

**Land east of Manor Farm, Templecombe, South
Somerset**

Appeal reference APP/R3325/W/20/3265558

**Heritage Proof of Evidence of Kit Wedd
on behalf of
South Somerset District Council**

April 2021

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1. Introduction

Personal Statement

- 1.1 My name is Kit Wedd. I am the Director of Spurstone Heritage Ltd, a consultancy providing independent advice on conservation and development of historic sites and buildings.
- 1.2 I hold a BA (joint hon) in English Literature and Study of Art, and full membership of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation. I have worked for architects and planning consultancies, as a historic buildings and areas inspector for Historic England and in the conservation section of the consulting engineers Alan Baxter Ltd.
- 1.3 I have written and edited several books about historic buildings, and taught on postgraduate conservation courses. I was deputy director of the Victorian Society and director of the Society's postgraduate Summer School. I now serve the Society as a trustee.
- 1.4 I have advised on development proposals for many sites adjoining or containing designated heritage assets and have acted as an expert witness at three recent Inquiries concerning the impact of development within the settings of designated heritage assets: in 2019 on behalf of West Malling Parish Council at an Inquiry into proposed development within the setting of Malling Abbey, Kent; in 2020 on behalf of Wye Parish Council at an Inquiry into proposed development at Wye College, Kent, and currently on behalf of Medway Council at an Inquiry into proposed development of land east of Pump Lane, Lower Rainham, Kent.
- 1.5 On 5 March 2021, after the appeal had been lodged, I was approached by Mr David Kenyon, Head of Development Management at South Somerset District Council (SSDC; the Council), and asked to act as an expert witness in this case. Before accepting the instruction, I reviewed plans and documents submitted by the Appellant with application Ref. 19/03416/OUT, and the consultation responses. I researched the Site and the heritage asset that would be affected by the proposed development, and was satisfied that I would be able to act in this case.
- 1.6 The evidence I will present to the Inquiry on behalf of the Council will be on heritage matters.
- 1.7 I declare that the evidence set out in this proof is true to the best of my knowledge. The opinions expressed are my own and have been formed using my professional judgement, based on my knowledge and experience, following accepted good practice and according to the standards of my professional institute.

Methodology

- 1.8 Information for this Proof of Evidence was acquired principally through desk-based research. Libraries and archives have been closed due to Covid-19 so I have largely relied upon secondary sources and online resources. I should like to record my gratitude to Chris Webster of the Somerset Heritage Centre for assistance with my research.
- 1.9 I visited the Site on 31 March 2021. As well as the Site and its environs this visit included the garden of the Manor House and part of the service wing, and the garden of Silverlands, a property 100m south of the Manor House.
- 1.10 The Historic Environment Record (HER) has not been included, as it is included in the Appellant's Archaeological Desk Based Assessment (CgMs Heritage November 2019; CD 2.11), and all relevant designations have been obtained from other sources.

- 1.11 In assessing the significance of the heritage assets I have used the definitions of significance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (the NPPF; CD11.01), online Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG; CD 11.02) and Historic England's (HE) *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (HE 2008; 11.09).
- 1.12 My assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the designated heritage asset follows the methodologies in the HE guidance on *Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment* (GPA2; HE 2015; CD 11.10) and particularly *The Setting of Heritage Assets* (GPA3; HE 2017; CD 11.11).
- 1.13 I provide an assessment, at an appropriate level of detail, of the significance of the asset and the contribution to significance made by the Site as part of its setting. I then assess the impact that the proposed development would have on that significance, by changing the setting.
- 1.14 Because the application is in Outline, this Proof of Evidence considers the impact of the development proposals as presented in the Appellant's Parameter Plan (Dwg. No. 19-025 600 Rev C; CD 6.05) and Illustrative Masterplan (Dwg. No.19-025 Sk01 Rev H; CD 10.01), to assess whether the development could take place in principle without causing harm to the significance of the heritage assets. To note: the Illustrative Masterplan submitted with the application was an earlier version (Dwg. No. 19-025 406 Rev J; CD 6.04) and it was that drawing that was referred to in the Council's Reason for Refusal No. 2. The differences between the two iterations of the masterplan are not such as to cause me to revise my assessment of the impact of the proposal. However, the more recent SK01 Rev H includes more information about the proposed landscape design, and is the version that I have referred to in preparing this evidence.

2. Background to the appeal

2.1 This Proof of Evidence has been written on behalf of the Council in relation to the appeal by Gleeson Strategic Land (the Appellant) against refusal of an application for outline planning permission to develop up to 60 houses and related infrastructure on land at Manor Farm, Templecombe, South Somerset (LPA ref 19/03416/OUT; PINS ref APP/R3325/W/20/3265558).

2.2 The description of development is as follows:

“Outline application 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).”

2.3 The Site of the proposed development (the Site) is land east of Manor House, a Grade II* listed building, and it forms part of the setting of this designated heritage asset. The application was supported by a “Heritage Statement” (the title that appears on the cover of the document filed on the Council’s website and in the Core Documents as “Heritage Statement Addendum”). The Heritage Statement I refer to in my evidence is this June Addendum. (Heritage Collective June 2020; CD 6.07).

2.4 The Heritage Statement concluded that the proposed development would have a slight effect on the significance of the Manor House as a result of a change to its setting. It concluded that this would cause a low level of less than substantial harm, which would not seriously affect the significance of the designated heritage asset. (Heritage Collective June 2020, paras 4.21 and 5.3; CD 6.07)

2.5 The application was refused on 14 August 2020. My evidence deals with Reason for Refusal no. 2, which concerns heritage. It is given in full below, and I have underlined the key points that my evidence addresses:

“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. Nevertheless, 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 part of the site identified for provision of residential development would extend too far north into the strategic views that are the setting of the nearby Grade II Listed Building (Manor Farm) and the erosion of its rural historic character, resulting in 'less than substantial' harm being caused to the designated heritage asset as described in paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework. It is considered that the illustrative Masterplan has not demonstrated that the proposed quantum of residential development can be accommodated on the site without causing unacceptable detriment to the character and setting of the designated heritage asset.*

“As such, the proposal conflicts with the Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and, in the absence of any public benefits that would outweigh such harm, is contrary to Policy EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019), in particular paragraphs 192, 193 and 196.” (SSDC decision notice, 14 August 2020; CD 9.02)

2.6 The appeal was lodged on 26 January 2021.

3. Understanding the heritage asset

The Site

- 3.1 The Site of the proposed development (the Site) is about 4.3ha on the east side of Combe Hill south-east of the village of Templecombe (Appendix 1; Fig 1). Its highest point is the southern tip on Combe Hill at the entrance to the Manor Farm track, at 100m AOD; the lowest is near the half-way point on the west boundary, where the red line changes course, at 86m AOD. The approximate centre of the Site is at Grid Reference ST 71071 22120.
- 3.2 The Site comprises an area of pasture, several agricultural buildings, and areas of hardstanding. The pasture is part of a field currently subdivided by post-and-wire fences to make grazing compartments for livestock. It is bounded to the north by the rear gardens of houses on High Street and Templars Barton, to the west by Manor Farm and the track leading to it from Combe Hill, and on the other sides by field boundaries.
- 3.3 Nearly all the residential development surrounding the Site to the north, west and south-west dates from the twentieth century. The exceptions are the Manor House, Knights Barn and Manor Barn (the barns converted to dwellings) on Combe Hill west of the Site (Fig 2).
- 3.4 The Manor House is listed Grade II* (NHL Ref. 1056356; Appendix 3) and is a designated heritage asset as defined in Annex 2 of the NPPF. For ease of reference I follow the Appellant in referring to the listed building as the “Manor House” to distinguish it from the modern farm building to its east, now known as “Manor Farm” or “Manor Farm house”.
- 3.5 The Manor House consists of two wings in an L-shaped plan: a domestic wing facing west onto Combe Hill (Fig 3) and a long service wing that extends north-eastwards towards the Site (Fig 4).
- 3.6 There are no Public Rights of Way across the Site but at its northern tip a stile on East Street leads to a Public Right of Way (WN 29/12; the public footpath), which crosses a field east of and outside the Site. The Site is therefore primarily experienced by the public as open land in views north from the public footpath, with a backdrop of farm buildings and some houses, including the east gable wall of the Manor House (Fig 5).
- 3.7 The public footpath enables Manor House to be seen in the context of 360° views across open country, with a wide panorama across the Blackmore Vale to the east (Fig 6).

History

Abbas Combe and Temple Combe

- 3.8 The village of Templecombe is an amalgamation of two distinct early-medieval manorial estates. Both were in existence before 1066 and survived in some form of monastic ownership until the Dissolution.
- 3.9 They were linked by a road running north-south across a combe (a narrow valley between hills). The smaller estate to the north was held by the Benedictine nuns of Shaftesbury Abbey, and consequently known as Abbas Combe. The southern part belonged to Earl Leofwin (or Leofwine), brother of King Harold. It included a small settlement thought to have been centred on the junction of High Street and East Street. Leofwin was killed at Hastings in 1066 and the manor passed into Norman hands: Domesday (1086) records it as one of the many properties acquired by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, half-brother of William I and his regent in England.

The preceptory of the Knights Templar

- 3.10 At some point before 1136 the manor was granted to the Knights Templar. By 1185 the Templars had established a preceptory south of the early settlement, on the eastern slope of Combe Hill; hence the name Temple Combe. Like all monastic foundations, it was endowed with estates from which it derived income for its own upkeep and for its mission — in the case of the Templars, funding crusades.
- 3.11 The Templars held the manor until 1312, when their Order was suppressed and the preceptory was sequestered by the Crown. In 1332 it was granted to another military monastic order, the Hospitallers (Knights of St John). In 1338 the property comprised a house, a richly furnished chapel and two dovecotes, and arable, pasture and meadowland.
- 3.12 A survey in 1514 recorded a chapel, hall, great parlour with chamber over, pantry, brewhouse, bolting house (where wheat was flailed to remove the bran), kitchen, wheat larder, dairy, five chambers (one recently built), a milk house and a study. The preceptory buildings were centred to the east of the existing Manor House, and the road from Temple Abbas probably ran due south to Yenston on a line immediately west of the chapel.
- 3.13 The Valor (valuation survey) of 1535 listed the substantial endowments of the preceptory:
“the manors of Templecombe and Westcombland and estates at Templeton Chudleigh and Clayhanger in Devonshire, Williton, Long Load and Lopen in Somerset and Temple fee in the town of Bristol, and a number of small fees, rents and dues described as Culetts. The gross total income came to £120 10s. 3¼d. ... the net yearly value was £107 16s. 11½d.” (VCH 1999)
- 3.14 The Hospitallers held Temple Combe manor until they too were disbanded and it was once again claimed by the Crown, in 1540. Over the next decades the manor passed in and out of private hands. In 1543 it was bought by Edward, Baron Clinton, and Richard Tyrwhitt; in 1558 it was returned to the Hospitallers; by 1568 it was owned by Richard Duke, reclaiming demesnes he had bought or leased in 1542.

Construction of the Manor House

- 3.15 It was during Duke’s period of ownership that the preceptory was dismantled and the first manor house was built. This first house was eventually replaced by the service wing. Investigations for a *Time Team* television programme in 1995 confirmed that the service wing is the earliest surviving part of the present building. (Harding *et al*, 1995; Somerset HER No. 51258) Dendrochronology of the roof timbers indicates that it was built in 1615–20. The service wing was certainly constructed on the remains of an earlier building and possibly incorporates fabric from its predecessor.
- 3.16 Further research is required to establish the precise historic uses of the service wing but the lack of openings on the north elevation indicates that it was a barn (the window openings on the south elevation are later alterations). Abbas Combe Barn 600m north of the Manor House presents a similarly blank face onto Lily Lane.
- 3.17 The present domestic wing was built shortly after the service wing and was said to have been “much amended” by Richard Duke’s grandson, Charles Brooke. Seventeenth-century features of the interior that have been documented include traces of a spiral staircase, a fireplace with a four-centre arched stone lintel, and beams and interior joinery with various mouldings. (Somerset VAG July 1983; Clarke-Irons 1974) A hatch in the inner face of the chimneystack at first-floor level gives access to a smoking area for bacon or ham.
- 3.18 Brooke died childless in 1610 leaving his estates to Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury. The house then became tenanted as a farmhouse, usually known as Temple Combe Manor Farm or Manor House.

Abbas and Templecombe Manor

- 3.19 During the eighteenth century the lordships of Abbas Combe and Temple Combe manors were combined and eventually inherited in 1812 by Henry William Paget, second Earl of Uxbridge, who became first Marquis of Anglesey in 1815.
- 3.20 Abbas and Templecombe was only a part of Lord Anglesey's extensive landholdings in Somerset and Dorset. He was an absentee landlord, more interested in his military and political career (and a scandalous private life) than the day-to-day management of his estate. Fortunately, he had a capable agent in William Castleman, an attorney from Wimborne, who served the earl diligently from 1804 until his (Castleman's) death in 1844.
- 3.21 The tithe map and apportionment of 1839 confirm Paget as the owner of Templecombe manor. The map shows the Manor House and two large barns to the south (Manor Farm Barn and Knights Barn) loosely enclosing a yard that could have been entered from the turnpike road from the north or the west (Figs 7 and 8). The tithe map also shows the remains of the chapel in a garden east of the house, with a small orchard to the north. The tenant of the whole farm including the plots that make up the proposed development Site was James Stay ("*James May*" in the Heritage Statement is an error; Heritage Collective June 2020; para. 3.6; CD 6.07)
- 3.22 The Paget family estate that had been built up in the eighteenth century was gradually sold off in the nineteenth. Lord Paget disposed of large parts of the estate at increasingly frequent sales between 1825 and 1852. Abbas Combe and Templecombe Manors were sold in 1848 or 1850 to John Bailward of Horsington (the next village north of Templecombe), who was then enlarging and amalgamating his estates, parcel by parcel. The *Victoria County History* records that the Lordship of Templecombe and Horsington manors remained with the Bailward family until at least 1931. (VCH 1999)

Road and rail

- 3.23 The Appellant's Archaeological Desk-based Assessment states that the road through Templecombe once ran along the western boundary of the application Site, and was "*realigned potentially during the Post Medieval period following the construction of the Manor House, potentially to allow the manor house to incorporate the chapel into its grounds.*" (CgMs Heritage November 2019, para. 4.5.3; CD 2.11). Whatever its origins, the awkward dogleg around the Manor House persisted into the twentieth century; the OS published in 1931 is the first to show the present curved alignment (Figs 13 and 14). However, there had been some improvements before this: in 1824 the main road was turnpiked by the Blackmore Vale Trust as part of the route from Castle Cary to Stalbridge. (VCH 1999), and by the 1830s development along the main road was beginning to merge Abbas Combe and Templecombe into one settlement.
- 3.24 Two railways came to Templecombe in the early 1860s. The Salisbury & Yeovil railway opened the Upper or Top station west of the High Street in 1860, and in 1862 the Dorset Central railway opened a line beginning near Cole, in Pitcombe, to a terminus known as the Lower station. The latter was an important stopping point on the Somerset and Dorset line, with an engine shed and goods depot, and became the principal station for Templecombe. The two stations were linked by spur lines but both had closed by 1966. The route of the line to the Lower station can be discerned in the field east of the Site, leading to a bridge on East Street. Public pressure led to the reopening of the Top station in 1983.
- 3.25 The railway stimulated farming in the Templecombe area: "*During the late 1870s c. 10,000 tons of freight was exchanged between the two railway routes every month including milk, butter, cheese, fruit, rabbits, coal, and beer. By 1900 some 200 trains a day used the spur linking the two lines.*" (VCH 1999)

Templecombe Manor House and Farm

- 3.26 It appears from the OS of 1856 that Bailward's purchase of the manor was followed by expansion of the farm operation at Templecombe Manor House: new buildings appeared along the Combe Hill boundary and at right-angles to Knights Barn (Figs 9 and 10). A narrow building closed off the yard from the road (this had a wide door opening — now blocked but visible from the garden of Templars Retreat — so some access could still have been possible). These changes further enclosed the farmstead from the road on the north and west sides.
- 3.27 In 1871 the Manor House (Manor Farm) was tenanted by Henry Lock, then aged 56, who lived there with his wife Eliza, their son Thomas, and one female servant. The farm was indeed a substantial one: Lock is described in the census for that year as "*Farmer of 390 acres employing 8 men and 4 boys*" (Fig 15).
- 3.28 The 1901 OS shows pretty much the same arrangement of farm buildings, except that the building east of the service wing on the site of the Templars chapel appears more consolidated than in the previous survey (Figs 11 and 12). The chapel walls are said to have survived, in an increasingly ruinous state, until c. 1980.
- 3.29 In 1911 the Manor Farm was occupied by William Mitchell, a farmer who had been born in the village, his son Henry (described in the census return for that year as "*deaf and dumb from birth*"), who worked the farm with him, and two female servants (Fig 16). The house is noted as having nine rooms, which corresponds with the size of the domestic wing as it exists today.
- 3.30 The south end of the Manor House appears to have been altered, possibly in the early nineteenth century when a bay and stair may have been removed. The arch of a partially filled opening is evident above the ground-floor window in the south end wall (Fig 17). A projecting porch was present in the early twentieth century but this was replaced by the existing porch before 1960 (compare Figs 18 and 19).
- 3.31 The coursed rubble masonry walls may originally have been rendered, at least on the house, to give a 'polite' finish more in keeping with the refinement of the ashlar window and door openings. The roofs could once have been entirely covered with stone slates. The domestic wing now has a Welsh slate roof; its low pitch and brick chimneystacks indicate that it was rebuilt to suit slates. On the service wing all but four of the eaves courses have been replaced with red clay tiles, perhaps to save money or to lighten the load carried by the roof structure.

Twentieth-century development

- 3.32 The Manor House and Farm remained isolated from the village of Templecombe until the early twentieth century. The first substantial development in its vicinity was the Merthyr Guest Hospital on the opposite side of the High Street, which opened in 1906 (Fig 18). This was founded as a general hospital and became a maternity hospital in 1948. It has recently been converted as part of a residential development scheme.
- 3.33 The OS map of 1931 shows no change at the Manor House, and the orchard still present, but residential development infilling the south side of the High Street between East Street and the Manor House (Figs 13 and 14). There is also the beginning of development with small-scale housing along Back Lane and at Overcombe on Bowden Road, and the appearance of larger detached houses to the south of the Manor House, on the opposite side of Combe Hill.

- 3.34 In the late 1950s the Manor House was owned by Mrs Parfitt, who sold off the property in separate parcels: the Manor House, outbuildings and yard formed one plot, the two barns another, and land to the west (i.e. on the other side of the A357) a third. A new house, the present Manor Farm house, was built 20m to the south of the Manor House in 1960. The orchard may have been cleared at this time; it was gone by 1977. (OS map reproduced in CgMs Heritage November 2019; page 29, Plate 9; CD 2.11)
- 3.35 It must be assumed that this is the point at which the Manor House became a separate residence and its direct functional connection to Manor Farm ended. The slurry pit plateau and large metal barns south-east of the house were constructed for the new farmer before 2000. Access to the new Manor Farm house and metal barns is via a track along the western boundary that opens onto Combe Hill at the south-west tip of the Site.
- 3.36 Other residential development took place north of the Manor House in the triangle enclosed by the realignment of the A357: a pair of semi-detached brick houses (The Dees), a bungalow (No. 39 High Street) and Temple View. Templars Retreat was built by 2001, its garden being on the former roadway in front of the Manor House service wing (Fig 20). Templars Barton off the A357 to the north of the Manor House and detached houses to the south have gradually ended the isolation of the Manor House from the rest of the village.
- 3.37 In recent decades residential development in Templecombe has been concentrated east of the A357 and south-west of the village, on either side of Bowden Road. The urban grain is moderately dense along the High Street but looser around Bowden Road, where a distinctly suburban character has been established by development largely consisting of bungalows and two-storey houses arranged in pairs or short terraces.

Assessment of significance

- 3.38 The proposed development has the potential to affect the significance of Manor Farm, not directly — no changes are proposed to the fabric of the listed building or within its curtilage — but through changes to its setting.
- 3.39 Advice on setting emphasises that conservation decisions should be based on a proportionate assessment of the particular significance of a heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, including by development affecting its setting. (HE 2017 para. 19; 11.11; NPPF para. 189; CD 11.01). In this case, the Site is part of the setting of a highly-graded designated heritage asset, a Grade II* listed manor house with ancient origins as a Templar preceptory. This sensitive context warrants a detailed examination of significance.
- 3.40 In accordance with Steps 1 and 2 of the GPA3 methodology, this section provides my assessment of the significance the heritage asset using the NPPF definitions. I then assess the contribution made by the Site to significance, as part of the setting of the asset.

What is 'significance'?

- 3.41 Significance underpins the definition of a 'heritage asset' in Annex 2 of the NPPF:
- A building, monument, site, place, area or landscape identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions, because of its heritage interest. Heritage assets include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority (including local listing).*

3.42 Annex 2 of the NPPF also contains the following definition of significance:

Significance (for heritage policy): *The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.*

Significance usually derives from a mix of the types of interest mentioned in the NPPF.

3.43 HE's *Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance* (2008; CD 11.09) contains a methodology for assessing significance, using slightly different terms. It refers to evidential, historical and aesthetic values that are broadly equivalent to the NPPF types of interest.

Levels of significance

3.44 Features or aspects of a site that confer significance may be categorised as follows:

High significance: makes an important specific contribution to the special interest of a site

Moderate significance: makes a specific contribution to the special interest of a site

Low significance: makes a general contribution to the interest of the site

Neutral: makes no contribution to special interest, but does not detract

Detracts: obscures or harms significance.

3.45 Understanding significance helps those responsible for sites that form part of the settings of heritage assets to develop them in ways that preserve, enhance or better reveal the special interest, character or cultural value of the assets.

Significance of the designated heritage asset

Designation

3.46 The significance of Manor Farm is officially recognised by its inclusion in the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, at Grade II*. This confirms that it is a particularly important building of more than special interest; only 5.8% of listed buildings are Grade II*.

Types of interest

3.47 The archaeological interest of the Manor House has been described elsewhere and is well attested in the Appellant's Archaeological Desk Based Assessment. (CgMs Heritage November 2019; CD 2.11) In this section I deal with the other types of interest mentioned in the NPPF, in this order: historic, architectural, and artistic.

The listed building

3.48 The Manor House is situated on the main road through the village of Templecombe, at the top of a steep rise and opposite the junction with Bowden Road, another ancient route. It has a strong visual connection with both highways and the green opposite, where there is a recently-restored historic well, a local landmark. The presence of the house has also influenced the alignment of the road on two occasions in the past. This prominent position, formerly isolated from the rest of Templecombe and commanding extensive views westward over the Blackmore Vale, indicates the Manor House's high status and contributes to its historic interest.

- 3.49 The site of the Manor House is associated with notable people and institutions dating back to before the Conquest. These give it a specific historical context that is a major contributor to its significance. The first, early-medieval development of the Manor House site as a preceptory by the Knights Templar has left archaeological remains and also evidence of reused material from their buildings worked into the fabric of the existing house. These confer high historic interest.
- 3.50 The farmstead arrangement of the Manor House, Manor Farm Barn and Knights Barn, evident on the tithe map of 1839 but probably much older, is also of historic interest. The interrelationship of three large barns (including the service wing of the Manor House) indicates the scale of the farming operation that was run from the Manor House, originating in the medieval period and sustained into the second half of the twentieth century. The farm retains the name “Manor Farm” and is still in active agricultural use, albeit under different ownership.
- 3.51 The L-shaped format of the building also contributes to its historic interest as it underlines the dual purpose of the Manor House as a dwelling and as a working agricultural building. The early sixteenth-century origins of the service wing have been confirmed by dendrochronological analysis of the roof timbers. The domestic wing is a well-preserved double-pile house of the seventeenth century; the fact that it replaced an earlier house partly on the same footprint reflects an elevation in the status of the building and its owners in the period of its construction.
- 3.52 Some changes, notably to the roof coverings and chimneys, are readable on the exterior. I have not had access to the interior but published records make it clear that there are features of high historic interest inside the building. These include a remnant spiral stair, stone fireplace and early joinery. In addition to their intrinsic interest, they are important evidence of incremental change by successive owners, which further contributes to the historic interest.
- 3.53 The Manor House has high architectural interest as a well-preserved seventeenth-century manor house built in local stone. The wall masonry is coursed rubble and the details are in finely-worked ashlar. The distinct status and functions of the two wings are expressed in their architecture, particularly in the public-facing elevations (Figs 3 and 4). The long north elevation of the service wing, a cliff face of unrelieved masonry punctuated by one small ground-floor window, has a monumental quality that expresses the building’s functional and secure character. The house front has a domestic character conferred by mullioned windows and a porch; the latter is a late twentieth-century addition, designed to suit the character of the host building. The garden elevations have a still more open character, and important features such as a four-centre arched door opening. Alterations including a lean-to extension under a catslide roof and the addition of windows to the south elevation of the service wing are in keeping with the vernacular character of that part of the building (Figs 21–23). These characteristics give the Manor House great architectural interest.
- 3.54 The picturesque qualities of the Manor House are particularly evident in views from the garden, where weathered stone and undulating rooflines are the backdrop to an attractive green space containing potentially significant remnants of earlier structures, but the artistic interest of the Manor House cannot be definitively described without the benefit of a visit to the interior. Apart from the house’s incidental appearance in the postcard view reproduced at Fig 18, no historic topographical views or literary descriptions have been discovered. Its artistic interest cannot be properly assessed at this point.

- 3.55 Even so, the combined value of the archaeological, historic and architectural interest of the Manor House give it overall **high significance**, and this is reflected in the Grade II* listing — a designation that was conferred, it is worth noting, without the Inspector’s having seen the interior.

The setting of the listed building

- 3.56 My assessment of the Site’s contribution to the significance of the Grade II*-listed Manor House is based on guidance in the NPPF, the NPPG, *Conservation Principles*, and GPA3. Relevant extracts from these are included in Appendix 4 paras. A4.15–24.
- 3.57 The immediate setting of the Manor House consists of the Manor House garden, the A357 (High Street and Combe Hill) and the adjoining houses and gardens (Templars Retreat, Manor Farm, Knights Barn, and Manor Barn) that were once part of, or built upon, the Manor House farmstead and garden.
- 3.58 The intermediate setting is in two distinct parts. One is the twentieth-century development, principally small-scale suburban housing, on the High Street and Bowden Road west and north-west of the Manor House. The other is the Site of the proposed development to the east of the listed building: the track and hardstanding, the modern farm buildings, and the undeveloped open farmland of the field.
- 3.59 The wider setting consists of the village of Templecombe and the landscape of the Blackmore Vale beyond the Site, including the public footpath across the field that adjoins the west boundary of the Site. The entrance to the footpath via the stile on East Street, and the railway bridge 215m to the east, where East Street becomes Temple Lane, are also part of the wider setting.

The contribution of setting to the significance of the listed building

The immediate setting

- 3.60 The Manor House garden preserves open space in the area of the former farmyard. Although this is much reduced and separated from the barns of the former farmstead it enables some understanding of the historic use and arrangement of the place. It permits the south and west elevations of the Manor House to be appreciated in a tranquil green setting appropriate for a building of such high significance. It makes a **moderate positive contribution to the significance of the listed building**.
- 3.61 The main road is a historic route, a former turnpike road, and the link between the Manor House and the historic centre of Templecombe. Its route past the Manor House has changed, from straight past the east side in the medieval period, to a dogleg along the front of the service wing in the sixteenth century — probably to preserve the Manor House’s relationship to the Templars’ chapel — to the present gentle curve to accommodate motorised traffic. It has an important functional relationship to the Manor House, associated with historic patterns of use.
- 3.62 The road also gives public access to the Manor House and affords views of it from several angles, in which the age and architectural quality of the listed building can be appreciated. Against these positive attributes that contribute to the significance of the heritage asset must be set the disruptive noise, vibration, night-time lights and busyness of a main road, which detract from the significance of the Manor House. The **overall contribution of the road to the significance of the heritage asset is therefore low to moderate**.

- 3.63 Manor Farm Barn and Knights Barn, now in residential use, preserve the relationship between the Manor House and its former farm buildings. This evidence of the arrangement of the former farmstead is a tangible reminder of historic patterns of use. These attributes make a high positive contribution to the significance of the listed building; that contribution is somewhat reduced by the separation of the properties with walls, hedges and fences that largely block the views between them. Thus the barns overall make a **moderate positive contribution to the significance of the listed building**.
- 3.64 The garden of Templars Retreat, a recently-built house north of the Manor House, lies along the north elevation of the service wing on the former turnpike road. Its walls contain at least two blocked openings that are evidence of previous routes to and around the service wing, used when the Manor House was a working farmhouse directly connected to the turnpike road and the barns (Fig 24). The garden preserves open space in front of the service wing, and provides an attractive foreground in views of the listed building (Fig 4). It makes a **moderate positive contribution to the significance of the listed building**.
- 3.65 Manor Farm house and its associated farm buildings occupy land that was formerly part of the Manor House farm and garden. They are of no architectural or historic interest, although they may be regarded as the modern equivalents of the Manor House and historic barns, an extension of the Tudor farm complex that continues the historic agricultural use of the listed building's setting. To that extent, they make a **low positive contribution to its significance**.

The intermediate setting: outside the Site

- 3.66 The intermediate setting that is not part of the Site is largely late twentieth-century development of small-scale housing. None of it approaches the quality or interest of the Manor House, and the loss of open country must be counted as a negative attribute. An exception is the Edwardian Merthyr Guest Hospital, which has some historic and architectural interest in its own right. It was the first modern development of any scale at this end of the village, and marked the beginning of the end of the Manor House's isolation from the rest of Templecombe, although from a respectful distance and a similarly elevated and separate site. Its recent restoration as part of the Casterbridge Place development has enhanced its own significance. It makes a **minor positive contribution to the significance** of the listed building. Overall, however, the intermediate setting outside the Site makes a **neutral contribution to the significance of the listed building**.

The intermediate setting: the Site

- 3.67 The east end of the Manor House service wing is a tall gable wall of plain rubble masonry (Fig 25). The topography of the Site, on the gently sloping side of the Blackmore Vale, ensures that the distinctive shape of the gable wall, and in some views the roofs of the Manor House, are visible from some distance (Figs 26 and 27). Despite encroaching development and the fence around Manor Farm house that conceals the lower part, the Manor House remains an imposing structure and a prominent feature in the view.
- 3.68 The loss of open farmland to suburbia west of the A357, and the appearance of residential development on either side of the Manor House, have ended the isolation of the listed building and diminished its prominence. This makes the view between the Manor House and the open undeveloped farmland to its east all the more important, as it preserves the last element of the historic agricultural context for the listed building. It also preserves the visual prominence of the Manor house, an important indicator of its status.

- 3.69 Another indication of status is the way in which the Manor House turns its face towards the road, addressing the junction with the historic route of Bowden Road. This ‘public face’ asserts the higher status of the domestic quarters in relation to the working buildings of the farm — the service wing and the barns.
- 3.70 A functional relationship between a heritage asset and its setting is one of the attributes that might contribute to significance, listed in the GPA3 Assessment Step 2 Checklist. (HE 2015, p. 11; CD 11.11)
- 3.71 The Manor House is no longer a working farmhouse, but the functional relationship does not have to be current in order to contribute to significance; the Site remains in agricultural use and continues to illustrate a historic functional relationship between the listed building and its former farmland.
- 3.72 Following the advice in GPA3 on non-visual aspects of setting, I consider that factors associated with the Site such as the ability to appreciate seasonal changes and activities on the land, birdsong, breeze, scents and night-time darkness all contribute to the significance of the listed building: they sustain the rural setting that provides a context for the Manor House as an isolated historic building that was once at the centre of a working farm. (HE 2017, Step 2 checklist, page 11| CD 11.11)
- 3.73 The Site is not an especially quiet spot because of traffic on the A357 but this is background hum. Most of the time the undeveloped open farmland provides a tranquil setting that enhances the significance of the heritage asset by emphasising its rural setting at the edge of the village. The quality of the light is natural, subject to seasonal and diurnal changes that accompany the natural rhythms of the agricultural year. (HE 2017, paras. 26, 31| CD 11.11) On my site visit I saw sheep and lambs on the fields nearest the Manor House (Fig 26), and the Spring birdsong was very noticeable to a visiting city-dweller.
- 3.74 The way in which the Site has influenced the historic relationship between places is another intangible contributor to significance. GPA3 advises us to consider the history of the Site, and degree of change over time.
- 3.75 The Appellant’s Heritage Statement states that “*The setting of Manor House has been entirely altered during the last 150 years*” (Heritage Collective June 2020, para 3.18; CD 6.07) then contradicts this by describing the Site as “*largely undeveloped farmland ... which it has always been*”. (para 3.23) Apart from the late twentieth-century Manor Farm house and barns, there has never been any building on the Site, which retains its essential historic character — indeed, it is the last remaining piece of undeveloped open farmland at the south-eastern edge of the village.
- 3.76 The Heritage Statement says, “*While there may be no specific historic associations with this part of the building’s setting ...*” (Heritage Collective June 2020, para. 3.20; CD 6.07) This contradicts the Statement’s discussion of the historic map sequence. The undeveloped open farmland of the Site is the last link between the listed building and its history as a working farmhouse in an agricultural setting. The undeveloped open farmland of the Site has a properly rural character, which ensures that the historic interrelationship of the listed building and the land remains legible.
- 3.77 The way in which Manor Farm is cultivated has changed. The orchard shown on the tithe map of 1839 — and which survived until at least 1928 — has been grubbed up, the plateau was formed to contain slurry pits, and large metal barns were introduced. In 2001 the field east of the Manor House, including part of the Site, was under the plough (Fig 28) and in 2008 the farm was being operated as a dairy unit (SSDC October 2008; page 17, para 8.4; CD 11.19).

- 3.78 This is not surprising: farmers have always adopted new crops and methods, and farming practices can be expected to evolve. Even apparently “wild” or “natural” English landscapes are managed to some extent and will therefore change over time. These changes show that the Site remains a working agricultural landscape, which reinforces its historic link to the Manor House. They are not detrimental to significance — in fact, they enhance it.
- 3.79 As evidence of the long historical connection between the Manor House and its former farmland, and as the last link between the designated heritage asset and its original setting, the Site makes an important contribution to significance.
- 3.80 For all these reasons, the Site makes **a fundamental and vital contribution to the high significance of the heritage asset** as part of its setting.

The wider setting

- 3.81 A clear sequence of historic development from north to south is discernible in old maps of Templecombe. Residential properties are tightly clustered around the church to the north; shopfronts give way to houses on the continuous frontage of the High Street as it proceeds south; then there is the isolation and more spacious configuration of the Manor House and barns within open farmland, sustained well into the twentieth century. Latterly, development has been concentrated west of the A357. The undeveloped nature of the Site is a visual and functional reminder of the historic pattern of development, the interdependence of the Manor House and its surrounding farmland, and the community’s dependence on agriculture.
- 3.82 The undeveloped open farmland of the Site permits the listed building to be appreciated from the public footpath across the field east of the Site. The gable wall is visible from every part of the footpath, as far as the first field boundary (Fig 29)
- 3.83 The public footpath is a quiet route, where natural sounds such as birdsong can be appreciated. It is reached via steps up a hedge bank, and a stile, at the point at which East Street changes from a village street of small houses to a rural lane. This transition from village to undeveloped open farmland emphasises the historic agricultural setting of the listed building. The footpath enables the public to experience directly the diurnal and seasonal rhythms, activities, sounds and smells of a working agricultural landscape – all of which continue to illustrate the historic functional relationship between the listed building and its setting.
- 3.84 The wider setting also links the open, undeveloped farmland of the Site to the open, undeveloped farmland of the Blackmore Vale in an uninterrupted sequence of cultivated fields that stretches for nearly six miles north-eastwards to the western edge of Gillingham. The Manor House and the preceptory before it were located to command this sweeping view across the Vale, and from the footpath a sense of continuous physical and temporal connection between the Manor House and the agricultural landscape of Somerset and Dorset is almost palpable. By connecting the listed building to this wider landscape, the Site underlines the asset’s intangible associations with its surroundings.
- 3.85 For these reasons the wider setting makes a **major positive contribution to the significance of the designated heritage asset**.

- 3.86 **Overall contribution of the Site to the significance of the designate heritage asset**
- Fundamental to the significance of Templecombe Manor House is the survival of the undeveloped open farmland character of the Site as part of the setting. The field has been cultivated in association with the buildings at the Manor House site since the establishment of the Templar preceptory. There is no evidence that it has ever been built upon, east of the twelfth-century chapel and the late twentieth-century plateau. As the last surviving link between the Manor House and farming, it provides the historic context for the listed building and the rest of the former farmstead. It is the part of the setting that most closely resembles the setting at the time the Manor House was built. It both *“contributes to the significance of the heritage asset [and] to the ability to appreciate that significance”*. (HE 2017 para. 9) As the working agricultural landscape part of the setting, , and as the last link between the designated heritage asset and its original setting, the Site makes **a fundamental and vital contribution to the significance of the designated heritage asset that is the Grade II* listed building.**

4. The proposals and their impact on significance

The proposals

- 4.1 It is proposed to remove the existing metal barns and slurry pit plateau. Their location would become the centre of a development covering most of the southern part of the Site with new houses, roads and associated infrastructure. Up to 60 houses would be arranged in cul-de-sacs off a spine road entered at the Manor Farm entrance on Combe Hill.
- 4.2 The Site as a whole covers about 4.3ha and the built-up area would be about 1.7ha, or about 40% of the Site. The remaining 2.6ha would be landscaped as areas of Green Infrastructure. This includes “*landscape buffers, public open space, landscape planting, Community Woodland, Sustainable Urban Drainage System and footpaths*”. (Parameter Plan dwg. no. 19-025 600 Rev C; CD 6.05) The Northern part of the Site, including the north-west section nearest the Manor House, would become “*managed Public Open Space*”. (Illustrative Masterplan Dwg. No.19-025 Sk01 Rev H; CD 10.01) There would be extensive boundary planting with trees and hedges, as well as trees along the new roads and within the Public Open Space.
- 4.3 The fact that the application is in outline in such a sensitive location makes it particularly important to establish development parameters that will ensure that the scheme can be delivered without causing an unacceptable level of harm to the heritage asset.

Impact on the significance of the designated heritage asset

- 4.4 Step 3 of the Historic England GPA3 methodology is to identify the effects a development may have on setting and to evaluate the resultant degree of harm or benefit to the significance of the heritage asset. The headings below are based on the GPA3 Step 3 checklist (HE 2017, para. 32 and page 13; CD 11.11). Not all the items in the checklist are relevant to this application (for example, as it is an outline application it is not possible to comment in detail on the form and appearance of the development). Therefore the most relevant headings have been selected or adapted, to suit this particular case.

Location and siting: proximity and orientation

- 4.5 The nearest built form would be approximately 10m from the listed building, but the character and appearance of the entire Site would be altered by the proposed development. The topography of the Site means that the new housing would be conspicuous in the view from all points along the public footpath. It would obtrude into every view of the Manor House from the field and the wider landscape. This would cause harm to the significance of the listed building by urbanising its setting.

Topography: key views

- 4.6 A “*Massing and visual impact study*” in The Appellant’s Design & Access Statement Addendum identifies the key views requested by HE and the Council’s Conservation Officer (CO) in pre-application consultation. It describes how the proposals have been changed in response to concerns expressed by HE and the CO, and provides visualisations of the proposed development from four agreed viewpoints outside the proposed built-up area. (Origin 3 June 2020, pages 10-17; CD 6.03) The viewpoints within the field east of the Site are at each end of the footpath, and at the East Street railway bridge.

- 4.7 The Heritage Statement identifies entirely different key views. First, *“There are long views from the west (from Bowden Road) toward the Manor House which provide the opportunity for an appreciation of the building, with the site forming a backdrop to this view, allowing views toward the horizon and reinforcing the rural character beyond the built form.”* (Heritage Collective June 2020. para. 3.24; CD 6.07) Then: *“Key views of Manor House are considered to be from Combe Hill where the front elevation of the property can be appreciated (Figure 8)”* (Heritage Collective June 2020, para 4.6).
- 4.8 On my site visit I could not see the Site from Bowden Road; as Figure 8 in the Heritage Statement demonstrates, the Manor House fills the view entirely. However, since I agree with the Heritage Statement that there would be no impact on significance through any change appreciable from this part of the setting, I propose to discuss only the impact on the key views identified in the DAS Addendum, towards the Manor House from the east.
- 4.9 Unfortunately, the Heritage Statement’s analysis of the effect of topography on views towards the Manor House from the east is also confusing: *“The topography of the land slopes downwards to the east of the site with a notable change in levels between Manor Farm (behind the Manor House) and the remainder of the application site. This will help to mitigate the visibility of the new development from the surrounding area.”* Surely the opposite is true, and the new houses would appear more dominant when viewed from lower ground to the east of the Site? Certainly, in views looking towards the Manor House from the public footpath, the new development will be very visible.
- 4.10 The Heritage Statement then says that a site visit undertaken in May 2020 confirmed that: *“the topography prohibits clear and meaningful views of the heritage asset.”* (Heritage Collective June 2020. para. 4.5| CD 6.07) This contradicts the massing and visual impacts study in the DAS Addendum, which shows the proposed development *“allowing views of the Listed Building to be obtained”*. (Origin 3, June 2020, page 16; CD 6.03) In any case, I disagree with the Heritage Statement: there are clear and meaningful views of the Manor House from all the key views identified by HE and the CO (and see my Figs 25–27 and 29).
- 4.11 At present, the north-west part of the Site closest to the Manor House opens out to a panoramic view across the Blackmore Vale, and the open undeveloped nature of the Site as a whole permits the Manor House to be seen in exactly the kinds of varied views referred to in GPA3: *“static or dynamic, long, short or of lateral spread, [including] a variety of views of, from, across, or including [the] asset”*. (HE 2017, page 6 para. 10| CD 11.11) The proposed development would substantially limit the variety and availability of views of the listed building. Views of the listed building would be reduced to glimpses between houses in the north and north-eastern parts within the proposed built-up area. This loss of visibility of the heritage asset would limit the potential to appreciate its significance, and therefore cause harm to its significance.
- 4.12 The visualisations of the key views in the DAS Addendum show how, from areas outside the Site that are accessible to the public, the new houses would obtrude into the view. (Origin 3, June 2020, pages 12–17; CD 6.03) This would be detrimental to the dynamic views and views of lateral spread identified in GPA3 as contributing to significance. The new houses would be visible from every viewpoint. There would no longer be any point on the public footpath from which to see the Manor House in its historic relationship with undeveloped open farmland extending continuously across the Blackmore Vale, and this change would cause harm to its significance.

Physical or visual isolation of the asset

- 4.13 The Templar preceptory and the Manor House that succeeded it were buildings of the highest status in the locality, and their isolated situation reinforced their importance. A venerated site, a skyline location commanding a view of its own extensive property, and distinct separation from lesser buildings in the village, all gave the Manor House dignity and grandeur. Its isolation was maintained into the twentieth century, but was gradually eroded in the post-war period. Any further erosion of its isolation would cause harm to the significance of the listed building.
- 4.14 The proposed introduction of up to 60 houses into its setting would further reduce the physical isolation of the Manor House and increase the sense of its absorption into the modern growth of Templecombe.
- 4.15 the Heritage Statement misses this point when it states: *“The location of the proposed development would not physically or visually isolate the heritage asset. It will still be considered as part of the built [form] of the village when seen from Combe Hill.”* (para 4.9) In my opinion, its having become *“part of the built form of the village”* has diminished the significance of the Manor House. Development that further encroaches upon the setting of the listed building can only cause further harm to this aspect of its significance.

Changes to ownership arrangements

- 4.16 From at least the early seventeenth century until c. 1960 the Manor House was the centre of a substantial farm. The Heritage Statement suggests that its significance has been *“diluted by ... the use of the building for residential purposes rather than as a farmstead”*. (Heritage Collective June 2020, para. 3.23) However, a current functional relationship is only one of the attributes of setting that might contribute to significance in the GPA3 Assessment Step 2 Checklist. (HE 2017, p. 11) What is important here is that the undeveloped open farmland of the Site retains its agricultural character and thus continues to illustrate the historic relationship between the listed building and its surroundings. The proposed change to the agricultural character of the Site would diminish that illustrative value, and cause harm to the significance of the listed building.

Change to built surroundings and spaces

- 4.17 The proposals include the removal of the existing metal barns and other farm buildings (Manor Farm house would be retained) and their replacement by up to 60 two-storey houses in various configurations: detached, in semi-detached pairs and in short terraces of three houses. The appearance of the built-up part of the Site would change from that of a working farm with hardstanding and buildings associated with continuing agricultural use, to that of a suburban housing development.
- 4.18 The existing metal barns are of no historic or architectural interest but they make a small contribution to significance as evidence of continuing agricultural activity on the Site. Their replacement with residential buildings would therefore harm significance.

Introduction of movement or activity; noise, light

- 4.19 Non-visual and intangible aspects of the setting that contribute to the significance of the heritage asset include the ability to appreciate seasonal changes and activities on the land, birdsong, breeze, scents and night-time darkness. The proposed development would introduce the activity of a modern suburb into what is currently a tranquil rural setting. Noise will be generated by cars and delivery vans, and by people going about their business; reverberation off hard surfaces will give a different quality to the soundscape. Street lighting will be required, and there will be light spill from the private properties. These changes would damage the intangible associations between the Site and the heritage asset, and therefore cause harm to significance.

4.20 In my view the Appellant’s Heritage Statement does not adequately consider how intangible qualities — particularly the tranquillity of the undeveloped open farmland — contribute to our experience of the asset. (Heritage Collective June 2020, page 34 para. 4.16; CD 6.07). The proposed development would replace the diurnal and seasonal rhythms of the existing agricultural use with the year-round activity of a residential suburb. This would change fundamentally the way in which the heritage asset would be experienced and would cause harm to significance by undermining the historic connection between the asset and its agricultural setting.

Changes to communications / accessibility

4.21 The new housing would be arranged around new roads. These will require regrading, hard surfaces with painted lines, kerbs and pavements, visibility splays at junctions, warning signs, lighting etc. The introduction of hard landscape, signage and street furniture would urbanise much of the Site — a change of character that would cause harm to the significance of the listed building.

Changes to land use, land cover, tree cover

4.22 It is proposed to create “*managed public open space*” in the north-west part of the Site nearest to the listed building. The change of use would fail to preserve the historic connection between the Manor House and its working agricultural setting, and would therefore diminish the Site’s contribution to the significance of the listed building.

4.23 In my view, the Appellant’s Heritage Statement underplays the significance of the relationship between the Manor House and its agricultural setting. It does not acknowledge how the Site has maintained its historic character as working farmland since the medieval period, and how this contributes to the significance of the Manor House as the centre of a historic farmstead. It does not acknowledge that the loss of this setting, through development with housing and transformation into landscaped amenity space, will sever the last link between the listed building and its original setting.

4.24 Absence of built form alone would not preserve the setting of the listed building. The Heritage Statement refers to the preservation of a “*rural buffer*” around Manor Farm. (Heritage Collective June 2020, para. 4.2; CD 6.07) It is not clear what exactly this refers to, but the Illustrative Masterplan (Dwg. No.19-025 Sk01 Rev H; CD 10.01) shows a “Manor Green” replacing the field in the northern part of the site.

4.25 The underlying topography would be substantially altered by excavation and infilling (Origin 3 Levels Parameter Plan dwg. no. 19-025 610; CD 10.02). The green would be landscaped with trees and shrubs. Sinuous new footpaths would lead from East Street to the new houses, skirting two new swales and two new sustainable drainage basins on the lower part of the Site. This proposed public open space would be a very different kind of landscape to the existing pasture, managed in a very different way.

4.26 In general, it would be suburban amenity space with a park-like landscape design. Presumably the management company responsible for its upkeep would have to maintain it with public health and safety in mind (including, for example, hard surfacing to the footpaths and warning signs near any bodies of water).

- 4.27 In particular, the landscape shown on the masterplan would introduce elements that are alien to the historic agricultural landscape setting of the listed building. Grass, trees and shrubs would replace pasture or crops, and there would be *“Tree planting used to frame view toward the Manor House”*. (Origin 3 June 2020, page 13; CD 6.03) The Heritage Statement describes this type of soft landscaping as beneficial: *“There will be a substantial amount of replanting including a community woodland to the north east of the application site and this will help to reinforce the rural character....”* (Heritage Collective June 2020. para. 4.16) I disagree: the result of planting trees to “frame views” and woodland to provide “rural character” would be contrary to the genuine existing character of the historic agricultural landscape, which needs to be understood in a more nuanced way.
- 4.28 It is not correct to describe the landscape proposals as *“replanting”*, when in fact they would introduce a substantial amount of new planting. Trees are not abundant in this historic agricultural landscape. There are no trees within the field containing the Site, and only one on its eastern boundary, more than 200m to the east of the Site. Although there are a few trees within hedgerow boundaries, field trees are rare in the wider landscape of the Blackmore Vale. The proposed buffer planting of trees and shrubs along the eastern and southern Site boundaries, and the trees arranged in groups and individually around “Manor Green” on the illustrative masterplan, would introduce an entirely new characteristic into the landscape. This would not *“reinforce the rural character”* so much as fundamentally alter it.
- 4.29 The existing public footpath east of the site is straight — as one might expect, given that it crosses a working farm. A straight line is the most direct route, and the one that causes least loss of productive land or disruption to farming operations. The sinuous paths proposed in the Masterplan would introduce a new feature into the landscape, one which is contrary to the genuine character of the existing historic agricultural setting.
- 4.30 The balancing swales and sustainable drainage basins would introduce still more alien features into the historic landscape.
- 4.31 Above all, the agricultural use of the land would be lost. The undeveloped open farmland character of the Site makes a fundamental and vital contribution to the significance of the listed building because the properly rural appearance and use of the place illustrates the historic relationship between the Manor House and its agricultural setting. The proposals would change the character of the undeveloped part of the Site from farmland to designed parkland, and that illustrative value would be lost, fundamentally diminishing the contribution that the Site makes to the significance of the listed building.

Level of harm to significance

The proposals

- 4.32 The NPPG advises that:
- “Where potential harm to designated heritage assets is identified, it needs to be categorised as either less than substantial harm or substantial harm [...] Within each category of harm (which category applies should be explicitly identified), the extent of the harm may vary and should be clearly articulated.”* (Para. 018 Reference ID: 18a-018-20190723)
- 4.33 For the reasons I have set out above (paras. 4.4–4.31), I consider that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm (the term used in the NPPF) to the significance of the designated heritage asset that is Templecombe Manor House, a Grade II* listed building. The harm would be **at the moderate to high end of the ‘less than substantial’ scale of harm.**

Cumulative change

4.34 The NPPG also advises:

“When assessing any application which may affect the setting of a heritage asset, local planning authorities may need to consider the implications of cumulative change.”
(Paragraph: 013 Reference ID: 18a-013-20190723)

4.35 GPA 3 advises that:

“Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development affecting its setting, to accord with NPPF policies consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change will further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset. Negative change could include severing the last link between an asset and its original setting “ (HE 2017, page 4)

4.36 Since the Merthyr Guest Hospital was built at the start of the twentieth century, development around the Site and close to the Manor House has been steady and relentless. The sale of the barns as separate building plots in the 1960s disassembled the farmstead and introduced the loose urban grain of detached houses in generous gardens, south of the Manor House. The 1980s produced Templars Barton. Nos. 7–17 East Street, opposite the stile, were built between 2001 and 2006. The intermediate setting of the Manor House is now filled by relatively recent housing, except at the Site.

4.37 There is more to come: outline planning permission for two houses on Combe Hill south of the Site, was granted on 16 July 2019 (Ref. 18/03222/OUT)

4.38 These existing and approved developments create a context of cumulative change in which the additional change now proposed should be assessed for its impact on significance.

4.39 The scale of the proposed development, at up to 60 houses, would be a substantial addition to Templecombe in one of its most sensitive edge locations. It would encroach upon the Manor House in views from the east. It would reduce the open space of the intermediate setting. The view towards the Manor house would change from a wide lateral view of an agricultural field, to a view closely framed by a residential street.

4.40 The changes to the parts of the Site not built upon would change it from productive farmland to suburban amenity space, and so far alter its character as to obliterate its contribution to the significance of the Manor House.

4.41 The Site is the last link between the listed building and its original setting. The proposed development would permanently sever that link, ending an agricultural use that has connected the Manor House to this part of its setting since the twelfth century.

4.42 I therefore consider that the effect of cumulative change including the proposed development would be to cause **harm at the moderate to high end of the ‘less than substantial’ scale of harm.**

Pre-application advice

Historic England

4.43 Historic England are the Government's expert adviser on England's heritage. They have a statutory role in the planning system and their views should be accorded great weight in planning decisions. In general, I agree with the advice they provided in their letters to SSDC (HE 11 February 2020, 22 April 2020 and 16 July 2020; Appendix 5).

- 4.44 The first two letters expressed concern about the potential impact of earlier schemes so I have noted only the remarks on the relationship between the listed building and the Site, and the contribution that the Site makes to the significance of the designated heritage asset as part of its setting:
- “The complex has sat outside the boundaries of the Templecombe settlement until the expansion of the village during the 20th century. During this period, the green rural setting was significantly eroded by modern development. The last link held by the property to the rural landscape is the north-west corner of the application site. It provides views down the valley to the surrounding countryside. Although there is a significant hedge along the boundary of the site, this landscape still forms a clear element of the experience and appreciation of the asset, the last vestiges of its rural setting and therefore due to its rarity holds greater value in terms of the contribution it makes to the significance of the asset.”* (HE 11 February 2020, p. 2; CD 3.09; my Appendix 5)
- 4.45 The same letter refers to the north-west corner of the Site as *“the last section of the grade II* listed Manor House’s rural significance. This is a key component in [understanding] the former position and relationship of the historic complex with its former surrounding landscape.”*
- 4.46 My assessment of the contribution that the Site makes to the significance of the designated heritage asset as part of its setting chimes with HE’s advice, although I do not draw the same distinction between the *“north-west corner”* and the rest of the Site; in my view the entire Site contributes to the significance of the Manor House, as part of its intermediate setting and as its link to the wider setting of the Blackmore Vale.
- 4.47 In their next letter, HE remarked on *“the conspicuous nature of [the] grade II* listed Manor”* in views from the Site (HE 22 April 2020, page 2; CD 5.03; my Appendix 5).
- 4.48 The Appellant amended the scheme, eventually reducing the number of houses to the current maximum of 60. HE’s third letter acknowledges that: *“The level of harm has been substantially reduced by the most recent amendments”* and notes that *“The residual harm will need to be considered by the council as part of their wider planning balance set out under Para 196, NPPF.”* (HE 16 July 2020. Pages 1–2; CD 7.04; my Appendix 5)
- 4.49 The Appellant’s planning advisers claim that *“The consultation responses that have been received from statutory consultees confirm that highways and heritage issues have been satisfactorily resolved.”* (Letter Origin 3 to SSDC 24 July 2020, page 1; CD 8.03) I do not see that this can be the case, since HE’s most recent advice is that the development would cause *“residual harm”* (HE 16 July 2020 p. 1; CD 7.04; my Appendix 5)

The NPPF

- 4.50 NPPF para. 193 states:
- “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”* The Manor House is a highly graded heritage asset (Grade II*) and consequently great weight should be attached to its conservation.

- 4.51 NPPF para. 196: *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”* I have identified that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building through change to its setting. The harm would be in the moderate to high end of that scale of harm. It is for others to weigh the harm against the public benefits of the proposal. However, it is worth noting that no changes are proposed to the designated heritage asset (it is outside the proposed development Site), and there is no apparent current threat to its future as designated heritage asset.
- 4.52 It should also be noted that the development proposals do not offer any heritage benefits; the proposed development will not enhance or better reveal the significance of the Manor House in any way, but only harm it.

The Council’s Reason for Refusal no. 2

- 4.53 The Council’s Reason for Refusal no. 2 concerned heritage. The South Somerset Local Plan (2006–2032; adopted March 2015) Policy EQ3 — Historic Environment states:
- “Heritage assets will be conserved and where appropriate enhanced for their historic significance and important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place. ... All new development proposals relating to the historic environment will be expected to:*
- *Safeguard or where appropriate enhance the significance, character, setting and local distinctiveness of heritage assets ...*
- 4.54 The CO welcomed changes made to the design of the proposed development in response to pre-application advice, but remained concerned that: *“the buildings in the south of the site extend [too] far north into the strategic views that are the setting of the listed building. This erodes the final links that the farm has to its rural setting.”* The CO concluded that the proposals would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, in *“the medium range of the spectrum of harm in that category”*. (Email Anthony Garratt to David Kenyon, 3 August 2020)
- 4.55 The Council considered the advice of HE, which has been consistent throughout the consultation process. They reached their own conclusion that the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset, in the medium range of that spectrum of harm. Therefore the Council were justified in departing from the assessment of impact provided in the Appellant’s Heritage Statement.
- 4.56 I agree that the harm to significance would be less than substantial, but assess the harm as being at the moderate to high end of the ‘less than substantial’ scale of harm.

Conclusion

- 4.57 It is necessary, when reaching a judgement in this case, to have regard to the moderate to high level of less than substantial harm that would be caused to the high significance of the designated heritage asset that is Templecombe Manor House, a Grade II* listed building.
- 4.58 Decision makers should give considerable importance and weight to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings. The development of just over 60% of the Site with housing, roads and associated infrastructure would change the setting in ways that would harm the significance of the highly graded heritage asset.

- 4.59 I agree with the Appellant’s Heritage Statement’s assessment of the significance of the fabric of the Grade II*-listed Manor Farm.
- 4.60 I agree with the assessment in the Appellant’s Heritage Statement that the development would cause harm to the significance of the listed building through change to its setting, and that the harm would be less than substantial (the term used in the NPPF). However, I disagree with the Heritage Statement as to the extent and degree of the less than substantial harm.
- 4.61 I have set out above (paras. 3.60–3.83) the ways in which setting, and particularly the historic landscape of the Site contributes to the significance of the designated heritage asset. I believe that the Appellant’s Heritage Statement understates the contribution that the Site makes to the significance of the listed building. It does not acknowledge how the scale and historic isolation of the Manor House lent it presence and status. It largely ignores intangible attributes of setting. It ignores the potential impact of roads, the substation and other infrastructure that would be associated with the development. This has inevitably led the Appellant’s heritage advisers to underestimate the harm that the proposed development would cause to the significance of the listed building.
- 4.62 The Heritage Statement finds the harm “*would be a low level of harm that does not seriously affect the significance of the designated heritage asset*”. (Heritage Collective June 2020, para 5.3; CD 6.07) I assess the **harm to be at the moderate to high end of the ‘less than substantial’ scale of harm**. I therefore support the Council’s Reason for Refusal no. 2, and respectfully request that the appeal be dismissed.

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