

SOUTH STOKE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Public Meeting – Core Strategy Amendments Consultation held at 7:00 p.m. on 25th November 2013 in the Village Hall

Present: Mr. M. Devenish (Chairman), the six other members of the Parish Council, the Parish Clerk, and 55 members of the Public, 10 of whom were non-resident in the Parish.

Also present:-

B&NES Ward Councillor Neil Butters – Bathavon South

The Chairman opened the meeting welcoming everyone, and handed to the Clerk who presented a brief summary of the proposed Green Belt Boundary amendments to the Core Strategy.

The Vice Chairman, Robert Hellard then discussed the implications of these changes for the parish of South Stoke and other neighbouring areas. The key points being that:-

Building in the Green Belt and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty contravenes the latest National Planning Policy Framework.

UNESCO requires a World Heritage Site buffer zone and Bath & North East Somerset Council have failed to provide one.

The heritage assets of the Wansdyke and the South Stoke conservation area need protection from development so the whole plateau needs to remain in the Green Belt.

The area enclosed by the proposed new Green Belt Boundaries is sufficient for between 650 and 700 houses at “Sulis Meadows” density.

Any access from the East would guarantee the urbanisation of the whole plateau over time. Any improvements to the Cross Keys junction should be to increase current safety, not to facilitate urban encroachment across the plateau

The shaded area around Manor Farm buildings seems to imply development for “Employment purposes”. Any further changes or intensification in this prominent position on the edge of the Plateau would be seriously detrimental to the Green Belt, AONB, World Heritage Site and the Millennium Viewpoint.

The area is recognised as a foraging area for rare species of bat and a long established breeding ground for skylarks. Dark skies are also a fundamental feature of this precious landscape. Mitigation of these issues is not possible.

The meeting was then opened for questions and a general discussion and many points relating to the possible development and the above points were highlighted.

The method and guidance on how to respond to the B&NES consultation process was then provided, together with a summary paper.

A discussion of the need to progress the Conservation area Appraisal to a fully adopted planning document was then given, as an aide to furthering the arguments, particularly at the Examination in Public. Also highlighted was the potential need to seek professional advice in order to challenge elements of the whole process of the Core Strategy. Both matters requiring funding, the availability of funds from the Parish Council and other sources was explained, with a request for pledges of financial support from those assembled, should the need arise.

Finally, Robert Hellard put the specific motion to the meeting in order to conclude the meeting with a clear statement of the views of those present:-

The South Stoke / Odd Down plateau is a unique resource for the citizens of Bath, South Stoke and the surrounding areas. It would be inappropriate to allow an ‘Urban Extension’ on this land.

The motion was passed unanimously by all those present, some 41 South Stoke residents and 8 from outside the Parish boundaries.

The meeting closed at 9:00 p.m.