

<b>Development description</b> Outline application for the demolition of existing buildings and residential development of up to 76 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).	<b>App. Ref</b> 19/03416/OUT
<b>Site address</b> Land at Manor Farm Combe Hill Templecombe Somerset	<b>Response date</b> 24 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
<b>Environment Team response by</b> Charles Potterton (Consultant Landscape Architect)	<b>Case Officer</b> David Kenyon
<b>Summary response</b>	
No Objection or comments	
No Objection – subject to conditions described below	
Object in principle	
Not acceptable in its current format	
<span style="float: right;">✓</span>	
<b>Detailed response</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.     <b>Introduction &amp; background.</b></li>   <li>2.     I have visited the site and its surroundings. I have read all the relevant documents submitted in relation to the application.</li>   <li>3.     <b>The site.</b></li>   <li>4.     The site sits on the east side of Templecombe / A357. It lies outside the settlement boundary. It is located on and around the farm buildings of Manor Farm. The topography in this area is particularly important and the existing farm buildings sit at approximately the highest point of the village and on somewhat of a promontory at some 30m higher than the valley landscape to the east.</li>   <li>5.     To the immediate north of the main buildings and to the immediate south of the site entrance, the land falls away. This landform must be one of the primary drivers in terms of any proposed layout as it plays a significant role in determining the degree of (inter)visibility of the site.</li>   <li>6.     There is some existing vegetation to the rear of the farm building area and some around the 'pond' area. There are also some freestanding trees to the south of the farm buildings and perimeter hedges to the outside boundaries.</li>   <li>7.     PROW WN 29/12 traverses the field to the east of the site. There is a Grade 2* listed building (Manor Barn) to the immediate west of the site. The site has also been the subject of a number of archaeological 'digs' in the past.</li>   <li>8.     <b>The principle of development.</b></li>   <li>9.     It is important to note that a number of documents have identified potential for development on the site. '<i>The Potential for Rural Settlements to be Designated Villages</i>' report suggests 75 dwellings (2.12).</li> </ol>	

10. The HELA (at 2.13) notes that the site could be appropriate for 35 dwellings and at 2.17/2.18, the South Somerset 'Peripheral Landscape Studies' confirms that the site has some capacity and suggests a density per hectare (dph) of circa 30.

11. Having visited the site and having studied the submitted information, I would agree that the site has potential for 'some' development, but the unique set of constraints provided by this site mean that density should not be any measure of acceptability or appropriateness.

**12. Landscape character.**

13. I disagree with the LVIA at 3.25-3.27 and consider that these notes are to do with threats to the rural landscape and are not intended as any form of justification for any development. Indeed, '*widespread concern amongst parish councils at the loss of identity, sense of place and the urbanisation of the countryside*' would suggest reasons why not to develop.

14. At 3.66 of the LVIA, the site is given a rating of 'moderate to low' value. I suggest that it actually has an increased value because of its historical importance. Historic England also take a different view in regard to its rarity and therefore value. In their response dated 11th Feb 2020 -

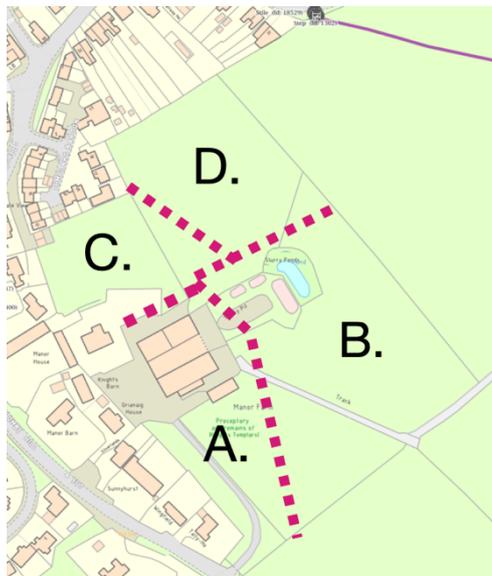
*'The complex has sat outside the boundaries of the Templecombe settlement until the expansion of the village during the 20th century. During this period, the green rural setting was significantly eroded by modern development. The last link held by the property to the rural landscape is the north-west 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'.*

15. It is accepted that this statement was made in regard to the setting of the listed building, but it still relates to the same piece of land. That letter (from HE) also go on to say -

*'We are convinced that a less harmful layout can identified within the application site that will allow for a more meaningful buffer to be created to the grade II\* listed Manor House. In our view, alternative layouts, avoiding development in the north-west section while retaining views through the wider countryside, would significantly minimise the impact to the highly designated asset (Para 190, NPPF)'.*

16. There will clearly be a change to the character of the site and to its immediate surroundings with any development (in whatever form). Changes to landscape character can be reduced to a more acceptable level by ensuring that the overall quantum of development and the exact nature of the layout is appropriate.

17. Changes to the character of the wider landscape can also be kept to a minimum by ensuring that the layout is as discrete as possible. With such a prominent hilltop site, this does provide a challenge which is discussed in the section on visual impact below. Lighting in the landscape must also be considered.
18. At present, I believe that the development is too large in terms of physical extent and thereby causes harm to the character of the landscape. I also consider that the layout does not respond properly to the landscape constraints of the site.
- 19. Visual impact.**
20. As noted, the site includes an important promontory that sits some 30m higher than the wider landscape. The LVIA mentions a ZTV at 3.47, but I am unable to find this. The nearest is a Visual Appraisal Plan (L3 A) in the appendices.
21. I question the LVIA at 3.36 and 3.68 c where it says that the site is 'surrounded by built development on two sides'. Surrounded means to be 'all around', which clearly is not the case. I also find 3.70 contradictory as it states that '*because of the Site's open character and localised visibility*' whereas in 3.68 (h) it is described as '*relatively well contained and enclosed in the local landscape*'.
22. A finer grained analysis constraints and opportunities shows that the site can be divided into a number of distinct 'areas' (labelled only to aid future identification / discussion) –
- A.** Site entrance and flat plateau (to include existing car park / buildings)
  - B.** Eastern and southern facing slopes (outer part of the site)
  - C.** Rectangular area south of Templars Barton and east of Temple View & Templars Retreat (smaller internal area)
  - D.** Lower area west of PROW WN 29/12 and south of No's 17-35 High St



23. In respect of Area **A**, I consider that there is potential for development in this area but development must not move any further east than a line drawn along the back of the existing shed. To move any further out would cause significant visual harm (and harm to wider landscape character). The removal of the farm buildings may be a benefit.
24. In respect of Area **B**, I consider that this is the most sensitive in terms of wider visual impact and resulting harms to wider landscape character. There should be no built development in this area and the focus must be providing appropriate mitigation for any development on Area A.
25. An increase in boundary planting at the lower areas of the site will be least successful in screening or filtering views of buildings that are located at a higher level. In some cases, screen planting will be best located nearer to the viewer (as opposed to nearer to the object being screened).
26. With Area **C**, I am aware that here is a combined and enhanced sensitivity around archaeology and setting of the listed building. There is also a close relationship with existing residential properties at Templars Barton. I do not think there should be any built development in this sensitive area, but it does need an appropriate soft landscape solution that addresses these issues.
27. Lastly, Area **D**. This is closely related to the properties along High St and East St. It is also closest to the PROW. Having said that, it does sit much lower in the landscape and I consider that there is some scope for built development here. I am aware of the need to also balance and 'feather into' the issues related to Area **C** and that will inevitably restrict development.
28. Whilst I have identified that there is potential for some development on the site, it does present a complex array of issues and constraints that must be dealt with appropriately. In this regard, I find that the current iteration of the scheme (drg 406 J) is acceptable in so far as it includes an appropriate density and layout of units on Area A and avoids development on Areas C and D. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the proposed layout extends too far to the east across Area B and, as explained above, because this area is very sensitive in terms of wider visual impact and wider landscape character, this part of the scheme will cause an unacceptable level of harm.
29. I must therefore conclude that the scheme as shown on 406 Rev J is unacceptable in its current format.

**Charles Potterton BA DipLA CMLI**  
Chartered Landscape Architect

## **CV EXTRACT**

My name is Charles Potterton. I am a Chartered Member of The Landscape Institute and Director of Potterton Associates Ltd. I hold a BA Degree in Landscape Architecture (Glos 1982), a Diploma in Landscape Architecture (Glos 1983) and have been practicing as a Landscape Architect since 1984. My qualifications are BA DipLA CMLI.

Potterton Associates Ltd was founded in 1992, is a Registered Member of the Landscape Institute and trades as a Limited Company.

I am also regularly employed as a Consultant Landscape Architect by a number of Local Authorities including Swindon Borough Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council, Malvern Hills District Council, Herefordshire County Council and Mendip District Council to deal with landscape matters arising through the development control process. I prepare consultation responses for planning applications that are deemed likely to have an impact on the landscape. I also prepares Statements of Case and act as Expert Witness on a regular basis for both private and public clients.

I am Chairman of the Conservation Area Panel, which advises Worcester City Council on matters affecting the 11 Conservation Areas across the City. I also sit as a Landscape Architect on the expert panel for DESIGN : MIDLANDS, a design review service, based in Birmingham.