

Response to Response Document

1) Site Selection. We were told at the meeting in September 2015 that the MCLT had considered 6 sites but their preferred site was Northwick Road. We were not given the full details of the other sites or offered a vote to choose between sites. I asked why we couldn't use one of the sites on the Causeway? I was told it was not a viable site because some vehicles exceed the speed limit on the Causeway!!! I replied that at least it was a 2 lane straight road built for purpose. We were not given any other reason why the Causeway site could not be used. It is stated that there are no other available sites. I am unsure of the veracity of this statement. However, at the time, there obviously were other sites as the Architects themselves say, and I quote, "The site adjacent to Northwick Road is one of very **few** in the village that meets the following requirements." To say that a show of hands was 70 - 30 in favour of Northwick Rd. is, I am afraid, both inaccurate and untrue. We were asked to vote for the site, but many people, quite rightly, asked what we were going to be voting for as there were no plans or project with any idea of what the proposal may consist of or look like!! Eventually, the MCLT Chair asked us to vote as to whether or not the MCLT should look in principle as to the site's viability. We were assured this was not final and that we would be able to vote again on any recommendations. This has subsequently been refused. I counselled against voting in principle as I felt the MCLT might take this as a mandate. I think it is important to note that the MCLT Chair was asked if Minutes of the meeting were being taken and replied, "No, we don't really need them as this is only an informal meeting." There was also no proper count of hands.

2) Road Traffic and Safety. It is asserted that the traffic count on Northwick Rd. was low. I do not think that an average of 235 vehicles a day on a 9 feet wide lane is low!! The survey fails to take any account whatsoever of other road users such as pedestrians, dog walkers, cyclists or horse riders. I use the lane and am always stopping to allow these other users to pass. They also state that the average speeds are quite low inferring that this is a positive. (Maximum speeds recorded on the lane were 36-40 mph in a 30 zone!!) The reason for the generally low speeds is that it is physically impossible to drive safely any faster. These speeds therefore speak to the inherent dangers on this lane and are a negative indicator not a positive one. The junction with Vole Rd. is blind and cutting back hedges will make minimum improvement. The layout of the road makes physical improvements impossible. I also note that the mitigations requested by the MCLT in terms of road signs and markings have been rejected by Somerset Highways.

3) Flooding. The response document states that the historic local flooding problems were caused by lack of maintenance of drainage ditches and that this has been carried out. As a resident of Vole Rd. at the junction with Northwick Rd. I can tell you that we have had standing water in the road by our drive every year since the major problem in 2012. It would appear not to be just a problem of maintenance. I am concerned that the run off from the car park area and entrance/exit will just pour more water onto Northwick Road and the rhynes and subsequently flood Vole Rd. As far as I am aware Wessex Water is still awaiting drawings and confirmation before it can adopt any drainage scheme. Furthermore I have seen nothing from South Western Housing Society confirming that they will take on the maintenance of the Rhyne to the north of the site.

4) The MCLT claim that if this application fails that they will “lose” £1 million. This is misleading, emotive and untrue. They do not have £1 million and this is a figure for funding which will be borne by other organisations. If the application is rejected by planning, they will still “lose” their funding.

5) The MCLT quite rightly make the point that time is getting short for this tranche of funding for the project. This is one of the reasons that they should withdraw the application now and seek another more appropriate site whilst there is still time. The plans for the development could easily be transferred to another site with minimal amendments. It should be noted that if the application is successful, this would undoubtedly trigger an appeal which would further delay the start of the development.

6) With the current push for affordable housing there will certainly be other opportunities to obtain funding for another, possibly bigger and better, project on a much more suitable site. One such site that will probably be available is the very large field behind Mark School. This would enable children from the Affordable houses to get to that school without any danger, would allow for a much bigger development (with houses for sale as well as rent if required) bringing extra revenue to the MCLT, and would also help to alleviate the current parking problems on the Causeway associated with Mark School

I therefore commend the resolution to the Membership

Mark Johnson