

FRESHFORD MILL AND THE JOINT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN.

There are major reservations about the references to Freshford Mill in the MAKING PROGRESS document.

The current situation is that

1. 21 Planning approved residences are nearing completion (Although delayed no doubt until the housing market improves).
2. The parish council resisted the development of housing on the site for a number of sound reasons, including the very poor access, but eventually had to accept that the best option after the approval by B&NES of the 21 residences was to mitigate the negative effects of the build. The poor access remains a vital issue which has not been effectively dealt to date.
3. The permission allows for the 21 residences to be built on the footage of the old industrial buildings, and that the unsightly large shed be removed once the housing development be completed, thereby improving the openness of the site with its positive effect on the rural character of the Frome Valley.
4. The site is currently in the hands of administrators, but the approved build will eventually be completed and occupied, most probably early on in the period of the Joint Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposals in "Making Progress are :

1. **To allow for New Housing at Freshford Mill.** As 21 residences are already approved, any new housing would be in addition, and would reverse the Parish Council's major efforts to minimize the negative effects of residential development on this site. Any new housing would involve building on the area of the site which was historically, and is, open space and would create increased pressures on the poor access, openness and views up and across the beautiful Frome valley. Such build would increase lighting pollution, particularly when viewed from above along Sharpstone Lane, and could create changes in the access lanes to deal with the traffic, vehicular and pedestrian, generated. Build on the open area (Particularly the higher section outside the flood plain where the current large shed is due to be demolished as per the approved scheme for residential use) would also affect adversely the openness of the views protected by the Freshford Conservation Area.

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2. To encourage the inclusion of the site for mixed purposes such as affordable housing and workshops. In the present and predictable political climate it is wishful thinking to believe that the planning authorities in considering a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Order as designated in Schedule 9 of the Act would accept reduction of the 21 residence level - so Affordable Housing or workshops would have to be in addition to the 21 less any conversion permitted of the buildings currently under construction into affordable homes or workshops (Unlikely, to say the least) and could become an issue in the agreement of a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

3. Affordable Housing. Affordable Homes can be built regardless of Green Belt or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty restrictions. However, Freshford Mill is too far from the services available in the village (to the Railway Station over half a mile ; the Galleries shop and Memorial Hall over a mile. The Tynning hill creates a major contour barrier for easier pedestrian access. It is not on a bus route and to schedule such would require a major change in the charming rural Crabtree lane, as would be the case with any other new residential build at the Mill.

It is proposed that the Neighbourhood Plan should not give support , implied or stated, to any further build on the Mill site. This in order to reduce the access and traffic implications already creating a potential problem , to improve the openness of that part of the site outside the footprint of the current build, and to maintain the rural character of this sensitive section of the Frome valley.