

## Officer Report On Planning Application: 19/01840/OUT

<b>Site Address:</b>	Land North Of Ansford Hill Ansford Castle Cary
<b>Ward :</b>	CARY
<b>Proposal :</b> <b>CIL Liable = YREM</b>	Erection of 200 dwellings (70 affordable and 130 open market) with associated highways, drainage, landscaping and public open space.
<b>Recommending Case Officer:</b>	Stephen Baimbridge
<b>Target date/Ext of time</b>	2nd October 2019 16th June 2020
<b>Applicant :</b>	Wyke Farm Ltd And Andrew Hopkins Concrete Ltd
<b>Type : 01</b>	Major Dwlgls 10 or more or site 0.5ha+

The application was referred to the Area East Committee as an application meeting the definition of 'major-major'. The Committee resolved that the application should be refused in line with the officer's recommendation. This decision was ratified by the Councils Chief Executive Officer.

### Site Description and Proposal

The site lies to the north of Ansford and Castle Cary and is adjacent to the A371, known as Station Road and leading to Ansford Hill to the site's southern boundary. To the immediate north is the railway line and Castle Cary railway station. The land is currently farmland and mainly sown for winter wheat. Topographically, the site slopes down towards the north and northwest.

The site is mainly bound by existing hedgerows; there is also an established hedgerow that runs through part of it. The southern boundary is a low hedge affording views into and across the site from the A371 on Ansford Hill. On the south west corner there is a low stone wall (opposite the junction with the B3152), and there are also some dwellings to the west of the site.

On the south side adjacent to the main access there are existing farm buildings and a concrete yard. Overhead power cables run across the site. Public footpath WN 2/16 runs on the eastern side of the site, connecting the A371 to the railway station.

A number of documents have been submitted in support of the application including an indicative layout plan, access plan (access being the only issue of detail to be considered at this stage), highway estate layouts, landscaping plans, flood risk assessment and associated plans, arboricultural assessment, transport assessment and addendum, ecological assessment, geotechnical assessment, landscape and visual impact assessment, affordable housing statement, and noise assessment.

The planning application falls within the scope of Schedule 2 Section 10(b) of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations'). The Local Planning Authority is required to make a formal screening decision as to the requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment because the proposed development includes more than 200 dwellings, and the site exceeds 5 hectares. The screening opinion was issued on the 25th June 2019 and concluded that an Environmental Statement was not required.

### Planning History

There is no relevant planning history on this site to report.

### Planning Policy and Guidance

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), and Paragraphs 2 and 47 of the NPPF state that applications are to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of determining current applications the local planning authority considers that the adopted development plan comprises the policies of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (adopted March 2015) and the Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan adopted January 2018.

### Policies of the adopted South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028)

Policy SD1 - Sustainable Development  
Policy SS1 - Settlement Strategy  
Policy SS4 - District Wide Housing Provision  
Policy SS5 - Delivering New Housing Growth  
Policy SS6 - Infrastructure Delivery  
Policy LMT1 - Ansford/Castle Cary Direction of Growth  
Policy HG3 - Provision of Affordable Housing  
Policy EQ1 - Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset

Policy EQ2 - General Development  
Policy EQ3 - Historic Environment  
Policy EQ4 - Biodiversity  
Policy EQ5 - Green Infrastructure  
Policy TA1 - Low Carbon Travel  
Policy TA4 - Travel Plans  
Policy TA5 - Transport Impact of New Development  
Policy TA6 - Parking Standards  
Policy HW1 - Provision of Open Space, Outdoor Playing Space, Sports, Cultural and Community Facilities in New Development

#### Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 14th November 2019)

Policy DP1 - Development Standards and Design Principles  
Policy HOU2 - Housing Development in the Direction of Growth  
Policy TRA1 - Opportunities to development the Transport Network  
Policy TRA2 - HGV Traffic at Local Hotspots  
Policy ENV1 - Protection of Green Corridors and Natural Environment

#### National Planning Policy Framework (as revised)

Paragraph 11 notes that decisions should be apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Chapter 4 - Decision making  
Chapter 5 - Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes  
Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places  
Chapter 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment  
Chapter 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

#### National Design Guide (NDG)

The Design Guide sets out how well designed places can be achieved and forms part of the Government's collection of planning practice guidance and should be read alongside the separate planning practice guidance on design process and tools. The NDG sets out the ten characteristics of well-designed places.

#### South Somerset Historic Environment Strategy

The HES is designed to set out a 'positive strategy' to support and supplement the broad policies contained in the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028) and the NPPF. The HES is to be read alongside the policies in the Local Plan and the guidance in the NPPF and will be a material consideration in decision-taking on planning applications.

### **Consultations**

#### Ansford Parish Council

Ansford Parish Council cannot therefore support or justify this application, and firmly rejects this opportunistic proposal for the following reasons:

The proposal is non-compliant with various policies of the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.

The site is situated beyond the designated housing development area and a prime agricultural field that contributes as a resource and to the rural character of the area. It should be safeguarded from urban sprawl.

The number of new homes currently under construction far exceeds the total amount projected in the Local Plan. Further housing should not be permitted.

There is no evidence to show that this scheme passes appropriate sustainability criteria, in terms of demand for local employment, the ability for the town centre to absorb a substantial increase in the number of new residents, a lack of school places, and limited capacity at doctor & dentist surgeries.

The site is relatively detached, without a direct bus route. There will be a significant increase in car usage causing further congestion within the town centre and compounding an extent under-supply of parking.

Concerns over pedestrian safety between the site and schools and other amenities, with no marked crossing points along the busy A371 main road.

The negative features outweigh the limited benefits for the local community.

#### Castle Cary Town Council

Object. Unsustainable form of development on a site within the open countryside, outside the boundary of the settlement and not within the direction of growth or within any area proposed for development in any adopted plan or in the preferred options for emerging local plan policy. Wholly inconsistent with national and local policies for protecting the open countryside, and in particular is contrary to the NPPF para 170, policies SD1 and SS1 of the adopted Local Plan and policy HOU2 of the Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan.

Furthermore the site is in a particularly prominent location visible from the railway station and other approaches to the town from the north, thereby constituting an important part of the landscape setting of Castle Cary and Ansford; the proposal would be highly detrimental to this setting of the town and to the landscape character of the area, and

is therefore contrary to policy EQ2 of the adopted Local Plan.

#### Highway Authority

Content that there will not be a major impact on the highway infrastructure as a result of this development. Whilst a certain level of vehicular trips will be generated, the Transport Assessment shows the surrounding highway network can accommodate the level of increase. If conditions are deemed appropriate to secure improvements SCC would be in support. Require conditions to be imposed relating to highway/access construction, drainage, CEMP, gradients, parking provision, Travel Plan, and no obstruction of visibility splay above 600mm.

#### SCC as Lead Local Flood Authority

Initially objected, following further information the LLFA are in principle happy with the proposals. In the detailed design further consideration must be given to the use of SuDS for multiple benefits not just flood risk; steep sites do not preclude their use. The surface water flood map should form part of the constraints plan for the development, informing the site design. Need to ensure the scheme can be adopted (particularly at this stage). Would be uncomfortable with dwellings within the areas of risk. Further discussion needed with Network Rail to understand their requirements and how this might impact the drainage going forward. Recommend condition relating to submission of surface water drainage scheme.

#### Environment Agency

The application does not fall within their consultation parameters so please rely on the comments of the LLFA.

#### Education Authority

Ansford Academy, which is the secondary school in the catchment, currently has space available to accommodate the children from this development; therefore, we do not require contributions for secondary at this time.

There is a proposed new school with early years setting which has an allocated site approved with application ref 15/02347/OUT. This now has reserved matters submitted on the Torbay Road site. The totals below will go towards the build of that school so that the pupils from this development can be accommodated:

- o 10 x 17,074= £170,740 for early years development
- o 64 x 17,074= £1,092,736 for primary school development

#### (Sports, Arts, and Leisure

There is a requirement for:

On site provision of equipped play - centrally located LEAP of minimum size 892 m2 with buffer zones of at least 30 from activity zone to habitable room façade of nearest dwelling.

On site provision of youth facilities of minimum size of 223 sqm adjacent to the proposed LEAP with minimum buffer zones from activity zone to habitable room façade of nearest dwelling shall be at least 40 metres.

Off site contribution to the provision of new or enhancement of existing changing rooms at Donald Pither Memorial Ground.

Total financial contribution of £474,006.

#### SCC Public Rights of Way

No objection subject to appropriate surface to accommodate increased future use, secured as part of legal agreement.

Connecting link to WN2/16 to be provided. Proposed works should not encroach on the PROW; health and safety of users to be taken into account. Possible temporary diversion/closure to be authorised prior to any interference.

#### Network Rail

Network Rail can confirm that there are no capacity concerns at the station and a development of this size is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the station. Network Rail does not object to this development. There is no analysis of the development's impact on the station in the Transport Assessment (updated rail service information was submitted as an addendum).

#### Somerset Waste Partnership

Vast majority of properties have direct access to an adopted highway with the only exception being plots 182-186 inclusive, 199 & 200, so should this layout move forward then a collection point near the public highway would need to be designed in for these properties. The current documents don't appear to give details of exact gradients across the development, if the application progresses and there are steep gradients or steps to/from some of the plots then we would need to make sure this is acceptable from a collections point of view (knowing the local area here I believe this site might be quite steep in places).

#### Designing Out Crime Officer

No objection.

#### SSDC Housing

I am happy that the Housing Associations involved feel comfortable with their tenure mixes and the housing market need for this area. My only comment now would be that the affordable rent levels (inclusive of any service charges) are capped at LHA rates.

### Somerset Ecology Services

No objection to this application provided the conditions are applied relating to a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), Mitigation Compliance, Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) to be submitted (condition to provide details of requirements), Trees and Hedgerow protection, Bats/external lighting of boundaries, works to protect badgers/works, invasive non-native species protocol to be submitted, Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (BMEP).

### Wessex Water

Capacity within the Castle Cary sewerage treatment catchment is generally limited. There is not enough capacity within the receiving foul network to accommodate the additional 200 dwellings. However Wessex Water will plan and execute capacity improvements to support new approved development in accordance with the new charging arrangements as effective from June 2018. Developers will be required to meet certain infrastructure charges.

### South West Heritage

The submitted geophysical survey indicates there is potential for archaeology of local significance on the site that will require recording before being impacted by the development. This is likely to require some trial trenching and subsequent excavation of certain areas of the site. Recommend programme of works and written scheme of investigation as requested in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 199), secured by the use of the following conditions attached to any permission granted.

### SSDC Environmental Health (Noise)

Without mechanical ventilation there is potential for significant disturbance at night; all properties along the norther boundary will require mechanical ventilation.

### SSDC Streetscene

Would prefer a more centrally located green space on the site, but due to the amount of public open space proposed happy for the application to continue.

### Strategic Planning

An explanation of policies SS1, SS5, and LMT1. Ansford and Castle Cary is a Local Market Town with a housing target of 374 dwellings in the Plan period. The Local Market Town as at 31st March 2019 had exceeded that target by 291. The direction of growth is the most sustainable area for growth.

The Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan supports the delivery of strategic policies in the Local Plan including the direction of growth for the town. Policy HOU2 was highlighted which seeks to pause further housing proposals within the direction of growth without clear evidence that it will meet an identified local need in the NP area and hinterland that cannot be met elsewhere.

## **Representations**

There have been 50 responders all of whom object to the proposal (mainly local residents but including Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) and Care4Cary). The full submissions can be viewed on the Council's website; they are summarised as follows:

- o The proposal will result on development on open farmland and would add to the significant overdevelopment of Castle Cary
- o Site is outside the natural and historic boundary of the town, and straddles two distinct local landscape character areas (Upper Cary Vale and Folding Hillsides)
- o The development will harm the landscape setting of both the town and the railway station, a much loved heritage asset. The station is identified as a non-designated heritage asset of local significance, and its setting should be fully considered. The location is an entry point to Castle Cary and contributes towards rural tranquillity for visitors to the area, which would be totally spoiled by a development of 200 houses
- o There are currently more than 500 new dwellings being built, far exceeding the minimum 374 in the Local Plan. This is unsustainable in a small town. These developments should be completed first so the impact on the town can be assessed
- o Would result in insensitive over development and several hundred more dwellings being added to Castle Cary, a progressively overwhelmed market town, putting an unacceptable strain on local infrastructure, facilities and services including schools and medical. There are already three major developments taking place in the town
- o The site is too far from the centre of the town, not on a direct bus route, and not in a location where it is practical to walk to local facilities and employment. As a result the development will contribute more cars and congestion, incompatible with reducing emissions
- o There will be a huge increase in traffic, and the submitted information is questioned. Ansford Hill unsuited to accommodate the additional traffic generated, a route which is dominated by HGVs
- o Crossing the A371 is hazardous and pedestrian safety would be compromised, particularly if further crossing points are added
- o The fields in the area are often waterlogged and this winter has seen flooding, including on the A371. Building on the site would impair the flow of water still further, possibly having implications for the rail track. Development could have an impact upon the River Brue

- o Site is outside the Neighbourhood Plan and the adopted Local Plan, both of which should dictate planning decisions
- o The Council's 5 year land supply is not alone justification to grant permission for this development due to strong landscape issues
- o Proposal is not in accordance with paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies SD1, SS1 and EQ2 of the Local Plan and policy HOU2 of the Neighbourhood Plan which requires clear evidence for housing to meet a clearly identified local need
- o Construction of the scheme will mean it will be more convenient to shop elsewhere
- o Will result in loss of prime agricultural land
- o The site contains an untouched historical 18th century Turnpike Road which should have a full archaeological investigation
- o The development will bring limited or no benefits to the local community

## **OFFICER REPORT**

### Principle of Development

The site lies outside the defined settlement area of Ansford and Castle Cary as shown in the adopted Local Plan. It is not identified for further residential development. Policy LMT1 shows a direction of strategic growth for the town however, this site lies beyond this identified area for development.

The proposed development would add two-hundred dwellings to the total number of deliverable dwellings in the Plan period. This would take the total number far in excess of the figure set out by policy SS5 and would take the quantum of development out of kilter with the level of growth envisaged for the Local Market Town in policy SS1.

The extra housing would assist the Council in meeting its total district-wide housing target for the Plan period of 19,950 as set out by policy SS4.

It should also be noted that the Council has been unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, meaning paragraph 11d) of the NPPF and the 'tilted balance' is in play. This means development plan policies most important to the determination of the application are out-of-date and should be afforded them limited weight. It is considered those policies most important are those in the Local Plan policies and Neighbourhood Plan seeking to limit the distribution and quantum of housing growth. The tilted balance also means approving applications for housing unless the harm of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal.

The Council has previously received legal advice from both Counsel and our solicitor that exceedance of the minimum housing figure set out in policy SS5 should not be considered significantly and demonstrably harmful. That is unless that exceedance can be demonstrated to result in tangible planning harm. Otherwise, it amounts to exceedance of a minimum arbitrary figure in an out-of-date policy.

Therefore, the overall quantum of development of this proposal, cumulatively with others completed and committed, is not considered to be significantly and demonstrably harmful.

It should be noted that policy HOU2 of the Neighbourhood Plan is concerned solely with housing growth within the Direction of Growth as defined by Local Plan policy LMT1 of the Local Plan. The proposal falls significantly beyond the area identified as the Direction of Growth.

### Landscape and Visual Impact

The impact the development of this large site is a crucial issue to consider when determining this application. The landscape and visual impacts are to be considered carefully before making a decision on this proposal.

A large number of the objections received referred to the fact that the site will harm the landscape setting of the town to the south and the railway station to the north. It is evident that the site is open and clearly visible upon approach from the north. Physically there is a distinction between the location of the site and the settlement to the south; objectors referred to the site being beyond the "natural boundary" of the town and there is a clear transition between urban and rural when approaching the site from both directions. The ridgeline to the south of the site helps to define that transition effectively, and places this site on sloping land outside the containment that the topography provides.

The Council has worked closely with the Parish and the Town Council to best understand local opinion on the value of the site as a landscape resource, and consultants were commissioned to review the heritage impacts and the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment that was submitted in support of the application. Their response notes that whilst the LVIA broadly follows established methodology there are areas that lack clarity, which brings the judgements subsequently made into question. An important part of an LVIA is ensuring that certain receptors are chosen, and impacts upon them assessed, in a robust manner. The methodology used in defining landscape and visual receptors is questioned by the Council's consultants along with how their sensitivity to change is evaluated.

The impact upon the nature of the site is clearly significant and will change it permanently. The LVIA indicates that landscape mitigation will reduce the impact to "moderate-major adverse". It is clear that with a development of this size on open, sloping

farmland that there will be a fundamental change from the current baseline nature of the site. The impact is permanent, and considered to be major adverse.

As well as the on-site impact, the development will have a permanent and adverse impact upon the character of the area. Whilst the LVIA accepts this, the Council's consultants feel it underplays the level of negative impact. The development is deemed to have a permanent, moderate-major effect - a significant effect - on the landscape in this area. The transition northwards from the town to this site is a clear move into a rural area and essentially undeveloped area, where there is a high susceptibility and sensitivity to change. A development of 200 dwellings will impact greatly on the identified character in a locally valued landscape.

In terms of the setting of the town to the south, the LVIA notes a moderate adverse impact but the basis of the judgment is not clearly explained. As noted above there is a clear shift in character when coming out of the town and this development would inevitably add a suburban character to this area, altering the relationship between the rural and urban area. The development would result in considerable harm to the setting of the town, and of the public perceptions of the town and enjoyment of the countryside setting, by allowing development to bleed over the ridgeline onto this site. The impact upon the setting of the railway station has also been noted as a concern.

In terms of visual amenity, the LVIA notes that the impact upon views is relatively localised and that the main impacts will be to people using the highways and public rights of way in the area. The significance of the effects is an area of contention between the LVIA and the Council's consultants. It is considered that there is a permanent, major adverse - significant - effect on the visual amenity of people at the railway station, walkers of the A371 and the public footpath on the eastern edge of the site, and a major-moderate impact upon motorists, rail passengers and users of other public rights of way in the area.

It is evident that the development of this site will have a permanent, significant and demonstrable impact from a visual impact and landscape character perspective. Localised views will be permanently and adversely affected. From a development plan perspective the most relevant policy in the Local Plan is EQ2, which requires development proposals to conserve and enhance the landscape character of the area and consider the local area character and site specific considerations. It is considered that the proposal is contrary to policy EQ2 for the reasons given above.

#### Historic Environment

As aforementioned, a Heritage Assessment was commissioned. It set out a study area of a 500-metre radius. Within the study area, there are six listed buildings and a greater number of non-designated heritage assets in close proximity and within the site.

The heritage assets most affected are the non-designated heritage assets of the railway station, and the remains of the former turnpike road, which stand as an earthwork within the site.

The assessment identified that the proposed development will result in changes to the setting of the non-designated Castle Cary Station. The sense of the building as a rural station isolated from the settlement will be eroded. However, there will be no direct physical impacts to the station building. Overall, this erosion of the station's isolated rural setting is considered to result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the building, which is a non-designated heritage asset that contributes to the local character and sense of place.

Within the site is remains of the former turnpike road, which survives as an earthwork within the site and has done since the turnpike was diverted for the railway in the 18th Century. The proposed indicative layout shows development that would result in the total loss of this section of historic routeway, a non-designated heritage asset of low importance. An alternative layout could preserve this feature of the historic landscape. A programme of archaeological work was also suggested through the imposition of a condition.

Local Plan Policy EQ3 notes that "heritage assets will be conserved and where appropriate enhanced for their historic significance and important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place.... All new development proposals relating to the historic environment will be expected to safeguard or where appropriate enhance the significance, character, setting and local distinctiveness of heritage assets...".

The NPPF paragraph 197 states that "in weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset." The harm to Castle Cary Station is not considered to approach "substantial" (for which greater justification would be required to reflect the additional policy tests that such harm requires for designated heritage assets). However, the proposals are in conflict with the South Somerset Historic Environment Strategy, which notes that "The Council may support development proposals that would affect a local heritage asset or its setting, where it is demonstrated that the development proposal will not harm the historic, architectural, cultural, or landscape interest."

Overall, the proposal is contrary to policy EQ3 and the Council's Historic Environment Strategy but the harm identified is 'less than substantial' and would be outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme. The proposal is not therefore, in respect of the impact of the heritage assets, considered to be contrary to the NPPF.

### Site Layout and Design

The application is in outline only and access is the only matter not reserved for future consideration. An indicative layout plan has been submitted along with plans showing the estate road layout and landscaping. These demonstrate that the site can accommodate 200 dwellings with a considerable amount of open space, although it is possible that at detailed design stage some alterations would have to be made to best accommodate the development upon the site's topography.

A number of landscaping plans have been provided based upon this illustrative layout, and show the retention of a large part of the existing hedge and the substantial oak, a number of new native trees (with the potential for additional climbers/shrubs), grassed amenity space, pedestrian paths, and areas of green frontage between dwellings and the estate road.

A plan of the access arrangement with a 4.5m x 90m splay has been submitted for consideration. This will result in the provision of a footway, widened carriageway and the removal/setting back of the existing vegetation (and concrete block wall) on the frontage.

### Transport/Access

The application was supported by a number of indicative estate road layouts and a Transport Assessment, which audits the suitability of a number of routes in the locality and provides information relating to the highway use, includes peak time modelling for the site itself based on 200 units. An addendum was also provided which set out the rail services available at Castle Cary Station, along with the view that the development will generate more customers of those services with the majority accessing the station by foot.

The issue of transport is an important one; in particular, the potential impact upon the A371 as the adopted Neighbourhood Plan notes, in Policy TRA2, Ansford Hill as a HGV Hotspot, and therefore an additional access onto it requires careful consideration.

A Walking, Cycling and Horse-riding Assessment Review has been undertaken; this considers collision data (noting six Personal Injury Accidents during the last five year period in the vicinity of the site, only one of which involved a non-motorised vehicle user). It notes the availability of bus and rail services and reviews the multi-modal trip generation information. The report assesses the "walkability" of a number of local services and assesses the available routes and their quality. A link from the development to public right of way WN2/16, which will allow pedestrians to access the railway station as well as provide an alternative route towards the town.

Whilst the Highway Authority consultation response notes that cycling and walking infrastructure improvements would be welcomed as part of the development, secured via an appropriate condition/ legal agreement, it is considered that the development has suitable connectivity and subject to certain linkages/improvements the development could be considered acceptable from this perspective. It is noted that a travel plan would also be required, secured via obligation. The proposed access from the A371 on Ansford Hill is acceptable (subject to construction and gradient details being submitted and approved).

There has been discussion about provision of a pedestrian/cycle crossing. However, it has been accepted that this is not required from this particular development as it was a requirement of the Wayside Farm planning application (ref. 14/05623/OUT), which was granted on appeal and is underway.

### Drainage

The application is supported by a number of documents, including plans and a Flood Risk Assessment, to allow consideration of the potential drainage implications of developing this site. The site is not within a Critical Drainage Area, and is within Flood Zone 1. Some ponding was noted on part of the site, and the FRA indicates this would have been caused by the railway embankment and boundary wall on the site, combined with non-permeable strata. The drainage strategy indicates an attenuated drainage system designed to 1 in 100 years plus 40% for climate change (and would mean the introduction of a drainage system would remove the ponding effect that has been evident).

The proposed solution can provide betterment and would be designed in accordance with best practice, the West of England Sustainable Drainage Developers Guide that the LLFA has adopted, and CIRIA 753 (SUDS manual). The LLFA has recommended a condition if planning permission is granted.

### Ecology

An Ecological Impact Assessment was undertaken and records the results of a survey, which noted the existence of habitats and species on the site. It notes the species-poor hedgerow across the site has a value for bats, the existence of a badger sett and latrine, and other species present/using, or potentially using, the site.

The planning system requires biodiversity net gain to be delivered through decision-making. If this application were to be deemed acceptable it would be necessary to ensure measures are implemented that provide for net gain. The Ecological consultee has recommended a number of conditions that should be imposed on any grant of planning permission to manage the construction phase and to provide for biodiversity net gain and ongoing habitat provision.

## Noise

As the site is located adjacent to the busy A371 Station Road and in close proximity to the main railway line, a Noise Impact Assessment was undertaken and submitted in support of the application. The northeast aspect was chosen as the most appropriate location to provide a worst-case scenario in terms of potential impact upon the proposed residences.

The Assessment recommends, with reference to British Standard 8233:2014 "Guidance on Sound Insulation and Noise Reduction for Buildings" and WHO guidelines, that mechanical ventilation is installed throughout the proposed development to ensure that residents are not reliant on open windows that may compromise sound insulation performance (as inevitably windows and trickle vents are a weak point in terms of sound insulation on a façade). Glazing requirements are also proposed to limit noise impacting on residents. The Assessment notes that windows can of course be opened at the occupants' discretion.

Subject to a condition in line with the above, the Environmental Health Officer was satisfied with the scheme.

## Obligations

The Education Authority would be seeking £1,263,476 early years and primary school development.

The Heads of Terms submitted suggest it would be willing to pay also for 28 secondary places, amounting to £696,108 based on pre-application advice sought from the Education Authority. However, this application benefits from more up-to-date advice so only the amount given above for early years and primary education could be sought.

Policy HG3 of the adopted Local Plan applies and this requires 35% of the dwellings to be affordable, subject to viability. An Affordable Housing Statement has been submitted with the application and notes that of the 70 affordable units that would be provided, 56 of them would be social or affordable rented (80%) and 20% would be starter homes.

The Heads of Terms states that a local equipped area of play (LEAP) and a youth facility will be provided on-site. The LEAP would be 892m<sup>2</sup> based on 2m<sup>2</sup> per person, with 446 people from 200 dwellings), and the on-site youth facility would be 223m<sup>2</sup> (based on 0.5m<sup>2</sup> per person).

The agent was originally prepared for the developer to provide the LEAP and youth facility (including the relevant equipment) but later agreed to pay the financial contribution of £474,006 instead.

The Highway Authority proposed that the following be secured through a S106 on grant of outline consent:

- o Travel Plan
- o New access road with right turn lane generally in accordance with drawing number 0720 P2 although the footways should be no less than 2m in width
- o Links to the public footpath to the north east and the station (Please see note below)
- o A range of internal cycleway/footway routes providing site permeability
- o Improvement of the existing footway along the Ansford Hill frontage to no less than 2m wide
- o As appropriate, a suitable formal pedestrian/cyclist crossing point in the South West corner of the site linking to existing infrastructure southwards on B3152 Station Road

As stated above, the latter point regarding a crossing is not deemed to be reasonable given the obligation placed on Wayside Farm planning application (ref. 14/05623/OUT), which was granted on appeal and is underway.

The developer has agreed to resurface the footpath along the eastern boundary of the site, from the railway station gate at the northern end of the footpath to the junction with Ansford Hill at the southern end.

In further discussions with the agent, it has also been agreed that the developer would be willing to provide new street lighting - subject to them being sensitively designed and appropriate to the peri-rural location of the site - to enhance pedestrian and cycle safety.

The scheme would also be liable for CIL at the reserved matters stage.

## Conclusion

The site is currently open farmland and lies on sloping land beyond the ridgeline that helps to contain the northern extremity of the settlement. The topography helps to define an obvious distinction between the built development of the town and the open countryside; this site is clearly in the open countryside that frames the setting of the town and as such development of this site for residential purposes would extend into the open countryside in a visually intrusive manner. The application is therefore contrary to Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028), Policy DP1 of the Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood Plan, and paragraph 170 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The development of 200 dwellings on this site would have social and economic benefits including the contribution of affordable housing and open market housing to district-wide housing supply, increased patronage of local services, increased



linkages of the Local Market Town to the train station, and those benefits associated with construction. However, the adverse impacts upon the landscape and local character of the town would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Permission should therefore be refused.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Refuse