

3/37/19/021

The Environment and Planning Committee met on 28 August and received a presentation from Ian Timms on behalf of Tameer Homes. Rebecca Miller, Head Planning Specialist, Somerset West and Taunton Council were in attendance. Councillors and members of the public had submitted a range of questions and answers were received. In addition, two members of the public addressed the Committee.

A number of issues of concern were raised in response to the documents making up the application submitted but it was noted that documents were still being added to the website. Many of the issues were awaiting responses from statutory consultees and it was noted that the Highways Authority had requested extra time to comment. In the light of this, the Council reserves the right to make further comment once more documents are received.

Concern was raised about the level of consultation, the increase in traffic, the number of dwellings proposed, flood risk, pressure on local infrastructure such as education facilities, doctor's appointments, sewage capacity, and water supply, transport services, environmental impact, and the likely number and quality of jobs anticipated.

It was a matter of considerable concern that since the mill was operational when the Local Plan was approved, the site was not considered as a site available for housing such that the proposed dwellings would be additional to the sites designated in the Plan. This, given the large number of dwellings in the planning pipeline was, if all were delivered could result in the population of Watchet doubling. This would mean Watchet / Williton taking an unbalanced share of new housing. With reference to that, the current status of the proposed Cleeve Hill development (3/37/18/015) was questioned and a clarification is still awaited since it was noted that it was not part of the published Transport Assessment with the agreement of the Highways Authority.

Concern was raised at the level of Affordable Housing proposed and the Committee wanted to see a clear commitment to the 35% level which is policy in the Local Plan. It was noted that negotiation of the Section 106 agreement would follow a Viability Assessment undertaken on behalf of Tameer Homes and that the district council could commission its own work to inform its negotiations. The Committee urges that this option be seriously considered should the level of Affordable Homes proposed fall below 35%.