

Notes of a public meeting held in Westbury Village Hall on Sunday 19th March

1. The meeting had been called by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group (NPWG) to update residents on recent communications from the Church Commissioners (CC) agents and to help the parish council (PC) consider how to respond.
2. It was reported that agents for the CC, Litchfields, had given a zoom presentation to the PC about revised ideas for the greenfield site at Roughmoor Lane. Litchfields were unwilling to share material with the village, so the PC gave their own summary. Little had changed.
 - The pond had been moved closer to the proposed housing, though still outside the development site.
 - The entry had been moved slightly, though still through Mortar Pits (which assumes the County would sell that land)
 - Alternative sites were offered for the community space on the eastern side of the development, either in the greenfield or the adjacent brownfield land. In the latter case Litchfields had said the cost of dealing with contamination would fall to the village.
3. The PC also reported on discussions concerning the dilapidated buildings and risk from asbestos and other contamination. Another agent (Strutt & Parker) acting for the CC had confirmed that work would begin shortly to secure the site and remove dangerous material at their expense. Members of the NPWG were seeking assurance that the work would be carried out according to best practice and were informing HSE and local environmental health.
4. All agreed that the proposals remained very unsatisfactory and considered what actions to take. NPWG members set out a number of steps that the PC might take that were broadly endorsed by the meeting.
 - Seek pre-application discussions with planners and conservation officers asap
 - Invest in the development of a settlement character appraisal that could inform a future village plan as well as an immediate response.
 - Invest in expert advice in relation to traffic, parking, pedestrian safety and related issues.
 - Develop an alternative vision for development making use of student resource from UWE.
 - Build on earlier work in bio-diversity net gain (BNG) and issues around water treatment drawing on village expertise.
5. It was confirmed that the PC and NPWG would provide information in support of any individual who wanted to voice outright opposition to any development. The main thrust of the PC response however should be to challenge overdevelopment and seek to ensure that should development take place it respected the village character and key issues including road safety, parking, BNG and sensible location of community space be fully addressed.
6. Although the CC appeared to have no immediate plans for the brownfield land it was felt that the village should develop its own ideas to be in a good position to respond to any proposal that might be brought forward.
7. It was agreed to continue to inform the village of developments via news posts on the website and paper copies of key information for those unable to access the internet. The WhatsApp group was available for those wanting to engage in discussions about the issue. A further meeting would be arranged in the village hall when any new proposals were received.