

Statement of Community Involvement

Land to the west of Sodbury Road, Wickwar

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Executive Summary

Bloor Homes has undertaken a programme of public consultation to outline and shape their plans for a housing development of up to 180 homes on Land west of Sodbury Road in Wickwar, in South Gloucestershire. The site is situated to the west of Sodbury Road, in the southern part of Wickwar.

Pre-application consultation activity for the proposal has included:

- distribution of 808 leaflets to households around the proposed development site, to make residents aware of the proposals, to invite them to share their views with the project team and to provide them with a hard-copy response form;
- provision of a dedicated project email address consultation@sodburyroadwickwar.co.uk and Freepost address Freepost Middlemarch Consultation to enable two-way communication channels for the public so they could provide feedback free of charge to them;
- a project website, www.sodburyroadwickwar.co.uk, outlining the proposals and providing contact details as well as an online feedback form;
- a freephone telephone number 0800 25 45 185 where members of the public could contact a member of the project team if they had any queries;
- following up emails to questions and comments received throughout the public consultation process.

The various feedback channels, both traditional and digital, remain in place to provide members of the public with the opportunity to comment and ask questions throughout the planning process.

At the time of writing, 155 individual responses have been received, of which 45 were hard copy response forms sent to the Freepost address and 110 were online feedback forms received through the project website.

The main issues raised focussed on the village not having sufficient facilities and infrastructure to sustain any further growth, the perception that Wickwar has already taken its fair share of development and that any more would be considered overdevelopment. Furthermore, traffic congestion and the road network were also raised as main issues. Several respondents provided suggestions as to how the facilities could be improved to facilitate development, such as the provision of a medical centre or contributions to expanding education facilities.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The views of the community are important to Bloor Homes. The company embraces community consultation; it is at the heart of their approach to development, not only in the pre-application stage, but for the duration of the project. This document outlines the consultation that has been undertaken prior to the submission of the application, the feedback received and forthcoming consultation activities.
- 1.2. Bloor Homes' public consultation programme was informed by the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) of South Gloucestershire Council (adopted March 2021), which embraces engagement from an early stage and provides general principles for how public consultation ought to be undertaken.
- 1.3. The SCI emphasises the importance of the need for developers to carry out pre-application community consultation. On page 6, paragraph 1.13 the SCI states:
 - 1.4. *In order to be truly effective, the Council views community involvement as needing to be:*
 - *Open*
 - *Transparent*
 - *Involving of people*
 - *Empowering of people*
- 1.5. On page 25, paragraph 3.15, the SCI states:
 - 1.6. *For major sites (over 10 homes and or 1ha, 1000m2 commercial floorspace) the Council will encourage developers to undertake pre-application consultation tailored to the scale, complexity and nature of the proposals. This could range from a simple letter to neighbours and local Councillors inviting comment, through to a full exhibition or workshop.*
- 1.7. Bloor Homes has looked to carry out their consultation programme in line with these principles, whilst being mindful of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Consultation Activities

Project website

- 2.1. In order to utilise the opportunity to establish an ongoing presence for the development online, a dedicated project website was set up: www.sodburyroadwickwar.co.uk. The website provides an overview of the proposals, About Us and The Site sections and an online feedback form as well as details on how visitors can engage with the consultation.
- 2.2. The website was advertised on the leaflets that were distributed in the local area. The website content can be viewed in Appendix 1.

Project email and Freepost

- 2.3. To ensure that stakeholders can easily get in touch with Bloor Homes project team about any matters relating to the proposed development, two free-of-charge communication channels have been provided, the project email address consultation@sodburyroadwickwar.co.uk and Freepost address Freepost Middlemarch Consultation.
- 2.4. These communication channels were advertised through the leaflet and project website.

Consultation leaflet

- 2.5. The leaflet for the proposed development is a double-sided A4 size full colour document that is designed to inform local residents about the proposals and to invite them to provide feedback. It provides a CGI aerial layout of the site in order for residents to understand what the proposed development would look like, as well as contact details should they wish to get in touch and a feedback form to respond to the consultation through regular post (at no cost to them).
- 2.6. The leaflet was circulated around the proposed development site, to 808 addresses in the Wickwar area. The leaflet can be viewed in Appendix 2. A map of the leaflet distribution area can be viewed in Appendix 3.

Wickwar Parish Council

- 2.7. In order to inform local Parish Councillors of the proposals, Bloor Homes wrote to Wickwar Parish Council and provided written responses to the questions they asked about the proposals for the site.

3. Summary of Consultation Feedback

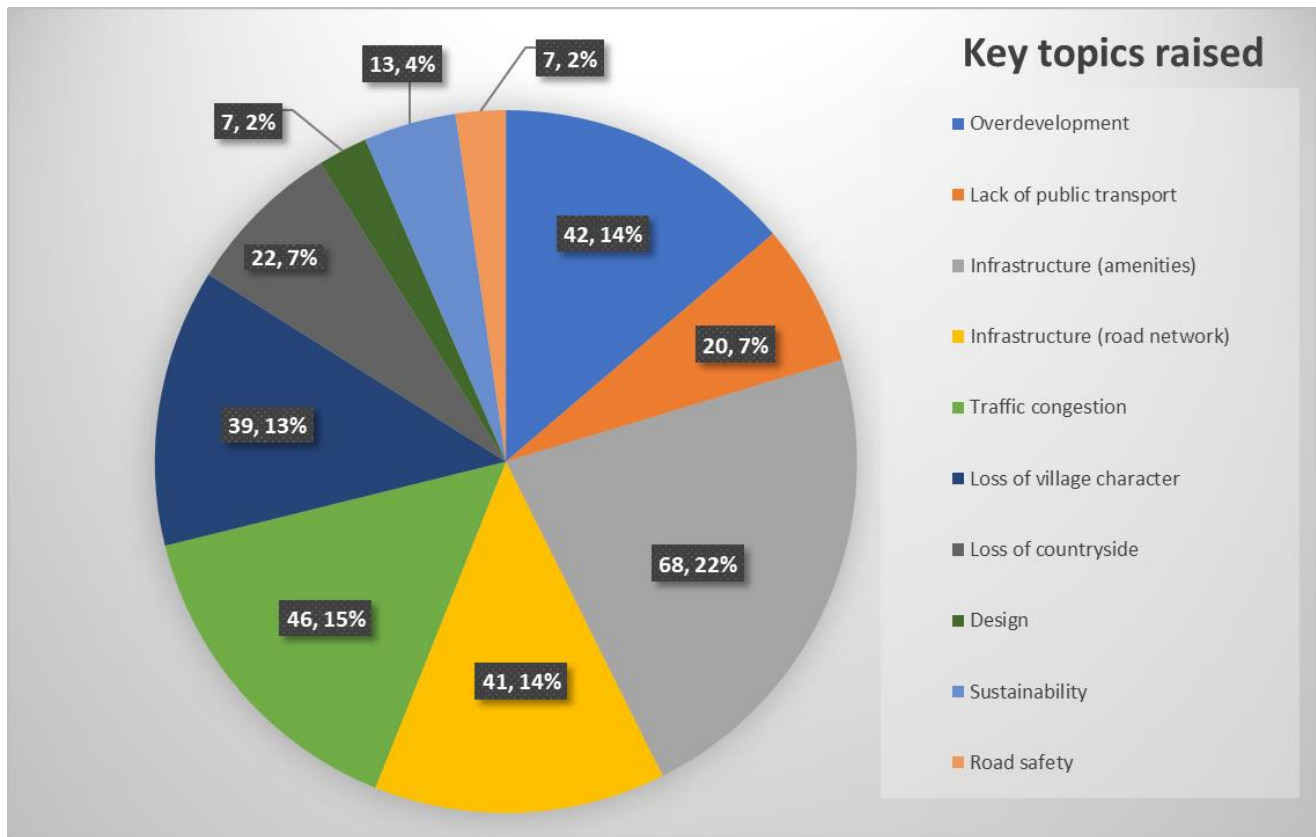
Overall Feedback

- 3.1. At the time of writing this report, 155 individual responses have been received through the various feedback channels, 45 of which are hard copy response forms sent to the Freepost address and 110 are project website feedback forms. Copies of the submitted feedback forms can be found in Appendix 4 and 5.
- 3.2. Feedback received from the consultation included comments that were made in relation to perceived issues and concerns about the proposed development, as well as neutral statements and questions and a few positive remarks.
- 3.3. There were clear trends in the feedback received from the consultation exercise. Comments on the same key issues were clustered into categories. The 10 main issues consistent throughout the responses are presented in the table below, in order of frequency of reference by individual respondents.
- 3.4. NB. Many response forms addressed several issues creating a total number of comments larger than the total number of responses.

Table 1: Most frequently raised questions and comments

	Topic	Number of times raised	% of total comments
1	Questions and comments about local amenities	68	22%
2	Questions and comments about traffic congestion	46	15%
3	Questions and comments about overdevelopment	42	14%
4	Questions and comments about the road network	41	14%
5	Questions and comments about loss of village character	39	13%
6	Questions and comments about the loss of countryside	22	7%
7	Questions and comments about a lack of public transport	20	7%
8	Questions and comments about sustainability	13	4%
9	Questions and comments about design	7	2%
10	Questions and comments about road safety	7	2%
Total		305	100%

Figure 1: Most frequently raised topics about the plans



3.5. The three topics which were most frequently raised by respondents include the capacity of local amenities, traffic congestion and the view that this proposal constitutes overdevelopment. Combined these three topics were mentioned 156 times representing 51% of comments and questions raised about the aspects of this proposed development.

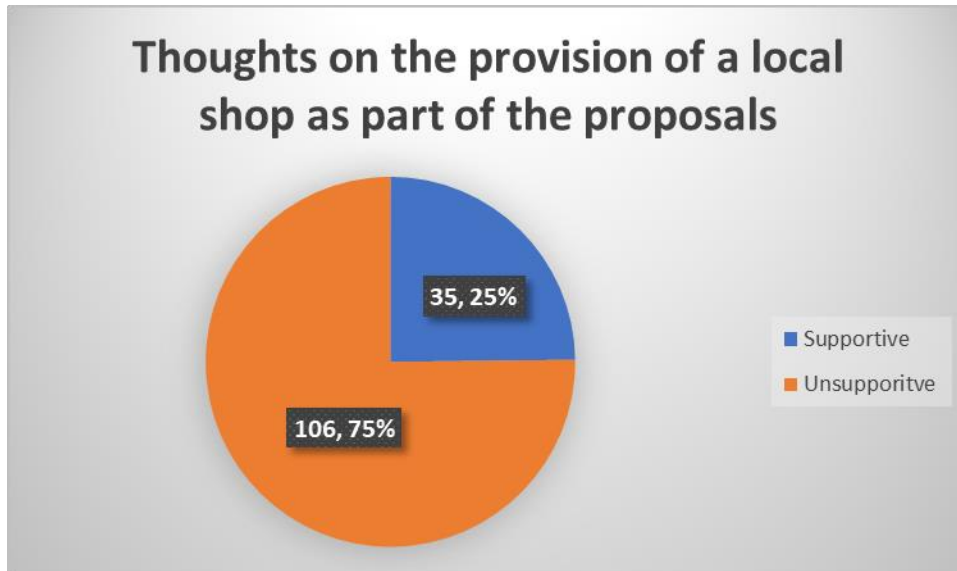
3.6. There were 68 comments made about the capacity of local amenities. In particular, some comments mentioned that school places are already stretched in the area and that residents are unable to book a GP appointment as it is, without the introduction of 180 additional homes into the local area. Furthermore, people also mentioned that it is hard to book an appointment at the dentist, due to capacity problems.

3.7. There were 46 comments about traffic congestion. In particular, it was noted that traffic congestion is already an issue and that this would be exacerbated by an additional 180 homes as it would likely mean an additional 360+ cars on the road.

3.8. There were 42 comments about overdevelopment. Comments mentioned that Wickwar has already experienced significant growth and development over recent years and the perception that it cannot sustain anymore. Comments referenced the number of new homes being too many, especially when coupled with other new nearby developments of late.

3.9. Significant attention was paid to the road network being unable to cope with the perceived extra vehicles this development would introduce into the area along with the idea that this development would result in a loss of village character.

Figure 2: Thoughts about the provision of a local shop as a part of the proposals



3.10. Overall, 25% of respondents support proposals for a new shop compared to 75% of those who do not.

3.11. Some residents stipulated they thought a local shop would be useful, however not at the cost of more homes. Several respondents questioned whether the shop would be built if the scheme were to be granted permission, having had poor experiences with other developers in the past.

3.12. Those who were supportive claimed a new local shop is essential and would be a welcome part of the scheme. Some stated a local shop does not go far enough, and that greater contributions to infrastructure are required.

Figure 3: Interest in buying or renting a property at this development



3.12. Respondents were asked whether they would be interested in buying or renting a property at this development upon its completion. 96% of respondents to this question stated they would not, however 4% of respondents to this question said they would be interested in buying or renting at this development. Not all respondents to the questionnaire answered this question.

4. Response to Consultation Feedback

Topic	Consideration given by project team
Local amenities	<p>As part of the proposed development Bloor Homes is proposing a local shop which would contribute to the local amenities and facilities in Wickwar. Where it comes to school and GP surgery places, all relevant professional bodies will be consulted during the planning process, including the NHS for health care provision and South Gloucestershire's Highways Department in respect of road capacity and education, to name but a few.</p> <p>The Council will require Bloor Homes to provide financial contributions towards facilities and services which need improvement or expansion due to the proposed development. The Council classifies Wickwar as a larger village, where some level of sustainable growth is feasible. In its Sustainability Appraisal, the Council note that "it is possible to access a range of services and facilities by walking and cycling or via regular public transport connections in Wickwar". It will be up to the Council to decide what level of growth is acceptable for Wickwar at this point in time.</p>
Traffic congestion	<p>Bloor Homes has instructed independent transport consultants to assist with the traffic and access aspects of the proposed development. They will work closely with South Gloucestershire Council as the Local Planning Authority and Highways Authority. Methodology of how to assess traffic impacts is agreed with the Highways Authority which takes general trends in traffic movements, such as those generated during weekdays or weekend days, school holidays and lockdowns into consideration. The traffic assessment will be available for public viewing on South Gloucestershire Council's planning portal once the application has been submitted and validated.</p>
Overdevelopment	<p>There is a pressing need in South Gloucestershire for high-quality housing on sites that are deemed suitable for development. The Council are in the process of reviewing the Local Plan and have to be able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, a method in which the Government stimulates local authorities to bring forward new housing in a timely fashion. According to the Government's housing calculation method, across South Gloucestershire 1,353 new homes need to be delivered per year for the next 15 years to keep up with local people's housing need. Wickwar is a large village and is well situated, at a commutable distance from employment and service hubs such as Yate and Chipping Sodbury and can accommodate a level of growth. It is important to bear in mind that all planning applications are judged on their own merits, and it is the planning system's task to ensure only the best proposals come forward.</p>
Infrastructure (road network)	<p>The traffic implications of the proposed development will be discussed with the Highways Authority and Bloor Homes will be required to provide financial contributions which may well include local road improvements. The detail of these contributions has not yet been assessed. However, the proposed development's impact on the local highway network will be carefully considered as part of the determination of the application by the Local Planning Authority and permission will not be granted if there is assessed to be an unacceptable highways impact.</p>

Village character	<p>Bloor Homes consider that a housing development of up to 180 homes would be proportional in size and that it would be possible to bring forward a development that would fit well into its immediate surroundings and the wider village setting. The site adjoins the built-up area of Wickwar and would form a natural extension of the village. The site is well contained due to established landscape features such as existing hedgerows and the project team would look to ensure that any new homes would be sensitively positioned, with a care to reduce outside views. Density would be in keeping with the rest of the village. There would be enough space for the houses, internal roads, car parking and gardens, and also for public open greenspace for residents and visitors to enjoy, congruent with what would be expected in a village / semi-rural setting.</p>
Loss of countryside	<p>The role of the planning system is to find the right balance between the need for more housing and development on the one hand and the protection of landscapes and greenspace on the other. In populated areas such as South Gloucestershire this can present a real challenge, however it is felt that this particular site can accommodate up to 180 homes without the balance being compromised. The proposals incorporate generous open greenspace areas and will be sensitively fitted into their wider surroundings by making best use of existing on-site screening provided by mature hedgerows and trees. Professional ecologists will put forward possible measures that can be considered to mitigate any potential impacts on wildlife. Beyond just mitigation, the project team will look at measures to enhance and improve the site, for example by improving habitats such as the sensitive management of trees and hedges or by enhancing and enriching the habitats by use of ecology buffers and corridors to ensure safe and secure habitats. Other examples include the careful planting of native species in the site's hedgerows.</p>
Road safety	<p>Road safety issues will be addressed thoroughly in the Transport Assessment which is part of the planning application documentation. The increase in traffic associated with up to 180 homes is not considered to significantly impact the local road network, its capacity or safety. The transport consultant will work with the Highways Authority to ensure that the access provision is safe. Mitigation measures such as traffic calming could be considered.</p>

5. Appendices