



Grass Roots Planning Ltd
Unit 106
86-88 Colston Street
Bristol
BS1 5BB
t: 0117 9300 413 m: 07841 026 816
e: catherine@grassroots-planning.co.uk
w: www.grassroots-planning.co.uk

Development Management
Dorset Council
South Walks House
South Walks Road
Dorchester
Dorset
DT1 1UZ

Our Ref: 473/CT
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Dear Sir/Madam

PRE-APPLICATION ENQUIRY: PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT ON LAND TO THE SOUTH OF LOWER ROAD, STALBRIDGE

On behalf of our client, Land Value Alliances, please find enclosed a pre-application enquiry for the proposed development of land located to the south of Lower Road, Stalbridge for residential purposes of around 132 dwellings.

We enclose the following information to assist with your consideration of this enquiry:

- Site location plan;
- Site Assessment – Constraints and opportunities;
- Concept Masterplan;
- Development Parameters Plan;
- Technical Reports:
 - Transport Assessment Scoping Report, prepared by Vectos;
 - Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage Technical Note, prepared by Vectos;
 - Phase 1: preliminary Contamination Assessment Report, prepared by Ruddleson Geotechnical;
 - Archaeological Design Based Assessment, prepare by Avon Archaeology; and
 - Tree Constraint Plan and Schedule, prepared by Bosky Trees.

The Site

The 5.67-hectare site is broadly triangular in shape, located to the south of Lower Road and currently comprises two agricultural fields. It is bounded on all sides by mature hedgerow, with a hedgerow running through the centre of the site, interspersed trees.

The ground rises gently from the south eastern corner towards to north-western corner. A public right of way runs along the site's south western boundary.

The site falls outside the settlement boundary of Stalbridge and is located within a rural priority area. It is located within the Blackmore Vale and Clay Vale Landscape Character Areas.

Outline planning permission for 60 houses was granted in March 2019 for the redevelopment of land to the west of the site (ref: 2/2017/1095/OUT). Reserved matters approval has also recently been granted for the Gladman Development Site Site (following application 2/2017/0741/OUT) on the opposite side of Lower Road, to the north of the application site, for 120 houses (ref: 2/2019/0162/REM). This is now being progressed by Bovis Homes.

These sites are identified on the aerial view of the application site below (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Aerial view of the site, with site area identified in red and nearby consented schemes

Planning Considerations

The relevant Development Plan comprises saved policies contained within the North Dorset Local Plan (2003) and the North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (LP1), which was adopted in 2016. We are aware that Dorset Council has recently begun work on a new Dorset-wide Local Plan.

The NPPF (2019) also forms a material consideration.

The Principle of Development

The Local Plan (policy 6) sets a requirement that at least 57,000 new homes are provided over the plan period, which is an annual rate of 285 dwellings per annum (dpa). Stalbridge is the largest settlement beyond the four main towns and is a sustainable market town, with good access to public transport, community facilities, shops and services. Local Plan policy 2 confirms that Stalbridge (and other larger villages) have been identified as the focus for growth to meet the local needs outside the four main towns.

It is inevitable that Stalbridge will continue to be expected to make a substantial contribution towards meeting additional housing demand within the Dorset-wide Local Plan, which is at a very early stage.

As you will be aware, paragraph 73 of the NPPF requires local authorities to identify and annually update a supply of deliverable sites to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement. Where an authority cannot do this, policies relating to housing supply cannot be considered to be "up-to-date".

The Council acknowledges that it cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply ("5YHLS"), confirming in its most recent Annual Monitoring Review (2018) that it has a land supply of no more than 3.3 years. However, this is based on the 2011 SHMA for Dorset and the 2012 North Dorset update, which established an annual delivery target of 285dpa and it is clear from the more recent Eastern Dorset SHMA (2015), which included North Dorset, that the full objectively assessed need for North Dorset is in fact higher at 330dpa. This gives a 5YHLS of less than 3 years (2.97 years), which is an even greater shortfall. Future housing demand will need to be calculated using the standard method approach.

Even where an authority *is* able to demonstrate a 5YHLS, it is clear from recent appeal and high court decisions, that the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development with respect to housing proposals, means that applications on unallocated land may be considered acceptable if they are sustainable. However, in this case, the Council cannot demonstrate a 5YHLS, in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the relevant housing policies applicable to the proposed scheme are out-of-date. The "tilted balance" is therefore engaged and in accordance with the NPPF, any future planning application should be approved unless the adverse effects of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

As mentioned above, there have been other recent planning permissions on immediately adjacent sites to the north west and west of the development, which have effectively extended the built-up area of Stalbridge. We presume that this will lead to a review of the existing settlement boundary as part of the Local Plan Review. In light of these recent consented schemes, the site to which this pre-application submission relates, offers an obvious development site; it will fit within the future built-up area of Stalbridge and in essence "round off" the settlement boundary as extended by these recent permissions, as shown in Figure 2 below.

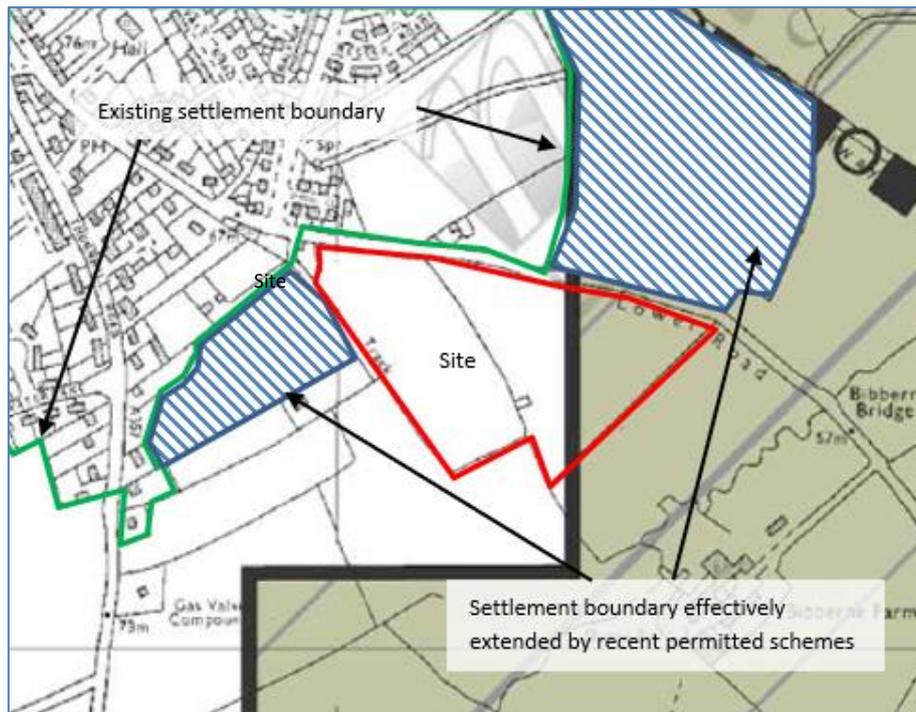


Figure 2: Extract from Proposals Map, with settlement boundary and relationship with recently permitted schemes annotated

In addition to this, the site is located within close proximity to a range of key facilities within Stalbridge Town Centre, including local schools, shops, services and local employment opportunities. These facilities and services lie well within the recommended maximum walking distance of 1.5km, and many are much closer, including Dike & Son superstore, Stalbridge Primary School, a Post Office, and a range of other small independent shops, which are less than 1km from the site.

The closest north bound bus stop is situated on Lower Road, 50m from the site, and the closest southbound bus stop is 200m from the site, on Jarvis Way. These provide bus services between Yeovil, Sherborne, Sturminster Newton, Blandford Forum and Wincanton.

Templecombe Railway station is approximately 7km away and can be easily accessed by sustainable methods of transport, namely cycling. It provides services to Exeter St David's, Yeovil and London Waterloo. Assuming an average cycling speed of 16km per hour, the rail station can be reached within less than 30 minutes from the proposal site.

Consequently, the site is in a location where the use of the car can be minimised as everyday facilities and sustainable methods of transport lie within close proximity. The principle of developing dwellings in such a sustainable location is supported by the NPPF.

Given the significant shortfall in North Dorset's 5-year housing land supply, the development would make a substantial contribution to housing supply, in a sustainable location, which effectively constitutes "rounding off" of the settlement boundary. As the "tilted balance" is engaged permission should be granted her unless the substantial benefits for delivering both affordable and open market housing in a sustainable location is outweighed by significant and demonstrable adverse effects. We will now go on to consider the potential adverse effects that may apply to the site.

Initial Constraints and Opportunities

An initial constraints and opportunities exercise was undertaken, which identified the following:

- Existing neighbouring development largely comprises two storey dwellings, with a few bungalows;
- The neighbouring permitted scheme to the north has effectively extended the settlement edge of Stalbridge and development proposals would be seen in the context of this;
- Potential access points for both vehicular and pedestrian/cycling;
- Potential to connect to surrounding footpaths and relationship with closes bus stops and the town centre;
- Opportunity to retain the main trees and hedgerows;
- The best locations for the incorporation of sustainable drainage;
- The best locations for useable community and public open space at key nodal points;
- Planting and sensitive design to minimise the loss of amenity to existing homes;
- The physical and topographical constraints to development;
- Provision of a soft transition from the urban to the countryside;

The Proposed Masterplan

The enclosed documents from Urban Design Box show how the constraints and opportunities of the site have been analysed and informed the emerging concept master plan for the site. In summary, the proposed masterplan provides the following:

- A single vehicular access point from Lower Road and an emergency/pedestrian/cycle link in the northwest corner;
- Further pedestrian links are proposed to improve connectivity with proposed development to the west, the centre of Stalbridge to the north and the footpath to the south.
- 4-hectares of residential development to be developed at 30-35 dwellings per hectare – the current emerging masterplan show the development of 132 dwellings;
- Areas of public open space within and around the development site to provide a buffer to adjacent agricultural land and provide a rural transition from the elements of the site that are to be developed;
- Sustainable urban drainage has been incorporated and which will double up as ecological areas;
- Courtyard or barn style development is proposed within the southernmost corner of the site to create a soft edge and mimic more traditional agricultural buildings; and
- Retention of existing trees, and perimeter hedgerows, where possible.

The proposed development will offer a number of significant benefits, including the delivery of much needed open market and affordable housing, public open space and a community/play area and will offer employment opportunities throughout the construction phase, as well as social benefits related to the provision of s106 contributions towards social infrastructure, which will underpin the vitality of this existing urban area.

At this stage, we would appreciate feedback from Officers in respect to the emerging masterplan layout and design approach adopted.

Highways and Access

Vectos will be undertaking a Transport Assessment to accompany the planning application, but in advance of this, Vectos has prepared the enclosed Scoping Report.

This confirms that the site is located in a highly accessible location, close to Templecombe Railway Station and local bus stops and it is within walking and cycling distance of a range of everyday amenities and a number of smaller local villages.

A simple priority junction is proposed to access the site. We are aware that the consented residential development to the north east (ref: 2/2017/0741//OUT) proposes some changes to Lower Road which would apply to a section of highway close to the site, and the proposed new access junction has been designed that it can be implemented with or without the changes proposed to Lower Road being delivered as part of the nearby development.

The roads will be designed appropriately to accommodate servicing and refuse vehicles. Car and cycle parking will be provided in accordance with the relevant standards.

Having reviewed the assessment work undertaken during the consideration of the nearby approved scheme (ref: 2/2017/0741/OUT), it is clear that there is sufficient reserve capacity within the local highways network to accommodate the committed development as well as the additional development we are proposing.

Landscape Impact

To assess the potential landscape impact of the development and guide the preparation of the masterplan, Tyler Grange has been involved since the start of the project. Their early involvement allowed them to put forward a landscape strategy to the wider consultant team to inform the masterplan and to ensure that it was 'landscape led'.

Tyler Grange has visited the site to gather a visual record and to identify landscape and visual receptors. These will later be considered within a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) and viewpoint location agreement will be sought with the Council in due course.

Neighbouring development, both existing and consented, has altered the local baseline around the site and means that it is both seen and influenced by the settlement edge of Stalbridge. This existing developed context exists to the north and west.

The site is comprised of two agricultural fields that occupy gently sloping land that is bound by mature hedgerow and hedgerow trees. These landscape features are characteristic of the area and are not considered to be rare or valued more than at a local level. Notwithstanding, these the perimeter hedgerows and trees within them are to be retained as part of the development and large parts of the hedgerow that bisects the field will also be retained along with the trees that hedgerow contains.

Visual receptors which are likely to experience visual change are generally limited to the edge of the site and the local area to the south. This is due to the screening effects of intervening vegetation, built form and changes in topography.

Views from local footpaths are generally limited to the south and south west of the site. Footpath users who will experience visual change have been identified on the footpath aligned along the site's south western boundary and from footpaths on the elevated landform further to the south where elevation allows views over the intervening features.

In summary, Tyler Grange has concluded that no significant impacts on landscape and visual resources are predicted at this stage as a result of well-designed and positioned residential built form within the

site. In addition, benefit to the site's landscape resources can be delivered through several strategies. These include greater vegetation management and provision, new public open space within the site and the connection of neighbouring public footpaths through the site. SUDs water management can be also be accommodated within the site for landscape and biodiversity gain.

Flood Risk/Surface Water Drainage

Vectos has prepared a Technical Note which provides a more detailed summary of the flood risk constraints that apply to the Site and demonstrates how these will be overcome, in accordance with the relevant planning policy. It also provides a summary of how surface water runoff will be managed using Sustainable Drainage Systems.

The site is located within flood Zone 1 and therefore has a low level of risk from fluvial or tidal flood sources. A desk top study has not revealed any other significant potential sources of flooding and therefore flooding is not a constraint to development. Sustainable drainage systems will be utilised to manage surface water run-off, which will be designed to mimic greenfield conditions.

Further detail is provided in the enclosed note prepared by Vectos.

We are aware that the proposed drainage associated with the development to the west requires a requisition across the site, but there is an opportunity for this to be delivered comprehensively without the need for requisition.

Ecology

Surveys have been undertaken in relation to the site and the site is considered to have low overall value in ecological terms as the site has been in use for agricultural purposes since 1782, and in arable cultivation from the beginning of the 20th Century. While the hedgerows and trees will provide some habitats of interest, most of these will be retained. An automated bat recording detector has been employed on one of the mature Oak Trees and the findings taken from that will feed into the final Ecological Assessment and mitigation strategy. In essence, the site is not constrained in terms of ecology and the development will offer opportunities to improve the biodiversity of the land.

Trees

Arboricultural Consultants, Bosky Trees, has been instructed to prepare a tree survey and constraints plan. As the fields have been ploughed, Bosky Trees has advised that it is not expected that the root protection areas would be circular, and the likely RPA has been identified on the Tree constraints Plan, which is submitted with this enquiry.

The emerging masterplan has been designed to retain as many trees as possible, particularly the Category A and B trees which are all shown as retained. The development also avoids the root protection areas.

As such, it is not considered that the proposed development will have a significant adverse impact on trees within, or adjacent to the site.

Agricultural Land Quality

An agricultural land assessment has been commissioned and will accompany the future planning application. The site is shown as Grade 3 on the Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) plans

and we are aware that much of the land around Stalbridge has been surveyed in detail, including the north-west corner of the site and has been classified as Subgrade 3b.

Archaeology

An Archaeological Desk Based Study has been undertaken by Avon Archaeology Ltd to establish whether there are any archaeological constraints to development, a copy of the Report is included with this pre-application submission.

In summary, the study finds that based on cartographic evidence, the site has had its current form since at least 1782 and has been under arable cultivation from the 20th century. Although medieval occupation could have been centred close to the site, there is a significant possibility that any archaeological remains would have been disturbed by modern ploughing techniques. There potential for in-situ archaeology therefore remains low.

Other Matters

Technical advice in respect to contamination and utilities have also been obtained and identify no significant constraints that would give rise to adverse effects resulting from the development.

Community Engagement

In parallel with this process, we will also be undertaking public consultation. This will comprise a leaflet drop to surrounding residents which will provide brief information on the proposals and direct them to a detailed website that will include plans and full technical information in respect to the development. Individuals who do not have access to the internet will also be provided with details of how to engage via post. Direct consultation with a range of stakeholders such as the Town Council, Ward Members and community organisations will also be undertaken at this time. This method of consultation has been used to great effect on a range of similar scale sites and has been found to be more inclusive and successful than a standard exhibition which is often used by developers. We will provide you with the details of the consultation exercise, including a link to the website, in due course.

The Planning Application

We can confirm that we will be shortly be undertaking a formal EIA Screening Opinion Request to ascertain whether an EIA is required to support the planning application, given that the adjacent sites were not supported by EIA's and the lack of adverse impacts on designated sites, it is considered that the site is unlikely to be classed as Schedule 2 development that requires an EIA.

In due course an outline planning application will be submitted in relation to this site and we would welcome your confirmation that the following scope of application is appropriate:

- Relevant plans and drawings;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Affordable Housing Statement;
- Statement of Community Involvement;
- Planning Statement, including S106 heads of terms;
- Flood Risk Assessment;

- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan;
- Agricultural Land Quality Report;
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment;
- Arboricultural Survey and Arboricultural Implications Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Assessment;
- Ecology Survey; and
- Viability Assessment (if required)

Please let us know if any other documents or studies will be required.

We would appreciate the Council's view on the proposed development and the information provided and look forward to a pre-application meeting to discuss matters further.

Conclusion

In conclusion, given the significant shortfall in North Dorset's 5-year housing land supply, the "tilted balance" is engaged and there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The development would make a substantial contribution to both open market and affordable housing supply, in a sustainable location which effectively constitutes "rounding off" of the settlement boundary, particularly given the recently consented schemes to the north and west. As we demonstrate above, there are no adverse effects which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development, and in our view, accordance with the NPPF, the proposed development should therefore be supported, however we await the council's view on these issues in due course.

Yours faithfully



CATHERINE TYRER
Associate Director