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Monday 30th January 2023

Planning Department
South Somerset District Council

Dear Sirs

Planning Subject: Objection to- 22/03560/OUT- Land OS 6975
South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset

I wish to raise a number of objections to the proposed development of the land South of Bowden Road in Templecombe, Reference- 22/03560/OUT, Alternative Reference- PP-11716445.

Having been a resident of the Abbas and Templecombe rural settlement for nearly forty years, I am quite concerned about the number of associated housing developments being approved and the resulting unsustainable increase in house numbers and population – given the existing limited infrastructure, available resources and, arguably, inadequate roadways. In outline my concerns in essence are:

- **Local Plan – Housing Numbers** As a rural settlement, Abbas and Templecombe with the two main approved developments yet to be completed (Slade's Hill – 70 houses and West Street 49 houses), it far exceeds the average growth for comparative rural centres in South Somerset. The proposed development of an additional 140 houses, therefore, appears contrary to and should be considered in the light of Policy SS1 of the adopted Local Plan 2006-2028 (Local Plan). **In this context – enough is enough.**
- **Availability of Local Facilities** The developers place much sway on the community facilities/amenities available within our 'rural settlement', which they purport to be within easy walking distance of the proposed Bowden Road Estate. There are arguments whether those facilities currently afford the existing community an appropriate level of service, let alone the anticipated strain of being expected to cope with an influx from the scheduled developments or, indeed, being swamped with the anticipated number of residents from those 140 houses.

Under SS2 of the Local Plan, there are assumptions that *"Walkable neighbourhoods are typically characterised by having a range of facilities within 10 minutes' (up to about 800 m) walking distance of residential areas, which residents may access comfortably on foot"*.

Indeed, the developers quote this and state that in their plan it is achievable. That is if measured from the A357 pedestrian/cycle entrance. It does not however consider the walking distance to reach that start point – which for some would double that distance. Hardly what could be described as a 'walkable neighbourhood'.

See later comments regarding Local Infrastructure.

- **Landscape Character and Visual Sensitivity to Build Development** Under the Potential Development (Housing From 2006 – 2026) (Peripheral Landscape Study – Templecombe) published in October 2008, the proposed development (the four fields) was not identified as being one of the sites suitable for future development. A later update included this site, but stated that it was “ ... *not adequate for significant numbers of dwellings – suggest 10 dwellings close to Bowden Road remainder of the site too much of an encroachment into the open countryside.*” **One has to ask – What has changed?**

The Peripheral Landscape Study, using its ‘Landscape Capacity Matrix’, defines the proposed development area generally in terms of their ‘Landscape Capacity to Accommodate Build Development’ as either “Low Capacity or at best Moderate Low”. **Hardly a recommendation!**

- **Site Vehicle Access Point** There are issues regarding the proposed (revised) site vehicle access point. What was a simple field access point, prior to speculation and later publicity about the proposed development, was enlarged quite substantially by the farmer. In doing so, it appears he may have misappropriated about 6m of land between the field itself and Bowden Road, which is owned by Somerset District Council (Highways Authority – Land Registry WS64844). One has to question whether ownership or permission was in fact granted for him to legally acquire the land to enable him to extend/enhance the gateway access – or merely did he have permission from the Council Tree Warden to root out this ancient hedgerow for his future intentions? Perhaps the Tree Warden was led to believe – albeit possibly wrongly – that the farmer actually already owned that parcel of land.



I highlight this, as in order to accommodate the revised proposed access point to the site in the planning application, the developers themselves will need to acquire that particular new additional piece of land from the Council and further decimate part of that ancient hedgerow. Perhaps they too assume they already have acquired ownership of the land on which they propose to establish their access and build the junction.

This aspect certainly requires clarification!

- **Junction Safety** Continuing on the subject of the access point, there must be questions regarding the safety viability of placing a priority junction at this point leading on to Bowden Road/Lane. This relatively narrow single carriage road – barely capable of allowing two normal cars to pass in safety – is used significantly as a back-road to and from Milborne Port. Traffic approaching the proposed junction from the west frequently disregard the 30mph speed limit restriction – which starts almost at the point where the priority junction is planned. Unless the



Highway Authorities insist on cutting back significantly the hedgerow (on their land) and to provide and apply adequate warning signage, the potential for accidents involving exiting traffic from the 'estate' would be an exponential risk.

- **Bowden Road Traffic** Bowden Road itself is not only a hazard for pedestrians – no pavements and only limited stretches of grassed areas on which to step out of the way – but also, as a result of substantial on-road parking it presents chicane type situation for road users. Frequently, large or emergency vehicles experience difficulty in passing through and in many stretches of the road single lane traffic is only possible. Existing residents will testify to the numerous examples of traffic emerging from the current two priority junctions (West Street and Westcombe) and other side streets on to Bowden Road, of the careless disregard of drivers failing to give way (priority) to traffic on Bowden Road – thankfully, to-date, no serious accidents have occurred. However, increases in vehicular traffic on to Bowden Road from the West Street development, as well as from the proposed development will exacerbate this safety threat. The point is that with the anticipated increased vehicular traffic – pre and post construction – inevitably it will exacerbate the hazardous conditions which currently prevail along this stretch of roadway.

Again, an exponential risk of injury through potential traffic accident incidents.

- **Safety – Drainage Ponds** Regarding the proposed development plans - I wish to express a safety concern about the intention to install a number of – SuDS (Sustainable urban drainage systems). As far as I can ascertain, at various times of the year these in effect will be unguarded ponds – full of water. These, incredibly, in some cases will be located next to proposed children's play areas. There is no mention of any safety fencing.
- **Site Maintenance** As attractive as the proposed site development illustrations may well be, there is an enormous amount of 'green' land given over to cultivation of grassed children's play and community areas etc. What commitment will the developers be giving to maintaining and sustaining this image – and at what cost to whom?
- **Contaminated Land** There is compelling anecdotal evidence that within the four fields forming the proposed development that circa 1967, during the then outbreak of 'foot and mouth disease', part of the land was used as a burial site for slaughtered animals and their carcasses interred therein. So strong is this claim – surely it must be thoroughly investigated. It is understood DEFRA (Department for Environment and Rural Affairs) would require strict controls over any disturbance and use of such land.



- **Area Proposed For Community Uses'**

In the proposed planning application, on the plan, there is a substantial area abutting the rear of five properties at the west end of Bowden Road which is earmarked 'Area Proposed For Community Uses'. As commendable as it may seem that the developers imply that they wish to accommodate some suggestion from the



local community as to what they may or may not in the future fund/build in this area. Surely at this Planning Application stage, without any idea what this may be, it cannot be accepted. It is a speculative promise only – no guarantee – and at this stage has no substance.

- **Restricted Covenant** Regarding the above five properties, including my own, the Land Registry Title, number WS64844, contains way leaves, easements, rights of way and, more importantly, restrictive covenants applied to this land on 29th September 1981, which specifies that: "... the purchaser, or whosoever hands the same may pass that at no time shall any building of any kind be erected on the land hereby conveyed within 25yards of the parcel of land on which properties 67, 69, 71, 73 and 75 sit". Nowhere in the proposed development is this restriction acknowledged.
- **Local Infrastructure** The planning application indicates that the rural settlement has a favourable and sustainable local infrastructure. However, it is essential that these are seen for what they are, their limitations and, perhaps, inability to cope in the face of the increasing and proposed rise in the community's population.
 - ❖ **Transport** Whilst acknowledging the value of having a bus and train service, the former is a staggered and rural service that has limited potential to sustain commuting for employment to the larger areas for same. The latter certainly is a bonus, but again, in terms of commuting for local employment and onward connectivity it has limited potential to be enjoyed by existing local residents or would attract new ones.
 - ❖ **Medical** There is a part-time offshoot of Milborne Port Surgery in Templecombe, which is mainly a dispensary and nurse practise with the presence of a doctor - usually one day per week. It is an old, converted house situated halfway down a slope with a path and steps from either side, which is inaccessible in terms of disabled access and most elderly patients. In icy winter conditions it is a precarious challenge for all. Quite often, in terms of access and availability, residents opt to attend Milborne Port or Wincanton surgeries.
 - ❖ **School** The primary school struggles to cope and maintain educational standards with the existing number of pupils from its catchment area, let alone the anticipated influx from the anticipated and proposed developments. There is evidence of local children already being denied access and having to commute to schools further afield.
 - ❖ **Employment** Being chiefly an agricultural community, the Abbas and Templecombe settlement offers little commercial or industrial opportunities. Often quoted as a major employer is the defence contractor 'Thales'. That it may be, but the nature of its sensitive high-tech engineering and research activities means that it's recruitment requirements for technical and electronic expertise is nationwide and is unlikely to focus on or attract local personnel other than in support or administrative roles. Predominantly such staff commute

in from outside areas. This lack of employment potential hardly contributes to the recommendations as set out in the Sustainable Development Policy (SD'1).

- ❖ **Shops** Once a thriving community with a range of different shops, Templecombe is reduced to having a small Co-op (recent addition) and a convenience store (Westcombe). The latter was also the village post office, but this facility has been closed now for two months, with no sign of it re-opening.
- ❖ **Social Amenities** The last pub/restaurant in Templecombe has now gone – it was replaced by the Co-op. There is a fish and chip shop – part-time three nights of the week – and a small café – also only open part-time.
- ❖ **Recreation** Templecombe has a Recreation Centre, which comprises a Social Club, two football pitches, tennis courts and a children's play area.

Presumption in Favour of Developers It is understood that in December 2022 the Government launched a proposed change to legislation to scrap the presumption in favour of developers where Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are unable to prove that they have a rolling five-year supply of deliverable land for housing, to ensure there is always sufficient land allocated to meet their housing need. (National Planning Policy Framework 2021) It is therefore hoped that this rural settlement (Abbas and Templecombe), which clearly has already absorbed more than its fair share of the LPA's new housing quota, is not to be forced to accommodate a shortfall experienced elsewhere – notwithstanding the outcome of the anticipate change in this associated legislation – and, indeed, a raft of objections to the development from concerned residents.

I therefore respectfully submit these my objections to the planning application 22/03560/OUT-Land OS 6975 South Of Bowden Road Templecombe Somerset for your consideration as appropriate.

Yours sincerely

JOHN J.B. ALLAN