

PLANNING POLICY CONSULTATION

Application No: 19/03416/OUT

Proposal: Outline application for the demolition of existing buildings and residential development of up to 80 dwellings including the creation of a new vehicular access and pedestrian accesses, open space, landscape planting and surface water attenuation.

Land at Manor Farm, Combe Hill, Templecombe, Somerset

Monitoring

Monitoring demonstrates that from the beginning of the adopted Local Plan period (April 2006) to 31st March 2019, 63 dwellings have been delivered within Abbas and Templecombe. There are commitments (extant planning permissions) for a further 88 dwellings within or adjacent to the settlement. As a result, there is potentially a total of 151 dwellings to be delivered within the Plan period (2006 – 2028) – as shown in Table 1. This figure would rise to 231 dwellings should this application be granted.

There are also further applications pending, that should be taken into consideration if they are approved prior to the determination of this application, and any necessary amendments made to the total dwellings tally (see Table 2).

Table 1 – Completions and Commitments Data

Settlement	Local Plan 2006-2028 settlement status (Policy SS1)	Local Plan 2006-2028 Total Housing Requirement	Total Completions 2006 - 2019 (net)	Existing housing commitments as at 31 st October 2019 (net)	Total Completions and Commitments (net)	Performance against Local Plan Target
Abbas & Templecombe	Rural Settlement	n/a	63	88	151	n/a

Table 2 – Planning applications pending decision within the settlement:

Address	Application No.	No. of Dwellings	Comments
Land At Slades Hill, Templecombe	18/02739/OUT	70	This site currently has permission for 75 dwellings (included in the commitments) – part of which has extant permission for an industrial building.
Knights Templar Court Nursing Home	18/00650/OUT	19	Two pending applications for outline permission on the same site (only one can be implemented if approved).
	19/00123/OUT	21	
Land at Combe Farm OS Plots 4300 Part and 4613	19/01604/OUT	49	

The 2011 census statistics show that the built-up area (BUA) for Templecombe comprised 746 dwellings. From April 2011 to March 2019 there have been a further 28 completions that has led to a 4% increase in the number of dwellings in the village. Together with the 88 dwellings committed, the village will potentially increase in size by 15.5% from 2011. Should the application be approved this would potentially result in a 26% increase in the number of dwellings in the village since 2011 – without accounting for other applications pending decision (listed in Table 2).

Table 3 – Increase in the number of dwellings in Templecombe

Templecombe BUA (2011) – number of dwellings	746
Completions April 2011 – March 2019	28
% increase in the number of dwellings 1 April 2011 - 31 March 2019	4%
Existing commitments	88
Total completions / commitments	116
Potential % increase in the number of dwellings in Templecombe from 2011 (116/746 x 100)	15.5%
Total completions / commitments & proposed development (116 + 80)	196
Potential % increase in the number of dwellings in Templecombe from 2011 (196/746 x 100)	26%

Planning Policy Context

Policy SS1 places each settlement a tier within the ‘settlement hierarchy’, based on their role and function within the district. In accordance with policy, the scale of development envisaged for each settlement should be commensurate with its tier, thereby reinforcing the hierarchy.

The adopted Local Plan 2006-2028 identifies Abbas and Templecombe as a Rural Settlement having access to two or more of the key services required. Policy SS1 Settlement Strategy states that Rural Settlements will be considered as part of the countryside to which national countryside protection policies apply, subject to exceptions identified in Policy SS2.

Policy SS2 Rural Settlements sets a presumption against development unless key sustainability criteria can be met. Proposals for housing development should therefore meet identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing, and be commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement, and increases the sustainability of the settlement in general.

Future delivery of development in such rural locations should therefore carefully balance sustaining communities against protecting and enhancing the rural environment. The supporting text to Policy SS2 notes that:

“...the interpretation of Policy SS2 will depend on applying these factors in considering proposals at each individual settlement; for example a proposal that is acceptable in one of the larger Rural Settlements such as Templecombe, which has a relatively strong employment function and good sustainable transport links with the presence of a railway station, will be different to a smaller Rural Settlement such as Compton Dundon which does not have these features.”

Policy SS5 Delivering New Housing Growth states that the overall scale of growth established for each settlement, and wider policy framework will be key considerations, with an emphasis upon maintaining the established settlement hierarchy and ensuring sustainable levels of growth for all settlements. There is no individual housing target identified for Templecombe in the Local Plan rather a collective figure of 2,242 dwellings for all Rural Settlements.

The total number of dwellings delivered in Rural Settlements to 31st March 2019 was 3,076 dwellings, exceeding the total housing requirement for the plan period (2006-2028) by 834 dwellings. This reflects that development in Rural Settlements has made a significant contribution to housing delivery in South Somerset and more homes have been delivered in these locations than the settlement strategy envisaged. Larger Rural Settlements appear to have been the main focus for most development although there are significant commitments in other smaller settlements.

It is noted that the application proposes affordable housing at 35% and is therefore compliant with those provisions for affordable housing provision set out in Policy SS2 and Policy HG3. However, it is arguable whether the development would be commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement, when considered in the context of housing growth within the plan period. The level of housing, should this application be granted permission would equate to the levels of growth allocated to the Rural Centres such as Martock and South Petherton, both of which have a significantly greater number of dwellings, larger populations, a wider range of services and facilities, and a defined retail role (see Table 4). The size of settlement can be seen in context to be similar to Stoke-sub-Hamdon; however the level of growth (51 dwellings) directed to this Rural Centre is considerably lower than the growth already permitted at Templecombe. Therefore, the proposal is considered to be contrary to Policy SS1.

The Local Plan housing targets for the Rural Centres are listed below:

Table 4 – Rural Centres Statistics

Rural Centres	Total Housing Requirement	Population 2018 mid term estimates	No. of dwellings (2011)
Bruton	203	3110	1141
Ilchester	141	2100	920
Martock	230	4456	2083
Milborne Port	279	2802	1325
South Petherton	229	3092	1488
Stoke sub Hamdon	51	1642	771
Templecombe	n/a	1572	746

Peripheral Landscape Study - Templecombe¹

¹ https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1818/peripheral-landscape-study_templecombe.pdf

Undertaken in 2008, the Peripheral Landscape Study assessed the capacity of the settlement fringe to accommodate new development in a landscape sympathetic manner. It is noted that the area between Manor Farm and housing to its north is graded moderate sensitivity. Among the three potential areas identified for development is land alongside Manor Farm, which includes the proposed site area. Low densities are considered appropriate with sufficient space set aside for landscape mitigation to the eastern edge to soften view of development from the vale. An allocation of open space and structural landscaping is suggested to minimise the skyline impact of the village as viewed from the vale. The study indicates that the village has some scope for 'landscape sympathetic' growth, on areas, including the Manor Farm site, that offer options for potential development.

Local Plan Review 2016-2036

The emerging Local Plan Review is currently in preparation and two consultations have taken place under Regulation 18²; with the most recent consultation on Preferred Options ending in September 2019. The Preferred Options Plan proposed the reclassification of Abbas and Templecombe from a Rural Settlement to a new category of Village. An indication of the minimum level of future growth was provided as 60 dwellings within the proposed plan period 2016-2036 (in addition to existing commitments at 31st March 2018).

Several objections have been received in relation to Policy SS1 Settlement Strategy in the Preferred Options Local Plan Review, with regard to reclassifying Abbas and Templecombe as a Village in the settlement hierarchy. The proposed elevation of the settlement from a Rural Settlement to a Village is based on an assessment³ of all the Rural Settlements to identify the most sustainable locations based on a number of factors including existing employment levels, accessibility by road/bus/rail, and attractiveness to the housing/employment market and consideration of constraints such as flood risk, ecological designations, conservation areas and presence of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land.

A significant number of the objections also reference proposed developments at West Street and Manor Farm as some of their key concerns in impacting on village character and highway safety in particular. As the emerging Local Plan Review is still at an early stage in its preparation and representations have yet to be considered, it is judged that extremely limited weight can be attached to it (paragraph 48 of the NPPF).

HELAA: The site of the proposed development has been identified as suitable, available and developable in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA); part of the evidence base to support the emerging Local Plan Review. The HELAA site E/ABTE/0013 was assessed as a suitable site for up to 35 dwellings, as a reduced density was suggested due to conservation issues and the need for landscape mitigation.

The identification of potential sites within the HELAA does not imply that planning permission would be granted if an application were to be submitted. The HELAA is a high level assessment and therefore all planning applications should continue to be considered against

² Town & Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

³ [Potential for Rural Settlements to be Designated Villages](#)

the appropriate policies within the adopted Development Plan, having regard to any other material considerations.

Brownfield Register

The proposed development site at Manor Farm was previously included on the Brownfield Land Register 2018. This was brought to the attention of the Strategic Planning team in August 2019. Following this communication, the site was reassessed. [Planning Practice Guidance](#) for Brownfield Land Registers states that land registers will provide up-to-date and consistent information on sites that local authorities consider to be appropriate for residential development having regard to the criteria set out in regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017.

On undertaking a desktop review of the Manor Farm site, it was considered that the site is 'greenfield' as the agricultural buildings on the site are not included in the definition of previously developed land (see [Annex 2](#) of the NPPF). This oversight was corrected and the site was removed from the register.

Planning Balance

According to evidence⁴, Abbas & Templecombe is the fourth largest Rural Settlement in the district with a good level of local service provision, including a primary school, local convenience shop/Post Office, village hall, faith facility, doctor's surgery and children's play area. The former pub is currently being converted to a convenience store on the High Street. There is also significant employment provision within the settlement, reinforced by a recent permission for an industrial building (Use Class B2) opposite Thales. Abbas & Templecombe also has a train station (on the Exeter/Waterloo line) and the A357 passes through the settlement to join the A303 at Wincanton, 5 miles to the north. There is also a regular bus service (Wincanton-Sherborne-Yeovil) every 1-2 hours, Monday to Saturday.

The settlement is, therefore, considered to be a sustainable location that can support a reasonable level of housing growth and granting permission would contribute positively to the Council's supply of market and affordable housing, with the accompanying social and economic benefits. The Peripheral Landscape Study⁵ identifies that there is landscape capacity for development on this site taking into account landscape character and sensitivity; and historic, wildlife or environmental constraints.

In coming to a decision on this application, these benefits should be considered with, inter alia, any other impacts (positive or negative) identified, including adverse impacts against the harm to the settlement hierarchy defined in Policy SS1 and inconsistency with Policy SS5 that requires the scale of development to be commensurate with its tier in the settlement hierarchy. Should this application be approved it would lead to the level of housing growth in Templecombe commensurate with housing requirements for the Rural Centres such as Martock and South Petherton.

It is noted that the cumulative transport impacts of development upon the local highway network (most notably the A357) and pedestrian safety on the High Street should also be

⁴ [The Potential for Rural Settlements to be Designated Villages](#)

⁵ [Peripheral Landscape Assessment for Templecombe, October 2008](#)

considered with regard to current commitments in the settlement and any decisions taken in relation to pending applications in the meantime. In relation to cumulative impacts on the highway, it may be helpful to also consider this in the context of the 130 dwellings permitted at Henstridge.

The Council's Five Year Housing Supply Statement (September 2019)⁶ concluded that it was only possible to demonstrate a supply equivalent to about **4.5 years** based upon the assessment of future housing land supply for the period 2019/20 to 2023/2024, (this equates to **4,711 dwellings**).

The Council accepts that it is unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply and that a presumption in favour of sustainable development exists. Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and grant permission when decision taking where the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date (this includes circumstances where there is no five-year supply of deliverable housing sites with the appropriate buffer), and therefore less weight can be afforded to policies that affect the supply of housing. Paragraph 11 is therefore a significant material consideration with regard to the tilted balance in favour presumption of sustainable development.

⁶ [South Somerset District Council 5 year Housing Land Supply 2018 to 2023](#)