

Mr T Lane
37 High Street
Templecombe,
Somerset, BA8 0JF
17th April 2020

Mr D Kenyon
South Somerset District Council
The Council Offices , Brympton Way
Yeovil ,Somerset
BA20 2HT
Also Sent by email to David.Kenyon@SouthSomerset.gov.uk and
planning@southsomerset.gov.uk

Dear Mr Kenyon,

I write with regard to the application for time extension and also the revised plan for:

Planning application reference; 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.

Whilst I am pleased that the developers seem to be taking on board some of the objections raised during the process, it does also seem to me that they are “papering over the cracks” in their approach.

They have taken the highest profile objections and believe they have entered into some sort of verbal agreement with both Highways and Historic England and seem to be of the opinion that they are progressing towards a “positive outcome” having “solved” the issues.

I am a little outraged in their approach to this and also the way that they seem to lay their own opinions and research down as fact and that they then believe this to be and end to the matter.

They have stated that they couldn’t wait for SSCD to respond initially and so have carried out their own “in depth” research and now believe this to be sufficient for us all to take as factual.

I would implore SSCD to carry out their own unbiased research in order to form an opinion.

There are a few points I would like to raise in addition to the objections originally stated before this revision, which I hope will still be considered during the application process.

Firstly, the application is still titled 80 Dwellings, this leaves the plan open to still include the removed dwellings somewhere else in the buildable area. This would obviously affect the density of the site, which again would need looking at. We are all aware of how these developers operate once the plan has been approved and so we need to batten down their intentions properly from the start. This needs to be changed to reflect the revised numbers before it goes any further.

Historic England

Origin3 refer to Historic England as stating "*Historic England are quite specific about their concern but **do not** consider that development of the site **is not inappropriate***"

This sentence means that Historic England DO see it as Inappropriate! It seems that Origin3 may have overlooked what Historic England were saying here. Either way it shows that they are not paying proper attention to what they are writing and not checking that things are correct in a rush to show us how great they are at sorting everything on our behalf.

Scale Of Growth

This is farcical! They claim it is considered sustainable due to local facilities, namely:

The School: Currently full, oversubscribed and with a waiting list and no means of expansion

Convenience Store: a small Co op being built in the former Public house and likely to employ 6 people

Significant Employment Generator: I assume they are referring to Thales, the specialist underwater defence contractor. They hardly recruit from the village as they need specialist knowledge and skills and they also have planning lodged for 70 Dwellings adjacent to their site.

I find it hard to believe that SSDC finds this 'acceptable levels' of sustainability for an additional 80 houses.

Density

They have referred to SSDC HELAA recommendation of 35 dwellings as un researched and claimed that their own 'in depth' heritage assessment is much more accurate and says they can build 78 (but they still ask for 80)

Surely SSCD HELAA states 35 dwellings, reduced from 78, for a reason but this seems to be ignored.

Why recommend 35 if you are to consider an application for 80?

Can we please have confirmation of exactly how many dwellings are now proposed as the title still claims 80.

Also there are still the 5 restricted height properties remaining on the plan. These are the ones that are causing the most concern to neighbouring residents as they are now right against garden walls and have the most impact re: light, noise and air pollution and also causing security and privacy issues. There is a feeling that these are "spite" inclusions by the land owner, who is very unhappy about the level of objection to the plan.

I would suggest they be removed from the plan and feel that this would alleviate a lot of the anxiety and objection to the current plan. It would also allow for the pumping station to be moved closer to the new dwellings as that is also a point of contention regarding noise that still hasn't been answered by anybody.

The council's proposed plan for 2016 to 2036 suggest that a suitable number of new dwellings would be 75 across all sites within this period. This plan could provide in excess of the total local plan numbers on its own without the other pending plans in the area. I understand that everyone keeps banging on about each plan being considered independently surely it is the council's job to look at cumulative plans and how they may affect the entire area as a whole.

Highways

Origins3 still seem to be mostly ignoring the impact of this development and are instead simply concentrating on two minor points. The way they have attempted to overcome these is, in my opinion, at best, heavily flawed. There is still no mention of pollution, light pollution and noise, there is mention of the road being kept clear of mud during construction and that truck wheels should be cleaned before departing the site but this surely will never happen. Can we see proof of sites where this has been properly carried out throughout the winter season? Does this just go ahead until someone gets killed trying to slow down for the traffic lights on a hill covered in mud?

Also there seems to be an assumption that the speed limit is to be changed to extend the 30mph area toward the site access. The research to prove traffic capability is based upon the speed limit being at 30mph, but, as Origin3 stress throughout their letter, this development MUST be treated stand alone with factors as they are currently. The fact that they then make a report based upon a fictional speed limit is totally unacceptable.

Also has the highways department actually seen the data that Origin3 claim to have captured (85th percentile wet weather). This also seems to have been captured over a period of 5 days in November of 2018. Two points here, this is a quiet period in Templecombe and also, more recently, I believe that Heavy Goods Vehicles have been diverted through Templecombe due to the re designation of the road through Charleton Horethorne. This is now the main commercial route from A303 to A30 meaning a massive increase in Commercial traffic since the data was gathered, making the report obsolete and inaccurate. I would suggest that this data needs to be re gathered under current traffic conditions (outside of COVid Lockdown) and over a period of more than 5 days and sampled throughout busy seasons.

Origins3 state via i-transport report, that they use a very clever MOVA system that calculates the impact of increased traffic density but surely this is dependant on the data inputted. Has the council had site of the data put in, i.e. how many additional vehicles per household were included. If you visit Templecombe you will notice that most households have at least two vehicles. This is because there is very little public transport to get to places in the area. You have to drive. I would like to see a traffic report based on 2 cars per new dwelling (160), plus the service vehicles, and how that impacts on the local highways. The report states it falls 'Short of Severe'. Is 'Short of Severe' seen as acceptable? Surely that still means very bad?

In Summary, I accept that the developers seem to be listening, where it suits them, but the way they are approaching their revisions seems to be by doing verbal side deals with Agencies to overcome some issues but based on flawed data with no visible proof of what they have carried out.

I would also draw your and SSDC's attention to the two historical refusals of plans for this site 06/02405/OUT and 07/01308/OUT that were refused with the statement:

"The proposal would appear as an incursion of built form into the open countryside, to the detriment of the character and setting of Templecombe"

Surely this still applies or are we no longer bothered about our countryside as long as its worth loads of money?

Our worry is that Origins3 are trying to accelerate plans during a time that people wont have so much chance to speak out and that rather than waiting until things can be carried out properly by the regulated authorities they are trying to submit their own data as factual and railroad the plans through. I sincerely hope that his will not be the case.

Yours sincerely

TJ Lane