

**Notes of public meeting to discuss planning application  
2021/0071/OTS to build 49 dwellings on 'Barbara's Field'  
and donate 'Brown's Ground' to Rode, held on  
4<sup>th</sup> February 2021 (on Zoom)**

**Present:** Peter Travis (Chair), Ann Edney, Pat Restorick, Elaine Butler, Mike Salmon, Jim McAuliffe, Steve Eyles, Cllr Linda Oliver, Hugh Williams (Clerk) and 30 Parishioners

Peter Travis welcomed all to the meeting and gave some background to housing development in Rode. He reported that the following had recently been or are to be built:  
44 houses on Church Farm, approved about 10 years ago  
8 houses on Lower Street, approved about 15 years ago  
5 houses opposite The Bell, approved about 4 years ago.

Mendip's housing target was increased last year by some 500 houses per annum, this followed a change in the formula used to determine District Housing need. Given this much higher target Mendip can no longer show a 5 Year Housing Land Supply and as a result, planning applications will be considered under NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework), which has a 'tilted balance' in favour of development. The NPPF guidelines make approval by Mendip of one, if not both, of Rode's current major planning applications (Merfield and Barbara's Field) more likely to be approved.

He added that he would be restricting people to three minutes in which to put their points across in order to give a chance for everyone to speak.

**Points raised on planning proposal**

The following points were made during the meeting:

- 1) Traffic generated during the building stage and once built was a major concern. 80% of road accidents took place on rural roads and access to this site necessitates use of minor roads. It was pointed out that access to the A361 from Church Lane was poor with limited sight-lines and part of Church Lane to the A361 was only wide enough for single file traffic. The transport assessment for the development was questioned and it was said it did not reflect the full nature of the problems. Additionally, many would exit this development through the village, again along a single width road and through narrow village streets; this was not noted in the 'flawed' transport assessment. Church Lane was narrow hence any extra traffic would be of concern given children walk along it. Little consideration had been given to the rural Clay Lane which could become a 'cut through' to the Bradford Road.
- 2) The development was on a greenfield site which was against both Government guidelines and Mendip's own policy. Brownfield sites should be always used wherever possible. Rode's Neighbourhood Plan (RNP) itself had rejected any development on greenfield sites. To build on a greenfield site would probably be the start of a domino effect resulting in other greenfield land being proposed for development. Additionally, Brown's Ground had been designated as a green space in the RNP which had been endorsed by Mendip so there would be no gain in it being 'donated' to the village. It was also pointed out that the recent Dasgupta Report (The Economics of Biodiversity)

had concluded that Nature is an asset and should be considered as such in any development; there was no costing of this in this application.

- 3) This application had been submitted as an 'Outline planning application'; there was considerable concern over this, as it did not tie down any developer to do anything apart from to build 49 dwellings. There should have been a full planning application as this development currently did not demand sustainable housing with zero carbon emissions. It was argued the houses should meet the highest sustainability standards, given as Rode had recently declared a climate emergency. In connection to this point the gardens for the properties appeared small so with changing attitudes about the environment there would be a demand for allotments which would far exceed the proposed incentive of 12 allotments on Brown's Ground (already the current waiting list would fill these).
- 4) There was concern that the actual plans were inaccurate and a number of current properties' land was not shown correctly. The 'buffer zone' was poorly indicated or did not exist and loss of privacy to existing houses from this development had not been considered.
- 5) It was said that Barbara's Field had many historical remains, including remains of clay pipe factories and the heritage assessment did not reflect this, being based on 2014 data and not on the latest information. The heritage and topographical assessment concentrated on Brown's Ground and not Barbara's Field.
- 6) Rode had exceeded its requirement for new housing up to 2029 and this application and the Merfield/The Mead application would completely change Rode as a village. Many residents lived in Rode because it was a village.
- 7) Water run-off was already a problem and unless sufficient ground drainage was installed, the new development would exacerbate the problem. Also planting of willow and fruit trees on Brown's Ground would not take up water in winter (when run-off was worse) as these were deciduous trees.

Additional points were made that: a) a greenfield site will require utility supplies. To bring in, for example, electricity for heat pumps, electricity for EV cars as well as housing will require major work and supply capability was questioned; b) waste water and sewage could pose problems with the village already near capacity; c) Cllr Oliver said the independent transport report (prepared for a resident) should be now sent to Highways Development Control at Somerset.

The Chair thanked all for their comments and concerns, these would be considered when the Parish Council meet next Tuesday (9<sup>th</sup> February) to decide its position on the application. He said Andy Fussell had been asked to answer outstanding question on sustainability, but would not be present when the PC made its decision.

Anyone making comments on this application should send them to Mendip and they must quote the reference number 2021/0071/OTS to get the comment registered.

Hugh Williams

Clerk to Rode Parish Council