

Planning Service
South Somerset District Council
The Council Offices
Brympton Way
Yeovil
BA20 2HT

24th July 2020

Dear David,

Ref: Application 19/03416/OUT - Land at Manor Farm, Templecombe – Rebuttal of Consultation Responses

Origin3 on behalf of Gleeson Strategic Land, Origin3 Ltd submitted a revised masterplan and supporting information for consideration of planning application 19/03416/OUT on 1st July 2020. The revised scheme which was consulted upon from the 2nd July is 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).”

The end of the 21-day consultation period was yesterday, the 23rd July.

As of midday today, there have been formal consultation responses from Historic England, Somerset County Council Highways and Somerset County Council Education, Abbas & Templecombe Parish Council and eight members of the public.

Neither the Council’s Conservation officer nor Landscape Consultant have submitted formal responses to the revised scheme. This is disappointing as my client has spent additional time and resources refining the layout of the proposed scheme to respond to comments made by South Somerset Officers during a Design Workshop in June 2020 (and previous consultation responses from statutory consultees and the public). This is set out in the Design & Access Statement Addendum (June 2020). Yet it continues to be the case that South Somerset Officer’s concerns over scale, landscape and visual impact and heritage impacts have only been verbally articulated. This is 7 months into the application.

The consultation responses that have been received from statutory consultees confirm that highways and heritage issues have been satisfactorily resolved.

Somerset County Council Highway’s response dated 16th July 2020 clearly states that the Highway Authority does not consider that the proposal will cause a highway safety or efficiency issue. In accordance with paragraph 109

of the NPPF the application should not be refused on highways grounds as the proposed development is acceptable to the Highway Authority. Our client accepts the suggested conditions and would agree to the s278 agreement.

Historic England's response, dated 16th July 2020 clearly states that the amendments reduce the level of harm to the heritage asset substantially and the revised scheme will lead to less than substantial harm which should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, as set out in paragraph 196 of the NPPF. The consultation response notes that the revised masterplan addresses the concerns previously set out by Historic England in their consultation responses to the 80-unit scheme on 19th February and 72-unit scheme on 23rd April, with regards the significance of the grade II listed Manor House and the contribution made by its setting. The revised 60-unit scheme now addresses the site's heritage constraints and allows the grade II* listed Manor House to retain a more meaningful link to its rural setting.

Somerset County Council Education note in their consultation response of 16th July 2020, that the reduced scheme results in a reduction in the number of expected pupils from that previously proposed. As with the larger scheme, the pre-school and primary school (Abbas & Templecombe Primary) will be required to expand to accommodate the children from the proposed development and an education contribution will be required to be secured in a S106 agreement. Our client has already indicated that this contribution is acceptable. There is sufficient capacity at the Secondary School.

No other statutory consultee has commented formally on the revised scheme.

Abbas & Templecombe Parish Council have raised concerns in their consultation response dated 22nd July 2020. Their concerns are taken in the order they are presented:

1. Heritage - there is concern that the Parish Council would be required to maintain the proposed community area identified as "Manor Green" area at the rear of the listed Manor House.
 - a. It is proposed that this area would be privately maintained by a management company via a maintenance plan and therefore will not fall into neglect or burden the Parish Council. Alternatively, the space could be offered to South Somerset District Council, should that be the preference but in any event management of this space would be subject to an appropriately worded clause in the s106 Agreement
2. Highways – there is concern over the capacity of the highway network and road safety.
 - a. As set out above, Somerset County Council as the responsible Highway Authority clearly state in their formal response to the revised scheme that they do not consider that the proposal will cause a highway safety or efficiency issue.

3. Scale of Growth – the Parish Council note that as a result of a recent decision to approve an application for 49 dwellings at West Street, a total of 349 dwellings will be delivered in Templecombe within the Plan Period should the revised scheme for 60 dwellings be approved. It is stated that this figure is higher than that proposed for Milborne Port, which is a higher order settlement and therefore this is contrary to Policy SS1 (Settlement Hierarchy) and SS2 (Rural Settlements) of the South Somerset Local Plan.

It is assumed that the Parish Council figures are taken from the Officer Report for the West Street application (19/01604/OUT) which went to Regulation Committee on 2nd June 2020. In that report 289 dwellings are cited as the potential level of growth within the settlement should the West Street application be approved:

“As stated above, there is potentially a total of 151 dwellings to be delivered within the Plan period (2006-2028). Together with approved 70 dwellings at Slades Hill and the potential for 19 dwellings at Throop Road, this gives a potential of 240 new dwellings in Templecombe. This figure would rise to up to potentially 289 dwellings should this current application at West Street be granted”.

These figures are incorrect. In their calculations the Council have double counted the planning approvals for Slades Hill (12/03277/OUT for 75 dwellings 18/02728/FUL for 70 dwellings) and have overcounted the units associated with the Templar Court Nursing Home, rather than calculating the equivalent net gain in dwellings, they have calculated a gross figure (the Council’s Five Year Housing Land Supply Report is clear that the dwellings associated with these approvals result in a lower net gain of dwellings). These two instances alone equate to an additional circa 85 units that cannot be delivered in Templecombe but are identified as coming forward in the settlement and are contributing to the level of growth and decision making associated to that level of growth.

Our proposed scheme is 60 units. The Council, in approving the West Street application accepted that 289 dwellings was an appropriate level of growth for Templecombe, regardless of whether the figure is correct or not, the Council accepted that 289 dwellings did not result in any adverse impacts on infrastructure as a result of this scale of growth and was not contrary to Policy SS2 or SS1 of the South Somerset Local Plan. Given the Council accepted the principle of 289 dwellings being appropriate scale of growth for Templecombe and that figure is actually now lower, it is clear there is sufficient capacity for the Council to approve our scheme as it will not result in any adverse impacts on infrastructure and is not contrary to Policy SS1, SS2 or SS5 of the South Somerset Local Plan as the resulting scale of growth will be lower than the accepted 289.

4. Visual Impact – there is concern that this has not been addressed and await, as do we, the Council’s Landscape Consultant’s report.
 - a. In the absence of that report, as detailed in the Addendum Planning Statement (June 2020) a Landscape and Visual Impact and Addendum support the proposed development and evidence how the proposal complies with Policy EQ1 of the South Somerset Local Plan and the NPPF in respect of the environmental objective of enhancing and protecting the natural, historic and built environment.

5. Additional Points – there is concern that the scheme will not provide 35% affordable housing.
 - a. The proposed scheme provides 35% affordable housing in a SHMA compliant mix. At no point in the application process has our client suggested this is not viable.

Finally, turning to the public comments. The reduced number of dwellings is welcomed, as is the revised layout which addresses previous concerns over privacy by residents in Templars Barton. Concerns can be grouped as follows:

- Highway safety and impact,
- Scale of growth at the settlement level and associated impact on infrastructure; and
- Use of private land to create the proposed footpath on A357.

Highway safety and impact and scale of growth at the settlement level and associated impact on infrastructure are sufficiently covered above.

In terms of the concern that private land will be required to create the proposed footway, we have confirmation from Somerset County Highways that the footway works will be carried out within the adopted highway and can therefore be included in the s278, I can provide evidence if you require this.

In summary there are no technical reasons to refuse the scheme and the scale of growth which the proposed development will now contribute to, has already been considered acceptable and not contrary to Local Plan Policies SS1, SS2 or SS5.

Furthermore, as documented in the Planning Statement (December 2019), 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 NPPF 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. This was recognised in the West Street decision (19/01604/OUT).

The numerous public benefits of the proposal as set out fully in the Planning Statement, should be weighed against the less than substantial harm to the listed building. The scheme represents a considered, well-designed, high quality scheme that will deliver much needed housing in Templecombe and South Somerset, will comply with local policy requirements and will provide a number of community benefits including, but not exclusively, the provision of 35% affordable housing, improved pedestrian and cyclist permeability and public open space. It is therefore considered that given all of the above, and having due regard to the 'tilted balance', the identified harm does not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme and, as such, planning permission should be granted.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Joanna Manley

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