



Minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held at Banwell Youth & Community Centre, 7pm on Monday 3rd of March 2025.

PRESENT: Councillors Nick Manley (Chairman), Simon Arlidge, Paul Blatchford, Steve Davies and Paul Harding.

IN ATTENDANCE: Liz Shayler (Clerk).

Cllr Manley welcomed everybody.

Before the meeting was convened, members of the public were invited to speak.

No members of the public were present.

The meeting was convened.

09/25 To receive apologies for absence (agenda item 1)

No apologies were received.

10/25 To receive declarations of interest (agenda Item 2)

No interests were received.

11/25 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on the 3rd of February 2025 (agenda item 3)

Resolved – That the minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on the 3rd of February be approved as a correct record of the meeting.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous with one abstention due to absence)

The minutes of the meeting were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12/25 To discuss North Somerset Councils consultation on 'Additional Housing Sites' and agree a recommended submission to Full Council (agenda item 4).

Resolved: The Planning Committee recommends that the Parish Council submits the following response.

1. Prioritisation of Grey Belt Sites in the Green Belt

Some sites in the Additional Housing Sites documentation, currently within the Green Belt, may now qualify as Grey Belt under recent NPPF changes. Prioritising development in these areas would:

1. Distribute housing more evenly across North Somerset.
2. Support sustainable locations, especially near Bristol, the region's economic hub.
3. Reduce strain on overstretched rural villages like Banwell.

North Somerset Council should identify Grey Belt land within the Green Belt and prioritise these sites before considering less sustainable rural developments.

2. Housing Target & Overdevelopment within Banwell

Banwell is already contributing 2,800 homes through the strategic site development at Wolverhill, playing a significant role in North Somerset's housing supply.

We urgently seek clarification on the number of homes required at Wolverhill, as paragraph 3.22 of the consultation document suggests the strategic sites will require additional capacity to be assessed, while paragraph 7.1 suggests an extra 500 homes could be accommodated. This expansion threatens the existing plans for Wolverhill, which prioritise the delivery of accessible and open green space and ecological mitigation.

Any further development within or near the Banwell Bypass would be excessive and unjustified. If all proposed sites were developed, Banwell would already be responsible for 13% of North Somerset's housing target, a significant and disproportionate burden, which would rise to over 15% with the additional 500 homes at Wolverhill.

3. Banwell's Classification as a Category A Village

Banwell's classification as a Category A village is not justified by the services and facilities available. While it has some local amenities, it lacks the infrastructure needed for a truly sustainable settlement. Based on North Somerset's own criteria, Banwell aligns more closely with a Category B village, as it depends on larger nearby settlements for essential services. Like other Category B villages such as Bleadon, Wrington, and Claverham. Banwell does not have sufficient employment opportunities, retail options, healthcare facilities or reliable public transport to support significant growth without overburdening existing resources.

4. Impact on Local Services

While the Wolverhill development promises improved local services and amenities, experience from developments such as Meadfields shows that these facilities often take years to materialise. In the meantime, existing GP surgeries, infrastructure, employment opportunities, retail facilities, and public transport are already overstretched, leaving residents with inadequate provisions. The cumulative effect of further development will exacerbate demand and negatively impact both new and existing residents.

5. Flood Risk & Drainage Issues

Several proposed additional sites have flood risks or high-water tables, making them unsuitable for development. The topographical studies undertaken by Banwell Parish Council have already demonstrated that certain areas cannot be developed due to water-related constraints.

6. Environmental & Landscape Harm

The proposed sites erode the rural character of Banwell, with some affecting the Mendip Hills National Landscape. The impact of light pollution, urbanisation, and habitat fragmentation will have significant long-term ecological consequences.

7. Biodiversity & Conservation Concerns

Several sites are located near the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Banwell Ochre Caves and Banwell Caves, known habitats for Horseshoe Bats and Greater Horseshoe Bats. Moreover, there are several other sites of significant nature conservation interest in the vicinity. The proximity of proposed locations, particularly sites HE20195 (East of Riverside) and HE201050 (Western Trade Centre), poses a potential threat to the sensitivity of these areas. Additionally, all five sites harbour a variety of legally protected species within a 1 km radius, including Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Slow Worm, Adder, Grass Snake, Badger, and Hedgehog, further highlighting their ecological importance.

Site-Specific Objections

HE20195 - East of Riverside (Adjacent to the Cemetery) – 4.8 ha, 30 dwellings

1. Flood Risk: The northern part of the site is prone to flooding, which contradicts National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) guidance on avoiding flood-prone areas. There is always an issue with flooding on Riverside during episodes of heavy rain.
2. High Water Table: - we know there is an issue with the water table in this location as topographical studies undertaken by the PC meant we were unable to extend the cemetery due to the height of the water table.
3. Heritage and Impact: The site is near several listed buildings and would adversely affect their setting, particularly the historic view from Banwell and the Grade I-listed St Andrew's Church towards the Castle. Furthermore, the site is believed to contain several archaeologically significant areas, including the Abbey's medieval fishponds. A 2012 Border Archaeology dig uncovered a well-preserved footprint, possibly of a Roman soldier, and wooden posts thought to be part of a trackway leading to the marshland.
4. Infrastructure Strain: The local road network would face significant challenges in accommodating additional development, as access would be limited to Riverside and Church Street. This would increase traffic within the bypass and into Banwell's conservation area, counteracting the bypass's intended purpose of reducing congestion.

HE208050 - Elmcroft Farm (Behind Wolvershill Road Properties) – 5 ha, 100 dwellings

1. Traffic & Access Issues: additional housing would increase traffic and put pressure on the Banwell Bypass which would either empty onto Wolvershill Road or onto the new bypass.
2. Settlement Creep: This site extends the village boundary unnecessarily, increasing urban sprawl and would adversely affect the proposed green gap between the Bypass and Banwell Village.
3. Impact on Rural Character: Development would erode Banwell's rural setting by taking development up to the bypass.
4. Drainage Issues: Potential for water runoff affecting nearby properties and infrastructure.

HE203014 - Land North of Banwell (Adjacent to Jubilee Gardens) – 1.6 ha, 58 dwellings

1. Strategic Gap Conflict: The site reduces the gap between Banwell village, the Banwell Bypass, and the Wolvershill strategic growth area. This contradicts the Local Plan's goal of preserving village identity.
2. The proposal for 58 houses in land only 1.6ha in size would see double the density of the adjacent Jubilee Gardens (3.2ha in size and 54 dwellings). This would result in a cramped development which would appear discordant with the existing pattern of development in Banwell, failing to respect the existing character and appearance of the area.

HE2098 - South of Knightcott Road – 8.76 ha, 95 dwellings

1. This site already has a proposal in planning awaiting a final decision by North Somerset for 27 houses. As a Parish Council, we have already strongly objected to the site's suitability for housing, as it would be contrary to the existing Local Plan, would be contrary to decisions made by a Planning Inspector in 2016 and would harm the rural landscape character of the area, compromising Knightcott's identity as a distinct hamlet and adversely harming the setting of the Mendips National Landscape.

HE201050 - Western Trade Centre – 1.2 ha, 30 dwellings

1. This site has been twice refused for development by North Somerset (2018 and 2021), the latter application being also dismissed at appeal by the Planning Inspectorate in 2022, with the inspector stating the development on the site for only 20 houses "would have a significant harmful impact on the character and appearance of the area" and "would result in a new urban built form of development which would project out into the fields which surround the site, completely at odds with the linear form of the existing hamlet (Knightcott)."
2. We consider these comments from the Planning Inspector are still applicable.

Wolvershill Strategic Site

1. The additional 500 houses at Wolvershill Strategic Site would increase density and undermine the proposed benefits of the current plans. With several applications already submitted, this increase could strain infrastructure and disrupt the proposed development.

Conclusion

Banwell PC strongly opposes the proposed additional 5 housing sites. The existing strategic allocation at Wolvershill already provides a substantial contribution to North Somerset's housing needs. Further development would be unsustainable, environmentally damaging, and inconsistent with the policies from the emerging Local Plan. The PC urges NSC to reconsider these allocations in favour of better-connected locations with the appropriate infrastructure to support growth of better connected locations with the appropriate infrastructure to support growth.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

13/25 To note and comment upon planning applications (agenda item 5).

(i) 25/P/0238/RM Land at Parklands, Meadfields Phase 6 Churchland Way.

Reserved Matters application for area Phase 6, with access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for approval, for the erection of 68no. dwellings and associated works pursuant to Outline Permission 16/P/2744/OT2 (Outline planning application with Environmental Statement with all matters reserved for subsequent approval for a residential development of up to 250 dwellings and associated infrastructure).

Resolved: To note this application.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

- (ii) **25/P/0325/FUL Land South of Lower Laurel Farm, Summer Lane, Banwell**
Proposed erection of 6 bed-bungalow for use as an accessible holiday let.

Resolved: To support this application.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

14/25 To note the following planning applications (agenda item 6).

- (i) **25/P/0239/NMA Land at Parklands (Phase 4a) Churchland Way.**
Non-material amendment to permission 23/P/1376/RM (Reserved Matters application for area Phase 4a for the erection of 95no. dwellings and associated works pursuant to Outline Permission 12/P/1266/OT2) to allow for substitution of house types and some surfacing and boundary amendments.
- (ii) **25/P/0258/LDE Withyhurst, Riverside Banwell BS29 6EH.**
Certificate of lawfulness for confirmation that the use of an existing outbuilding used as a two-storey annexed habitable space used incidentally to the occupation of the main dwellinghouse (Withyhurst) is lawful.

Resolved: The applications above were noted.

The resolution was correctly proposed and seconded (unanimous)

15/25 To note planning decisions – (agenda item 7)

- (i) **24/P/2704/FUL The Moor Dairy Moor Road Banwell BS29 6ET**
Proposed demolition of existing barn and erection of a new barn. **APPROVED**
- (ii) **24/P/2695/AGA Banwell Woods Towerhead Road Banwell**
Application to determine if prior approval is required for the placement of a shipping container clad in timber, to be used for storage of tools/equipment and shelter during adverse weather conditions. **WITHDRAWN**
- (iii) **24/P/2636/FUL Field to the Rear of Rose Hatch Cottage Hatches Lane Banwell**
Proposed extension of existing equine menage area. **APPROVED**
- (iv) **24/P/2588/FUH 87 Knightcott Road Banwell BS29 6HR**
Proposed demolition and rebuilding of the existing single storey outbuilding on the same footprint to provide a new garage/workshop and home office and solar panels to the West elevation roof. **APPROVE**

16/25 Date of the next meeting (agenda item 8)

7th of April 2025 7pm Planning Committee Meeting at the YCC.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 19:30

.....Chairman

.....Date