

From: Kevin Carlton <
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2021 12:55 PM
To: Ursula Fay <
Cc: Kate Hudson-McAulay <>; Gareth Withers <
Subject: 20/P/2990/OUT Land off Butts Batch

Hi Ursula

I have taken into account the representative views submitted and note also that I have advised on other landscape and visual assessments in the vicinity (such as Cox's Green and of more relevance in this case Gatcombe Farm), so I am very familiar with the location. I have noted views that have been provided by others, which help to clarify matters in respect of where views are also available (particularly of the church) and where small locational changes might have improved the view. The applicants have provided a limited but representative selection of views to assist the assessment of the proposals, which along with other views I have available to me are sufficient to comment (although the applicant may submit further views if they wish).

The applicants note the existing pastoral character of the site. The residences to the north and east are said to be *an abrupt settlement edge*, but actually have a limited influence on the northern field. Also noted are views out to All Saints Church which is said to add *to a sense of local distinctiveness*. In respect of the land they note *The land gently rises from the south-west corner (Viewpoint C) to a high point at its centre (Viewpoint B) affording attractive views west along the valley of the River Yeo, to higher ground of Cleeve Ridge to the north and the distant backdrop of the Mendip Hills AONB to the south.*

The ZTV shows an extensive potential extent of visibility. 10 representative public viewpoints are included.

There is a significant impact upon the approach road from the south, a number of PRow and permissive paths, particularly to the south, north and west of the site and more distant impacts from high ground, perceptible because of the scale of the projection into open countryside, which is uncontained by any other development, except for a small amount of residential. The photographs show the particularly open nature of the large fields, a part of which the site occupies, which disproves the applicants view that the site is well contained.

They concede that *There will be two short-term Major adverse visual effects from the track directly adjacent to the northern site boundary and on local road Half Yard on the approach to Wrington from the south, where construction activities and the new housing will be dominant in the view.*

There is some benefit from setting back the development within the northern field, behind the existing hedge, as it retains the southern field as open and construction lies on a similar line to buildings to the east side of Half Yard. However the benefits largely end there, as the land rises from the river Yeo and is highly visible, as noted above. From Half Yard, the scheme as presented would block the view of the church tower and much of the wooded ridge of Wrington Hill. Although dwellings can be seen in the village they are mostly in generous plots and well broken up by existing trees and hedges, whereas the new development would present a highly prominent and wider line of development at the southern end of the village, largely unbroken by any planting until the new hedges and trees mature.

Where seen from the north and east, the similar lack of any significant existing vegetation means that the extensive proposal is highly reliant upon the establishment of new perimeter hedges and trees all

of which take time to mature and have the desired screening effect. This therefore leaves a substantial urban projection, with a very linear built edge, highly visible for many years.

Landscape Sensitivity

North Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2018) provides an assessment of the sensitivity of landscapes specifically to housing development, on the periphery of all settlements. The assessment identifies the site within a wide band of high sensitivity land west of the settlement and states: 'To the west of the village the land is open, visually prominent and located outside of the development form, and there are no landscape features which could potentially limit development sprawl. Owing to this, this land is of high sensitivity.'

This confirms the view that the site is largely unsuitable for residential development, reflecting a number of the categories used to determine high sensitivity landscape as below.

High sensitivity: Land with a high susceptibility to change and/or which is of high value, e.g. land adjacent to or visually prominent from the AONB, land outside of the settlement pattern, land which has high visual prominence, land which contributes to heritage or ecological assets.

The applicants say it is 'medium sensitivity' and this consequently impacts upon the conclusions they draw.

I would also agree with the comments of the Conservation and Heritage Officer in respect of the impacts upon the setting of the village and the heritage assets.

In terms of the AONB, the site is within the wider setting, but not the immediate setting of the AONB and at such a distance the residential extension would be perceived as part of the village, however lighting effects will be extended into the adjacent open countryside.

Landscape Character

<http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Landscape%20character%20assessment%20September%202018.pdf>

The 2018 NSC Landscape Character Assessment
The Landscape Character Area is the J2: RIVER YEO ROLLING VALLEY FARMLAND. The application site exhibits many of the key characteristics outlined below:

Key Characteristics

- Transitional area at 5m to 60m AOD with gentle rolling landform.
- Predominantly Mercia Mudstone geology with areas of Alluvium, Head and Lias.
- Presence of the River Yeo running from east to west through the area plus numerous tributaries, drainage channels, small ponds and at the far east of the area, Blagdon Lake.
- Strong valley feel particularly to the east of the area with enclosure given by the rising wooded limestone ridges to north and south.
- Rural pastoral landscape with sheep, cattle and horses grazing.
- Irregular medium sized fields of medieval enclosure along the river and on the hill sides.

- Full hedgerows and frequent hedgerow trees.
- Riverside trees of willow and oak and modest bridges.
- Presence of small farm orchards with concentration of larger cider orchards around Sandford.
- Scattered farmsteads plus large villages on higher ground at the base of the ridges and along major routes.
- Traditional buildings of stone with red roof tiles including farms, churches and historic village centres plus modern infill and ribbon development of brick and render.
- Network of A roads, minor roads and winding rural lanes.

Character

The River Yeo Rolling Valley Farmland generally has many of the positive characteristics of the Rolling Valley Farmland Landscape Type, it is generally a peaceful pastoral landscape with intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees, a network of rural roads and scattered stone farmsteads, however the character has been considerably urbanised to the west particularly to the west of the M5. Village infill, ribbon development and non agricultural land uses such as caravan sites are present. **The overall strength of character is moderate** but weak to the west of the M5.

Condition

This character area is generally in good condition in particular key landscape elements such as the hedges, hedgerow trees including willow pollards, and small bridges however other elements are less intact such as the farm orchards and there is room for enhancement of the woodland and grassland for increased biodiversity value. However for the area to the west of the M5 the condition is more degraded and is in a declining condition.

STRATEGY

Landscape Strategy

The landscape strategy for River Yeo Rolling Valley Farmland is to conserve the peaceful, rural nature of the landscape with intact pasture and field boundaries and to strengthen and enhance the area of weaker character particularly where the landscape is affected by modern development to the west of the M5.

Landscape Guidelines

- Conserve the rural, pastoral character of the area.
- Strengthen and enhance areas affected by urbanisation.
- Consider opportunities for grassland, woodland and wetland habitat creation, particularly in areas which are marginal for farming.
- Maintain the pollarded willows and encourage local uses for the cut material.
- Conserve historic hedgerows and nurture existing and new hedgerow trees particularly pollarded willows.

- Limit village infill and ribbon development, and where development does take place encourage sensitive use of materials and quality of design.
- Minimise visual effects of modern settlement along the A roads for instance through careful screening and replanting of hedgerows and or new woodland belts.
- There should be a presumption against arable conversion in areas of archaeological landscapes defined by earthworks.
- To prevent poaching of earthworks light grazing management is recommended.

The proposal does not accord with Policy CS5, CS32, the NS Landscape Character Assessment SPD and the NS Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. It is not of a suitable scale and cannot be assimilated into the village and the local landscape, due to its open nature and high landscape sensitivity. It impacts adversely upon landscape character, as it does not conserve the peaceful rural nature of the landscape.

S106 Green Infrastructure Request



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Regards

Kevin

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