

Please complete the various sections of the form below as appropriate and return to the
Development Control Manager by: 02 December 2021

Name of Parish/Town Council	Middlezoy
Application Reference	34/21/00008/ACN
Location	Land to the East of Back Lane, Middlezoy, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA7

	Tick if Appropriate
This Council has no observations to offer	
This Council objects this proposal on the following valid planning grounds	
<p>The primary grounds for rejection of this application are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road Safety concerns • Impact on neighbouring properties – loss of privacy • Compliance with local planning policy • Environmental issues • Insufficient public consultation <p>These factors are detailed below:</p> <p>Within the supplied Planning Statement and Community Involvement document September 2021 the following points are made:</p> <p><i>1.2 Extensive consultation with the parish council and steering group tasked with the delivery of affordable homes.</i></p> <p>Response: This has not taken place and is contrary to the Local Planning Policy page 85. This would also generate questions around who is responsible for the maintenance of the area and the safety aspects linked to the pond. There has never been consultation with Summerfield</p> <p><i>5.172 It is generally expected that such schemes will be community-led. Promoters will be encouraged to carry out meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with Parish Councils and other local stakeholders in advance of a detailed scheme being submitted.</i></p> <p>Response: Consultation took place on 22/11/2018 sites favoured were Back Lane and were based at the time for the offer of a community facility to house the local shop and post office. No consideration of this has been made in this application.</p> <p>Response: The documents referred to in 1.3.6 relate to consultation during 2018. Minute reference point 19/02/2019 2.6 concludes:</p> <p><i>It was agreed that there was a need for Affordable Housing in Middlezoy but there needed to be further public consultation and, if there were alternative viable sites, for the Parish Council to identify them.</i></p>	

Response: This is currently in process as a result of the most recent housing needs assessment and was agreed at the meeting at which Sedgemoor District Council representatives Esther Carter and Duncan Harvey were present.

2.6 Fulfils an identified local housing need for affordable homes as evidence by an up-to-date assessment of local housing needs agreed with the district council

Response: The assessment (May 2021) identified the need for twenty-six affordable homes not the ten being proposed in the planning application. This falls short of sixteen and fails to meet the needs identified for 3-bedroom affordable homes.

5.3.1 unmet housing need identified

Response: As above the need is still un-met through this application

6 Community Involvement

9 (1.2) extensive and exhaustive site selection and consultation/engagement exercises

Response: The consultation has been looking at alternative sites for the housing needs as sited above. The only other public consultation to have taken place with Acorn of which Neal Jillings was part of was during the period 2018/19. No recent consultation has taken place to allow for public enquiry on the new plan and application.

Within the supplied Measures Only Travel Statement (Hydrock) September 2021 the following points are made:

1.2.2 Delivered successfully, Travel Plan measures can help solve a number of practical issues associated with travel. In summary, the implementation of Travel Plan measures are intended to bring forward the following benefits: -

Encouragement of safe and viable alternatives to single occupant vehicles for travel to and from the development site.

Identification of pragmatic travel initiatives to encourage non-car modes of travel and car-sharing; Fewer vehicle trips than would otherwise have been the case.

and A reduction in overall vehicle mileage and an associated reduction in environmental pollution.

Response: in line with the Local Plan pages 84-86 this does not improve or enhance the area increasing traffic and making unsafe for pedestrians and by removing the bus stop will increase single occupancy travel rather than reduce. This also sites reduction in overall vehicle mileage, consideration post covid should consider the design of properties affording space for home working which the plans fail to do.

3.2.4 Proximity of site to local facilities

Response: The table above refers to facilities that are no longer in operation highlighting dated material being used in the generation of the reports. Namely: Othery Shop, Post Office, Baker (all closed) – Beehive Studios (closed)

School is within walking distance but road safety through visibility/lack of pavements is a safety concern.

3.2.5 Walkable Neighbourhood and accessible cycle routes to local amenities

Response: as above the amenities are no longer present and roads around the village are National Speed Limit.

3.4.1 Bus Stop by the George Inn

Response: this is the only bus stop affording two way boarding in the village and will be removed this correlates with the Local Plan page 105/106 7.18 and page 131 7.1222

4.3.2 Will not result in a change to the character of surrounding roads, these will remain lightly trafficked/low speed environment – suitable for pedestrians/cyclists.

Response: Back Lane will see an increase in traffic from the site and reduction in pedestrians due to the size of the road and limited movement for pedestrians to traverse safely, particularly young families. This goes against local planning policy page 109 D2/page 131 7.122/page 132 D13

The Parish Council feels that the development goes against guidance in the Local Plan as follows:

5.169

It will not meet economic sustainability as fails to provide a community resource in a village at risk of losing its village shop and post office

The layout does not provide for 3-bedroom affordable homes as highlighted in the May 2021 Housing Needs Assessment

The total number of homes determined from the housing needs assessment are not being met by this development.

7.18

Design should encourage a healthier lifestyle and encourage cycling which is more likely to do the opposite in a village that has no footpaths or street lighting. The increase of family homes will increase (hopefully) families with children. The plans do not mitigate for this safety concern.

As above the loss of the bus stop is not encouraging public transport usage or reduction of vehicle mileage for solo occupants.

7.73

Consultation with stakeholders including Parish Councils has not taken place as suggested should happen

7.122

Safety concerns for cycling and walking due to increased traffic are not being met and lack of infrastructure to support increased cycling and walking.

Policy D13 (page 132/133) Supporting Travel Improvement Plans

There is no evidence that the design will improve the ability to cycle or walk in and around the village with safety needs being addressed. The reduction in miles travelled to meet the demands of climate change could be assisted through the ability to work from home, but the housing designs to not incorporate space for this to happen.

Adverse effects to the environment include increased traffic, noise and pollution affecting people and wildlife.

7.19 Reflecting changes in society and work life balance

The reference to lack of space to incorporate home working is relevant under this heading.

Loss of services if the village shop goes with no available provision on the new development would cause further travel to either Bridgwater/Somerton or Langport which is increasing the burden on the environment not reducing.

7.24 Integrated transport

The development goes against this with loss of bus stop, increased traffic and increased road safety concerns along Back Lane.

Policy D2

The Council are committed to providing high quality inclusive developments. Linked to the housing needs survey not being addressed for twenty-six homes not ten and no 3-bedroom provision being considered. The lack of cycle areas being provided to aid the connection across the district, environment concerns and lack of safety mitigation for the area for pedestrians.

Policy D23

Ecology report in dated 2017 are out of date, bats have been seen within the village and an updated report should be undertaken.

Policy D24

Pollution impact – increase in vehicles will increase pollution and absence of bus stop will affect this.

Habitat of wildlife/bats and small mammals at risk.

Protecting residential amenities – Weymont Close residents will be overlooked (and vice versa)

Policy D28

Increased use of Back Lane will see reduction in walking and cycling this route going against the local plan.

Policy D34

There is no mention of the requirement as outlined in the local plan to provide outdoor recreational playing space in accordance with the guidance set out on page 172 for developments of eight or more dwellings. **Recognition of this is required.**

D35 New development that creates a need for additional provision that cannot be met through existing facilities will be expected to meet any identified shortfall.

Had consultation taken place with the Parish Council and community the concerns about the local services would have been recognised and spoken about in relation to D35 and the village shop. This is increased with the dated information included in the report in relation to available provision in the neighbouring village of Othry which is no longer in operation.

At the time of the original consultation there was documented comments (7/6/2019) by the district council by Esther Carter that either the Parish Council should go along with it as it will happen anyway. This was later smoother over by Duncan Harvey to calm the situation and as a result subsequent sites being investigated.

Access to the field adjacent may prove problematic as not all field boundaries are owned by the same farmer and access could present an issue.

No legal guarantee that the developer would provide the number of affordable homes that are detailed in the plan.

Background information for the Objection:

The applicant gives the impression that the Parish Council has not been engaged in trying to further the development of affordable housing in the village. This is untrue, but it has been hampered by the Covid outbreak and the numerous delays it has caused as people have not been working as normal. That being said, they have done their best and are now in a position to put forward an alternative proposal that is acceptable to the village, meets planning policy without the need for highways engineering.

Originally the Parish Council was led to believe that the only way they could get Affordable Housing in the village was to accept a number of houses for sale as well. The housing needs survey of Aug 2017 identified a need for 11 Affordable homes, (7 x 1 bed, 2 x 2 bed, 2 x 3 bed) but to make it profitable for the builders they would need to build 28, 10 of which would be Affordable and 18 for sale. They worked with Sedgemoor District Council officers on this project and arrived at two sites. There was a consultation with Sedgemoor District Council officers on the two sites, (planned by Acorn builders) with local residents in November 2018 and of the two, Back Lane was preferable but was not favoured because of the blind junction between Nethermoor Road and Main Road and the four ninety degree blind bends in Nethermoor Road and Back Lane. The Parish Council then became aware that they could build affordable homes without market value homes and discussed this with SHAL (a local Affordable Housing Association). SHAL agreed to enter into the project with the Parish Council. The Parish Council also became aware of the growing concerns of the village about the Back Lane site so asked Sedgemoor to stop doing investigations on Back Lane. Sedgemoor District Council officers continued with the surveys, despite being asked to stop as they said they had already paid and couldn't ask the contractors to work elsewhere.

The Parish Council then started to investigate alternative sites as more landowners identified land parcels. Most of these had some problems such as being too far out of the village, having to have road infrastructure work, being on a flood plain and causing run off onto the A372. Covid got in the way of this investigation but over a period of time all sites were visited by SHAL's CEO and Development Officer. One of these sites was subject to probate and due to the complexity of the estate and the delays caused by Covid, this was not settled until March 2021.

In the interim the Parish Council requested that a new Housing needs survey be completed and this was done in June 2020 and the results published May 2021. The results of which were quite different from the previous survey. It suggested a need for 26 Homes 19 for Affordable/Social rent. (9 x 1 bed, 5 x 2 bed, 3 x 3 bed, 2 x 4 bed) and 7 for shared ownership. (5 x 2 bed, 2 x 3 bed). With this in mind SHAL and the Parish Council revisited all the sites and arrived at a site that met all the needs of the village. The Back Lane site was reconsidered as it could site the 26 Affordable Homes but the road problems remained and the land owner was not interested in this proposal as they were already in negotiation with a private developer.

The preferred site is adjacent to housing and exits Main Road from Holloway Road where there are no major road engineering issues. The junction onto Main Road has a clear line of site and the extra traffic can turn both left and right to exit the village. SHAL engaged in pursuing the development and are currently working with an architect to draw up outline plans and conduct surveys on the proposed site so that they can consult with the village.

Objections to the Back Lane site

1 Middlezoy is in **tier 3** of Sedgemoor District Council's Planning policy. Meaning that development is restricted to "meeting local housing needs and employment growth appropriate to the settlements scale and character" Middlezoy is a small rural village with under 300 dwellings and although it accepts there is a need for 26 Affordable homes (about 9%) it doesn't need any more expensive homes that locals cannot afford. The Back Lane proposes 16 homes (12 x 3 bed and 4 x 4 bed) that will fall into this category. (about 5%) If this application was successful the Parish Council would have to find a site for the remaining 16 Affordable homes. Thus expanding the village by 42 homes ie 14% which is excessive for a tier 3 village.

2 The Sedgemoor Planning Policy also allows for "specifically releasing mixed tenure schemes outside of the settlement boundaries that meet an identified local affordable housing need". The back Lane site does not meet this need as it proposes 10 Affordable Homes. (4 x 1 bed, 3 x 2 bed for rent and 3 x 2 bed Shared Ownership) This is clearly short of the 26 homes identified in the 2021 survey. If this planning application goes ahead the village would be left having to find yet another site to accommodate the remaining 16 homes.

3 Tier 3 also supports "retention of existing and provision of new key local services/facilities" Our village shop and Post Office is in a precarious position as it is sited on the Methodist Chapel grounds and the Chapel is considering whether or not it is viable to keep Middlezoy open. The Parish Council has had this in mind for some time and has been seeking to negotiate that the shop and Post Office should form part of the infrastructure of a bid for affordable homes under "Community Gain." (As it was included in the original application in 2017) If Back Lane goes ahead without provision for a shop, we are quite likely to lose our shop and Post Office. Although there are other shops in nearby villages the Post Office serves a wide community including Westonzoyland, Burrowbridge and Othery. The nearest alternative is some 7 miles away. The Post Office also supports our local businesses as they use it for banking and potage.

4 Sedgemoor's strategic priority 3 aims to "manage congestion" but the proposal in this planning application to reduce Main Road to a single track will actually make it much worse. The Parish Council rejected the Back Lane site because of difficult junction with Main Road and Nethermoor Road. The application provides for 52 extra vehicles at this junction and to use Back Lane and Nethermoor Road where there are no pavements and is a single track road with 4 ninety degree bends, with no visibility. This road is used extensively by dog walkers as it connects to the footpaths through the fields and onto Othery. Also Sat Navs direct all outside traffic coming into the village for the Village Hall, down Back Lane and Nethermoor Road, passing the proposed entrance to the

site. The village hall puts on events and rents the hall out, so these roads already have a considerable amount of traffic. The application's solution to the problem at the junction is to reduce Main Road to a single track. This is not appropriate as it is the main road through the village. It does not deal with the problem that there is a blind bend, it just allows cars to move into main road to see oncoming traffic. Any collision may be less serious but it will not be avoided. It is also dependant on the compulsory purchase of land in Back Lane from three properties which would be for the County (District) Council to approve. It would reduce the parking spaces for the houses on that part of Main Road and road would have an impact on our local public house "The George", as it only has a small car park and customers can currently park on the road outside and to the side of the premises. The pub has letting rooms and a good reputation for its food, so people travel to it by car. Without the ability to park The George will lose business, which it can ill afford given the damage the current Covid outbreak has already caused. There is no mention in the plan of how they would mitigate the danger of 52 extra cars travelling down Back Lane and Nethermoor Road which, as previously outlined, is dangerous.

Also, it is quite possible, given the number of 3 and 4 bedroom houses proposed, that a property may have more than two vehicles, especially as the village has little public transport, just a bus that runs 4/5 times a day six days a week, and not at times convenient for people to travel to work. If this was the case there is nowhere for them to park, excepting Main Road, as this is the only road in Middlezoy that is not single track. The residents of Main Road currently park outside their houses and there is no room for more, especially as some will be displaced with any reduction of Main Road.

5 The plan includes a field with an open space and a pond which is adjacent to the existing playing field and village hall, therefore it serves little purpose. There is no mention of whose responsibility it would be to maintain this facility but it is clearly not going to be the residents. If it is the intention that the Parish Council would take responsibility it doesn't feel that there is a need as the existing playing field is quite adequate. Also there is the Health and Safety issue of the dangers of large ponds in public places where children play.

6 In relation to the processes involved in this application, there has never been any consultation between Summerfield and Sedgemoor District Council, with either the Parish Council or the village, in relation to these plans, which are different to those discussed with the village in Nov 2018 when Acorn was the proposed builder. Presumably this is because the village rejected the previous plans for the reasons already given.

7 As there has been no consultation with the Parish Council over this application the village is very concerned that the Affordable homes proposed on the site will not be allocated to local people but left open for all people on Homefinder Somerset, thus not meeting the village needs at all.

If our observations coincide with those of the group manager, in accordance with the delegation scheme, we accept that the application will not be reported to the Development Control Committee unless one of the other exceptions in the delegation scheme apply.

Signed  Date 22nd November 2021

In the interest of efficiency, the council is extending its use of email. We will thus correspond with you in this way as much as possible, if you wish to respond to this letter by email, please write to planning.comments@sedgemoor.gov.uk