

# East Harptree Parish Council

Please reply to:

The Parish Clerk, Priddy Green House, Priddy, Wells BA5 3BE  
Telephone: 01749 870358 email: eastharptreeparishcouncil@gmail.com

Ms S Johnston,  
Bath and North East Somerset Council,  
Via email - [sarah\\_johnston@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:sarah_johnston@bathnes.gov.uk)

8<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

Dear Ms Johnston

## ***Background Paper - Access to Services and Facilities in the Rural Areas***

Further to your conversation on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2017 with our Vice Chair, Andrew Jones, I have been asked to summarise the concerns of East Harptree Parish Council over the consultation process which gave rise to the above Background Paper. We request a formal response from BANES as set out the final paragraph.

### **The Issue**

Whether the community run shop in East Harptree qualifies as a "Convenience Shop".

### **Factual Background**

The East Harptree Community Shop is run solely by village volunteers. It can only open when there are volunteers available to run it.

It currently targets restricted opening hours as set out on its website. Every week volunteers must be matched to these restricted hours via a rota and where there are gaps that cannot be filled the shop remains closed. A sign is then put up explaining that it is closed due to unavailability of volunteers. Given the volunteer nature of the shop, the local community understand that this happens.

As a result, the hours are not only restricted but also unreliable. In addition, hours are further restricted during school holidays due to lower numbers of available volunteers (when the shop only opens in the morning).

For these reasons, the shop does not fulfil the function of a convenience shop able to meet the daily shop needs of residents.

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## Historical Background

During the extensive Placemaking Plan consultation and evidence process, East Harptree Parish Council spent time explaining this issue to officers at BANES (I have copied in your colleague, Richard Daone who will confirm this). As a result of this process it was accepted that the East Harptree Community Shop did not meet the requirements of a Convenience Shop (as defined in the Rural Facilities Audit 2015).

This is evidenced expressly in the Placemaking Plan itself in the Rural Areas section 86:

*"86 The village shop, which is run on a voluntary basis, has irregular open hours and as such does not fulfil the function of a convenience shop able to meet daily shopping needs."*

The Placemaking Plan was adopted in July of this year. We are aware that in the formulation of the New Local Plan, the Placemaking Plan is being combined with the Core Strategy and reviewed to ensure that it reflects, and is consistent with, National Policy and the JSP. There is nothing in either that could justify a change in the existing assessment of the shop.

Under the current New Local Plan 2016-2036 process, BANES undertook to refresh the rural facilities assessment giving rise to the above Background Paper. During this they consulted with all Parish Councils. East Harptree Parish Council responded to this consultation exercise, again reiterating that the East Harptree Community Shop was a **"Part time Community shop run by volunteers with restricted hours and unreliable opening times"** and so did not meet the criteria for a Convenience Shop for these purposes. Whilst on the phone to Andrew Jones you confirmed that response.

Despite all of this historical background, the recently published New Local Plan Issues & Options Consultation and the above Background Paper reflected East Harptree as having access to a Convenience Shop.

## What we understand happened

From your discussion with Andrew Jones we understand that when finalising the Options Consultation and Background Papers BANES undertook a desktop review of the East Harptree Shop website which referred to its target hours. At this time BANES failed to take into account the historical background above and reached the conclusion that these hours were regular enough to classify it as a Convenience Shop.

Given the contradiction with the direct information obtained from East Harptree Parish Council under BANES's own consultation process, can you explain why BANES did not contact East Harptree Parish Council to discuss this? Had this been done this error would not have occurred.

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As a result of this decision, the above Background Paper is inaccurate. This has led to an **erroneous categorisation** of East Harptree as having "Moderate" access to services and facilities (rather than "Limited") in the New Local Plan 2016-2036: Issues and Options Consultation document. During our PC meeting 4.12.17 it became apparent that there was a growing concern by the village community that BANES had not adhered to its own policies and procedures and we as a parish council were in no position to give them any assurance that these had been followed.

## **What we would now like to happen**

Taking into account the above errors by BANES we would now like you to correct the village classification to 'Limited'. It may be too late to amend the above Background Paper but we expect BANES to ensure that the background evidence on record is amended and stated accurately for the rest of the New Local Plan consultations. We would request your assurance that when the next version is issued this conclusion is taken into account and East Harptree's categorisation is corrected to 'Limited'.

We look forward to your formal response within the next two weeks so that our Parishioners may have time to respond appropriately to the current consultation.

If you would like to clarify any information in more detail please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely,  
for and on behalf of East Harptree Parish Council.



Alan Butcher  
Parish Clerk.

cc. all East Harptree Parish Councillors and our Ward Councillor, Tim Warren.