

DIVISIONAL MEMBER COMMENTS

Application Ref No:	49/24/0057
Address:	Greenway Farm, North Street, Wiveliscombe
Date of response:	2 January 2025
Divisional Member Name:	Cllr Dave Mansell

1. Support the granting of permission	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Please explain below the main grounds on which you support the proposal:		
2. Object to the granting of permission	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Please explain below the main grounds on which you object to the proposal:		

Material Considerations	Explanation of Grounds
1. Overlooking, loss of privacy or overbearing/over-shadowing nature of proposal	
2. Design & appearance, impact on public visual amenity	<p>Building houses at this location would reduce open space between Wiveliscombe and Langley Marsh and have an impact on the landscape and on views at and over the site.</p> <p>The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment concludes: "While adverse visual effects are predicted, taken together they will not lead to widespread or substantial degradation of the visual resource". It is also stated: "The greatest level of change would be at the site level, with direct effects on the site and the immediately surrounding area. Predicted indirect effects are not widespread across the study area, but limited to some areas of higher ground to the west of the site."</p> <p>Views over the site from Greenway Lane are shown further below.</p>
3. Layout & density of building	
4. Effect on listed buildings and/or conservation areas	
5. Loss of trees or ecological habitats	Biodiversity gain is proposed, but also a loss of established hedgerow and trees.
6. Inadequate parking and/or servicing areas	Access to the proposed development may lead to a loss of on-street parking spaces used by houses opposite. This needs to be avoided or addressed, as there is already a shortage of parking in North Street, Plain Pond and, in general, at other locations around Wiveliscombe. Displacing current parking is likely to cause problems from vehicles having to park elsewhere.
7. Access, highways safety or traffic generation	<p>Vehicle movements resulting from the development would add to traffic and congestion in the centre of Wiveliscombe, including at the town centre end of North Street and in The Square.</p> <p>If this development were to be approved, measures or conditions should mitigate the harm that would result by improving the environment at the top of North Street and in The Square.</p>

	<p>Following local consultation, a vision has been prepared for design improvements to the town centre – see www.wivey.co.uk. These include safe crossings across The Square and North Street between protected dropped kerbs, and a small indent into the paved area (on Co-op side) to allow a delivery bay and short-term shoppers parking, while also improving traffic flow through The Square.</p> <p>The pedestrian and cycle path should be a welcome feature of the proposed development, although the benefits are limited and the path is only suited to being accessed by homes on the southern half of the site.</p> <p>The Transport Statement over-states the bus service available in Wiveliscombe. The 25 route normally takes about 50 minutes to reach Taunton (not 40 as stated). There are now less buses into Taunton after timetable cuts in 2024 and the service remains at risk of further cuts. There are issues with over-crowding, sometimes insufficient capacity, and poor service reliability, all of which reduces its suitability for use by commuters and college students.</p> <p>The proposed Travel Plan does not provide evidence that the measures it contains are proven to be effective or will achieve a modal shift away from the car, especially given the current poor provision for public transport and active travel for Wiveliscombe. This reduces the sustainability of the location for new housing, with much more required to make a difference.</p>
8. Noise, smells or disturbance from the scheme	
9. Flood Risk	<p>Previously, there has been flooding in the area from heavy rainfall coming down Greenway Lane and from adjoining fields. Recently, there has been flooding at the lower end of Plain Pond that resulted from inadequate drainage, including for water taken by the highway drains in Allenslade Close. Both Highways and the Housing services at Somerset Council have not yet been able to find a solution using existing drainage systems.</p> <p>The Flood Risk Assessment says at 4.1: “It is proposed to discharge the proposed site drainage to the existing public surface water sewer (if infiltration isn’t feasible) and foul water sewer in Allenslade Close.” This would add to the risk of problems already experienced in Plain Pond gardens.</p> <p>Further work is needed to assess these proposals to avoid adding to the existing flooding problems and risk. Surface water drains may need improvement, especially to address a current problem at the point where the drain currently should flow into the field alongside and behind Allenslade Close, which has long been blocked.</p> <p>There appear to be no measures for water reuse, such as by rainwater harvesting, to reduce water needing to be stored and discharged into existing sewers. This should be rectified.</p>
10. Other reason – please explain	<p>SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY</p> <p>This site is outside the settlement limit boundary for Wiveliscombe and, therefore, to be treated as being within open countryside (Policy SP1), where new development is to be strictly controlled.</p> <p>In my view, the tests required by Policy CP8 for development in the open countryside outside of settlement boundaries have</p>

	<p>not been met, particularly with regard to the landscape, maintaining open breaks between settlements and protecting natural assets.</p> <p>ENERGY</p> <p>The following proposed energy aspects are welcomed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing the thermal performance of the buildings by exceeding current regulations with improved energy efficiency from lower U-values (better insulation) for the fabric (walls, roof, floor, windows, doors). • Installing 29kWp of solar PV generation, which is likely to be achieved by an average of about 4 panels per dwelling. • Showersave waste-water heat recovery. <p>It should be made clear that these measures will be installed and not just considered at the design stage, but then dropped. However, to meet Policy DM5 and the Council's declarations of a climate and ecological emergency, together with published aspirations for zero carbon design (Climate Positive Planning Interim Guidance), even higher standards of insulation and air tightness should be achieved, as detailed in the Council's Net Zero Carbon Toolkit (for Somerset West and Taunton).</p> <p>It is disappointing to see that gas boilers are currently proposed for heating. Heat pumps are much more efficient and can be cleanly powered, unlike gas boilers with their polluting emissions that cause climate change. There should be a clear commitment to installing air or ground source heat pumps for heating new housing.</p>
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3. Further Comments

- My view at present is that the adverse impacts of the proposed development, as outlined above, outweigh the benefits.
- Impacts would be reduced and benefits increased by supporting measures that reduce congestion and improve the environment at the top end of North Street and in The Square, particularly by contributing to improvements contained in the town centre vision.
- Further enhancing the thermal performance of the buildings and especially by using heat pumps for heating would be other important steps towards a development that could achieve a positive balance of benefits. Surface water drainage and flood risk also needs to be better addressed.
- Wiveliscombe already benefits from open space and play areas, including at the Recreation Ground, Willow Mead (bottom of Northgate) and Sandys Moor. Infrastructure contributions could achieve greater (and more needed) benefit by improving the town centre and addressing congestion and parking problems, which, otherwise, would be increased by another 25 homes off North Street. Parking must also be retained for Plain Pond residents.
- It should be noted that Wiveliscombe has already exceeded its expected contribution to housing supply through an additional 94 homes built at Sandys Moor/Elworthy Place, 52 homes at Willow Mead and 71 homes recently approved at Burges Lane. It is not sustainable to add further new housing in Wiveliscombe without sufficient infrastructure investment, including to address congestion and parking problems in North Street and the town centre.

If you are a member of the Planning Committee you agree to abide by the following statement:

I confirm that the preliminary comments above are made on the basis of the information available to me at this time, and that I will either decide the matter afresh should the application be referred to the Planning Committee, taking into account at that time all further information available to me, or I will not participate in any decision on the matter if it comes before the Planning Committee, other than to make representations on the application before withdrawing from the meeting.

Views from Greenway Lane over the site, which show houses in Plain Pond that front on to North Street.

