

21/2004/007

LANGFORD BUDVILLE PARISH COUNCIL (ACTING FOR VILLAGE HALL TRUSTEES)

ERECTION OF SINGLE STOREY VILLAGE HALL, ASSOCIATED CAR PARKING AND ACCESS DRIVEWAY, LAND AT RITHERDONS (O.S. REF. ST 108228), LANGFORD BUDVILLE AS AMENDED BY LETTER DATED 19TH APRIL, 2004 WITH ACCOMPANYING DRAWING NOS. 03060.P20B, 21B, 22B AND 23B

10811/22799

1.0 **RECOMMENDATION**

Permission be REFUSED for the following reasons:-

- 01 The site is beyond the settlement limits in open countryside in an elevated and prominent position not well related to the existing settlement pattern and buildings and its development as proposed would constitute an undesirable intrusion into an attractive area of open countryside to the detriment of the visual amenities of the locality. (Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy STR6 and Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policy S8)
- 02 The development of the site as proposed would adversely affect the setting of St Peter's Church, which is a Grade I listed building, and the setting and character of the Langford Budville Conservation Area when viewed from the public footpath leading from Langford Common to the village by reason of its size and siting. (Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy 9 and Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policy EN15).
- 03 The proposed development does not make adequate provision for a footpath link of an acceptable standard to the site from the village. (Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review Policy 49 and Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit Policies S1(B) and M1).

Note to Applicant

- 01 You are advised that a site further down the slope towards the road may be viewed favourably by the Local Planning Authority.

2.0 **APPLICANT**

Langford Budville Parish Council (Acting for Village Hall Trustees).

3.0 **PROPOSAL**

Erection of single storey village hall with associated car parking and access driveway. The walls for the proposed building are to be rendered and painted over

a dark plinth with a blue/black tiles (Redland Cambrian or similar). The site area extends to approximately 0.494 ha.

The proposed accommodation provides for a main hall (18.5 m x 9 m), a smaller committee room (5.8 m x 4.6 m) and associated office, kitchen, wc and store rooms. The total internal floorspace area is 364 sq m. The overall height of the proposed building is approximately 7.1 m to the ridge. Parking for a minimum of 25 cars included 3 disabled spaces on hard surfacing with overflow parking on hardcore providing an additional 8 spaces. Access to the proposed hall and its parking area is down a 3 m wide access road approximately 100 m in length with parking bays. The first 30 m of the access road will be surfaced in tarmac. The remainder will be hardcore and gravel. The access is to be formed onto the existing lane leading from Two Ashes into the village at a point where there is an existing access gate. Sight lines at the point of access will be improved by cutting back the hedging and banks.

The precise siting of the proposed hall has been moved on the amended plans such that it is now positioned to the west of the footpath that leads from the car parking area, adjacent to Langford Common, to the village and school. The existing field hedging to the north of the proposed building is to be supplemented with additional trees and hedging. New post and wire fencing reinforced with hedging/planting of indigenous species is proposed alongside the proposed access road. The submitted plans also show indicatively the position of 'proposed future playing fields' adjacent to the proposed hall and 'proposed housing by others' adjacent to the access road.

The Village Hall Trustees see the siting of the hall as proposed as having three primary functions. The first, and most important, is that it be as close as possible to the village centre and able to be accessed safely by children. The second is that the position is suitable to the future playing fields. The third function identified by the Trustees is that the placement has as minimal an impact as possible to the immediate area and the village landscape as a whole. The proposed position is adjacent to an existing footpath which the Trustees see as providing a quick and easy link into the centre of the village. Vehicular access is separate and will be encouraged around the village (past the public house), thus seeking to reduce traffic approaching past the school. Traffic exiting the site will be encouraged to turn left towards the Wiveliscombe road and thus back around to the village.

In discussions with the applicants' agent, concern has been expressed in particular in terms of the impact of the proposed hall on views through to the church and village. An alternative position, further down the slope towards the road, has been suggested to the Trustees. However, the Trustees have a number of reservations concerning this lower position, among which is that of drainage, as the land is actually lower than the road and adjacent drains and the Trustees do not wish to suffer the added cost of pumped drainage. They remain of the opinion that a location at the top of the slope meets more of their desired requirements and consider that the amended position will reduce any impact on views through to the church and village. In repositioning the proposed building, it has also been set down some 1.75 m to ensure that only the roofline would be visible in the distant views from the top field gate and Common. The ridge would be 2.24 m lower than

the ground level at the top gate adjacent to the Common. The Trustees believe that the roof will blend into the existing hedgerow (which will be supplemented and strengthened by additional planting) thus mitigating any serious impact on the view.

A letter has been received from the landowner stating the following:-

“Following all the incorrect information that has been sent around the Village, and to your Planning Department, I thought it would be useful if I explained the offer that I have made to the Village.

1. As I am sure you are aware, Langford Budville has been raising money for a Village Hall for many years, and that to date have failed to secure a site on which to build it. I have therefore offered to give a site for a Village Hall without any conditions attached.
2. The Parish Council recently carried out a survey to determine the housing needs of the Village. The survey proved a need for up to six dwellings of various sizes. I have therefore offered a site to a Housing Association to build these dwellings on an area close to the proposed Village Hall.
3. Langford Budville also has no playing field. The area to the south of the proposed Hall would be ideal for this purpose. I have therefore made the following offer. That should I obtain planning consent for a few private dwellings on the small area of land between the proposed Village Hall and the social housing site, that I will give the land required on this site for a Village playing field.

I understand that the footprint for the Hall has been moved within the red line, to a much more acceptable site. The car parking area is now quite small and may be insufficient for the needs of the Hall, If an additional area for parking is required down the slope towards the social housing, then I am willing to provide this also.”

4.0 **THE SITE**

The site is located on the western side of the village of Langford Budville, to the west and south of the area locally known as Ritherdons. The site forms part of a larger field and is currently in agricultural use. Access is in the position of an existing field gate onto the lane into the village from ‘Two Ashes’. The site is beyond the settlement limits.

5.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

There is no recent relevant planning history related to this site.

Planning permission has previously been granted for a village hall on land south of Heathfield on the road out of the village towards Holywell Lake.

The next item is an application for a village hall elsewhere at Langford Budville.

6.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review

Policy STR1 sustainable development

Policy STR3 rural centres and villages

Policy STR5 development in rural centres and villages

Policy STR6 development outside towns, rural centres and villages

Policy 9 the built historic environment

Policy 37 facilities for sport and recreation within settlement

Policy 38 sport and recreation in the countryside

Policy 48 access and parking

Policy 49 transport requirements of new development

West Deane Local Plan

Policy WD/SP/1 settlements defined as villages

Policy WD/SP/2 development outside settlement limits

Policy WD/RT/1 proposals for recreation or tourist development

Policy WD/RT/5 formal recreation and cultural facilities

Policy WD/LB/4

Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit

Policy S1 general requirements

Policy S2 design

Policy S7 villages

Policy S8 outside settlements

Policy EN15 conservation areas

Policies M1, M2 and M3 transport, access and circulation requirements of new development

7.0 RELEVANT CENTRAL GOVERNMENT POLICY GUIDANCE

PPG1 General Policy and Principle

Paragraphs 4 - 7

Paragraph 28 A number of the previous themes come together in considering development in the countryside. Here, the planning system helps to integrate the development necessary to sustain economic activity in rural areas with protection of the countryside. Rural areas can accommodate many forms of development without detriment, if the location and design of development are handled with sensitivity. Building in the open countryside, away from existing settlements or from areas allocated for development in development plans, should be strictly controlled. In areas such as National Parks which are statutorily designated for their landscape, wildlife or historic qualities and in areas of best and most versatile agricultural land, policies give greater priority to restraint.

Paragraph 32 Just as well-designed, new development can enhance the existing environment, it is fundamental to the Government's policies for environmental stewardship that there should be effective protection for the historic environment. Those aspects of our past which have been identified as being of historic importance are to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage. Their presence adds to the quality of our lives, by enhancing the familiar and cherished local scene and sustaining the sense of local distinctiveness which is so important an aspect of the character and appearance of our towns, villages and countryside. Their continued use is important if they are to contribute fully to the life of our communities.

Paragraph 40

Paragraph 50

Paragraph 54/55

PPG7 'The Countryside – Environmental Quality and Economic and Social Development

Paragraphs 1.3 – 1.5

Paragraph 2.3

Paragraph 3.23 People who live in rural areas should have reasonable access to a range of services. Local planning authorities can facilitate provision and help retain existing services by, for example, assessing the nature and extent of rural needs, identifying

suitable sites and buildings for development to meet these needs, and promoting mixed and multi-purpose uses.

PPS7 (Draft) Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Paragraph 7 People who live or work in rural areas should have reasonable access to a range of services and facilities. Local planning authorities should:-

i. facilitate and provide for new services and facilities (e.g. through the use of planning obligations and the identification of sites in plans), particularly where;

- planning permission is granted for new developments in country towns or other service centres;

- settlements, or the population of their rural catchments, are expanding;

- there is an identified need for new or expanded services to strengthen the role of a particular rural service centre;

ii. seek opportunities (e.g. through planning obligations) to enhance public transport as a means of improving access to service centres;

iii. identify in development plans suitable buildings and development sites for community services and facilities to meet the needs of a range of users, including people with disabilities;

iv. support mixed and multi-purpose uses that maintain community vitality;

v. support the provision of small-scale, local service facilities (e.g. childcare facilities) to meet community needs in areas away from main service centres, particularly where they would benefit those rural residents who would find it difficult to use more distant service centres. These local facilities should be located within or adjacent to existing villages and settlements where access can be gained by walking, cycling and (where available) public transport.

Paragraph 9 Planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities, such as village shops and post offices, rural petrol stations, village halls and rural public houses that play a vital role in sustaining village communities. Planning authorities should support the retention of these local facilities and should set out in development plans the criteria they will apply in considering applications that will result in the loss of vital village services (e.g., from conversion to residential use).

PPG15 'Planning and the Historic Environment'

Paragraph 2.26 Conservation of the wider historic landscape greatly depends on active land management, but there is nevertheless a significant role for local planning authorities. In defining planning policies for the countryside, authorities should take account of the historical dimension of the landscape as a whole rather than concentrate on selected areas. Adequate understanding is an essential preliminary and authorities should assess the wider historic landscape at an early stage in development plan preparation. Plans should protect its most important components and encourage development that is consistent with maintaining its overall historic character. Indeed, policies to strengthen the rural economy through environmentally sensitive diversification may be among the most important for its conservation.

Paragraph 4.14 Section 72 of the Act requires that special attention shall be paid in the exercise of planning functions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. This requirement extends to all powers under the Planning Acts, not only those which relate directly to historic buildings. The desirability of preserving or enhancing the area should also, in the Secretary of State's view, be a material consideration in the planning authority's handling of development proposals which are outside the conservation area but would affect its setting, or views into or out of the area. Local planning authorities are required by section 73 to publish a notice of planning applications for development which would in their opinion affect the character or appearance of a conservation area.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS (originally submitted plans)

County Highway Authority

“The county road, Ritherdon’s Lane, giving access to the proposed site is very narrow and the junction with the classified un-numbered road is inadequate for an increase in traffic flow and construction traffic. The access as shown on the submitted drawing no 03060.P.20 Rev is acceptable.

The access road will need to be strengthened and widened. The junction at Two Ashes will also need to be improved. Ritherdon’s Lane, which connects with the village is very narrow and is not suitable for access to the proposed site. The route from the village to the proposed site needs to be via the main road and will need to be well signed.

Dennis Quick in the Highway Service Manager's Office has great concerns regarding the proposed site in relation to existing flooding problems. There are

flooding problems in Ritherdon's Lane. The Highway Authority was threatened with legal action last year when properties were flooded.

Surface water discharges from the fields on the opposite side of the lane from the proposed development onto the highway. Surface water from the widened carriageway and the site would flow down Ritherdon's Lane to the village, which will aggravate the flooding problem. The existing surface water sewer is a 150 mm diameter pipe, which does not have the capacity to convey the storm water at present. The 150 mm diameter pipeline is 600 m in length and laid on private land before discharging at Chipley. Improvements to this pipeline would be very difficult and costly.

Ritherdon's Lane is not constructed to take heavy vehicles. The carriageway would need to be reconstructed and widened before any building work was commenced.

The footpath from the site to the village crosses arable land before passing between the properties known as Tranquilla and Yewtree. Over this section the path is very narrow and would need to be improved. There are no footways through the village.

Provided that the above improvements were carried out before construction started on the proposed village hall there would be no objections on highway grounds to this proposal."

Environment Agency

Do not wish to provide comment as proposals are outside the scope of the Liaison Manual.

Wessex Water

"The development is located within a foul sewer area. It will be necessary for the developer to agree a point of connection onto the system for the satisfactory disposal of foul flows generated by the proposal. This can be agreed at the detailed design stage. The nearest public foul sewer will require a considerable length of off-site connecting private lateral pipe from the proposed location.

The developer has proposed to dispose of surface water flows to soakaways. It is advised that your Council should be satisfied with any arrangement for the satisfactory disposal of surface water from the proposal.

With respect to water supply, there are water mains within the vicinity of the proposal. Again, connection can be agreed at the design stage.

It is recommended that the developer should agree with Wessex Water, prior to the commencement of any works on site, a connection onto Wessex Water infrastructure."

Somerset Environmental Records Centre

No Sites of Special Scientific Interest/National Nature Reserves/County Wildlife Sites/County Geological Sites recorded at or adjacent to the site. Three County Wildlife Sites and one SSSI (Langford Heathfield) within 1 km of the site. Badgers and other legally protected species.

Somerset Wildlife Trust

- “1. We have studied the response of the Somerset Environmental Records ; Centre. This response indicates that the application site is very close to Langford Heathfield SSSI. As such, we recommend that English Nature be consulted regarding this application.
2. It is apparent that the application site lies outside of the settlement limit as laid down in the Taunton Deane Local Plan Revised Deposit, November 2000 and, in addition to this, the proposal appears to go against policy S8 of the Local Plan.
3. However, should the Authority not be minded to refuse this application, the Somerset Wildlife Trust would recommend the following:-
 - 3.1 That consideration is given to securing the future retention and sympathetic management of part of the site for wildlife and as an additional amenity for local people, perhaps through the use of a Section 106 agreement.
 - 3.2 That any additional planting is limited to the use of appropriate native species, ideally of a local provenance.”

English Nature

“The Langford Heathfield SSSI extends across the road to include the roadside verge and arguably the boundary hedge where the entrance to the new Village Hall is planned. If the existing gateway is used without any modification to the road access point e.g. to improve visibility and access, then there will be no impact on the SSSI. Any such modification will have an impact and it depends on the extent of what is considered necessary as to nature of that impact. However this is not an important part of the SSSI and it is probable that some modification could be carried out without having any detrimental effect on the special interest of the area. The proposals do include new tree and shrub planting which may be taken as mitigation against the loss of a small amount of vegetation from the SSSI, providing that the trees are native broadleaves. Until the exact nature of the modification (if any) to the entrance is known it is not possible to be more specific.”

Landscape Officer

“My main concerns with the proposed scheme are:-

1. The site is locally prominent from the Wiveliscombe road and public footpath with little opportunity for mitigation.

2. The site would need significant levelling and is likely to look artificial in the 'rolling' landscape.
3. That Highways may require the removal of existing hedgerows to meet visibility splay requirements.

I think it would be better to have the access road closer to the existing hedgerow and so that the future of the 'proposed' housing site can be considered at a later stage and will have less impact in the landscape."

Comments on amended plans:- "The proposed relocation of the position of the Village Hall building should help to soften the wider landscape impact of development but will still require substantial remodelling of the existing levels and landscape proposals to mitigate any impacts."

Landscape Officer (Wildlife)

"Site adjacent to SSSI Langford Heathfield. "

Conservation Officer

"Location remote and on elevated site. Surely a site better related to existing development can be found which is also less exposed. Needs to be sited on lower ground, e.g. where the proposed housing is suggested."

Rights of Way Officer

"According to the plans there is no building on the legal route. However, there is a car park which would constitute an obstruction. I would prefer to have the footpath diverted as there is a further problem of the route to the south that may in the future be obstructed by pitches etc. There is a solution by a straight line from the hall to the existing gate. (I have not been approached for a diversion).

Environmental Health Officer

No observations.

Drainage Officer

"Due to the sensitive nature of the surface water drainage systems in the area and the instances of localised flooding a substantial drainage system will have to be provided. This will require some form of on site attenuation and I enclose a copy of our minimum requirements for design.

This application should not be given approval until such a system has been agreed at least in principal, with this officer.

The applicant is therefore requested to contact this officer at an early stage if it appears approval may be forthcoming.

1. Any surface water discharges by whatever means be limited to that which occurs naturally from the catchment and as calculated from a 1 in 1 year storm using 10% impermeability. Any excess flows should be dealt with by on site attenuation.
2. The design storm for any attenuation system shall be for a 1 in 25 year return period storm.
3. Environment Agency should be approached for consent to discharge and for their requirements regarding oil interceptors etc and headwall design.
4. Details required of proposed point of discharge to watercourse together with details of headwall etc.
5. The poor quality of water discharging from surface water outfalls can seriously affect the receiving watercourse. Techniques to reduce the impact of these discharges have been developed and collectively form a range of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs) for dealing with run off. It is strongly recommended that some form of SUD be used at this proposed development.”

Housing Officer

Would like to see social housing in this village as there is a proven need.

Leisure Development Manager

“We would support this application as Langford Budville is one of the few villages of any size within Somerset currently without a village hall.

It would however appear that the proposed building although of a good layout is not high enough for badminton.

Playing fields are shown as a future additional proposal, will the building have provision for changing facilities to be added?

There is no mention of whether sustainable construction has been considered or if the school has been included in the design.”

Parish Council

Support.

Langford Budville Playgroup

Support – A village hall will be of great benefit to the organisation.

Langford Budville Primary School

“The Primary School in Langford Budville would like to offer the strongest support to the current proposals to build a village hall.

At present we take the whole school to Wellington Sports Centre for their indoor P.E. as we have no school hall. This obviously uses a lot of valuable curriculum time that would be available to us if we could use a local facility like a village hall. We were praised in our recent Ofsted report (February 2004) for working hard to achieve high standards in P.E., but they noted that we were handicapped by the lack of facilities.

The school has a strong tradition of performing plays, dance and drama. At present this is all done in the classrooms with productions in neighbouring schools and we have to rely on little or no opportunity to practice in the performance venues.

The school has a thriving playgroup, which if relocated to a village hall, would give space in the school for a learning resources/computer suite area.

We value our links with the community and we feel that a facility like this would enable us to work jointly with them on new projects.

Lastly the provision of low cost housing must only benefit the village in keeping a balanced age and social class profile. It would also assist ensuring that the school, which currently takes more than half of its children from Wellington, continues to thrive.”

Runnington Parochial Church Council

“Would like to acknowledge its full support for this application.

The Church in Runnington would benefit greatly if such a facility was available – as a venue for:- (a) Sunday Club; (b) Meetings; (c) Harvest Supper; (d) Wedding/Funeral Receptions; (e) Fund raising events. This is to name but a few.

The PCC is aware that there is some controversy over the site, however it trusts that the Village Hall Steering Committee and the planners at TDBC will select the most appropriate and suitable site within the village for such a building.”

Parish Church of St Peter, Langford Budville

“At the recent Parochial Church Council Meeting, it was agreed unanimously to support the building of the Village Hall.

It was felt that this would certainly be an asset to all the residents, especially those involved with the Church and the School.

This decision also has the endorsement of both the Archdeacon and the Bishop of Taunton.”

9.0 **REPRESENTATIONS**

(on originally submitted plans)

44 letters of objection (5 from outside the parish) making the following points:-

1. Sited too far from other buildings.
2. Will be on the skyline, when viewed from most of the village.
3. The beneficiaries of the development will be the landowners and the developers rather than the public.
4. Large scale development in small village – meeting halls in Wellington and Milverton for large events. A smaller building that the village could afford to build and maintain would be more appropriate.
5. The chosen location does not relate well to the existing settlement and the church and school in particular.
6. The location seems specifically designed to encourage the approval of housing on the remainder of the land, which is a greenfield site outside the village envelope.
7. There was no allocation for development in the village in the local plan and any development on this land would not be compliant with government and local plan policies.
8. The site is between the village and one of the largest SSSI's in the district, containing both wildlife (particular deer, owls and badgers) and plants of some significance – the potential loss of this buffer of land in agricultural management is of concern.
9. The site is in an elevated position and the large building would have an overbearing visual impact on the setting of the village and an unnecessarily adverse impact on the surrounding land and on the SSSI.
10. The proposal provides for a hall with seating for 175 people, with parking for only 25 cars, creating the need for multi-trips to deliver and collect visitors.
11. Pedestrians would have to walk a considerable distance from the centre of the village, making access difficult. The footpath is an option, but it is not suitable for use late at night or even early in the evening in winter months.
12. It is a poorly sited development for the function it aims to provide.
13. The access is from a narrow road where in places there is insufficient room for two cars to pass and with an inadequate junction onto the Wiveliscombe road.

14. The majority of vehicles would have to negotiate the narrow village roads.
15. The site lies on the path of a public right of way, requiring a diversion order.
16. Proposed building should use local building styles and materials, rather than being a standard design bearing no relationship to the location and having no detailing that draws on the character and qualities of the conservation area and nearby existing buildings.
17. O.S. plan out of date.
18. The extra traffic will lead to the road system becoming overloaded and dangerous, with section of the access road having no grass verge or paved area for pedestrians. The access road is also used as an access to the school.
19. The accessibility of the proposed development by public transport is virtually impossible.
20. The proposed building will effectively fill the skyline both towards the village and Quantock Hills to the north and east and blot out the canopy of the Heath from the village.
21. Water pollution and flooding potential – the land is a watershed for the higher fields to the north of the site, there are springs including an artesian well on the site. In periods of heavy rain excess water causes flooding both at Ritherdons and lower in the village. An increase in water run-off will increase risk of flooding.
22. Significant noise pollution, with cars travelling to the car park making a huge intrusion of noise and on the privacy of the adjoining properties.
23. No study of the village for 22 years, so there is no evidence of the viability and vitality to a site within the settlement limits.
24. Despite agent's suggestion, feel very significant hedging will be destroyed to enable a reasonable splay for access.
25. The Village Hall Steering Committee and the Parish Council have effectively blocked any open meeting of the residents to discuss the development and to date have no business plan or sufficient funding for the project. Cannot be financially viable as a village hall - a grandiose scheme bound to fail at the expense of others and carries within it the seeds of destruction of the existing community.
26. Previous hall was allowed to decay to the point of being derelict through lack of use and maintenance.
27. No demand for a village hall nowadays – will be a 'white elephant'.

28. Within a few years it will be vandalised and be a blot on the landscape.
29. Will need public lighting, which would cause significant light pollution to the surrounding area.
30. Alternative site to the north-east of the church is a better site.
31. Site not close enough to the church or school for it to be shared by cars visiting these places, which are both badly in need of safe parking.
32. Siting will have a major impact on the peaceful ambience of the village.
33. Will increase the likelihood of housing development nearby in the future.
34. Huge loss of prime agricultural land.
35. The pattern of new development should be determined through the development plan process.
36. An access at the alternative site near the church gives an opportunity for improving traffic at the notorious black spot.
37. Concerns about the independence of the process which has led to this application. It has been undertaken in a largely covert manner by a self-appointed committee.
38. The needs of young children should be met.
39. The narrow lane from the village will undoubtedly be used by mothers dropping toddlers off at any playgroup after dropping off older siblings at the school.
40. Inappropriate area for social housing in a village where there is no shop and negligible public transport.
41. Contamination from foul water is possible from this development.
42. The lane leading to the site is frequently used by dog-walkers and horse riders and there is no street lighting.
43. The proposed access is unfeasible.
44. A dog fouling problem is likely to arise.
45. Query whether the suggestion of encouraging vehicles to approach the site via the route past the Martlett public house is an acceptable or workable solution.
46. Setting of the Grade I listed church would be impaired.

47. The village is of notable archaeological significance.
48. The existing hedge will have virtually no screening effect.
49. Concern at the possibility of the lane becoming one way.
50. Being uphill from the village, it will be too difficult for the majority of the villagers homes to reach, particularly if old or infirm.
51. At night people would not wish to stumble for at least 100 m along an unmade and unlit downhill path with at least one steep and potentially dangerous drop.
52. Potential adverse effect on adjacent smallholding due to pollution from drainage run-off.
53. Increase in surface water run off will cause subsidence on adjoining land.
54. Decision on the application should await the outcome of a survey of all households in the parish being carried out to ask whether a village hall is wanted and whether Ritherdons or an alternative site is preferred.
55. Recently introduced speed limits are a joke and do nothing to improve road safety.

21 letters of support (2 from outside the parish) making the following points:-

1. The village has a tremendous need for a hall and it can only enhance the village and be an asset.
2. Playgroup currently limited for space and need for venue for youth activities.
3. The primary school has to bus the children to Wellington to make use of sports hall facilities and to town schools for dramatic productions. Many other school activities would be greatly enhanced by the availability of a hall area.
4. The village community life will be strengthened when there is a good facility to use for a whole range of events, bringing people together. Many of these events will not create excessive noise or even much extra traffic.
5. Restrictions would be in place to prevent rowdy parties.
6. In time will become accepted as part of the local scene.
7. It is time to stop passing the village hall from one site to another and start moving forward.

8. Planners' suggestion of moving the position of the hall nearer to the road down into the dip would result in a significant increase in nuisance to the neighbours from noise – the lie of the land would act as an amphitheatre – and views would be seriously affected both from the neighbours and from the hall itself.
9. The proposed site on the edge of the village is ideal – away from the heart of the village, yet within walking distance for both the school and the villagers.
10. The site is the only one available and where further advantageous playing facilities could be developed in the future.
11. Inappropriate for objections from adjacent chainsaw and lawnmower business, which has noise from revving of engines.
12. Have responsibility to trust and support the steering committee with their plans and decisions to push the project forward in the best possible way.
13. Development at the skittle alley at the Marlett will be a loss for functions in the future.
14. The village is one of the very few that does not have a hall for meetings, functions and the day to day activities of the community.
15. Those opposing the application are encouraging villagers to object to the application after presenting them with incorrect information.
16. Will not be visible as enter village.

Comments on amended plans

1. Architect letter only refers to landscape impact when viewed at ground surface level. View that roof ridge would be below ground level does not make sense.
2. Building will still be visible.
3. No account taken of water table, wells, etc. or possible destabilisation of adjacent private land.
4. New position of car park will be highly visible from all directions, in particular from the top gate and from Ritherdons Lane. Car parking still inadequate.
5. Still no discussion with villagers – who at the presentation were forbidden to question either the provision or location for a hall.
6. Claims that the revised location better serves the village requirements are absurd. New location is no nearer the village centre for pedestrian, is no more secure, possibly has greater impact on neighbouring properties, is

further away from proposed playing fields and economy in sub-structure not proven.

10.0 **PRINCIPAL ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

- A. Is there a need for a village hall? NEED
- B. Is it appropriate for a village hall building to be provided on a site outside the settlement limits and in open countryside in policy terms? POLICY
- C. Will the proposed development have an adverse visual and landscape impact? VISUAL IMPACT
- D. Is the access to the site acceptable and is adequate parking provision made? ACCESS/PARKING
- E. Are the arrangements for the disposal of foul and surface water drainage adequate? DRAINAGE
- F. Will the proposal have an unacceptable impact on the wildlife of the area? WILDLIFE
- G. Is the design of the proposed building acceptable? DESIGN
- H. Will the proposal have an adverse impact on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties? IMPACT ON NEARBY PROPERTIES
- I. Is the development sustainable? SUSTAINABILITY
- J. OTHER ISSUES

A. Need

A number of the letters of objection question the need for a hall for the village. There is at present no village hall in Langford Budville. The previous hall was demolished over 20 years ago. Since that time efforts have been made to find an alternative site and planning permission has been obtained for 2 sites – both just outside the village to the south of the road towards Holywell Lake. A few years ago, negotiations for the purchase of a site for a hall to the rear of the primary school fell through. Since that time, the village hall trustees have had informal discussions with my officers to seek a suitable site.

The accountability of the Village Hall Trustees is not a planning issue. Nor is the role of the Parish Council and the landowner in the proposal. Clearly, the fact that a planning application has been submitted by the Village Hall Trustees gives credence to the view that there is a need for a village Hall. The Taunton Deane Local Plan notes that although there is no village hall, the local community is actively pursuing provision of this facility. The Leisure Development Manager supports the application and notes that Langford Budville is one of a few villages of any size within Somerset currently without a village hall. In terms of size of the

building, the Trustees clearly see that the size proposed is what there is a demand for. Although it is likely that outside persons and organisations are likely to use the facilities, the main purpose is to provide a venue for village based activities.

The next application on the agenda is for a village hall at Langford Budville on an alternative site. Consideration of these applications is not a question of choice between the two sites. It is possible for both applications to be granted planning permission (or refused planning permission), if the Members are so inclined. If such a scenario were to arise, it would then be down to the respective applicants to decide how to proceed. Each application has therefore got to be considered on its merits.

B. Policy

The application site is located beyond the settlement limits of the village. In such areas, Policy S8 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan applies. This states that outside defined settlement limits, new building will not be permitted unless it maintains or enhances the environmental quality and landscape character of the area and meets certain criteria. One of these is that the proposal should support the vitality and viability of the rural economy in a way which cannot be sited within the defined limits of a settlement.

The provision of a village hall with its associated car parking requires a relatively large area of land. I do not consider that there is an appropriate area of land within the settlement limits which would be suitable for the proposed development. I therefore consider that it is appropriate that, in view of the aspirations of the local community, a site on the edge of the village beyond the settlement limits is appropriate. This is consistent with the previous planning permission for a village hall at Langford Budville when a similar policy framework prevailed.

The indications on the submitted drawings of 'proposed housing by others' and 'proposed future playing fields' is not part of the current planning application and should not influence Members' consideration.

C. Visual Impact

Policy S8 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan referred to above goes on to say that new building permitted in accordance with this policy should be designed and sited to minimise landscape impact, be compatible with a rural location and meet the following criterion where practicable:-

- (i) avoid breaking the skyline;
- (ii) make maximum use of existing screening;
- (iii) relate well to existing buildings; and
- (iv) use colours and materials which harmonise with the landscape.

The siting of the proposed building as originally submitted was on an elevated site to the west of the village. I consider that in that position the proposal would have an adverse impact on views from the village towards the Common and also have an adverse impact on views towards the village from the road leading past the

Common and from the public footpath which leads from that point towards the village. The views along that footpath are towards the Quantock Hills in the background and the village, running down from the village church on its high point, in the foreground. The church is Grade I listed and the area around it is a designated conservation area. I consider that a village hall building with its associated car parking and access road in that position would have a seriously detrimental impact on the setting of the listed church and the conservation area.

Although the amended siting will not block off views of the church and conservation areas, I consider that it will have a detrimental impact on the setting. The footpath crosses an open field at an elevated level and I consider that this higher ground is inappropriate for the proposed development, notwithstanding the fact that the building would be 1.75 m lower in the revised position.

Both the original and amended sitings do not relate very well to the existing pattern of development in the village. The proposed access road is 100 m in length to the start of the car park with the proposed hall a further 60 m distant. The building would be approximately 100 m from the nearest dwelling in the village.

I am of the view that if a site in the 'Ritherdons' area is considered to be appropriate, an alternative site on the lower ground close to the lane should be investigated, although I am aware that the applicants have raised concerns with regard to drainage in the area.

D. Access/Parking

The site is proposed to be accessed from Ritherdons/Butts Lane with the applicants insisting that they would seek to encourage users of the hall to use the road past the Martlett Inn rather than the lane past the primary school leading to the site. Parking provision for 33 cars is proposed.

The County Highway Authority recognise that the lane leading to the site is very narrow and that the junction with the Wiveliscombe road at Two Ashes is inadequate for an increase in traffic flow. They state that the access lane will need to be improved. The Authority accepts that the vehicular route from the village to the proposed site would be via the main road rather than the lane, but that it will need to be well signed.

In view of my recommendation of refusal of the application, I have not sought amended plans seeking the above improvements. However, I consider that the proposal would be acceptable from a highways point of view with the improvements requested by the County Highway Authority. If the Committee is mindful to approve the application, these improvements can be sought by a condition. However, I do have concerns with regard to the suitability of the footpath from the village to provide an adequate route for accessing the hall on foot. The surface of this would need to be improved. Under the current emphasis on encouraging sustainable development, Policy 48 states that the level of car parking provision associated with new development should be no more than is necessary to enable development to proceed. The site is on the edge of the village and it is within convenient walking distance for the majority of residents of the village. I consider that to provide more

car parking space than this would have the effect of encouraging more residents to drive to the hall rather than walking or cycling. With a 100 m long access road, it is unlikely that there will be a highway problem of cars parking on the highway. This issue was not raised by the County Highway Authority.

E. Drainage

Several of the letters of representation express concern at the possible increase in surface water run-off which may exacerbate an existing situation whereby properties in the village are flooded in times of excessive rainfall. The Council's Drainage Officer recognises that the surface water drainage systems in the area are of sensitive nature and that there have been instances of localised flooding. This is backed up by the response from the County Highway Authority. Consequently the Drainage Office indicates that a substantial drainage system, incorporating some form of on-site attenuation, will have to be provided.

As can be seen from the above, the Drainage Officer does not raise objection to the proposal, and I consider that, in the event of the Committee being minded to grant permission, his requirements can be achieved by way of a condition.

F. Impact on Wildlife

Several of the letters of objection refer to the proximity of the site to the Langford Heathfield SSSI and the potential impact on the wildlife of the area. The consultation response from the Somerset Environmental Records Centre indicate that there are no badgers or other legally protected species at the application site, but there are within 1 kilometre of the site. English Nature have not raised objection to the proposal, although they do recognise that there will be more loss of hedgerow where the access to the site is to be improved. My conclusion is that there will not be a detrimental impact on the wildlife of the area.

G. Design

A number of representations have included the view that the design of the proposed building does not reflect the local vernacular. Policy S2 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan states that development must be of a good design and that its scale, density, height, massing, layout, landscaping, colour materials and access arrangements will be assessed to ensure that the proposal will, where reasonably and feasible, meet certain criteria. One of these is that any development shall reinforce the local character and distinctiveness of the area, including the landscape setting of the site and any settlement, street scene and building involved.

The proposed building has been specifically designed to be simple and modest to meet the village's needs, activities and functions. The siting is very much a 'stand alone' one, where there are no buildings immediately adjacent to take a lead from in terms of design. The design proposal incorporates relatively low eaves lines with a greater expanse of roof area to wall area. The proposed materials are to be rendered walls with a slate type of roof material which I consider to be

appropriate to this rural style of village locations. I see no specific reason to object to the proposed design and materials for the building.

H. Impact on nearby properties.

The distance to the closest residential property is 100 m. With the amended plan setting the building down on slightly lower ground (by 1.75 m) this will alleviate any adverse affects from potential noise. The Environmental Health Officer does not raise any objection. Other residential properties in other directions are even further away and I do not consider that there will be any significantly adverse impact on the amenity of the occupiers to justify refusal of the application.

I. Sustainability

The site is adjacent to the village, potentially within appropriate walking distance for many of the potential users of the hall. It can be assumed that at present there will be an element of travelling out of the village, largely by car to access facilities that could be provided by a new hall.

There is unlikely to be an adverse impact on the wildlife of the area. The proposed designs and materials respect the local character and distinctiveness of the area. The proposal will improve public amenity and improve accessibility to community and recreational facilities for all sections of present and future generations.

J. Other Issues

The public right of way, which crosses the site, will not be affected by the proposed development. The proposed building (as indicated on the amended plan) is immediately to the west of it.

The application site occupies one side of the field. I do not consider that it will have a particularly adverse impact on the value or use of the remainder of the field for agricultural purposes.

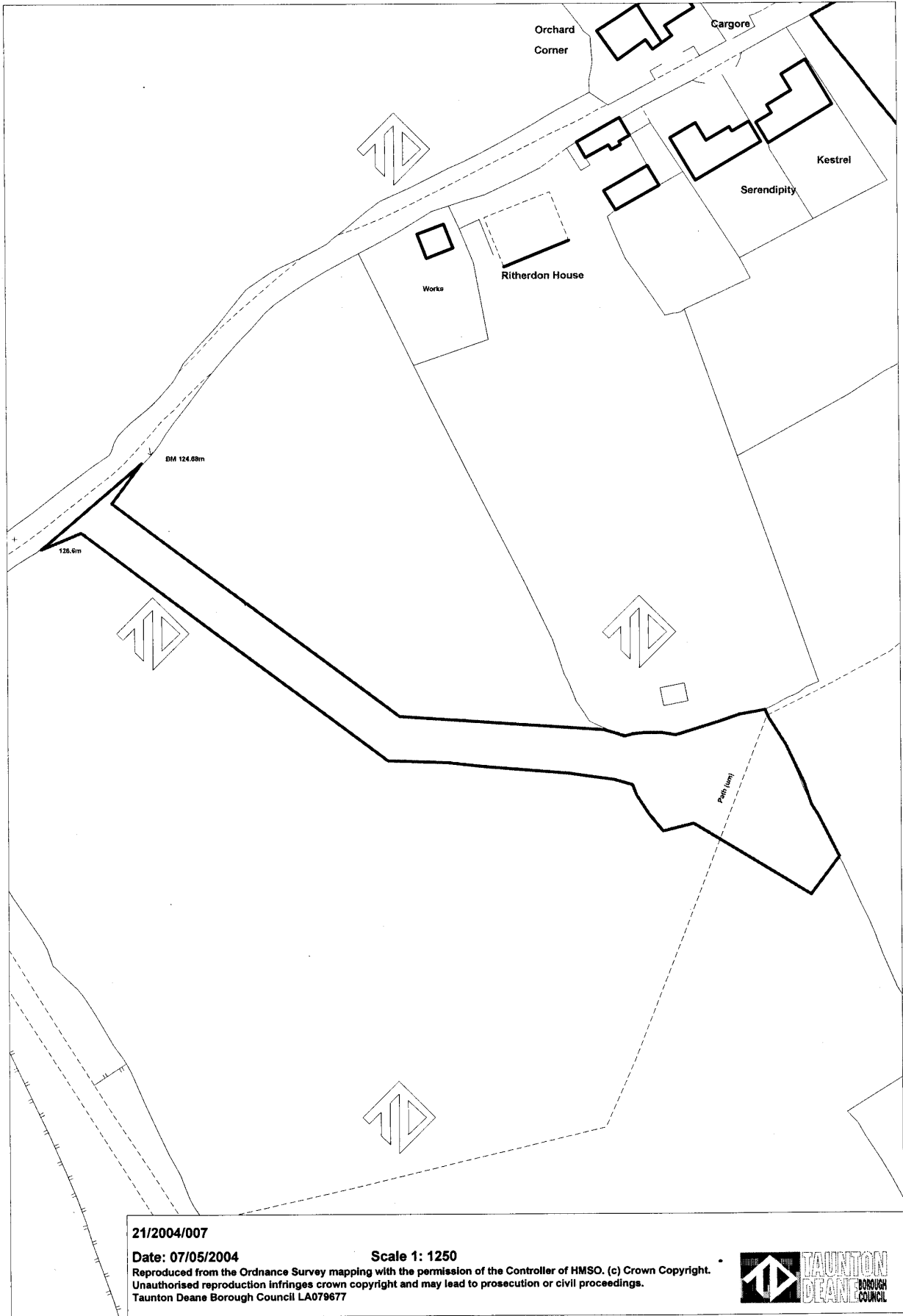
11.0 CONCLUSION

It is not disputed that there are aspirations within the village for a new village hall. Furthermore, in the absence of a suitable site within the settlement limits, I consider that it is appropriate for a site on the edge of the village beyond the limits to be sought.

Informal pre-application discussions have taken place with the Village Hall Trustees and their agent and the general area to the west of the village at Ritherdons has been accepted as being appropriate for the proposed hall. However, the proposed site, even in its amended position is in an elevated position where it will have an adverse impact on views towards the Quantock Hills AONB and the setting of the village church and conservation area. An alternative siting further down the slope closer to the road should be investigated. My recommendation is therefore one of refusal.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

CONTACT OFFICER: Mr J Hamer Tel. 356461



21/2004/007

Date: 07/05/2004

Scale 1: 1250

Reproduced from the Ordnance Survey mapping with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. (c) Crown Copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Taunton Deane Borough Council LA079677

