

Ms F Wadsley
Deane House
Belvedere Road
Taunton TA1 1HE

49 West View
Creech St Michael
TA3 5DU
13 December 2017

Dear Ms Wadsley,

**RE PLANNING APPLICATION 14/17/0033
Gladman Development Ltd, Creech St Michael**

Please see below a copy of a letter of objection submitted on 4 February 2013 in respect of Planning Application 14/13/0006, the David Wilson Homes development to the rear of Creech St Michael Primary School and West View. This development has now been completed but, given the proximity of the David Wilson Homes to the field now being proposed for development, the points made so clearly in the letter are equally as relevant, if not more so, to the current Gladman Planning Application and should be taken into consideration. Salient points are highlighted.

It is interesting to note that the author of the letter is also the current owner of the field being proposed by Gladman for development.

Yours sincerely,

Lynn Gates

Dear Sirs,

I am writing to object to the proposed application and indeed any further planning for properties that affect the waterways and tributaries that feed into the North End Stream within the Creech St Michael Parish.

During December, an exhibition was held into the possibility of sites within Creech St Michael around this proposed location. The developers there were David Wilson homes who had already been responsible for the construction of the latest estate there to the east of the school.

I and my family own and farm land at Foxhole lane which is accessed from Worthy Lane near Creech St Michaels North End. We have used this land for growing crops for some twenty years and had always managed to successfully crop the land even though one field of 7 acres adjacent to the Taunton to Bridgwater canal is low lying and can lie wet. That field has the North End Stream alongside one boundary, a contour ditch supplying water to Vicarage Lane, Bull Street and what used to be Court Barton farm's ponds alongside a second. The contour ditch level is controlled by a weir that is now somewhat in disrepair and the

overflow from the weir goes along a third boundary back to the main North End Stream Boundary. The 4th boundary is alongside the canal.

The canal level is some 6 feet above the field except where the field rises sharply at one edge to the contour ditch. The majority of 5 acres of that 7 acres field is low lying as is some of our adjacent field. All the field levels are below the canal level. Therefore all waters coming down the streams and ditches have to go into culverts and pipework under the canal and thence across a neighbour's field via ditches, under the main railway lines in further culverts and siphons to ditches onto the Somerset levels and into the River Tone.

We have always known that the main North End Stream culvert which is the eastern most canal culvert of our 7 acre is running at close to its maximum in winter months and this is why it is supplemented by a second overflow culvert approximately 40 yards to the West of it. The two are joined by a shallow wide ditch to allow excess water to use both culverts.

Both culverts are very old and were built at the time of the canal construction.

Our fields have always been able to grow combinable crops successfully and whilst they can occasionally have a small area that is perhaps a little thinner, this would never exceed more than a half acre and there would be no total failure of the crop.

More seriously, there is historical evidence that even minor increases to the weir height on our contour ditch can cause backing up of the water before our fields, to the extent that houses in North End of Creech St Michael will flood. The weir height is down at present but this shows how near to calamity we are. The increased water flows from high speed run-off are pushing all of these watercourses to their limits and beyond.

Since the new estate at Hyde Lane, the fast flow from rainfall events has inundated our field to a depth of 2 or 3 feet in places on numerous occasions this autumn and winter. The water has stayed in place for days at a time since the existing culverts could no longer cope with the speed at which the water came down. The water would in our opinion as highly experienced arable farmers, have caused us total crop loss had there been conventional cropping such as wheat or Oilseed Rape in place over an area of around 5 acres. As it is, we are growing miscanthus in the field which is a perennial crop harvested in March or April. The crop has been in the field for about 6 years and will stand flooding for medium periods during its dormant winter months. We have always been able to cut and dry bale that crop in this field without fear of getting stuck or of crop loss. No provision has been made to increase the size of the culverts under the canal and little or no maintenance has been carried out by any authorities responsible. Water has been flowing through the second culvert so fast that it has completely inundated the field south of the canal causing wash outs and flooding there too.

As a result of the lack of run-off control, we may not be able to harvest a crop in our field again.

I raised the issue with the Canals and Rivers Trust at a meeting on site but have yet to hear their conclusions. At first site there appears to be little they can do and indeed should have to do.

When I raised these points with David Wilson's Representatives at their exhibition, they had no answers to satisfy either mine or anyone else's detailed questions on the subject of the run off. They made false claims that they were discharging into the canal. If they had been then they are defying two laws, one being legal and the other being gravity.

There has been no granting of water easement into the canal by the Canals and Rivers trust (I checked and they won't). David Wilson's homes may have thought that by sending the water to North End stream, it was going into the canal. Anyone who can read a map badly, might surmise this. However, anyone who had done a proper assessment, would know that the stream flows under the canal and not uphill into it.

I have raised all of this problem with Taunton Deane borough councillors by phone who assured me that "proper assessments had been done" and that "there were concerns about the culverts under the canal".

Clearly no proper assessments have been done. If they had, then surely it would have been necessary (and polite) to notify or ask permission of those landowners whose land bordered the relevant watercourses before measurement could begin. The phone was a bit quiet at this point. So it's either no assessment, or perhaps the assessors are relying on work carried out prior to our taking ownership of the land, in which case the assessment is relying on twenty plus year old data.

I was also assured that any development passed by the council "must have no downstream impact on peak water flow through existing water courses". David Wilson homes are clearly unaware of this by their own admission and lack of knowledge as to where their surface water even goes.

Incidentally, I now understand that those contacted stand to massively benefit from a number of other planning permissions already granted at Hyde Lane, Brittons Ash, Monkton Elm and its environs. Planning on nearly all that land will have a detrimental impact on water flows through the North End of Creech and will certainly have an impact on riverside property below Creech and on the Somerset moors and levels, currently still under water. There is huge concern among businesses both large and small, rural and town based, whose incomes and employees are being badly affected by the current road closures in the county. All of this can be directly attributed to a combination of poor river maintenance and excessive building in the catchment area with ineffective restrictions imposed on run-off water management. Add to that a wet year, with much evidence pointing towards this being increasingly normal and the two effects now give us the problems experienced by all to the east of Taunton and many within the county.

Recent planning applications have tried to control surface water run-off by installation of "catch and release" ponds. Clearly the planning department and building inspectors are unaware of how these work:

I cite the example of the new medical centre and its car park at Creech St Michael. There is a collection pond to the South of the Car park.

It is fed by a large diameter pipe directly from the car park drain and possibly this is connected to the Medical Centre roof drains and may be connected to a part of the development by David Wilson homes (water doesn't flow uphill !). This is fine and the pond is a reasonable capacity.

There is one glaring error. The pipe leaving the pond is the same size as the one going in. Therefore the pond will hold little or no water over and above what is already in there, a flash rainstorm event will simply pour into the pond, pass straight through it and out of the exit pipe at the same speed, taking any fish and other wildlife with it. The delay from one to the other will be a matter of no more than a minute or two. If anything the water flow will be faster as a result of lack of frictional losses where there is no pipe wall. Thankfully it seems that this water does not go into the North End Stream but may traverse the canal in further culverts to the West the village centre. We have experience of "catch and release" here at home and successfully use it to prevent excessive water flows as a result of run off from some of our own fields, buildings and ditches. Needless to say, we don't do it this way.

I am also aware that houses at North End have been flash flooded this autumn as a result of the poor run off control. The ditch that runs in the valley of the fields to the North of the village school has had large water flows recently as evidenced by friends who regularly walk the area as well as myself. There is great concern among informed residents of North End and West View, Creech St Michael, and many more may not be aware of what is coming their way. The construction of huge quantities of housing, road and development on the other side of the motorway from Creech at Hyde Lane, Langaller, Walford Cross and Brittons

Ash will also affect the water flows at North End unless correct water management is put in place. All of that water goes under the canal at the site of our field. Creech St Michael parish council is well aware of the problems and has forwarded earlier correspondence to TDBC from me.

Government relaxation on planning for extensions conservatories and the like means that any proposed flood prevention scheme will need to double in size as people take advantage of this. I am aware of rules regarding pathways and driveways with free draining paving. These are often ignored. The new estate at Creech St Michael near the school already has "home improvements" which are not sustainable from a drainage perspective. Existing properties in the village are undergoing improvements and additions all the time increasing the pressure still further.

I know that the Environment Agency has had significant input to many of the developments in Taunton Deane. Whilst the abysmal performance over the flooding issues as a result of almost non-existent maintenance of the Tone and Parrett rivers doesn't exactly fill anyone round here with confidence in their ability, they have been spot on with their representations to TDBC over building on flood plains.

There is much talk about new houses being sustainable. Please explain how a house can be sustainable when the developers not only build on good agricultural land but then elsewhere cause the same area again to be unusable for agriculture thanks to high speed flood run-off?

Can I also offer a few "sustainable" suggestions:

No further large scale development within the catchment area that feeds North End Stream is allowed, ever. Its full and can't take any more. In a perfect world all planning, outline or otherwise in the areas already mentioned should be rescinded and significant restrictions placed on existing properties wishing to expand.

How about encouraging use of roof water harvesting by incentive ?

If you wish to live on a new estate in Taunton, you pay a band above on your council tax and the extra money is ring-fenced to go to projects that will allow better drainage of the River Parrett and Tone rather than dumping water on the moors, killing the wildlife and fragile ecosystems there, blocking roads and stifling all businesses, not just rural ones. Landowners are already paying drainage rates to maintain all the rhynes and ditches and pump systems on these moors. Those moors have to be, and are, farmed sympathetically with nature by law. The dumping of filthy water at the current speeds and quantities makes a mockery of that.

Developers pay a roof tax to facilitate the start of those sort of projects in the same way as Sedgemoor District Council have apparently imposed. Developers pay a deposit which is held for 5 years and refunded once any "catch and release" systems have proven history of operation and any attributed failure resulting in loss of property or income results in loss of deposit. Developers are not allowed to build until all property owners who may be affected are satisfied with provisions and works for flood prevention, legal documentation regarding compensation and sufficient deposit is in place. Why should others pay for TDBC and the developers mistakes ? Householders who have lived in Taunton are now faced with increased insurance premiums as a result of this.

Developers or TDBC should be responsible for all downstream effects of any development. Presumably the planning department has liability insurance ?

Park and ride is simply unsustainable: one car park space takes up an area covered by at least three vehicles (proper multi storey could be as little as a quarter of a car ground space per vehicle). The system doesn't work now that people work such a broad spectrum of hours. It provides a free spaces for those on a car sharing scheme with their friends and gives Taunton residents the headache of dealing with the water run-off.

I stand to lose significant income already as a result of failures by both TDBC and developers to address flooding issues and am considering further action. You should be aware that there are many landowners in the area who are at breaking point with the flooding issue. There have already been consultations with local MPs.

In conclusion, I am objecting to the proposed development as being unsustainable because of the potential flood risks that I and others believe will not be properly addressed by the developers or the borough council. History has already proven me correct.