

**Frome Town Council
Frome Town Hall
Christchurch Street West
Frome
BA11 1EB**

Matthew Kendrick
Grass Roots Planning Ltd
Unit 106
86-88 Colston Street
Bristol
BS1 5BB

3 November 2020

Selwood Garden Community

Dear Matthew

Following our Council meeting on 28 October, the following was agreed as a formal response to the pre-application consultation.

Frome Town Council is not fundamentally opposed to a town extension that creates an opportunity to provide planned development with much needed facilities and infrastructure for the town. Before we are able to support or object to this, we have to be able to justify our support, or our objection, in terms of the benefits such a development will bring to our community, or identify that these benefits are not sufficient. As we know, there is a lot more work to be done before we can fully understand the impacts and potential benefits.

We also need to be able to fully evaluate all the issues that were raised as part of the engagement feedback. A lot of this information will not be available until the Outline application is submitted to MDC, at which point detailed ecology surveys, traffic impact assessments and modelling, details of the Design Codes, plus much more information will be available to scrutinise.

As this proposal is still at the pre-application consultation stage, we have an opportunity now to help shape the proposals before they are submitted to MDC. This is in line with our approach to all new developments throughout the town, working with all individuals and developers/promoters to influence any proposals before the final plans are submitted to ensure that that all development benefits the town.

Councillors have stated that the figure of 1700 houses is too high, and would want to see a reduced number of houses. This would enable the development to reflect a post-Covid society with houses providing space for home working, additional public space (including allotments) and additional work opportunities.

The approach to transport needs to be far more radical. The proposed development should be both anticipating the change in how people travel in the future and promoting it. This is an opportunity to challenge peoples dependency on the car, particularly in light of the Climate Emergency declared by all three tiers of Council in this area.

At the moment, the masterplan is based around car use with active travel infrastructure being an add on – this emphasis needs to be reversed. The approach to transport must be around making walking, cycling and public transport the obvious and easy choice while challenging our instinctive use of the car for all journeys. The Design Review Panel have said that in a post-Covid world we might expect a 20% reduction in traffic movement, so this needs to be considered. We feel now is the right time to undertake a comprehensive independent transport assessment of the town and hope that together with our Mendip and Somerset Cllrs we can ensure this happens. We are keen to work with LVA to explore how this might be achieved.

We are particularly concerned with the access along Little Keyford and in line with our response on the allocated Keyford sites, access should be from the B3092 Blatchbridge Road. Promoter/developers should be making financial investment in public transport not leaving it to the bus companies alone. Foot/cycle links over/under the bypass should be provided and there must be an active travel route to the train station, not just an aspiration for one. The whole site should be completely permeable to walking and cycling by the shortest routes, including links with the allocated Keyford sites.

There should be adequate employment provision such that all residents could potentially work on the site (i.e. no net increase in commuting elsewhere). We support Selwood Parish Council in their view that the land on the west side of the A361 or anywhere outside the Frome By-Pass, should not be developed as this will eventually lead to “development creep”.

Zoning should be less rigid - there should be more mixing up of activities and house types etc (as in the older parts of Frome).

There is a lot of apprehension over what will happen if permission is granted and how we can ensure the proposals will not be diluted once reserved matters applications come forward. There is concern that this can not be achieved using design codes. This needs to be embedded into the proposals and legally binding, with the outline application encouraging the planning authority to place safeguards on future development.

We are also concerned over the provision of infrastructure and what guarantees there will be that the proposed infrastructure will be provided and at what stage of the development. We share the residents concern that the proposals will put too much strain on the existing infrastructure in the town, i.e. doctors surgeries and school places. There is also the question of what additional investment will be made towards the towns existing infrastructure, including highways in respect of S106 contributions.

From the discussions we have had with residents there is genuine concern that the Town's infrastructure is not capable of coping with such a development. Therefore, in addition to the discussions LVA have had with the key stakeholders, we would also like to arrange specific meetings with key stakeholders to understand their thoughts and requirements over the next decade, these would include, but not limited to –

- Medical Centre (NHS)
- Schools & SCC Education
- Youth and young People
- Friends of River Frome

We are living in a climate emergency where minimising carbon emissions are essential. The proposed development has the potential to set a new standard in build quality, so it is essential that all buildings are built to the highest environmental standards, designing towards Passivhaus standards and taking a fabric first approach.

Finally, we feel that the Vision should be strengthened to reflect all the above ambitions. To gain our support, any proposals, need to be truly visionary in its commitment to the future wellbeing of our town and beyond.

Yours Sincerely



Jane Llewellyn
Planning & Development Manager

Attachments :

Summary of feedback from the engagement meeting on 21 October 2020

By email only:

CC, Simon Trafford, Team Leader – Development Management, Mendip District Council