**Roughmoor lane development, Westbury sub Mendip**

I am the Parish Paths Liaison Officer (PPLO) for Westbury sub Mendip. I have the following comments to make on the draft proposal, as shown on the present plan entitled Roughmoor Lane Living (undated). The comments reflect my role, which in its broadest sense is to encourage and facilitate walking within and around the village, in collaboration with Somerset County Council Highway Authority.

1. **Landscape**

The proposed development occupies around one third of a large field to the south of Roughmoor Lane. The present plan shows 41 houses, plus a number of very small buildings the size of garden sheds. Presumably this will be subject to radical revision. In any case, however, the roofs of the new houses will be prominent when viewed from the AONB to the north. In particular, path WS 13/19, on the hill immediately to the north of the A371, known as Broadhay, has been for many generations a favourite walk and picnic spot for villagers, giving fine views to north and south, and in this instance, directly over the proposed site. The roofs of the new houses should therefore be dark brown in colour. This would ensure that they are not eye-catching, and also that they blend with the roofs of existing housing to the east and west.

Tree-planting is shown on the plan. This is a Government requirement, but in this case the active Westbury Tree Group would be important consultees, over the question of plantings. It is also important that footpaths are taken into consideration when considering new plantings. The wrong tree planted too close to a footpath can undermine the path and cause long-term problems.

The north-west corner of the proposed development is allocated a rectangle of undeveloped land. If, as suggested, this is designed for a new village hall, access for both pedestrians and vehicles directly from Roughmoor Lane must be available – not only from the new development. If the developers are offering to fund or construct this hall as part of the development, this will be most welcome. If not, this area has no purpose, but must not be relegated to be used for more housing. It is important that it should not be located as shown, unless a new village hall is assured. For other constructive use by the public (essentially, walking) it is both meaningless and poorly placed. An open area of the same size placed centrally in the development would encourage a feeling of coherence, a sense of community, and would be more equally available to all residents for meetings and children’s play.

It is the view of the Parish Council that land to the east of the proposal site (also owned by the Church Commissioners) would be a preferable site for a new village hall, since this would be more central within the village, and right next to the church and churchyard. I agree with their preference. My comments in paragraph 3 assume, for the moment, that this must be set on one side, if the current proposal within its boundary as shown, is to remain the only basis for the development.

The remaining part of the large field to the south of the housing is shown untouched, apart from the installation of a large pond in the south-west corner. This would be a welcome addition, and should be retained as part of the proposals.

The field, and another large field to the east of Station Road, are the only fields within the parish not to be laid down to pasture. Both are owned by the Church Commissioners. The planting of crops on these fields is a visual and farming anomaly, but, more importantly, it has led to annual problems for walking the footpaths which cross them. These fields have been repeatedly ploughed and cropped (most frequently with maize), and the Commissioners’ tenants have for many years repeatedly failed to obey the law by reinstating the paths which cross them, after ploughing and planting (see below).

The new residents will wish to use the facility offered by these paths (see below), and the Commissioners are urged to rectify this situation.

1. **Rights of Way**

No existing Rights of Way (ROWs) cross the proposed development, although two important ROWs lie just to the south of it. Indeed, the proposal map pays no attention to the existing ROW network at all, merely indicating roads. However, there is an excellent opportunity for the new development to follow Government encouragement to extend and enhance the present ROW network.

1. The proposal plan shows two new short paths (only indicated by yellow arrows) linking the development to the existing Recreation Ground to the west, but their status is not mentioned. These must be definitive ROWs, for permanent, uncontested use, with adequate surfacing.
2. Villagers, in particular, residents of the Stoneleigh estate, have for some time (and partly in order to avoid the obstruction caused by crops, mentioned above) used, with tacit consent of the landowners and users, an unofficial north-south path which falls immediately within the western boundary of the development, from Roughmoor Lane, south to the former railway line. Both goodwill and practicality would suggest that this be designated a ROW, providing an off-road walking or even multi-user route, continuing south at the field edge until it first crosses footpath WS 13/3 and later joins WS 13/2, where it crosses the old railway line. When the proposed Strawberry Line multi-user path is completed, it will use this section of rail track-bed, and this would be an important access to it. WS 13/2’s short southward continuation beyond the railway line already offers the most convenient access to open countryside and a popular quiet, long cul de sac, which is popular with walkers and cyclists who desire a quiet and level route south of the village. This new ROW would have the added advantage of encouraging residents of the two housing developments, Stoneleigh and the new development, to meet. (The vague and wandering line shown on the present plan, heading towards the same destination, would be an inadequate alternative: it would be impossible to define without surfacing, and would interfere with any farming activities in the field.)
3. Reference must be made to the two existing ROWs within the field, by examining the Definitive, or any suitable OS Map. Paths leading from the development should be provided to access these. In addition to the north-south path mentioned in (b), a path should be provided at the south-east corner of the development. These two new links would both give access to the cross-field path WS 13/3. This path, which provides an enjoyable off-road peaceful route to the village of Rodney Stoke, two miles to the west, begins at the centre of Westbury sub Mendip, and passes close to the church and churchyard. Paths which have an age-old heritage basis are important and their use can be encouraged.
4. **Village footways**.

It is to the regret of the Parish Council that present criteria have prevented all but modest extensions to the footways adjoining the dangerous A371 as it passes through the village. Some improvements have been made, however. One of these was the roadside footway which links Roughmoor Lane (and the proposed development) to the village centre, with its community shop and school. Pressure should be applied under the new development proposal, to install a pedestrian crossing at the village centre. This has long been desired, and would be more important than ever, due to increased village access on foot from the new housing. For pedestrians in the village, occasional fast-moving vehicles have long been a concern, and a new crossing, together with effective speed reduction measures, would be a welcome improvement.

The proposals include a new footpath/footway on the northern edge of the development, parallel to Roughmoor Lane. This will be extremely welcome, but should continue across the designated Amenity land at the north-west corner, to give safe access to the existing play area and recreation ground.

Faithfully,

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