

SUMMARY of Public Meeting of FOMAG on Friday 21st March 2025 at 7.30pm at Mudford Village Hall.

What is FOMAG?

The Friends of Mudford Action Group (FOMAG) was set up by Tony Cavalier following the proposed Primrose Lane development (explained below). Now chaired by James Cary, **FOMAG remains determined to hold planners to account and ensure that whatever is built in the parish of Mudford is in line with what people in the parish actually want.**

This proposed development is **huge**: 765 dwellings plus a 65-bed care-home, employment land, a community building and a healthcare facility. If it goes ahead as proposed, it will have an enormous impact on the surrounding area for decades.



What stage are we at?

Outline planning permission was granted by Somerset Council Planning Committee South on 22nd October 2024 subject to a 'Section 106 agreement'.

JARGON EXPLAINED: A Section 106 is a legally-binding promise made by the developer to the local council to provide community benefits, such as affordable housing, infrastructure improvements and mitigate environmental impact. This has not yet been signed, sealed and delivered.

Mudford Parish Council and FOMAG made representations at this meeting. The planning consultant was able to speak for **90 minutes**. A few local representatives were able to speak for 3 minutes each. The planning decision was made without taking into account **serious concerns** that FOMAG has consistently raised, rooted in evidence and data and laid out in reports by experts, paid for by FOMAG.

At this public meeting, FOMAG highlighted some key areas of concern. They are:



Flooding and Sewage Issues

Mudford suffers regular flooding from both the River Yeo and the rain. The amount of water coming downstream floods large areas of the parish. This, in turn, makes the roads impassable.

But it gets worse! At the meeting, Stephen Bartlett also spoke about the need for a new sewage treatment site since current infrastructure can't cope. And **when overwhelmed, the pumping station shuts down and untreated effluent is washed down West Mudford Road!** Clearly, this is not what anyone wants.

Three 'Retention Ponds' have been planned. Oddly they have been placed alongside a National Gas Pipeline, which does not seem safe. When these retention ponds are full, water will simply be channelled into the river upstream of the Mudford Bridge, which will **make flooding even worse.**

Worse still, the land on which the development is proposed, lies on a recognised spring line. The retention ponds planned are only one metre deep and **will be totally overwhelmed immediately!** This has already happened on the construction of the A303 upgrade which also now floods regularly. Somerset Council Planning Committee South and planners have completely failed to engage on this issue and offer any kind of assurances.

To find out more about flooding, visit **Mudford Village Hall on 5th April between 10am and 2pm** for the launch of the **3 Villages Flood Group**. It will be opened by Councillor Mike Stanton with Sarah Dyke MP as a guest speaker. There will be stands and representatives from the Somerset Rivers Authority, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, Environmental Agency, Re Imagining the Levels, Somerset Council, Emergency Voluntary Action Group and Somerset Wildlife Trust. Drop in between 10-2. **Come at noon to catch Sarah Dyke MP.**



Environmental Impact

Robin Bowring explained the developers are expected to provide clear visualisations (modelling) so everyone can see how things will look. This is industry standard practice. **The developers have not done this, having had 11 years to do so.**

Visual mitigation for this massive development must be protected. The trees around Wyndham Park that screen the visual impact were **felled by local residents so they had a nicer view of the countryside!** That shouldn't have happened. How do we ensure that doesn't happen in this proposed development? This has not been addressed.

Traffic

Phil Sargent explained how the planning decision was made based on erroneous, out-of-date information provided by the Highways Agency who said that Mudford's weekly traffic at about 4000 vehicles per day (not per week, as we previously reported). That's 28,000 vehicles per week. **The actual figure recorded by the village camera on the A359 is about 73,000 vehicles per week. That is 45,000 vehicles per week MORE than the figure on which this planning decision was made!** The Highways estimate is wrong by about 200%!

760 more dwellings will easily bring another thousand cars into the parish of Mudford. This has not been fully considered. And most of this traffic passes through Marston Magna and Queen Camel. Queen Camel already experiences serious congestion with a number of pinch points in the village. These cannot be easily mitigated or alleviated. No thought or care has been given to this.

Employment

Er, what employment? A required commercial area to provide local employment will be the last thing to be built, probably over a decade after work has begun! This means that everyone in the new development looking for work will have to drive either into Yeovil or through Marston Magna and Queen Camel. More traffic. And where are these employment opportunities?

Anthrax

There remain serious and credible reports of anthrax sites, where infected cattle have been buried (not burned). The planners and developers have brushed aside these concerns in a manner which seems irresponsible and unsafe.

Affordable Housing

The normal minimum requirements of affordable housing (30%) have been relaxed to 15% so that the developer can keep his margins and profits. And no-one is denying this! There is an appetite for affordable homes in Mudford. Young people who would like to remain local are struggling to find options anywhere near Yeovil. Why has this number of homes been allowed to drop?

Sarah Dyke MP

Sarah Dyke, the new local LibDem MP, has recently become highly engaged in this development and has serious concerns. LibDems have even more ambitious targets on affordable homes than current government policy and she seems disappointed that this is being waved



through by many of her fellow party members.

At the meeting, Stephen Bartlett explained how he recently arranged for Sarah Dyke MP to come to the parish and walk around the church, the bridge and the sewage pumping station to see the areas most affected by flooding. She also saw bones washed out of the church graveyard that you may have seen reported in the local press.

Action point: Please consider writing to Sarah Dyke to thank her for her engagement and encourage her to continue! If you are in Adam Dance's constituency, it would be great to write to him as he is currently not engaged. Yeovil itself will be affected by this large development. And local affordable housing is an issue for him to consider.

A Positive Vision for the Future

In the meeting, we noted that there is an appetite for affordable houses, and that FOMAG does not simply oppose the development on principle. It is clear that this proposal is a poor one and will cause devastation in the long term in terms of flooding and traffic. And it will essentially make the area a building site for the next 15-20 years.

Therefore, we need to think constructively about what we want, as well as what we don't want. This might involve commissioning our own people to come up with something sustainable and manageable that works for everyone.

So, what happens next?

Answer: Judicial Review

We have a strong case to challenge the way that the decision was made by Somerset Council Planning Committee South on 22nd October 2024 where legitimate concerns were brushed aside or completely ignored.

That cannot happen until that Section 106 has been agreed and signed. But once that happens, we have a six-week window in which to launch an appeal. At that point, we're instructing barristers and it gets expensive.

A judicial review will probably cost £40,000

Mudford PC has some funds set aside, as does FOMAG although FOMAG funds are depleted after a decade of action and commissioned reports and legal advice. FOMAG, therefore, will aim to raise at least £10,000. Please consider how much you can give. It is a serious investment in your future as well as the future of the community in and around Mudford.

The good news is that if the review is successful, the money is returned and can be put to better use locally.

What you can do right now:

Stay engaged. Get onto the mailing list if you're not already on it. Contact James Cary at info@jamescary.co.uk and you will be added.

Talk to your neighbours. They may know nothing about what's coming. Perhaps you could print out a copy of this summary and give it to them.

Write to Sarah Dyke MP, Adam Dance MP and your local councillors expressing your concerns. Please do that in your own words rather than cutting and pasting existing words, or it is essentially treated like junk mail.

Think about how much you can give to the crowdfunder when it comes – possibly in the next few weeks!

Sarah Dyke MP

<https://members.parliament.uk/member/4995/contact>

Adam Dance MP

<https://members.parliament.uk/member/5191/contact>

Three Villages Floodgroup

<https://www.3vfg.org.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/3villagesfloodgroup>