

SOMERTON PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A SPECIAL VIRTUAL PLANNING MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY
8th JUNE 2021 AT 7.00 P.M.

AGENDA

1. To consider apologies for absence. Apologies were received from Diane Crane and Richard Walters.
2. Declarations of interest. None
3. To consider planning application BA/2021/0176/HOUSEH Render front of property Cherry Trees, Common Road, West Somerton, Somerton
Applicant : Mr Brett Hurrell. Cllr Clift proposed that no objections be made to this application. This was seconded by Cllr Barker and unanimously agreed by all councillors present.
4. To consider Planning Application 06/21/0389/F Proposed single storey side extension to form sunroom Honey Pot Cottage, Honey Pot Lane East Somerton Somerton NR29 4DZ
Applicant: Mr T Agnew. Cllr Clift proposed that no objections be made to this application. This was seconded by Cllr Jones and unanimously agreed by all councillors present.
5. To consider Planning Application 06/21/0419/F Retrospective application for erection of 1.5m high chestnut and stock style fencing to enclose private land around ruins of St Marys Church (with access from Manor Farm Road).
Burnley Hall Estate Dark Lane
Applicant Mr J Chapman. Cllr Barker proposed that the following letter be sent to the planning department objecting to this application. This was seconded by Cllr Clift and unanimously agreed by all councillors present.

Letter from Dan Hewett, Head of Planning, Wilson Wraight dated 6th May 2021;

- a. *Mention is made "The now ruinous Grade 2 Listed St.Mary's Church etc". The English Antiquary Francis Blomefield (1705 -1752) published a County History of Norfolk and mentioned, briefly, that St.Mary's Church, East Somerton, "had been ruined for many years". It seems likely that the church was in ruins in the 17th century as Blomefield wrote about it in the middle to late period of his life i.e. maybe*

1725 to 1750. It is reasonable to conclude that the church has been in ruins for probably 3 centuries or more.

- b. *The claim on page one of the letter that the fencing “has been put up with health and safety at the forefront and the intention of restricting access to the land around the remains of the church” is considered both an exaggeration and a misleading appraisal of the situation. Locals and the wider public have enjoyed unrestricted access to the ruins and the immediate surrounding woodland for time immemorial. There has never been a sign displayed on the site to state that public access is not permitted.*

There is a sign, affixed to one of the wooden bollards situated on the edge of Back Road which reads;

“East Somerton St.Mary. This ruin is in the care of the Parochial Church Council of the parish of Winterton with east Somerton. Enquiries about the building may be made at The Rectory, Somerton Road, Winterton-on-Sea NR29 4AW. Anyone entering this ruin accepts full responsibility for their own safety”

This original notice does not mention private woodland nor anything relating to no entry but actually reminds persons entering the ruin that they do so at their own risk. To access the ruin, persons have had to enter and pass through the surrounding woodland.

- c. *The site is not the only location to have experienced a marked increase in visitors during covid restrictions on travel. Likewise, many attractions have unfortunately experienced negative impacts such as litter and anti-social behaviour. Hopefully, as other sites, locations and attractions re-open to the public, the situation will return to normal.*
- d. *The fencing was erected without first carrying out any structural survey according to an email dated the 24th May 21 received by Somerton Parish Council from Winterton Parochial Church Council, the Rvd John Bloomfield despite the claim that “Health and safety grounds are the principal reason for installing the fencing with a focus on protecting the public”.*
- e. *The claim that the fencing is an effort to protect the landowner from personal injury related insurance claims should really be substantiated. Has there ever been any claim made from a member of public wandering through the surrounding woodland? Has the landowner taken advice from Historic England on how to manage Health & Safety issues associated with Listed Buildings and their surroundings?*
- f. *The letter confirms that the ruined church is owned by Winterton Parochial Church Council but again there appears to have been no liaison with Historic England nor the Local District Council, (Great Yarmouth Borough Council) regarding any concern as to whether the ruins should be designated a precarious structure.*
- g. *The claim that “The final justification is to prevent vehicles encroaching into the woodland to park. This is a regular occurrence and causes considerable damage to the natural habitat”, is false. Several years ago, wooden bollards were placed on the border of the northern side of the woodland (Back Road) making it impossible for vehicles (cars) to enter the woodland surrounding the ruins. There is no evidence that vehicles accessed the woodland surrounding the ruins from Manor Farm Road.*
- h. *The suggestion in the letter that “the fencing erected without planning consent is considered to be in accordance with both local and national planning policies” suggests that restrictions requiring that fencing should not exceed one metre in height if it is next to a highway used by vehicles or the footpath of such a highway*

and that no part of the site is a listed building or within the curtilage of a listed building does not apply in this case.

The ruined church and its surrounding woodland has historical, aesthetic and communal value. Access to and from the church including the surrounding parcel of woodland has been enjoyed by the public for many years without incident or complaint. No attempt has been made by Winterton Parochial Church Council to address any safety concerns with the structure. No survey report was commissioned on the structure before the fencing was erected. No survey report has, to date, be made available to Somerton Parish Council. The 1.5 metre tall fencing is intrusive on the actual setting and has changed the authenticity of the ruins to give it an unwelcome, stockade appearance.

Somerton Parish Council therefore strongly objects to this application and requests that the tall boundary fencing be removed. Furthermore, to address any safety concerns with the structures' arches, that discussions take place with the Borough Council and Historic England to establish whether any remedial works can be undertaken, if necessary, to make the structure safe. The provision of an information board to welcome visitors and to explain the history, the sensitivities of the building and its surrounding woodland may go some way to address issues with litter and anti-social behaviour.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 19.30