

To:

Cllr Drew Mellor
Graham Farrant

Copy:

Sir Christopher Chope, OBE, MP
Cllr Lesley Dedman Cllr Paul Hilliard Cllr Gillian Jarvis Cllr Avril Coulton
Cllr. Margaret Phipps Cllr Simon McCormack Cllr David Flagg Cllr Nick Geary
Cllr Nigel Brooks Cllr Sue Bungey

Date 11th April 2022

CONCERNS REGARDING BCP PLANNING PROCESS

References:

- a. Avon Beach Hut Extensions 8/21/1068 (Retrospective)
- b. Avon Beach Hut Extensions 8/21/1040 (New)
- c. 20 Chewton Farm Road Christchurch BH23 5QN. 8/21/0798/RM
- d. 22 Chewton Farm Road Christchurch BH23 5QN. 8/21/0690/FUL
- e. Eco Sustainable Solutions Ltd Chapel Lane Parley Christchurch BH23 6BG. 8/20/0998/FUL
- f. Jumpers Corner land Christchurch 8/21/0410/OUT

Dear Cllr Mellor and Mr Farrant,

We write to you on behalf of several Christchurch Residents' Associations, namely:

Friars Cliff Residents Association Highcliffe Residents Association
Christchurch Citizens Association Winkton Residents Association

The purpose of this open letter is to convey collective dismay and disillusion with the BCP Planning process regarding planning application approvals at References A to E and the refusal at Reference F. These are emblematic of wider BCP planning issues, and in this letter we explain why we believe there is an ongoing failure of 'due process'. We urge you to take this seriously, as the present arrangement is not fit for purpose and does nothing to foster trust and confidence among a great many Christchurch residents the BCP Council purports to represent.

Firstly it is a fact that, for planning applications A to E, there was near unanimous objection from Christchurch Councillors on the Planning Committee. Yet in every case, approval was carried by the weighted bias of Councillors representing Bournemouth and Poole. The refusal at Reference F was a very close vote due to the same overt bias of Bournemouth and Poole councillors.

Also, and without labouring the point, it is inappropriate to see the Chair, Cllr David Kelsey, often applying excess leverage on the planning committee to support these applications, which he clearly favours. We cite as examples References A and B, and we urge you to study the BCP video recording of the hearing to appreciate the point. In both hearings the Chairman sets out his personal views early on, and then re-iterates them repeatedly as the hearings continue, even to the point of challenging the Highways officer who recommended refusal. The Deputy Chairman (Cllr Toby Johnson) mirrored unequivocally the Chairman's position, and not once was there a different viewpoint between them. To illustrate the imbalance between Christchurch and Bournemouth/Poole positions for References A and B we see:

Supporting Approval:

BCP Planning Officer
Chair and Deputy Chair

ALL Bournemouth / Poole Councillors

Objecting to Approval:

BCP Highways Department
Christchurch Town Council

ALL Christchurch Councillors

To add to this, and for the example of Reference B, there were 91 letters of objection with just 4 letters of support. In addition the Friars Cliff Residents' Association submitted a mandated position opposing the beach hut extensions, and Christchurch Town Council itself recommended refusal of the application. So it is not understood why such little consideration was given to the considerable weight of opinion on this matter.

The fundamental truth here is that the two applications provide almost exclusive financial gain to the Avon Beach Company tenant, whilst disadvantaging the many thousands of beach users who use the promenade each year and who will suffer from greatly increased congestion. Funding was very largely paid for from public funds during the raising and widening of the promenade, yet the public lose the benefit of a better/wider walkway.

To now look at the approved developments at References C and D (Chewton Farm Road), we note that again there was collective objection from Christchurch Councillors. In each case the vote was carried overwhelmingly by Bournemouth/Poole Councillors.

A further example of local disregard concerns the Planning Application at Reference E (Hurn Waste Incinerator). More than 700 objections were lodged, but ignored, and there has already been a complaint raised that the 9 members supporting the application were heavily prompted by the chairman to disregard details put forward in objection. It is a fact, again, that only Bournemouth and Poole councillors voted to grant approval, with no support from Christchurch Councillors and local concerned/environmental groups.

Equally, for the Planning Refusal at Reference F there was unambiguous and heavy 'lean' towards approval from the Chair to the Planning Committee, despite the approximately 270 objections and well-founded concerns voiced at the time by various BCP officials.

The above examples are all symptomatic of the failed BCP Planning Process that favours, overwhelmingly, the interests of Bournemouth and Poole over Christchurch. It is a process that represents, in no meaningful way, the needs and characteristics of the Christchurch area and negates, time and again, the position of Christchurch Town Council, Parish Councils, Christchurch Councillors, residents, focus groups and all they represent. This now leads us to engage with, and support, the campaign position of the Christchurch Independents Group and Highcliffe Parish Council. The joint position is that the BCP planning process is not fit for purpose in terms of its failure to represent the balance and local interests of the Christchurch area.

The solution we support is that the one BCP Planning Committee be replaced **SOONEST** with one committee each for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. An alternative would be to create two planning committees: one for Christchurch, and one for Bournemouth/Poole, to reflect the different forms of urban area. We urge you to consider this, and to understand that there is considerable weight of cross-Christchurch opinion behind the proposal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Friars Cliff Residents' Association:
Christchurch Citizens Association:
Highcliffe Residents' Association:
Winkton Residents' Association:

Steve Alves / Paul De Jonghe - Co-Chairs
John Pendrill – Chairman
Ian Hartnell – Chairman
Sarah Boyce - Chairman