

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the Planning Committee held in the Council Chamber, County Hall,  
Usk on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2014 at 2.00 p.m.**

**PRESENT:** County Councillor R. Edwards (Chairman)

County Councillors: D. Blakebrough, D.L.S. Dovey, D.L. Edwards, D.J. Evans, R.G. Harris, R.J. Higginson, S.G.M. Howarth, P. Murphy, M. Powell, B. Strong, F. Taylor, P. Watts, A.E. Webb and A.M. Wintle.

County Councillors G.L. Down, R.J.W. Greenland and V.E. Smith attended the meeting by invitation of the Chairman.

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr. G. Ashworth	-	Head of Planning, Enterprise
Mr. P. Thomas	-	Development Control Manager
Mrs. P. Clarke	-	Planning Control Manager
Mr. M. Davies	-	Development Plans Manager
Ms. S. Wiggam	-	Senior Strategy & Policy Officer
Mr. R. Tranter	-	Head of Legal Services
Mr. R. Williams	-	Democratic Services Officer

County Councillor F. Taylor arrived during consideration of Application DC/2014/01002.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.- Apologies for absence were received from County Councillor P.R. Clarke.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

2.- Declarations of interest are identified under the relevant minute.

**MINUTES**

3.- The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

**MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN: AFFORDABLE HOUSING  
SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

4.- We received a report by the Development Plans Manager regarding the draft Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Affordable Housing to support the policies of the Monmouthshire Local Development Plan (LDP), with a view to issuing for consultation purposes and to recommend to Cabinet and Council accordingly.

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We resolved to endorse the draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance with a view to issuing for consultation purposes and to recommend to Cabinet and Council accordingly.

**REVIEW OF PRE-APPLICATION PLANNING ADVICE SERVICE**

5.- We received a report by the Head of Planning, presented by the Planning Control Manager, in which Members received an update on the Planning Department's formal Pre-Application Planning Advice Service.

It was noted that based on customer feedback, it had become apparent that there was a need to be able to provide an additional officer charge at Levels 1, 2 and 3 without having to jump to the next level, which appeared to be deterring customers from obtaining the correct expert advice. Providing an additional officer charge of £55 for Level 1, £68 for Level 2 and £95 for Level 3 would ensure that the customer would obtain the correct level of advice without having to incur excessive charges.

Given the overall increase in workload through a volume increase in applications, changes to procedures brought in by the Welsh Government and adoption of the Local Development Plan, it was difficult to determine the specific impact of the formal pre-application advice service upon the service as a whole, as a certain amount of work was being undertaken prior to April 2014 (although it was not being recorded).

In response to questions raised by Members, the Planning Control Manager stated that a number of pre-application advice queries were being received every week, which was pleasing. Currently, officers were working at capacity with regard to providing this service.

On behalf of the Planning Committee, the Chairman thanked officers for the valuable service that was being provided to the members of the public.

We resolved to receive the report noted its content. It was not considered necessary to revisit the charging schedule at this time. However, the service would continue to be monitored and reviewed after 12 months had elapsed. In addition, the Welsh Government was consulting on pre-application charges in the Planning Bill. Therefore, the results of the consultation might impact on the Council's procedures and charges.

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

6. - Planning applications considered at the meeting were dealt with in line with the agenda index.

We received the report presented by the Head of Planning, the Development Control Manager and the Planning Control Manager and resolved that the following applications be approved subject to the conditions, as outlined in the report.

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**Application DC/2014/00622\* - Proposed Conversion of Redundant Agricultural Building into a Dwelling. Carrow Hill Farm, Carrow Hill, St. Brides Netherwent, Caldicot NP26 3AU**

**Application DC/2014/01166\* - Proposed Installation of New Foul Drainage Treatment Plant Together With Grease Trap Within Existing Foul Drainage System. Glen-Yr Afon House Hotel, Pontypool Road, Usk**

**Notes**

† Denotes that objections were made to these applications.

\* Denotes that late correspondence was received in respect of these applications.

**Application DC/2014/01166\***

Denotes that County Councillor B. Strong declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this application, as his son is the Managing Director of the Glen-Yr-Avon House Hotel.

The following applications were considered where debate ensued.

- (a) **Application DC/2014/00876† - Demolition of Existing Bungalow and Construction of a New Two Storey Dwelling, Garage and Associated Works. Lindaward, Wainfield Lane, Gwehelog, Usk**

We considered the report of the application which was recommended for approval subject to the nine conditions, as outlined in the report.

In noting the detail of the application, the Development Control Manager informed the Committee that consideration of the application had been deferred at the Planning Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014 to allow the applicants to re-consider the design and scale of the building.

The local Member for Llanbadoc, attending the meeting by invitation of the Chairman, expressed her support for the application, as well as outlining the support by Gwehelog Community Council in respect of the application.

Having considered the application and the views expressed by the local Member, it was proposed by County Councillor R.J. Higginson and seconded by County Councillor P. Murphy that application DC/2014/00876 be approved subject to the nine conditions, as outlined in the report.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded.

For approval	-	14
Against approval	-	0
Abstentions	-	0

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The proposition was carried.

We resolved that application DC/2014/00876 be approved subject to the nine conditions, as outlined in the report.

(b) **Application DC/2014/00939†\* - Provision of Photovoltaic Solar Park and Ancillary Infrastructure. Rhewl Farm, Shirenewton, NP16 6AG**

We considered the report of the application which was presented for refusal for one reason.

In noting the detail of the application, Members were informed that the application had been presented to Planning Committee on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014 with a recommendation for approval. However, The Planning Committee had not agreed with this recommendation and had resolved to defer the application for refusal. The application was re-presented to the Planning Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 with a recommendation for refusal. However, following revised comments from the Wye Valley AONB Unit in respect of the amended plan (indicating a reduced area of development) from the applicants, the Planning Committee had been minded to defer consideration of the application to the next meeting for the following reasons:

- To receive further details of the reasons why the Wye Valley AONB Unit had changed its advice.
- To receive details of potential community benefits from the proposal.
- To explore the possibility of securing a financial bond to ensure that there was finance available to decommission the site.
- To re-consult with the local Member and the local community councils on the amended scheme.

The local Member for Shirenewton, attending the meeting by invitation of the Chairman, outlined the following points:

- Concern was expressed regarding the Wye Valley AONB's change of opinion regarding the application.
- Having walked the perimeter of the Great St. Pierre Woods and taken photographs of the proposed location of the solar panels, the local Member considered that approval of the application would create a detrimental effect on this area.
- The applicants had not engaged with the local community councils or the local Member regarding community benefits.
- Having undertaken some research regarding local funding from solar developments, details were provided in late correspondence to the

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Planning Committee. It was noted that on average, the community received about £1,000 per MW of electricity generated. The applicants were offering a fraction of this amount. The local Member would be willing to engage with the applicant with regard to this matter.

- The proposal to plant trees to screen the countryside from the solar panels will not be effective. The solar panels will still be visible.
- The local Member asked the Planning Committee to reject the application for the reason identified in the report. However, if the Planning Committee approved the application, the local Member asked the Committee to include an additional condition that the applicants engage with the local community councils and the local Member to agree upon a community benefit fee.

Having considered the report of the application and the views expressed, some Members expressed their support for the application with an additional condition that the applicants engage with the local community councils and the local Member to agree upon a community benefit fee. The Head of Planning informed the Committee that community benefit did not fall within the remit of the Planning process and that officers were unable to negotiate on a sum of money in respect of community benefit outside of the planning process. Therefore, a condition could not be added to the application. However, an informative could be added requesting that the applicants consider maximising the community benefit amount.

Other Members expressed concern that the screening at this location on the Wye Valley AONB would be inadequate and that approval of the application would create a detrimental impact on the surrounding area.

In response to a Member's question regarding the Planning Bill and its effect on wind turbines and solar farm developments, the Head of Planning stated that the bill had been publicised but was unaware of any changes that might affect planning authorities' decisions regarding solar farms and renewables.

In summing up, the local Member asked the Planning Committee to consider refusing the application, as approval would create an adverse visual intrusion, and result in changes to the landscape. Protection of the landscape was key. Approval of the application would lead to the erection of a two metre high fence with solar panels located behind it.

It was therefore proposed by County Councillor R.G. Harris and seconded by County Councillor R.J. Higginson that application DC/2014/00939 be approved with appropriate conditions.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

For approval	-	6
Against approval	-	7

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Abstentions - 1

The proposition was not carried.

We resolved that consideration of application DC/2014/00939 be refused for the reason, as outlined in the report.

(c) **Application DC/2014/01002\* - Substantial Demolition of Existing Dwelling and Erection of Replacement Dwelling. Bay Tree Cottage, Llansoy**

We considered the report of the application which was presented for refusal for the two reasons, as outlined in the report.

The local Member for Devauden, attending the meeting by invitation of the Chairman, outlined the following points:

- The dwelling was linked to the main village of Llansoy and was therefore not located in the open countryside.
- Approval of the application would provide the installation of modern conveniences in the replacement dwelling whilst maintaining the traditional character of the cottage externally.
- No adverse comments relating to the application had been received. However, a number of letters of support for the application had been submitted.

Having considered the report of the application and the views expressed by the local Member, concern was expressed regarding the design of the building and that the proposed replacement dwelling was contrary to Policy H5, with the replacement dwelling being considerably larger than the original dwelling.

It was therefore proposed by County Councillor D.L. Edwards and seconded by County Councillor D.J. Evans that application DC/2014/01002 be refused for the two reasons, as outlined in the report.

Upon being put to the vote, the following votes were recorded:

For refusal	-	12
Against refusal	-	0
Abstentions	-	3

The proposition was carried.

We resolved that application DC/2014/01002 be refused for the two reasons, as outlined in the report.

**The meeting ended at 3.28p.m.**