

WEMBDON PARISH COUNCIL

Local Development Framework Consultation

April 2010

Response to Sedgemoor District Council

by

Wembdon Parish Council

April 2010

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In autumn 2009 Sedgemoor District Council published their initial discussion draft of the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.2 The draft LDF included forward planning guidelines for all areas within Sedgemoor and whilst the community in Wembdon may have views on all aspects of the draft LDF, as Wembdon Parish Council, we will limit our comments to those aspects of the draft LDF, which have a direct bearing on Wembdon Parish.
- 1.3 The principle impact of the proposals within the LDF on Wembdon will be from the development of a large housing estate on land known as Cokerhurst Farm.
- 1.4 In November 2009 a representatives of SDC, Nick Tait, made a presentation of the draft LDF to a regular meeting of the Wembdon Parish Council.
- 1.5 Members of the Parish Council also attended the consultation event in Wembdon hosted by SDC
- 1.6 The Parish Council's response to the proposed LDF takes into account information gained through the various meetings and documents outlined above and the verbal and written comments made by residents of the Parish both at the Parish Council meetings and sent to the Parish Clerk. In addition, as a part of the work carried out in preparing the Wembdon Parish Plan, published in August 2008, every household in Wembdon was invited to respond to a survey of their opinions on their "Vision for Wembdon". Responses were received from over 70% of the households in Wembdon and these too have been used by the council in preparing this response to SDC.

2.0 Potential Impacts on Wembdon

- 2.1 Wembdon is an ancient village, the name being derived from "The Hill of the Hunter", initial settlement dating from at least Roman times. Until the 19th century the population was small with much of the area laid to orchards when developments started first along Wembdon Rise. The area is well known for the red sandstone, which was quarried from the 12th Century until very recent times and many of the older houses, farm buildings and walls as well as the church are built from this.
- 2.2 The development of Wembdon has been very slow until the recent BNDR estates. This has resulted in a wide variety of housing, with construction materials and styles differing depending upon the time of construction. These variations in size and style of housing very much give the character to Wembdon and this was recognised in the Vision for Wembdon document as a significant feature of the village, important to the Wembdon community.
- 2.3 Wembdon is now a village of some 1320 households, having recently doubled in size with the developments along the new Bridgwater Northern Distributor Road (BNDR). Despite its close proximity to Bridgwater, the residents of Wembdon greatly value its separate village status with over 80% of respondents in a recent survey supporting this position. The village has a parish church, church centre, primary school, post office/shop, garage, public house and playing field. Relative to neighbouring areas of Bridgwater, the village has a low incidence of crime and anti social behaviour.
- 2.4 The influx of another 550 dwelling housing estate into Wembdon is completely contrary to the expressed wishes of the Wembdon community. There is a recognition that further housing may need to be developed in Wembdon, but the very clear statement from the community was that this should be in the form of a series of small groupings of around 10 houses.

3.0 Roads & Transport

- 3.1 Bridgwater has major problems with traffic access on the two principle routes into and out-of the town, the Bristol Road and the Taunton Road. Currently the Quantock Road is congested at key times of the day but is generally free flowing, however, with the developments of the new Haygrove school and the potential new power station at Hinkley Point, the traffic on the A39 will increase significantly.
- 3.2 With its close proximity to Bridgwater, almost all residents travel daily out of Wembdon for employment, school, college and shopping. All traffic from Wembdon must use the BNDR or the Quantock Road/A39 and when these roads are congested, especially when there are roadworks along the route or in the event of road accidents, Wembdon traffic is effectively trapped. Any development, which increases traffic, will have a major and detrimental effect on the residents of Wembdon.
- 3.3 Traffic congestion on the A39/Quantock Road/BNDR encourages traffic to route though Wembdon village rather than along the A39/Quantock Road. This rat-run through Wembdon has a very negative effect, increasing the risk of road accidents, increasing the problems of traffic pollution and making it far more dangerous for anyone walking along the narrow pavements or cycling through the village.
- 3.4 The BNDR was designed primarily as a distributor road to service the needs of the 1000 new homes feeding onto it. The existing junctions at Wylds Road and Bristol Road are inadequate to meet large increases in traffic and the road is regularly congested at busy times of the day.
- 3.5 Given the daily traffic congestion on the A38, it is apparent that the highest priority should be given to any housing or other developments that could provide an improvement in the flows of traffic from North to South Bridgwater. Development of Cokerhurst Farm will only exacerbate the existing traffic congestion in Bridgwater.

Summary

Wembdon is a village with its own character and not an extension of North Bridgwater. It should be treated differently to Bridgwater when new developments in Sedgemoor are considered.

The Wembdon community have clearly set out their own Vision for Wembdon and published this. 95% of the community are against another large-scale housing estate in Wembdon.

The development of the Quantock Road provided a by-pass for Wembdon in the 1930s. This was very necessary as the road through Wembdon is narrow and sections of the road have pavements on one side only.

The increased traffic on the Quantock Road is now pushing traffic off of this "Wembdon by-pass" and back through Wembdon. This creates a dangerous situation for anyone walking or cycling through Wembdon and makes crossing Wembdon Rise very difficult for children attending St George's school.

Development of the new Haygrove School and the new Hinkley Point power station will further increase congestion on the Quantock Road. Any housing developments at Cokerhurst Farm will simply add to this problem.

Bridgwater has a major problem with traffic congestion on the A38, Taunton Road and Bristol Road and this gives the town a very poor reputation. One consequence of this is the complete hollowing out of the town centre, increasing the traffic travelling to Bristol and Taunton.

Developing Cokerhurst Farm will increase traffic on the A39 and will lead to further congestion in Bridgwater. A better option would be to provide for development of housing East of Bridgwater and tie this in to the development of a road, which will alleviate the current traffic congestion on Taunton and Bristol Road.