

Public Inquiry held at Caryford Hall, Ansford, Somerset on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Submission by Ansford Parish Council

With reference to the location of the land to the north of Ansford Hill, the site is, relatively speaking, detached from the main settlement area of Ansford & Castle Cary by virtue of the A371 main road, therefore every single pedestrian journey to and from this site to the town centre, to local schools, surgeries and churches etc., has to cross over this busy A road, although no marked zebra pedestrian crossing exists either adjacent to or near the site, with cyclists facing similar difficulties when dismounted.

School children walking directly up Ansford Hill to & from Ansford Academy would have to cross over the road, as the single footway is not continuous, and crucially, some parts of the footways are only 1.05 mts. wide, nor does it have any safety barriers, thereby subjecting children and adults having to walk single file on a predominantly unsafe and potentially hazardous route.

Furthermore, the site does not have any adjacent bus stops along its boundary, and people would have to walk down Ansford Hill to cross over the main road at a partially obscured road junction to get to the nearest bus stop on the B3152. Due to the poor pedestrian connectivity to and from all local amenities (except the station), and - may I emphasise this point once more, the site's detached location utterly fails even the most basic road safety elements. This site would, in fact, be the largest housing development in the area, but it should be realised that it is located furthest away from the town centre, and families would find themselves beyond the practical reach of the local community.

Alas, it would appear the safest option for local travel would be to drive the relatively short distance to shops and facilities, resulting in increased vehicle usage, pollution and significantly adding to local congestion. This situation is especially disappointing, as we are all being urged to walk or cycle to local destinations instead of driving. Please take note that not a single extra car parking space has been included in future local infrastructure commitments, and increased car movements would simply bring gridlock to the road network within a small rural neighbourhood.

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May I now turn to the matter of site surface water. Due to the significant gradient running downhill mainly towards the northeast corner of the site, the sheer volume and force of surface water runoff from the 200 new homes, drives, patios, paths & roadways etc., would undoubtedly put drainage groundworks under enormous pressure, although the proposed attenuation storage capacity would appear to be insufficient to handle extreme flow rates following bouts of heavy rainfall.

However, we understand that the water would then flow from the storage tanks to a new headwall/culvert and then into a single pipe under the railway embankment, but we are highly sceptical that this arrangement would cope with excessive outflows, especially to an area that has previously been subject to localised flooding. This area, incidentally, is where a new station car park will be situated although not yet started, as planning approval given in 2019 applied specific conditions; namely the removal of industrial contamination in the ground and flood prevention works. Let me repeat that last point - "flood prevention works".

On the southwest corner of the site, the Ansford Hill/ Station Road junction has frequently flooded, causing traffic delays and general inconvenience to walkers and motorists. *Indeed, just a few days ago, on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2021, this main road junction was flooded for part of the day, after moderate rainfall.*

Turning now, to foul water discharge. We are also concerned about the movement of sewage from the site, as the technical drawings show there is a “possible public foul pumping station,” to mechanically pump effluent from the lowest part of the site up to the top of the hill into the combined sewer located at Ansford Hill. This would result in high energy usage and would have a considerable impact on sustainability, and increased carbon footprint issues.

However, in the event of random electrical power cuts, it is vital that a contingency plan has been assigned as an alternative method for shifting effluent away from the site, otherwise a sudden stoppage would be an extremely serious matter, with the possibility of affecting public health if not immediately actioned. These critical issues regarding the management and regulatory control of sewage disposal deserve the utmost scrutiny.

In consideration of this, I wish to refer you to the findings of a detailed report by Dr. Lisa Thomas from Bath Spa University, with reference to the Wessex Water PR19 Business Plan, dated September 2018; Appendix 8.6A - Claim WSX02 - Sewage treatment works capacity programme.

*“In relation to the efficiency of the Sewage Treatment Works at Castle Cary, Wessex Water had underestimated the number of new building developments and population growth in the area. For example, their estimate for the number of new dwellings from 2021 to 2025 was 170, and an increase of 229 new residents, together with increased flows from the nearby Crown Pet Food factory. Even at these low estimates, the developments at Station Road alone (not including the Appeal site of course), would increase flows and loads over and above future growth estimates. The Sewage Treatment Works was reaching the limit of its treatment capacity and expected to have exceeded a number of permitted limits by mid 2019.”*

*“Currently, a considerable stretch of the river Brue from the sewage treatment works discharge point and downstream towards Carymoor Civil Parish is in a poor state, both chemically and ecologically. It is a very minor river at this stage, subject to very low flows and carries an unacceptable burden of pollution from several sources further upstream. Long periods of dry weather followed by torrential rainfall is not ideal when planning an extensive housing development on a slope.”*

With reference to the potential integration of yet another large housing development on the periphery of the community, it would be entirely irresponsible for the water authority to take on additional sewerage operations at a time when the existing capacity is already overstretched. We therefore ask that Wessex Water is instructed to confirm precisely what additional resources have been installed at the Sewage Treatment Works at Castle Cary, and to verify that they would have the necessary infrastructure and adequate capacity to cope with such a large spike in demand.

In conclusion, we feel that the existing agricultural field should remain as an important productive resource, and one that would continue to sustain the natural rural character of this open landscape, this being an irreplaceable and an environmentally green asset within our neighbourhood. The potential harm to both visual and pastoral aspects of the Brue Valley would be immense, and we passionately believe that this prominent location should warrant special consideration and protection, and free from the negative effects of urban sprawl.

Ansford Parish Council firmly opposes this development and asks for the Appeal to be dismissed.

Chris Edwards, Chairman  
Ansford Parish Council