# Roughmoor Lane consultation

**1. The process**

 The land at Roughmoor Lane has been identified for housing development in the Mendip Local Plan. Although that plan was only formally adopted in December 2021 it has been the subject of negotiations between the District Council, local organisations and the planning inspector over many years. The parish council and others have contributed to these discussions, but the plan has now been legally adopted.

 The present consultation therefore is not about whether housing should be built but what kind of housing development there should be. It is the **preplanning** stage (**Stage 1**) so it should influence what the Commissioners put forward for outline planning permission to the Mendip District Council’s planners in February **(Stage 2).** The Commissioners will discuss their submission with Mendip planners who may well want further changes. We will all be looking for how far they incorporate the results of the first consultation. This is your **first chance** to challenge and influence the shape of the development.

 Your Parish Council will receive the amended plans and then, informed by all of you, will have 21 days to comment formally at **the second stage**. Individuals and organisations will also have a **second chance** to comment.

If outline planning permission is granted, the Commissioners will then sell on the site to a developer who will come back with more detailed plans, which again will be subject to Parish and District comment. **(Stage 3).** These may well come some months or even years later and could be substantially different from the original proposals. There will be a **third chance** for you to comment.

So **this is the first, but not the last opportunity** to comment on the largest housing development proposal in Westbury for many years, if not ever. Your parish council can represent your views to the planning authority (Mendip DC) but our opinion is not binding and can be set aside. You can also respond personally to Mendip on both the second and third stages; again the planning authority does not have to listen. The best chance of influencing the development is to show where it ignores specific policies in the Mendip plan.

In order to help ensure that all considerations are taken into account I have summarised the key issues that have come up in discussions around the village. Do let me know of any I have missed. The aim of this summary is to help individuals and the parish council cover all relevant issues when submitting comments

Sue Isherwood

**2. Summary of key issues**

The village has a number of serious concerns with the proposals which we hope will be addressed before the formal application for outline planning permission is made. To summarise

1. While the local plan speaks of 40 dwellings this plan suggests 60 which represents serious overdevelopment in terms of the density of the site and the overall impact on the character of the village. No attempt is made to justify a 50% increase.
2. Development on this scale will generate a substantial increase in both vehicle movements and pedestrians crossing the A 371 which is not addressed in the outline plans. The local plan requires “*Safe pedestrian links should be provided to enable access on foot to the village core.”*
3. The plans will generate an increased need for parking while removing existing parking at mortar pits. Without safe walking routes the development will cause traffic congestion as people attempt to park in the core area to the detriment of the conservation area.
4. There is no serious attempt to “*safeguard the amenity of neighbouring residential properties*” either by substantial screening, by locating houses to the south of the plot or putting single storey buildings on the northern side. There is considerable support for an 8 metre green hedge and path strip along the Roughmoor Lane side of the development which would create a realistic wild life corridor and provide some screening.
5. The proposals to achieve biodiversity net gain seem token, and also to claim credit for existing features such as the hedge and playing field trees. The excessive density reduces the possibility of BNG.
6. The location of the attenuation pond outside the designated site allows inadequate provision within the site for sustainable drainage, presumably in order to maximise housing density. It reduces the potential for BNG within the site itself.
7. The plan substantially ignores the existing footpath network and makes little effort to show how the development might link to or improve it.
8. The proposals do not appear to reflect the dark skies policy of the village nor the impact on views out from the AONB including light pollution.
9. The proposed location of land for community use at the NW corner of the site is perverse in that it would maximise traffic and parking problems for no conceivable gain and is universally opposed. Many have suggested locating both parking and community building space on the brown field site to the East, also owned by the Church Commissioners.
10. While provision of ‘affordable’ housing within the plan is positive for the village there seems no provision for single storey building which might allow existing residents to downsize without moving away. Generally the plans are so schematic and scant on detail that it is difficult to respond meaningfully.