# Taunton housing development gets approval without planned connecting road amid concerns



The final phase of a significant housing development in Taunton has been approved to proceed without the construction of a connecting road link between the new homes and previously built phases, following a narrow vote by Somerset Council's planning committee west.

David Wilson Homes had originally secured outline planning consent for the Nerrols Farm development in 2010. The scheme is planned to deliver about 900 homes alongside a new primary school on land between Lyngford Lane and Maidenbrook Country Park in northern Taunton. The current decision concerns phase three of the project, which involves building 292 homes, including 73 affordable residences.

Initial proposals for phase three, submitted in July 2019, incorporated plans to extend Rossiter Road from phase two in a north-westerly direction to connect with a new roundabout at the junction of Lyngford Lane and Cheddon Road. However, the developer later opted not to link phases two and three via roadways. Instead, access to phase three will be solely via a T-junction at the northern end of Lyngford Lane.

David Wilson Homes cited practical challenges, specifically a narrow “ransom strip” of land outside its ownership between the two phases, as the reason for not proceeding with the link road. As part of the approved designs, Lyngford Lane will be closed to vehicular traffic but retained as a quiet route for walking and cycling, providing connectivity from the new homes to local amenities such as the post office. Enhancements to existing public rights of way around the development will improve pedestrian and cycle links, including a new pathway connecting to Leigh Road. Additionally, a walking and cycling route along the southern side of Cheddon Road is planned to offer safe access to Pyrland School and Wellsprings Leisure Centre, in line with Taunton’s local cycling and walking infrastructure plan (LCWIP).

The decision followed extensive debate during the committee meeting held on 15 April in Taunton, which took place after members conducted a site visit. The vote to approve the plans passed narrowly by five votes to four, with one abstention.

Local residents voiced strong opposition to the proposals during the meeting. Ralph Willoughby-Foster criticised the application for failing to deliver the number of homes specified in the Taunton Deane Core Strategy, stating it undermines sustainable community development and sets a concerning precedent for other land allocations. Speaking to Somerset Live, he said: “Our planning policy aims to build new garden communities, not just to bolt new housing estates onto the existing urban area. The council is being held to ransom.”

Concerns about safety and traffic impacts were also raised. Nicola Reece highlighted risks to children walking to the nearby Cheddon Fitzpaine Church School via Lyngford Lane, which she described as having limited pavements and poor visibility in places. She remarked: “We are not against the development of this site; we are against this current plan. If you approve this application, it will be out of your lives, but we will live with the effects daily. We had hoped your site visit would give you a sense of the worry we endure. The developer is calling the shots, and the council is letting them."

Kate Wilson added her voice to the opposition, emphasizing the consensus among local parish councils, the MP, and Somerset councillors regarding the deficiencies of the plan. She said: “None of this makes any sense. The consequences of these plans will not only be unsafe but irreversible. Everyone is saying the same thing - we can’t all be wrong. The developer knows the link road would solve all our problems - but rather than build developments with integrity, they have shut down conversations about the ransom strip.”

Councillor David Fothergill, representing Monkton and North Curry, expressed concerns that the developer was obscuring the broader traffic impacts on communities north of Taunton. He noted: “They’re trying to hide just how dangerous those roads to the north are - and as councillors we should be mature enough, sensible enough and experienced enough to say that there is more to this than we are being told. Traffic assessments to the north have not been done for a reason - and the reason is that it will impact those communities so badly that people don’t want to tell you about it.”

Councillors Tom Deakin and Norman Cavill also voiced their reservations, with Cavill describing severe congestion near Cheddon Fitzpaine Church School during peak times and asserting the importance of resolving the access issues. Councillor Caroline Ellis criticised the developer for reducing the density of phase three to avoid building the link road, describing the decision as flying "in the face of reality" and stating she could not support the plan.

Despite the strong objections, Alison Blom-Cooper, the council’s chief planning officer, advised committee members that refusing the application was likely to result in the council losing an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate. She explained: “The changes to the National Planning Policy Framework which were made in December, and the pressure on local authorities to deliver housing, means that almost every application that goes to appeal for a housing development is being allowed, unless substantial or serious harm can be identified. That would mean that we would almost certainly be liable for a costs award - not to mention the amount of officer time and resource that would be taken up in fighting an appeal.”

Chairing the meeting, Councillor Simon Coles acknowledged this reality, saying: “I’m really concerned that if we do not reach a decision, we will find ourselves at an appeal, and I think there is a 99.9 per cent chance we would not win. That is the reality of where we are - it is not a threat.”

Following nearly two hours of debate, the committee voted to approve the detailed plans for the third phase of Nerrols Farm, allowing the construction of the 292 homes without a road link to the existing phases. The decision concludes the planning process more than a decade after the initial outline consent was granted for the development, although the absence of the connecting road continues to be a source of concern within the local community.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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