

**19/03416/OUT | 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 (all matters reserved except access). | Land At Manor Farm Combe Hill Templecombe Somerset**

At the meeting of Abbas and Templecombe Parish Council held on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup>. January 2020 to consider the above planning application there was a unanimous vote to recommend that this application be refused.

The reasons behind this recommendation are laid out below.

#### ARCHEOLOGICAL

With its links of the Medieval Templar Knights the site has archeological remains under the surface that should be preserved for posterity.

#### PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS/PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Local records suggest that this site has been refused planning permission on two previous occasions and it would seem anomalous for it to be granted this time when the criteria are unchanged.

As a conclusion to their planning statement Origin 3 on behalf of Gleeson state ' *The application Site is suitable, achievable and deliverable*'

It should be noted that outline planning permission the Slades Hill Site was first sought in 2005 ref 05/01336/OUT for the erection of two employment buildings each of 500 square metres, 72 dwellings (of which 35% would be affordable housing), extension to a cemetery to 0.65 acre, extension to existing school playing fields of 1.11 acres, open space and construction of link road to existing employment site. The most recent residential element of this application ref 18/02739/OUT- Outline application for residential development comprising up to 70 dwellings and associated open space, landscaping works and area for school expansion, together with new access and drainage infrastructure. Is still awaiting a decision

It is therefore key to accept that Slade hill has been a development similar in scale and yet in over 15 years and numerous variations of planning applications residential development has not been deliverable. Templecombe therefore has a proven record of not achieving deliverable development and further proposed development should not be considered.

With regard to current housing demand of the current properties listed as being for sale in Templecombe on Right Move (January 25 2020)

1 plot for 19 houses which has already been on the market for 6 months.

Of the remaining 8 properties 3 are new builds 2 of which have been on the market for 15 months and a further new build that has been on the market since February 2019.

This clearly does not demonstrate an identified need for significant new development in the village.

Currently there is the potential for a total of 156 dwellings with planning permission but not yet started and Manor Farm would give a total of 236. Not only is there no proven demand. But also a total of so many dwellings in a rural settlement with a recommendation in the local plan of 60 dwellings is in no way commensurate with current planning policy for rural settlements

In addition with reference to the recent application below

## SECTION 106 AGREEMENT

*Application to vary S106 Agreement dated 30th October 2014 attached to approval 13/03318/OUT between Hopkins Development Limited, South Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council to remove the requirement for the provision of any affordable housing as part of the residential development to be carried out on the site.*

While this original application was allowed on appeal where the benefit to the community of the provision of affordable housing contributed considerable weight to approval. It was subsequently identified the site would not be viable with the provision of any affordable housing. This application has now been awaiting a decision since May 2019 however it highlights the vulnerability of development even after 106 agreements have been signed.

We would therefore request that a full viability exercise on the Manor Farm project should be undertaken as part of the planning application determination process in order to demonstrate that a policy compliant level of on-site affordable housing is absolutely viable and can be secured without risk.

With further reference to the comments regarding planning policy:

*Policy SS1 –Settlement Strategy -This policy sets out a hierarchy for the spatial distribution of growth across the district. Provision for development should be made appropriate to the scale of the settlement. Rural Settlements are considered as part of the countryside to which national countryside protection policies apply, subject to the exceptions in Policy SS2.*

As previously highlighted not only is there no proven demand for up to 236 additional properties in Templecombe but also a total of so many dwellings in a rural settlement with a recommendation in the local plan of 60 is in no way commiserate with the rural settlement which Templecombe is currently identified as. Rural Settlements are the 4th tier in that hierarchy and are the lowest tier and are considered as part of the countryside to which national countryside protection policies apply. A further 80 dwellings bringing a total to 236 dwellings simply shows no respect to the countryside. Further within the site itself SSDC HELAA recommendation suggested a maximum of 35 properties and so the proposal for 80 dwellings is grossly over that number.

*Policy SS2 –Development in Rural Settlements This exceptions policy allows growth which is commensurate with the scale and character of a settlement if it enhances its sustainability beyond simply providing market housing. To qualify as a Rural Settlement a place needs to have two or more of the services listed.*

Templecombe is currently categorised as a Rural Settlement within the current local plan. As already mentioned 80 dwellings is not in scale or character as at no point has there been a development of 80 houses in one area of the village at the same time so such development is not in character in the way Templecombe has developed in the past.

*Policy EQ2 –General Development: development will be designed to achieve a high quality which promotes local distinctiveness and preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the district. Development should protect the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and new dwellings should provide acceptable residential amenity space in accordance with policy HW1.*

The increase in numbers of dwellings damages local amenity and therefore is not in keeping with this policy it does not preserve the character of Templecombe as a rural settlement.

*5.25Policy HG3 requires schemes greater than 6 dwellings to provide 35% affordable housing. Policy HG5 requires a mix of housing types and sizes informed by the latest District-wide evidence base stemming from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) which is dated 2016. The proposal*

*would provide 35% affordable housing, which equates to 28 units, with the tenures split between 80% social rented housing and 20% intermediate housing. The proposed development meets a district wide need for market and affordable housing and meets an identified local affordable housing need in accordance with Policy SS2.*

Origin 3 identifies 11 household requiring affordable housing. This perceived need would be addressed by the existing planning consents and so this proposal would be excess to local requirements.

South Somerset 2018 recommends a maximum of 35 dwellings should this site be developed – less than half the number now being proposed.

## ROAD ACCESS

Entrance to the site.

Despite what technical arguments may say when actually on the ground visibility both turning into and out of the site entrance is not good and no amount of splay can negate the lack of visibility caused by existing buildings to the north. In addition vehicles travelling northward through the lights at the bottom of Combe Hill accelerate up the hill and not until they are half way up can see the entrance.

Origin 3 traffic plan suggests that the proposed 80 dwelling development will only add approximately 18 additional vehicles per hour to the road network. However, this makes no allowance for the number of delivery, contractor, royal mail and service turning in and out of the development daily nor does it take account of house owners using their cars for local trips due to the dangers of pedestrian access to the heart of the village.

The inadequacy of public transport (2 hourly service between Wincanton and Yeovil but no early morning or evening service and no Sunday service) make using it for journeys to and from work are impossible as are social outings both in the evenings and Sundays. Once again adding more congestion onto the already overcrowded roads.

## PEDESTRIAN ACCESS

Proposed access via:

- (1) Combe Hill onto A357 at south end of site.

New footpath (125m) proposed on east side of A357 to connect to existing footpath network, linked with a dropped kerb crossing to west side of A357

In order to reach the Primary School/ Thales/ Fish and Chip Shop / Coop pedestrians would need to cross A357; cross entrance to Bowden Road; cross entrance to Vine Street before reaching Yarnbarton. Then pedestrian crossing with lights.

3 x crossing points

For Train Station and Doctor's Surgery pedestrians would need to cross A357, cross entrance to Bowden Road, and cross entrance to Vine Street.

3 x crossing points

For Post Office and Recreation Ground cross A357 then walk into Bowden Road (no footpath) and along Westcombe OR cross Bowden Road and take steps up to Kington View footpath (although this route would be impossible for many physically disabled) .

- (2) East Street access from north corner of site. Plan shows path with gradient to be able to remove the six steps currently by stile of Footpath WN29/12.

Once pedestrians on East Street no pavement proposed to junction by Yew Tree, only signs saying Beware Pedestrians in Road. There is no footway either North or South on the A357 from this junction. Parked cars on the southerly stretch of road often result in pedestrians being forced to walk in the centre of the roadway.

Proposed highway improvement to include removing centre road markings and creating a coloured strip of tarmac for pedestrians along High Street up to existing footpath could be lethal.

No restrictions on HGV for A357 apart from height restrictions for railway bridge. No room to pass two large vehicles and have space for footpath.

In order to have pedestrian access safely along High Street, the whole length would need to be traffic-light controlled (as Yenston)

In view of these problems it would seem likely that responsible parents would not allow their children to use the pedestrian routes from the site but would choose to use their cars. Thus adding yet more traffic onto an already overburdened and dangerous piece of the A357.

*If planners are minded to allow this development then we would ask that pedestrian priority crossings be installed across the A357, Bowden Road and Vine Street.*

#### PROVISION FOR CYCLISTS

NONE!

- (1) Combe Hill onto A357 at south end of site. No additional help for cyclists. Eg sharing footway with cyclists. Proposed width of footpath 1.5 narrowing to 1.2 metres. This is insufficient to carry both, would need 3 metres.
- (2) East Street access from north corner of site. Proposed footpath with gradient will have signage asking cyclists to dismount, as only 2m wide. Would need to be 3m wide to accommodate both.

#### VILLAGE AMENITIES

The village infrastructure is already under strain without any of the additional dwellings for which planning consent has already been granted. The village school, whilst having some physical space to expand, does not have the finance to increase its teaching staff to cope with more pupils. Although once the need for extra staff/classrooms became apparent investment could be expected to follow the time lag would mean that children from the new houses initially be forced to look outside the village for primary education.

The Doctors surgery is only a satellite surgery for the Milborne Port surgery and is already heavily subscribed. The present building is not accessible for any disabled patients having steps leading up to its entrance.

It would be folly to believe that residents from Manor Farm estate would not use their cars if going to either the railway station or any other village amenities thus exacerbating the already lack of parking provision.

EMPLOYMENT: Whilst on the surface there would appear to be adequate employment opportunities in the village. The truth of the matter is that the majority employment is on one major site whose work force is mainly specialised and graduate based. The age group of this group tends to prefer living in more urban environments even though this means longer journeys to and from work (putting even more strain on our overcrowded roads)

