The meeting was attended by Samantha Thomas, planning consultant for Carney Sweeney (CS) and Ciara McGinty, planning manager for Taylor Wimpey (TW) who gave a presentation.

The planning application for Brookfield nursery was granted on appeal. 25% of the housing will be affordable with 60% being rented and 40% shared ownership. There will be a mix of one, two, three and four bed houses with them being a mixture of terrace, semi and detached.

As part of their referred matters process, they have met with key Somerset Council officers who have given feedback on the proposals. They have also met with a design panel of a mix of external consultants who are independent and give opinion and challenge on the design proposals. Their response was received at the end of May 2026.

It is intended, that once all reserved matters have been considered, the application will be submitted at the end of July/beginning of August 2026. They explained that when the planning permission was finally granted it was subject to 11 conditions and section 106 matters.

Using slide 3 they explained:

1. The current access into the Brookfield site will be closing and a new opening will be made to the site.
2. Dormice have been found on site and they will need to apply for a licence to Natural England.
3. Slow worms have also been found on the development and it is intended that these will be moved off site.
4. There are also badgers in the surrounding areas. It is required for there to be a 20 metre development standoff area around any setts that are in use which is shown by the yellow dotted line.
5. With regards surface runoff, this will be into the river they will also be putting in a pond for more surface area for water to run into. This will enable water to discharge from the ponds into the water course at a lower rate.
6. With regards sewers and foul water from the development, for areas P1 and P2, they will take the output from these 40 houses into Ruishton Lane. The remainder will go into the ground using pipes and Wessex Water will take that off to the sewers.
7. With the wetland area, water from the water course will go through this, passing through each cell. The purpose for this is to take the phosphates out of the water.
8. The flood zone 2 and 3 areas will have no development on them. Nothing will be in the flood zones.

Using two site access handouts, they explained:

9. The proposed site access has already been approved.
10. There will be a footpath running the other side of the hedge from the road, all the way along the site. One end will come out by the substation onto Ruishton Lane. The other end will come out at the far end of the site near the A358 where the pavement begins.
11. Additional and enhanced signage is being proposed and improved markings on the existing speed humps.
12. They will need to remove some of the hedge on the shared road part for visibility.
13. At the pub end there will be a visual narrowing on the road and a dropped kerb.
14. Their proposals need to go through a technical approval process with Highways under section 278. However, the principal of their proposals has been agreed as part of the appeal already.

Slide 4:

15. There will be some landscaping and trees planted adjacent to the existing hedge.
16. A local play area will be added.
17. There will be bungalows and 1 1/2 storey properties at the end next to Orchard Rise.
18. Everything will be to national design standards.

They added:

19. the management of the space will be set up via a management company.
20. There will be 37 affordable units, nominations for which will be via Home Finder.
21. They also need to submit a travel plan, phosphates plan, demonstrate an increase in biodiversity net gain and submit their proposals to Highways.
22. They will be making financial contributions of £2,000,000 to education primarily for early years, primary and secondary schooling.
23. CIL money will be approximately £2.2 million of which 15% goes to the parish council which will be approximately £340,000.

The meeting was then open to questions and comments from parish councillors and the public:

<u>Layout and design</u>

Q1. What was the design justification for three storey buildings which are contrary to the neighbourhood plan?

- It was explained the designs will be 1 and 1.5 stories up to 2.5 stories, of which there will be 5. The apartment blocks are shown in yellow in the centre of the site on slide 3. The design panel advised on this approach. It was felt it would create them as a destination point coming into the site.

Q2. How does the design relate to the village design and neighbourhood plan requirements?

- They have looked at the design context and contents in the parish. They distributed an additional handout showing a range of properties within the parish. They have looked at the character, street design etc. The road alignment is as per the appeal decision.

Q3. How did they decide on the housing design?

- Through focus groups and using building regulations.

Q4. What sustainability is built in to go beyond regulations as set out in the neighbourhood plan policy?

- A sustainable policy has been submitted and they will put an addendum to it i.e. SUDS Will take account of climate change.
- There is no longer a requirement to demonstrate a minimum of 10% biodiversity net grain. They do not know what the net gain will currently be, but the ecologist will work this out at the end.
- It was agreed that hedgerows can be removed at the appeal. The design review panel asked to see if some trees can be retained. They will be putting in some additional planting.
- The properties will be built to current regulations using heat recovery systems and better insulation.

- Some houses may have solar panels depending on which way they face. The layout of the roads has already been agreed, so that impacts the facing ability of the houses.

Q5. Which aspects of layout and design are open to change?

- They will take all the feedback they receive but cannot move away from the principal layout, as that was set at appeal.

Q6. Slide 3 has changed from that previously issued and had arrows pointing from the development site into Orchard Rise these are not there now?

- There were pedestrian access arrows before, these have been removed. The arrows indicated where an existing road meets a boundary of the development. Developers are required to build a road up to that boundary, meeting the existing road on the other side, however, the hedgerows are not coming down and there is no intention for the road in the development to go through into Orchard Rise.

Q7. If there will be 150 houses, we can assume 100 children. Only a small play area is being provided, where will the children go and they will have to go there via the road?

- There is a play area provided in the centre of the development and one the other side of the pond in the open space area.

Q8. The large play area the other side of the pond is in flood zone 2, how will this affect the longevity?

- We have been asked to move that play area closer to the development, to the left of the pond, by the council, but it will still be in the flood zone area. Open space and play areas are allowed to go in flood zone areas.

Q9. There is the requirement for a 20 metre exclusion area around the badger sett. It is proposed that the foul water route to the pumping station will be in that zone. How will you cater for the 20 metre exclusion zone?

- We will have to do updated badger surveys and submit them with our final plans.
- We are not proposing a pumping station as we are now using gravity feed through gravel. Wessex Water still need to comment on our proposal and we need to submit further details for approval.

Q10. Can you confirm it will be a virtual footway?

- Yes, there will be walking in the road. There will be surfacing, signage and build out areas to give more precedent to pedestrians and more awareness to vehicles. Highways have accepted this proposal.

Q11. For the footpath along Ruishton Lane, you will need to take out a lot of hedge, but it is on a gradient so how will that work?

- The existing hedge will stay and the path will move further into the development.

Q12. There is a lot of overgrowth of existing hedgerows and this needs to be maintained. Who will maintain it and along the footpath?

- This will be put into the management company. The residents of the development contribute to the costs of the management company.

It was commented that there has not been any consultations with anyone living along Ruishton Lane and there is dispute over who owns the land along the lane. It was recommended that urgent consultation take place with residents along Ruishton Lane.

It was commented that, at the original design statement meeting, the developers said the buildings would include blue lias and slate and the housing design does not include these. It appears to be taking standard house types and not taking into account the village design. This is not what was sold to the village.

Q13. As part of the neighbourhood plan development a study was undertaken which found there was no need for new housing but housing for families and elderly would be helpful. It looks like there are only one or two bungalows in the design which doesn't allow downsizing?

- The housing mix is based on market research and what is wanted in Taunton. Bungalows have not sold in the past. (It was questioned when in the past TW had tried to sell bungalows).

It was commented that the slides and handouts provided do not show cars. It was not clear where there are parking spaces i.e. where will visitors park? It would be helpful if these could be shown on the drawings. It was also pointed out that being next to the motorway, it is a good place to leave a car for car sharing and if you are catching the Falcon bus from the motorway roundabout. It was suggested looking at permit parking to manage parking capacity.

<u>Flooding</u>

It was explained that, for the last three years, the river had over topped with flooding on this sits which contributed to the flooding in the village and the wider levels. It was questioned how will it be acceptable for the wetland area, SUDS basin/pond and play area to be underwater every year when it floods? It was commented that this development will contribute to the flooding in the centre of the village.

It was explained that the Nexus 25 site floods in winter and comes down the Blackbrook. 9000 properties proposed to be built in the Blackdowns will have runoff which will come down from there as well.

It was commented that it can be difficult for some properties within the village to obtain insurance due to the flooding in the village. It was pointed out that properties on this site may find it very difficult to gain insurance.

Q14. What safety aspects have been considered when the play area is flooded, full of sewage, and the safety aids are covered, as it will be very deep?

- It is designed to remain dry except those three areas which will remain with water when it floods. People will know not to go there.
- The SUDS basin doesn't have the maintenance issues of tanks. The management plan of this area will be included with the management company. It is expected that the pipes under the road may be adopted by the council.

Liaison

Q15. It was asked whether representatives from the management company will come to parish council meetings? Parish councillors or residents may have questions on whether the requirements within the management plan are being delivered.

- It was explained that they have not yet talked to a management company. The content of the management plan is agreed and is then handed to the management company. They cost it and a charge is made to each home within the development. There will be a defined contract which will be between the management company and residents. It is for the customers to make sure the management company is acting on it.
- It is not yet known when the site will responsibly transfer to Taylor Wimpey.
- It was agreed that it can be arranged for a meeting between the parish council and a representative from the developers. A point of contact can be put in place from transfer until completion of the build so that any concerns can be raised.

Badgers

It was explained that there are two sets of badger setts. One that CN says is disused is actively being used. There is also evidence from the private land on Orchard Rise that there has been some poison put down by the badger setts on both the private land and the development land setts. This has been reported to Somerset Badger Group who are going to look at the setts. The potential poison is also being tested. CN asked for information and any evidence gathered to be shared with them which they can then forward to their ecologist for advice. They will also advise them of this on their return to office.