



**Frome
and District
Civic
Society**

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Cllr Harvey Siggs
Mendip District Council
Council Offices
Cannards Grave Road
Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 5BT

Dear Cllr Siggs,

Saxonvale, Frome

Thank you for inviting us to the council offices on the 21st of August for a briefing on Saxonvale. We found the discussion positive and very useful in understanding the council's intentions with the site. I write to confirm our views on the development. We appreciate at this stage in your plans there will be a number of competing priorities and hope you will take the following comments as intended to assist the council in developing a robust, successful plan.

Whilst accepting that the Planning Brief has been challenged by an Appeal Inspector, and recognising the need for new priorities since it's creation, the Development Brief does contain good basic planning and urban design guidance and many good proposals on how the site should be developed. Where still relevant, this guidance and those proposals should be carried forward into the new scheme for developing the Saxonvale site. We would be pleased to discuss further which areas of the brief remain relevant.

The scheme should be a comprehensive and integrated layout. There would be great benefit if it could also include the site owned by Frome Town Council, which we would encourage, as a partner in developing the site to its best potential.

We see the connection through King Street and the Kingsway precinct as of critical importance in linking the development to the town. In this regard we would encourage Somerset Highways, Mendip and the owners of the M&S store and Kingsway, to bring forward compatible proposals that fully integrate the development of Saxonvale with the town.

Policy DP7 (page 93) of the adopted Local Plan says: *All allocations will be the subject of either an appropriately detailed Development Brief or Masterplan or other structured and agreed pre-application process prepared in conjunction with the relevant community. Where a Development Brief/Masterplan is prepared, it will, where appropriate, be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document prior to the granting of planning permission.*

Given the central position and likely impact of this major development, we trust MDC will bring forward a masterplan or development brief for consultation with the wider community.

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There is great benefit to be gained if the developer of the site is committed to being involved for the long term in developing, managing, maintaining and letting properties, rather than in selling off parcels before or as they are built, and exiting from any long term care of the site.

The South West Design Review Panel is currently working with BANES to provide skilled advice and guidance on getting the best results out of developing sites. A similar approach on developing Saxonvale would provide great benefits, at minimal cost, to the Council.

We share many of the council's aims for the site and would support future development that includes:

- A well connected Riverside Park and children's play area, retaining the majority of trees covered by the TPO area, including the old river meander.
- Seamless pedestrian linkages to the town including a public square, and shared surface streets, including King Street.
- A pedestrian & cycle bridge across the river to connect to the riverside walk through Willow Vale and Rodden Meadow as a major benefit to residents. This path has become a valuable spine route through the town. A cycle bridge would create a welcome bypass for cyclists avoiding the main town centre roads.
- A new access road from Garsdale through to the Kingsway car park area to service new and existing commercial developments, alleviating Vicarage Street of non-residential traffic.
- High quality design of all parts of the development, avoiding pastiche and generic 'modern' design, but embracing the special qualities of the town's spatial and material character.
- Inclusive residential development with an emphasis on a broad range of dwelling size and cost, including a proportion of flats for sale and rent that suit the needs of the existing community, young and old.
- A range of retail and commercial development focussed on larger units and follow-on space for growing enterprises, that complements rather than competes with the existing offer in the town.
- Continuity of active building frontages on principle routes from the town centre, with taller ground storeys, designed for adaptation to a variety of uses, safeguarding future trends in demand for residential, retail and commerce as the town grows.

We hope you find the above useful in preparing development proposals. We offer our support and encouragement to develop this dialogue.

Yours faithfully

Richard Swann RIBA (Chair)
for and on behalf of Frome & District Civic Society

cc. Frome Town Council,
Pang-Moore,
Frome Chamber of Commerce,
Frome Times