

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Update – June 2023

Update: Lichfields

Lichfields have indicated they will consult with the community again before submitting an application which was planned for summer 2023 but now will probably be submitted autumn 2023. In April they asked the parish council if they would prefer the 0.1 ha of community space to be located within the old Court Farm buildings site (brownfield site). The Council have responded saying they were unable to consider the request as there wasn't enough information to make an informed decision. Further community consultation is necessary on the preferred location and use of community space but this would only be possible once the viability of any use of the brownfield site is understood. Lichfields have indicated that they wish to put in for outline planning consent this autumn, so we have six months from May to come to a conclusion.

Update: Meeting with Planners

NPWG met with Somerset East planners regarding the housing allocation site south of Roughmoor Lane to better understand planning judgements on key issues around number of houses, highway safety and the impact on listed buildings from any development of the redundant Court House Farm buildings. House numbers and layout will need to respect settlement character which of course is open to interpretation. The lack of a 5 year housing supply for Somerset East will limit the extent to which planners can minimise house numbers. There was confirmation that the wording regarding highway safety for pedestrians in the planning policy is taken to mean that pedestrian pavements and a crossing of the A371 would be expected to be part of the proposal. The absence of effective pedestrian safety measures such as pavements and crossing would have the potential to be a reason for refusal but the planners will consider all in the planning balance.

Update: Specialist Reports

The three specialist reports that the PC agreed to fund in early May are underway and being overseen by NPWG task groups. All reports are due to finalise in July / Aug.

Settlement character of Westbury sub Mendip. Liz Beth has visited the village and identified the key elements needing evidence. A lot of photos indicating element of village character have now been collated and a draft report is expected in July

Highway safety (Transport Statements). David Mason has visited the village and reviewed key elements of A371. He has met with the task group and considered our feedback on issues and a draft scoping report (stage 1 of 3 stages). The outcome of a meeting with highways has been fed back to DM and a second draft of initial scoping report is now being reviewed. Final scoping report is expected early July which will complete stage 1. Stage 2 and 3 will follow once an outline application is submitted.

The third report being developed by Jenny Payne, a post graduate student of urban planning from University of the West of England (UWE) is to produce alternative proposals for developing the area south of Roughmoor Lane (greenfield) and around Court House Farm buildings (brownfield) that reflects the community's priorities. Work is underway overseen by Tony Westcott and NPWG and a draft report expected in July.

Use for Community Space (Green or brownfield site?)

The local plan requires that the Church Commissioners allocate 0.1 hectares (20m x 50m) of the greenfield site for community use. Previous village surveys have indicated just over 50% of respondents felt this space would best be used for a larger village hall / community hub (with car

parking) but other uses sought included allotments, extension to playing fields, changing rooms and car parking

The NPWG are of the view that if the community space was to be used for a village hall / community hub (0.1 ha estimated to host current hall size plus 20 car parking spaces) it would best be located as close as possible to the centre of the village with good pedestrian access and car parking to also serve the shop, school and church. However, if the community space was located within the brownfield site then this would release the 0.1 ha on the greenfield site for more housing (3 houses at a 30 hs / ha density). In addition to the allocation of 0.1 ha for community use the Parochial Church Council have an ambition for some of the brownfield site to allow for an extension to the burial ground.

Given the location of the brownfield site at the centre of the village it makes sense that any long term planning for the inevitable expansion of the village and its facilities should consider how best this central site can be used. The Church Commissioners have been engaged directly on this issue and the PC and PCC are awaiting their response.