



Ms Sue Isherwood
Chair
Westbury-sub-Mendip Parish Council
(via email only)

13 April 2023

Dear Ms Isherwood

Thank you for your time and that of the wider Parish Council on 23 February when we met to discuss the proposals at land south of Roughmoor Lane. The purpose of the call was to provide an update to the Parish Council on the extensive work that our team has undertaken since the public exhibition in March 2022 and to try to address the comments we received. The purpose of the meeting was also to seek feedback and clarification from the Parish Council on significant points around the location of the community hall and the Parish's intentions regarding the delivery of, financial commitment towards, and business plan for the proposed hall. As agreed, this letter provides a response to the main comments and queries raised by the Parish Council.

Our Approach to Strategic Land

We were disappointed to see from your website how our position on the *Coming Home* report was reported in the feedback provided to the village following our call; it doesn't reflect the discussion. We sought to clarify that the *Coming Home* report was instructed by the Archbishops' Commission on Housing, Church and Community as an ambitious response to the housing crisis, including recommendations as to how the wider Church, Government and key actors can act. Whilst we both espouse the values and support the overarching objectives outlined in the report, our approach to bringing forward land for new homes and communities is set out in [Our Approach to Strategic Land](#).

As discussed, the starting point for the Commissioners in bringing forward new housing is to use adopted planning policy to develop parameters for development, working within the planning system, consulting with the local planning authority, Parish Councils and local communities through public engagement. We had hoped that we had clearly communicated this to you on the call.

Community Hall Location

Following the previous engagement with the Parish Council, our understanding was that the preferred location for a new community facility was outside the allocation boundary, in the location of the agricultural steading. The Mendip Council Local Plan allocation (Policy WM1) is clear as to where development in principle is considered acceptable, and the steading is outside the allocation boundary. To clarify, the only reason we amended the masterplan to include land outside of the allocation boundary for community use was as a direct result of community consultation and specific Parish Council feedback on the matter.

As stipulated by policy, we, as applicants, are required to gift the land but are not responsible for undertaking detailed design work nor for funding/building the hall. We appreciate that the off-site location could be a more complex prospect in terms of costs, heritage sensitivities and policy implications. Consequently, if the Parish Council's commitment to pursuing this option has

changed, then as noted on our call, we remain prepared to revert to an on-site option which we originally proposed and which is as per the adopted Mendip site allocation requirements.

Whilst we discussed the conversion of the curtilage listed barns with Mendip Council, they could not provide detailed advice without a detailed scheme and were happy to hold further pre-application discussions if the Parish Council still want to pursue that option.

Technical and Design Matters

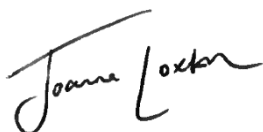
We provide below a response to several technical and design comments raised by the Parish Council at the meeting:

- Road safety concerns: We have revised the site access at Stoke Road to present an improved solution, with greater visibility from Roughmoor Lane, and following feedback are reviewing the bus stop location. We are keen to explore with the Parish Council and Somerset County Council (SCC) Highways the appetite for reducing the speed limit along Stoke Road through the village to 20mph and introducing traffic calming measures.
- Existing barns and asbestos: We have passed these queries to our rural colleagues who are liaising with the tenant on the matter and are obtaining quotes for surveys, asbestos removal, and site clearance; the latter to give your members an idea of the likely costs.
- Green corridor: The current masterplan includes an 8m wide landscape buffer along the northern boundary of the site, which includes gapping up the existing hedgerow and a new footpath for safe pedestrian access along Roughmoor Lane to the recreation ground to the west.
- Public Rights of Way: As confirmed on our call, we will explore the request for a dedicated cycle and pedestrian connection from the new housing site to the Strawberry Line.
- Dwelling numbers: Policy WM1 is for a minimum of 40 dwellings. There are 60 dwellings shown on the current masterplan, including in the location of the 'alternative community land'. Of this figure, 18 will be affordable homes, in full accordance with local plan policy. Both national and local planning policy require development to make efficient use of land and the scheme presents low density development (less than 25 homes per hectare), in the context of guidance within the Local Plan.
- Building heights: The dwellings proposed are predominantly 2 storeys, with occasional 2.5 storeys, which will be no higher than 2 storeys by including roof dormers to make the roof space habitable.
- Construction dust: This and other potential adverse impacts that could arise during construction, will be managed via a 'Construction Environmental Management Plan' secured by condition.

In terms of timeframes, we had been working towards a public consultation and pre-application engagement with local planning authority in the Spring, ahead of submitting a planning application in Summer 2023, subject to receiving feedback from the Parish Council on its preferred community use location - which would allow us to finalise the masterplan.

We hope this letter is useful in responding to your queries and request that this letter is also published on the Parish Council website as a further update for the benefit of the wider community.

Yours sincerely,



Joanna Loxton
Head of Strategic Land Investment