

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024 at 7pm at Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood

PRESENT: Cllr Rae Frederick (Chairman)  
Cllr Andrew Briers  
Cllr Luke Dadford  
Cllr Gareth DeBoos  
Cllr Mary DeBoos  
Cllr Janet Georgiou  
Cllr John Haywood  
Cllr Peter Kelleher  
Cllr James Swyer  
Cllr Glenys Turner  
Cllr Becci Windsor

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk  
Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk  
District Cllr Jeremy Heron  
District Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine

ABSENT: Cllr Philip Day  
Cllr Ingrid De Bruyn  
Cllr Michael Thierry

### **C/7264 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present.

### **C/7265 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Town Clerk reported that apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Day, De Bruyn and Thierry, and District Councillor Linford.

### **C/7266 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

### **C/7267 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024, having been circulated, be approved and signed as a correct record.

### **C/7268 RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024 be received.

**C/7269  
PLANNING, TOWN & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr Turner presented the minutes of the Planning Town & Environment Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024 be received.

**C/7270  
POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Cllr M DeBoos presented the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

F/6371 - The Town Clerk commented on the draft Council budget for 2025/26 and asked that Members give further consideration to some of the suggested recommendations prior to the January meeting of the Policy & Finance Committee when the final budget would be agreed as a recommendation to Full Council. The Finance Manager had carefully considered the bundle of cuts suggested to the annual transfers to reserves, which had been quickly rejected. The effect of these transfers was to load the precept putting money aside for the future. The transfer to the events reserve has the same effect, and as this reserve already has sufficient funds to meet the cost of any cancelled events or contingencies, and the events have resulted in a surplus over the last few years, he questioned the need for this transfer. Finally, he felt it would be a shame to completely remove the grants budget and suggested Members may wish to consider refocusing the scheme and awarding smaller sums to local community groups to benefit residents.

**RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024 be received.

**C/7271  
COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

Cllr Turner expressed an interest in joining the Events Committee.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllr Turner be appointed to the Events Committee.

**ACTION N Vodden**

**C/7272  
PLANNING APPLICATION FOR LAND OFF MOORTOWN LANE (21/11723)**

Members considered a report recommending that the Secretary of State be requested to call in the decision made by New Forest District Council to approve planning application 21/11723 for the proposed development of land off Moortown Lane (*Annex A*).

It was noted that, for clarity, the draft letter should be amended to make it clear that the additional phosphate mitigation required would be approximately 10% based on the number of open market dwellings only.

**RESOLVED:** 1) That a request be submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing,

- Communities and Local Government to call in the decision made by New Forest District Council to approve planning application 21/11723.
- 2) That the draft letter, with the clarification outlined above, be submitted to both the Secretary of State and Natural England.

<b>ACTION J Hurd</b>
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### **C/7273**

#### **COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED**

The Town Mayor asked Members to start thinking about nominations for the 2025 Community Awards, which would be considered at the Council meeting in January.

She reported on her attendance at the following:

- Winter Wonderland Christmas Lights Switch On – she expressed huge thanks to everyone involved, saying it was great to see the whole town come together;
- The Danny Cracknell Homeless at Christmas appeal at Ringwood School
- Ringwood & Fordingbridge Business Community Christmas Drinks – Fordingbridge keen to become more involved
- Veterans Christmas Party
- Forest Forge Theatre Company performance of A Christmas Carol at Carvers Clubhouse
- Repair Café, which was going from strength to strength

She also reported that Community First is looking to hold a volunteers' fair in Greyfriars in March 2025 and asked Members to let her know of any community groups that could benefit from attendance.

### **C/7274**

#### **REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

County and District Councillor Thierry had given apologies but submitted an update noting that HCC had passed over responsibility to SGN for the works at the junction of Gorley Road with Southampton Road, which should soon be concluded, and that NFNPA Planning Committee had approved the addition of four Ringwood properties to the Local List of Heritage Assets, with 76 properties still to be considered.

District Cllr Haywood reported that he had attended a political briefing in Westminster regarding the Devolution White Paper noting that government had identified Hampshire and Isle of Wight as an area it would like to see reorganised from two tier to unitary authorities and is asking the authorities to come forward with plans for a combined authority. He had attended a briefing on the new arrangements for refuse collection, which would be launching in Ringwood in August 2025. He had also taken part in a corporate challenge exercise, for which the results would be published in the New Year.

District Cllr Rippon-Swaine reported that he and Cllr Heron had both given grants to support the Rotary Christmas Eve event.

### **C/7275**

#### **REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Swyer had enjoyed being part of the Winter Wonderland event team, and said the Forest Forge production of A Christmas Carol was superb.

Cllr Windsor had attended the opening of a new allergy clinic in Ringwood, and it was noted they would be giving a talk to the Under 1s group at Carvers Clubhouse. Following the theft of

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food from the Christchurch Food Bank, she reported that Ringwood & District Round Table had sent funds to support replacement.

Cllr M DeBoos wished to place on record thanks to Ringwood & District Round Table for all their help at the Winter Wonderland event and for their Santa's Sleigh initiative

**C/7276**  
**FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

The following meeting dates were noted:

Recreation, Leisure & Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
Planning, Town & Environment	10.00am	Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2024
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 29 <sup>th</sup> January 2024

**C/7277**  
**EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED:** That, in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public were excluded because publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted (*Confidential minutes - Annex B*).

**C/7278**  
**LEGAL MATTERS**

The Town Clerk reported on ongoing legal matters relating to the Football Club project and contractual issues with the Christmas lights.

**RESOLVED:** That the Town Clerk's verbal report be received.

**C/7279**  
**PERSONNEL MATTERS**

The Town Clerk reported he had written to the Town Mayor indicating his intention to retire in 2025, exact date to be determined.

He commented on prior discussion at Staffing Committee about development and progression of existing staff. He had been keen to honour that principle by facilitating internal recruitment to the role of Town Clerk if possible, and Members now had an opportunity to consider an internal candidate. He therefore recommended the appointment of Members to a recruitment panel to oversee the process.

**RESOLVED:** That Cllrs M DeBoos, Frederick and Haywood be appointed to a recruitment panel to manage the process of recruiting a new Town Clerk, with Cllr G DeBoos acting as a reserve.

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 7.55pm.

APPROVED  
29<sup>th</sup> January 2024

TOWN MAYOR

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Chairman's initials

## TOWN COUNCIL

18 December 2024

### Planning Application for land off Moortown Lane (21/11723)

#### 1. Introduction and reason for report

- 1.1 Planning application 21/11723 for development of land off Moortown Lane (Strategic Site 13) was approved by the New Forest District Council (NFDC) Planning Committee on 13 November 2024, with the Service Manager being given delegated authority to grant permission subject to completion of a Section 106 agreement.
- 1.2 Considering the Town Council's objection to the application and its non-compliance with six policies in the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (RNP), some Members of the Council and the RNP team have considered potential next steps.

#### 2. Background information and options

- 2.1 To ensure that any action is based on informed views, discussions on any potential route of appeal have been held with two planning consultants.
- 2.2 In summary, the views of both consultants are as follows:
  - A judicial review would be costly, and it is suggested not appropriate.
  - A request to the Secretary of State to call-in should be considered:
    - This would have most weight if submitted by the Town Council.
    - It would not have a cost implication other than officer's time.
    - Given that this is an allocated site and the government requires more housing, there is the potential for the request to be refused.
    - However, the potential increased occupancy resulting from the ability to use a first-floor study room as a bedroom would mean there is insufficient phosphate mitigation included in the application. This issue needs to be investigated since:
      - The precedent set will impact all the other up to 74 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in England that require nutrient neutrality.<sup>1</sup>
      - When reviewing a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)<sup>2</sup> the first important legal principle that LPAs need to be aware of is that case law tells decision-makers that they need to apply a precautionary approach at each stage of the habitats assessment process.<sup>3</sup> As such, the HRA for this application should have included modelling of the potentially increased occupancy, and it does not.
      - Phosphate mitigation is required to protect the Avon Valley which is an internationally important site and as such protected under the Habitats Regulations 2017. Competent authorities, such as local planning authorities must assess the environmental impact of planning applications and local plans which may affect these sites. LPAs can only approve development if they are certain that it will not have an adverse effect on the site.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-sets-out-plan-to-reduce-water-pollution>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/habitats-regulations-assessments-protecting-a-european-site>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/topics/environment/nutrient-neutrality-and-planning-system/faqs>

- Not making adequate provision for phosphate mitigation is a breach of these international regulations.
- A parallel letter to Natural England directly is advised.

2.3 As a consequence of this advice, a letter to the Secretary of State has been drafted (Appendix A). This outlines in further detail the reason for requesting a call-in, if agreed.

2.4 To give some context to the scale of the issue, in the Phase 1 detailed plans for 150 dwellings, 26 of the 75 open market dwellings have upstairs study rooms and therefore have potential for the occupancy rates to change if those rooms were to be used as bedrooms. The resulting additional phosphate mitigation required would be approximately 10%.

### 3. Issues for decision and any recommendations

**3.1 Members are respectfully invited to consider supporting a request to the Secretary of State to call in the decision made by New Forest District Council to approve planning application 21/11723.**

**3.2 If supported, Members are asked to consider approving the draft letter in Appendix A, and a parallel letter to Natural England.**

For further information, contact:

Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk  
Direct Dial: 01425 484721  
Email: [jo.hurd@ringwood.gov.uk](mailto:jo.hurd@ringwood.gov.uk)

## Appendix A – draft letter to Secretary of State

We, Ringwood Town Council (RTC) request that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government calls in the decision made by New Forest District Council (NFDC) to approve planning application number 21/11723, Hybrid planning application comprising a total of 443 dwellings. SS13 - LAND OFF MOORTOWN LANE, RINGWOOD on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

This application breaches at least 11 Local Development Plan Policies including 6 policies in the recently made Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (RNP).

In reviewing the application RTC raised significant concerns about the inclusion of first-floor study rooms in the open market housing. It was argued by the applicant and NFDC officers that, due to Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS), these are not bedrooms and hence, for example, a house design with 2 bedrooms and a first-floor study room should be classified as a 2-bedroom dwelling and occupancy calculated accordingly.

During discussion of the application by the NFDC Planning Committee, officers were asked if there was a way of conditioning that the studies were not used as bedrooms, and they said that there was not. However, our understanding is that the designs could be altered to exclude an opening window and then the studies could not lawfully be used as bedrooms.

Not only does this have the potential to reduce the number of truly smaller dwellings on the site (in breach of RNP Policy R5 and NFDC Local Plan Policy HOU1), it also means that the occupancy stated is artificially low and hence the application does not include sufficient phosphate mitigation to protect the internationally important site of the Avon Valley.

Our calculation suggests that the Phase 1 detailed application for 150 dwellings requires approximately 10% more phosphate mitigation, and we anticipate that Phase 2 will have a similar issue.

This, we believe, needs to be investigated since:

- The precedent set will impact all the other up to 74 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in England that require nutrient neutrality.
- When reviewing a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) the first important legal principle that LPAs need to be aware of is that case law tells decision-makers that they need to apply a precautionary approach at each stage of the habitats assessment process. As such, we believe that the HRA for this application should have included modelling of the potential increased occupancy, and it does not.
- Not making adequate provision for phosphate mitigation is a breach of the international Habitats Regulations. If not investigated, we understand that the government and Natural England would be held responsible for any breach that arises.