



West Monkton Parish Council

Planning Application Comments

14/21/0047 - Application for outline planning permission with all matters reserved, except for access, comprising up to 1,450 dwellings, up to 4.91 hectares of land for strategic employment uses, up to 8 hectares of land for a through school, mixed use district centre including mobility hub, community facilities, green infrastructure, drainage works, and associated works, on land at Walford Cross, Monkton Heathfield.

Introduction, context, and considerations

The Parish Council has prepared these comments in relation to updated plans, reports and proposals submitted in respect of the above application in January 2024.

In developing these comments, consultation has taken place with members of our community including:

- Public Consultation Event on 24th February at Creech St Michael Village Hall
- Public Consultation Event on 26th February at Brittons Ash Community Hall
- Sharing information about the proposals on the Parish Council websites and Facebook pages requesting comments and / or the completion of an online feedback form.

These consultation activities have generated comments and concerns about the proposal from our community and these are reflected in the Parish Councils comments below.

Position of the Parish Council

Whilst the Parish Council generally supports the application, it strongly objects to the highway elements of the proposal.

Further explanation of the position of Parish Council is provided below.

The Parish Council has, jointly with Creech St Michael Parish Council, been discussing the S106 agreement for the community infrastructure elements of the development and welcomes the agreement by Somerset Council and the Developer that both Parish Councils will be signatories on the S106 agreement.

Highways

The Parish Council strongly objects to the removal of a relief road / ERR2.

A new illustrative masterplan was shared with the Parish Council in March / April 2023 in its draft form. The draft masterplan illustrated the removal of the ERR2 and instead proposing modifications to the existing A38. The Parish Council believes strongly that the removal of ERR2 and A38 traffic instead

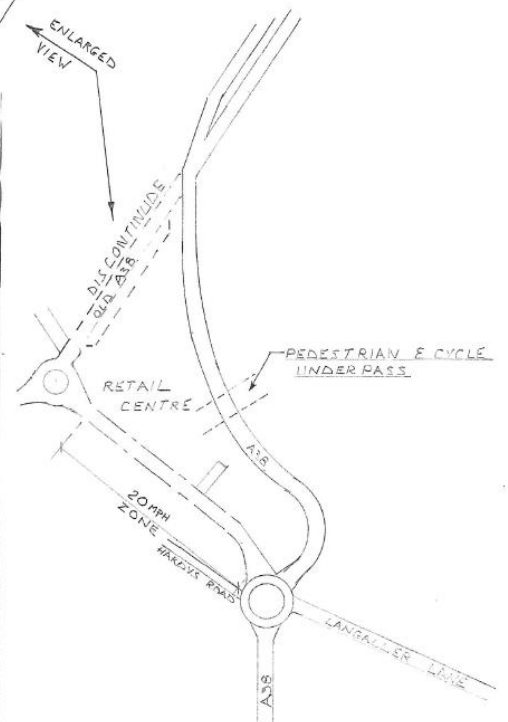
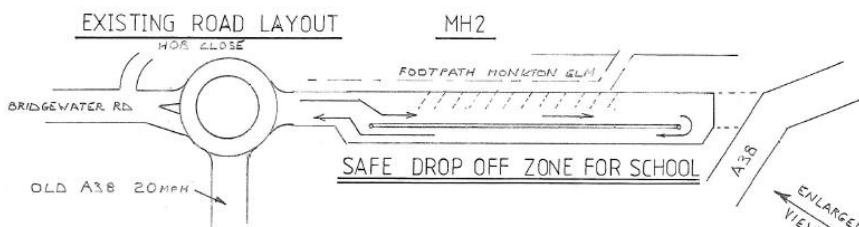
continuing on its existing route and in between the existing MH1 and proposed MH2 developments will have the following impact on the local area:

- Pedestrians, cyclists, and school children will not be able to safely navigate the A38 to get to / from the facilities that are proposed in MH2, including a Through School and a District Centre.
- The continuous flow of traffic on the A38 (between 10,000 and 15,000 vehicle movements per day) will segregate the new community moving into the MH2 development from the wider community.
- There will be a significant increase in traffic movements on Monkton Heathfield Road, and potential rat running through Goosenford / Cheddon Fitzpaine impacting on the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

The Parish Council has at every opportunity, voiced its concerns about the highways proposals to the Developer and Planning Officer from April 2023 to date. The Parish Council has also met with Somerset Council Highways Officers, the Executive Member for Highways at Somerset Council, the local MP and corresponded with National Highways about the proposals to no avail.

In April 2023, the Parish Council responded to the proposals, suggesting an alternative road layout, illustrated below in a sketch which was submitted to the Planning Officer, the Developer and Somerset Council Highways in June 2023.

The Parish Council considers that this alternative road layout would improve pedestrian and cyclist safety through the provision of a pedestrian underpass and would also provide a drop off zone for the school. Traffic will be discouraged from using the Monkton Heathfield Road but instead to continue on the A38 / ERR where a more direct route is provided. This alternative would not require any additional road building and therefore there would be no increase in cost to the Developer. The road could be built prior to the build of houses and provide access for construction traffic and access to all phases of the development.



Despite the many representations made by the Parish Council it is disappointing that the submitted proposals only provide for modification of the A38 rather than a relief road or alternative road layout as suggested by the Parish Council.

In respect of the highway proposals that have been submitted the Parish Council makes the following comments and suggested amendments:

- A foot and cycle path should be provided from the A38 junction with Monkton Heathfield Road to the access road to Walford House / Springfield to enable active travel.
- The access road to Walford House / Springfield has not been included in the plans submitted and it is therefore presumed that the existing arrangements for accessing the drive/road to these properties and for crossing the A38 will be maintained. The Parish Council suggests that the central reservation of the A38 needs to be widened to enable vehicle to access / exit the road without causing an obstruction on the carriageway.
- The Parish Council has concerns about the proposed varying road widths on A38 from Walford Cross to the junction with Monkton Heathfield Road where it changes from two lanes to one lane at three or four locations. The Parish Council suggests that the A38 from Walford Cross down to the District Centre / Cricket Club roundabout is single carriageway to reduce traffic speeds and that the speed limit on this stretch of road is lowered to 40mph.
- The speed limit on Monkton Heathfield Road from Blundells Lane to the junction with the A38 should be reduced to 20mph to reflect the speed limit already in place through Monkton Heathfield and to deter drivers from driving through Monkton Heathfield.
- The Parish Council supports the proposed improvements at the A38 junction with Monkton Heathfield Road. The traffic lights should be triggered / timed to ensure that they hold traffic and deter road users from turning right at the junction and using Monkton Heathfield Road. The timing of the traffic lights should only allow a short window of time for cars to turn right.
- All road improvements proposed between the A38 / Monkton Heathfield Road junction and Langaller Roundabout should form part of phase 1 of the development to ensure the safe crossing of children to the new school and pedestrian / cycle movements to the District Centre.
- The Cricket Club junction / roundabout should be traffic light controlled to encourage use of the ERR by traffic, avoid traffic movements onto Bridgwater Road / Bawler Road and to enable a light controlled pedestrian crossing point.
- All crossing points between the A38 junction with Monkton Heathfield Road and the Langaller Roundabout should be raised to slow vehicle speeds. Central islands on uncontrolled crossing points should be provided to ensure pedestrian safety. If the crossing points along this stretch of road are to be classified as a safe route to school, do they meet the requirements for that designation?
- Cycle path and footpath connections towards Creech St Michael along Langaller Lane should be included on both sides of the road to enable school children from Creech St Michael to walk / cycle to school safely.
- Langaller Roundabout / Junction – the road design is unclear. The plans indicate that a traffic light-controlled crossing will be provided at one of the junctions but not all four. How will traffic flows be managed? Who has the priority? Is this junction a roundabout or traffic light controlled? The Parish Council is concerned that confusion may be caused by the proposed road layout which may cause incidents.
- Sufficient access roads to areas of the development must be provided to enable sufficient emergency access. The illustrative masterplan indicates that at least one area of the development

only has one road in / out. More than one access road should be included if the number of homes proposed exceeds the threshold.

- The proposals should be expanded to include improvements to the ERR between the Hardys Road Roundabout and the Canal Roundabout so that two lanes of traffic can be provided, one lane turning left to proceed to Bathpool / on the A38 and the other to turn right to proceed on the WRR / A3259. This will enable the better flow of traffic and greater use of the ERR / WRR. The Parish Council understands from a meeting with Somerset Council Highways that there is currently sufficient road width to enable this improvement to be made.

Bus Gate:

It is noted that the Transport Assessment Addendum Monkton Heathfield Phase 2, prepared by SLR (trading as Vectos (South) Limited), refers to the Monkton Heathfield Road Bus Gate and states that:

5.6 As part of the transport strategy for Monkton Heathfield Phase 1, which has now been built out, a bus gate was proposed on Monkton Heathfield Road to reduce traffic flows along the Monkton Heathfield Road corridor.

5.7 It is understood that following consultation, an agreement has yet to be reached with the local community on the implementation of a bus gate, indicating that this is no longer a preferred option. As a result of this extended period of consultation, the necessary funds to implement such a scheme have now been significantly depleted such that its implementation is no longer possible.

5.8 Given changes in contemporary guidance and agreements to vary policy SS 1 of the Taunton Deane Core Strategy 2011 to 2028, including removal of the ERR2 in place of wider placemaking improvements, it is considered that traffic flows will not be detrimental to wider policy objectives and as such proposals for the bus gate are no longer required.

5.9 Based on the above reasons and for the purposes of this assessment, it is assumed that the bus gate will not be implemented, and existing traffic flows will need to be accommodated.

The Parish Council considers that the statements made in these paragraphs are incorrect for the following reasons:

- Paragraph 5.7 infers that consultation with the local community has taken place regarding the implementation of the bus gate. Consultation has not taken place with the local community. The Parish Council has engaged in conversation with the Developer and Somerset Council Highways about the delivery of the bus gate but at no point has the Parish Council indicated that not implementing a bus gate is a preferred option.
- In recent correspondence with Somerset Council Highways (February 2024), it was confirmed that it is still the intention of Somerset Council to implement a bus gate, subject to the location of it being agreed.
- Paragraph 5.8 indicates that there has been a variation of policy SS1 which required the delivery of ERR2. This is incorrect. Policy SS1 has not been amended, rather supplementary planning policy has been approved / made since the Core Strategy / Policy SS1.
- If Somerset Council Highways and the Developer have made the decision that the bus gate is not going to be delivered, as inferred in the Traffic Assessment Addendum, traffic flows on Monkton Heathfield Road as a result of the proposed development will increase significantly. The Parish Council deployed its Speed Indicator Device on Monkton Heathfield Road (near the junction with

Richards Crescent) from 15th December 2023 to 22nd January 2024. The results demonstrated that there are already on average 4500 vehicle movements a day. Improvements, including traffic calming measures i.e. gateways, build outs and crossing points and possible restrictions on Bawler Road, need to therefore be made on Monkton Heathfield Road to and from the development before the occupation of any property on MH2 to deter traffic from using the road and to instead use the A38 / ERR / WRR.

Modelling

It is noted that the Transport Assessment Addendum Appendix D Vision & Validate Inputs/Outputs document makes the following modelling assumptions from the Development:

- There will be a 9% increase in traffic flows on Monkton Heathfield Road.
- Only 45% of residents in the new development will be car / van users.
- Only 3% of residents in the new development will use the bus.
- That the District Centre will not provide a chemist / pharmacy nor a bakery.
- That 824 jobs will be made available within the development.

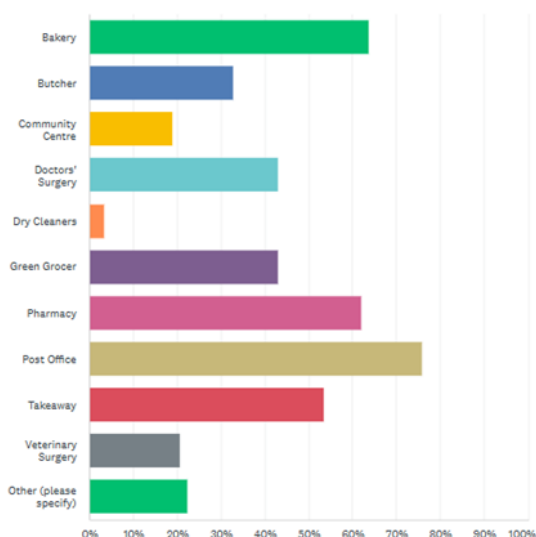
The Parish Council questions and challenges these figures for the following reasons:

- It is inevitable that the number of vehicles using Monkton Heathfield Road will increase by more than 9% as a result of the development. 1450 homes are proposed which is likely to result in three thousand cars. Further consideration of traffic calming improvements on Monkton Heathfield Road to and from the development, as outlined above, is needed.
- The development should encourage greater use of buses so that more than 3% of residents use the bus. Bus services need to be provided through the development from phase 1, at first occupation, to encourage a change in travel habits and greater use of the bus.

There is high local need for a pharmacy / chemist in the District Centre. A pharmacy wanted to locate in the MH1 retail centre but unfortunately it seemed that no accommodation could be made there. In addition, feedback from a recent survey conducted by the Parish Council has indicated a need by the local community for small local shops like a bakery, pharmacy, and post office. A copy of the results from the survey is available below. The traffic modelling assumptions should be amended so as to ensure that these types of shops are not prevented from being provided in the District Centre.

It is anticipated that a planning application will be submitted during 2021 for the next stage of development in West Monkton and neighbouring Creech St Michael - the Urban Extension Phase 2. Within the development, a District Centre will be delivered. To inform the comments that the Parish Council submit to Somerset West and Taunton Council (the Local Planning Authority) in relation to the upcoming planning application, a poll has been developed to understand the services and shops that the community most need in the District Centre. Please complete the poll below to indicate your preferences, if a shop / service you would like to see doesn't appear in the poll, please select 'Other' and add your suggestion. Thanks for your time.

Answered: 58 Skipped: 0



Pedestrian / Cycle Improvements

The Parish Council supports the proposed off-site improvements to pedestrian and cycle lanes along Bridgwater Road, from Brittons Ash to Bathpool. The Parish Council requests that the proposed improvements between the Canal roundabout and Bathpool are amended to include a dropped kerb at the rear of the pavement to allow cyclists to continue down Dyers Lane and onto the canal towpath.

Area of Development to North of Monkton Elm Garden Centre (The Elms)

It is noted that the cycle / pedestrian lanes proposed for the area of development to the north of Monkton Elm Garden Centre will require the removal of the existing hedge along Monkton Heathfield Road. The Parish Council suggests that rather than removing the hedge, the cycle / footpath is placed behind the hedge. This would also enable the hedge to act as a screen for particulate matter from vehicle emissions for those using the path.

The Parish Council also questions whether there is a need for a footpath on Blundells Lane and to the northeast of the attenuation pond.

The Parish Council suggests that when the detailed reserved matters application for this area of development is submitted it should include the following:

- A community orchard to the northeast of the site. This was included in other plans previously submitted but has been removed.
- Screening along the boundary at the northeast of the development for the neighbouring properties.
- The location of the housing and allotment sites to the north are swapped to reduce the impact on neighbouring properties.
- Modifications to the culvert, ditch, and attenuation pond along Blundells Lane and under Monkton Heathfield Road are included. The increased water flow from the development into the existing infrastructure will overwhelm it, potentially flooding roads, and nearby property, as it is already at capacity.

District Centre

The District Centre, following no retail units being provided in MH1, is of significant importance to the wider community and it is therefore vital that the District Centre is completed, and units occupied by the time phase one is completed. Trigger points and financial bonds should be included in legal agreements in respect of the Development to ensure completion of the District Centre in phase one.

The Parish Council also expresses the following concerns in relation to the District Centre:

- Sufficient parking / vehicular access to the school must be provided. A drop off point for car and school buses is vital. If there is not sufficient provision, parents / carers will park vehicles in neighbouring residential streets or in the car parks of nearby local businesses.
- As outlined above, the modelling data assumes that no pharmacy will be delivered. There is a high local demand for a pharmacy / chemist.
- Where a retail / business unit is proposed, any residential property above must not have a restrictive covenant that restricts the use of the unit beneath, this was an issue in MH1 that resulted in the non-delivery of retail units.
- Sufficient parking needs to be provided in the District Centre for the proposed community use of pitches / hall / facilities outside of school hours.

- A sufficient footprint for the Community Hall needs to be provided for external storage alongside the main community hall building.

Phasing

The Parish Council believes that the following amendments are needed to the proposed phasing of the development:

- Access to the southern allotment site and scout hut land near Langaller should be delivered as part of phase one.
- The employment land should be delivered and comprehensively marketed in an earlier phase. Perhaps the use of HIF funding repaid from the Staplegrove development could enable the earlier delivery of employment land in phase one or two rather than in phase four. This would enable local employment opportunities for those people purchasing houses and residing in Langaller Park reducing the reliance on the car in line with the Garden Town Principles.
- All road improvements proposed between the A38 / Monkton Heathfield Road junction and Langaller Roundabout should form part of phase one of the development to ensure the safe crossing of children to the new school and pedestrian / cycle movements to the District Centre.

More generally, following the experiences from MH1 and the non-delivery of retail units and sports pitches, the Parish Council feels strongly that trigger points should be agreed for delivery of all obligations. The Parish Council would like to be consulted on the trigger points, including any re-negotiation of them. Once the trigger points are agreed they must be enforceable and financial penalties / bonds should be included in S106 agreement. This step will avoid a repeat of experiences in MH1.

Affordable and social housing must be delivered in the development of 25%. This should also be included in the S106 agreement and not be negotiable.

Allotments

The proposed allotment sites, both of which will be delivered in phase one, should be fenced off and a water and electric supply provided as early as possible. The southern allotment site should be provided with access as outlined in 'phasing' above.

Wetlands

It is noted that the Wetlands are being provided by the developer to satisfy the phosphate mitigation requirement of the Development. The phosphate mitigation provided by the Wetland will be required to be assured and in place for the next 80 / 100 years. As such the obligation / responsibility for the ongoing delivery of the phosphate mitigation by the Wetland should remain with the Developer.

Topsoil

As the existing use of the land is agricultural, a condition should be included whereby the top four inches of soil is removed and stored on site for use in each garden. This will enable each garden to have at least 200mm of topsoil which will enable growing of vegetables in support of declared climate emergency objectives.