

Officer: Simon Fox Date: 25 September 2020
Report agreed (PPO/APM): Date:
Chair/Vice Chair – (If Applicable): Agree to delegation: Date:

Application Number: 42/20/0031
Committee Date:
Expiry Date: 02 October 2020
Extended Expiry Date:
Earliest Decision Date: 13 July 2020
Final Decision Level:
Decision Type: CA

Somerset West and Taunton

Planning Officer's Report and Recommendations

Applicant: VISTRY AND LIVEWEST

Description of Development

Application for approval of reserved matters in respect of appearance, landscape, layout and scale, following outline application 42/14/0069, for Phase H1A for the erection of 75 No. dwellings, hard and soft landscaping, car parking including garages, internal access roads, footpaths and circulation areas, public open space and drainage with associated infrastructure and engineering works with additional details as required by Condition No's 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 23 on land at Comeytrowe/Trull

Recommendation

Recommended decision: Conditional Approval

Recommended Conditions (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

DrNo PL-VI-01 RevA	Site Location Plan
DrNo PL-VI-02 RevB	Site Context Plan
DrNo PL-VI-03 RevH	Planning Layout
DrNo PL-VI-04 RevD	Materials Plan
PL-VI-04.1 RevB	Materials Plan Specification
DrNo PL-VI-05 RevD	Boundary Treatments plan
DrNo PL-VI-05.1 RevB	Boundary Treatments
AC-VI-03 RevG	Accommodation Schedule
SS-VI-01 RevB	Street Scenes and Sections
DrNo HT-H1a-G-S224-01RevB	Gateway Frontage – S224
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X306-01RevB	Gateway Frontage – X306
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X306-05	Gateway Frontage – X307
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X307-01RevC	Gateway Frontage – X307
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X307C-01RevB	Gateway Frontage – X307C
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X307C-05	Gateway Frontage – X307C
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X309-01RevD	Gateway Frontage – X309

DrNo HT-H1a-G-X309-02	Gateway Frontage – X309
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X309-03	Gateway Frontage – X309
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X413-01RevC	Gateway Frontage – X413
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X413-02	Gateway Frontage – X414
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X414-01RevD	Gateway Frontage – X414
DrNo HT-H1a-G-X 414-03 RevA	Gateway Frontage – X414
DrNo HT-H1a-P-X204-01RevB	Primary Frontage – X204
DrNo HT-H1a-P-X306-02RevB	Primary Frontage – X306
DrNo HT-H1a-P-X306-06RevB	Primary Frontage – X306
DrNo HT-H1a-P-X307C-04 RevA	Primary Frontage – X307C
DrNo HT-H1a-S-A10L-01	Secondary Frontage – A10L
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X204-02RevB	Secondary Frontage – X204
DrNo HT-H1a-S-S224-02RevC	Secondary Frontage – S224
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X306-03RevD	Secondary Frontage – X306
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X306-04RevB	Secondary Frontage – X306
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X306G-02RevB	Secondary Frontage –X306G
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X306G-03RevB	Secondary Frontage – X306G
DrNo HT-H1a-S-S325-01RevB	Secondary Frontage – S325
DrNo HT-H1a-S-S325-02RevB	Secondary Frontage – S325
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X307-02RevB	Secondary Frontage – X307
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X307-03RevB	Secondary Frontage – X307
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X307C-02RevB	Secondary Frontage – X307C
DrNo HT-H1a-S-X307C-03RevB	Secondary Frontage – X307C
DrNo HT-VI-GAR-01	Single Garage
DrNo HT-VI-GAR-02	Double Garage Double Owner
DrNo HT-VI-GAR-03	Double Garage Extended

DrNo BR-L-N1-PL210 Rev E	Planting Plan Layout
DrNo BR-L-N1-PL211 Rev E	Planting Plan Sheet 1
DrNo BR-L-N1-PL212 Rev E	Planting Plan Sheet 2
BR-L-N1-PL101 RevB	Tree Layers Plan Strategy
BR-L-N1-PL102 RevB	Central Key Space
BR-L-N1-PL103	Gateway Key Space

DrNo 02-ATR-1001 RevB	Fire Tender Tracking Plan
DrNo 02-ATR-1101 RevB	Refuse Vehicle Tracking Plan
DrNo 02-DR-1001 RevA	Preliminary Drainage Layout
DrNo 02-GA-1001 RevA	Preliminary Highway Levels Plan 1
DrNo 02-GA-1002 RevA	Preliminary Highway Levels Plan 2
DrNo 02-GA-1101 RevA	Preliminary Adoption Plan
DrNo 02-GA-1201 RevA	Preliminary Junction Visibility
DrNo 02-RP-1001 RevA	Preliminary Road Profile 1
DrNo 02-RP-1002 RevA	Preliminary Road Profile 2

Energy and Sustainability Statement, AES Sustainability Consultants Ltd, July 202

Drainage Statement, awp, May 2020 1033 Rev A

Planning Statement

H1a Compliance Statement, COM-VI-01

Western Neighbourhood Master Plan and Design Guide, (incl. Appearance Palette), March 2020

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

2. Prior to the construction of the buildings above damp proof course level (dpc), samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and thereafter maintained as such, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the building/area.

3. Prior to the construction above base course level of the roads, footways and cycleways shown on the approved plans, a hard landscape scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority showing details of the hard surface treatment of the roads, footways, cycleways, driveways and paths and a programme of implementation. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the development and the surrounding area.

Notes to Applicant

1. Your attention is drawn to the original conditions on permission 42/14/0069 which still need to be complied with.
2. Development, insofar as it affects the rights of way should not be started, and the rights of way should be kept open for public use until the necessary Order (temporary closure/stopping up/diversion) or other authorisation has come into effect/ been granted. Failure to comply with this request may result in the developer being prosecuted if the path is built on or otherwise interfered with.
3. In accordance with paragraph 38 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way with the applicant and entered into pre-application discussions to enable the grant of planning permission.

Proposal

Reserved matters approval is sought, for the appearance, landscape, layout and scale of 76 dwellings, hard and soft landscaping, car parking including garages, internal access roads, footpaths and circulation areas, incidental public open space and drainage with associated infrastructure and engineering works (Phase 1 - Parcel H1a-Vistry/LiveWest) on land at Comeytrove/Trull.

This is the second reserved matters approval sought in relation to the appearance, landscape, layout and scale of housing at this strategic site. Councillors will recall considering application 42/20/0006 seeking 70 dwellings on a neighbouring parcel (H1b-Taylor Wimpey) with that permission being issued in July 20. The residential

schemes follow the approval by committee of reserved matters relating to strategic infrastructure for the western neighbourhood, ref 42/19/0053.

The outline application, ref 42/14/0069, for this 2000 dwelling development was accompanied by a viability assessment, which made assumptions around the costs and timescales for delivery of this strategic site, with the delivery of affordable housing being agreed at 17.5%. However, it is noted that following the allocation of funding by Homes England, affordable provision across the site is being supplemented with 'additionality' affordable units raising affordable housing delivery to a total of 35% across the urban extension.

This parcel contain such 'additionality' units. This does mean the developer is under stringent timescales to get the additional affordable homes consented and constructed by LiveWest ahead of the Government's funding deadline. The applicant team advises that in real terms this means that every month the development is delayed, a further 4 additional affordable plots on the site will be lost. For this reason they are obviously very keen for the RM decision for Phase H1A to be issued without delay.

The 76 dwellings comprise 2, 3 and 4-bed houses and also 1 bed flats (50 market, 26 affordable). 14 affordable units are secured via the s106 and 12 units represent the 'additionality' units.

Parcel H1a is located on the periphery of the site sharing its north-eastern boundary with the A38 and its north-western boundary with the residential property formally known as The Croft, which has been demolished and is in the process of being replaced with four dwellinghouses (ref 05/11/0042). The eastern boundary adjoins the approved H1b parcel and also parcel H1c which is still to be designed and submitted as a Reserved Matters application. The western and southern boundaries will adjoin the new A38 Gateway roundabout and spine road respectively.

A new play area within an area of open space is to be located to the north-east of parcel H1a.

The principle and layout (within the western neighbourhood) inclusive of street hierarchy and cycle paths were approved as part of the Outline (42/14/0069) and Infrastructure Reserved Matters (42/19/0053) consents. In order to ensure the safety of cyclists, parking has been provided in rear access courts for properties on the northern side of the primary spine road.

To the west of the parcel the existing public footpath travels in a north-south direction, this footpath was incorporated into the now approved layout for parcel H1b.

The proposed dwellings are all two-storey houses save for three pairs of dwellings which are 2½ storey containing dormer windows and one 2-storey building which is split into two flats. The 2½ storey dwellings are located in key positions to add variety to the urban form in line with the Design Guide.

The proposed dwellings consist of a mixture of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties. The majority of dwellings are of a simple rectangular floorplan with pitched roofs. All dwellings have allocated parking as well as cycle storage in shed or garages.

Landscaping is proposed within the parcel including trees on all streets, hedges to

provide boundaries, landscaping within parking courts and vertical planting.

Since submission a number of amendments to plans have been sought and submitted. In summary this includes additional detailing to the proposed dwellings, amendments to better respond to urban design principles and improvements to proposed landscaping.

Site Description

Outline consent with all matters reserved (except points of access) has been granted for a residential and mixed use urban extension at Comeytrowe/Trull to include up to 2,000 dwellings, up to 5.25ha of employment land, 2.2ha of land for a primary school, a mixed use local centre and a 300 space 'park and bus' facility (application ref. 42/14/0069). The site area for the outline application was approx. 118ha and was bounded by the A38 Wellington Road to the north-west, the suburb and parish of Comeytrowe to the north and north-east and the farmland of Higher Comeytrowe Farm to the south. The Blackdown Hills AONB is located approximately 2.5 miles to the south of the site.

The area submitted for approval with this application comprises parcel H1a of the site and is the only residential parcel that sits exclusively within the parish of Bishops Hull. The remainder of residential parcels fall within Trull parish.

The site slopes from the north-east to the south west and increases in elevation to the A38. The hedgerow that bordered the A38 has been removed to allow the roundabout works and will be replaced in time with a landscape buffer, already approved. This parcel is separated to parcel H1b by way of a hedgerow, which has been incorporated into the proposed layout. It also acts as defining feature of a Right of Way situated to the eastern boundary of this parcel and providing a footpath link between the junction of the A38/Jeffreys Way to the north and Higher Comeytrowe farm to the south.

There is existing landscaping to the boundary with the site known as The Croft. There are no trees of note within this parcel.

Relevant Planning History

Ref. 42/14/0069 - Outline planning permission with all matters reserved (except access) for a residential and mixed use urban extension at Comeytrowe/Trull to include up to 2,000 dwellings, up to 5.25ha of employment land, 2.2ha of land for a primary school, a mixed use local centre and a 300 space 'park and bus' facility - Approved 8 August 2019.

Ref. 42/14/0042 – Demolition of a section of wall on the western side of Honiton Road for creation of the access to the south west Taunton Urban Extension (Under Planning Application No. 42/14/0069) on Honiton Road, Trull – Approved 9 August 2019

Ref. 42/19/0053 - Application for approval of reserved matters following outline application 42/14/0069 for construction of the strategic infrastructure associated with the Western Neighbourhood, including the spine road and infrastructure roads;

green infrastructure and ecological mitigation; strategic drainage, earth re-modelling works and associated retaining walls on land at Comeytrowe/Trull - Approved 18 March 2020.

Ref. 42/20/0005/DM - Prior notification of proposed demolition of chicken coops on land south west of Taunton - No objection subject to conditions 21 February 2020.

Ref. 42/20/0006 - Application for approval of reserved matters following Outline Application 42/14/0069 for the appearance, landscape, layout and scale for the erection of 70 No. dwellings, hard and soft landscaping, car parking including garages, internal access roads, footpaths and circulation areas, public open space and drainage with associated infrastructure and engineering works (Phase 1a Parcel H1b) on land at Comeytrowe/Trull - Approved 22 July 2020.

Ref. 42/20/0022/FPD - Footpath Diversion Application Public Footpath reference T29/11 South West Taunton Comeytrowe. Concurrent application still under consideration.

Ref. 42/20/0024 - Application for approval of reserved matters following outline application 42/14/0069 for the erection of a foul pumping station, water booster station and gas pressure reducing station to serve the permitted 2000 dwellings on land at Comeytrowe/Trull - Currently deemed invalid.

Ref. 42/20/0042 – Erection of a foul pumping station, water booster station and gas pressure reducing station to serve the permitted 2000 dwellings under outline application 42/14/0069 on land at Comeytrowe/Trull - Currently deemed invalid.

Ref. 42/20/0043 - Non-material amendment to application 42/19/0053 for the relocation of the approved sub-station on land at Comeytrowe/Trull – Pending.

Consultation Responses

A summary is given, all consultee responses are available to read in full on the council's website, www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

BISHOP'S HULL PARISH COUNCIL – Objection:

- With the previous application for pumping station (42/20/0024) being deemed invalid, surely no development can proceed until the issue of drainage is resolved?
- No public open space, play provision or local amenities provided for the proposed new 75 houses or for the previous 70 house (42/20/0006)

Previous objections are reiterated concerning the spine road completion, the need for the school and adequate measures to prevent flooding.

COMEYTROWE PARISH COUNCIL – Objection:

- There is insufficient buffer/protection between the proposed development site and the existing adjacent property. It is worrying that this may set a precedent for the next phases where the development site adjoins existing properties where no 'green zone' has been detailed on the plans.
- It should be noted that the original outline application detailed these areas as residential, to include play parks, green areas, appropriate landscaping, etc., however, these green elements seem no longer included within the detailed scheme. This is an important aspect of the design that is critical in protecting the privacy and wellbeing of existing residents.

Previous objections are offered as continuously relevant concerning the density of housing on higher areas of land, the need for an all through school, reference to the climate emergency, removal of hedgerows, no EIA, no hilltop parks, the spine road completion, the need for the school, adequate measures to prevent flooding, enforcement of planning conditions and the impact on the local area requires consideration.

TRULL PARISH COUNCIL – Objection:

- “Despite the apparent deadline for comments online there are not yet any responses from key internal consultees such as the Placemaking Specialist and the LLFA, both of whom objected initially to application 42/20/0006 for the first parcel of houses (the Placemaking Specialist maintained her objections despite some amendments to the plans). It is impossible for the public and Parish Councils to comment meaningfully without all the information being made available to them”.
- The site requires an updated EIA.
- Conditions of the outline permission remain to be completed despite the assurances from the applicants.
- The District Council has an obligation to follow the guidance on garden town planning.
- The houses are not distinctive.
- The key space is insufficient.
- The houses should be future proofed.
- Emails concerning the validation of the application should be reinstated online.

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY – No objection on flood grounds.

LEAD LOCAL FLOOD AUTHORITY - Satisfied with the proposals.

HISTORIC ENGLAND – No detailed comments to make, refer to SWT Conservation Specialist to ensure all opportunities have been taken to mitigate potential impacts on designated heritage assets including listed buildings.

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND – No objection

SCC - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP – Comments:

The proposed layout is broadly acceptable but detailed points made concerning street tree detail, surfaces, tactile paved crossing, gradients, retaining walls, drainage will need to be considered by the developer as part of their technical highways submission.

SCC RIGHTS OF WAY – No objection:

An Informative note is requested to advise proposed works must not encroach on the right of way.

NATURAL ENGLAND – No objection, refer to standing advice.

PLACEMAKING SPECIALIST– Objection.

- Considers the scheme to be not of a high enough standard of design quality for this gateway frontage and does not meet the design tests set out in the NPPF, National Design Guide, or the Taunton Garden Town Vision and Taunton Garden Town Charter & Checklist. It also does not comply with the design requirements set out for this parcel in the approved Neighbourhood Design Guide for this development.

- “The approved Neighbourhood Design Guide for this development requires distinctive local identity that interprets the character of Taunton, a positive arrival experience that reflects the vision for the new garden community, traditional building forms, well-proportioned solid to void ratio featuring vertical emphasis, high quality materials. The contextual analysis shows 19th Century Victorian houses and the illustrative proposed houses for the Gateway frontage as well designed classical buildings incorporating vertical proportions and sash windows”.
- Key issues include
 - The proposed house designs are standard ‘anywhere’ types merely adapted and do not reflect local traditional house forms shown by the developers as being the identity of Taunton. This will not provide a distinctive local identity.
 - The Neighbourhood Design Guide states that the house types for this parcel should be well-proportioned traditional building forms with vertical proportions. This has not been carried to reflect local character and identity.
 - There is insufficient design definition between key buildings and normal buildings. This will give a lack of legibility and will produce repetitious and undifferentiated street scenes.
 - There is little roofscape interest. Roofscape interest in long distance views is a specified requirement for this development parcel. This needs a greater variation in the height of buildings and the provision of features such as chimneys, cowls etc.
 - 95% of houses have no boundary treatment specified to their frontages. Low level hedge with railing is a specified requirement generally for all plots in this development parcel.
 - The proposed materials are not high quality materials. In particular, reconstituted stone is wholly unacceptable given the proliferation of local building stones. Local stone needs to be used throughout the parcel (not just to buildings on the frontage).
 - Strong advocacy to refer the application to a Design Panel.

LANDSCAPE – Comments

Verbal discussion - The inclusion of more oak along the eastern boundary is necessary. Remove division of the eastern POS by hedging. Detail of trees in hardstanding required.

BLACKDOWN HILLS AONB – No comments to make.

TREE OFFICER – Comments:

Suggested tree species changes.

[officer comment – these changes have been made]

HOUSING ENABLING – No objections raised.

“The developer is required to deliver 17.5% affordable homes on this site under the S106 Agreement. The 13 affordable homes proposed is 17.33% of the total 75 homes. The final percentage of affordable homes across the whole site must be 17.5% of the total homes delivered. This will be monitored in the subsequent phases of this development.

This proposal undertakes to provide a further 17.3% (13) affordable homes through additional funding from Homes England. This additional affordable housing brings the percentage of affordable housing to be delivered on the site to almost 35% which is welcomed.

The tenure split of all 26 affordable homes will reflect the tenure split agreed in the S106 agreement i.e. 60% affordable rent and 40% shared ownership.

The affordable housing layout and proposed tenure plan (as shown on drawing AC-V1-O3d Vistry H1a dated March 2020) is evenly distributed across the site in small clusters so as to be an integral part of the development and will not be visually distinguishable from the market housing on site.

The type and size of the affordable housing units to be provided reflect the distribution of property types and sizes in the overall development. The unit sizes have been assessed by Somerset West and Taunton against the requirements set out in Policy D10 in the Taunton Deane Adopted Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. All units sizes either meet or exceed the minimum internal floor space requirements.

The Housing Association associated with this development is LiveWest which is one of Somerset West and Taunton's preferred partners".

AVON AND SOMERSET CONSTABULARY – Comments:

Rear gates would be advisable for rear access paths and increased overlooking of parking courts is desirable.

[officer comment – these changes have been made}

Comments have yet to be received from the following:

- Somerset Waste Partnership
- SWT Community Protection
- SWT Conservation Officer
- Ecologist
- Wessex Water

An update will be given at the committee meeting. In discussion with the Principal Planning Specialist it was felt expedient to continue to issue the report for the agenda as these particular consultees are unlikely to raise objection given the application follows the principles and approach already approved by the outline and the first parcel H1b.

Representations Received

A site notice has been posted and neighbours notified of the application. The council is in receipt of 6 representations from 5 members of the public.

A summary is given, all responses from the general public are available to read in full on the council's website, www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk.

The comments made can be summarised as follows:-

- "The roads cannot cope with even more dwellings".
- "Drainage with associated infrastructure? We all know that this is not right".
- Drainage statement discrepancies.
- Discrepancies with the application form and validation process.
- The plan doesn't show The Croft development or any landscaping important for privacy.
- "The proposed layout delivers a harsh and unsympathetic boundary between new development and properties to the north. It creates a stark and unmitigated transition between the established low density residential area to the north of which development at The Croft forms a part and the higher density suburban development of the new urban extension".
- "The proposed layout does not appear to respond to mature trees that substantially overhang the application site from land to the north (The Croft)".

- Affordable housing should be tenure blind.
- An updated EIA should be undertaken.
- Climate emergency.
- There are no LEAPS or NEAPS on this plot.
- Concern regarding hedgerow removal.
- No up to date tree or ecology surveys.
- Procedural point concerning consultation.
- Potential red line discrepancy.
- Comments regarding conditions and triggers.

Planning Policy Context

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development plan for Taunton Deane comprises the Taunton Deane Core Strategy (2012), the Taunton Site Allocations and Development Management Plan (2016), the Taunton Town Centre Area Action Plan (2008), Somerset Minerals Local Plan (2015), and Somerset Waste Core Strategy (2013).

Relevant policies of the development plan are listed below.

SD1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development,
 CP1 - Climate change,
 CP4 - Housing,
 CP5 - Inclusive communities,
 CP6 - Transport and accessibility,
 CP7 - Infrastructure,
 CP8 - Environment,
 SP2 - Realising the vision for Taunton,
 SS7 - Comeytrowe / Trull - Broad Location for Growth,
 DM1 - General requirements,
 DM4 - Design,
 DM5 - Use of resources and sustainable design,
 A1 - Parking Requirements,
 A2 - Travel Planning,
 A3 - Cycle network,
 A5 - Accessibility of development,
 ENV1 - Protection of trees, woodland, orchards and hedgerows,
 ENV2 - Tree planting within new developments,
 ENV3 - Special Landscape Features,
 I4 - Water infrastructure,
 D7 - Design quality,
 D8 - Safety,
 D9 - A Co-Ordinated Approach to Dev and Highway Plan,
 D10 - Dwelling Sizes,
 D12 - Amenity space,
 TAU1 - Comeytrowe / Trull,

Local finance considerations

Community Infrastructure Levy

Creation of dwellings is CIL liable.
Proposed development measures approx. 7332sqm.

The application is for residential development in Taunton where the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is £70 per square metre. Based on current rates, the CIL receipt for this development is approximately £513,250.00. With index linking this increases to approximately £729,000.00. Exemptions for affordable housing will see this figure reduce.

Determining issues and considerations

The Scope of this application

This application seeks approval of reserved matters, namely the appearance, landscaping, scale and layout of the parcel in question. Means of access to the whole Comeytrove site was approved via the outline application.

Article 6 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 sets out that the reserved matters deals with some or all of the outstanding details of the outline application proposal, including:

- appearance - aspects of a building or place which affect the way it looks, including the exterior of the development
- landscaping - the improvement or protection of the amenities of the site and the area and the surrounding area, this could include planting trees or hedges as a screen
- layout - includes buildings, routes and open spaces within the development and the way they are laid out in relations to buildings and spaces outside the development
- scale - includes information on the size of the development, including the height, width and length of each proposed building

The details of the reserved matters application must be in line with the outline approval, including any conditions attached to the permission.

Councillors will recall a great deal of discussion regarding the scope of a reserved matters application at the meeting of 9th July 2020 when the adjoining Taylor Wimpey parcel H1b (42/20/0006) was approved. Matters such as Taunton's Garden Town status, climate change, the Council's five year land supply, development viability and sustainable development all being matters discussed at length. Those matters could likely be raised again in conjunction with this application and so Councillors may find it beneficial to revisit the webcast for that meeting to refresh themselves on the officer advice at that time which remains germane to this application and indeed all the future reserved matters applications at Comeytrove Urban Extension. The webcast can be viewed here:

<https://democracy.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=330>

Principle of development of the site

The principle of developing this site to provide an urban extension has been

established by the outline approval. This reserved matters application seek approval for detailed matters in relation to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping and as explained above consideration is limited to these issues.

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

A full and detailed Environmental Statement was submitted with the Outline application, and officer opinion is that there is no need for this to be updated as there has been no significant change to the status of the land nor any other relevant factors since the outline consent was granted. Indeed it is understood that members of the public also wrote to the SoS to say they considered the H1b application should require a new ES. However, the SoS confirmed officers view that no update was required.

Negotiated Amendments

In accordance with paragraphs 38-46 of the NPPF, officers have worked proactively with the applicants to secure improvements to the proposal. A number of design changes have been secured over two sets of amended plans.

These can be summarised as increased or improved detailing, changes to fenestration, improvement to the design of key buildings, changes to finishing materials, revised boundary treatments, landscaping changes, increased surveillance of parking courts, and the inclusion of gates to rear access paths.

Layout, Design and Appearance

Core Strategy Policy DM4 Design, Site Allocations & Development Management Plan (SADMP) Policy D7 Design Quality and Section 12 (Achieving well designed places), together with paragraphs 124-132 of the NPPF and the National Design Guide are relevant. The Garden Town vision document, Charter and Checklist and the Somerset West and Taunton Design Guide consultation draft are also material considerations albeit with limited weight given the existence of the outline approval.

Given the strategic nature of this site, the design process is taking place over a number of years, with broader considerations around the site context and structure being considered in principle as part of the Outline application, with parameter plans setting expectations regarding access and movement, green infrastructure, scale, density and land use as part of the approval.

A condition (4) on the Outline application required the submission of a Site-specific Neighbourhood Masterplan and Design Guide. This document is intended to build on the approved parameter plans and provide a more detailed framework against which mid-level matters of design such as the proposed arrangement of development blocks, streets and spaces can be assessed. A Neighbourhood Design Guide for the Western Neighbourhood (Neighbourhood Design Guide) was discharged in March 2020 after several months of negotiations.

An Appearance Palette is also required by Outline condition (5) for each parcel. This in turn builds on the Neighbourhood Design Guide and provides a framework to assess narrower design considerations such as building design, building materials, surface materials, street furniture and tree species. An Appearance Palette for parcels H1a and H1b was submitted as part of the Neighbourhood Design Guide (pages 168-179) and was likewise discharged in March 2020.

These plans and documents further inform how the reserved matters should be considered.

This application is accompanied by a Compliance Statement setting out how the applicant believes the proposal accords with the parameter plans, Neighbourhood Design Guide and Appearance Palette.

- *Context and Site*

Principles relating to site setting, landscape integration and mix of land uses were established at Outline stage and where appropriate secured through parameter plans.

This application now under consideration provides housing, including affordable housing, within the context of established principles. The proposed layout is in accordance with the approved parameter plan for land use.

- *Structure*

Principles relating to the strategic network of green infrastructure, access and movement, appropriate density and heights were established at Outline stage and secured through parameter plans. The proposed layout is in accordance with these.

The Comeytrowe urban extension will deliver a comprehensive landscape and green infrastructure scheme, with substantial areas of open space and tree planting in line with the Garden Town Vision. Much of this green infrastructure was approved under application 42/19/0053. This application also approved the strategic Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) and earthworks to create level building plots.

The SWT Design Guide states that the creation of a design concept, to identify key groupings, focal points/features, character areas, and street and space hierarchy is a very important stage in the design process. The Neighbourhood Design Guide sets out a framework regarding the creation of character areas and nodes, key frontages and groupings development of principles on development blocks, density and height ranges, development block structure, and street and space hierarchy for the Western Neighbourhood.

- *Design Detail*

The approach to parcel H1a has been both informed by reference to the suite of design documents but also importantly the Planning Committee's interpretation of them at the 09 July 2020 meeting in resolving to approve the application for H1b despite several design facets remaining problematic to officers and councilors alike. It was apparent the committee, as the decision-maker, attributed weight to a wide range of issues in making a decision based on the planning balance.

The parcel contains design facets to continue the approach in H1b and also respond to the suite of design documents:

- The parcel is at a lower density to parcel H1b, reflecting its site edge location. Several 2½ storey properties are included as key buildings to add variety and legibility. Councilors will recall the density and heights of buildings are set out in the parameters plans and show a gradual intensification as you move towards the local centre and away from higher points of the site.
- Continuation of the primary frontage treatment, rendered key buildings and railings with the short section of the spine road and cycle way
- A varied roofscape informed by the natural topography and stepped rooflines, but also some dormers on key buildings and chimneys, interspersed with tree canopies.
- Implementation of the street hierarchy, including shared surfaces and private

drives.

- Key transition spaces at the Gateway and Central area.
- Comprehensive landscaping, through street trees, hedging and frontage shrub planting.
- Private rear amenity space within acceptably sized gardens.
- Where rear gardens adjoin the public realm brick walls are used (rather than fencing) to provide additional security and enhance the quality of the street scene.
- Dwellings to be finished in render, red brick and yellow brick with stone dressings as per parcel H1b but also the introduction of grey reconstructed stone on several key buildings fronting the A38 and new roundabout.
- The use of roman tiles, plain tiles and natural slate (on the primary frontage to tie into parcel H1b) ensure the visual impact of the urban extension when viewed from sensitive areas is minimised.
- The use of casement windows throughout as per H1b, with the introduction of ground floor bay windows for visual interest in key locations, and added light to the recipient habitable rooms.

Whilst the principle of the type and distribution of materials is agreeable (i.e. the choice of red brick, buff brick, slate etc) it should be noted that at the time of writing this report officers had yet to see specific samples of the proposed building materials. As such a condition is proposed (2) requiring that these be submitted.

- *Objections from the Placemaking Specialist*

The matters causing the objection outlined in the consultation section of this report fall largely to the use of what is described by the Placemaking Specialist as 'anywhere' standard house types only. This leads to criticism regarding the lack of identity and local character, variety and design definition, and little roofscape interest. Additional points of concern relate to the lack of frontage boundary treatments to all dwellings and an opinion on the quality of materials, and in particular the use of reconstructed stone.

- *Response to the Placemaking Specialist's objections*

There is an objection to the proposed dwelling typologies on the grounds that they do not represent "traditional building form". This was similarly challenged on parcel H1b and the committee were reminded that the viability exercise that was carried out at the Outline stage assumed that the site would have standard build costs, which would assume the use of a standard house type product.

The applicant has through amended plans responded in part to ensure the elevations are designed to reference the local character of Taunton, with detailing and materials interpreted from their studies in and around Taunton.

With regards to the roofscape, it is varied to an extent due to the topography of the site and stepped rooflines, a mixture of roof materials and chimneys adds interest; more chimneys have been added through the amended plans. Tree planting will also help contain and disrupt built form.

Reference is made to the use of reconstructed stone rather than natural stone on several units within the Gateway Frontage. The Placemaking Specialist contends that the applicant team has undertaken to use natural stone within the approved Appearance Palette, agreed via condition. Both sides have referred to historic discussions surrounding this issue; the applicant team is clear they have resisted the use of natural stone throughout those discussions. Indeed the Appearance Palette in question merely states 'stone'. The expediency of needing to agree that document to

unlock the submission of the first set of Reserved Matters applications led to the matter being deferred until now.

The applicant team point to the fact that reconstructed stone is a very good alternative to natural stone, that natural stone is significantly more expensive and will increase the build time on site through increased labour time and the risks associated with local skill shortages, and ensuring a sufficient supply of natural stone is available. These risks and costs are something the applicant team say they cannot afford. They stress to deliver the Urban Extension they will need to ensure that the scheme remains financially viable, something that has become even more acute in light of COVID-19 and the economic downturn. Any delay also risks the delivery of the additional affordable units.

If Councilors were minded to refuse the application on the basis of the non-use of natural stone alone then clear and demonstrable reasons would need to be given. It is worth noting that whilst the applicant team accept and acknowledge that the Trull end of the site will command the need for natural stone to better reflect the dwelling typological in that area, there is actually very little natural stone in the context of the A38 and the Western Neighbourhood.

It is concluded that whilst desirable there is no clear and demonstrable planning reasons to refuse the application on the basis that natural stone is not used. The merits regarding the use of reconstructed stone in its place is a decision that Councillors can reach based on an assessment of visual amenity and reminded of the fact the proposed muted grey colour of the proposed reconstructed stone will help the Gateway Frontage units regress into the site rather than present a more solid and brighter frontage should more render be used instead.

There is an objection to the use of casement windows, stating sash windows, or windows with vertical proportions, would be preferred as they would be more akin to the shape of windows on Taunton's historic buildings. This objection was also made in response to 42/20/0006. Councillors concluded, in approving that application, that casements were acceptable and there is no policy basis to require an alternative window style.

The type and distribution of materials is not at dispute but concerns remain regarding the specific choices, i.e. the specific manufacturer and specification of red brick, tile etc. The specific materials will be viewed on site prior to the committee meeting and Councillors will be updated on the proposed materials detail. Until then a standard condition is proposed.

- *Refuse and Recycling*

Hardstanding for bin storage is provided to the rear of all units. Where collection cannot be made from the immediate frontage of properties designated collection points are provided a short distance from properties. Paths provide rear access for terraced properties where necessary.

- *Parking and cycle storage*

Parking is provided in a mixture of parking courts and on-plot parking (to the side or front of the dwelling). Visitor parking is also provided. The level of car parking, and size of garages, is adequate to meet the requirements for parcel H1a and is in line with the parking standards in Appendix E of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan.

External storage of cycles is in garages and sheds, again this is in line with parking

standards. Where cycles are stored in sheds these are located adjacent to access gates.

Sustainability

This application for reserved matters is supported by an Energy and Sustainability Statement. The outline application did not secure additionality in terms of the sustainable construction specification over Building Regulations and this was a point of some discussion at the committee meeting of 09 July 2020 when parcel H1b was approved. The Design Guides focused on other important but often forgotten measures of sustainability such as walkable neighbourhoods, cycling infrastructure, public transport, open space inclusive of allotments, surface water management and biodiversity enhancement.

The statement sets out a fabric first approach to demand reduction which will in turn deliver a level of energy performance beyond the current Building Regulation standards whilst addressing a range of additional sustainable design considerations.

Improvements in insulation specification, efficient building services, a reduction in thermal bridging and unwanted air leakage paths and further passive design measures are reported to enable the relevant standards to be met, whilst building in low energy design and future climate resilience to the design and construction of the dwellings. It also states how water saving measures have been incorporated into the design in order to deliver a calculated water use per person which far exceeds Building Regulations requirements.

Councillors will also be keen to learn that in order to support the transition to electric vehicles, all plots with adjoining garages are intended to be provided with electric vehicle charging points.

It must be stressed that because this is a Reserved Matters application this additionality over and above what was secured at the outline stage is seen as a very positive step by the developers.

Residential Amenity

• *Impacts on Neighbours*

At present there are no existing immediate neighbours to H1a however the neighbouring site, formally known as 'The Croft' is undergoing redevelopment for 4 dwellings under reference 05/11/0042. The dwellings are not occupied. The approved plans for that development show new planting on the boundary to supplement that which already exists. The properties at The Croft site will be elevated compared to the proposed dwellings on the boundary within parcel H1 and be located at least a distance of 25m window to window. Additional planting is also shown within the parcel on the boundary to supplement that which existing and is proposed at The Croft.

A representation from the developer of The Croft has been received detailing concerns; it is considered the additional information and assessment of the boundary which identified the felling of one former large tree within The Croft site ensures no harm will result to inhabitants of parcel H1a living closest to the boundary.

Overall the combination of factors ensures an acceptable level of amenity will be afforded to all future residents.

- *Standard of amenity for proposed dwellings*

Internal floorspace and layouts meet the space standards of SADMP Policy D10. The Housing Enabler has also confirmed acceptance of the sizes and layouts of the affordable units.

There is sufficient space between the windows of dwellings to prevent unacceptable overlooking, and gable ends are positioned so as to avoid over-shadowing of neighbours.

Overall it is considered the proposed dwellings will provide an acceptable standard of amenity for future residents.

Impact of Heritage Assets

The outline application contained an assessment on the likely impacts to heritage assets. Now we have the precise detail within a Reserved Matters application we can compare the judgments and assumptions made then to the proposal as is now.

The outline application assessed the potential change to Rumwell Park by the construction of modern houses and access roads on the south side of the A38. It noted the separation by the A38 and acknowledged that the proposed development will not encroach on the primary setting of the house, namely its farmland, which includes aspects of designed landscaping, or the key connective views with the driveway and the A38. It would also not interfere with the relationship between the house and listed gate piers. Therefore the significance would only be effected by the change in use of farmland to the south, which forms a rural 'backdrop' to the listed building. It was concluded the potential development if built in line with the parameters plans would represent an adverse, permanent, indirect and low change, considered to be a moderate/minor effect to its significance. The outline application was obviously approved on this basis. Given the Reserved Matters is broadly in compliance with the parameter plans and given the inherent measures within the application (design and landscape) and the setting, it is considered there are no additional mitigation measures which can eliminate, reduce or otherwise offset the moderate/minor effects on the setting of Rumwell Park.

Conclusion and planning balance

The delivery of the urban extension will make a significant contribution towards meeting 'transformational housing growth' in Taunton and the wider council area.

The principle of development of an urban extension on this site, together with access connection to the existing road network and principle drainage issues, was agreed with the outline planning permission. The reserved matters application accurately reflects and builds upon the outline approval and the approach taken in the approval of Reserved Matters on the first housing parcel H1b, adjacent to the parcel subject to this submission H1a.

The previous Reserved Matters application ref. 42/20/006, considered by Councillors, similarly raised issues of design quality, site viability and the approach that should be taken with the Reserved Matters submissions that will now be continually submitted across the whole of the Western Neighbourhood over the coming months and into 2021.

There has been engagement by the applicant's agent and officers have added value by seeking amendments to plans during the application stage, many to align with changes similarly made to parcel H1b and the valuable input from the Placemaking Specialist. A number of issues have been fully or partially resolved,

however it has not been possible to fully resolve all the issues raised. Of those issues that remain, explanations have been provided by the applicant as to why they have chosen to progress this design for a decision without making changes. The parcel contributes, in a small way, to the comprehensive landscape and green infrastructure scheme for the Comeytrowe site. The wider site is delivering substantial areas of open space, including new parks and gardens, allotments, playing fields and tree planting in line with the garden town vision approved by Reserved Matters 42/19/0053.

The development consortium is building momentum by opening up the site and seeking reserved matters approval, even in uncertain times. This application would deliver housing, including affordable housing, and its positive determination in a timely manner would keep delivery of the 'additionality' affordable homes on track.

Having had regard to the representations of objection and the advice of the various consulted parties, it is considered that with regard to the planning balance the benefits of the scheme significantly outweigh the impacts. Overall, within the parameters set by the outline consent, the proposal represents sustainable development.

In preparing this report the planning officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1998.

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