

Pitcombe Parish Council Public Meeting on Bruton School for Girls site Meeting minutes Saturday 14th March, 2026, Hadspen Village Hall

Meeting Chair: Jonathan Duffy, Pitcombe Parish Councillor
Facilitators: Mark Hutton, Neville Hartnell, Pitcombe Parish Councillors
Ewan Jones, Bruton Town Councillor

Meeting Purpose

The chair outlined that the meeting had three main objectives:

- To provide an **update on the current status of the charity**, ensuring attendees have a clear understanding of the present position.
- To **share initial ideas for the site** and encourage **community discussion and feedback**.
- To **outline a possible way forward** based on the discussion.

Tone and Approach

It was acknowledged that the topic continues to generate strong feelings. Attendees were asked to help maintain a **constructive and positive tone** during the meeting.

The chair emphasised that the meeting was **not intended to revisit historical issues or apportion blame to the Trust**. Any specific concerns could be **discussed separately outside the meeting if required**.

Focus of the Meeting

The meeting would focus on:

- **Sharing a vision for the site**
- **Gathering feedback from the community**
- **Beginning to shape proposals** that could lead to a solution meeting the needs of the wider community.

Charity Commission Ruling (2 December) – Key Points

The meeting noted the key outcomes of the **Charity Commission ruling of 2 December**:

For interest, here is a link the ruling from the Bruton Town Council web site.

<https://brutontowncouncil.gov.uk/charity-commission-decision-about-bruton-school-for-girls-trust/>

The key points discussed were:

- BSGT's **assets must continue to support these purposes**.
- BSGT **retains the ability to sell, lease, or redevelop the site**, but any proceeds must remain within the charity.
- Due to a **potential conflict of interest**, if the BSGT site is to be sold, **new independent trustees should be appointed before any sale takes place**, and any funds generated should be used **solely for educational purposes**.
- Any **capital raised from a sale of the BSGT elements should be held in a permanent endowment**, ensuring the capital itself is preserved, while **income or interest generated may be used to support education locally**

Meeting Focus and Next Steps

- It was noted that while the Charity Commission ruling provides important context, the **main purpose of the meeting was to listen to community ideas and aspirations** for the future of the site, while also sharing an initial vision.
- The meeting recognised the need to remain **realistic about what can be achieved**, taking into account factors such as **funding, management capacity, long-term sustainability, and risk**.
- The importance of **partnerships and sponsorship** was highlighted as key to developing a viable proposal. Potential partners could include **educational organisations, local groups, community organisations, businesses, and individuals willing to support the project**.
- The aim is to begin **developing a shared vision for the site** that reflects community interests while also being **practical and deliverable**. As proposals develop, it was emphasised that **key stakeholders should remain informed**, including local residents, community groups, and the Charity.
- As a practical outcome from the meeting, it was proposed that **a small community interest group could be established** to help develop and take forward the emerging vision.

Vision for the Site

- A preliminary **vision for the future of the site** was presented, reflecting themes already raised by members of the community.
- The concept is to develop a **thriving, multi-use community space with education at its core**. This could include **schools, learning spaces, workshops, and community activities for people of all ages**.
- The vision also includes opportunities for **performance and visual arts**, as well as facilities that support **physical and mental wellbeing**, while helping to **strengthen the local economy by supporting local businesses**.
- It was noted that any development would need to **balance housing, community services, and green spaces** to create a **sustainable and well-integrated environment**.
- The proposal was presented as **an initial vision rather than a fixed plan**, intended to **start discussion and allow the community to shape the project going forward**.

Conceptual Development Model

- A **conceptual model for the development of the site** was presented.
- At the centre of the model is **education**, reflecting the original objectives of the Bruton School for Girls charity. Education would act as the **core anchor**, providing opportunities for **learning, skills development, workshops, and community programmes for people of all ages**.
- Surrounding this core would be a range of **community assets**, potentially including spaces for **arts and culture, wellbeing activities, sports groups, community organisations, social activities, and small enterprise opportunities**. It was noted that this approach could help reinforce **Bruton's reputation for educational and artistic excellence**.
- For the development to be **financially viable and sustainable**, it was suggested that **a proportion of the site could be allocated to housing**. This could include a mix of **social housing and a limited number of residential properties**, helping to generate funding and provide ongoing financial support for the wider community facilities.
- The overall aim would be to create a **balanced and integrated development**, where **education, community uses, shared spaces, and housing support one another rather than operating separately**.

Conceptual Zoning Model

- A **conceptual zoning model** for the site was presented, illustrating how different areas could support complementary themes while contributing to a coherent overall development.
- **Education Zone (Core)**
Education would remain at the centre of the development, potentially including a **SEND school, an additional school, a sixth form college, a vocational learning centre, and early years provision**. Together these could create a **connected learning pathway from early years through to further education and employment**.
- **Community Hub**
A community-focused zone centred on **arts, culture and community activity** was proposed. This could include a **theatre and arts centre**, providing space for **performing arts, exhibitions, workshops and creative learning**, as well as opportunities for **schools, local groups and community performances**. A **youth centre** linked to arts and sports activities was also suggested.
- **Health Hub**
A health and wellbeing area could include **healthcare services such as a doctor's surgery, dental practice, and other wellbeing facilities**, alongside community initiatives such as a **Men's Shed or community shop**.
- **Sports and Recreation Zone**
This zone would retain and develop the site's existing **sports facilities**, potentially including the **all-weather pitches, tennis courts, outdoor pool and a sports centre**, with possible additions such as further recreational facilities.
- **Business Hub**
A business and enterprise area could provide **co-working spaces and small business units**, supporting **local entrepreneurs, freelancers and creative businesses**, while contributing to **local employment and economic growth**.
- **Open Spaces**
The model also emphasised the importance of **green and open spaces**, potentially including **community gardens, landscaped areas and preserved trees**, supporting wellbeing and biodiversity.
- **Housing**
To support the **financial viability and long-term sustainability** of the project, the concept includes a **proportion of housing**, potentially including **social housing, residential homes, a care home, and staff accommodation**.
- **Flexible/Other Uses**
A final area was intentionally left **flexible**, allowing space for **additional ideas from the community**, such as youth facilities, training centres, meeting spaces, cafés or other community uses.
- It was emphasised that this **represents an early conceptual framework rather than a fixed proposal**, intended to **stimulate discussion and help explore how the site could evolve into a valuable community asset in the future**.
- It was proposed that the **next step could be to establish a small community interest project group** to help take the vision forward.
- The group's role would include **working with the community to ensure that future proposals reflect local needs and aspirations**. It would also begin **engaging with the trustees, key stakeholders, organisations and potential partners**, including educational institutions, arts organisations, health providers, businesses, government bodies and funding organisations.
- The aim would be to **develop practical and achievable projects that deliver clear benefits to the community**.
- The meeting was intended as **the starting point for discussion and for identifying individuals who may wish to contribute to shaping the next stage of the project**.

Structure of the proposed Project Group

- It was suggested that, if formed, the **community interest group** should include people with a **range of skills, experience and local knowledge** to help progress the project.
- A **project co-ordinator** would sit at the centre of the group to organise activity, maintain momentum and ensure communication between partners and stakeholders.
- Given the central role of education within the concept, it was proposed that the group should include **someone with education expertise** to advise on schools, colleges and learning programmes. **Planning expertise** would also be valuable to help assess development feasibility and navigate regulatory processes.
- Representation from **local councillors**, including **Pitcombe and Bruton Town Council and Somerset Council**, was suggested to ensure alignment with local government priorities and decision-making processes.
- As the site is linked to a charitable trust, it was also considered important to include **legal or charity governance expertise** to ensure proposals align with the Trust's responsibilities.
- The group should also include **community representatives** to ensure that local views remain central to the process. In addition, representation from the **visual and performing arts community**, as well as **young people**, was suggested to reflect the importance of arts and youth engagement within the vision.
- Overall, the intention is to establish a **balanced group bringing together professional expertise and community voices** to guide the next stage of the project.

Questions and Community Discussion

- At the conclusion of the presentation, attendees were invited to **ask questions and share comments**, including support for particular ideas, concerns, or additional suggestions.
- Participants were asked to **focus discussion on future possibilities rather than revisiting past issues**, and to keep contributions brief to allow everyone an opportunity to speak. Attendees were also asked to **state their name clearly for the minutes** when asking questions.

Questions and Answers

- Chair opens the floor for questions and reminds participants to keep questions to three minutes each.

Community Interest Company and Trust Ownership

- Speaker 2, David Weston, suggests involving the Community Interest Company (CIC) to achieve the group's goals.
- Speaker 3, Laura Field, clarifies that the community does not own the site and asks how can it influence decisions?
- Speaker 4, Sue Simpson, provides a detailed explanation of the site's designation and the trust's control over the land.

Funding and Site Maintenance

- Speaker 5 asks about funding to maintain the site and prevent further deterioration.
- Chair mentions debts were transferred with the school and the trust's obligation to maintain the site.
- Speaker 5 adds that the new charitable document requires the trustees to maintain the site.
- Speaker 7, Cllr. Ewan Jones and Speaker 3 discuss the geographical boundaries of the site and the potential for development.

Trustees and Community Involvement

- Speaker 8 explains the governance of the site by the Bruton School for Girls Trust and the involvement of the Charity Commission.
- Speaker 7 mentions the support from the Sexey's Foundation Trust for a new Sixth Form centre.
- Speaker 9, Reverend Jonathan Evans asks about the time frame for presenting proposals to the trust and the potential debt owed by the trust to King's School.
- Chair clarifies that new trustees are responsible for any sale decisions and emphasises the need for a cohesive scheme.

Environmental and Community Aspects

- Speaker 10, Phillip Pidsey, enquires about an environmental survey undertaken by South Somerset District Council.
- Speaker 11, Cllr. Lucy Trimnell mentions efforts to find the responsible tree officer and the need for planning within the existing framework.
- Speaker 12, Lucie Reader, emphasises the importance of reducing flood risk and promoting mental well-being through the site's development.
- Speaker 13 introduces the idea of creating a sustainable community with housing for teachers and staff.

Communication and Community Engagement

- Speaker 16 suggests the need for a communicator to ensure the community is informed about the site's development.
- Chair acknowledges the need for better communication and mentions efforts to keep the community informed.
- Speaker 17 emphasizes the urgency of the site's condition and the need for trustees to be involved in the process.
- Speaker 8 commends the progress made with the Charity Commission and encourages the community to focus on the vision for the site.

Biodiversity and Community Vision

- Speaker 18 highlights the importance of biodiversity and the potential for educational opportunities on the site.
- Chair agrees and emphasizes the need to explore the benefits of open spaces for well-being.
- Speaker 2 supports the vision and suggests a balanced approach to housing and community development.
- Speaker 13 reframes the idea of housing as a way to create a sustainable community, not just for funding.

Final Questions and Consensus

- Chair asks for a show of hands to gauge general support for the vision. Response is over 90% of attendees.
- Chair concludes the meeting by thanking everyone and inviting further questions and involvement.