

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING BRIEFING – 15 FEB 2021 - SUMMARY

SS1/SS2 -

- We now have a 6yr housing supply, therefore Local Plan is current
- Fivehead is a rural settlement in open countryside (SS2) and does not feature in HELAA
- Initial response to Parish Housing Needs Assessment shows 78% do not want further housing development.

Highways

- Access and estate road is too narrow and cannot be adopted due to restriction set by Highways.
- Vehicles will block Butchers Hill, waiting to turn in to long access slip road if blocked.
- Traffic survey of Butchers Hill is needed - extant problems with speed, volume, and inappropriate types of traffic.
- Multiple accidents on the Village network not acknowledged.
- All walking routes through the Village have no footpaths or street lighting.

Habitat

- Tree/hedge survey required.
- Protected species records on site requiring EPS licences. Protected species on neighbouring site (Glendale) not acknowledged. (Greater & Lesser Horseshoe bats, Dormice etc)
- Nearby ponds and watercourse (<250m) not acknowledged - 'major development' as over 0.5ha.
- In impact risk zone for designated sites (SSSI and RAMSAR)
- Botanical survey required based on previous recorded plant life.
- Badger tracks run throughout the entire site and neighbouring gardens, not just the northern boundary.
- Natural England have yet to respond to habitat survey - waiting for HRA

Drainage

- No infiltration tests done to assess extent of surface water run-off.
- The high risk of flooding from surface water run off at the base of Butchers Hill was not acknowledged and excluded from the Govt. map.
- Routing surface water through the ditches on Butchers Hill will fail due to existing and regular blockages (reported to Highways on a regular basis)
- Mains connection not yet agreed with Wessex Water - there must be no use of septic tanks etc.

Climate Change

- No energy reduction technologies or carbon reducing methods of building planned.

Heritage

- Out of character with adjoining historic buildings and joins two historic settlements (a village centred on an ancient crossroads, by an historic Church, with a settlement at the end of a turnpike)
- Archaeological features, yet to be examined in the field (mound)
- Historic lime kiln in the field
- The Archives have not been checked.

Consultation

- Poor response to applicant's public survey - many objections listed.

Design

- Overhead high voltage power cables not included.
- No details of type of affordable housing.
- Clarification required on position of northern boundary.
- 2m high perimeter wall surrounding the site with no hedging on the northern/eastern boundaries.
- Unclear if characteristic natural stone will be included in final design.
- Landscaping cannot maintain the character of open countryside.

Cumulative Impact

- Almost 10% increase in housing in Fivehead over 2 years, including 69 vehicles.
- Increase in danger to local road network.

Planning history

- This is the 6th application for housing on this field; all previous applications refused, including by a Planning Inspector.

Response to application

1. **NPPF Para 11** - The applicant is mistaken in their Planning Statement, claiming the District only has a 4.5yr (Oct 2019) supply. This was superseded in 2020 with the District achieving a 6yr supply, therefore there is no presumption in favour of sustainable development.
2. **SS2** - Fivehead is classed as a rural settlement in open countryside and therefore protected from development.
 - There are no employment opportunities appropriate to the scale of this development; all our facilities are run by volunteers apart from the pub (currently for sale), which is likely to become a community pub, run by volunteers.
 - There will be no enhancements to our facilities.
 - There is no identifiable housing need - we are in the process of conducting a Parish Housing Needs Assessment, with initial returns showing 78% do not want more housing in the Parish. The Community Plan Survey (2017) did not ask this question, it questioned the appropriateness of existing housing stock. The majority of responders thought there were too many large, detached houses, which should be replaced with more affordable housing. There are at present 159 houses for sale within 5 miles of Fivehead, with 10 houses in the process of, or about to be built in the Village itself.

The SSDC Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (**HELAA**) does not include Fivehead as a location for development.

3. Traffic -

- Highways want the access road to be 7m wide to be an adoptable road, the plans are for a 6m wide road. Waste services will not enter a private road, leaving the potential for 28 bins left out on Butchers Hill.
- Butchers Hill is single track in places with on-street parking causing restrictions. It is just 5m wide at the entrance point. Vehicles will have to wait, blocking Butchers Hill to enter the estate if the long access road is occupied. Vehicles pulling out to pass this waiting traffic will be a hazard as there is no view.
- Butchers Hill is not a residential road, but the main tributary from Fivehead and surrounding Villages onto the A378 which has an average of 1434 vehicles per day through the Village. The Planning Inspector has previously deemed this junction to be below standard.
- There have been 4 serious injury accidents nearby in 10 years, 1 of which was 100m away from the site entrance on Butchers Hill. There has been numerous, unrecorded damage only accidents, including a house hit at the bottom of Butchers Hill causing £40k of damage in 2019.
- All walking routes through the Village have no footpaths or street lighting.
- The Parish Council receives complaints regarding the speed, volume, and inappropriateness of the traffic on Butchers Hill several times a year, all registered with SCC Highways.

4. Habitat -

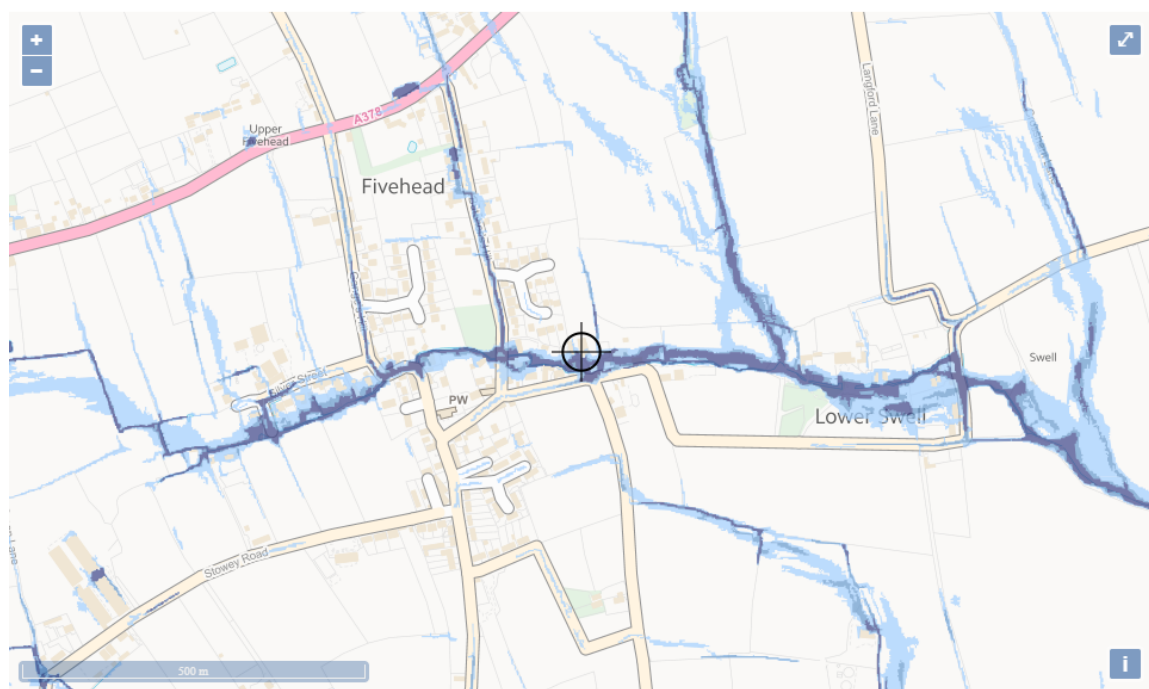
- There is no Tree/Hedge survey, despite the site being surrounded by hedges and mature trees and the acknowledgement there are records of Dormice and Brown Hairstreak butterflies nearby.
- There are protected species records on site (ST351232, ST353231, ST352230 - 7 varieties of bats, and water voles - SERC) The neighbouring Glendale development has sightings of Greater & Lesser Horseshoe bats and Dormice, for which Natural England EPS Licences are in place.
- The site is over 0.5 hectare and therefore classed as a Major Development. It is less than 250m from several ponds (Windy Ridge, Crossacre) and the tributary to Fivehead River which runs through the Village.
- Newts, frogs, toads and grass snakes have been sighted in these ponds; water vole and even otter have been recorded in the Fivehead River tributary. (SERC)

- The site is within the impact risk zone for Fivehead Woods and Meadows SSSI and the West Sedgemoor RAMSAR site.
- Orchids are reported in the field margins; the 1990 application recorded pyramidal orchids, Field Scallions, Greater Knapweed, Hawkweeds, Galium all still likely to be present due to the low use of this meadow.
- Badger tracks are along all hedgerows, with some householders providing 'badger highways' through their gardens adjoining the field.
- The plan for just 4 new bird boxes is disappointing.
- Brown Hairstreak butterflies inhabit large areas of the Village. Additional hedging, including ALL boundaries should include planting of hawthorn for this protected species.
- We would want to see relevant habitat protections, including additional surveys, light pollution mitigation and a CEMP, should approval be granted.

5. Drainage -

- The surface water run off estimates cannot be relied upon as no infiltration tests have been done.
- The plan to route the surface water into drainage ditches on Butchers Hill will fail. These ditches are regularly blocked, as they are now. We have been waiting 2 years for them to be cleared. This causes flooding at the base of the hill, next to the entrance to Glendale. This matter is ongoing with the developer and Highways.
- It is admitted in the application there is a likelihood of flooding at the entrance.
- The Govt. Surface Water flood map provided omits the bottom half of the Village, which floods regularly due to surface water run-off from Butchers Hill. The last serious occasion being 2013.
- 1/3 site will be impermeable.
- Mains connection not yet agreed with Wessex Water - there should be a condition for no biodigester/treatment plants/septic tanks etc.

Govt Surface Water Flooding map - showing high risk of flooding at the bottom of Butchers Hill, along the Fivehead River Tributary. This was not shown in the applicant's drainage survey.



Extent of flooding from surface water

6. Climate Change

- The picture of solar panels in the design statement is misleading, no energy reduction technologies are included - there should be conditions to include these and to ensure the houses are as carbon neutral as possible.

7. Heritage -

- Fivehead is an historic, agricultural settlement centred on an ancient crossroads. Angel Row, on Butchers Hill, opposite the proposed development, housed the agricultural workers for the Langford Manor, Cathanger and Swell Court estates. It had a slaughterhouse, a bakery, 3 pubs, and later a shop. It serviced a wide area and was an important settlement with many historic houses.
- The end of the turnpike road (A378) is marked by Red Post House with Coins, Mount Pleasant and Friar Cottage in this cluster. The 1835 map shows a clear disconnect from the Village. The Planning Inspector agreed there should remain a break from the Village to this small cluster, sat in open countryside.
- There are records of 8 kilns and Roman features in the Village, yet to be examined.
- There is a confirmed field kiln on the site which would have been serviced by the workers from Angel Row.
- There is a yet to be examined archaeological feature (the mound) in the field itself.
- To place a modern estate next to Grade II listed, historic turnpike houses, there needs to be 'clear and convincing' justification. The estate will be surrounded by a 2m wall, with clearly visible, generic houses with no reference to local character. The elevations facing the heritage buildings will not be local stone, but a combination of red brick and painted render.
- The Archives have not been checked as they are closed, and the author of the heritage survey has no local knowledge.

8. Consultation

180 users looked at the online questionnaire produced by the applicant, only 16 completed it, with just 4 in support.

Reasons for objections:

- Increase traffic and insufficient public transport,
- Loss of the last green space,
- Too many bungalows in the Village,
- Additional strain on the infrastructure,
- Light pollution,
- Increased surface water run - off and flooding,
- Cumulative impact with other developments,
- Overhead power cables,
- Loss of mature trees on the boundaries.

9. Design

- Overhead high voltage power cables cross the site, not mentioned in the application.
- Clarification is required on which of the 6 options for affordable housing would be included in the planning conditions.
- The northern boundary line is in question with neighbouring properties.
- There will be a 2-metre high perimeter wall and hard fencing.
- No hedging being added north/east boundaries.
- The local character stone mentioned in the design statement is referred to as 'stone detailing' - however, the plans show all houses are mostly stone apart from the rear of Plots 3 and 4, which face the listed cottages, which will be red brick and painted render.

- To maintain any semblance of local character, either blue or white lias would be appropriate, and not altered at a later date.

10. Landscape

- This field was deemed by the Planning Inspector to be open countryside.
- It will be impossible to maintain this character through planting and landscaping. The houses will be visible from Angel Row, Butchers Hill, Ganges Hill, and the natural 'break' to the open countryside will be gone.

11. Cumulative Impact

- This application is part 2 to 2 previously agreed detached houses by the same developer, on Ganges Hill (19/02717/FUL), approved at the time when SSDC could not demonstrate a 5yr housing supply.
- The neighbouring site at Glendale (20/03631/S73) is underway, constructing 3 large, detached houses.
- The site at Stillbrook Road is also underway, to construct 4 large bungalows.
- If all plans go ahead, Fivehead will have an extra 19 detached houses in 2 years, adding almost 10% to our housing stock.
- This equates to 69 more vehicles.
- The only location in the Village to have a traffic survey conducted recently is Stowey Road, connecting Fivehead to Curry Mallet. The result showed the Manual for Streets advisable limit of 100 vph was exceeded at peak times. Traffic using Stowey Road will be connecting with the A378 via Butchers Hill.
- There needs to be a traffic survey on Butchers Hill when COVID restrictions allow.

12. Planning history

This site has now been subject to 5 planning applications. The previous applications have varied in numbers of houses, but this is irrelevant as the reasons for refusal are not concerned with the size of development, but that development at this location would be harmful to the character of the Village and go beyond the limit of the Village.

The Planning Officer's statement at appeal in 1991, included the following points:

- 63 letters of objection were received, with none in support.
- There was no identifiable housing need, in fact as is the case now, development had exceeded requirements.
- The size and layout of the site would be liable to further development which would not be to scale with the Village and not acceptable as it lies outside the Village boundary. The applicant had explained the larger development (15 houses) would mirror the density of Ganges Close, but the Planning Officer corrected this to 32 if it were to mirror density.
- The position of the site on rising ground and would make any development highly visible from surrounding countryside and detract from its village setting.
- This development would not represent 'infill' or 'squaring off', but encroachment into the countryside and if allowed would set a precedent for future development, expanding the Village and destroying its character. Fivehead's character is that at points the countryside penetrates the Village, even to its centre.
- The County Surveyor stated that, 'the loss of an obviously wildlife rich area in Fivehead, which are becoming increasingly rare, should be resisted.'
- The District Planning Authority agreed that the grounds for refusal in 1964 and 1970 still stand.