

HEARING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF SOUTH WEST STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS

MATTER 6: OTHER SITES IN THE EVENT THAT THE COUNCIL NEEDS TO BRING FORWARD ADDITIONAL DEVELOPMENT SITES FOR SOUNDNESS

- 1.0 As we have set out in our previous representations we consider that land south of Doniford Road, East Watchet offers a sustainable location for housing growth in Watchet (site location plan enclosed as Appendix A). It was previously assessed as part of the SA and SHLAA processes and compared favourably with the sites currently selected at Liddimore Farm and Parsonage Farm. In relation to reserve sites identified under emerging policy LT1 the site at East Watchet is far less constrained as we have previously explained in matter 5.
- 1.1 Since our last representations were submitted the emerging proposals for this site have been subject to public consultation and EIA screening. The public consultation boards are attached at appendix C and a planning application is currently being prepared. This is clear evidence of the developer's intentions and the potential deliverability of the site.
- 1.2 The EIA screening process concluded that the proposed development would not give rise to significant environmental effects. In confirming that an EIA was not required West Somerset made the following points:
- The development, either alone or cumulatively would be unlikely to give rise to significant environmental impacts;
 - The site lies outside any particular sensitive landscape areas; and
 - The geographical extent of any impact is likely to be limited and local and the probability of significant impact is considered to be very low.
- 1.3 While the potential adverse impacts need to be balanced against the benefits of developing this site, and the EIA screening response should not be seen as prejudicing this process, the above identifies that any such adverse impacts would be limited in their scope and would not affect specifically designated areas.

- 1.4 In respect to matter 5 regarding deliverability, after the conclusion of the public consultation process a planning application for the site will be prepared imminently and is due to be submitted to the council in late spring 2016.
- 1.5 The site therefore offers an opportunity to make a meaningful and immediate contribution to the council's five year land supply requirements. It will also have the following benefits:
- i. It will provide a more direct vehicular link between the existing properties found in the residential area based on Normandy Avenue/Cherry Tree Way and the town centre of Watchet;
 - ii. It will aim to reduce surface water flooding issues that have been reported to occur on the Doniford Rd/Normandy Avenue junction;
 - iii. It will improve the botanical interest of a large area of a County Wildlife Site, and make it available to public access; and
 - iv. It will provide a more direct link between large parts of East Watchet and Williton to the South.
- 1.6 In relation to the first identified benefit the residents located on the estate centred on Normandy Avenue and Cherry Tree Way currently cannot access the town via a direct road link. Instead they have to travel out along Doniford Road in a north easterly direction before meeting the junction located adjacent to Doniford Animal Farm before turning left and continuing along Doniford Road into Watchet Town Centre, a total journey of 1,750m from the centre of the Normandy Avenue Estate to the nearest urban edge of Watchet (Doniford Rd/Admirals Close Junction). The proposed development would shorten this distance to 636m by providing a more direct vehicular link to the town. This will shorten car journeys to everyday facilities for those residents reliant on such means of transport. Furthermore pedestrian and cycle linkages would also be provided and strengthened as part of the development which will benefit both future and existing residents, making travel patterns in this part of the town more sustainable.
- 1.7 In respect to the second benefit we have been made aware of surface water flooding issues in the vicinity of the Doniford Rd/Normandy Avenue junction. These are existing problems that the development will aim to solve through the provision of additional water attenuation facilities in this area and online storage systems (i.e. oversized box culverts within road system, storage tanks etc.).
- 1.8 A proportion of the site was identified back in 1996 as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) on account of its calcareous grassland; preliminary findings suggest that the upper slopes in the northern part of the site may be of highest botanical interest and accordingly this has been retained and kept

free from any development in the emerging concept master plan for the site. Many parts of the designated area are heavily overgrown with scrub and this undermines its botanical value and the reason it was identified as a LWS. The proposed development will clear a large part of the scrub area and manage this land to promote its value as calcareous grassland, which will be an ecological benefit of the proposed development.

- 1.9 Connected to the fourth identified benefit this is similar to identified benefit no. 1 with road users able to avoid the junctions near Doniford Halt station by travelling through the application site to Williton to the south. Access controls will prevent rat running through the existing un-adopted road network in this location (Normandy Avenue et al. are currently un-adopted privately owned roads) can also be provided.
- 1.10 Finally we have identified that the site is of Grade 3B agricultural land quality, which is not the best and most versatile land and therefore not protected by national planning policy. The use of such a site should be given priority over other sites of better agricultural value.