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Land East of Station
Road, Ansford,
Castle Cary,
Somerset

Landscape and
Visual Evidence

Prepared by: Mrs
Clare Brockhurst FLI,
BSc (Hons), Dip LA

Volume 1: Text

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Author: Clare Brockhurst FLI



Tyler Grange

Volume 1: Text

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Section 1: Introduction

Introduction of the Witness

- 1.1. I am Clare Brockhurst, a founding partner of Tyler Grange LLP. Within my technical area of expertise I specialise in landscape and visual planning matters and the design of strategic Green Infrastructure (GI). I appear at this inquiry on behalf of The Silverwood Partnership, the appellant.
- 1.2. I have a Bachelor of Science Honours degree in landscape management from the University of Reading and a post graduate diploma in landscape architecture from the University of Central England (Birmingham). I completed and passed my professional practice examinations and became a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) in 1997. I was invited to apply for, and was made a Fellow of the LI (FLI) in 2007 in recognition of my contribution to the profession in the field of landscape planning.
- 1.3. I have sat on the LI's policy and awards committees and was an elected member of Council. I am also a Pathway to Chartership mentor and this year I am a judge for the LI's award for the Strategic Landscape Planning category.
- 1.4. I started my career as an in-house landscape architect for Bovis Homes where I gained an understanding of the house building process and the effects of development on the landscape. I was responsible primarily for the design of open space and the management of land and component features being adopted by local authorities. I then joined CPM- Countryside Planning and Management as a graduate in 1997. During my time with CPM I worked with a large number of commercial developers on a range of new housing schemes ranging from small scale infill development proposals from 15 to 50 dwellings to strategic sites up to 5,000 units. In 2007 I became Managing Director of Waterman CPM (after the company was acquired by Waterman Group plc).
- 1.5. I was the lead landscape witness for the Countryside Agency at the inquiry into the designation of the South Downs National Park. I gave evidence at over 250 informal hearings and have extensive knowledge of landscape characterisation and assessing valued landscapes.
- 1.6. I, along with three colleagues, set up Tyler Grange LLP in 2010. The practice has grown from the original four partners to a team of 50 consultants across five offices. Since starting the business I have been involved in assessing landscape and visual effects and designing Green Infrastructure for a number of new housing developments including those in rural locations and edge of settlement. These include a new settlement extension for 4,500 dwellings within a strategic multifunctional landscape in Leicester, 30 new dwellings on the edge of a Conservation Area in the South Downs National Park and 250 units in North Devon, incorporating ecological and landscape enhancements.
- 1.7. A detailed CV of relevant projects is contained at **Appendix 1**.



- 1.8. In addition to the 250 appearances during the year-long SDNP inquiry, I have been called as an expert witness at formal planning inquiries on over 45 occasions, including giving evidence on behalf of councils', local community groups and developers.

Instruction

- 1.9. I was instructed by the appellant in August 2016 after they had been informed that their original witness would be unable to appear at this inquiry due to personal commitments.
- 1.10. I have read the work prepared by Nicholas Pearson Associates (NPA) and visited the site and can confirm that my understanding and appreciation of the site is reflected by the contents of the report which accompanied the planning application.

Scope of my Evidence

- 1.11. In order to prepare my evidence for this inquiry I have undertaken the following tasks:
- i. Review of the material prepared by Nicholas Pearson Associates and the appellant's team as related to landscape, views and outline approach;
 - ii. Review of the Castle Cary Peripheral Landscape Study, 2008;
 - iii. Review of the Committee Report;
 - iv. Review and consideration of the layouts for the consented schemes in the Direction of Growth Area (DoG);
 - v. Review of the relevant policies referenced in the Reason for Refusal; and
 - vi. Further fieldwork and analysis as necessary.
- 1.12. Within my evidence, where appropriate, I make reference to published best practice guidance for considering landscape and visual matters, this comprises:
- Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition, LI and IEMA, 2013 (GLVIA 3); and
 - An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment, Natural England (AALCA), October 2014.
- 1.13. Based on the Reasons for Refusal and the Council's Statement of Case my evidence addresses the following matters:
- Whether there are any landscape and visual constraints which are so significant that development of the Appeal Site is unacceptable 'in-principle';
 - The relationship of the appeal site to the extant extents of Castle Cary; and
 - Whether the proposals comply with the relevant parts of the Framework and policies of the local plan.



1.14. My evidence is structured as follows:

Volume 1 - Text

- i. Section 1: Introduction;
- ii. Section 2: Policy Context;
- iii. Section 3: Landscape and Visual Character of the Appeal Site;
- iv. Section 4: Analysis of the Reason for Refusal; and
- v. Section 5: Summary and Conclusions.

Volume 2 – Appendices and Plans

- 1.15. In relation to the planning history of this site, the planning balance and other planning related matters I direct the inspector to the evidence of Mr Des Dunlop of D2 Planning who is appearing on behalf of the appellant.
- 1.16. The evidence I have prepared represents my professional opinion on the objective and subjective aspects of the development and the Council's reason for refusal. Based on my knowledge, I believe the facts stated in this evidence are true and accurate and I have complied with my professional code of conduct.



Section 2: Policy Context

- 2.1. This section of my evidence will address those policies cited in the Reason for Refusal (RfR) as relevant to the consideration of landscape matters. The evidence of Mr Dunlop of D2 Planning sets out the planning history, current planning context as a whole, the weight to be applied to the adopted and emerging policies and the planning balance that needs to be made in respect of this appeal.

Policy Issues

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.2. I understand that the NPPF (the Framework) should be read as a whole to appreciate the context of the Government's national planning policy.
- 2.3. As a point of fact the site is not covered by specific polices listed in the NPPF, paragraph 14, footnote 9 which indicate that development should be restricted, including:
- SSSI;
 - Green Belt;
 - Local Green Space;
 - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
 - Heritage Coast; and
 - National Park.
- 2.4. NPPF 17 sets out the Core Planning Principles. NPPF 17(v) requires account to be taken of the different roles and character of different areas, "recognising" the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it. A distinction can be drawn with NPPF 109, which seeks to "protect" only valued landscapes (rather than the whole of the countryside for its own sake).
- 2.5. Section 7 is entitled 'Requiring Good Design'. What is critical in reading this part of national policy is that the appeal has been made in outline, with all matters reserved save for the point of access. Therefore the design, appearance and internal road layout and connectivity are yet to be considered in detail. Section 7 of the NPPF is not relevant in light of the reason for refusal and the Council's comments on the planning application.
- 2.6. Section 11 of the NPPF specifically sets out the policy framework for conservation of the natural environment. Whilst this section is not specifically relied upon in the reason for refusal the first paragraph in this section (Paragraph 109) seeks to protect and enhance 'valued landscapes'. Unlike its predecessors, the NPPF does not seek to protect the intrinsic beauty of the countryside for its own sake. Rather, it seeks to protect "valued landscapes". This is not a term which is defined in the NPPF.
- 2.7. Paragraph 109 of the Framework seeks to protect and enhance 'valued landscapes'. This is not specifically cited in the first reason for refusal and there is no suggestion by the



Council that the appeal site lies within or is a 'valued' landscape (for the purposes of the NPPF). Indeed in the landscape analysis of the application (Committee Report un-numbered) there is no mention of the site being part of, or within, a valued landscape. That is, of course, consistent with the identification of the site lying within the Direction of Growth. I address this matter in more detail in the following sections.

South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (Adopted March 2015)

2.8. Policy EQ2 states:

“Development will be designed to achieve a high quality, which promotes South Somerset’s local distinctiveness and preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the district.

Development proposals, extensions and alterations to existing buildings, structures and places will be considered against:

- *Sustainable construction principles;*
- *Creation of quality places;*
- *Conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area;*
- *Reinforcing local distinctiveness and respect local context;*
- *Creating safe environments addressing crime prevention and community safety;*
- *Having regard to South Somerset District Council’s published Development Management advice and guidance; and*
- *Making efficient use of land whilst having regard to:*
 - *Housing demand and need;*
 - *Infrastructure and service availability;*
 - *Accessibility;*
 - *Local area character;*
 - *Site specific considerations*

Innovative designs delivering low energy usage and/or wastage will be encouraged. Development must not risk the integrity of internationally, nationally or locally designated wildlife and landscape sites. Development proposals should protect the residential amenity of neighbouring properties and new dwellings should provide acceptable residential amenity space in accordance with Policy HW1.”

2.9. Policy EQ5 states:

“The Council will promote the provision of Green Infrastructure throughout the district, based upon the enhancement of existing areas including public open space, accessible woodland, and river corridors, and by ensuring that development provides open spaces and green corridor links between new and existing green spaces. Development proposals should provide and/or maintain a network of connected and multifunctional open spaces that, where appropriate, meet the following requirements:



- *Create new habitats and connects existing wildlife areas to enrich biodiversity & promote ecological coherence;*
- *Provide and/or maintain an accessible network of green spaces and improve recreational opportunities, including environmental education, local food production and support physical health and mental wellbeing;*
- *Ensure that all children and young people have reasonable access to a range of play and leisure opportunities;*
- *Provide and/or maintain opportunities for enhanced, attractive walking and cycling routes linking urban areas and the wider countryside;*
- *Enhance and/or maintain the character and local distinctiveness of the landscape;*
- *Contribute to and/or maintain local identity and sense of place;*
- *Increase the district's tree cover;*
- *Help mitigate the consequences of climate change (sustainable drainage systems, shade etc.); and*
- *Alleviate current and future potential visitor and recreation pressure/disturbance to internationally designated conservation areas.*

Existing Green Infrastructure will be protected against any adverse impact of development proposals. If loss of existing green infrastructure assets is unavoidable in order to accommodate necessary development, appropriate mitigation for the loss will be required. Development should include green infrastructure of an appropriate type, standard and size and be designated at least to meet Natural England 'Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard' (ANGSt) or otherwise appropriately contribute to improving access to natural greenspace such that the overall aims are met."

2.10. I would make the following observations in respect of these two policies. These are policies which seek through the design process to create and deliver new Green Infrastructure and deliver high quality development. Both of these issues can be addressed through a suitably worded condition.

2.11. These policies do not place restrictions on the location of new development or address landscape or visual constraints to development. They do not protect or define settlement setting's or any perceived 'green gaps'.

The Approach of the Council

Identification of Sites

2.12. In 2008 the Council undertook analysis of the landscape around Castle Cary¹ to identify land that has capacity for development in respect of the character of the towns' landscape context and the visual relationship between the town's edge and the open land. The

¹ Peripheral Landscape Study (PLS)



purpose of the PLS was to find suitable sites of development and assess the capacity of the settlement fringe to accommodate new development in a landscape-sympathetic manner. The PLS purposes does not extend to considering the detailed effects of development and its remit ends at the point of identifying sites suitable for development.

- 2.13. This study concluded (Figure - 5 Landscape Capacity Castle Cary, extract at **Appendix 2**) that the North West quadrant of the study in the main has moderate capacity to accommodate development, with small pockets of lower capacity or higher capacity.
- 2.14. Following this study the Council concluded that the generally heavily constrained context to Castle Cary meant that the Direction of Growth (DoG) for the settlement would be in this North West quadrant, extending no further than the A371.
- 2.15. In the EIP Inspector's report² the DoG to the north of the town was accepted and at paragraph 108 Inspector Hogger noted:
- "The policies for sustainable development in the local market towns are reasonable, based on a proportionate evidence base and are sound in all respects."*
- 2.16. The adopted local plan and the Inspector's Report have both relied upon and ultimately endorsed the findings of the Peripheral Landscape Study which formed part of the 'proportional evidence base' and as such evidence as to the suitability for new housing within the Appeal Site it is of material weight.
- 2.17. Subsequently, new housing development has been permitted on three sites within this quadrant; these are shown on **Plan 1: Permitted Development Context (10622_P01c)** in my **Volume 2**. One of these developments (C on Plan 1) (165 units) is on land classified as being of 'High' or 'Moderate-High' capacity to accommodate development. The smaller scheme prepared by Elan Homes (A) is on land classified as being of 'Moderate-Low' capacity to accommodate development. Finally, the 75 unit scheme west of Station Road (B) is within land classified as being of 'Moderate' capacity to accommodate development, the same level of classification as the appeal site. The status of the various planning submissions is addressed in the evidence of D2 Planning.
- 2.18. The presence of these areas of new housing areas forms the extant baseline. I am not aware of any evidence to suggest that they will not be developed in the short term. As addressed in the evidence of Mr Dunlop, Yarlinton Homes have confirmed they will start construction of B in January 2017. Any further changes must be considered against what is currently permitted in this locale. As noted at paragraph 7.2 of the PLS "*that those areas categorised as high and moderate-high capacity, and in a credible relationship with the town, should be investigated as potential development sites.*" (My emphasis). The appeal site has a direct and immediate relationship with Castle Cary with the development of the consented schemes.
- 2.19. The PLS has not been updated since the grant of consent for development on these areas of land. This is an important omission in the process as the settlement edge is not in the

² Report on the Examination into the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028, David Hogger, 8 January 2008

same location as considered in the 2008 study and the landscape and visual relationship is now different.

- 2.20. The Appeal Site is not located in an area constrained by any strategic or green gap. The RfR is misleading in this respect as the appeal proposals do not offend any relevant policy or planning aspirations. In fact suggesting that the land is in a 'gap' contradicts the conclusions of the PLS which is that the appeal site is within an area suitable to accommodate development.

Committee Report

- 2.21. The relationship of the appeal site has to be considered against the 'new' settlement edge which extends up to and opposite the appeal site (with the recently consented schemes). The character of the landscape has changed since 2008 with the grant of planning consent for up to 275 new dwellings; as has the visual relationship between the town's edge and the open landscape.
- 2.22. The Appeal Site is not isolated from the built form of Castle Cary as suggested in the committee report (unreferenced but within the section headed 'Landscape Impact'). In addition since the writing of the committee report, further changes have been approved and the Well Farm development is not the only approved scheme in the DoG.
- 2.23. Within the committee report the issue of landscape 'acceptability' is considered in the final paragraph under the heading 'Cumulative Impact of Level of Development in Castle Cary/Ansford'. This states that:

"Accordingly, it is logical to take the view that this scheme, to be acceptable in landscape terms should only come forward as part of, or subsequent to 15/02347/OUT and 15/02388/OUT. If that view is taken the 'cumulative' assessment is of up to 473 dwellings in Castle Cary/Ansford – i.e. the 75 dwelling proposed by this application plus the 158 built/committed and the 240 proposed by applications 15/02347/OUT and 15/02388/OUT. This would be 99, or 26.5%, over the minimum identified. On this basis it is not considered that it could reasonably be argued that the delivery of an additional 75 much needed houses (including affordable homes) is so at odds with the level of development envisaged by policy SS5 that permission should be withheld." (My emphasis)

- 2.24. It is the case that the appeal site will come forward alongside the consented schemes as detailed above and described in the evidence of D2 Planning. It is clear that there is no 'in-principle' objection on landscape grounds to development in the location of the appeal site, it is a matter of timing of delivery. There is simply no evidence to support the LPA's contention that the other sites will not be developed (now that they are consented). On this basis, there is no substance to the LPA's reason for refusal.



Section 3: Landscape and Visual Character of the Appeal Site

Landscape Character

- 3.1. For the purposes of my evidence I recognise 'Landscape' as defined by the European Landscape Convention, 2000 (ELC):
- "...an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".*
- 3.2. Landscape character is defined in the GLVIA 3 as:
- "The distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse".*
- 3.3. The process of classifying landscapes into landscape character areas and types is a judgement free one. The classification does not indicate landscape value.
- 3.4. The landscape character of the appeal site and wider context was considered in the Preliminary Landscape and Visual Appraisal (PLVA) undertaken by Nicholas Pearson Associates. Within the PLVA the assessor concluded that certain fields within the study area were not suitable for development³ (the relic orchard, former orchard and pasture and the rising land which separated Castle Cary from Ansford), and as a result the Appeal Site is limited to a single field. This analysis was consistent with the capacity findings from the 2008 PLS prepared by the Council.
- 3.5. The landscape character of the site is described in Section 3.0 of the PLVA.
- 3.6. In considering the effects on the character of the landscape (in the context of the extant baseline) it is important to acknowledge that change in itself does not equal 'harm'. The effects of any new development need to be considered in light of the existing context, which in this instance includes the relationship of the site to the existing townscape, not simply the undeveloped pasture. This change is also considered in relation to the scale of the proposals and the extent to which the effects would be registered beyond the site and within the wider landscape. The importance of understanding this context and the effect of change has been explored in other appeals.
- 3.7. Inspector Nicholson in the Milverton Road, Wellington⁴ appeal considered the issue of development and the effects on landscape character areas as well as site specific effects, he noted at paragraph 33:

³ Paragraphs 1.4 and 5.16 of the PLVA

⁴ APP/D3315/A/12/2170249, December 2012



“There can be little doubt that the change from farmland to housing would have a dramatic effect on the character of the field. However, there are developments further to the south and may be more to the east. Given its location on the cusp of different designations⁵, the change of use of the site would not so much alter the character of the areas within which it currently lies as to change the character of the site itself to that of the nearby urban areas of Wellington. While the site is part of the wider, pleasant countryside it is also unremarkable”. (My emphasis)

- 3.8. In Homelands⁶, which was also reviewed by the Secretary of State the inspector noted at paragraph 14.36 that:

“...There is every reason to accept that the proposals would result in a pleasant, if very different, environment...”

- 3.9. In this instance development of the Appeal Site will ‘move’ the edge of Castle Cary slightly further North East of its current position, with the character of the land changing to reflect the character of the existing and consented settlement edge. The aim of the appellant is to create an attractive and well-designed environment which would be a pleasant location to live in.
- 3.10. Within the PLVA Nicholas Pearson Associates included a plan entitled Figure 4: Landscape Design Principles⁷ which illustrates how the key landscape features would be retained. I have developed this further to illustrate how development can respond to its context and include Green Infrastructure to benefit the residents and to facilitate a transition from the settlement edge to the rural hinterland (**Plan 2: Landscape Strategy, (10622_P02b), Volume 2**).
- 3.11. With the exception of facilitating the access road all existing trees and hedgerows will be retained and where appropriate reinforced.

Visual Character

- 3.12. The extent of the visibility of the appeal site has been explored in the PLVA (Sections 4.0 and 5.0). Generally the appeal site is well contained by landform, housing and mature vegetation so that the area of visual influence of the appeal site is limited in extent. As a result the greatest degree of visual change will be experienced by people close to the site.
- 3.13. The response of the Council’s Landscape Architect does not highlight any visual issues or viewpoints that are not addressed in the PLVA.

⁵ There were no designations but this is a terminology issue the site was located at the interface of a number of landscape character area classifications.

⁶ APP/G1630/A/11/2146206, 2148635 & 2159796, July 2012

⁷ It is noted that the appellant was also the promoter of the land to the west of Station Road (14/02020/OUT) and the outline application was made and consented with a masterplan or Landscape Framework plan.

Section 4: Analysis of the Reason for Refusal

- 4.1. As noted in the introduction to my evidence there are a number of ‘issues’ noted in the first reason for refusal, I now address each of these in turn.

Whether the proposals comply with the relevant parts of the Framework and policies of the local plan

- 4.2. As noted above in terms of Paragraph 14 of the Framework the site is ‘unconstrained’. The landscape issues contained with Section 7 of the Framework can be addressed and benefits delivered through appropriately worded conditions.
- 4.3. The Site is not subject to any ‘value’ designation. It is not the subject of any statutory designation or local landscape policy which is based on condition or quality criteria. Indeed it is in a location which the Council has considered appropriate for settlement growth, informed by a landscape and visual study. No issue of ‘value’ has been raised in the Council’s evidence base or in the processing/determination of the application.
- 4.4. GLVIA 3, which has been published since the PLS was prepared, makes clear in paragraph 5.26 that:

“The fact that an area of landscape is not designated either nationally or locally does not mean that it does not have any value”.

- 4.5. ‘Having value’ and being a ‘valued landscape’ are not inter-changeable terms. A landscape may have a degree of local value but that does not equate to possessing value sufficient to reach and surpass the necessary threshold to be ‘valued’ by a particular community at either a local or national scale and therefore paragraph 109 is triggered. This is a matter that has been considered at appeal⁸, where the inspector concluded at paragraph 21:

“However, it nonetheless remains that the Taw Estuary is not covered by either a national or local landscape designation, including identification as an “area of great landscape value” in the LP, and the appeal site is not close to any such designations. I therefore consider that the Council’s reference to an appeal decision in the Slad valley near Stroud offers little comparison to the circumstances at the appeal site. Furthermore, I find merit in the submission that to be of value, the landscape needs to be something more than the ordinary. I therefore generally share the assessment of the appellant that the landscape at the appeal location has a primarily local value. Accordingly, it is my judgment, based on the evidence before me, that the appeal site does not form part of a “valued landscape” which would benefit from specific protection in accordance with paragraph 109 of the NPPF.

⁸ Appeal Ref: APP/X1118/A/14/2224465, Mead Park, Bickington, decision released May 2015

- 4.6. Furthermore is the fact that any measure of value needs to be applied in the context of the Government's objective to support sustainable development. This matter was addressed by Inspector Pope⁹, at paragraph 26:

"Whilst some residents consider the appeal site to be an attractive area of countryside, all landscapes have some value. From everything that I have seen, heard and read, this 3.66 ha area of land is rather unremarkable and there is no cogent evidence to substantiate the LPA's argument that it forms part of a valued landscape to which paragraph 109 of 'the Framework' applies. There is greater force in the appellant's argument that unless some objective landscape assessment is undertaken, arguments concerning valued landscapes could be applied to all sites where development is proposed. This, in turn, would be likely to frustrate the Government's objective to boost significantly the supply of housing".

- 4.7. Notwithstanding this position, paragraph 5.27 of the GLVIA 3 notes:

"Where local designations are not in use a fresh approach may be needed. As a starting point reference to existing Landscape Character Assessments and associated planning policies and/or landscape strategies and guidelines may give an indication of which landscape types or areas, or individual elements or aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are particularly valued. A stated strategy of landscape conservation is usually a good indicator of this".

- 4.8. In considering the value of the landscape the following aspects of the landscape are noted¹⁰ as relevant in the assessment process:

Landscape Quality (condition): A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements;

Scenic Quality: The term used to describe landscapes which appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual senses);

Rarity: The presence of rare features and elements in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type;

Representativeness: Whether the landscape contains a particular character, and/or features and elements, which are considered particularly important examples;

Conservation interests: The presence of features of wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of a landscape as well as having value in their own right;

Recreation value: Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important;

⁹ APP/D0840/A/14/2222789, Porthpean Road, St Austell, January 2015

¹⁰ GLVIA 3, Box 5.1, Page 84

Perceptual aspects: A landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities and/or tranquillity;

Associations: Some landscapes are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or event in history that contribute to perceptions of natural beauty of the area.”

- 4.9. For each of these considerations there is a range from ‘good’ through ‘ordinary’ to ‘poor’ in terms of the landscapes performance against these criteria. In the table below these issues are considered in relation to the site.

Table TG1

Criteria	Observations/Comments
Landscape Quality	<p>The Site in its current condition generally reflects the local character area in terms of typical features particularly the hedgerows, and occasional mature trees, including Oak trees. With the consented development the appeal site will be an edge of settlement location.</p> <p>The hedgerows bounding the site are representative of the wider area but are not in themselves particularly special they have been regularly managed as part of the agricultural operations. Within the consented schemes hedgerows are retained within the housing development and therefore are components of the settlement structure.</p> <p>Overall the site is of ordinary quality.</p>
Scenic Quality	<p>The Site has a distinct sense of place as being a location on the edge of a settlement (due to the consented scheme) within a developed and settled landscape, with the existing housing on Station Road and on the ridge at Ansford affecting the perception of the landscape in this location.</p> <p>The degree of enclosure afforded by the mature hedgerows and housing combined with the landform and limited public access limits the opportunity to appreciate the wider landscape.</p> <p>Visual links to off-site features such as the church spire and traditional orchard enhance the scenic quality.</p> <p>As a result of these matters the scenic quality is ordinary to good.</p>
Rarity	<p>As noted above the landscape of the site is consistent of the wider landscape character area and as such the features present are typical and not rare locally or at a broader scale. There are no locally rare elements associated with the Site. The landscape is ordinary in this respect.</p>
Representativeness	<p>Whilst the site possesses locally typical features such as the hedgerows, these are not considered to be especially important and have not been protected in their own right as important examples of their type.</p>



	There is nothing exceptional associated with the Site. The site is ordinary in this regard.
Conservation Interests	<p>The nature conservation interests of the site are limited to the boundaries and occasional trees. No significant ecological constraints are identified in relation to the site.</p> <p>There is no evidence that indicates an historic dimension that is significant in respect of the site.</p> <p>Overall the conservation interests are ordinary, varying locally and across the site.</p>
Recreational Value	There is no public access to the site and no recreational activities associate with this land. The appeal site has poor recreational value .
Perceptual Aspects	<p>The proximity of the settlement edge both in terms of the established and new housing, railway line, road junction and highways infrastructure affect how this site is perceived.</p> <p>This is not a wild or tranquil landscape which tends to be valued by the public allowing a sense of 'getting away from it all'. This is a settlement edge location.</p> <p>This aspect is considered to be ordinary.</p>
Associations	There are no known associations which would indicate a strong and important link between this landscape and its historic or current appreciation.

- 4.10. Having considered the key elements related to value there is nothing associated with the Site that makes this land as a whole more than ordinary and valued no higher than of local importance. This conclusion is, of course, entirely consistent with the identification of this area as forming part of the Direction of Growth. Based on this analysis undertaken in compliance with professional guidance and established through previous appeal decisions I do not consider that the Appeal Site is a Valued Landscape and paragraph 109 of the Framework does not apply.
- 4.11. This was not a matter considered in the committee report and no conclusion was made by the officers in respect of the value of the landscape, the officer was silent on this matter. This would have been the most appropriate mechanism for the Council to express its view on the value of the landscape.
- 4.12. On this basis I consider that the proposals comply with the relevant paragraphs in the Framework relating to landscape matters.
- 4.13. At a local level the appeal site is within the Direction of Growth area and is located in a sweep of land classified as having 'moderate' capacity to accommodate new development (cross refer to Plan). This is consistent with other land parcels which have been granted



consent for development and as such there is an apparent acceptance that the policy context which is common to these sites is not offended by the development of new housing.

- 4.14. Specifically, in terms of the local plan policies EQ2 and EQ5 development of the Appeal Site can respond to the character of the area, specifically its edge of the settlement location and relationship with the new development West of Station Road. The proposals can incorporate and deliver new, accessible Green Infrastructure which can be designed to enhance the biodiversity within the site through the inclusion of new tree planting, appropriate meadow flowers and fruiting tree species.
- 4.15. The provision of orchard planting within the appeal site will continue and connect key landscape components.
- 4.16. With the inclusion of a suitably worded condition the objectives of policies EQ2 and EQ5 can be delivered and the proposals are policy compliant.
- 4.17. It should be noted that despite the Council's reference in the committee report to 'green gap' it is a matter of fact that there is no adopted or emerging policy that protects the appeal site or the landscape in this location as a 'gap' or 'green wedge'. Policies EQ2 and EQ5 are not 'gap' policies. Further, the site does not form part of any Green Belt.

Whether there are any landscape and visual constraints which are so significant that development of the Appeal Site is unacceptable 'in-principle'

- 4.18. It is factually correct that the development proposed in this appeal will change an area of settlement edge landscape to settlement. However, that is the result of any new housing on a greenfield site, no matter what the size of scale of the development is. Such a change as a matter of principle is not a reason to object to the appeal proposals particularly given the Council's conclusion that the Appeal Site is within an area suitable for settlement expansion, is of a moderate capacity to accommodate the nature of change proposed and that the landscape effects will be acceptable if the appeal site is delivered alongside the other consented schemes (see Section 2 above).
- 4.19. Existing key landscape features will be retained and new landscape measures can be incorporated to minimise visual effects on road and footpath uses and filter views from existing residential properties.
- 4.20. I agree that the appeal proposals will extend development beyond currently consented built edge. However the extent of the development, coupled with the fact it complements the local area and characteristics, and its effects are limited to that area already influenced by the existing settlement, results in change which is appropriate and acceptable.



The relationship of the appeal site to the existing extent of Castle Cary

- 4.21. At the time of preparing the 2008 PLS, the appeal site was part of a series of fields which lay some distance from the edge of Castle Cary. Since that study was completed and the Council determined that the landscape in this quadrant was the least constrained to accept new housing development permission has been granted for up to 275 dwellings with associated open space and new planting.
- 4.22. The settlement edge is now directly opposite the appeal site on the western side of Station Road (site B on Plan 1) which links Castle Cary with the outlying road frontage properties on Station Road.
- 4.23. The provision of new housing as part of an extension to the existing settlement does not introduce uncharacteristic or incongruent features into this location. The local landform ensures that the effects of this change are limited and do not extend into the wider countryside area or affect open countryside from which the effects of settlement are not already apparent.



Section 5: Summary and Conclusions

- 5.1. I am a qualified landscape consultant and Fellow of the Landscape Institute with extensive experience relevant to this inquiry. I have considered the matters in the first reason for refusal and the comments made by the Council's Landscape Architect and I have concluded that development of the appeal site would be acceptable in this location, given the extant baseline and the limited landscape and visual effects likely to arise. In landscape terms this is an entirely suitable location for new housing as evidenced by the Council's own Peripheral Landscape Study.
- 5.2. Castle Cary is substantially different in form and extents since the analysis undertaken in the Peripheral Landscape Study by South Somerset Council. This evidence base served its purpose in identifying suitable land to accommodate growth but its relevance in considering planning applications is now limited and reliance on this document in respect of specific proposals goes beyond its original scope.
- 5.3. It is evident that the appeal site is being brought forward in the context of the Council's acknowledgement as to the suitability of settlement expansion in this location and as a result of the consented development proposals.
- 5.4. The relationship of the appeal site to the consented development is acknowledged in the committee report, along with the recognition that in combination with the consented scheme the appeal scheme is of an appropriate scale and acceptable in landscape terms. This is not a site which is isolated or disconnected from the settlement edge. It is a settlement edge location in an area of land identified (following a landscape and visual appraisal) as capable of accommodating new housing.
- 5.5. Development of the appeal site on land classified as of moderate capacity to accommodate would be consistent with the approach adopted elsewhere in the Direction of Growth area (DoG). In addition development can be brought forward in a sympathetic and responsive manner to address the landscape and townscape relationship which will exist in this location. Existing key features can be retained and development is confined to the lower lying part of the landform avoid the relic orchards and pastures.

