

**WILLIAMS / PROOF**

**APP / LANDSCAPE**

---

**Application Ref: 19/03416/OUT  
PINS Ref: APP/R3325/W/20/3265558**

**LAND AT MANOR FARM,  
COMBE HILL  
TEMPLECOMBE,  
SOUTH SOMERSET  
BA8 0LJ..**

**LANDSCAPE PROOF OF EVIDENCE  
OF DAVID WILLIAMS**

**ON BEHALF OF  
GLEESON STRATEGIC LAND LTD**

APRIL 2021



David Williams  
**Landscape**  
Consultancy

**Appeal Pursuant to Section 78 (2) of the  
Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

**APPEAL BY GLEESON STRATEGIC LAND LIMITED  
AGAINST THE REFUSAL OF PLANNING PERMISSION BY  
SOUTH SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL  
IN RELATION TO PLANNING APPLICATION 19/03416/OUT  
ON**

**LAND AT MANOR FARM, COMBE HILL  
TEMPLECOMBE  
SOUTH SOMERSET  
BA8 0LJ.**

**Landscape Proof of Evidence  
Of  
David Williams, BA (Hons), Dip (Hons) LA, MLI.**

of

David Williams Landscape Consultancy Ltd  
Dyers,  
East Putford,  
Holsworthy,  
Devon  
EX22 7UG

PINS Ref: APP/R3325/W/20/3265558

DWLC Ref: 0360/A4/L2//DHW

Date of Hearing / Inquiry: 11<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Date of Document: 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## **CONTENTS**

- 0.0 Qualifications and Experience
- 1.0 Introduction and Scope of Evidence
- 2.0 Landscape Planning Policy
- 3.0 Landscape Context, Site Description and Visual Appraisal
- 4.0 Consideration of the Development Proposals
- 5.0 Consideration of Reasons for Refusal
- 6.0 Summary and Conclusions

## **APPENDICES / ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL**

### **EXISTING DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED WITH THE APPLICATION**

Report on Landscape and Visual Matters: dated 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019: - DWLC Reference: DWLC/0360/A4/L1B/DHW (CD/2.16)

Updated Report on Landscape and Visual Matters: dated 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020: - DWLC Reference: DWLC/0360/A4/L1E/DHW (CD/6.09).

### **NEW APPENDICES / MATERIAL INCLUDED IN LANDSCAPE PROOF**

- Appendix A** Methodology for preparing Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plans.
- Appendix B** Methodology for preparing Verified Photomontages PM06, PM08 and PM10.
- Appendix C** Aspect Ecology Technical Note, April 2021.
- Appendix D** Appeal Design and Access Statement (DAS).
- Appendix E** A copy of former RMC Engineering Works Appeal decision (APP / Z3825 / A / 12 / 2176793).

### **PLANS AND PHOTOGRAPHIC APPENDICES (In separate document)**

#### **PLANS**

- Drawing No.0360 / L2 Rev B– Site Appraisal Plan (Revision to existing plan in CD/6.09).
- Drawing No.0360 / L3 Rev B – Visual Appraisal Plan (Revision to existing plan in CD/6.09).
- Drawing No.0360 / L4 Rev I – Indicative Landscape Strategy Plan (Revision to existing plan to reflect changes to the Illustrative Masterplan (CD/10.01)).
- Drawing No.0360 / L5 – Visual Appraisal – Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plan (Bare Earth) (New plan)

Drawing No.0360 / L6 – Visual Appraisal – Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plan (Visual Barriers) (New plan)

Drawing No. 0360 / L9 – Wider Context / Landscape Strategy Plan (New plan)

Drawing No's. 0360 / L11 to L28 – Site Cross sections A-A to I - I. (New plans)

Drawing No's. 0360 / L29 to L36 – Long Sections from Viewpoints No.VP11 and VP12 (New plans)

### **PHOTOGRAPHIC APPENDICES**

New Photographic Sheets: 0360 / P03 – Photomontage PM06 – Before, After Year 1, Year 5, Year15;

New Photographic Sheets: 0360 / P04 – Photomontage PM08 – Before, After Year 1, Year 5 and Year15;

New Photographic Sheets: 0360 / P05 – Photomontage PM10 – Before, After Year 1, Year 5 and Year15.

## **0.0 QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE**

- 0.1 I am David Hugh Williams and Principal and Owner of David Williams Landscape Consultancy Limited, an independent landscape consultancy which I established in March 2009 and is now based in East Putford, Holsworthy, Devon.
- 0.2 I hold a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Landscape Architecture and a Post-Graduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Thames Polytechnic (now Greenwich University). I was elected a member (formerly an Associate) of the Landscape Institute in 1989.
- 0.3 I have over 30 years' post-qualification experience in Landscape Architecture and until March 2009 held the position of Landscape Director at Barton Willmore based at Calcot, Reading in Berkshire. Before that I was an Associate Director at Entec UK Ltd for two years (in their Reading office) and prior to that I was employed by Chris Blandford Associates, in charge of their London office for four years. Before April 2001, I was employed by Barton Willmore Environmental for 17 years; rising to the position of Director of the company before leaving to join Chris Blandford Associates.
- 0.4 I have provided professional advice on landscape assessment, townscape and environmental impact assessments and detailed design issues on a wide variety of projects. These include residential, commercial and industrial developments, infrastructure projects, power transmissions schemes, wind farm projects and recreational proposals for public and private companies and organisations.
- 0.5 I have undertaken numerous landscape and visual assessments using a methodology adapted from the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment and Management. The most recent guidance is edition GLVIA3 published in March 2013.
- 0.6 My EIA work included major projects such as Crossrail 1: Western Route (Maidenhead to Paddington section), the Longbridge Urban Regeneration project involving the assessment of regeneration of the former MG Rover plant at Longbridge Birmingham, the London Array Grid Connection for the London Array offshore wind farm scheme and a large scale residential development at South West Sittingbourne (Wises Lane), Sittingbourne, Kent and Kent Science Park / Highsted

Park (East Sittingbourne) Sittingbourne, Kent adjoining the Kent Downs AONB. I have also been involved smaller scale projects such as housing developments at Hoplands Farm, Hersden, near Canterbury, Kent, land at Cockering Farm, Thannington, Canterbury, Kent, land at Sandhole Lane, Westbury Leigh, Somerset, and land at Goldwell Farm, Yeovil Road, Crewkerne, Somerset and smaller scale housing developments at Veryan, and Germoe Cross, Paa Sand within parts of the Cornwall AONB.

- 0.7 The evidence which I have prepared and provide for this appeal, reference APP/R3325/W/20/3265558, is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.
- 0.8 I have given evidence at numerous public inquiries and hearings on landscape and visual matters. I am familiar with the Appeal Site (hereafter referred to as the Site or Appeal Site) and the character of its surroundings and have examined the relevant plans and documents for the purposes of this Appeal.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 David Williams Landscape Consultancy (DWLC) were approached by Gleeson Strategic Land ('The Appellant') in May 2019 to undertake an initial landscape and visual appraisal of land at Manor Farm, Combe Hill, Templecombe South Somerset BA8 0LJ (CD / 1.07) and to provide support on landscape matters in the promotion of the Appeal Site including a landscape appraisal report to accompany a planning application for the Appeal Site.
- 1.2 I am the author of the original Report on Landscape and Visual Matters (RLVM) relating to the earlier scheme on the Appeal Site for 80No. dwellings, new access open space and associated infrastructure dated 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019 (CD/2.16) and the subsequent updated Report of Landscape and Visual Matters (CD/6.09 [also referred to as the Landscape Report]) submitted with the planning application (CD / 2.01). The original RLVM (CD / 2.16) and the Updated Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) provided the Council with sufficient information to enable the landscape and visual effects to be considered and judgements reached on landscape issues.
- 1.3 My evidence is given on behalf of Gleeson Strategic Land Limited and, in this proof of evidence, I shall consider the landscape and visual matters relating to the proposed development on Site that is the subject of this Appeal.
- 1.4 The proof of evidence of Mr J Orton of Origin3, who deals with planning and housing supply matters, Mr J Smith of RPS Group who deals with the heritage matters and "Statement of Common Ground" sets out in full the details of the planning application including the accompanying reports and documents, and the Local Planning Authority's Reason(s) for Refusal (CD / 9.02).

### **Scope of Evidence**

- 1.5 The planning application was submitted to (LPA) on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019 which was validated by the Council on same date. Following consideration of the Appeal Scheme and Application (CD / 6.01 to CD / 6.16), the Council refused the Application under delegated powers and issued a decision notice on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020 (CD / 9.02). The Decision Notice (CD / 9.02) sets out two reasons for refusal. The second reason relates primarily to heritage issues and alleged harm to Manor House, a Graded II\* listed building, whilst the first reason relates to landscape matters and states:

**“1) This is an outline application which seeks to establish the principle of development and access. All other matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are reserved for future submission, consideration and determination. An illustrative Masterplan no 19-025 406 Rev J has been submitted indicating where and how the quantum of 60 dwellings could be accommodated on the application site. The Council is of the opinion that, whilst some residential development can be provided on parts of the site without causing unacceptable detriment to landscape character and harm to visual amenity, there are other parts of the site, particularly on the eastern and southern outer slopes where residential development is indicated on the Masterplan and which the Council considers would cause an unacceptable level of harm to the rural character of that part of the site and the wider landscape. Development in these areas would also cause an unacceptable level of harm to the visual amenity of those receptors adjacent to the site as well as those in the wider landscape. With that concern in mind, it is considered that the illustrative Masterplan has not demonstrated that the proposed quantum of residential development can be accommodated on the site without resultant unacceptable levels of harms to the landscape and for which an overriding essential need has not been justified. The Council is of the opinion therefore that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply in this case.**

**As such, the proposal is contrary to Policies SD1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028. The adverse impacts are considered to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the acknowledged benefits towards meeting the Local Planning Authority's housing supply (including affordable housing provision), and other social and economic benefits, having due regard to paragraphs 11.d) ii. and 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019)”.**

1.6 I attended the Case Management Conference (CMC) held by the previous appointed Inspector and this landscape proof of evidence deals with the following (as set out in Paragraph 10 of the CMC Inspector's Summary):

- i) It identifies the relevant character areas and the particular relevant features of these character areas;
- ii) It indicates the extent of the Zone of Visual Influence of the proposed development;
- iii) It identifies the key views and viewpoints (including with reference to plans) and what parts of the appeal site or the proposed development might be visible in such views; and



iv) The consequences of this to landscape character, including the effects of any proposed landscaping.

1.7 As I will explain later in this evidence, the development proposals, subject to this appeal, resulted from a detailed assessment of the landscape and visual aspects of the Appeal Site, its surroundings, and its location on the south eastern edge of Templecombe. As such, I consider the Appeal Site is suitable to accommodate development as proposed together with associated infrastructure, landscaping, open space and access, although the development will result in change which will cause some adverse effects upon the landscape and on visual amenity in the area surrounding the Appeal Site, these are not considered to be significant and the proposed development includes proposals aimed at minimising the landscape and visual effects and assimilating the development into the local area (approximately 60.55% of the Appeal Site area is to be provided as public open space and landscaped areas).

1.8 It is anticipated that the Appeal DAS, Illustrative Masterplan, and updated Landscape Strategy Plan Drawing No.0360 / L4 Rev I – Landscape Strategy Plan (CD / 10.03) will be the subject of planning conditions and the exact details of the landscape proposals will be submitted at detailed reserved matters stage and agreed with the Local Authority, prior to the implementation of the proposals. This remains the case with the updated plan which we would expect RMA to broadly accord with.

1.9 I will also show that careful attention has been given to the potential landscape and visual effects of developing the Appeal Site for housing and the design and layout of the proposed development incorporates appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that the development has minimal impact on views in the locality, and from the surrounding area, as required by the policies referred to in the Reasons for Refusal.

1.10 This proof of evidence is set out under the following headings:

Section 1.0 – Introduction and Scope of Evidence (this section).

Section 2.0 – Landscape Planning Policy.

Section 3.0 – Landscape Context, Site Description and Visual Appraisal.

Section 4.0 – Description of Development Proposals.

Section 5.0 – Consideration of the Development Proposals.

Section 6.0 – Consideration of the Local Authority's Reasons for Refusal.

Section 7.0 – Consideration of Third-Party Objections and

## Section 8.0 – Summary and Conclusions

- 1.11 This evidence should be read in conjunction with the evidence from:
- Mr Jonathan Orton of Origin3, who deals with planning and housing supply matters; and
  - Mr Jonathan Smith of RSP Group who deals with built heritage matters.

### **Methodology**

- 1.12 In order to inform the assessment of the proposed development, I have visited the Appeal Site and surrounding area on several occasions and at differing times of the year, so I am familiar with the changing landscape conditions.
- 1.13 The methodology used for the assessment of the Appeal Site is contained in Appendix A to the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09). This method accords the “*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition*” (GLVIA3) published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013) (CD / 11.12) and recent Natural England guidance “*An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*”, dated October 2014, (which superseded the 2002 landscape character assessment guidance) and “*An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management*” by Natural England (dated June 2019) [which superseded “*Topic Paper 6 - Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity*” also published by The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage (undated)].
- 1.14 The methodology is a ‘tried and tested’ method for assessing the likely landscape and visual impacts and is like other methods I have used in completing landscape and visual assessments for many projects in Somerset (and elsewhere in the South, South West and South East of England).
- 1.15 In landscape and visual impact assessments, a distinction is drawn between landscape effects (i.e. effects on the features / elements, patterns and character or quality of the landscape irrespective of whether there are any views of the landscape, or viewers to see them) and visual effects (i.e. effects on people’s views of the landscape, principally from public rights of ways, bridleways / footpaths, and other areas with public access such as recreation grounds / designated open land etc. but also from any residential properties). The Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) therefore considered the potential impacts of the development on both landscape character and visibility.

- 1.16 The methodology used is project specific and aims to provide a structured and consistent approach to assessing effects, although it is recognised that landscape and visual impact assessments includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements being made.
- 1.17 The methodology appears to follow a pragmatic approach (i.e. sensitivity of landscape / viewpoint x magnitude of change = significance of effect) to determining the potential significance of effects arising from a development. However, the methodology is flexible, and the tables set out in the methodology are used as a guide, as both landscape and visual impacts involve assessing many factors which influence the professional judgements reached in identifying the sensitivity and magnitude of change. The methodology aims to ensure that these factors are considered and that it is transparent and robust in determining the significance of effects.
- 1.18 One of the initial tasks involved in assessing the Site, its surroundings, and the development proposals, is the identification of the 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' (ZTV) of the scheme. A ZTV is defined in the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3 – CD / 11.12) as *"A map usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which, a development is theoretically visible"*. A ZTV plan or diagram is a tool to assist in the identification of visual receptors. There are a few ways that the ZTV can be determined.
- 1.19 For some smaller schemes, the ZTV of the Site and development proposals can be estimated from viewing the surrounding landscape from within and on the edges of the Site and by walking / driving the local roads and public rights of ways in the area looking towards the Site to estimate the likely extent of the ZTV taking account of the landform, buildings and vegetation which formed visual barriers in the locality.
- 1.20 For other larger schemes, the ZTV involved the preparation of a computer-generated drawing with visual barriers using the proposed height of the development and surrounding contours to define theoretical areas or potential locations within the landscape where views towards the development could be possible.
- 1.21 The approach set out in paragraph 1.17 above was the initial method used for determining the ZTV of the Application Scheme. which set out in paragraph 3.47 and 3.48 of the Updated Report on Landscape and Visual Matters (CD / 6.09). However, following the refusal of the application, two computer generated ZTV drawings have

been prepared of the Appeal Scheme. Further details of the ZTVs are set out in Section 3.0 of this evidence but I consider that the ZTV, included in this evidence, validates, and confirms what I originally did and considered to be 'Zone of Theoretical Visibility' to be.

- 1.22 Within the ZTV, a number of photographs (No's.1 to 20) were taken from representative viewpoints and these were included in the appendices (Photograph Appendix 0360 / P02 – Site Context Photographs) to the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09). The photographs were prepared following the Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11 on Photography (CD / 11.17), available at the time, which advised, at paragraph 3.4, that the *“most appropriate combination of lens, camera format and final presentation of image should be deployed to represent the relevant landscape. This is likely to include both the site of the proposed development and its context”* whilst at paragraph 4.2 of the Advice Note (CD / 11.17) reference is made to the type of lens that can be used.
- 1.23 However, the Landscape Institute have recently updated the latest advice on photography and visualisations which is now contained in 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' LI Guidance Note 06/19, dated September 2019 (CD / 11.13) and site context photographs are not subject of the latest LI guidance is states: *“Similarly, context photographs and sketches may be effective ways to communicate to stakeholders, in advance of, or association with, more sophisticated Visualisation Types. Generally speaking, they are not used to explain design proposals within the planning process. They may indicate the appearance or context of a landscape or site, show specific points of detail, or be used for internal design iteration. Such illustrations, sketches and photographs are not, therefore, the subject of this guidance”* (Refer to paragraph 1.2.4 of CD / 11.13).
- 1.24 The representative photographs were taken using a Canon EOS 700D digital camera with an 18-55 mm lens set at a 50mm focal length to give a similar depth of vision equivalent to the human eye. A number of photographs have been taken and combined to create a panorama from each viewpoint. The photographic appendices sheets (0360 / P01 and 0360 / P02) contained in the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) were prepared on A1 sheets to give a viewing distance between 300mm and 500mm, but the photo sheets were reduced to A3 size for ease of reproduction for the Landscape Report (CD/6.09). The photographs are for illustrative purposes only and are produced as an 'aide memoir' and by producing them at A3 size it requires the

decision maker to carry out a site visit to assess the Appeal Site and development proposals 'in the field'.

## 2.0 LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 In terms of the planning context for the Appeal Site and surrounding area, the relevant Planning Policy Documents and Statutory Plans are as follows:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019 (CD / 11.01);
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) March 2014 (as updated) (CD / 11.02); and
- The South Somerset Local Plan – Adopted March 2015 (CD / 11.03).

2.2 The agreed “Statement of Common Ground” sets out in detail the relevant local and national planning policies applicable to the Appeal Site.

### Other Guidance Documents

2.3 In relation to other planning and non-planning related guidance documents and landscape matters, the following are relevant (in date order):

- i) South Somerset published “*The Landscape of South Somerset – A Landscape Assessment of the Scenery of South Somerset*” in 1993 (CD / 11.15) and this indicates that the Site and surrounding area lie within “*Area 6: Escarpments, ridges and vales – East of Yeovil*”. In relation to Area 6, the assessment subdivides the area into 4 landscape character areas with the Site and Templecombe lying within “*Sub-Area 2: Wooded Ridges and Clay Vales*”. The LCA provides a description that is very generalised and not specifically relevant to the Site and its immediate surrounding area although the ridgeline upon which Templecombe is located on and the open pastoral vale to the east are mentioned. The South Somerset LCA does not appear to follow any recognised methodology or guidance provided by Natural England (or Countryside Agency / Countryside Commission), so it is difficult to replicate the assessment or understand the process used and factors that informed it at the time. Also, the Council proposed to progress with a ‘tailor made landscape strategy for the District’ but this has not been progressed (Relevant extracts from the South Somerset LCA were included as Appendix D of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09]);
- ii) South Somerset Council also published in 1996 (updated in 2006) “*Landscape Design – A Guide to Good Practice*” (CD / 11.18). This guide was prepared to illustrate the approach to landscape design which the District Council advocated for new developments in South Somerset and to interpret the

requirements of Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 'General Policies and Principle' and Circular 11/95 'The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions'. At that time, the guidance had the status of Supplementary Planning Guidance and it is no longer extant and there is no replacement. However, the approach advocated is considered to be still relevant today and this guidance has been used to inform the landscape design of the proposed development.

- iii) Natural England - National Character Map of England published in April 2014: The relevant National Character Area Profiles (NCAP) are: No. 133: Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour (CD / 11.14) included as Appendix C of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09];
- iv) South Somerset '*Peripheral Landscape Studies*' (CD / 11.19) between November 2007 to August 2013 (Study) – South Somerset Council have carried landscape capacity assessments of land around a number of settlements (13) in the District including Templecombe which was completed in October 2008. The introduction section of the Study (entitled: Background to the Study) refers to PPS 7 and the approach to countryside character assessment developed by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) and also national landscape guidelines in relation to visual impacts. But the study does not make reference the sources / exact approach used; the Study describes the landscape sensitivities, visual sensitivities and conclusions reached, albeit these judgements are based on one / very few viewpoints, especially in relation to land to the west of Templecombe. In relation to Manor Farm and the land to the south east of Templecombe, the assessment identifies its landscape capacity as ranging from 'moderate to high and moderate to low' capacity as shown on Figure 5 of the PLS (CD / 11.19). The conclusion is set out in Paragraph 7.6 of the Study, which states:

***“Area (iii) indicates land alongside Manor Farm, backing on to High Street. Whilst of insufficient scale to offer strategic development potential, it is included as being appropriate in scale to its village context for housing development. The site lays close to the skyline as viewed from the vale, hence low densities (circa 30 dph) are considered appropriate, with sufficient space set aside for landscape mitigation to the east edge, to soften views of development from the vale”.***

### **3.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT, SITE DESCRIPTION AND VISUAL APPRAISAL**

- 3.1 The Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) submitted with the Application describes in detail the Appeal Site, its surroundings and my landscape and visual appraisal (CD / 6.09 – pages 9 to 35) of the locality and wider surrounding area. The ‘Statement of Common Ground’ sets out those parts of the Landscape Report which are agreed with the Council and therefore the full description and analysis of the Appeal Site is not repeated here.
- 3.2 In the paragraphs that follow I have set out briefly the relevant description and appraisal of the Site and its landscape, and the key findings of the land subject to this Appeal.

#### **Appeal Site and Surroundings**

##### *Location*

- 3.3 The Site is located to the east side of the historic village of Templecombe immediately adjacent to the built-up edge of the settlement with areas of open countryside / farmland to the east and south. Abbas and Templecombe and surrounding scattered settlements and farmsteads lie within open rural countryside although settlements occupying elevated positions on the River Cale valley sides form notable features in the landscape visible in long and very long-distance views from either side of the valley. The location of the Site and its wider landscape context is shown on Drawing No. 0360 / L1 – Site Context Plan which was contained in the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).

##### *Landscape Context*

- 3.4 To the north of the Site are houses served off the High Street (No’s 21 to 35 - which have long narrow gardens) and houses served off Templars Barton, a small cul-de-sac development of 14 dwellings within the former grounds of No.37 High Street with the houses served of East Street, to the north east of the Site, extending the limits of Templecombe eastwards beyond the Site. The built-up areas of the village extend northwards either side of the High Street / A357 towards the Exeter to London (West of England) railway line and Templecombe Station. The town of Wincanton lies approximately 6.5 kilometres to the north of the Site.



- 3.5 Immediately to the west of the Site are a number of large, detached houses and bungalows served off the High Street and Combe Hill including The Dees, Temple View, Templars Retreat, served off a minor private road, and No.39 High Street, Manor House (Grade II\* Listed Building), Manor Barn, Knights Barn, Grianaig House, Silverlands, Sunnyhurst, Wingfield and Tally-Ho. To the west of the High Street / Combe Hill is further residential development predominantly semi-detached, terraced houses and bungalows extending along Bowden Road, and served off side streets and lanes with Berryfield House, Langdale and The Orchard situated on Combe Hill on the south west of the Site. Further to the west, there is open farmland extending towards the hamlet of Henstridge Bowden.
- 3.6 To the south of the Site, detailed planning permission has recently been granted for 2 dwellings adjoining the south western corner of the Site and Combe Hill (SSDC Ref: 18 / 03222 / OUT) which extend the limits of the village southwards beyond the Site. To the south of the village limits is open farmland, consisting primarily of open pasture fields enclosed by tall robust hedgerows, extending along the A357 towards Common Lane Farm and the village of Yenston with the larger settlement of Henstridge, about 2.0 kilometres from the Site.
- 3.7 To the east of the Site is open countryside and farmland comprising medium to large sized regular shape pasture fields occupying the low lying parts of the River Cale valley with the villages of Kingston Magna, and Buckhorn Weston occupying higher ground on the eastern side of the River Cale valley, about 4.5 kilometres from the Site with the small village of Cucklington to the north east, about 7.0 kilometres from the Site also located on higher ground on the east side of the River Cale valley.

#### *Topography*

- 3.8 The topography of the area is dominated by the wide-open valley of the River Cale and its tributary streams (Bow Brook and Filley Brook) which flow southwards to connect to the River Stour near Henstridge Airfield and Marnhull. The River Cale valley bottom lies between 54 metres to 65 metres AOD to the east of the Site with the land rising to the west to about 145 metres AOD and a ridge of higher ground (aligned in a north to south direction) near Henstridge Bowden.
- 3.9 The village of Templecombe lies on the east facing undulating slopes of the River Cale valley on a minor ridge line at about 95 metres to 110 metres AOD with the land falling northwards and southwards to shallow valleys / tributary streams at about 75 metres to 85 metres AOD. The Site and western parts of Templecombe lie on the

ridge and lies at an elevation between about 85 metres AOD to about 100 metres AOD with the land falling southwards to a minor valley before rising to another ridge / area of high ground at Windmill Hill near Yenston. The highest point within the Site is near the Sites entrance at the south western corner with the land sloping northwards and eastwards to a low point near the north eastern corner of the Site, to the rear of No.12 East Street. The farm buildings and slurry pits are situated on slightly raised man-made ground extending eastwards from the general slope of the land.

- 3.10 The houses to the north are situated at approximately the same level as the northern parts of Site with existing development following the valley slope eastwards with houses on East Street lying at a lower level than much of the Site at about 85 metres AOD. Existing development to the west of the Site, on Combe Hill, lies a similar level to the higher parts of the Site between 95 metres to 100 metres AOD with the housing areas to the west served off Bowden Road lying at a slightly higher elevation at between 100 metres to 105 metres AOD and forming a backdrop to the Site.

#### *Tree Cover and Woodland*

- 3.11 Tree cover within the landscape surrounding Templecombe, especially within the River Cale valley / Blackmore Vale and higher ground to the west, is relatively good, and forms a key characteristic of the local landscape, with extensive woodland blocks to the west and south west and hedgerow and garden trees on sloping ground to the north east of the Site on the edge of Templecombe. Some of the wooded areas are ancient woodlands (AW) although there are no AW within or close to the Site. In addition, to wooded areas in the wider landscape, the framework of hedgerows in the landscape contains many mature trees and lines of trees along the network of minor lanes and roads with tree cover also following the railway line to the north of the Site and trees occurring within the rear gardens of properties on the edges of Templecombe.
- 3.12 The undulating nature of the topography in the landscape, together with the existing framework of hedgerow trees, copses, and wooded areas to the north, west and south west of the Site contributes to a high degree of enclosure and containment within the landscape, restricting and limiting views from local roads, lanes, and public rights of way in the local area. There are, however, longer distance views from within and across the River Cale valley as well as from areas of higher ground to the east

with areas of higher ground, trees, and wooded areas to the west of the Site forming the background in these views.

#### *National / Regional Landscape Character*

- 3.13 The landscape character of the area is defined in the Natural England National Character Map of England and National Character Area Profiles published in April 2014. The Site lies on the western fringes of National Character Area Profile (NCAP) No. 133: Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour (CD / 11.14) with NCAP Area 140: Yeovil Scarplands to the west. A copy of National Character Area Profile No. 133 – Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour NCAP (CD / 11.14) taken from the Natural England website were contained Appendix C to the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).
- 3.14 Whilst the guidance contained in the NCAPs is generally incorporated into more local character assessments, the South Somerset character assessment referred to below predates the NCAP by many years. The Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour NCAP No.133 (CD / 11.14) however, highlights a number of characteristics and issues which I consider are relevant to the Templecombe and the Appeal Site. These I have underlined below and are:
- a) *“the lowland of the Blackmore Vale affords long, wide vistas to the ridges and hills of the Yeovil Scarplands NCA and the Blackdowns NCA – and beyond”* (Page 5);
  - b) *“A complex mosaic of mixed farming; undulating, lush clay vales dissected by a broken limestone ridge and fringed by Upper Greensand hills and scarps”*. (Page 6 - 1<sup>st</sup> bullet)
  - c) *“Many villages at the foot of the scarps, at river crossing points, on the Greensand springline, along the limestone ridges and at strategic sites”* (Page 6 – 8<sup>th</sup> bullet);
  - d) SEO 1 – *“Conserving the pattern of field boundaries with ancient and veteran trees, avoiding further loss, restoring hedgerows and establishing a new generation of hedgerows trees”* (Page 13 – 6<sup>th</sup> bullet);
  - e) SEO1 – *“Avoiding development that detracts from character, natural beauty and tranquillity of the NCA and, in as many cases as possible, identifying alternative approaches that enhance and reinforce them”* (Page 13 – last bullet);
  - f) SEO 2 – *“Using an understanding of the area’s traditional and historic architecture, and its distinct patterns of settlement, to inform appropriate conservation and use of historic buildings, and to plan for and inspire any*

environmentally beneficial new development that makes a positive contribution to local character". (page 14 - 1<sup>st</sup> bullet);

- g) SEO 2- "Conserving historic features in the landscape with heritage interest, including historic settlements and buildings and archaeological earthworks and sub-surface archaeology, while recognising the potential for undiscovered remains" (Page 14 – 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet);
- h) SEO 2 – "Maintaining and enhancing the rights of way network and open access land throughout the area". (page 14 - 9<sup>th</sup> bullet);
- i) SEO 2 – "Finding opportunities to increase and improve the area of accessible natural greenspace in places that are currently poorly served, notably in the NCA's towns and the often overlooked rural areas". (Page 14 – 10<sup>th</sup> bullet);
- j) SEO 4 – "Ensuring that the sense of place imparted by the localised use of specific building stones is maintained and, as often as possible, reinforced by new development" (Page 16 – 4<sup>th</sup> bullet);
- k) Under the Other key driver heading: – "Housing allocations and development of employment sites could have an adverse impact on the character around the NCA's settlements; increased infrastructure could also have deleterious impacts on character and tranquillity" (Page 28 - 5<sup>th</sup> bullet);
- l) Under Other key driver heading: - "Even in the relatively small towns in this NCA, urban tree planting and the development of various green infrastructure and sustainable urban drainage systems will gain importance in the mitigation of impacts of more extreme weather events such as flash flooding. These measures can also provide other public benefits such as relaxation, informal recreation, increased local biodiversity and helping to integrate and soften new development". (Page 28 - last bullet).

3.15 Whilst under the 'Supporting documents' section of the NCAP (CD / 11.14) it refers to the following which I consider are relevant to the Appeal proposals:

- a) "Ensure development respects the scattered settlement pattern" (Page 44);
- b) "Conserve the pattern of field boundaries, avoid further loss and restore hedgerows and hedgerow trees" (page 45);
- c) "Soften the edge of settlements particularly when new developments are being designed" (Page 46);
- d) "Opportunities for enhancements to the public rights of way network should be realised". (Page 47); and
- e) "Improved access opportunities should incorporate enhanced interpretation, particularly of heritage assets and features". (Page 47).

- 3.16 Somerset County Council have not prepared a County wide landscape character assessment.

*Local Landscape Character*

- 3.17 The identification of the landscape character of the local area is set out in “*The Landscape of South Somerset – A Landscape Assessment of the Scenery of South Somerset*” dated 1993 (CD / 11.15) referred to earlier and this assessment indicates that the Site and surrounding area lie within “*Area 6: Escarpments, ridges and vales – East of Yeovil*”. In relation to Area 6, the assessment subdivides the area into 4 landscape character areas with the Site and Templecombe lying within “*Sub-Area 2: Wooded Ridges and Clay Vales*”.
- 3.18 On page 53 of the assessment it highlights that “***Many of the region’s villages and towns seem to nestle into a ridge, sheltering from east winds, often tree enclosed***”. The assessment on to list settlement examples but I consider this characteristic could equally apply to Templecombe and the Appeal Site. On the same page, under Change in the Landscape, it refers to the most important elements in this landscape being “***its high number of woods, remnant unimproved grassland and surviving historic landscapes and sites, all of which may be threatened***” although I consider none of these elements would apply to the Appeal Site.
- 3.19 On page 54 the assessment highlights the responses from parish council’s including “***The lack of management investment.....Overhead wires and ugly modern barns were another irritation***” and goes to state “***All of these concerns are justified***” whilst in the same paragraph it considers “***In general more planting needs to be done for the future and opportunities taken to enlarge or link isolated woods together***”. The comment regarding isolated woods would not apply to the Appeal proposals but the proposed development would remove the existing discordant barn occupying part of the Appeal Site and including significant areas of new planting, open space and wildlife habitats which I refer to in later sections in this evidence.

*Listed Buildings / Conservation Areas*

- 3.20 The nearest listed building to the Site is Manor House also referred to as Manor Farm in some reports and also the second reason for refusal. This building is located on the High Street / A357 immediately to the west of the Site and is a Grade II\* listed

building. A copy of the Summary Listing for Manor House taken from the Heritage England website was included as Appendix B of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).

- 3.21 Details, as necessary, of the Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the Site, in particular the legibility of the significance of the grade II\* listed Manor House when perceived from the Site and contribution of the Site to this heritage asset's significance are address in Mr J Smith's evidence.
- 3.22 However, it should be noted that Manor House is tightly contained by modern 20<sup>th</sup> Century development on three sides (north, west, and south) and part of the fourth side (to the south east by Manor Farm house and large barns and to the north east by Templars Retreat and boundary walls) and there are no windows directly facing the Site and it is the blank end gable wall of the listed building backs on to the Site. From a landscape perspective, the initial impression of this listed building when seen from the Site and also Public Footpath No. SM 29 / 12 to the east (see paragraph 3.20 below) is an unassuming stone gable wall seen amongst a variety of built forms consisting of the adjoining, more modern residential development.
- 3.23 In addition, there are no ground level views from the curtilage / immediate setting of Manor House towards the Site as these are curtailed by high boundary walls. As a consequence of the above, the Site only forms part of the wider or extended setting to the listed building and therefore I consider that the listed building contributes in a limited way to or influences the character and visual appearance of the Site.
- 3.24 Also the setting of the Manor House has changed significantly in the last 150 years as the modern village has subsumed the setting – even redirecting the layout of the of the main road which historically used to align close to the north side of the heritage asset. The initial impression of this listed building when seen from parts of the Site and also Public Footpath No. WN29 / 12 to the east is a blank stone end wall seen amongst a variety of built forms consisting of the adjoining, more modern residential development and the large agricultural barns.

#### *Public Rights of Way*

- 3.25 There are no public footpaths crossing the Site and there are a limited number of Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the immediate vicinity of the Site. The nearest PROW to the Site is located to the east and is Public Footpath No. WN29 / 12 which extends from East Street and north eastern corner of the Site, across the open fields

to Common Lane to the south east of the Site. To the south east, Public Footpath No. WN29/12 connects to Public Footpath No. WN12 / 13 and continues to Common Lane near Common Lane Farm. Other public footpaths in the area are listed on page 15 and 16 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09). The location of the public rights of way within the vicinity of the Site and wider area were marked on Drawing No.0360 / L1 – Site Context Plan contained in the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) and also Drawing No.0360 / L2 – Site Appraisal Plan contained in this evidence.

#### *Site Description*

- 3.26 Drawing No.0360 / L2 – Site Appraisal Plan, at 1:2,500 at A3 and contained in this evidence, illustrates the existing land uses, topography, features, and vegetation on the Site and within its immediate surrounding area. The Site comprises a roughly rectangular shaped parcel of land of some 4.31 hectares (10.65 acres) comprising land around Manor Farm house including four small open pasture fields, part of a larger pasture field to the east, several large farm buildings / barns, areas of gravel and concrete hardstanding, several slurry pits to the north, east and south of Manor Farm with a gravel entrance driveway off Combe Hill / A357. The Site is contained and enclosed by built development on two sides, to the west and north with post and wire fencing to the east and south. The north eastern edge of the Site is open and not defined by any physical or visual feature on the ground.
- 3.27 The northern boundary adjoins houses served off the High Street (No's 21 to 35) and Templars Barton and is defined by a mix of post and wire or post and rail fences about 1.5m high, close board fencing about 1.8m high, stone walls about 1.5m high and garden hedges and other vegetation with most of these properties overlooking the northern parts of the Site.
- 3.28 The north eastern edge of the Site is open and not defined by any physical or visual feature on the ground, whilst the south eastern boundary of the Site is defined by post and wire fencing about 1.2 metres high and is open, allowing views into and out of the Site along the edge. Along this boundary there are two field gates leading to the adjoining pasture field.
- 3.29 The southern boundary of the Site at its eastern end is defined by a section of robust well maintained thorn hedgerow comprising predominantly Hawthorn, Elm, Blackthorn and Elder species about 1.8 metres to 3.5 metres in height which restrict low level views out of and into the Site. The central section of the southern boundary

is defined by post and wire fencing about 1.2 metres high with field gate at its junction with the hedge. This section of the boundary is open allowing views into and out of the Site whilst the western section of the boundary is defined by a section of post and rail fencing about 1.2 metres high extending up to the stone wall and laurel hedge that forms the section of the Site boundary on to Combe Hill / A357. Also located on the western section of the southern boundary are two mature Horse Chestnut trees about 8.5 metres in height and a field gate leading to the adjoining pasture field.

- 3.30 The western boundary of the Site follows an irregular alignment and is defined by a variety of boundary features / treatments. At its southern end, near the entrance, the boundary is formed by section of stone walling either side of the entrance gates, then by a section of metal post and chain link fencing and mixed garden hedging defining the boundary to the properties known as 'Tally-Ho', then section of post and rail fencing following the east side of the access track to Manor Farm before extending around the west side of the large barns in the centre of the Site and rear garden walls, fences and hedging to around Manor Farm.
- 3.31 The northern section of the western boundary is defined by a low stone wall about 1.0-metre-high extending across the front of Templars Retreat and Temple View up to the north western corner of the Site and rear of a block of concrete block garages. There is a small pedestrian gate in the north western corner of the Site leading on to adjoining private road. Due to the varied nature of the western boundary some of the adjoining dwellings have view in and across the Site, such as Tally-Ho, Wingfield, Sunnyhurst, Silverlands, Templars Retreat and Temple View whilst views are curtailed / screened from Grianag House, Knights Barn and Manor House.
- 3.32 The boundaries to the Site are therefore well defined by established field boundaries with enclosure and containment provided by built development to the west and north but due to the open nature of the eastern and southern boundaries there are short to very long-distance views obtained out of the Site across the River Cale valley / Blackmore Vale and also very long-distance views northwards towards Wincanton.
- 3.33 Apart from the trees and hedgerows defining parts of the Sites boundaries, vegetation cover within the locality is limited to mature trees situated within the western parts of the Site or adjacent to the access track to Manor Farm which include Beech, Silver Birch, Lime, Silver Maple, Cherry, Pear, Apple, and Sycamore species. In the centre of the Site is an area of Elder and Goat Willow shrubs and a declining



Goat Willow tree around the slurry pits. Details of the vegetation within and immediately adjoining the Site are contained in a separate Arboricultural Impact Assessment (CD / 6.06) was submitted as part of the Appeal Scheme.

### **Visual Appraisal**

- 3.34 An assessment of the visibility of the Site within its surroundings has been carried out, in June 2019 and again in early November 2019, by walking and travelling along the network of local roads, footpath, bridleways and other paths in the area surrounding the Site. The visual assessment of the Site was, as previously mentioned in paragraph 1.18 to 1.20 of this evidence, informed by estimating the “Zone of Theoretical Visibility” (ZTV) based on the introduction of residential development up to a maximum height of 9.5 metres to ridgeline. A description of the extent of the likely ZTV is set out at paragraph 3.47 to 3.49 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).
- 3.35 However, additional work has been undertaken since the Decision Notice (CD / 9.02) was issued on 14th August 2020 and two computer generated ‘Zone of Theoretical Visibility’ (ZTV) plans (or diagrams) have been prepared. These are Drawing No.0360 / L5 - Visual Appraisal – Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plan (Bare Earth) and Drawing No.0360 / L6 - Visual Appraisal – Zone of Theoretical Visibility Plan (with Visual Barriers). A copy of these drawings is included in the Appendices to this evidence whilst the methodology used for the preparation of these ZTV plans is contained in Appendix A to this evidence.
- 3.36 The first ZTV (Drawing No.0360 / L4) was prepared using the standard method of producing ZTV which is based on the topographical data, the proposed levels parameters plan (Drawing No.19-025-610 prepared by Origin3 [CD / 10.02] submitted with the Appeal documentation) and proposed building height parameters of 9.5 meters maximum height to ridgeline. The drawing indicates that the Site and development proposals would theoretically be visible / seen from an extensive area extending up to 9 kilometres from the Site to the north and area around Wincanton, large parts of the River Cale valley floor and areas to the east of the valley including areas around Cucklington, Buckton Weston and Kingston Magna with parts of the development theoretically visible approximately 5 to 9 kilometres to the south and south east including areas around Henstridge, Stalbridge and Marnhull. The drawing also indicates that development on the Site would theoretically be visible from a

reduced area to the west of the Site and outlying area of higher ground near Corton Hill, about 6 to 7 kilometres further to the west.

- 3.37 The second ZTV (Drawing No.0383 / L5) is also based on topographical data the proposed levels parameters plan (Drawing No.19-025-610 prepared by Origin3 [CD / 10.02]) and the proposed building height parameters although the main visual barriers within the landscape, such as existing built-up areas, woodlands, and tree belts, have been assigned an assumed height (woodland areas 15m, tree belts – 12m, housing areas 10m and industrial areas 15m). Not all the visual barriers, such as some belts of trees, individual trees or tall buildings within the urban area, or heights of the framework of hedgerows in the landscape were mapped, due the time it would take to accurately plot these features.
- 3.38 The second ZTV generates a more realistic ZTV and indicates that the visibility of the Site and Appeal Scheme is confined to a significantly reduced area and confirms my initial estimated assessment of the likely visibility of the Development Proposals and also the conclusion reached, at paragraph 3.49 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09), that:

***“the potential impact of the proposed development would be confined to a relatively small area of countryside to the east of Templecombe as the effects of the development would diminish with distance to the north east, east and south east. The assessment therefore considered public vantage points within the area with the large barns on the Site assisting in identifying the Site in the middle, long and very long-distance views”.***

- 3.39 On the basis of my initial estimated ZTV and site visits (undertaken during June 2019 and then again during November 2019 by walking and travelling along the network of local roads, footpath, bridleways and other paths in the area surrounding the Site) I was able to identify the following key representative views towards the Site. These representative views are referred to in paragraph 3.55 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09), where I briefly described each viewpoint, the nature and extent of views from these locations and assessed their sensitivity, using the definitions and criteria set out in the Landscape and Visual Assessment Methodology, Appendix A of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09). The photographs contained in the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) were taken in mid-November 2019 when some of the trees were still in leaf although I acknowledge that views will change depending on the seasons. The representative views included views from:

- a) Near distance restricted views into the southern parts of the Site from Combe Hill opposite the Site entrance (**Photograph No.1**) looking eastwards;
- b) Near distance restricted views into the north western parts of the Site from the private access road off the High Street and the High Street (**Photograph No.2 and 3**) looking south eastwards;
- c) Near distance restricted views from a short section of Manor Close (**Photograph No.4**) looking eastwards towards the Site;
- d) Near distance transitory restricted views from a short section of the A357 at Yenston Hill traffic lights (**Photograph No.5**) looking northwards;
- e) Near distance open views from a short section of Public Footpath No. WN29 / 12 (**Photograph No's.6, 7 and 8**) looking westwards;
- f) Near distance views from a short section of East Street (**Photograph No.9 and 10**) looking westwards;
- g) Middle distance views from a short section of Temple Lane (**Photograph No.11**) looking westwards;
- h) Very Long distance partial views from a short section of Public Bridleway No. WN29 / 11 (**Photograph No.12**) looking westwards;
- i) Very long distance restricted views from a short section of Gigg Lane near Abbey Ford Bridge (**Photograph No.13**) looking westwards;
- j) Very long distance view taken from Nylands Lane near Higher Nyland Farm (**Photograph No.14**) looking north westwards;
- k) Very long distance open and restricted views from the network of local lanes / NCR 253 near Kington Magna (**Photograph No's.15 and 16**) looking westwards;
- l) Very long distance view taken from All Saints Church, Kington Magna, a Grade I listed building, (**Photograph No.17**) looking westwards;
- m) Very long distance view taken from local lane near Stour Cross Farm / NCR 253 (**Photograph No.18**) looking north westwards;
- n) Very long distance view taken from local lane / NCR 253 near Tower House (**Photograph No.19**) looking westwards; and
- o) Very long distance view taken from local lane above Babwell Farm, Cucklington (**Photograph No.20**) looking westwards.

### *Baseline Lighting*

3.40 As part of the Landscape Report (CD/6.09) I also carried out an initial baseline lighting assessment including reviewing the CPRE Interactive Light Pollution & Dark Skies Mapping (CD 13.04) as this informs the landscape and visual appraisal in

relation the sensitivity of the Site and surrounding area to additional lighting. This assessment is set out on page 29 to 31 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) concluded that, in relation to light pollution / dark skies, the Site is located within Environmental Zone – E2 – Rural – Low district brightness – Village or relatively dark outer suburban locations and therefore sensitive to the introduction of new lighting.

### **Summary of Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

3.41 I have set out below a summary of the main points I concluded from the landscape and visual assessment of the Site which are as follows:

- a) That the Site is a roughly rectangular shaped parcel of land of some 4.31 hectares (10.65 acres) located to the east side of the historic village of Templecombe immediately adjacent to the built-up edge of the settlement with areas of open countryside / farmland to the east and south;
- b) That the Site comprises open land around Manor Farm house including four small pasture fields, part of a larger pasture field to the north east, several large farm buildings / barns, areas of gravel and concrete hardstanding, several slurry pits to the east of Manor Farm with a gravel entrance driveway off Combe Hill / A357;
- c) That the Site is contained by built development on two sides, to the west and north with post and wire fencing to the east and south and an open north eastern edge of the Site not defined by any physical or visual features on the ground and due to the open nature of the eastern and southern boundaries, there are short to very long-distance views obtained out of the Site across the River Cale valley / Blackmore Vale and vice versa;
- d) That the assessment identifies that the Site is relatively well contained and enclosed in the local landscape due to residential development to the west and north, undulating topography and field boundary vegetation to the south, although there are outwards views from the Site across the River Cale valley to the east and south east;
- e) That the topography of the area is dominated by the wide-open valley of the River Cale valley and its tributary streams (Bow Brook and Filley Brook);
- f) That the village of Abbas Combe / Templecombe lie on the east facing undulating slopes of the River Cale valley on a minor ridge line at about 95

metres to 110 metres AOD with the highest point within the Site near the Sites entrance at the south western corner with the land sloping northwards and eastwards to a low point near the north eastern corner of the Site, to the rear of No.21 High Street.

- g) That the existing farm buildings and slurry pits are situated on slightly raised man-made ground extending eastwards from the general slope of the land;
- h) That the Site is situated on the edge of the settlement of Abbas and Templecombe outside the existing built-up area of the settlement and therefore situated within the open countryside;
- i) That the Site and Templecombe lie within character area “Area 6: Escarpments, ridges and vales – East of Yeovil” and “Sub-Area 2: Wooded Ridges and Clay Vales” as defined “*The Landscape of South Somerset – A Landscape Assessment of the Scenery of South Somerset*” (South Somerset LCA) dated October 1993 (CD / 11.15);
- j) That the Site is not designated as having any particular landscape value or quality, such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area, although it does contain some features of importance such as hedgerows, and adjoining mature trees;
- k) That the “Zone of Theoretical Visibility” (ZTV) of the proposed development as shown on Drawing No. 0360 / L5 indicated that the ZTV would be relatively limited due to residential development and vegetation to the west and north, undulating topography and vegetation to the south but to the east, north east and south east, the ZTV would extend across the River Cale valley in an arc following rising ground from between Cucklington to the north and Kington Magna / Stour Hill to the east, up to about 7.0 kilometres from the Site with parts of the development theoretically visible approximately 5 to 9 kilometres to the south and south east including areas around Henstridge, Stalbridge and Marnhull;
- l) That, as a consequence of the above, the potential impact of the proposed development would be confined mainly to areas of countryside to the east of Templecombe although the effects of the development would diminish with distance to the north east, east and south east.

3.42 I also concluded from the visual assessment of the Site that, apart from views in close proximity to the Site including a short section of Combe Hill at the Sites entrance, partial and glimpsed views from the High Street and Manor Close to the west of the Site, and open views from a section of Public Footpath No. WN 29 / 12 and East Street immediately to the east of the Site, there are a limited number of middle and longer distance views from other public viewpoints. These are:

- i) Middle distance transitory views from short section of East Street and Temple Lane looking westwards;
- ii) Very long-distance transitory views from a short section of Public Bridleway No. WN 29 / 11 looking westwards;
- iii) Very long-distance views towards the Site from Gigg Lane,
- iv) Very long-distance views towards the Site from the network of local lanes near Kington Magna, including views from All Saint Church; and
- v) Very long-distance views towards the Site from Greenhill in Cucklington about 7.0 kilometres to the north east of the Site.

3.43 The visual assessment also indicated that, whilst there are a number of views towards the Site, the perception of the Site varies depending on the location of the viewer. In the majority of near distance views from the east, the full extent of the northern and eastern parts of the Site are seen against a backdrop of built development along the edge of Templecombe albeit the south western parts of the Site are less obvious in near distance views, they are seen in middle and longer distance views again seen against a backdrop of built development along the Combe Hill on the edge of Templecombe.

3.44 In addition, the assessment showed that in the long and very long-distance views, the Site is difficult to perceive without the use of binoculars or some other visual aids such a telephoto camera lens to perceive any detail.

3.45 The assessment confirmed that, apart from the above, there are no other middle-distance views and no other long-distance views towards the Site from viewpoints within the surrounding area to the west, north and south as views were curtailed by hedges / trees or intervening buildings or vegetation.

3.46 It can also be concluded from the landscape and visual assessment the following:

- a) That the visual prominence of the Site varies with parts of the Site evident in near distance views from the east but elsewhere containment is good to the north, west and south and that the existing agricultural barns on the Site form a notable, discordant and detracting feature on the Site and in the local and wider landscape.
- b) That whilst there are views into the Site from vantage points in close proximity to the Site, intervisibility within the wider area is relatively limited, due to the framework of hedgerows and trees occupying the River Cale valley side slopes and low-lying area; and
- c) That when viewed from the wider surrounding area (i.e. greater than 1 kilometre from the Site), the Site contributes in a limited way to the overall character and appearance of the landscape as the Site is not a prominent feature and forms a very small part of the overall panoramic view and could be easily missed.

### **Landscape Quality, Condition and Value**

3.47 In terms of judging the landscape quality / condition of the Site, it is for the individual practitioner to form a view based upon professional judgement and experience. Based on my assessment of the Site and the surrounding area, I concluded the following:

- a) That the overall landscape condition / quality of the Site and its immediate surrounds is regarded as 'good' although the Site has relatively few features of intrinsic landscape quality such as woodlands, and hedgerows, as most of the land is in farmland use with limited intrinsic quality albeit parts of the Site contribute to extended setting of Manor House, listed building;
- b) That the Site and countryside surrounding Templecombe lie within a non-designated landscape and therefore the Site cannot be considered forming a 'valued' landscape of national / regional / district importance under definition of a 'valued' landscapes as set out in paragraph 170 (a) of the NPPF February 2019; and
- c) That the Site and surrounding area would have local importance / value given the openness of the landscape, visibility from properties on the edge of

Templecombe and accessibility of the area via the network of local lanes and public rights of way.

- 3.48 As part of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) which accompanied the updated planning application (CD / 6.01 to 6.16), I also considered that overall the Site forms a small part of the transitional landscape setting to the village, i.e. the setting to the houses the High Street, Templars Barton and East Street, although the existing development also influences the character and appearance of the Site as well as providing containment and enclosure to the north and west with existing large barns on the Site forming a notable detracting landscape feature. Also, in addition to the above, because of the Site's open character and localised visibility, I considered that the design and layout of the proposed development needs to be carefully considered and landscape mitigation in the form of open space / buffers and landscape planting would need to be introduced along the southern and eastern edges of the Site to minimise any potential localised landscape and visual impacts.
- 3.49 Based on my landscape and visual assessment, I considered the Site to be appropriate for residential development in landscape terms, subject to the introduction of appropriate mitigation measures. The details of these mitigation measures were set out in Section 4.0 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).



## 4.0 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

4.1 The agreed description of the development proposals is set out in the ‘Statement of Common Ground’ whilst I briefly set out below a summary of the development proposals and outline landscape proposals and go on in Section 5.0 to consider the landscape and visual issues relating to the Site and the potential landscape and visual effects of the development on the local and wider landscape.

### The Proposed Development

4.2 The Appeal Scheme seeks outline planning permission for the:

***“demolition of existing buildings and residential development of 60 units including the creation of a new vehicular access and pedestrian accesses, open space, landscape planting and surface water attenuation (all matters reserved except access)”***

4.3 The 60-unit application was originally accompanied by an Addendum to the Design and Access Statement (CD / 6.03), an Illustrative Masterplan at 1:1250 scale Drawing No.19-025 / 406 Rev J (CD / 6.04), a Revised Parameters Plan Drawing No.19-025 / 600 Rev C (CD/6.05) prepared Origin3 and also a Landscape Strategy Plan, Drawing No. 0360 / L4 Rev E, contained the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).

4.4 However, additional work has been undertaken by the team since the Decision Notice (CD / 9.02) was issued on 14th August 2020 and details of the Appeal Scheme are set out in the Appeal Design and Access Statement (Appendix D to this evidence).

4.5 The Appeal Scheme is accompanied by an amended Illustrative Masterplan (CD / 10.01) at 1:1,250 scale, Drawing No. 19-025 / SK01 Rev H (CD / 10.01), together with a new Level Parameters Plan Drawing No.19-025 / 610 (CD / 10.02) prepared by Origin3 whilst an updated Landscape Strategy Plan, Drawing No. 0360 / L4 Rev I (CD / 10.03) has been prepared to reflect the minor changes that have been made to the Appeal Scheme Illustrative Masterplan (CD / 10.01) with an expectation that conditions will tie RMA to these plans.

4.6 The proposed development still comprises up to 60No.new residential, two storeys, attached and detached houses some with integral and attached garages and front parking spaces. Access to the development will be via a new priority-junction replacing the existing access off Combe Hill in the south western corner of the Site.

The access would extend northwards into the Site with a series of side streets / lanes and shared driveways extending to the west and east as cul-de-sacs serving housing parcels. The existing access road to Manor Farm (and the existing sewer alignment and trees along the western boundary) is to be retained outside the Site boundary and this provides an appropriate 'buffer' with the adjoining properties served off Combe Hill (Tally-Ho, Wingfield, Sunnyhurst, Silverlands, Grainaig House, Knights Barn and Manor House).

- 4.7 The Appeal Design and Access Statement (DAS), contained in Appendix D to this evidence, sets out the proposed dwellings are designed to reflect local distinctiveness, legibility within the scheme and enhance the character of settlement edge and draws on the built styles / character of the adjoining buildings and local vernacular within Templecombe and surrounding area. The new dwellings will be constructed using appropriate materials and details found in the locality, such as high-quality brickwork, tile hanging, and plain tiled and / or slate roofs. As I mentioned before it is expected that conditions will tie RMA to Appeal DAS.
- 4.8 The maximum height of the proposed 2 storey dwellings would be 9.5 metres to the ridge above finished floor ground level as indicated on the Levels Parameters Plan (CD / 10.02) and careful consideration has been given to the position of dwellings on the Site to minimise impact on the immediate neighbours thereby concentrating the development within the central and western parts of the Site (thereby avoiding increasing perception of extending the village envelope south beyond the existing access on Combe Hill although this has already occurred). The development has also been orientated to take advantage of the opportunity to maintain outward views from within and on the edge of the Site across the River Cale valley.
- 4.9 The updated Landscape Strategy Plan for the development are illustrated on Drawing No.0360 / L4 Rev I – Landscape Strategy Plan (CD / 10.03). In summary, the landscape strategy includes the following:
- i) Existing Landscape Features: Retention of existing landscape features such as trees, hedgerows, areas of scrub, their protection compliant to BS5837:2012 – 'Trees in relation to design, demolition, and constructions – Recommendations' and restoration and strengthening of these features and creation of new hedgerows and hedgerow trees;

- ii) Ecological Habitats and Enhancements: Retention and enhancements of existing poorer quality wildlife habitats within the Appeal Site, creation of new habitats to enhance biodiversity including new hedgerows, long-sward and tall flower-rich wildflower grasslands and damp / wetlands habitats and the provision of new bird and bat roosting habitats;
- iii) Open Space and Landscape Planting: Provision of substantial areas of multifunctional greenspace, natural and semi-natural greenspace, and amenity open space / recreational areas which accord or exceed the requirements of Policy HW1 Provision of Open Space in New Developments, of the Local Plan July 2015 (CD / 11.03). The key landscape features include:
  - a) The introduction of a new access off Combe Hill as a formal priority junction, requiring the removal of some sections of the existing stone walling and evergreen hedging in order to provide an appropriate junction design, and road width including new footway and sightlines together with the introduction of new tree planting along the access road to create an attractive street scene and control the extent development seen, (i.e. roofscape of the houses within the Site), in the longer term;
  - b) The introduction of a new native species mix hedgerow, groups of tree planting and a substantial landscape 'buffer' and structural tree planting along the southern edge of the Site to strengthening of the southern boundary of the Site, provide a strong development edge and control views into the Site;
  - c) The introduction of a new native species mix hedgerow, groups of structural tree planting and a substantial landscape 'buffer' and strategically placed groups of tree planting along the south eastern edge of the Site to strengthening of the south eastern boundary of the Site, provide a strong development edge and screen / control views into the Site;
  - d) The introduction of a new native species mix hedgerow, smaller discrete groups tree planting within the hedge along the north eastern boundary of the Site together with introduction of a substantial landscape 'buffer' / view corridor within the northern parts of the Site including areas of informal tree planting to maintain views towards the Manor House

(Grade II\* listed building) as well as creating a new north eastern boundary of the Site, provide a strong development edge and control and filter views into the Site from the adjoining Public Footpath No.SM29 / 12;

- e) The proposed 'buffers' within the Site would include tree and shrub planting, a variety of grassland habitats such long and short grassed areas and open space to form a transition and minimise the impact of the development on adjoining open countryside in particular on views from Public Footpath No. WN29 / 12, sections of East Street and Temple Lane and other more distance viewpoints to the east of the Site, as well as assimilating the Site in the existing landscape framework in the area.
- f) The proposed 'buffers' would also include a Swale and SuDS basin, as part of the developments proposed sustainable drainage system, together with their access and maintenance requirements;
- g) The introduction of new footpath routes within the proposed development, linking to other parts of the Site as well as a new footpath link to East Street which would connect to the wider footpath network in the area and provide a pedestrian link to the High Street;
- h) The introduction of a comprehensive landscape scheme to the front gardens and adjoining the access road and driveways within the development to create pleasant and attractive amenity for the new residents. The planting species suggested for the development shown on Drawing No. 0360 / L4 Rev I (CD / 10.03).

4.10 As stated at paragraph 4.7 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09), it is envisaged that the landscape scheme will be conditioned and exact details of the landscape proposals will be submitted at detailed reserved matters stage and agreed with the Local Authority, prior to the implementation of the proposals. This remains the case with the updated plan which we would expect RMA to broadly accord with. It is anticipated that this would include agreeing the initial size and mix of the plants; as well as the workmanship and maintenance / management of the planting to ensure successful establishment and longer-term growth and success of the planting.

### **Landscape Benefits**

4.11 In addition to the provision of new housing, the proposed development of the Appeal Site, will also bring forward a number of landscape and biodiversity benefits which would accord with the landscape guidelines set out in the national and district level landscape character assessments and South Somerset 'Landscape Design' Guidance (CD 11.18), page 5 / Section 3 – Nature Conservation / Section 4 – Designing with plants, and exceed the requirements of Policy HW1 – Provision of Open Space in New Developments , EQ2 – General Development, EQ3 – Historic Environment, EQ4 - Biodiversity and EQ5 – Green Infrastructure of the Local Plan (CD / 11.03).

4.12 These benefits include:

- i) Increasing the tree cover in the locality;
- ii) Providing a wider diversity of wildlife habitats (such as native tree and shrub planting, wildflower grasslands, ponds, and swales);
- iii) The provision of strategic scale tree planting;
- iv) The provision of formal open spaces and parkland, improving recreational opportunities and links to wider footpath network;
- v) The provision of semi-natural green spaces including informal and variety of open spaces;
- vi) Helping to mitigate climate change through the provision of SuDS and tree planting for shading.

4.13 Appendix C of this evidence contains an Ecological Technical Note, prepared by Aspect Ecology, setting out the existing baseline status and habitat / biodiversity score of the Site together with a calculation of the biodiversity net gain (BNG) rising from the proposed development and landscape proposals. This assessment shows that the proposed development and landscape proposals will achieve a BNG of approximately 19% and the note also indicates that relatively small increase in wildflower grasses or native shrub habitats circa 300m<sup>2</sup> (i.e.an area of 10 x 30metres) would achieve a BNG of 20%.

4.14 Mr J Smith in his evidence, acknowledges that there will be some minor harm to the heritage value (significance) of the Manor House caused by the built form in a part of its setting, but he also expands on the heritage benefits of the Appeal Scheme, including the proposed development and landscape proposals would:

- i) Remove the notable and detracting farm buildings on the Site;

- ii) Replace them with domestic-scale buildings (which are more in keeping with existing edge of the village);
- iii) Safeguard and protect the current west to east and vice versa views of the listed building and rural eastern setting;
- iv) Safeguard and enhance the setting and local distinctiveness of the heritage asset within these east to west and vice versa views;
- v) Provide greater opportunities to appreciate / experience the building and it's setting as currently legible from the Site and lastly; and
- vi) Forming a gradual transition from the proposed development to the listed building.

4.15 In addition, the southern and eastern landscape 'buffers' of open space and tree planting would also provide a much-improved settlement edge to Templecombe, creating a 'soft' and varying urban edge, as well as providing a large, strong 'green wedge' of open space within the northern parts of the Site, extending towards Manor House, which would be accessible to residents and the public.

## 5.0 CONSIDERATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 5.1 In this section of the proof of evidence, I briefly summarise the conclusions arising from my consideration of the development proposals. The Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) sets out in detail my consideration of the factors (value and susceptibility) that contribute to determining the sensitivity of the landscape receptors (paragraphs 4.12 to 4.17 of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09]) and visual receptor (paragraphs 4.41 to 4.52 of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09]) before going on to assess the landscape and visual impacts and effects of the proposed development during construction, on completion (Year 1) and Year 15 and longer term effects.
- 5.2 Section 4.0 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) sets out my assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, (paragraphs 4.12 to 4.40 deals with landscape effects whilst paragraphs 4.41 to 4.95 deals with the visual effects) and in Table 1.0 and Table 2.0 below I set out a summary of the predicted landscape and visual effects including with my assessment of overall effects on landscape elements, landscape pattern's / the Site and Wider landscape, not included in the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).
- 5.3 However, it should note that some of the summary of effects for visual receptors cover a wider spectrum of effects (i.e. View from the West (VP No.1). This reflects the sensitivity of the receptors as pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian users of Combe Hill are ranked higher than vehicle users and proximity of the proposed development to the receptors and magnitude of change experienced (see paragraph 4.52 and 4.53 to 4.55 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09).

**Table 1.0 – Assessment of Landscape Effects**

Notes: Lt = Long term, Ir = Irreversible, P = Positive, N = Negative

Summary of Predicted Landscape Effects with Mitigation					
Landscape Receptor	Period	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change / Nature	Significance of Landscape Effect	Residual Landscape Effect
Landscape Elements (Housing Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Very Low	High to Medium / N	Moderate to Moderate / Slight to Slight adverse	Moderate to Moderate / Slight to Slight adverse
	Year 15	Low to Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Slight adverse	Slight adverse
Landscape Elements (Open Space Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Very Low	Low to Medium / P	Slight to Moderate / Slight beneficial	Slight to Moderate / Slight beneficial
	Year 15	Low to Very Low	Medium / P	Moderate beneficial	Moderate beneficial
	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Very Low	Medium to Low N	Slight adverse	Slight adverse

Summary of Predicted Landscape Effects with Mitigation					
Landscape Receptor	Period	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change / Nature	Significance of Landscape Effect	Residual Landscape Effect
Landscape Elements - Overall	Year 15	Low to Very Low	Low N / Low P	Neutral to Slight beneficial	Neutral to Slight beneficial
Landscape Pattern's / Site Character (Housing Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low	Medium / N	Moderate / Slight' adverse	Moderate / Slight' adverse
	Year 15	Low	Low / N	Slight' adverse	Slight' adverse
Landscape Pattern's / Site Character (Open Space Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low	Low to Medium / P	Slight to Moderate / Slight' beneficial	Slight to Moderate / Slight' beneficial
	Year 15	Low	Medium / P	'Moderate / Slight' beneficial	'Moderate / Slight' beneficial
Landscape Pattern's / Site Character - Overall	Year 1 / Completion	Low	Medium to Low N	Slight adverse	Slight adverse
	Year 15	Low	Low N / Low P	Neutral to Slight beneficial	Neutral to Slight beneficial
Wider Landscape / River Cale Valley	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Medium	Very Low to negligible / N	Slight to Negligible' adverse	Slight to Negligible' adverse
	Year 15	Low to Medium	Very Low / P	Slight to Negligible' beneficial	Slight to Negligible' beneficial

**Table 2.0 – Assessment of Visual Effects**

Notes: Lt = Long term, Ir = Irreversible, P = Positive, N = Negative

Summary of Predicted Visual Effects with Mitigation					
Receptor	Period	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change / Nature	Significance of Visual Effect	Residual Visual Effect
View from the West (VP No's.1)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Very High to Medium / N	Substantial to Moderate / Slight Adverse	Substantial to Moderate / Slight Adverse
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Moderate Adverse to Negligible	Moderate Adverse to Negligible
View from the West (VP No's. 2, 3 &4)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Low to Negligible / N	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Very Low to Negligible / N	Negligible	Negligible
Views from the South (VP No.5)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Moderate Adverse to Negligible	Moderate Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Low to Negligible/ N	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
Views from the East (VP No's. 6, 7 & 8)	Year 1 / Completion	High – Very High	High to Medium / N	Major Substantial to Moderate / Substantial Adverse	Major Substantial to Moderate / Substantial Adverse
	Year 15	High – Very High	Low to Very Low / N	'Moderate / Slight to Slight' adverse	'Moderate / Slight to Slight' adverse
Views from the East	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	High to Medium / N	Moderate / Substantial to Slight Adverse	Moderate / Substantial to Slight Adverse



Summary of Predicted Visual Effects with Mitigation					
Receptor	Period	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change / Nature	Significance of Visual Effect	Residual Visual Effect
(VP No's. 9 & 10)	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Medium / N	'Moderate / Slight to Slight' adverse	'Moderate / Slight to Slight' adverse
Middle distance Views from the East (VP No. 11)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Moderate to Slight Adverse to Negligible	Moderate to Slight Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Low to Negligible / N	Moderate / Slight' adverse to 'Negligible	Moderate / Slight' adverse to 'Negligible
Very Long-distance Views from the East, South East and North East (VP No's. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, & 18)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium to Low	Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium to Low	Negligible	Negligible / Neutral	Negligible Neutral
Very Long-distance Views from the East, South East and North East (VP No.17, 19 & 20)	Year 1 / Completion	High	Negligible	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse
	Year 15	High	Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
Views from the adjoining residential properties (32No.)	Year 1 / Completion	High	Medium to Low / N	Moderate / Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Moderate / Substantial to Moderate Adverse
	Year 15	High	Low / N	Moderate / Slight to Slight Adverse	Moderate / Slight to Slight Adverse

5.4 Also, in Section 4.0 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09), I have briefly considered the visual effects on private views from adjoining properties. Whilst this is not a requirement of GLVIA3 guidelines or usual in landscape and visual appraisal report, I have undertaken this exercise as local adjoining residents would be interested in the conclusions reached. The results of the assessment on private views are set out in paragraph 4.94 and 4.95 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) and I concluded the following:

***“the overall resultant visual effect for local residents occupying the 32No. private properties would be ‘Moderate / Substantial to Moderate’ adverse visual effects initially during construction and on completion (Day 1).***

***However, these effects would reduce to ‘Moderate / Slight to Slight’ adverse level of effect (i.e. not significant) in the longer term, in approximately 15 years, as the development weathers and building materials have more subdued tones, the proposed tree planting establishes and matures screening and controls views and the proposals become assimilated into landscape”.***

- 5.5 Based on my landscape and visual assessment of the proposed development, I concluded (in paragraph 5.6 and 5.7 of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09]) that the majority impacts and effects would not be significant, but would result in a few, very localised visual effects mainly in views from Public Footpath No. WN29 / 12 and in adjoining residents' views.
- 5.6 Overall, I concluded, from the landscape and visual assessment, that the proposed development will therefore have some local landscape and visual impacts / harm but the effects of the development on character and visual appearance of the wider countryside, and this part of the River Cale valley, will not be significant as the proposed development would not erode or harm the special qualities or key landscape characteristics of the area.

**Additional Work / Information:**

- 5.7 As mentioned earlier in this evidence, since the planning application was considered by the Case Planning Officer and the Council's Decision Notice (CD / 9.02) issued, further work has been undertaken to refine the Masterplan (CD / 6.04) for the proposed development and therefore the Landscape Strategy Plan (CD / 6.09) has been amended to reflect the minor changes to the Masterplan (CD / 10.01). These changes are set out at Chapter 4.0D – Layout Comparison section of the Appeal DAS (page 50 – Figure 3.13) and arose through further consideration of maintaining 'key' views towards Manor House, listed building from Public Footpath No. SM29 / 12 which included minor realignment of dwellings fronting the northern open space and repositioning of tree planting to ensure views are not obscured in the longer term.
- 5.8 I have also prepared a new plan, Drawing No. 0360 / L9 included in the Appendices to this evidence, illustrating the Landscape Strategy Plan with a wider surrounding context as well as adding distance dimensions from Public Footpath No. SM29 / 12 to the proposed houses.
- 5.9 I have also as part of the above work, prepared 3 No. verified photomontages which have informed some of the changes to Masterplan and Landscape Strategy Plan. Two photomontages, PM06 and PM08, have been prepared from viewpoints on Public Footpath No. SM29 / 12 to the east of the Site and a further photomontage PM10 prepared from a viewpoint on East Street on the former railway bridge approximately 200 metres to the east of the Site, and 295 metres from the proposed houses (Refer to Drawing No. 0360 / L9).

- 5.10 The photomontages have been prepared by a specialist (Tomo Graphics) using a methodology which accords with the latest Landscape Institute guidance on 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' - TGN 06 / 19 (CD / 11.13) and they indicate the existing 'before' views, the proposed development and landscape planting at Year 1, assuming the whole development is completed, and at Year 5 and at Year 15.
- 5.11 The photomontages, I consider, confirm my original assessment of the visual effects of the scheme, in that initially, the development would be seen as a notable new feature in some of the views obtained from either on or very near to the Site and have initial adverse effects but over time the views would change with the planting significantly reducing / softening the visual effects and, in my view, having a beneficial effect.
- 5.12 I have also produced a series of cross sections through the Site and proposed development with existing and proposed development to the rear of the section line shown in elevation and they illustrate the existing farm buildings and topography of various parts of the Site, the relationship of the proposed development to the existing housing areas and roof lines to the west and north of the Site and the relationship and extent of open space, SuDS features and planting proposed within the Site. To be consistent with the photomontages, the section shows proposed landscape planting at Year 1, Year 5, and Year 15.
- 5.13 The cross sections are contained in the Appendices to this evidence. Cross Section A-A (Drawing No.0360 / L11 and L12) and B-B (Drawing No.0360 / L13 and L14) are sections extending north to south through the Site looking westwards whilst Sections C-C (Drawing No.0360 / L15 and L16), D-D (Drawing No.0360 / L17 and L18) and E-E (Drawing No.0360 / L19 and L20) are orientated west to east through the Site looking north and Section F-F (Drawing No.0360 / L21 and L22), G-G (Drawing No.0360 / L23 and L24), H-H (Drawing No.0360 / L25 and L26) and I – I (Drawing No.0360 / L27 and L28) are also orientated west to east through the Site but looking southwards. They have been prepared at 1:500 scale on A1 sheets but produced at A3 for inclusion in this evidence.
- 5.14 I have also produced two long Cross Sections from middle distance viewpoints to the east of the Site. The first of these sections is from Viewpoint No.11 on Temple Lane extending westwards through the Site, and proposed development, to the built-

up area of Templecombe on higher ground to the west whilst the second cross section is from Viewpoint No.12 on Public Bridleway No. WN 29 / 11 and extend westwards through the Site, and proposed development, also to the built-up area of Templecombe on higher ground to the west. Both sections are looking southwards. Cross Section VP11 has been prepared at 1:1,000 whilst Cross Section VP12 has been prepared at 1:2,500 scale both are on A3 x A0 sheets.

- 5.15 In addition, a number of the original drawings included in the Appendices to the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) have been updated / revised to show the locations of Photomontages PM06, PM08 and PM10 which have been added to the Site Appraisal Plan, Drawing No.0360 / L2, whilst the locations of long Cross Section lines from Viewpoint No's.11 and 12, are shown on the Visual Appraisal Plan, Drawing No. 0360 / L3. These revised drawings have been included as part of the Appendices to this evidence.
- 5.16 The sections, together with the photomontages, clearly show and demonstrate that the proposed development whilst having short to mid-term adverse visual effects will have limit visual effects in the longer term on views from locations to the east the Site.
- 5.17 They also demonstrate that the proposed development would generally follow the existing topography of the Site and create much improved settlement edge to Templecombe, creating a 'soft' and varying urban edge, as well as providing a large, strong 'green wedge' of open space within the northern parts of the Site extending towards Manor House as shown on the Landscape Strategy Plan (CD / 10.03) and Drawing No. 0360 / L9 which illustrate the Appeal Scheme in a wider context.
- 5.18 The new plan, Drawing No. 0360 / L9 also shows the distances from sections of Public Footpath No.SM 29 / 12 to the nearest proposed dwelling on the eastern and north eastern edges of the Site as well as the distance to the existing houses on the edge of Templecombe, houses on Templars Barton and East Street. I acknowledge that currently very little of the dwellings on Combe Hill are perceived and the proposed development would bring development closer to the viewer and users of the footpath. However, from the footpath houses on East Street are evident in the views as are houses on Templars Barton and the High Street which form the visual context and are a similar distance from sections of the footpath.

5.19 However, as demonstrated by Drawing No. 0360 / L9, the distances of the views from the footpath to the existing urban edge and Appeal Scheme are the similar and, in my view, the visual effects of the proposed development comparable to but rather better than the existing house of the edge of Templecombe. However, the Appeal Scheme includes areas of open space and planting on the boundaries and within the Site which will reduce these visual effects and, in time. create a 'soft' green edge to the Site and this part of Templecombe like the existing varied edge to the settlement found to the north of East Street.

## **6.0 CONSIDERATION OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY'S REASONS FOR REFUSAL**

- 6.1 The Statement of Case and Appeal DAS contain in Appendix D to this proof of evidence, sets out the full details of the outline planning application submitted to South Somerset District Council on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019 and validated on the same day for an 80-unit scheme and subsequent consideration of the planning application by the Council. Following extensive meetings and discussions with the Council's Planning Officer and other Officers at South Somerset and consultation responses from Statutory consultees and the Parish Council, the scheme has been amended twice and this Appeal now relates to a much reduce scheme of 60-units which was accompanied by a number of updated specialist reports and plans (CD / 6.02 to 6.16).
- 6.2 As mentioned in the introduction to this evidence, following consideration of the Appeal Scheme and Application (CD / 6.01 to 6.16), the Council refused the Application under delegated powers and issued a decision notice on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 2020 (CD / 9.02). The Decision Notice (CD / 9.02) sets out two reasons for refusal which set out in the proof of evidence of Mr J Orton of Origin3 and in the "Statement of Common Ground".
- 6.3 In this section of my evidence, I wish to consider the first reason for refusal in so far as it relates to landscape and visual issues.
- 6.4 The first reason for refusal relates to the Councils / Planning Officers view that:
- i) The Site is not suitable for the quantum of development proposed;
  - ii) The proposed development would result in an unacceptable level of harm to the rural character of the Site and wider landscape as well as unacceptable harm to the visual amenity of those receptors adjacent to the Site and those in the wider landscape;
  - iii) Due to the above the proposals fails to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (CD / 11.01) and planning policies SD1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (CD / 11.03).
- 6.5 In reaching the above view, the Planning Officer and Council, have relied on the opinions of Mr Charles Potterton, the Councils appointed external landscape

consultant in his consultation response. These comments are set out in full in the Planning Officers report (CD / 9.01) and he raised strong landscape objections to the proposed development as the proposed layout extends too far to the east and therefore into very sensitive areas of the Site, in terms of wider visual impact and wider landscape character, causing an unacceptable level of harm.

- 6.6 Mr Potterton and the Planning Officer make little reference to and appear to ignore the substantial amount of information that accompanied the Appeal Scheme including the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09). Neither does Mr Potterton counter the body of work with any systematic or objective assessment of his own. Mr Potterton seems to prefer to make several assertions of harm and developable parts of the Site based on a site visit and his 'finer grained analysis of the constraints and opportunities of the Site', which he considers shows that the Site can be divided into a number of distinct areas [which are set out in the Officer Report (CD / 9.01)] and as consequence, development on other parts of the Site would be harmful.
- 6.7 I have already said why I believe the scheme is appropriate and, whilst it will result in some adverse effects initially, I consider it will result in beneficial effects on the character and visual appearance of the Site and to the wider area in the medium and longer term.
- 6.8 I therefore do not agree with the Planning Officer's stance in this case. I do so for the following reasons:
- a) The Site is not designated as having any particular landscape value or quality, such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area, (although my assessment indicates it does contain some features of importance such as hedgerows and adjoining mature trees on the edges of the Site);
  - b) That, based on my landscape and visual assessment and using the criteria set out in Appendix A of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) the sensitivity of the Site is assessed as 'low';
  - c) The landscape and visual impacts of the scheme have been assessed using a tried and tested methodology which accords with GLVIA3 guidelines (CD 11/12);
  - d) The DWLC Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) is the only detailed assessment that has been carried out using a structured and consistent approach taking

account of all the inter-related aspects of the landscape, views, and scheme proposals;

- e) The landscape and visual effects of the proposed development would be localised to the immediate area around the Site and the effects would diminish with distance within the ZTV;
- f) The proposed development would not erode or harm the special qualities or key landscape characteristics of the area, although it is acknowledged that the Appeal Scheme will result in the loss of open farmland, it will remove the existing barns which are a discordant, detracting features from the landscape and introduce housing which will be in keeping with the adjoining landscape patterns and be perceived in the context of the existing built up areas of Templecombe [which already influence the character of the Site];
- g) The landscape effects would initially range from "Slight" adverse effects on landscape elements, "Slight" adverse effects on landscape patterns / character of the Site and "Slight to Negligible" adverse level of significance on the landscape in the locality, whilst the wider surrounding area and majority of the River Cale Valley would remain unaffected. The residual landscape effects would be "Neutral to Slight" beneficial in the longer term as the landscape proposals mature and the scheme integrates with the surrounding area;
- h) The visual assessment shows that the visual effects of the development would range from "Major / Substantial to Moderate / Substantial" to "Slight" adverse to "Negligible" visual effects initially in near distance views (depending on the location of the viewer) and that the visual effects will reduce to "Moderate / Slight to Negligible" adverse effects in the longer term, with local views from a section of Public Footpath No.SM29/12 to the east being "Moderate / Slight to Slight" adverse depending on the location of the viewer. In longer distance views from the east and River Cale valley sides, it is predicted that there would be "Moderate / Slight to Negligible" adverse effects initially (which are not considered 'significant') with the visual effects reducing to "Negligible" effects in the longer term;
- i) In all views, it is considered that the visual effects will be reduced significantly by:
  - i) the use of traditional materials and weathering to more subdued tones.
  - ii) the introduction of significant open space and new hedgerows and substantial tree / 'buffer' planting to the northern parts of the Site and eastern and southern boundaries of the Site; and



- iii) the provision of tree and shrub planting within the development.
- j) The proposed landscape measures will minimize the overall visual effects of the development and assimilate the new housing into the landscape resulting in beneficial effects in the longer term.

### **Consideration of the Planning Committee Report**

- 6.9 The Planning Officer Report (CD / 9.01) includes a number of comments made by the Planning Case Officer and Mr Potterton which relate to landscape matters and appear to have led the Case Officer to refuse the application.
- 6.10 At page 15 and 16 of the Officers Report (CD / 9.01) it refers to the '*Peripheral Landscape Study*' (Study) (CD / 11.19). I have already commented on this Study (CD / 11.19), at paragraph 2.14 to 2.19 of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) and again in this evidence (refer to paragraph 2.3 (iv)), regarding the methodology used and the findings of the Study.
- 6.11 In relation to Manor Farm and the land to the south east of Templecombe, the assessment (CD / 11.19) identifies the landscape sensitivity of the northern parts of the Site including parts of the eastern slope to the east of the existing barns as 'low' landscape sensitivity whilst the remaining parts of the Site including eastern slopes and low-lying part of the River Cale valley as having 'moderate' landscape sensitivity.
- 6.12 Whilst, in terms of visual sensitivity, the Study (CD / 11.19) identifies majority of the central southern, eastern, and north eastern corner of the Site as having 'high' visual sensitivity whilst the area of the Site to the north of the barns as having 'moderate' visual sensitivity. The Study (CD / 11.19) went on to identify the Site as having 'moderate to high' capacity in northern parts of the Site and 'moderate to low' capacity for the remaining parts of the Site including the eastern slopes as shown on Figure 5 of the Study (CD / 11.19). The Study (CD / 11.19) also suggests 'low' densities are considered appropriate and I agree with Mr Potterton that density should not be any measure of acceptability or appropriateness. It also provides some advice on landscape mitigation in order to accommodate development at Manor Farm.
- 6.13 It should be noted that the PLS (CD / 11.19) was prepared to inform the current adopted Local Plan 2015 (CD / 11.03) and allocation of development sites, at that time. The Study (CD / 11.19) therefore out of date as South Somerset Council are

presently undertaking a review of the Local Plan and therefore need to undertake a new 'landscape capacity study' for the Districts main towns and rural centres, such as Templecombe, in order to identify sites for development, using current recognised methodology or guidance provided by Natural England and the Landscape Institute [such as "Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) – Third Edition" (CD / 11.12) published by the Landscape institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013 or similar guidance)]. As a result, I conclude the capacity findings of the Study carry less relevance.

- 6.14 It should also be noted that whilst the Study (CD / 11.19) considered the historic landscape characterisation of the areas around Templecombe, it did not consider 'Conservation Areas' or Listed Buildings and their settings, in determining the sensitivity of the landscape, an aspect of the landscape which my assessment has considered.
- 6.15 At page 22 of the Planning Officer Report (CD / 9.01), the Planning Officer lists the '*public benefits associated*' with the Appeal Scheme, however, nowhere in the Officers Report are the landscape benefits of the scheme considered nor, it appears, are the potential heritage benefits considered, such as those set out in Mr J Smith evidence and those set out in paragraph 4.13 of the evidence.
- 6.16 At page 23 of the Planning Officer Report (CD / 9.01) under the heading 'Visual Impact', landscape and visual matters are considered, and this section makes little reference to, and appears to ignore, the substantial amount of information that accompanied the Application. This information included the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) which considered the likely landscape and visual impacts of the development and landscape, biodiversity and community benefits brought forward by the proposed development of the Site for housing, none of which appears to have been considered by the Planning Officer. Nor did Mr Potterton counter the conclusions of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) with a similar systematic assessment of his own.
- 6.17 It is acknowledged that the Officer Report refers to the original RLVM (CD / 2.16) and the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) and quotes the overall conclusions from these reports, but this section appears to be 'unbalanced' as most of this section of the Officer Report are quotations from Mr Potterton consultation response (CD / 7.07) and his opinions on the Sites potential to accommodate development. It should also

be noted that my understanding<sup>1</sup> is Mr Potterton's comments relate to the 76-unit scheme and not the submitted 60-unit scheme which reduced the extent of development and refined the layout slightly.

- 6.18 Notwithstanding the above, I have already responded in detail to Mr Potterton comments (CD / 8.01) and I do not intend repeating them in this evidence, but it should be noted that the Planning Officer again has only sets out the conclusions of my rebuttal response (CD / 8.01) to Mr Potterton consultation response (CD / 7.07) and not some of the substantive criticism of Mr Potterton's analysis of the Site and its surroundings, which appear to be primarily based on the visual aspects of the landscape in defining distinct areas of the Site and not the landscape as a 'whole'.
- 6.19 I also note from Mr Potterton's consultation response (CD / 7.07) that he considers that the 'value' of the Site (paragraph 3.66 of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09]) has been undervalued due the historical importance of the Site and refers to Historic England consultation response dated 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 (CD / 3.09), although Mr Potterton provides no comment on what he considers to be the 'value' of the Site should be. I have already commented on this issue in my rebuttal response (CD / 8.01) but even if Mr Potterton is right on this point, which I do not accept, and using Table 2.0 of Appendix A – LVIA Methodology of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09), the 'value' of the Site would only increase half a ranking to from 'moderate to low' to 'moderate'. The resultant landscape sensitivity of the Site, because of this change, would mean the sensitivity of the Site would be ranked 'Low' (using Table 3.0 of Appendix A of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09]). However, by reference to Table 2.0 set out at paragraph 5.2 of this evidence, (and at paragraph 4.17 of the Landscape Report [CD / 6.09]) I have already used a ranking of 'Low' when considering the sensitivity of the Site and therefore Mr Potterton criticism of my assessment is misplaced.
- 6.20 As the Inspector will see on the Site, the boundary line to the four areas that Mr Potterton defines are arbitrary and do not follow any physical feature on the ground or 'break in' slope and whilst he has indicated 'Area A' has potential for development, reading his comments the actual area he considers suitable for development is much smaller than the area shown on the plan as development should "*not move any*

---

<sup>1</sup> My understanding is:

11<sup>th</sup> June – Mr Potterton appointed by the Council,

18<sup>th</sup> June – Mr Potterton's initial development potential sketch,

2<sup>nd</sup> July – Revised Illustrative Masterplan submitted,

24<sup>th</sup> July - Mr Potterton's consultation response received referring to 76-unit scheme (CD / 7.07).

*further east than a line drawn along the back of the existing shed*". Also, it is uncertain whether the developable area includes the removal of the existing farm buildings and slurry pits to the east as his advice is *"The removal of the farm buildings may be a benefit"*.

- 6.21 Whilst I disagree that 'Area A' is the only part of the Site that is suitable for development for the reasons set out earlier, limiting housing development to only this part of the Site would not bring forward the same level of benefits as listed on page 22 of the Planning Officers Report (CD / 9.01) nor would it bring forward similar landscape benefits as set out in paragraph 4.12 to 4.14 of this evidence (and if a similar quantum of benefits were provided, it is unlikely that a smaller scheme would be viable).
- 6.22 The Planning Officer also sets out in this section, Mr Potterton's subsequent response (CD / 7.14) to my rebuttal response (CD / 8.01) however at the time I was not provided the opportunity to review or formally provide comment on this before the Application was refused. I wish to comment now, as follows:
- i) Paragraph 1 - I was not aware of Mr Potterton's instructions as I was not party to commissioning his work, but I note that he was *"commissioned to comment on the suitability / appropriateness of the overall submission"* not a full review of the Landscape Report on its own and I note that he only responded to certain points in the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09). However, I would have expected the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) to be reviewed and comment upon, at least at a 'high' level, to determine whether the report accords with GLVIA3 guidelines (CD / 11.12), in order to determine whether the Landscape Report is suitable and appropriate and fit for purpose as part of the overall submission.
  - ii) Paragraph 9 – Mr Potterton confirms that the comments, made in consultation response, are 'opinions' and that was the propose of his commission, although that is different to his comments in the first paragraph.
- 6.23 In addition, the Planning Officer and Mr Potterton also refer to *'unacceptable harm to visual amenity and the wider landscape'*, but the Officers Report (CD / 9.01) does set out or identify what aspects of landscape character or visual appearance of the area or specific viewpoints would be impacted upon by the proposals nor the degree of harm alleged. My assessment of the Site and the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09)

identifies the degree of landscape and visual impacts and resultant landscape and visual effects which appears to have ignored in this case.

- 6.24 The concluding paragraphs to this section, on Page 25, makes no mention of the conclusions of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) or reference to the Landscape Strategy Plan in the Landscape report (CD / 6.09) but refers to the illustrative Masterplan (CD / 6.04) "*not demonstrating that the proposed quantum of residential development..... can be accommodated on the Site without resultant unacceptable detriment to the character and appearance of the area*". There is no mention of open space or landscape mitigation, which is part of the Appeal Scheme, and in my view, these elements of the proposals will mitigate the impacts of the housing element of the Appeal Scheme in the longer term.

**Consideration of Reason for Refusal 1: Harm to the Landscape (Planning Policy EQ2)**

- 6.25 In the section below, I wish to briefly consider the alleged harm to the landscape and Local Plan Policy EQ2 whilst Mr Jonathon Orton in his evidence deals with the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and residential amenity space parts of the policy by reference to the Appeal DAS contained in Appendix D to this proof.
- 6.26 Design and general development matters are dealt with at paragraph 13.25 to 13.35 of the Local Plan (CD / 11.03) with Policy EQ2 set out on page 200 of the Plan. However, it should be noted that there appears to be some potential for a degree of tension in the policy as the policy requires development to '*preserve*' (keep free from harm i.e. 'no change') or enhance the character and appearance of the district (i.e. wider area), whilst at the same time '*conserving*' (manage 'change') or enhancing the landscape character (which not the same thing as preserving). It also requires developments to reinforce local distinctiveness, respect local context and the local area character, which again may not always preserve character.
- 6.27 It should be noted that there is no current Supplementary Planning Documents or Guidance (SPD or SPG) prepared by the District on how the potential tensions referred to above, should be addressed as they have not produced a landscape strategy as referred to in explanatory text, para 13.34 of the Local Plan (CD / 11.03) nor have they produced updated design guidance to ensure the highest possible standard of development, as stated in the explanatory text to the policy (Paragraph 13.35 on page 200 of the Local Plan [CD / 11.03]).

- 6.28 Parts of Policy EQ2 envisage that any proposed development will result in a 'change' in local distinctiveness, local context and local area character but it should also be noted that the policy sets no thresholds of what is considered to be 'harmful' although, in my view, the 'harm' would need to be 'significant' to be unacceptable otherwise no new developments would occur within the District as all developments cause some form of 'harm' to the landscape or views / visual amenity, even if they conserve and / or enhance landscape character.
- 6.29 In addition, just because a development can be seen does not necessarily mean that it would cause 'harm' as the development needs to be considered within its surrounding context and also it needs to be considered with mitigation included and also the longer-term effects of any proposed planting. This approach to mitigation measures was considered by the Planning Inspector in the former RMC Engineering Works Appeal (APP / Z3825 / A / 12 / 2176793) where the Inspector stresses the need to take a long-term view. A copy of the RMC Engineering Works Appeal decision is contained in Appendix E to the proof of evidence.
- 6.30 As is demonstrated in the evidence of Mr J Orton, there is a need now to release more land for housing to establish a five-year supply of housing land. If Mr Orton's evidence is accepted, then approving this development on this greenfield site would inevitably give rise to changes in local landscape character which would result in the loss of an area of countryside. However, the appeal proposals will bring forward a number of landscape, biodiversity and community benefits as part of the change to the local landscape character and, in my view, the scheme would accord with the aims of this policy.
- 6.31 This policy was formulated against the 2012 NPPF and requires landscape character to be conserved and / or enhanced. It generally reflects the guidance in Paragraph 170 of the February 2019 NPPF (CD / 11.01) but it should be noted that the Site is not designated as having any particular landscape value or quality, such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area, although my assessment shows that the Site does contain some features of importance such as hedgerows and adjoining mature trees.
- 6.32 The explanatory text (paragraph 13.34 of the Local Plan [CD / 11.03]) to the policy also highlights the need to "*conserve and enhance the natural environment and value placed on the character and diversity of the South Somerset landscape*" and refers to the Council's intention to produce a Landscape Strategy, which sets out the key

characteristics of the South Somerset landscape. However, to date this strategy or any other guidance has not been produced and therefore it is for the landscape practitioner to identify the key features of the landscape within which a development is located.

- 6.33 As I have already highlighted, earlier in this evidence, the existing South Somerset landscape character assessment (CD / 11.15) provides a generalised description of the character '*Sub-Area 2: Wooded ridges and Clay Vales*' within which the Site is located and that it is not specifically relevant to the Site. However, the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) that accompanied the application provided a comprehensive description of the Site and its character and local and wider context and I have already set out why I consider that the development proposals would not have any significant adverse impacts on the wider landscape and countryside to the east of Templecombe. I do acknowledge that the development would have some initial adverse effects, but these would be localised to the immediate area of the Site.
- 6.34 These negative effects however, need to be considered in the light of the number of landscape and biodiversity benefits that the scheme would provide in the longer term including increasing the tree cover in the locality, creating a wider diversity of wildlife habitats (such as native tree and shrub planting, wildflower grasslands, ponds and swales) and the provision of public open spaces, improving recreational opportunities and link to the wider footpath network as well as removing the existing farm buildings and associated raised terracing (thereby reducing the scale and massing of the built form in the Site); safeguarding the retention of the current east-west views between the Manor House listed building and the open land to the east of the Site (thereby also maintaining the current level of perception of open countryside close to the listed building in the northern portion of the Site); and enabling the physical access closer to the listed building in the northern portion of the Site than is currently the case (thereby allowing for a greater appreciation of Manor House's significance). All the above, in my view, would have a positive effect on the immediate surrounding landscape and improve the character and visual appearance of the Site.

## 7.0 CONSIDERATION OF THIRD-PARTY OBJECTIONS

7.1 In this section of my evidence, I deal briefly with the points of objection which have been raised by local residents in letters submitted at the application stage, and subsequently to the Planning Inspectorate following the appeal being lodged.

7.2 From my review of the representations, it seems most representations relate to the scale of the developments in and around Templecombe and ability of the village to cope, effects on heritage and archaeological remains, highway impacts or lack of facilities in the settlement to accommodate the new residents but I only comment on those issues which relate to landscape and visual matters. These can be summarised as follows:

- i) Contrary to Local Plan policies, guidance within NPPF (CD / 11.10) and South Somerset Periphery Landscape Study 2008 (CD / 11.19);
- ii) Unacceptable encroachment into the countryside and will spoil an area of great landscape value;
- iii) This scheme will most surely and irredeemably spoil an area of great natural beauty and archaeological value;
- iv) Impact on and spoil views from the Public Footpath; and
- v) Detriment to wildlife interests, including bats which are protected species and hedgehogs.

7.3 In addition to the above, representations from Abbas and Templecombe Parish Council raised similar concerns but landscape and visual impacts were not raised in their initial consultation response (CD / 3.07) of the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020 to the larger scheme but were subsequently raised in their response (CD / 7.05 and CD / 7.06) dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 to the smaller 60-unit scheme. Their landscape points of objection related to:

- i) The updated changes still do not address the remaining issues of scale of growth and landscape and visual impact; and
- ii) Visual Impact – This remains a concern does not address and we await an independent report requested by SSDC.

7.4 In response to the above objections, I would comment as follows:



- a) It is uncertain whether local residents and the Parish Council have read the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) as there is no comments on its contents in any of the representation made to the Council.
- b) The Parish Council objections are 'concerns' although there are no details of what these concerns are but I have dealt the landscape and visual issues including views from Public Footpath No.SM29 / 12 in some detail elsewhere in this evidence.
- c) The Site is not located within an area of great landscape value or area of great natural beauty as alleged by some respondents to the Application consultation.
- d) My assessment and this evidence addresses and responds to the points raised although I do acknowledge that the development would have some initial adverse effects, but these would be localised to the immediate area of the Site. However, these negative effects, would need to be considered in the light of the number of landscape and biodiversity benefits that the scheme would provide in the longer term as set out earlier in this evidence.
- e) Ecological issues are not raised as a reason for refusal and is a matter that can be dealt with by condition. Notwithstanding this, I think is worth noting the conclusions of the Update Ecological Appraisal Addendum (CD / 6.08) which accompanied the 60-unit and stated that *"the conclusions identified within the Ecological Appraisal remain applicable for the forthcoming planning application relating to the proposed development, with the amended scheme providing additional ecological benefits over the previous development proposals"*. This conclusion is also confirmed by the Ecology Technical Note contained in Appendix C of this evidence which indicates that the appeal proposals will achieve a minimum of 19% biodiversity net gain, if not more at RMA stage.

## 8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 I have considered the landscape character and visual appearance of the Appeal Site and its role in the local and wider landscape to the south and east of Templecombe.
- 8.2 The Appeal Site is located to the east side of the historic village of Templecombe immediately adjacent to the built-up edge of the settlement with areas of open countryside / farmland to the east and south. Abbas and Templecombe and surrounding scattered settlements and farmsteads lie within open rural countryside although settlements occupying elevated positions on the River Cale valley sides form notable features in the landscape visible in long and very long-distance views from either side of the valley.
- 8.3 To the north of the Site are houses served off the High Street (No's 21 to 35) and 14 No. houses served off Templars Barton, a small cul-de-sac development with the houses served off East Street, to the north east of the Site, extending the limits of Templecombe eastwards beyond the Site.
- 8.4 Immediately to the west of the Site are a number of large, detached houses and bungalows served off the High Street and Combe Hill including Manor House (Grade II\* Listed Building), Manor Barn, Knights Barn, Grianraig House, Silverlands, Sunnyhurst, Wingfield and Tally-Ho. To the west of the High Street / Combe Hill is further residential development predominantly semi-detached, terraced houses and bungalows extending along Bowden Road, and served off side streets and lanes with Berryfield House, Langdale and The Orchard situated on Combe Hill on the south west of the Site.
- 8.5 To the south of the Site, detailed planning permission has recently been granted for 2 dwellings adjoining the south western corner of the Site and Combe Hill (SSDC Ref: 18 / 03222 / OUT) which extend the limits of the village southwards beyond the Site. To the south of the village limits is open farmland, consisting primarily of open pasture fields enclosed by tall robust hedgerows, extending along the A357 towards Common Lane Farm and the village of Yenston with the larger settlement of Henstridge, about 2.0 kilometres from the Site.
- 8.6 To the east of the Site is open countryside and farmland comprising medium to large sized regular shape pasture fields occupying the low lying parts of the River Cale valley with the villages of Kingston Magna, and Buckhorn Weston occupying higher

ground on the eastern side of the River Cale valley, about 4.5 kilometres from the Site and the small village of Cucklington to the north east, about 7.0 kilometres from the Site.

- 8.7 The village of Templecombe lies on the east facing undulating slopes of the River Cale valley on a minor ridge line at about 95 to 110 metres AOD. The Site, and western parts of Templecombe, lie on the ridge and lie at an elevation between about 85.0 metres AOD to about 100.0 metres AOD with the land falling southwards to a minor valley before rising to another ridge / area of high ground at Windmill Hill near Yenston. The highest point within the Site is near the Sites entrance at the south western corner with the land sloping northwards and eastwards to a low point near the north eastern corner of the Site, to the rear of No.12 East Street. The farm buildings and slurry pits are situated on slightly raised man-made ground extending eastwards from the general slope of the land.
- 8.8 The houses to the north are situated at approximately the same level as the northern parts of Site with existing development following the valley slope eastwards with houses on East Street lying at a lower level than much of the Site at about 85m AOD. Existing development to the west of the Site, on Combe Hill, lies a similar level to the higher parts of the Site between 95 to 100m AOD with the housing areas to the west, served off Bowden Road, lying at a slightly higher elevation at between 100 to 105m AOD and forming a backdrop to the Site.
- 8.9 The Site and surrounding landscape lies on the western fringes of National Character Area Profile (NCAP) No. 133: *Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour* with NCAP Area 140: *Yeovil Scarplands* to the west as defined in the Natural England National Character Map of England and National Character Area Profiles published in April 2014. Whilst at a local level, the Site and surrounding area lie within “Area 6: *Escarpmnts, ridges and vales – East of Yeovil*”. In relation to Area 6, the assessment subdivides the area into 4 landscape character areas with the Site and Templecombe lying within “Sub-Area 2: *Wooded Ridges and Clay Vales*” as defined in “*The Landscape of South Somerset – A Landscape Assessment of the Scenery of South Somerset*” in 1993 (CD/11.15). The LCA provides a description that is very generalised and not specifically relevant to the Site and its immediate surrounding area although the ridgeline upon which Templecombe is located on and the open pastoral vale to the east are mentioned. I have also highlighted the important local features / elements of the landscape which would apply to the Appeal Site and development proposals in paragraph 3.18 to 3.19 of this evidence.

- 8.10 There are no landscape designations covering the Site, such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or Special Landscape Areas (SLA), and none of the trees or woodlands within and immediately adjoining the Site that are covered by Tree Preservation Order(s). The nearest listed building to the Site is Manor House which is located on the High Street / A357 immediately to the west of the Site and is a Grade II\* listed building. Details of the Listed Buildings in the vicinity of the Site, in particular the legibility of the significance of the grade II\* listed Manor House when perceived from the Site and contribution of the Site to this heritage asset's significance are address in Mr J Smith's evidence.
- 8.11 However, it should be noted that Manor House is tightly contained by modern 20<sup>th</sup> Century development on three sides (north, west, and south) and part of the fourth side (to the south east by Manor Farm house and large barns and to the north east by Templars Retreat and boundary walls) and there are no windows directly facing the Appeal Site and it is the blank end gable wall of the listed building backs on to the Site.
- 8.12 From a landscape perspective, the initial impression of this listed building when seen from the Site and also Public Footpath No. SM 29 / 12 to the east (see paragraph 3.20 below) is an unassuming stone gable wall seen amongst a variety of built forms consisting of the adjoining, more modern residential development. As a consequence of the above, the Site only forms part of the wider or extended setting to the listed building and therefore I consider that the listed building contributes in a limited way to or influences the character and visual appearance of the Site.
- 8.13 There are no public footpaths crossing the Site and there are a limited number of Public Rights of Way (PROW) in the immediate vicinity of the Site. The nearest PROW to the Site is located to the east and is Public Footpath No. WN29/12 which extends from East Street and north eastern corner of the Site, across the open fields to Common Lane to the south east of the Site.
- 8.14 I concluded from the landscape and visual appraisal of the Site, the following:
- a. That the Site is a roughly rectangular shaped parcel of land of some 4.31 hectares (10.65 acres) located to the east side of the historic village of Templecombe immediately adjacent to the built-up edge of the settlement with areas of open countryside / farmland to the east and south;

- b. That the Site comprises open land around Manor Farm house including four small pasture fields, part of a larger pasture field to the north east, several large farm buildings / barns, areas of gravel and concrete hardstanding, several slurry pits to the east of Manor Farm with a gravel entrance driveway off Combe Hill / A357;
- c. That the Site is contained by built development on two sides, to the west and north with post and wire fencing to the east and south and an open north eastern edge of the Site not defined by any physical or visual features on the ground and due to the open nature of the eastern and southern boundaries, there are short to very long-distance views obtained out of the Site across the River Cale valley / Blackmore Vale and vice versa;
- d. That the assessment identifies that the Site is relatively well contained and enclosed in the local landscape due to residential development to the west and north, undulating topography and field boundary vegetation to the south, although there are outwards views from the Site across the River Cale valley to the east and south east;
- e. That the topography of the area is dominated by the wide-open valley of the River Cale valley and its tributary streams (Bow Brook and Filley Brook).
- f. That the Site is situated on the edge of the settlement of Abbas and Templecombe outside the existing built-up area of the settlement and therefore situated within the open countryside;
- g. That the “Zone of Theoretical Visibility” (ZTV) of the proposed development indicated that the ZTV would be relatively limited due to residential development and vegetation to the west and north, undulating topography and vegetation to the south but to the east, north east and south east, the ZTV would extend across the River Cale valley in an arc following rising ground from between Cucklington to the north and Kington Magna / Stour Hill to the east, up to about 7.0 kilometres from the Site with parts of the development theoretically visible approximately 5 to 9 kilometres to the south and south east including areas around Henstridge, Stalbridge and Marnhull;
- h. That, as a consequence of the above, the potential impact of the proposed development would be confined mainly to areas of countryside to the east of

Templecombe although the effects of the development would diminish with distance to the north east, east and south east.

- 8.15 I also concluded from the visual assessment of the Site that, apart from views in close proximity to the Site including a short section of Combe Hill at the Sites entrance, partial and glimpsed views from the High Street and Manor Close to the west of the Site, and open views from a section of Public Footpath No. WN 29 / 12 and East Street immediately to the east of the Site, there are a limited number of middle and longer distance views from other public viewpoints.
- 8.16 The visual assessment also indicated that, whilst there are a number of views towards the Site, the perception of the Site varies depending on the location of the viewer. In the majority of near distance views from the east, the full extent of the northern and eastern parts of the Site are seen against a backdrop of built development along the edge of Templecombe albeit the south western parts of the Site are less obvious in near distance views, they are seen in middle and longer distance views again seen against a backdrop of built development along the Combe Hill on the edge of Templecombe.
- 8.17 It can also be concluded from the landscape and visual assessment the following:
- a) That the visual prominence of the Site varies with parts of the Site evident in near distance views from the east but elsewhere containment is good to the north, west and south and that the existing agricultural barns on the Site form a notable, discordant and detracting feature on the Site and in the local and wider landscape;
  - b) That whilst there are views into the Site from vantage points in close proximity to the Site, intervisibility within the wider area is relatively limited, due to the framework of hedgerows and trees occupying the River Cale valley side slopes and low-lying area; and
  - c) That when viewed from the wider surrounding area (i.e. greater than 1 kilometre from the Site), the Site contributes in a limited way to the overall character and appearance of the landscape as the Site is not a prominent feature and forms a very small part of the overall panoramic view and could be easily missed.

8.18 In terms of judging the landscape quality / condition of the Site, it is for the individual practitioner to form a view based upon professional judgement and experience. Based on my assessment of the Site and the surrounding area, I concluded that the sensitivity of the Site and surrounding landscape is considered to be 'medium to low' sensitivity to change. Based on my assessment of the Site and the surrounding area, I concluded the following:

- a) That the overall landscape condition / quality of the Site and its immediate surrounds is regarded as 'good' although the Site has relatively few features of intrinsic landscape quality such as woodlands, and hedgerows, as most of the land is in farmland use with limited intrinsic quality albeit parts of the Site contribute to extended setting of Manor House, listed building;
- b) That the Site and countryside surrounding Templecombe lie within a non-designated landscape and therefore the Site cannot be considered forming a 'valued' landscape of national / regional / district importance under definition of a 'valued' landscapes as set out in paragraph 170 (a) of the NPPF February 2019 (CD 11.01); and
- c) That the Site and surrounding area would have local importance / value given the openness of the landscape, visibility from properties on the edge of Templecombe and accessibility of the area via the network of local lanes and public rights of way.

8.19 In Section 4.0 of this proof of evidence, I briefly describe the proposed development as well as minor changes to the Appeal Scheme since the Decision Notice (CD / 9.02) was issued on 14th August 2020, by reference to an amended Illustrative Masterplan (CD / 10.01), Drawing No. 19-025 / SK01 Rev H (CD / 10.01), a new Level Parameters Plan Drawing No.19-025 / 610 (CD / 10.02), an updated Landscape Strategy Plan, Drawing No. 0360 / L4 Rev I (CD / 10.03) and Appeal Design and Access Statement (Appendix D to this evidence). In addition to the provision of new housing, the proposed development of the Appeal Site, will also bring forward a number of landscape and biodiversity benefits which would accord with the landscape guidelines set out in the national and district level landscape character assessments and South Somerset 'Landscape Design' Guidance (CD / 11.18 – page 5 / Section 3 – Nature Conservation / Section 4 – Designing with plants), and exceed the requirements of Policy HW1- Provision of Open Space in

New Developments , EQ2 – General Development, EQ3 – Historic Environment, EQ4 - Biodiversity and EQ5 – Green Infrastructure of the Local Plan (CD / 11.03).

8.20 These benefits include:

- i) Increasing the tree cover in the locality;
- ii) Providing a wider diversity of wildlife habitats (such as native tree and shrub planting, wildflower grasslands, ponds, and swales);
- iii) The provision of strategic scale tree planting;
- iv) The provision of formal open spaces and parkland, improving recreational opportunities and links to wider footpath network;
- v) The provision of semi-natural green spaces including informal and variety of open spaces;
- vi) Helping to mitigate climate change through the provision of SuDS and tree planting for shading;
- vii) The achievement of a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of approximately 19%; and;
- viii) A number of heritage benefits which are detailed in Mr J Smith proof of evidence.

8.21 In Section 5.0 of this proof of evidence, I set out the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development of the Site, for up to 60No. new dwellings, infrastructure, associated landscaping, open space and access, on the local and wider landscape. On the basis of my assessment I conclude the following:

<b>Summary of Predicted Landscape Effects with Mitigation</b>					
<b>Landscape Receptor</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of Change / Nature</b>	<b>Significance of Landscape Effect</b>	<b>Residual Landscape Effect</b>
Landscape Elements (Housing Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Very Low	High to Medium / N	Moderate to Moderate / Slight to Slight adverse	Moderate to Moderate / Slight to Slight adverse
	Year 15	Low to Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Slight adverse	Slight adverse
Landscape Elements (Open Space Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Very Low	Low to Medium / P	Slight to Moderate / Slight beneficial	Slight to Moderate / Slight beneficial
	Year 15	Low to Very Low	Medium / P	Moderate beneficial	Moderate beneficial
Landscape Elements - Overall	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Very Low	Medium to Low N	Slight adverse	Slight adverse
	Year 15	Low to Very Low	Low N / Low P	Neutral to Slight beneficial	Neutral to Slight beneficial



<b>Summary of Predicted Landscape Effects with Mitigation</b>					
<b>Landscape Receptor</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of Change / Nature</b>	<b>Significance of Landscape Effect</b>	<b>Residual Landscape Effect</b>
Landscape Pattern's / Site Character (Housing Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low	Medium / N	Moderate / Slight' adverse	Moderate / Slight' adverse
	Year 15	Low	Low / N	Slight' adverse	Slight' adverse
Landscape Pattern's / Site Character (Open Space Area)	Year 1 / Completion	Low	Low to Medium / P	Slight to Moderate / Slight' beneficial	Slight to Moderate / Slight' beneficial
	Year 15	Low	Medium / P	'Moderate / Slight' beneficial	'Moderate / Slight' beneficial
Landscape Pattern's / Site Character - Overall	Year 1 / Completion	Low	Medium to Low N	Slight adverse	Slight adverse
	Year 15	Low	Low N / Low P	Neutral to Slight beneficial	Neutral to Slight beneficial
Wider Landscape / River Cale Valley	Year 1 / Completion	Low to Medium	Very Low to negligible / N	Slight to Negligible' adverse	Slight to Negligible' adverse
	Year 15	Low to Medium	Very Low / P	Slight to Negligible' beneficial	Slight to Negligible' beneficial

<b>Summary of Predicted Visual Effects with Mitigation<sup>2</sup></b>					
<b>Receptor</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of Change / Nature</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Effect</b>	<b>Residual Visual Effect</b>
View from the West (VP No's.1)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Very High to Medium / N	Substantial to Moderate / Slight Adverse	Substantial to Moderate / Slight Adverse
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Moderate Adverse to Negligible	Moderate Adverse to Negligible
View from the West (VP No's. 2, 3 &4)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Low to Negligible / N	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Very Low to Negligible / N	Negligible	Negligible
Views from the South (VP No.5)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Moderate Adverse to Negligible	Moderate Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Low to Negligible/ N	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
Views from the East (VP No's. 6, 7 & 8)	Year 1 / Completion	High – Very High	High to Medium / N	Major Substantial to Moderate / Substantial Adverse	Major Substantial to Moderate / Substantial Adverse
	Year 15	High – Very High	Low to Very Low / N	'Moderate / Slight to	'Moderate / Slight to

<sup>2</sup> It should note that some of the summary of effects for visual receptors cover a wider spectrum of effects (i.e. View from the West (VP No.1). This reflects the sensitivity of the receptors as pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian users of Combe Hill are ranked higher than vehicle users and proximity of the proposed development to the receptors and magnitude of changed experienced.

<b>Summary of Predicted Visual Effects with Mitigation<sup>2</sup></b>					
<b>Receptor</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of Change / Nature</b>	<b>Significance of Visual Effect</b>	<b>Residual Visual Effect</b>
				Slight' adverse	Slight' adverse
Views from the East (VP No's. 9 & 10)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	High to Medium / N	Moderate / Substantial to Slight Adverse	Moderate / Substantial to Slight Adverse
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Medium / N	'Moderate / Slight to Slight' adverse	'Moderate / Slight to Slight' adverse
Middle distance Views from the East (VP No. 11)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium – Very Low	Medium to Low / N	Moderate to Slight Adverse to Negligible	Moderate to Slight Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium – Very Low	Low to Negligible / N	Moderate / Slight' adverse to 'Negligible	Moderate / Slight' adverse to 'Negligible
Very Long-distance Views from the East, South East and North East (VP No's. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, & 18)	Year 1 / Completion	Medium to Low	Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
	Year 15	Medium to Low	Negligible	Negligible / Neutral	Negligible Neutral
Very Long-distance Views from the East, South East and North East (VP No.17, 19 & 20)	Year 1 / Completion	High	Negligible	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse
	Year 15	High	Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible	Slight Adverse to Negligible
Views from the adjoining residential properties (32No.)	Year 1 / Completion	High	Medium to Low / N	Moderate / Substantial to Moderate Adverse	Moderate / Substantial to Moderate Adverse
	Year 15	High	Low / N	Moderate / Slight to Slight Adverse	Moderate / Slight to Slight Adverse

8.22 In Section 6.0 of this Proof of Evidence, I have considered first reason for refusal in so far as it relates to landscape and visual matters. This reason for refusal relates to the Councils / Planning Officers view that:

- i) The Site is not suitable for the quantum of development proposed;
- ii) The proposed development would result in an unacceptable level of harm to the rural character of the Site and wider landscape as well as unacceptable

harm to the visual amenity of those receptors adjacent to the Site and those in the wider landscape;

- iii) Due to the above the proposals fails to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (CD / 11.01) and planning policies SD1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (CD / 11.03).

8.23 On the basis of my assessment of the Appeal proposals, the visual and landscape issues relating to the Site and consideration of the first Reasons for Refusal, I draw the following conclusions:

- a) The Site is not designated as having any particular landscape value or quality, such as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or Special Landscape Area, (although my assessment indicates it does contain some features of importance such as hedgerows and adjoining mature trees on the edges of the Site).
- b) That, based on my landscape and visual assessment and using the criteria set out in Appendix A of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) the sensitivity of the Site is assessed as 'low'.
- c) The landscape and visual impacts of the scheme have been assessed using a tried and tested methodology which accords with GLVIA3 guidelines.
- d) The DWLC Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) is the only detailed assessment that has been carried out using a structured and consistent approach taking account of all the inter-related aspects of the landscape, views, and scheme proposals.
- e) The landscape and visual effects of the proposed development would be localised to the immediate area around the Site and the effects would diminish with distance within the ZTV.
- f) The proposed development would not erode or harm the special qualities or key landscape characteristics of the area, although it is acknowledged that the Appeal Scheme will result in the loss of open farmland, it will remove the existing barns which are a discordant, detracting features from the landscape and introduce housing which will be in keeping with the adjoining landscape patterns and be perceived in the context of the existing built up areas of Templecombe [which already influence the character of the Site];
- g) The landscape effects would initially range from "Slight" adverse effects on landscape elements, "Slight" adverse effects on landscape patterns / character of the Site and "Slight to Negligible" adverse level of significance

on the landscape in the locality, whilst the wider surrounding area and majority of the River Cale Valley would remain unaffected. The residual landscape effects would be “Neutral to Slight” beneficial in the longer term as the landscape proposals mature and the scheme integrates with the surrounding area.

- h) The visual assessment shows that the visual effects of the development would range from “Major / Substantial to Moderate / Substantial” to “Slight” adverse to “Negligible” visual effects initially in near distance views (depending on the location of the viewer) and that the visual effects will reduce to “Moderate / Slight to Negligible” adverse effects in the longer term, with local views from a section of Public Footpath No.SM29 / 12 to the east being “Moderate / Slight to Slight” adverse depending on the location of the viewer. In longer distance views from the east and River Cale valley sides, it is predicted that there would be “Moderate / Slight to Negligible” adverse effects initially (which are not considered ‘significant’) with the visual effects reducing to “Negligible” effects in the longer term.
- i) In all views, it is considered that the visual effects will be reduced significantly by;
  - i) the use of traditional materials and weathering to more subdued tones.
  - ii) the introduction of significant open space and new hedgerows and substantial tree / ‘buffer’ planting to the northern parts of the Site and eastern and southern boundaries of the Site, and;
  - iii) the provision of tree and shrub planting within the development.
  - iv) The proposed landscape measures will minimize the overall visual effects of the development and assimilate the new housing into the landscape resulting in beneficial effects in the longer term.

8.24 I also considered and commented on the Planning committee report as set out in paragraph 6.10 to 6.25 and conclude the following:

- i) That the out of date ‘*Peripheral Landscape Study*’ (Study) (CD/11.19) and its capacity findings carry less relevance in terms of the Site’s sensitivity and capacity to accommodate development in part because the Study did not consider ‘Conservation Areas’ or Listed Buildings and their settings, in determining the sensitivity of the landscape, an aspect of the landscape which my assessment has considered;

- ii) That the Planning Officers Report makes little reference to, and appears to ignore, the substantial amount of information that accompanied the Application. This information included the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) which considered the likely landscape and visual impacts of the development and landscape, biodiversity and community benefits brought forward by the proposed development of the Site for housing, none of which appears to have been considered by the Planning Officer;
- iii) Nor did Mr Potterton counter the conclusions of the Landscape Report (CD / 6.09) with a similar systematic assessment of his own;
- iv) That Mr Potterton criticism of my assessment on 'value' of the Site is misplaced;
- v) That I disagree that 'Area A' is the only part of the Site that is suitable for development for the reasons set out in my proof of evidence, and by limiting housing development to only this part of the Site, would not bring forward the same level of benefits nor would it bring forward similar landscape benefits as set out in paragraph 4.12 to 4.14 of this evidence (and if a similar quantum of benefits were provided, it is unlikely that a smaller scheme would be viable).

8.25 I have also considered the points of objection which have been raised by local residents and Parish Council. These issues include:

- i) Contrary to Local Plan policies, guidance within NPPF and South Somerset Periphery Landscape Study 2008;
- ii) Unacceptable encroachment into the countryside and will spoil an area of great landscape value;
- iii) This scheme will most surely and irredeemably spoil an area of great natural beauty and archaeological value;
- iv) Impact on and spoil views from the Public Footpath;
- v) Detriment to wildlife interests, including bats which are protected species and hedgehogs..

8.26 I have commented individually on each issue raised and concluded that none of the environmental / landscape and visual matters raised by local residents or Parish Council would justify dismissing the appeal proposals.

8.27 Based on my assessment of the Appeal Site and the development proposals, I concluded, that the proposed development will have some local impacts but the

effects of the development on character and visual appearance of the wider area would not be significant and that the likely adverse landscape and visual effects.

- 8.28 I consider that the proposed development would accord with the guidance within the National Character Area Profile No.133 – Blackmore Vale and Vale of Wardour (CD / 11.14) that I have highlight earlier in paragraph 3.14 and 3.15 of this proof, and in relation to Policy EQ2 – General Development of the Local Plan, I consider the Appeal scheme would accord with this policy in that it would conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area and local character of this part of Templecombe, in particular as the proposed development “nestles into the ridge” and provides landscape planting and open space to mitigate any harmful impacts. In relation to Policy EQ4 – Biodiversity and Policy EQ 5 – Green Infrastructure of the Local Plan, I also consider that the Appeal scheme accords with these policies in that it would provide significant areas of open space, new tree and shrub planting, new hedgerows and areas of grasslands including wildflower grass and habitats which amounts to a biodiversity net gain of 19% over and above the existing ecological value of the Appeal Site.
- 8.29 All these factors would need to be taken into account to planning balance which Mr J Orton, in his proof of evidence, considers in detail.
- 8.30 Having regard to the evidence given by Mr Jonathan Smith on heritage issues and Mr J Orton on planning matters and the conclusions set out in this Proof of Evidence, I respectfully request that the appeal be allowed.

