**MDC Local Plan Part II**

**Main Modifications MM66-MM69**

**Beckington**

**Councillor Shannon Brooke's response**

**2nd March 2020**

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**Reasons for objecting to further development in Beckington**

i. development approval numbers to date and

ii. a fundamentally flawed drainage system that could not cope before the recent increase in housing and is now 'in crisis' - with sewage rising up through manholes in the centre of the village:

  

* Beckington Parish was provided with a minimum requirement for development of 55 until 2029 and has already taken 115. (108 in Beckington village, plus 7 in Rudge, where there was to be no development). Even taking the 108 figure this equates to a 30.6% uplift in the village's housing stock.
* Beckington has a historic and serious drainage problem. Sewage rising/floating around at the heart of the village/conservation area, with no resolution - in spite of repeated assurances from Wessex Water that the problem would be resolved and more and more houses being built in the interim ... consequently exacerbating the problem.  
  - Many years ago Wessex Water recognised that there was a serious problem with the historic drainage system in Beckington and so put forward a solution, which they then quickly withdrew, as being 'too difficult/risky' (given the historic/'listed status' nature of most of the properties at the heart of the village, i.e. the buildings do not have the benefit of modern/strong foundations and therefore the proposal of new drains would put these buildings 'at risk' of subsidence).

- Redrow Phase I was given outline permission only on the basis that the development would require a new drainage system to be built directly from the site to the sewage works. However, Redrow/Wessex Water did not do this and, saving themselves money, simply added Redrow Phase I onto the existing fundamentally flawed village drainage network. This has directly and consequently further compounded Beckington's drainage problem and now sewage is rising out of manholes onto the tarmac at the centre of the village, even on dry days (i.e. without heavy rainfall being a factor in the 'combined sections' of the flawed system on Bath Road).  
- In 2018 Somerset Rivers Authority agreed to fund the Beckington Drainage Review, but several years on, proposed solutions have been withdrawn, no new solutions have been put forward and yet Redrow Phase II is once again being proposed, simply because more housing is required.

- The Planning Inspector R J Jackson, who reviewed the Redrow II appeal in June 2018, was not privy to the fundamental details of Beckington's failing drainage system when writing his report 11.7.2018 (i.e. issues claimed by residents regarding combined surface water and foul drains have since been proven as accurate, following the extensive surveying that was undertaken in 2019, via the Beckington Drainage Review). Thus, his report simply suggested that drainage issues could be mitigated, but this has not been the case. (NB nearly 2 years on). He did note that regarding foul drainage, ***"local residents continued to express their concern on this topic"*** para 4. ... concerns which have since been vindicated and remain a key concern to village residents.  
NB no viable solution has been forthcoming during the last 8 years, Wessex/Redrow Phase I have made the existing problem worse and Beckington now experiences greater incidences of sewage surfacing in the centre of the village, while no solution whatsoever, or even a timescale for a solution, has been proposed moving forwards.  
- As well as the 'complicated nature' of Wessex dealing with the need to fundamentally improve the flawed drainage in a conservation area, i.e. of largely historic and listed properties, **budget** is another factor why Wessex Water have not remedied this problem to date. It will be very expensive to solve the drainage problem at the heart of Beckington, with little payback in relation to the number of homes benefiting from the solution, therefore Beckington will most likely always be given little, or low, priority in terms of allocating resource/funds. e.g. If 40 houses will benefit from a £1m drainage spend somewhere else, then resource will be allocated to that and the sewage surfacing in the centre of Beckington village will continue unresolved because only a few houses, plus the community on foot, walking around the centre of the village, are directly affected.

**Reasons for opposing Redrow II site allocation off Great Dunns Close for 28 (or 36) units:**

* See above re detail of drainage. In brief:  
  - Redrow have largely compounded Beckington's problem of sewage surfacing at the centre of the village.   
  - Redrow did not build a new foul drain as they promoted and was approved in their outline planning consent.  
  - Redrow instead liaised with Wessex Water and 'saved money at the expense of Beckington' simply by adding their drains on to the flawed existing system.  
  **The Redrow development to date has not accorded with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 14.**
* Redrow have never provided Beckington with the greenspace provision approved by planning in their Phase I development.  
  **The Redrow development to date has not accorded with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Section 12.**
* Redrow originally requested 36 houses on this Phase II site and, given their previous 're-versioning' of their agreements (i.e. their agreements have been repeatedly breached/broken, so consequently mean very little in reality to the residents of Beckington) permissions on this site could potentially reach 36, or possibly more, when actioned.
* Highways England have reported that the (BP/M&S) A36 roundabout is at saturation point. Further development by Redrow at Great Dunns Close would add to the congestion at this point. The long traffic queues at this roundabout experienced twice daily during rush hours are something MDC and all those public bodies who have declared a 'Climate Emergency' should be working to minimise/reduce, rather that support Redrow II, which is effectively the promotion of a planning scenario which will enhance further traffic idling.   
  **In addition, all vehicles will have to enter and exit through an existing residential area.  
  Thus this site proposal does not meet key requirements in Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).**
* Redrow II will have a negative impact on the setting of the Beckington Conservation Area and a number of the listed buildings in Goose Street. (see Appeal Decision 11.7.2018 by Planning Inspector R J Jackson para. 7)  
  **This proposal fails regarding NPPF Sections 15 and 16.**  
  - Redrow II is proposed on high ground and would be dominating over Goose Street. *"This would increase the prominence of the development and harmfully affect the settings and thus significances of the Beckington Conservation Area and the various listed buildings identified, particularly Nos 41 and 49A."* (Appeal Decision 11.7.2018 para. 34)  
  - The proposed landscaping would reduce the effect of the proposed built development, but it would not completely avoid adverse effects of the proposed dwellings, or the change in character from open land to a managed open space next to the historic heritage properties. It would take 15 years for implementation to mitigate the harm. Although the harm to the historic link between No 49A and the appeal site could not be mitigated. (Appeal decision 11.7.2018 para. 35)

- This is a different situation to *Palmer* where the Court of Appeal accepted that mitigation could avoid harm. (Appeal decision 11.7.2018 para. 36)  
- *"The harms to the setting of the Beckington Conservation Area and the listed buildings are all less than substantial to the significance of the heritage assets. This means compliance or otherwise with DP3 of the LPP1 will depend on this harm being weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, although special attention and great weight should be given to preserving the settings of the listed buildings and the conservation area."* (Appeal decision 11.7.2018 para. 37)  
**Therefore, if it is decided by the Planning Inspector that Beckington has to take further housing to get sign-off of LPP2, then the Warminster Road site allocation, for 45 units, offers the best proposition for the village to be developed with the maximum planning gain and the minimum planning harm and is thus the more sustainable option   
NB in accordance with NPPF Section 2.**

**The Warminster Road site allocation, even though 45 units, offers the best future development proposition for the village because of the following:**

* no harm to the setting of Beckington's Conservation area **- according with NPPF Section 16**
* no harm to any of Beckington's 100+ listed buildings - this site simply being infill to the dual carriageway/A36 Beckington by-pass **- according with NPPF Section 16**
* foul drainage is an issue predominantly on Goose Street and at the bottom end of Bath Road where blockages occur, but not on the Warminster Road
* 30% affordable housing **- meeting NPPF Section 5 requirements**
* Access from the Warminster Road, i.e. with Wool Close remaining a cul-de-sac
* Public footpath to be retained
* Gifting of the 3 acre woodland to the Parish Council with appropriate paths, trim trails installed - **in accordance with NPPF Sections 8, 11, 12, 14 and 15.**
* Completion of the path/steps/ramp from the new David Wilson 'white elephant' car park area (belonging to the doctors surgery), actually linking it physically to the actual doctors surgery, so that it can be utilised by surgery staff and increase patient parking provision at the surgery, as was originally intended, but never actioned by David Wilson Homes. **This is helpful to assist with safe access to the doctors surgery and therefore assists in respect of NPPF Section 8.**
* Landscaping the boundary next to the dual carriageway to mitigate traffic noise (a large earth bund). **This will not only be of benefit to those living within this development, but will be of benefit to the whole village, especially those living on the David Wilson development and along the Warminster Road, so meets NPPF Sections 8, 11, 12 & 15.**
* Contribution to Parish Council for improved play equipment, community facilities ... capped at £130k (over and above s106 statutory contribution). **In a village with no 'free for all' adult fitness provision, no provision for teenagers, no provision for children aged 5-12 and an existing toddler play provision that is beyond 'tired', this accords very favourably with NPPF Section 8.**

**In summary, this Warminster Road site allocation for 45 units delivers the better holistic plan, in terms of NPPF Sections 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15 and 16 for the future sustainable development of Beckington's housing, green space, transport and amenity provision.**