

Thank you for your consultation request regarding:

Planning Application Reference 23/01390/FUL: Parcel 0956, Harptree Hill, West Harptree.

The Parish Council objects to this application.

West Harptree Parish Council strongly objects on the grounds that the proposed development breaches a number of planning policies and fails to meet the requirements of NPPF paragraph 80 (e). If planning consent were to be granted for this development, we suggest that it would set a dangerous precedent for more “*isolated homes in the countryside*” elsewhere in the Chew Valley and / or the AONB. Details of relevant planning policy considerations are set out below:

Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan

Policy HDE1 Rural Landscape Character

Visual charts HDE1-V1 and V2 show characteristics that reinforce countryside character within the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan area.

Using these charts as reference, it is evident that the proposed development fails to reflect conserve or enhance the local character.

Policy HDE2 Settlement Build Character

Visual charts HDE2-V1 and 2 show characteristics that reinforce settlement character within the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan area.

Using these charts as reference, it is evident that the proposed development fails to reflect conserve or enhance the local character.

Policy HDE3 Important Views

Chart HDE3-V2 (Sensitivity to Views) evidences that the site is in “*Slopes easily seen from the wider landscape. These form the skyline and backdrop to views.*” Furthermore, Chart HDE3-V1f (Important Long Views) evidences that the site is immediately adjacent to view location B6.

The site is in an area flagged in the Chew Valley Neighbourhood Plan as both **sensitive** and **visually prominent** and thus fails to meet the requirement.

Policy HDE13 Green Corridors & Biodiversity

The site lies within a significant green corridor on the South side of the valley and change of use from agriculture to domestic garden will have an adverse impact on the integrity of the green corridor.

Policy HDE15 Dark Skies Policy

Given the commanding position of the site overlooking the Chew Valley and the very large glazed areas, the light emanating from the proposed development at night will be both visible and obtrusive over a very wide area and will adversely impact wildlife.

B&NES Planning Policies

Policy NE2: Conserving and Enhancing the Landscape and Landscape Character

The development fails to conserve or enhance local landscape character, landscape features and local distinctiveness and fails to conserve or enhances important views thus fails to meet the requirements

Policy NE1: Development and Green Infrastructure

The development adversely affects the integrity and value of a designated strategic GI corridor thus fails to meet the requirements.

Policy GB1: Visual amenities of the Green Belt

The development is both within and conspicuous from the Green Belt and prejudices the visual amenities of the Green Belt by reason of its siting, design and materials used for its construction.

Policy CP7: Green Infrastructure

The integrity, multi-functionality, quality and connectivity of the strategic Green Infrastructure (GI) network in Diagram 20 will be adversely impacted.

. Policy CP8: Green Belt

The openness of the Green Belt will be adversely impacted, contrary to national planning policy.

. Policy ST7: Transport Requirements for Managing Development

Highway safety would be prejudiced. The retention of the existing hedge between the site and Harptree Hill is stated to be an essential part of the scheme, however this creates a major accident risk.

- There are no clear sight lines at the entrance to the site with the inevitable risk of accidents to cars and the many cyclists that use the hill.
- It will be dangerous for B&NES waste and recycling vehicles to stop on a busy and narrow hill without the ability to pull off the road.
- Construction traffic will similarly be unable to pull off the road, creating risk of accident and injury during building works.

National Planning Policy Framework**. Paragraphs 176 and 177**

These paragraphs stress that great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and that development in these nationally designated areas will be refused except in exceptional circumstances and clearly no such circumstances apply in this case.

. Paragraph 80

This paragraph states that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless one or more of five circumstances apply. Limbs a), b), c) and d) clearly do not apply in this case, leaving only limb e):

e) *the design is of exceptional quality, in that it:*

- *is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*
- *would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

We do not consider that the Para 80 (e) tests have been met and evidence this by reference to many problematic claims made in the Design and Access Statement:

| Applicant's claims | Commentary |
|---|---|
| <i>The Pre Application Advice Report for this site has identified that "Any dwelling to the proposed site will need to be of truly outstanding design, reflecting the highest standards in architecture".</i> | The applicant has failed to provide any objective evidence of quality of design such as a review by an independent design panel. The architectural practice can show no design awards or other external recognition of design quality. |
| <i>The ... dwelling is arranged as a series of buildings on the site to replicate a typical group of farmhouse buildings that are common in the local area.</i> | There is nothing in the massing of the scheme that is typical or in any way reminiscent of local farmhouse buildings. |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>The overall scale and massing of the proposed scheme has been kept low with the first floor rooms effectively located in the roof space to give the appearance of a bungalow / typical farm building.</i></p> | <p>Contrary to the applicant's statement, the ridge heights of the main buildings are substantial and nothing has been done to reduce or mitigate the visual impact.</p> |
| <p><i>The selected materials have all been carefully considered to ensure that the proposed dwelling is very much in keeping with the local context</i></p> | <p>The materials are an unfortunate hodgepodge and the juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary materials is jarring. There are no local references for Corten cladding, neither is it "reminiscent of agricultural buildings" nor does it "reflect the red colour of local stonework".</p> |
| <p><i>The use of straw bale walls adds innovation and a highly sustainable method of building that utilises local materials and labour to create a unique and highly thermal efficient property.</i></p> | <p>The plans indicate a wall thickness of some 450mm however straw bale walls would need to be some 800mm thick. We cannot find a single project where straw bale construction has been combined with random rubble masonry or corten steel cladding and do not believe either to be sound. All accredited design guides specify either flexible external render or other flexible vapour-permeable finishes such as timber rainscreen. This evidences that the proposed design would have to be very substantially changed prior to construction. It would be dangerous to grant consent to such an unbuildable development.</p> |
| <p><i>We believe that this proposed dwelling significantly enhances its immediate context and setting with a design that is sensitive to the characteristics of the local area but equally innovative and sustainable to create a truly remarkable piece of architecture.</i></p> | <p>This claim is the subjective opinion of the applicant's architect with no objective supporting evidence. The practice is small with no evidence of any recognition within the architectural profession for "exceptional quality of design."</p> |
| <p><i>The site's visibility above the A368 is greatly diminished by a strong tree line on the north-west boundary and the terminated view from the junction below. Where views are obtained these would be seen above the hedgerow lined lanes, a foreground of hedge-rowed fields, and a backdrop of the hill rising up behind. The site is very hard to clearly view from a public road or footpath either in the short, middle or long distance vistas.</i></p> | <p>We cannot agree with the three statements. The tree line is short and insubstantial. The site is visually very prominent given its elevation above the valley beneath. The site is immediately adjacent to and highly visible from Harptree Hill, Cowleaze Lane and the Limestone Link long distance footpath.</p> |
| <p><i>The building has been designed as a low carbon, energy efficient dwelling. Glulam Timber Frame (reduces the use of steel and evidences sustainability)</i></p> | <p>The building is inherently inefficient, with a very high ratio of external surface areas to the enclosed internal volume. At best, the design masks inherent energy inefficiency with applied measures and mechanical equipment. Corten steel is used extensively and is certainly not a low carbon material.</p> |

Kind regards,

West Harptree Parish Council

On 18/04/2023 12:12, development_management@bathnes.gov.uk wrote:

Please find attached a consultation request for the above application.

** Please help speed up the upload of your comments to our website
** DO NOT SIGN or include any personal contact details that require redacting
** PDF ATTACHMENTS only, or simply reply to this email

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Planning Services
Bath & North East Somerset Council

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