

## **Rode Parish Council**

### **Matter 4 – Consideration of the six sites suggested in the Main Modifications**

**4.1 Edge of Midsomer Norton:** Sites MN1 (Land at White Post, near Westfield for a minimum of 250 dwellings), MN2 (Land at Underhill Lane, Midsomer Norton for a minimum of 60 dwellings) and MN3 (Land east of the A367, near Westfield for a minimum of 145 dwellings).

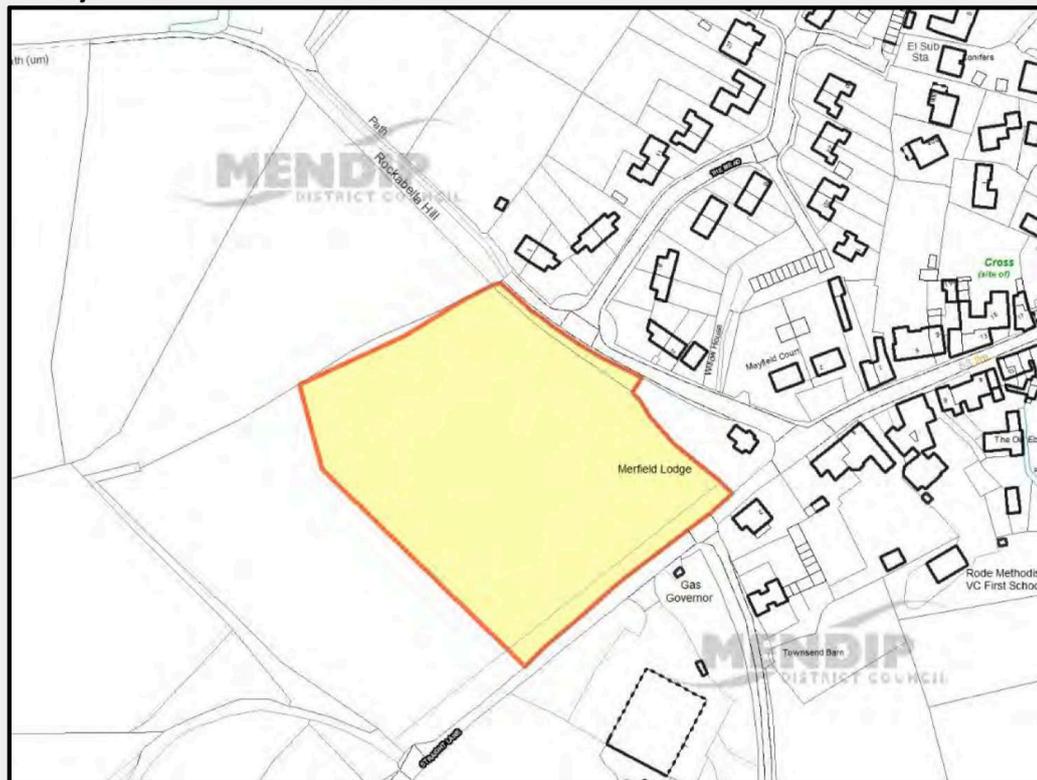
Rode PC does not wish to offer any views on these sites.

**4.2 Sites at Primary Villages: Sites RD1 (Land off The Mead, Rode for a minimum of 26 dwellings),** NSP1 (Land off Mackley Lane, Norton St Philip for a minimum of 27 dwellings) and BK1 (Land off Great Dunns Close, Beckington for a minimum of 28 dwellings).

**(i) Are these sites sustainable as sites for new homes, and are there ownership or other delivery constraints?**

#### ***1. Background.***

1. RD1 comprises land off The Mead in Rode, a greenfield site outside the village boundary. It is part of the estate of the owner of Merfield House, a Grade II\* listed building. It is bounded by The Mead on the NW side and Straight Lane on SE side. To the north is a hedgerow. The western boundary is a line drawn across the existing field which is currently used for grazing cattle.

**Policy RD1: Land off The Mead**

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2. The Mead was originally a council estate developed in the middle of the last century. It contains about 40 houses, mostly now privately owned. The housing all lies to the NE of the entrance road.
3. At the corner of The Mead and Straight Lane is Merfield Lodge, the original lodge for Merfield House. In 2014 Mendip carried out a Conservation Area Appraisal for Rode and Merfield Lodge, designed by Henry Goodridge, was one of several notable unlisted buildings described as follows:

The Lodge to Merfield House, a heady 19th-century brew of Victorian Italianate, coursed and squared Bath Stone and ashlar dressings, round-headed windows, expressed quoins and keystones, a bold end chimney and a porch on square piers, together with a pair of splendid rusticated and ball- finialed gate piers and a sturdy wall at either side, ramped up to the piers (there is a modern extension at the rear)

4. The Appraisal of Rode's Conservation Area is available on Mendip's website at [https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/8702/Rode-Conservation-Area-Appraisal/pdf/Conservation Area Appraisal Rode - Final Draft.pdf](https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/8702/Rode-Conservation-Area-Appraisal/pdf/Conservation%20Area%20Appraisal%20Rode%20-%20Final%20Draft.pdf)
5. Straight Lane was originally one of two main connection routes between Rode and Beckington/Frome. In the 1980s a bypass was built around Beckington and Straight Lane now ends with a very short slip road onto

the bypass. There is no entry from the bypass into Straight Lane. As a result it has effectively become a relatively quiet one way road intersected by Parkgate Lane and Shawford Lane (both single track lanes) used mostly for exiting the village onto the bypass. Part of Straight Lane is also part of the national cycle network (NCN254). Encroachment of the banks over the years has made two way vehicle working quite tight in places.

6. A few metres from the entrance to The Mead is Rode First School - federated with Norton St Philip School. At the beginning and end of the day this junction is congested with the vehicles of parents dropping off and collecting their children. And, as mentioned elsewhere, the school minibus effectively blocks the road at these times while pupils board and alight.
7. In 2015 the village carried out a survey as part of the preparations for drafting our Neighbourhood Plan. Four sites were put forward including land at Merfield. The majority of residents who voted rejected all four sites. Merfield was the least rejected but it was a two phase proposal including homes targeted at independent-living 'seniors' to be built fairly close to Merfield House in phase 1. Phase 2 was some additional housing on land adjacent to The Mead together with perhaps a re-sited village school. The questionnaire didn't differentiate between the two phases but from free text comments on some of the returned questionnaires suggested most were against phase 2.
8. Rode's Neighbourhood Plan was "made" in August 2017. Policy 2 included Housing for the Elderly at Merfield House and Policy 3 was provision of Housing for the Elderly more generally.

## ***2. Mendip's Involvement***

1. Following the adoption of Rode's Neighbourhood Plan, further discussions took place with the owners of Merfield to see how the policies could be delivered. Despite this being a greenfield site outside the village boundary, Mendip representatives initially encouraged the idea of bringing forward an innovative plan to provide suitable housing for residents wanting to downsize but live in the village. This could have been an exemplar site for other villages.
2. No additional housing for Rode was included in the draft LPP2 submitted for inspection. But following publication of ED20, Mendip responded by adding housing on Merfield's land specifying a minimum of 26 houses, a much larger development than originally discussed with the owners and

the village. Although detailed plans are yet to come forward, early reactions suggest considerable hostility to the prospect.

3. It is also questioned whether the road network described earlier could cope with an additional 26+ properties.

### **3. Draft Local Plan Part 2**

1. As earlier stated, the first draft of LPP2 had no allocations for Rode because the village already had completed or planned additional housing exceeding our target for the period to 2029. With regard to additional housing in the NE of the District and Mendip, we believe the comments in LPP1 have been mis-interpreted and this addition to LPP2 should now be struck out.

**(ii) How much weight should be given to the recent planning appeal decisions in relation to sites NSP1 and BK1, and in particular, have any material considerations changed since these appeals were dismissed?**

*Not applicable to Rode*

**(iii) What other sustainability issues should the Plan have regard to in relation to these sites?**

As argued previously this site does not need to be brought forward to satisfy the plan.

#### **4.3 Other sites within the north-east of the District:**

**In the light of the consideration of the sites identified in sections 4.1 and 4.2 above, are there any other sites, either on the edge of Midsomer Norton/ Radstock, or within the three Primary Villages identified above, or in any other settlements in the north-east of the District, which are considered to be more sustainable for the allocation of new development to meet the additional 505 dwellings total? If so, what is the evidence?**

1. As argued elsewhere the notion that there is a requirement to find sites that can accommodate the "additional 505 dwellings" is not supported by the evidence. There is therefore no requirement to seek out more sustainable sites.