

5th October 2022
Ref: 22.9001

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Dear Sir / Madam,

Pre-application Enquiry Statement – Land south of Bowden Road, Templecombe, South Somerset.

1. Introduction

This Pre-Application Statement has been prepared to form the basis of early engagement and discussions with South Somerset Council on behalf of our client, Gleeson Land, in relation to proposed development on Land at Templecombe, South Somerset. The pre-application enquiry relates to a proposed development for:

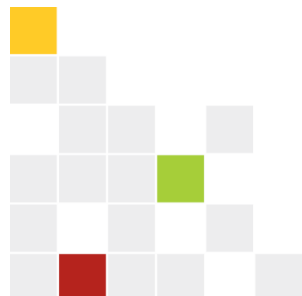
“Residential development of up to 200 dwellings with landscaping, access from Bowden Road and the A357, a community facility and associated infrastructure works”.

In addition to this Statement, the following information has been prepared in support of this pre-application enquiry:

- Completed pre application enquiry form;
- Site Location Plan (prepared by Richards Urban Design); and
- Masterplan (prepared by Richards Urban Design).

This statement is structured as follows:

- **Section 2:** Site Description
- **Section 3:** Planning History
- **Section 4:** Proposed Development
- **Section 5:** Planning Policy Overview
- **Section 6:** Material Planning Considerations
- **Section 7:** Summary and Conclusions



2. Site Description

The Site lies on the edge of Templecombe, listed as a rural settlement within the Council's adopted settlement hierarchy. Templecombe is a village located between Yeovil and Shaftesbury, close to the South Somerset and North Dorset border.

The site is currently accessed from two access points. Firstly, via a private drive off the A357 to the northeast and secondly, off Bowden Road, as displayed within the photographs below:



Access the A357



Access off Bowden Road

This site is bound by residential development along the northern border and a heavy thicket of hedgerow running along the southern border. The site is approximately 10.8 ha of entirely greenfield land, currently used for agricultural purposes.

In terms of the wider surrounding area, Templecombe benefits from a wide range of local amenities and facilities. Local services within the village include a Primary School, a convenience store,

takeaway, health service, employment opportunities, train station, and sports facilities. All services are within easy walking and cycling distance of the site. The site is also just 300m from a bus service between Yeovil and Wincanton and 650m from Templecombe railway station, which is on the line from London Waterloo to Exeter (with up to two services per hour).

Given the site's proximity to a wide range of local facilities and being easily accessible via public transport nodes, a residential scheme in this location is considered to be sustainable and to promote Active Travel given its close links to established walking routes into the village. This will be discussed in further detail under Section 6 of this statement.

The land is not subject to any local or national landscape designations. The site is located within flood zone 1 and as such is considered to be at the lowest risk of flooding. An extract of the EA Flood Map for Panning is included below for clarity:



Additionally, the site does not form part of any conservation area or area of high archaeological potential.

3. Planning History

A review of the site's planning history has been undertaken using the LPA's planning register. The review found that the site has a very modest planning history, with no application / relevant applications made within the last 5 years.

The planning applications submitted at the site are shown in the table below:

Application reference number	Proposal	Decision
11/00743/FUL	Erection of an animal shelter and agricultural store (GR370667/121850)	Approved 21.04.2011
04/03513/FUL	Replacement of existing 2 stall stables GR: (370667/121850).	Approved 12.01.2005
04/02692/FUL	To remove existing stables and replace storage building (gr 370667/121850)	Refused 19.10.2004

In terms of the surrounding area, the relevant planning history is shown in the table below:

Application Reference Number	Address	Proposal	Decision
19/01604/OUT	Land At Coombe Farm Os Plots 4300 Part And 4613 Pa West Street Templecombe Somerset	Outline application with all matters reserved save for access for residential development for up to 49 dwellings including landscaping, drainage and new vehicle access from West Street	Approved Wed 04 Aug 2021
18/02084/FUL	Coombe Farm West Street Templecombe BA8 0LG	Erection of 4 No. dwellings and associated garaging	Approved 27 November 2018
18/03222/OUT	Land Opposite The Orchard Combe Hill Templecombe Somerset	Outline application for the erection of 2 dwellings and construct vehicular access thereto.	Approved 16 th July 2018
22/00748/FUL	Land Adj. The Orchard Combe Hill Templecombe Somerset BA8 0LL	The erection of a single storey dwelling and widening the existing vehicular access thereto.	Unknown

As shown above, Templecombe as a settlement has been subject to various planning applications seeking permission for residential development, most of which have been met with approval from the LPA.

4. Proposed Development

The proposed development would provide up to c. 200 new dwellings, with a broad range of house types to meet varied needs in the area, including open market and affordable dwellings and public open space. Access to the site is proposed via a new simple priority junction from the southern side of Bowden Road.

The applicant intends to submit an outline planning application with all matters reserved except for access. This will include a high level of supporting information which demonstrates how the site can be delivered both technically and to create a successful urban extension to the village. The application documents will include both an illustrative masterplan, parameter plans and a detailed Design and Access Statement which will set out the assessment, evaluation and design approach. As part of the design process, the application will be engaging with key stakeholders including the Parish Council and the local community to inform and help shape the proposals.

It is also proposed that the development will include a number of community benefits including a community facility, formal play area as well as extensive areas of public open space. The development will accord with the ecological hierarchy of 'avoid, mitigate, compensate and enhance', biodiversity net gain will be achieved.

Previous Site Promotion

This Site has been subject to continued promotion throughout the previous Local Plan, as well as the emerging Local Plan's evidence base. The Site was promoted for 350 dwellings and assessed by the Panel in 2016, 2018, 2020 and 2021. The following comments were provided:

- 2016: Templecombe market overview: attractive due to the presence of a large employer, train station. Settlement could deliver approx. 25 dw/yr. Need for landscape mitigation tends to reduce density in rural areas. 350 too many.
- 2018 - Limited scope for development only - Bowden Road not adequate for significant numbers of dwellings - suggest 10 dwellings close to Bowden Road - remainder of site too much of an encroachment into open countryside.
- 2020- Proposed change of Templecombe to Village
- 2021 - No Change

5. Policy Context Overview

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework was revised on 20 July 2021 and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The following section identifies the relevant guidance and objectives which should be considered when assessing proposed development.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF details the three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and must be pursued in mutually supportive ways:

- an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 11 sets out how the presumption of sustainable development should be achieved. Specifically, for decision-taking this means:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

Paragraph 74 states that Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old.

Paragraph 110 of NPPF advises that applications for development should ensure the following:

- a) appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;
- b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;
- c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code 46; and
- d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.

Paragraph 111 of NPPF advises that development schemes should only be refused on transport grounds where the impact is severe.

Paragraph 113 states how proposals that generate traffic movements need to be supported by a Transport Statement, or transport assessment, to allow the likely impacts of the proposal to be assessed.

The Government's support for good design is set out in paragraph 126 which states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning. Local Authorities should be clear about design expectations and how these will be tested, whereas developers should effectively engage with communities and the Local Planning Authority throughout the process.

It is noted in Paragraph 174 that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and minimising impacts on biodiversity, providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.

Paragraph 194 states that Local Planning Authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the asset's importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. It is noted how Local Planning Authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. The NPPF places significant weight on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.

Paragraph 81 states that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The need for significant weight is to be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development is relayed in the Paragraph.

Paragraph 81 further explains how the approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.

The NPPF sets out in Paragraph 82d that Local Planning Authorities must be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

Local Planning Policy

South Somerset Local Plan (2015)

Local Planning policy is comprised within the South Somerset Local Plan adopted March 2015. The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 – 2028) is a collection of policies which set out the long term vision and strategic context for managing and accommodating growth within South Somerset up to 2028.

Local Plan Review 2020-2040

The Government has decided to reorganise local government in Somerset. As a result, South Somerset District Council will form part of a new unitary authority for the whole of Somerset. This will

combine the authorities of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West & Taunton, South Somerset, as well as Somerset County.

From our recent discussions with Officers, we understand that the day-to-day work of planning policy team is continuing in terms of collating a local plan evidence base and preparing strategies for towns and villages. However, limited further work is currently being undertaken formally at this stage in terms of consultation and plan-making, as this cannot begin until the new Somerset Authority is officially created in April 2023.

South Somerset has however, been liaising with the neighbouring Somerset authorities to ensure that a coordinated approach to evidence base preparation is followed by each authority in readiness for the new Somerset Local Plan.

Once the Unitary Authority is formed, a single new Local Plan will be prepared, which will relate to the entire new Authority. Assuming that a Regulation 18 consultation will commence 12 months following creation of the Unitary Authority, a Regulation 18 consultation could be predicted for April 2024, with a Regulation 19 consultation circa. 12 months following this in May 2025, and adoption in 2026.

It should also be noted that the current LP (adopted in March 2015) predates the NPPF (July 2021) which sets out national contemporary objectives and strategies for Local Planning Authorities. As such, relevant local policies must be assessed against their compliance with the NPPF and reduced weight should be afforded where they do not accord, with greater weight afforded to national planning policies in this instance. Para 11d confirms that where relevant policies are considered to be out of date, planning permission should be granted for sustainable development unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of where the proposal would conflict with any other policies in the NPPF.

With that above in mind, the following policies are deemed to be most relevant in determining the appropriateness of the proposed development at Land at Templecombe:

- **Policy SD1 (Sustainable Development)** - confirms that the Council will take a proactive approach to proposals with a presumption in favour of sustainable development used in order to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions within the district.
- **Policy SS2 (Development in Rural Settlements)** - makes provision for development in rural settlements, including where the development meets an identified housing need or where development will create or enhance community facilities and services to serve the settlement. The policy goes on to state that proposals must be commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement and increase the sustainability of a settlement in general. The policy also specifies that proposals for housing development should only be permitted in rural settlements that have access to two or more key services. Key services are defined as the following: local convenience shop; post office; children's play area/sports pitch; village hall/community centre; health centre; faith facility; and primary school.
- **Policy SS4 (District Wide Housing Provision)** - states that at least 15,950 dwellings should be delivered in the district within the plan period.
- **Policy TA6 (Parking Standards)** - confirms that parking provision in new development should be design-led and based upon site characteristics, location and accessibility.
- **Policy EQ2 (General Development)** - is aimed at achieving high quality design that promotes local distinctiveness and preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the area.
- **Policy HG5 (Achieving a Mix of Market Housing)** - requires development proposals to provide a range of housing types and sizes across the district to contribute towards the provision of sustainable and balanced communities.

6. Material Planning Considerations

Sustainable Location

The site is in a sustainable location and within walking distance of a number of facilities within Templecombe, including a Primary School, a convenience store, takeaway, health service, employment opportunities, train station, and sports facilities. Development in this location would therefore promote sustainable modes of transport. The site is well serviced by bus routes, which provide frequent direct links to Yeovil. Templecombe's train station also offers services direct to London Waterloo, Salisbury, Axminster and Yeovil. The site is around a 10 minute walking distance to Templecombe train station and within a 5-minute walk of the nearest bus stop on the High Street.

The site itself is also bound to the north by existing residential development and lies abutting the existing Settlement Boundary. As such, any future development would be considered the natural and logical rounding off of the existing settlement.

Given the site's proximity to a number of local services and its easy access / connectivity to a nearby public transport nodes, the site is considered a sustainable location for development. This is further supported by an Officer's Report for Land at Coombe Farm application ref. 19/01604/OUT, whereby the Officer acknowledges that Templecombe is a sustainable location with "a good level of local service provision". The Report goes on to state "mindful of the variety of services and facilities referred

to, the settlement is considered to be a sustainable location that can support a reasonable level of housing growth”.

It is therefore recognised that Templecombe has the capacity to accommodate residential growth and benefits from a suitable amount of services to support new residents. It should also be acknowledged that new development, and associated facilities, can contribute to the overall increase of sustainability of a location. In this context, the proposed scheme includes the provision of a flexible community use, this will be for the benefit of the existing and future residents of Templecombe and will increase the facilities on offer, thereby enhancing the sustainability of the settlement.

Furthermore, within the Manor Farm, Combe Hill, Templecombe appeal¹, in considering the overall planning balance, the Inspector acknowledged that the appeal site (located c. 150 metres east to the site to which this pre-application enquiry relates) was in “*a particularly sustainable location in terms of accessibility to local services and public transport*” (Para.47).

Policy SS1 defines the settlement hierarchy, within which Templecombe is identified as a Rural Settlement. The policy references that, within such locations, national countryside protection policies apply. The NPPF objectives promote development within sustainable locations, and it has been evidenced above that it has been established that Templecombe is a sustainable settlement, such national countryside protection policies are therefore considered to be adhered to in the context of this proposed development.

In the context of Policy SS2, the proposals will not only meet an identified [and currently unmet] housing need but will also create a community facility to serve the settlement. In addition, the proposals will provide financial contributions, which will also enhance existing community facilities. It should be noted that the provision of financial contributions in the context of Policy SS2 was afforded weight by the Case Officer in the overall planning balance and positive determination of application 19/01604/OUT.

Notwithstanding this, it is questioned whether full weight can be afforded to Policy SS2 in the context of a lack of five-year housing land supply. Within the Officer’s Report for application 19/01604/OUT, the Case Officer concluded that only limited weight can be afforded to conflicts with SS2 in the context of a lack of housing land supply, acknowledging that Policy SS2 is a housing restrictive policy.

It should therefore not be disputed that the proposed scheme meets the principles of sustainable development, and equally will assist in providing much needed housing in the short-term as well as the provision of extensive areas of public open space and a community use facility for existing and future residents. Development in this location should therefore be supported in principle.

In accordance with paragraph 74 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the housing policies of the development plan pertaining to the supply of housing can be set aside and any planning application should be determined on the basis of the ‘*presumption in favour of sustainable development*’. This requires the local planning authority to grant permission for new residential development unless adverse impacts could be identified that would significantly outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the NPPF.

¹ APP/R3325/W/20/3265558

As such, the following principal planning considerations have been assessed in turn to determine the acceptability of the proposal:

- Housing Land Supply;
- Highways and Access;
- Heritage and Conservation;
- Landscape;
- Ecology and Arboriculture;
- Public Benefits.

Housing Land Supply

It is acknowledged by South Somerset District Council that they are currently unable to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites. This is confirmed in the Council's Five-Year Land Supply Paper 2021-2026 published September 2021.

Additionally, recent Appeal Decisions (postdating the Council's latest Five-Year Land Supply Paper 2021-2026) within the immediate and surrounding area further establish that the Council are unable to evidence a five-year housing land supply. Of particular relevance is a recent Appeal (app ref. APP/R3325/W/20/3265558) whereby the Inspector assessed the principal issue of whether the Council could demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land, stating that:

*“This all gives me **sufficient concern** so as to question the **overall deliverability of the Council’s supply of housing, most notably, I consider the phosphates issue will lead to delays** which have not been factored into the Council’s supply figure. Therefore, of the figures before me, I lean in favour of the appellant’s housing supply figures which using the standard method with a **5% buffer indicate a five-year housing land supply of between 3.97 and 3.66 years supply...***

*An annual position statement, which is scrutinised by the Secretary of State through a formal process, and which would conclusively **demonstrate the housing land supply position, has plainly not occurred. Nor is there a recently adopted plan for the District...***

*Given my finding on housing land supply the addition of 60 houses to include affordable housing would boost **local housing supply and would be a benefit of significant weight particularly given that this site is not affected by the aforementioned phosphate issue and is in a particularly sustainable location in terms of accessibility to local services and public transport. Linked to this would be in-direct economic benefits which I give modest weight**”.*
(Boyer emphasis).

The Inspector concluded that:

*“Given that I have found that the Council **cannot demonstrate a five-year supply** of deliverable housing sites paragraph 11d) of the Framework is engaged and the policies most important for determining the application are to be considered as out-of-date”. (Boyer emphasis).*

Overall, at the time of the Appeal (July 2021), the Inspector found that the Council were not in a position to meet their five-year housing land supply. This, coupled with the ongoing phosphate issue whereby the majority of sites (in the Scott Schedule) fall within the affected catchment. As such, the Inspector undisputedly concluded that the Council were not able to meet their housing land supply.

Moreover, a recent appeal, approved by the Inspector in May 2022 for a development of 200 dwellings at Land north of Ansford Hill, Ansford, Somerset (app ref. APP/R3325/W/20/3259668) identified that there were over 5000 dwellings unable to be developed as a result of unresolved phosphate issue with no short term / immediate solution endorsed. The Inspectors Report stated that:

*“I note that there are approximately **5011 units currently held up pending a solution to the phosphates issue** referred to above... At this point in time the date of **resolution is more of an aspiration than a certainty**, therefore I cannot be sure the Council’s housing land supply position will be short-lived.*

*The Council cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply at this time. I am also conscious that the Council’s housing land supply position has been falling throughout the duration of the appeal starting at **4.7 years, then dropping to 4.5 years, and now the latest position of 4.4 years**. Furthermore, given my findings above, the actual figure will likely reduce again”. (Boyer emphasis).*

Interim Summary

In light of the above, both Appeal decisions unequivocally established a local housing need within the South Somerset District Area (SSDC) and deficiency within the LPA’s five-year housing land supply. Notwithstanding this, the ongoing and unrelenting phosphate issue continues to hinder permitted sites to commence development. The site subject to this pre-application enquiry has been assessed using Natural England’s mapping and has been proven to sit outside of the phosphate catchment area. As such, the site and proposed development offers an unconstrained in terms of phosphates and readily available development opportunity which would positively contribute to the Council’s demand for local housing and five-year housing land supply.

As aforementioned, it should also be noted that the SSDC are yet to adopt a new Local Plan in the last five years, and work on their emerging Local Plan has paused. Indeed, a new Local Plan for South Somerset is unlikely to be adopted until 2026, following creation of the new Unitary Authority. . All applications are therefore currently assessed against their compliance with the adopted Local Plan which restricts housing growth to within the settlement boundaries and to previously developed land. The District’s settlement boundaries are drawn tightly against the urban/built edge of settlements, it is therefore unlikely that the development of such sites will be sufficient to address the shortfall. There is a need to recognise that, in the context of a lack of five-year housing land supply, settlement boundaries should be afforded less weight (given that they are a housing restrictive policy) and there is a need to look outside of settlement boundaries to deliver housing to meet this unmet demand.

Overall, given that the Council are presently not able to evidence a 5 year housing land supply or an appropriate buffer, coupled with the forecasted position to worsen due to constraining factors (i.e. phosphates and the delayed RLDP) all housing restrictive policies should be afforded less weight in the overall determination of planning applications and therefore, whilst the application will be determined against the adopted LDP, the presumption should be in favour of sustainable development as triggered under paragraph 11d of the NPPF.

Highways / Access

The future planning application will be supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. Initial pre application engagement has been discussed with Somerset County Council. Discussions with SCC have been proactive and the scope and parameters for a detailed traffic assessment of the local highway network has been agreed – as well as other evidence that should be provided to demonstrate that the proposals accord with paragraphs 110 and 111 of the NPPF.

Access to the site is proposed via a new simple priority junction from the southern side of Bowden Road. There will be an additional pedestrian route into the site in the eastern end, connecting with the footway on the western side of the A357 Combe Hill, providing an additional continuous route into the village centre via the A357 Combe Hill and Yarnbarton. The TA will present planning application drawings of the accesses and demonstrate how they accord with design standards.

Within the future scheme, a road hierarchy will be established, which will create a variety of character areas that will respond to the local vernacular.

As set out previously, the site is in a sustainable location – a walkable / cyclable distance from local facilities and accessible to local settlements by public transport. Walking routes will be fully described in the Transport Assessment. A Framework Travel Plan will help to secure the take-up of sustainable modes among residents.

The scheme's community facility has been carefully placed on the edge of the existing built form to encourage usage by existing as well as future residents and to ensure that the facility represents an extension to the settlement. The facility will help improve the sustainability of Templecombe by providing additional services that might not be available within the village. The community use will contribute positively towards sustainable travel by reducing the need to travel further afield

Landscape

The Masterplan has been landscape-led and informed by an initial landscape assessment, which has assessed the site in its wider context. Key areas of opportunity have been identified to ensure the development represents an organic extension to the built form. Softer edges have been proposed along the southern and western edges to integrate the development with the existing residential dwellings and to retain and enhance the vegetation along the watercourse. The development has been designed as distinct parcels to ensure that they respond to the site's topography and blend into the wider landscape.

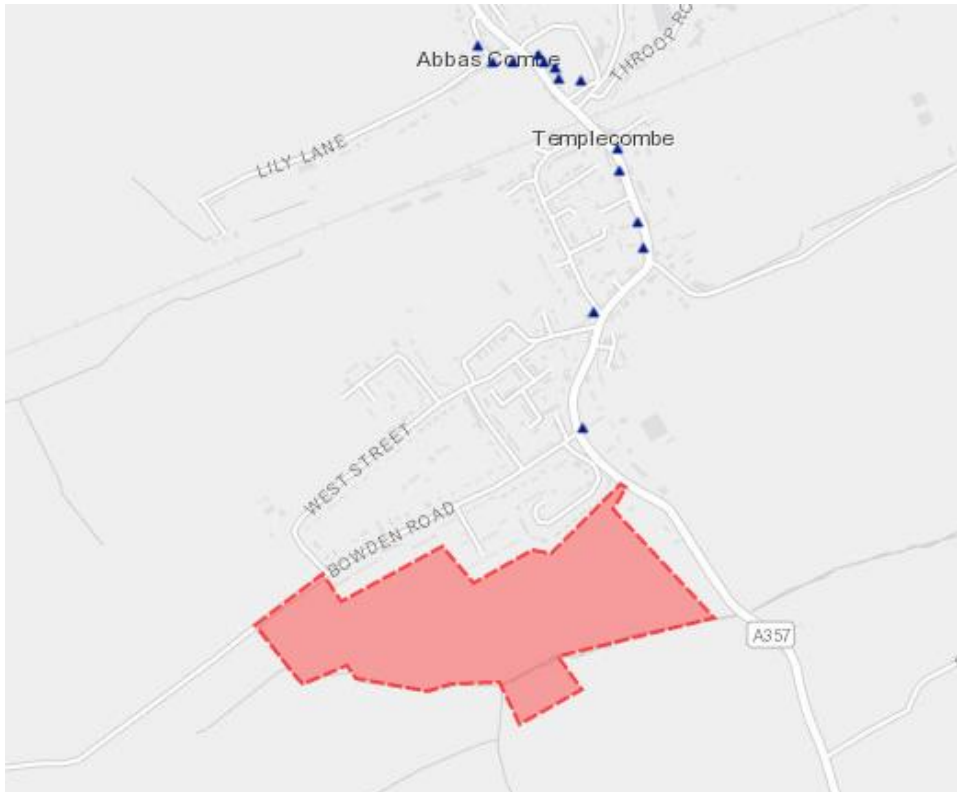
A future application will be supported by a full LVIA, which will further inform a future detailed Illustrative Masterplan and associated Parameter Plans.

Heritage and Conservation

A heritage assets search has been undertaken using Historic England's advanced mapping portal. The search has identified a number of Listed Buildings situated along Church Hill, Templecombe. The listed buildings range from Grade II* and Grade II properties however, the separation distances between the site and the listed buildings are considered substantial, with nearest Grade II* Manor House being over c. 150 metres from the site.

Moreover, the site is also separated from the listed building by an A-road (A357) and further screened by an existing cul-de-sac of residential properties (Manor Close).

An extract of the Historic England mapping is included below for reference:



As shown by the above map, the site itself is not constrained by any historic assets itself and by virtue of the separation distances and screening of the site to the nearest listed building, any impact would be considered negligible. Notwithstanding this, Templecombe is a village renowned for its historic character and therefore, any future development will be sympathetically designed and in keeping with the existing appearance of the area.

Ecology and Arboriculture

Paragraph 179, part b of the NPPF states that plans should:

“Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity”.

In line with NPPF objectives, any future planning application will be designed to promote and provide ecological enhancement, which will provide Biodiversity Net Gain. Habitats with the highest ecological

value, including trees and hedgerow, will be retained, as far as possible, and considered as part of a future scheme.

Targeted ecology surveys are currently being undertaken and reports will be submitted with the application that identify appropriate avoidance and mitigation work, both for habitats and protected species. This will ensure compliance with relevant planning policy and wildlife legislation and ensure that Biodiversity Net Gain is realised.

An initial tree survey has been undertaken, which has informed the masterplan. The tree survey identifies Category A and B trees along the southern perimeter of the site, which frames the site from the wider countryside further south. The site boasts two key hedgerows, which run north to south and these are retained on the proposed masterplan, with through routes provided to link the development parcels.

All trees along the southern border have been incorporated into the masterplan in order to retain and enhance the existing thicket of hedgerow and trees. Whilst the trees within the site have mostly been retained, the access has been carefully designed so that only very low-quality trees are removed.

A future application will be supported by an initial Tree Survey and Outline AIA.

Public Benefits

The proposed development would not only provide much needed housing to assist South Somerset Council in meeting their housing need but would also provide a number of additional public benefits.

In addition to providing circa. 200 dwellings, it is proposed that this scheme would include:

- Policy compliant affordable housing (35%);
- A Community Facility;
- Provision of LEAP/NEAP;
- Provision of extensive areas of public open space;
- Biodiversity enhancement area and overall Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Improvement of Sustainable Transport Routes.

The development of the site will unlock the site's potential for the enjoyment and benefit of existing and future residents of the town. The public will be able use the community facility, the Site's open space and improved sustainable transport routes.

It is considered, therefore, that these public benefits should be given considerable weight when determining the appropriateness of the proposed development at Templecombe.

7. Summary and Conclusions

Recent Planning Appeal's evidence that Templecombe is a sustainable settlement that is able to accommodate additional residential growth.

In the context of Policy SS2, the proposals will provide policy compliant affordable housing provision, in addition to a community facility with a flexible use and extensive areas of open space, for the enjoyment of existing and future residents. This will enhance the sustainability of Templecombe and contribute to an increased provision of facilities on offer within the settlement. Relevant parts of Policy

SS2 are therefore considered to be met in the context of this proposed development. In any case, it has been considered by Officers that SS2 can only be afforded limited weight in the context of a lack of five-year housing land supply.

Significant consideration should be afforded to this lack of housing land supply and the aforementioned issue of phosphates, which has resulted in considerable delays to the progression of a number of sites across the District. As mentioned, this site lies outside of the phosphate catchment area and therefore has the ability to be delivered in the short-medium term, which will unlock housing supply within the District.

Having regard to the above, and in summary, it is considered that the proposed development should be considered acceptable and appropriate in this location, in light of the following key factors:

- The proposal would make a meaningful contribution to the housing shortage, and affordable housing need in the short term with a view of delivering the scheme in the short – medium term;
- The site is located within a sustainable and accessible location;
- The proposed illustrative site layout and scale of built form is considered to be in keeping with The character of the immediate surrounds, including recent permissions in the area granted;
- the proposed development will be designed with a view to enhancing the area's visual amenity;
- There are no existing highway safety issues in the immediate vicinity of the site and the proximity to local services and sustainable transport infrastructure will help to reduce vehicle movements generated by the development; and
- It is not envisaged that there would be any adverse impacts in respect of flood risk, drainage, highways or trees.

We would welcome your thoughts and a further discussion relating to the development, in the context of this formal pre-application submission. Specifically, we are keen to secure a meeting with the relevant officer, so that these proposals could be discussed more fully.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Olivia Davis



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