

SCC/3938/2022 – Committee Speakers Written Statements

Client	BAM Consulting on behalf of Futures for Somerset SCC	File Ref	154306
Project	Comeytrove / Orchard Grove Primary	Date	25/11/2022

Please find below the ‘written statements’ for application SCC/3938/2022: Land at Comeytrove, Taunton, Somerset being heard at planning committee on Thursday 01 December, these statements summarise the key points that will be presented by the relevant speakers.

Planning Agent - Coral Ducroq: Stride Treglown, Associate Town Planner

The applicant team have proactively engaged with the Council from the very early stages, engaging in pre-application discussions with two pre-application meetings and numerous email correspondence prior to the submission of the application; and of course, held a round of public consultation with a drop in information event held in March 2022 where we answered questions of local residents and provided an online questionnaire.

Throughout the design process we have worked closely with the Council and consultees to answer their queries, and with the education department to ensure that the new facility will be fit for purpose and meet the needs of pupils and staff, both internally and externally, whilst respecting the unique surroundings of the site, and delivering a carbon neutral building using the ‘Passivhaus’ concept. The District Wide Design Guide was referred to from the outset.

Throughout the planning process we have listened to both Council officers, local residents and engaged with the Somerset West and Taunton Quality Review Panel and where possible made numerous changes to the design and layout as set out within the documents held on the Council website, including:

- Amendment to the vehicle and pedestrian access points onto the highway;
- Amendment to the parking arrangements and pedestrian footpath removing parking from the left of the path—attempting to answer comments made by the Review Panel, although appreciate changes have not entirely met their suggestions.
- Initial changes to the colour palette of the school following case officer comments during early discussions.

The school has been designed to accommodate future growth but this would be subject to a future planning application as when the additional space is required.

The school is considered alongside NPPF Paragraph 95 which states that ‘It is important to provide a sufficient choice of school places to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meet this requirement..... and give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools widening education choice. Councilors are urged to support this application and grant permission.

Prospective Head Teacher - Richard Healey – I am still awaiting the final written statement from the Head Teacher, but from discussions with them, the key themes of his presentation at committee will be:

- Enthusiasm for the school to become part of the growing community
- School management of the car park
- Promotion of sustainable travel, and promotion of walking, cycling and scooters instead of the car – these measures fit with the carbon neutral / Passivhaus themes of the school.

- How the school will grow year on year, so approx.. 8yrs from opening that it will reach full capacity.

Somerset County Council Education Team – Elizabeth Smith

Plans for the new school at Orchard Grove were approved by Cabinet on 20th January 2021.

The Council has a statutory duty to supply sufficient good quality places within statutory walking distance of a pupil's home address. The Orchard Grove housing development will eventually provide 2000 new homes in the south west of Taunton. Existing schools in this area, Bishop Henderson, Bishops Hull, Parkfield & Trull, cannot be expanded to meet the demand.

As a rule of thumb 2000 new homes could yield an additional 640 pupils. However, in the first instance it is proposed that a 420 place primary school with a 60 place nursery is built, although the school has been designed in such a way that expansion at a later date is possible should demand require it.

While bringing forward another new school for the children on Somerset the Council is also creating the County's first carbon neutral building fitting squarely with the Council's ambitious plans to reduce Somerset's carbon emissions to net zero by 2030.

The design has been based on the 'passivhaus' concept, an internationally recognised, performance-based energy standard in construction.

The Orchard Grove development has seen occupations since May 2022 and as of November 2022 there have been 200 completions, of which there are currently 20 unsold.

The school is planned to open in September 2023 and will open on a host site until the new school building is completed. The Castle Partnership Trust has been approved by the Secretary of State as the Sponsor who will run the school. Applications for a place in reception in 2023 have already been received.

The temporary host arrangements (which have been deployed in Somerset previously) will be at the Trust's Wellington school and 'home to school' transport will be provided.