

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting held on
27th June 2023 at 19.30hrs, at the **Iminster Meeting House & Arts Centre,**
East Street, Iminster, TA19 0AN

Chair: Cllr B Hamilton

Committee: Cllr P Burton, Cllr M Gunn, Cllr M James, Cllr J Karchud, Cllr V Keitch, Cllr I MacKillop, Cllr A Shearman, Cllr S Shepherd, Cllr N Tinson

Officers: M Tredwin (Town Clerk), V Freeman (Administration Officer) A Brown (Administration Officer)

In attendance: 24 members of the public

2023-0069-TC Public Forum

A member of the public asked why the meeting had been called at less than a week's notice.

She would welcome a statement on whether the phosphates issue has been resolved and how.

In section 2 the reference to the Iminster Neighbourhood Plan should be preceded by the word draft as the plan has yet to be put to a referendum.

2023-0070-TC Apologies for Absence

Cllr L Taylor

Cllr B Jenner-Hurford

Cllr S Osborne

Cllr D Paul

The Clerk has confirmed that reasons have been provided.

2023-0071-TC Declarations of Interest

Cllr Keitch declared an interest in agenda item 5 Proposed Persimmon Homes Development at Canal Way, Iminster as she is a Somerset Councillor.

Cllr Hamilton declared an interest in agenda item 5 Proposed Persimmon Homes Development at Canal Way, Iminster as he has a personal interest as he lives in the close vicinity of the proposed development.

2023-0072-TC Dispensations

There were no dispensations requested or granted.

2023-0073-TC Proposed Persimmon Homes Development at Canal Way, Iminster

Jamie Grant of Persimmon Homes and Simon Coles, a Planning Consultant addressed Members.

They advised Members that they wanted to come to the meeting to talk to Members about the updated plans whilst still in the draft stage.

Members were advised that there has been an exhaustive re-examination of the design parameters by a completely new team, they have spent the last few months updating various elements from the 2016/2017 plan.

The phosphates issue has delayed progress but that has now been resolved.

The S106 agreement was not signed on the original application and as such will be reviewed to take into account updated information.

The proposal is now for between 340 and 360 homes, which meets the requirements of Somerset Council.

Members were advised that it is never easy to get timings for meetings right, it is hard to get the balance right. There will be other opportunities for residents to express their opinions of the proposal in due course when the revised Outline and Full applications are submitted.

The S106 process was explained and the process for how the funding is obtained to support local projects. The S106 agreement will be a signed legal document between Somerset Council and the developer.

CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) was also explained. CIL is calculated at a flat rate on the square meterage of the development.

With the S106 funding the developer is willing to look more closely at the various projects to be supported.

Open spaces can be looked at once again, which will include sports pitches.

Members were invited to ask questions.

The representatives of Persimmon were advised that the emergency access was inadequate.

It was considered that the balance ponds for the water runoff are no way adequate – there would be attenuation schemes put in place. The water would drain into the balance ponds and drain off at a slower rate.

The pond from the previous project has not been maintained. There were concerns raised that promises from Persimmon have not been kept – Legal agreements are being tightened up. The Local Authority (Somerset Council) can take action against Management Company. The legal agreement and management company hasn't been agreed yet. They consider themselves a very different company now and the choice of management company is vital.

The representatives were asked how can we trust a company when the wording on the drawings are not accurate.

There are concerns regarding the size of the roads not just for emergency vehicles but also for recovery vehicles.

The new houses will have a big impact on the sewerage system in Ilminster if the overflowing rainwater flows into the sewerage.

Doctors surgery provision is going to be heavily affected, a large development will have a big impact on the infrastructure.

The Transport Section of Persimmon need to consult with the fire station.

A Member asked can you help us understand the philosophy around the vehicles. The plans do not appear to be clear as to whether the estate is designed for people first or cars first.

Members were advised that cars will be behind the homes with garages and parking. They would like to remove vehicles from the front of the homes. The outline it is not as highly detailed as the final stages. This will be more apparent in the more detailed designs will make give it a better feel.

A Member raised the point that Single access roads have caused major issues in other developments.

Persimmon have been involved in the schemes with single access, they need to make sure the design allows for significant access. A travel plan will be put in place using S106 to incentive use of cycling and public transport.

The single point of access will be by the surgery and which is already notorious. Peak times will see 350 cars coming out.

Schooling in Ilminster, Somerset Council has not allocated any funding to the school. The area can be used for something else as the land is owned by Somerset Council. Waiting for the education plans to be confirmed. They will either ask for a financial solution or put forward another plan.

Green and biodiversity, will there be enough vehicle charging points for all the vehicles and who will pay for the charging?

Persimmons advised building regs will set the standard of what is required. There will be allocated space with a mechanism for charging vehicles.

The term affordable housing was explained. Registered providers, housing associations will take over control of the affordable housing using a cascade. 35% of the development will be affordable housing.

Historically affordable housing was seen as smaller than other housing.

Members were advised national standards now set minimum sizes for rooms and affordable housing has to meet the national standards. Tenure blind housing means that people will not know whether housing is affordable or not. All housing needs to be disabled accessible – building regulations will dictate the requirements.

Residents were invited to ask questions.

A resident advised that he has been a resident of a previous Persimmon development who pays £250 a year and he currently is finding it difficult to get any work done. How do Persimmon plan to manage the new homes.

The current drainage ponds and drainage ditches have not been cleared for over 5 years, they are all blocked.

A Member advised that whilst in a previous SSDC role that he had lots of meetings to deal with the clearing the drains and culverts and these will be the ones that the new development will feed into. Officers at SSDC had to deal with 5 different managers, and had to keep starting all over again.

Members were advised that this will be looked at when the detailed design plans are put into place.

Who checks that the work is up to standard?

Members were advised that Somerset Council as the lead local flooding authority will need to approve plans.

There were concerns raised about Herne Hill Conservation area and what plans are in place to protect the wildlife and the amount of water that runs off the hill.

Members were advised that the developers are waiting for more detailed plans and that they are talking to the Environmental Agency and the Lead Flood authority.

A member of the public raised the rumour that Persimmon own a 'ransom' strip of land near the doctors surgery which could be used as emergency access.

Members were advised that Persimmon do not own that 'ransom' strip, it is owned by someone else.

A resident on a previous Persimmon development asked what guarantees he could be given that the new development management company would be any better as currently their phone calls are not answered and they have to go cap in hand to ask for any work to be done. The trees are not cut back and the grass hasn't been cut.

A resident asked, in general terms, what is their method for dealing with the phosphate issues.

Members were advised that this is an issue which has prevented most developments throughout the South West. The issue often sits with the foul sewerage issues and they have now appointed a company. They will be looking to mitigate 36/36 kg of phosphate, the biggest issue is the farming issue. They know that creating wetlands would not work. Look at fouling land. A number of different schemes are being looked at but right now there are few immediate solutions. Buying phosphate credits may be a solution by using offsite solutions within the catchment area.

A resident advised that he is and will continue to monitor and test the water in the River Ile over the coming years.

The meeting Chair thanked Jamie Grant and Simon Coles for attending the meeting.

Meeting ended at 20.40