

Version 4 – As of 1 December 2024

PC Objection to Cotswold Homes Ltd (CH) and Redrow Ltd (RR) Planning Application (2024/1865/FUL) to build 20 dwellings on land leading off Great Dunns Close, Beckington.

Beckington Parish Council objects to the Cotswold Homes Ltd (CH) and Redrow Homes Ltd (RH) Planning Application (2024/1865/FUL).

History of Previous Applications on the Site

Since 2015 three planning applications have been refused by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) Mendip, two dismissals of appeals by the Planning Inspector and a quashing of the allocation of the site in MDC's LPP2 as unlawfully allocated.

1. Growth of Beckington Above LPP1 Minimum Target

At the commencement of the Mendip Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) planning period on 1 April 2006 the Mendip Planning Department recorded the number of Beckington Village dwellings as **353**.

LPP1 set a minimum target of a 15% increase over the existing housing stock (55 dwellings based on the 353 figure for Beckington within the Planning period (2006-2029), which the Mendip District Council Strategic Planning Team deemed to be 'proportionate growth'.

In Somerset Council's Planning Policy response of 15 November 2024 to the CH / RH application it states:

"CP2: Supporting the Provision of New Housing

*Policy CP2.... indicates 55 new homes as a reasoned scale of housing growth **in the village**. The latest monitoring report shows that 111 dwellings were either completed or granted consent between 2006 and March 2024. The village has therefore delivered significantly in excess of CP2 requirements."*

This figure did not take into account the Parish wide figures, outside of the tightly drawn Beckington planning line, which includes outlying farms, the hamlet of Rudge and part of Standerwick.

If they were to be included, up to 1 November 2024, a further 22 dwellings have been completed with a further 4 granted planning permission, total 26. Including 3 further dwellings granted planning permission within the Village this takes the number of new dwellings in the parish to **137** since 1 April 2006. (This figure would have been greater but for 3 dwellings being unified and another having a change of use from a dwelling.)

Thus, the number of new dwellings within the parish of Beckington has risen to 490 (353 + 137) since 1 Apr 2006 – a disproportionate development when set against the plan target of 55 for the Planning period; a **39%** increase in housing stock as opposed to the minimum National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 15% minimum target, and **249%** of the 55 LPP1 minimum.

If the CH and RH application is permitted Beckington Parish's size would increase to 510 dwellings: a highly disproportionate development increase to **44.5%** - significantly more than the 55 dwellings identified as a minimum target for the whole of the plan period to 2029. And there are 5 years still to elapse before the end of the planning period in 2029.

As yet, there is no indication of the number of new dwellings that will be required for Beckington under the Somerset Plan for the next planning period commencing 2030, but disproportionate growth in this current plan period will have a compound effect on future targets.

2. Site Allocation Process

In 2015 the community voted on the next 'future development sites' as part of MDC's LPP2 process and did not vote in favour of development of the site in question. Alternative sites were identified which better suited the needs of the community.

In 2023 Beckington Parish Council commenced work on a Neighbourhood Plan to refresh the identification of 'future development sites' in anticipation of the requirements of the new Somerset Plan. The speculative CH / RR Planning Application should not be approved in advance of the completion of that work.

3. Proposed Site is outside Development Limits

The site is located outside the development limits of Beckington and in the open countryside, so the proposal is contrary to CP1, CP2 and CP4.

4. Loss of Rare Grade 1 Agricultural Land

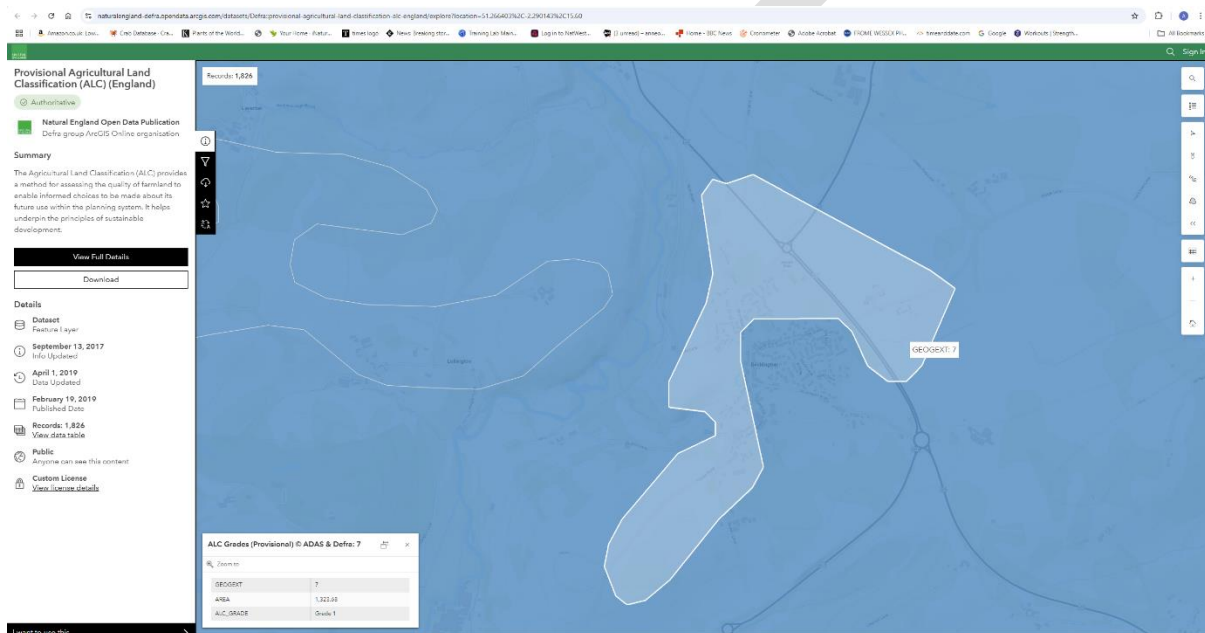
Para 180 of the NPPF advises that '*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by....(b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land*'.

Under Natural England's policies to protect agricultural land and soil, developers and local planning authorities (LPAs) should refer to the following government policies and legislation when considering development proposals that affect agricultural land and soils. They aim to protect:

- the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals
- all soils by managing them in a sustainable way

Natural England uses these policies to advise on development proposals as a [statutory consultee](#) in the planning process.

The Natural England Guide to Assessing Development Proposals on Agricultural Land offers broad guidance to 'avoid developing BMV'. The data shows that the CH/RR proposed site is mapped as 'Best and Most Versatile' – an area of 'Grade 1' land, surrounded by Grade 3.



The CH application incorrectly quotes the land quality as Grade 3B.

Grade 1 is very rare and may well have been a factor in the early settlement of Beckington. Additionally, land left fallow for a while improves, so to lose this rare Grade 1 land to development would be irresponsible in a climate emergency when concerns about food security are increasing.

5. Sewage and Waste Water Treatment

The existing main sewer system in Beckington dates from 1951.

The disproportionate increase in the number of dwellings since 2006 has put particular strain on Beckington's waste water handling infrastructure.

High volume of water (combined foul and surface water) reaching the Beckington Wastewater Treatment plant exceeds the capacity of the plant, resulting in the discharge of untreated water into the River Frome in 'Combined Sewer Overflow' (CSO) events. In 2023, there were 31 CSO events, totaling 458 hours.

Beckington Treatment Plant Permit No: 011987 – Storm Overflows into the River Frome

Frequency			Hours		
2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
15	20	31	183	207	458

CSO events are subject to Consent, which sets out the (exceptional) circumstances under which a CSO is permissible. 458 hours in a year far exceeds the level of consent; however, to date the Environmental Agency has not taken action to hold Wessex Water to account.

The additional foul water from a further twenty family homes will lead to more CSO events, adding further damage to the health of the River Frome. This situation will only be remedied by Wessex Water upgrading the capacity of the existing Beckington Water Treatment plant.

Should Somerset East agree the CH & RH proposal, it will be of paramount importance that:

- a. Wessex Water upgrades the current overloaded treatment plant, and***
- b. CH be held to its plan to install a new pumped system and 6" pipe and connect to the existing 6" pipe by the Memorial Hall.***

6. Heritage Harms

The proposed development will have a significant effect on the settings of designated heritage assets, namely the Beckington Conservation Area and Grade II listed buildings on Goose Street.

On its south and south-western boundaries, the proposed site adjoins the Beckington Conservation Area which preserves the historical village centre.

The Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) for Beckington (2010) notes that there are "clean edges" to the village in various locations, including to the north behind Goose Street. The CAA explains that this undeveloped land is important in maintaining historic boundaries, preserving views into and out of the village and providing a setting for older buildings.

The CH proposal would bring built form closer to the Conservation Area with the southernmost plots being located along the edge of the high ground to the north of Goose Street. The intervening land to the south falls away to the rear boundaries of properties on Goose Street and this area would remain as public open space.

This encroachment of urban form would erode the rural backdrop of the listed buildings, particularly No 51A Goose Street which has an historic functional link to the former agricultural use of the proposed site.

The scheme allows for natural screening that over time would soften the interface with heritage assets. However, this fails to mitigate the harm arising from the change in the character of the site from agricultural field to managed public open space and the severing of the historic link between the listed former barn and the site.

7. Traffic

A further 20 houses in Beckington will add to the dangerous congestion on the A36 roundabouts at either end of Beckington.

Highways England's comments of note - 15th Sept 2021:

"...the cumulative assessment work, which includes all allocations in the Local Plan, has reinforced the view that improvements will be necessary at both the A36 Beckington and White Row roundabouts over the Local Plan period. planned development across the Frome, Beckington and Rode area will contribute to unacceptable increases in congestion and delay at both roundabouts, and the current (Redrow) application proposals will only add to this. At the A36 Beckington roundabout, planned development will increase demand for a junction already operating over capacity. The roundabout is a current constraint with strategic traffic demands, and improvements are necessary to accommodate Local Plan development traffic and support the delivery of the development strategy for Frome, Beckington and Rode."

The comment above only reflects development within the Somerset town of Frome and the villages of Beckington and Rode. Beckington lies immediately to the west of a geographical "square" the corners of which are made up of the four towns of Frome, Warminster, Westbury and Trowbridge, all of which are undergoing massive housing development. Just two of the new Warminster developments, Tascroft Rise (249 dwellings) and Jubilee Gardens (193), provide 442 new dwellings. There are other developments in Warminster and also in nearby Trowbridge and Westbury , both no more than 6 miles away. Data concerning building in the three Wiltshire towns is not reflected in the Highways comments concerning the A36. Traffic from Warminster, only 5 miles away, feeds onto the A36 and adds to the congestion at the Beckington roundabouts.

8. Beckington Family Practice - Capacity

Further detriment to the village as a consequence of the disproportionate growth in dwelling since 2006, is that the Beckington Family Practice (BFP) is over-subscribed and the proposed addition of 20 further dwellings will exacerbate current problems.

The BFP site already suffers from limited parking and extremely difficult vehicle access along Goose Street and St Luke's Road.

9. S106

If the Somerset Council Planning Authority is minded to approve this application then Beckington Parish Council requests that it should be involved in the development of the Section 106 agreement to ensure that the additional infrastructure the village will require to meet the demands of the additional residents, especially with regard to the additional capacity that will be required of the sewerage system, additional facilities for children's play, **additional information open space (?)** and improvements to the highways including the implementation of a 20mph zone throughout the village, is met.

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