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## **District Executive**

**Thursday 3rd September 2020**

**9.30 am**

**Virtual Meeting  
using Zoom meeting software**

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The following members are requested to attend the meeting:

Jason Baker  
Mike Best  
John Clark  
Adam Dance  
Sarah Dyke

Peter Gubbins  
Henry Hobhouse  
Val Keitch  
Tony Lock  
Peter Seib

Any members of the public wishing to address the meeting at Public Question Time need to email [democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk) by 9.00am on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020.

This meeting will be viewable online by selecting the committee meeting at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF\\_soA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA)

For further information on the items to be discussed, please contact  
[democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk)

This Agenda was issued on Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

*Alex Parmley, Chief Executive Officer*

**This information is also available on our website  
[www.southsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk) and via the mod.gov app**

# Information for the Public

The District Executive co-ordinates the policy objectives of the Council and gives the Area Committees strategic direction. It carries out all of the local authority's functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council. It delegates some of its responsibilities to Area Committees, officers and individual portfolio holders within limits set by the Council's Constitution. When major decisions are to be discussed or made, these are published in the Executive Forward Plan in so far as they can be anticipated.

Members of the Public are able to:-

- attend meetings of the Council and its committees such as Area Committees, District Executive, except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Area Committees, District Executive and Council meetings;
- see reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and Executive;
- find out, from the Executive Forward Plan, what major decisions are to be decided by the District Executive.

The Council's Constitution is also on the web site and available for inspection in Council offices. The Council's corporate priorities which guide the work and decisions of the Executive are set out below.

## District Executive

Meetings of the District Executive are usually held monthly, at 9.30am, on the first Thursday of the month (unless advised otherwise). However during the coronavirus pandemic these meetings will be held remotely via Zoom video-conferencing. For more details on the regulations regarding remote/virtual meetings please see the Local Authorities and Police and Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 as part of the Coronavirus Act 2020.

The Executive Forward Plan and copies of executive reports and decisions are published on the Council's web site: <http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>

Agendas and minutes can also be viewed via the mod.gov app (free) available for iPads and Android devices. Search for 'mod.gov' in the app store for your device, install, and select 'South Somerset' from the list of publishers, then select the committees of interest. A wi-fi signal will be required for a very short time to download an agenda but once downloaded, documents will be viewable offline.

## **Public participation at meetings (held via Zoom)**

### **Public question time**

We recognise that these are challenging times but we still value the public's contribution to our virtual meetings. If you would like to participate and contribute in the meeting, please join on-line through Zoom at: <https://zoom.us/join> You will need an internet connection to do this.

Please email [democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk) for the details to join the meeting.

If you would like to view the meeting without participating, please see: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF\\_soA](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSDst3IHGj9WoGnwJGF_soA)

The period allowed for participation in Public Question Time shall not exceed 15 minutes except with the consent of the Chairman and members of the Committee. Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.

If you would like to address the meeting at Public Question Time, please email [democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk) by 9.00am on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020. When you have registered, the Chairman will invite you to speak at the appropriate time during the virtual meeting.

### **Virtual meeting etiquette:**

- Consider joining the meeting early to ensure your technology is working correctly.
- Please note that we will mute all public attendees to minimise background noise. If you have registered to speak during the virtual meeting, the Chairman will un-mute your microphone at the appropriate time.
- Each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes.
- When speaking, keep your points clear and concise.
- Please speak clearly – the Councillors are interested in your comments.

# District Executive

**Thursday 3 September 2020**

## Agenda

### **1. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Special District Executive meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and the District Executive meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

### **2. Apologies for Absence**

### **3. Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

Members are reminded that they need to declare the fact that they are also a member of a County, Town or Parish Council as a Personal Interest. Where you are also a member of Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council within South Somerset you must declare a prejudicial interest in any business on the agenda where there is a financial benefit or gain or advantage to Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council which would be at the cost or to the financial disadvantage of South Somerset District Council.

### **4. Public Question Time**

### **5. Chairman's Announcements**

#### **Items for Discussion**

- 6. The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan Referendum** (Pages 6 - 143)
- 7. Disposal of Churchfields Office, Wincanton** (Pages 144 - 149)
- 8. Investment Assets Quarterly Update Report** (Pages 150 - 160)
- 9. Reconstruction & Adoption of roadway, Chard Business Park, Chard** (Pages 161 - 166)
- 10. Shared Building Control and Somerset Independence Plus Service** (Pages 167 - 171)
- 11. Shared Legal Services** (Pages 172 - 176)
- 12. Urgent Decision - Support for Leisure Provider** (Pages 177 - 181)
- 13. District Executive Forward Plan** (Pages 182 - 188)
- 14. Date of Next Meeting** (Page 189)



**15. Exclusion of Press and Public** (Page 190)

**16. Yeovil Refresh Ring-fenced Assets and Development Opportunities (Confidential)**  
(Pages 191 - 208)

## The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan Referendum

Executive Portfolio Holder:	<i>Val Keitch – Strategy and Housing</i>
Ward Member(s)	<i>Camelot - Mike Lewis</i>
Strategic Director:	<i>Kirsty Larkins; Director, Strategy and Commissioning</i>
Service Manager:	<i>Peter Paddon; Lead Specialist – Strategic Planning</i>
Lead Officer:	<i>Jo Wilkins; Specialist – Strategic Planning</i>
Contact Details:	<a href="mailto:jo.wilkins@SouthSomerset.Gov.Uk">jo.wilkins@SouthSomerset.Gov.Uk</a> or 01935 462588

## Purpose of the Report

1. To agree the Independent Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications; and to set out the process for 'making' the plan in the event that there is a favourable outcome to the local referendum to be organised by the District Council.

## Forward Plan

- 2 This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of September 2020.

## Public Interest

- 3 The Neighbourhood Plan represents the views of Queen Camel Parish Council and other stakeholders on the preferred approach to future development in the Parish. This Plan has been the subject of Independent Examination by a qualified person and, if the Council agrees with the Examiner's report and recommendations for Proposed Modifications, the Plan will be then subject to a referendum of all those in the community on the Electoral Register. The referendum will ask whether local residents agree with the modified Plan's content and if it should be used in the determination of planning applications. [Regulations linked to the Coronavirus Act 2020](#) mean that no elections or referendums can take place until 6 May 2021. This includes neighbourhood planning referendums. These provisions will be kept under review by the Government and may be amended or revoked in response to changing circumstances.
- 4 The Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of various events and meetings which have been used to engage with interested parties and public consultations. The Parish Council also have a dedicated website for the Neighbourhood Plan: [Neighbourhood Plan – Queen Camel Parish Council](#)

## Recommendations



5 That the District Executive:

- a. agrees the Examiner's report and accepts in full her recommendations for Proposed Modifications to the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan.
- b. agrees a modification to the explanatory text at paragraphs 3.2.12 and 3.2.13, alongside amending Policy QC2; and providing a definition of "infill" alongside to clearly align the amendments with the paragraph 12(6) powers to modify, along with express recognition that the Examiner's recommendations have been accepted in full.
- c. agrees to officers organising a referendum next year for local people on the Electoral Register. The aim of the referendum is to ascertain whether local residents want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Queen Camel to help it decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area.
- d. delegates responsibility to the Director for Strategy and Commissioning to make any final minor text amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan, in agreement with the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

## Background

- 6 Neighbourhood planning helps local communities play a direct role in planning for the areas in which they live and work. The plan can show how the community wants land in its area to be used and developed. If a plan is 'made' following a successful referendum, it becomes part of the development plan for that area. Planning applications are determined by local planning authorities in accordance with the adopted development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7 The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Area designation was approved by the District Council in March 2013. Since then, the Neighbourhood Plan for the area was prepared and a 'Pre-Submission' Plan was consulted upon by the local Steering Group in May 2019 (Regulation 14). This initial consultation was followed by formal submission of the Plan in January 2020 and the District Council carried out formal consultation in line with procedures set out in the relevant Regulations (Regulation 16), before the restrictions on movement in response to Covid-19 were put in place. The Plan has now been the subject of independent examination and this report relates to the District Council's decision on the Examiner's recommendations and the next step of a local referendum. In the meantime, Planning Practice Guidance<sup>1</sup> states that neighbourhood plans awaiting referendums can be given significant weight in decision-making.

## The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan

8. The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan sets out a vision for the Parish and the Stakeholders' main aims. The Plan summarises the consultation process and evidence base which informed its preparation. It also includes policies seeking to

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<sup>1</sup> [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): planning update - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-update)



## South Somerset District Council

guide future development in the Parish relating to Housing, Business and Employment, Community Services and Facilities, Getting About, Environment; and Heritage. A site to the northwest of West Camel Road is allocated for about 30 dwellings; with the land to the north of Roman Way set aside for an extension to the existing recreation ground and/or an archeological interpretation area. The Plan also refers to a number of local projects that will be taken forward by the Parish Council, although these do not form Plan Policies.

9. The Neighbourhood Plan's main aims are set out follows:
  - To create new opportunities for local people to live and work in the parish and so strengthen the community and the local economy.
  - To make sure new development strengthens Queen Camel's character
  - To improve and extend safe routes in and around the village for horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians
  - To make sure there is sufficient off-road car parking for existing and new development
  - To preserve existing green spaces that are valued by local residents
  - To maintain, improve and extend recreational facilities to meet better the needs of local residents of every age and ability
  - To preserve and enhance the historically significant monuments and features
10. Alongside the Neighbourhood Plan itself, the Regulations require that a statement is submitted which states how the Plan meets the specified 'Basic Conditions', a Consultation Statement; and confirmation that the Plan meets the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulations and other European legislation.
11. On receipt of the Submission Documents, the District Council carried out the required public consultation for a period of six weeks under Regulation 16 in January - March 2020; this included a notice in the press, and hard copies of the Submission documents being made available at the Queen Camel Memorial Hall and Connect at Petters Way, Yeovil. The District Council also wrote to all authorities, utility providers, a wide range of stakeholders and other bodies considered to have an interest in the Plan, including those that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had consulted itself. The submission documentation was also made available on the Council's website.
12. A total of six responses were received and the District Council also presented its own comments; these were all sent to the Examiner.
13. The Examiner's Report concludes that the correct procedure for the preparation and submission of the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan was followed and that it meets the 'Basic Conditions', subject to the proposed modifications being made. The Examiner has proposed 19 modifications in all. The Examiner's Report (Appendix A) and amended document (Appendix B) in accordance with these proposed changes is appended to this report. The original Submission Plan, supporting documents and summary of representations received are all available on the District Council's website <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/>

14 In her Report, the Examiner states in paragraph 4.20 that:

“Paragraph 3.1.3 advises that past build rates would suggest about 3 dwellings could reasonably be expected from conversions and infill development, but *‘that more may be possible with the introduction of a settlement boundary’*. How that might be achieved is unclear when the settlement boundary defined on Map 7 is tightly drawn around the extant built up limits of the village, limiting the opportunities for infill development. I have serious concerns that the settlement boundary identified here has the potential to frustrate otherwise acceptable development on suitable and sustainable sites adjacent to the existing built settlement, that would accord with Local Plan policy SS2. I am therefore recommending that the text of the Plan and policy QC2 is modified to delete all references to the settlement boundary and that the settlement boundary is deleted from Figure 7. Consequential modification will also be needed to policy QC1b) to delete the words *‘within the defined settlement boundary’*” (Proposed Modifications 6,7,8 and 9).

15 At its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020, Queen Camel Parish Council decided the following:

1. The Parish Council wants to retain the Settlement Boundary in the Neighbourhood Plan, as it provides clarity as to the area where general infill would be appropriate and was supported by local residents in preparing the plan;
2. SSDC should include the Settlement Boundary or make other suitable modifications;
3. that the Parish Council want the Neighbourhood Plan to be in conformity with the Local Plan;
4. that the Neighbourhood Plan is given significant weight by SSDC when making development management (planning) decisions, as soon as possible; and
5. that the Neighbourhood Plan is taken to Referendum as soon as possible.

The letter to the District Council from the Parish Council is attached in full as Appendix C.

16 The local planning authority must reach its own view on whether the QCNP complies with the basic conditions. The key issue for District Executive Members to determine is whether or not they agree with the Examiner’s assessment as a matter of planning judgement.

There is considerable latitude given to such judgements by the High Court (as per ***R (Kebbell Developments Ltd) v Leeds City Council*** [2018]), and the basic condition in paragraph 8(2)(e) of schedule 4B to TCPA 1990 only requires that the draft neighbourhood plan *as a whole* be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted development plan *as a whole*. It is open to a local authority to conclude that there is general conformity notwithstanding a degree of tension: (as per ***R (Crownhall Estates Limited) v Chichester DC*** [2016]).

17 That being said, it is relevant to the settlement boundary point that:

- (1) The Local Plan does not use settlement boundaries for Rural Settlements and the explanatory text at 5.23 makes clear that the removal of settlement boundaries was a positive strategic choice;
- (2) As the Examiner identified, the use of a settlement boundary may have the effect of preventing sites from coming forwards which otherwise would be able to under the Local Plan;
- (3) Policy SS2 is a key strategic policy against which the conformity of the QCNP needs to be measured; and
- (4) No change is proposed in the Preferred Options consultation on the Local Plan Review which confirms at paragraph 5.21 that the Villages (which include Queen Camel) *'do not have identified development areas but growth is expected to take place adjacent to the existing built settlement'*.

Members are therefore advised that any departure from the Examiner's recommendation to delete the settlement boundary would be vulnerable to challenge.

- 18 However, another option might be to consider whether any additional wording could be added to the plan's explanatory text so as to record the views of the parish without elevating to the level of policy and therefore without contradicting the Examiner's recommendations. Supporting text in a development plan document does not have the same force as the policies themselves, but can nevertheless be taken into account in development control decisions.
- 19 Having worked with the Parish Council and following extensive discussions with them about their own suggested changes (including seeking Counsel's opinion), Members are advised that additional explanatory text, comprising amendments to paragraphs paras 3.2.12 and 3.2.13, alongside amending Policy QC2 and providing a definition of "infill" have now been agreed with the Parish Council.
- 20 As the proposed modifications arise from existing evidence or facts set out within the draft neighbourhood plan, additional consultation under para 13 of Schedule 4B would not be necessary.
- 21 At this point, the District Council has three principal options available to it in respect of making a decision on the Examiner's Report and Proposed Modifications. These are:
  - a. Accept the Inspector's proposed modifications and remove all references to the Settlement Boundary and accompanying outline on the map, Publish the decision notice and proceed to a referendum which will not be able to be held until May 2021.
  - b. Accept the Inspector's proposed modifications and remove all references to the Settlement Boundary and accompanying outline on the map, but endeavour to support the views of the parish by the making of some text amendments and



Policy QC2 [agreed with the Parish Council]. Publish the decision notice and proceed to a referendum which will not be able to be held until May 2021.

- c. Not accept the proposed modification to delete the settlement boundary, in which case the District Council would need to explain the reasons for this, on the basis only that the Examiner had made a factual error or a proposed modification that does not meet the basic conditions. SSDC would be required to consult on the decision for a six-week period. Depending on the responses received it may necessitate another Examination. The outcome would be reported again to the District Executive and a decision notice published, before then proceeding to a referendum which will not be able to be held until May 2021.

22 Once the District Council has issued its Decision, the Parish Council then also has two options; namely:

- i) Withdraw the Neighbourhood Plan – go back to Regulation 14; and consult on a revised policy approach. This would involve a further Submission stage and Examination.
- ii) Accept the District Council's decision and progress to referendum.

23 The Recommendation to the District Executive is that in line with option b above all of the Examiner's Proposed Modifications are accepted for the reasons set out in her Report; and that consequential revisions be made to the text in the Neighbourhood Plan; to include a definition of 'infill development' after paragraph 3.2.12, which states:

***Infill development in the neighbourhood plan refers to the development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings within the village, with its main access onto an otherwise built-up frontage or on other sites within the village where the site is contiguous with and closely associated with existing buildings. The potential for housing development is specifically permitted for reasons stated in Policy QC1 (i.e. the site allocation including the affordable housing element, infill opportunities, conversions and rural exception sites).***

24 The reason for introducing amendments is that the Neighbourhood Plan makes a number of references to the proportion of the older population in the settlement, such as in paras 1.5.6 and 3.2.34; and the need to make provision for this part of the community. In these circumstances, it would be appropriate to include text, without changing the essence to the Examiner's Recommendations, to encourage new housing to be located if at all possible in sustainable locations within easy accessibility of the services and facilities within the heart of the village, which the rest of the community would also benefit from.

25 If the District Council accepts the Examiner's recommendations, the next stage would be to hold a local referendum in Queen Camel. The prescribed question that needs to be asked is:





## South Somerset District Council

*"Do you want South Somerset District Council to use the Neighbourhood Plan for Queen Camel to help it decide planning applications in the Neighbourhood Area?"*

If more than 50% of those who vote say Yes, the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' (or adopted); and it becomes part of the statutory Development Plan for the District Council and needs to be taken account of in the determination of planning applications. Despite the currently delay to the holding of the local referendum, the neighbourhood plan can be given significant weight in decision making in advance of the referendum.

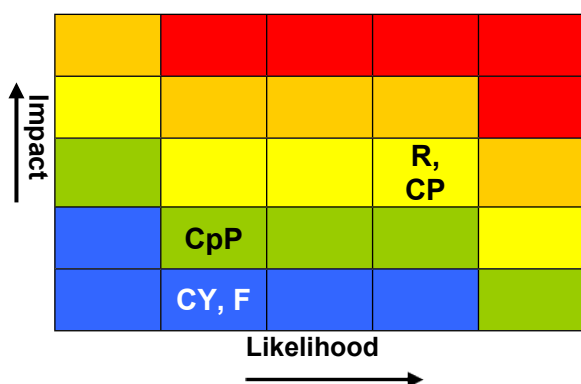
- 26 Under the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations, 15% of Community Infrastructure Levy receipts are generally passed directly to those parish and town councils (in England) where development has taken place. In England, communities that draw up a neighbourhood plan and secure the consent of local people in a referendum, will benefit from 25% of the levy revenues arising from the development that takes place in their area.
- 27 The District Council does not have the option to decline to hold the Referendum as this is required by legislation; and the associated costs will need to be absorbed into existing budgetary arrangements. However, Planning Authorities have been advised that, in order to minimise the financial impact of any delays to neighbourhood planning referendums, the Government will allow local planning authorities in 2020/21 to submit claims for New Burdens grant, instead of when the date of the referendum is set, at an earlier point in the neighbourhood planning process. A claim can be made at the point when the local planning authority issues a decision statement (as set out under Regulation 25 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 detailing its intention to send the plan to referendum. The Council will therefore claim a grant of up to £20,000 towards the costs of progressing the Neighbourhood Plan from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government once the formal decision has been issued.

### Financial Implications

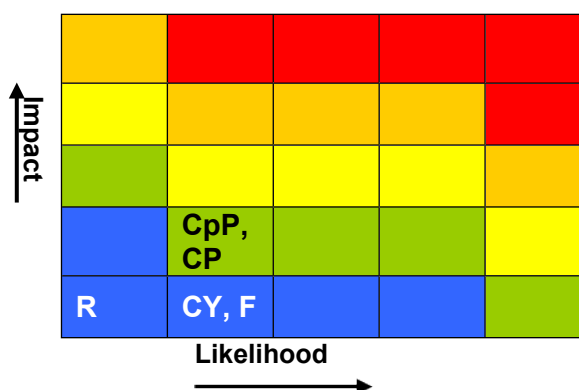
- 28 There are no additional financial implications as the £20,000 grant claimable from MHCLG will be sufficient to cover the costs of the referendum. It should be noted that if the referendum were not to progress the costs incurred to date will be funded from an existing Strategic Planning budget.



**Risk Profile before officer recommendations**



**Risk Profile after officer recommendations**



### Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan Priorities	Orange = Major impact and major probability
CP = Community Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY = Capacity	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
F = Financial	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

## Council Plan Implications

- 29 The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan accords with the Council's aims to increase the focus on jobs and economic development, protect and enhance the quality of our environment; and to enable housing to meet all needs. The District Council's values include supporting people and communities, enabling them to help themselves; and the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared by the local community who wish to have an influence on future development in the Parish. The Council Plan states that it will focus on supporting communities to develop and implement Neighbourhood Plans.

## Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

- 30 The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan does not directly address carbon emissions or climate change and no such issues arise.

## Equality and Diversity Implications

- 31 No significant changes to a Service, Policy or Strategy are proposed, directly and, therefore, it is not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.

## Privacy Impact Assessment

- 32 It is not necessary to process personal data so, therefore, a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is not needed.

## **Background Papers**

Appendix A – Examiner's Report

Appendix B – Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan (Amended)

Appendix C – The letter from the Parish Council to the District Council in response to the Examiner's Report



## **Report on Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2030**

**An Examination undertaken for South Somerset District Council with the support of the Queen Camel Parish Council on the November 2019 submission version of the Plan.**

Independent Examiner: Mary O'Rourke BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

Date of Report: 1 June 2020

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## **Main Findings - Executive Summary**

From my examination of the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan (QCNP/the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the policy modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – Queen Camel Parish Council (QCPC/the Parish Council);
- The Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Parish of Queen Camel indicated on Fig.1 of the Plan;
- The Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – 2019 to 2030; and
- The policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendum area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

## **1. Introduction and Background**

### *Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2030*

- 1.1 Queen Camel lies some 6 miles north of Yeovil in South Somerset. The Parish is bisected north south by the A303(T), which runs along the ridge of the Camel Hills on the north side of the valley of the River Cam. The northern half of the Parish is relatively undeveloped with scattered farmsteads and the registered parkland around Hazlegrove House, an independent preparatory boarding school, in the north east. The village of Queen Camel lies to the south, on the low-lying river floodplain and its High Street is the main A359, linking the A303 with Yeovil and Sherborne. The historic core of the village is designated as a Conservation Area and most of the older properties are constructed of local natural stone. Behind the High Street, there has been more recent estate development. The village has a new primary school and medical centre, a public house and a village shop with a Post Office. The Parish includes the hamlet of Wales to the west of Queen Camel, and has a population of some 908 residents in 355 households (2011 Census).
- 1.2 The Plan notes that the Parish Council has been proactive in the development of the village, publishing in 2005 a Community Plan and four years later, in 2009, a Development Plan for Queen Camel. With the

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Localism Act 2011, and because of this earlier work, the Parish Council was awarded Frontrunner status for the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. An application was made for designation as a neighbourhood area in March 2012 and approved by South Somerset District Council on 8 March 2013. Having successfully promoted an affordable housing project and new primary school site in the village, the Parish Council took the decision in November 2015 to put the Plan on hold, and whilst the original draft Plan was published on the Parish Council's website, it did not proceed to formal consultation.

- 1.3 Subsequently, in June 2016 the Parish Council decided to do more consultation with the community on proposals and policies for inclusion in the Plan. The QCNP, submitted under Regulation 15 and the subject of this examination, is an update of the original draft Plan. The Plan has been developed by a Steering Group on behalf of the Parish Council. The Consultation Statement sets out how the community has been involved, detailing the various consultation events held to engage with the local community and with interested stakeholders.
- 1.4 The Vision and Aims of the Plan, set out in Section 2, reflect public consultation and are that Queen Camel is to be a parish that retains its character; has an improved built environment; provides residents with accommodation and services appropriate to their needs; an enhanced standard of local service provision including recreational facilities; and an enhanced network of well-maintained footpaths and bridleways. In Section 3, the Plan addresses a number of relevant topics, putting forward planning policies on housing, business and employment, community services and facilities, getting about, the environment, heritage and community consultation. Section 4 sets out community projects, which go beyond planning policy, but which are matters raised during the Plan's preparation for the Parish Council and local community to pursue. The Plan's policies are designed to help achieve the underlying Vision and Aims. Generally, the Plan has a clear structure and overall purpose and is easy to read.

#### *The Independent Examiner*

- 1.5 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the QCNP by South Somerset District Council (SSDC), with the agreement of QCPC.
- 1.6 I am a chartered town planner and former government Planning Inspector, with some 40 years of experience in the public and private sectors, latterly determining major planning appeals and examining development plans and national infrastructure projects. I have recent experience of examining neighbourhood plans. I am an independent examiner, and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the draft Plan.

### *The Scope of the Examination*

- 1.7 As the independent examiner I am required to produce this report and recommend either:
- (a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum without changes; or
  - (b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to a referendum; or
  - (c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to a referendum on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.
- 1.8 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:
- Whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions;
  - Whether the Plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
    - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the Local Planning Authority;
    - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
    - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
    - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development';
    - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area;
    - whether the referendum boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the Plan proceed to referendum; and
  - Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 ('the 2012 Regulations').
- 1.9 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

## *The Basic Conditions*

1.10 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- Have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- Be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations; and
- Meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.11 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017(the 2017 Regulations)<sup>1</sup>.

## **2. Approach to the Examination**

### *Planning Policy Context*

2.1 The Development Plan for this part of SSDC, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) adopted in March 2015 (SSLP/the Local Plan). The SSLP is to be the subject of an early review and consultation took place between June and September 2019 on Preferred Options. The SSDC website indicates that public consultation on the Publication Local Plan 2016-2036 will not take place until early to mid-2021. However, whilst the QCNP is not being examined against emerging strategic planning policy, the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that the reasoning and evidence informing an emerging plan may be relevant to the consideration of the Basic Conditions against which a neighbourhood plan is tested. Where a neighbourhood plan is brought forward before an up-to-date local plan is in place, the PPG further advises that the local authority and qualifying body should discuss and aim to agree the relationship between policies in the adopted and

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<sup>1</sup> This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.



emerging plans, and aim to minimise conflicts. I take account of this guidance in my assessment of the Plan<sup>2</sup>.

- 2.2 Neighbourhood plans should not include provisions for excluded development. Nonetheless, it is relevant to note here that much of the Parish is located within a Minerals Safeguarding Area for building stone, as defined in the Somerset Minerals Plan 2015, where policy SMP9 seeks to protect important mineral resources from unnecessary sterilisation.
- 2.3 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF of July 2018 replaced the first NPPF published in March 2012<sup>3</sup> and itself has been replaced by the NPPF published in February 2019, which includes minor clarifications to the 2018 revised version<sup>4</sup>. All references in this report are to the February 2019 NPPF<sup>5</sup> and the accompanying guidance in the PPG.

### *Submitted Documents*

- 2.4 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- the draft Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan 2019 to 2030, November 2019;
  - the Map at Fig 1 of the Plan which identifies the area to which the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan relates;
  - the Consultation Statement, November 2019;
  - the Basic Conditions Statement, November 2019;
  - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation; and
  - the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report prepared by SSDC in February 2019 and Strategic Environmental Assessment Environmental Report of May 2019 (and its November 2019 addendum).
- 2.5 I have also had regard to the responses of SSDC and QCPC<sup>6</sup> to the questions annexed to my procedural letter of 27 March 2020.

### *Site Visit*

- 2.6 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 23 March 2020 to familiarise myself with it, and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan and evidential documents.

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<sup>2</sup> PPG Reference ID: 41-009-20190509.

<sup>3</sup> Footnote on page 4 of the NPPF July 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Footnote 1 on page 4 of the NPPF February 2019.

<sup>5</sup> See Paragraph 214 of the NPPF. The Plan was submitted under Regulation 15 to the local planning authority after 24 January 2019.

<sup>6</sup> By email on 14 April 2020. View at <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/your-council/your-council-plan-and-strategies/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/>

### *Written Representations with or without Public Hearing*

- 2.7 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections to the Plan, and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to a referendum.

### *Modifications*

- 2.8 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications separately in the Appendix.

## **3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights**

### *Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area*

- 3.1 The QCNP has been prepared and submitted for examination by the QCPC which is a qualifying body, for an area that was designated by SSDC on 8 March 2013.
- 3.2 It is the only Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Queen Camel, and does not relate to land outside the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

### *Plan Period*

- 3.3 The Plan specifies clearly the period to which it is to take effect, which is from 2019 to 2030.

### *Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation*

- 3.4 The Consultation Statement (November 2019) provides details of the public engagement that has taken place in the evolution of the Plan. As a result of the proactive work by the Parish Council in consulting on, developing and progressing the 2005 Community Plan and then the 2009 Development Plan, it was awarded Frontrunner status following the enactment of the Localism Act in 2011. The Frontrunner Steering Group held a Planning for Real consultation through March and April 2012, holding a series of public consultation events in the village. At the same time as the application was made to SSDC for designation as a neighbourhood area, which was approved in 2013, work progressed on taking forward an affordable housing project in the village and for a replacement primary school. In November 2015, with work proceeding on both developments and the main objectives of the plan achieved, the then Parish Council put the draft Neighbourhood Plan on hold.

- 3.5 However, subsequently it was decided in June 2016 to canvass residents for their views on development generally in the village, including use of the old school site. Each household in the Parish received two questionnaires<sup>7</sup>, a summary questionnaire and an open questionnaire, with additional copies available on the village website. 192 summary and 77 longer questionnaires were returned and analysis indicated a mix of opinion on further housing development in Queen Camel. Further public consultation was carried out in October 2017<sup>8</sup>, focusing on potential development sites, put forward following the Steering Group's call for sites. In addition, the views of local residents were sought on local character features, green spaces and community facilities and to check support for the Plan's objectives. Posters publicising the Options Consultation were displayed around the Parish, on the website and individual letters were sent to every home and landowner. In November 2017, over 100 villagers attended a public event held on a Friday evening and all-day Saturday at the village hall, where plans, initial site ratings, maps and photos were on display with members of the Steering Group available to answer questions. Subsequent to the event, 72 completed questionnaires were returned, generally indicating some support for more housing but only if the sites were acceptable. The Consultation Statement includes detail on responses to the site options, on proposed Local Green Spaces and on community projects, in particular future use of the old school site.
- 3.6 The Options consultation informed the drafting of specific policies in the Plan and formal Regulation 14 Consultation on the draft QCNP was held between 31 May and 28 July 2019. A summary of the Plan's policies was delivered to every household in the Parish and details were posted on the Parish Council website, with hard copies of the Plan available locally. In addition, a village meeting was publicised and held on 4 July to provide an opportunity for the public to ask questions of the Steering Group about the Plan, which was attended by 35 local residents. In all, some 67 response forms were received in addition to emailed responses from SSDC, Somerset County Council, Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England, Highways England and Wessex Water. A summary of the representations made is provided in the Consultation Statement at pages 18 to 29 along with the Steering Group's response, including proposed changes to the draft QCNP.
- 3.7 The submitted Plan was subject to a further 6-week consultation between 30 January and 12 March 2020 under Regulation 16 and I have taken account of the 7 responses received in writing this report, as well as the earlier Consultation Statement. I am satisfied that engagement and consultation with the wider community and interested parties has been thorough and robust throughout the Plan making process; that they were kept informed of what was being proposed, were able to make their views known, had opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging

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<sup>7</sup> The QCNP page 4 refers to this consultation as Survey 16.

<sup>8</sup> The QCNP page 4 refers to this consultation as Consultation 17.

Neighbourhood Plan and would have been aware of how their views had informed the draft Plan. I conclude that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for this Plan, having due regard to the advice in the PPG on plan preparation and in procedural compliance with the legal requirements.

### *Development and Use of Land*

- 3.8 The Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with section 38A of the 2004 Act.

### *Excluded Development*

- 3.9 The Plan does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'.

### *Human Rights*

- 3.10 I have to consider whether the QCNP has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998. The Basic Conditions Statement on page 13 sets out QCPC's view that as no issues have been raised in any preceding consultations in relation to possible contraventions of Human Rights, and given the conclusions on the QCNP's general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan and regard to the NPPF, it is reasonable to conclude that the making of the Plan does not breach human rights. I have considered this matter independently and I have found no reason to find that the QCNP, including its preparation, breaches or is otherwise incompatible with any of the Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998).

## **4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions**

### *EU Obligations*

- 4.1 A screening assessment in relation to potential requirements for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the European Directive 2001/42/EC was undertaken by SSDC in January 2015. At that time, it was concluded a full assessment was not required. This conclusion was reviewed by SSDC, prior to the Plan's pre-submission consultation under Regulation 14, as site allocations were now proposed<sup>9</sup>. The conclusion of the February 2019 Screening Report was that '*the draft QCNP is likely to have significant environmental effects*',<sup>10</sup> because of the inclusion of policies allocating land for development, and a full SEA was required. A

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<sup>9</sup> Screening by SSDC in September 2018 and February 2019 both concluded that SEA was required.

<sup>10</sup> Paragraphs 5.1 and 5.2 QCNP SEA and the HRA Screening Report February 2019.

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SEA Environmental Report was produced in May 2019 and a subsequent Addendum in November 2019.

- 4.2 The SEA Environmental Report describes an assessment<sup>11</sup>, according to Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, exploring options to assess the most acceptable approach to the allocation of land for housing, in addressing flood risk and heritage impact. It concluded that overall, any adverse impacts were not likely to be significant, and the preferred options appeared to be the most appropriate, with suggestions made to improve the drafting of various policies<sup>12</sup>. No specific comments were made on the SEA in response to consultation on the pre-submission draft Plan. I comment on the submitted policies under Main Issues below, but as far as the SEA is concerned, I am satisfied that the approach has been thorough and carried out in accordance with the Regulations, and should contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The full SEA was sent to the statutory consultees and they, along with SSDC, have raised no objection to the assessment or to its conclusions.
- 4.3 The draft QCNP was further screened for Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). Given the lack of European sites in the vicinity of Queen Camel, and the limited wider impacts likely from the Plan itself, the HRA screening concluded that the QCNP would not have significant effects upon the integrity of any European sites. Natural England and the Environment Agency agreed with that conclusion and that, as the QCNP is unlikely to have an adverse effect on a European site, there would be no requirement for an Appropriate Assessment. On the basis of the information provided, and my independent consideration, I agree that HRA is not necessary.

### *Main Issues*

- 4.4 Having regard for the QCNP, the consultation responses and other evidence, and the site visit, I consider that there are four main issues relating to the Basic Conditions for this examination. These are:
- whether the housing, employment and community facilities policies in the Plan provide an appropriate framework to shape and direct sustainable development, having regard to national policy and guidance, and are in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan;
  - whether the policies for the built and natural environment will secure high standards of design and protect heritage and environmental assets in line with national policy and are in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan;

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<sup>11</sup> PPG Reference ID: 11-001-20190722.

<sup>12</sup> Page iv of the Non-Technical Summary of the SEA Environmental Report May 2019 plus the November 2019 Addendum.

- whether the Plan appropriately provides for the designation of Local Green Spaces, having regard to national planning policy and the need to be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development; and
- whether the road infrastructure, footpaths and parking policies in the Plan meet the Basic Conditions, particularly in relation to the regard that has been had to national policy and guidance.

## *Introduction*

- 4.5 The QCNP begins in Section 1 with background and an introduction to the Parish and to the Plan, setting it in the national and district planning context, and describing local engagement in the Plan making process. Section 2 sets out the Vision for the area in 2030 and the Aims of the Plan, which emerged from the consultation exercises and from which the policies in Section 3 have been developed. These introductory sections set out a clear and robust structure for the planning of the area over the next 10 years, based on consultation with the local community and which have regard to national and local policy. Particular features of the local area and environment are shown on Figures 5A and 5B and later in the Plan at Figure 7, including flood risk zones. In the interests of clarity, I recommend their keys are modified to identify the particular flood risk zones and that the maps are updated to reflect the most recent guidance from the Environment Agency<sup>13</sup> (**PM1**).
- 4.6 I agree with the District Council that it would be useful for the individual paragraphs in the Plan to be numbered. This would help those using the Plan, both developers and decision makers, when making and determining planning applications. Whilst I recognise that it goes beyond my remit to recommend a modification in this respect, I urge the QCPC to consider this and additionally in the final version to correct a number of minor ‘typos’ noted in the Plan.
- 4.7 There are 15 policies in the QCNP that fall to be considered against the Basic Conditions. When made, the QCNP will form part of the Development Plan for the area and the PPG advises that a neighbourhood plan policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence, and should be distinct to reflect and respond to the unique characteristics and planning context of the specific neighbourhood area for which it has been prepared<sup>14</sup>. Policies should relate to the development and use of land<sup>15</sup>. With this in mind, I now turn, in the following paragraphs, to address each of my four main issues.

<sup>13</sup> See Flood map for planning: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/>

<sup>14</sup> PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

<sup>15</sup> Section 38A(2) of the 2004 Act. Also, PPG Reference ID: 41-20190509.

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## Issue 1 – Housing, Employment and Community Facilities

- 4.8 The Vision for the Plan is that *'Queen Camel will be a parish that provides its residents with accommodation and services appropriate to their needs so that if they wish they can live comfortably in the parish throughout their lifetimes in good quality housing and with appropriate levels of care'*. The aims of the Plan include creating new opportunities for local people to live and work in the Parish and to strengthen the community and the local economy, whilst ensuring that new development strengthens the village's character, supports local businesses, and to maintain, improve and extend recreational facilities to better meet the needs of local residents.

### Housing

- 4.9 The Settlement Strategy for South Somerset is set out in Local Plan policy SS1. Other than Yeovil, named Market Towns and Rural Centres, paragraph 5.11 identifies all other settlements as 'Rural Settlements' which policy SS1 advises *'will be considered as part of the countryside to which national countryside protection policies apply (subject to the exceptions identified in policy SS2)'*. The Local Plan is clear that the appropriate framework for the consideration of development in Queen Camel is provided by policy SS2.
- 4.10 Through policy SS2, the Local Plan strictly limits and controls development in the Rural Settlements unless key sustainability criteria can be met. However, paragraph 5.24 clarifies that *'this approach does not preclude development; indeed the NPPF promotes sustainable development in rural areas, with housing and employment to be located where it enhances or maintains the vitality of rural communities'*. More particularly Local Plan policy SS2 limits housing development to that which meets identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing, and where the Rural Settlement has access to two or more key services listed at paragraph 5.41 of the Local Plan. In that regard, Queen Camel has most of the key services listed, namely a primary school, health centre, village hall, local convenience shop and post office, play area/sports pitch, pub and church.
- 4.11 In terms of delivering new housing growth, policy SS5 of the Local Plan provides for at least 15,950 dwellings in the plan period 2006-2028, of which around 14% (2,242) are expected to be built in the Rural Settlements, with decisions on where, and how much, to be determined in accord with the aims of policy SS2. Evidence supporting the QCNP includes a Housing Needs Assessment of March 2018 which used various indices to draw conclusions about the amount of housing that might be needed in Queen Camel. Table 1 of the Plan sets out the range of factors considered, including Local Plan projections and targets, affordability and evidence of local housing need, market demand, local residents' views, and census and housing stock analysis, to suggest that a housing requirement for Queen Camel of between 2 to 2.5 new homes per annum would be appropriate for the 11 year Plan period (overall 22 to 28 new homes). Thus, policy QC1 makes provision *'for about 30 new homes to be*

*built in Queen Camel parish between 2019 and 2030, to meet the projected local needs of the community’.*

- 4.12 The Local Plan is the subject of an early review and the June 2019 Preferred Options consultation document notes that development in the Rural Settlements has made a significant contribution to housing delivery in the district and that more homes have been delivered than the settlement strategy in the adopted Local Plan had envisaged. Assessed against sustainability criteria, Queen Camel is one of 12 settlements identified as a Village in the proposed new settlement hierarchy where *‘provision will be made for limited development to meet local need, support local services and economic activity appropriate to the scale of the settlement’*<sup>16</sup>. The Villages are not to have identified development areas but growth would be expected to take place adjacent to the existing built settlement<sup>17</sup>.
- 4.13 The NPPF at paragraph 65 requires that strategic plan-making authorities should establish a housing requirement figure for their whole area and that *‘within this overall requirement, strategic policies should also set out a housing requirement for designated neighbourhood areas which reflect the overall strategy for the pattern and scale of development and any relevant allocations’*. Paragraph 5.47 of the Local Plan Review Preferred Options consultation document addresses the situation in Queen Camel noting that the emerging Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to deliver 2 to 2.5 homes per year. On the basis of the Villages’ housing requirement figure in the Review, having regard to completions and commitments, and then dividing the residue equally between the 12 villages, it identifies a housing requirement of 60 dwellings for Queen Camel over the Review Local Plan period to 2036, equivalent to 3 new homes a year, and this is set out in proposed Review policy SS2.
- 4.14 Although provision in QCNP policy QC1 falls short of the emerging Local Plan policy requirement, SSDC has noted that it may be acceptable. This is because the Plan has been shortened to end in 2030, rather than 2034 as before, and it acknowledges at paragraph 1.6 that there should be a review of its policies when the new Local Plan is adopted. Having regard to these matters, I am satisfied that the Plan’s housing provision is generally in conformity with the adopted Local Plan policies SS2 and SS5, which only gives a broad indication as to the amount of housing to be provided in Rural Settlements like Queen Camel. Further, whilst the April 2017 Local Development Scheme indicated the Local Plan Review would be adopted in 2020, a later adoption date now seems more likely. Having said that, as it is an objective of Government to significantly boost the supply of homes<sup>18</sup>, policies should not set a ceiling on development that may in all other aspects be acceptable. I am therefore recommending a modification to policy QC1 to refer to making provision for *‘at least 30 new*

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<sup>16</sup> Preferred Options policy SS1.

<sup>17</sup> Preferred Options paragraph 5.21.

<sup>18</sup> NPPF, paragraph 59.



homes' (**PM2**). This would allow for the proposed 30 dwellings to be provided through the policy QC3 allocation as well as any new homes that may come forward in accord with policy QC1 through infill or redevelopment opportunities, conversions or replacements of dwellings or rural exception sites.

- 4.15 The NPPF requires that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. Paragraph 61 goes on to say that this requirement will include, but not be limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes. In accord with national policy, Local Plan policies HG3 and HG4 deal with the provision of affordable housing. Since the NPPF policy was revised, SSDC has advised that the requirement for affordable housing has only been applied to proposals for 10 or more dwellings and the text on page 24 of the Plan should be updated. Local Plan policy SS2 limits development in rural settlements, inter alia, to that which '*meets identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing*', and the Plan refers on page 26 to restrictions being imposed on affordable housing to prioritise its occupation by local people or those with a local connection. The second part of policy QC1 requires that where developments are providing affordable housing, in line with the Local Plan requirements, that they will be subject to local occupancy criteria and Appendix 1 includes an allocation cascade for rented or shared ownership affordable housing, which generally accords with that of SSDC<sup>19</sup>. However, in the interests of clarity, I am recommending a redrafting of the second part of policy QC1 together with the updating of the text on page 24 (**PM3**).
- 4.16 Queen Camel has an ageing population compared to both South Somerset and to England, and I appreciate the QCPC and the local community's wish to ensure that new housing is '*age-ready*' and that their design takes account of the principles of the '*Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation*' (HAPPI). However, other than the box on page 25, there is very little in the Plan to explain to an interested developer what they should be providing by way of particular building features or where they could find out more about the HAPPI principles. This omission needs to be addressed in the Plan. I also consider that the policy requirement, for the design of both affordable housing and open market housing to be '*in line with the HAPPI principles*', would be more appropriately included as part of policy QC4 which deals with the design of buildings and I am recommending modifications accordingly (**PM4**).
- 4.17 Evidence from local surveys and responses from consultation with the local community indicate an imbalance in the area's housing stock and the third part of policy QC1 supports open market housing that provides for smaller 2 and 3-bedroom homes, that are likely to be more affordable. As part of a wider housing mix, the policy also supports the provision of

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<sup>19</sup> SSDC Rural Lettings Framework April 2019

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starter homes and self-build plots and requires that larger homes should comprise no more than 20% of the total provision of open market housing on a site. It accords with Local Plan policy HG5 which seeks to achieve a mix of market housing and requires, on small sites, that housing types and sizes should be provided that, taken in the context of existing surrounding dwellings, contribute to the provision of sustainable, balanced communities. However, I am deleting the last sentence of policy QC1 which is ambiguous in its references to '*where feasible*' and '*to facilitate possible subdivision to allow multiple occupancy*'. In that it could be possible for future provision of accommodation for a carer to be achieved in many different ways, depending on the particular needs of the person being cared for, the policy lacks the necessary clarity for a decision maker to be able to apply it with confidence, contrary to advice in the PPG<sup>20</sup>. Subject to these modifications and some consequential rewording of the policy (**PM5**), I am satisfied that policy QC1 would have regard to national policy, be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the adopted Local Plan and would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development, thus meeting the Basic Conditions.

- 4.18 The QCNP supports the principle of infill development and redevelopment within the village and policy QC2 sets out criteria for infill development within the settlement boundary defined on Figure 7. Consultation in 2017 indicated support for the reinstatement of the settlement boundary used in the earlier 2006 Local Plan. But since then, development of the health centre, primary school and housing at Roman Way has taken place off West Camel Road. Representations have been made that defining a settlement boundary lacks general conformity with both policy SS2 of the adopted SSLP and is in conflict with emerging policy SS2. More particularly, paragraph 5.23 of the adopted Local Plan 2006-2028, states that the Rural Settlements '*will no longer have identified development areas ...*'. No change is proposed in the Preferred Options consultation on the Local Plan Review which confirms at paragraph 5.21 that the Villages (which include Queen Camel) '*do not have identified development areas but growth is expected to take place adjacent to the existing built settlement*'.
- 4.19 Both the NPPF and the Local Plan through policy SD1 set out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 13 of the NPPF advises that the application of the presumption has implications for the way communities engage in neighbourhood planning. Neighbourhood planning should support the delivery of strategic local plan policies and '*should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies*'. Paragraph 3.1.2 of the QCNP describes the definition of a settlement boundary as providing '*clarity on how the Local Plan policies on rural settlements should be interpreted.*' However, identification of a settlement boundary is not supported in the adopted Local Plan, nor in the emerging Local Plan, both of which state that Rural Settlements/Villages should not have identified development areas.

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<sup>20</sup> PPG ID reference: 41-041-20140306

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- 4.20 Paragraph 3.1.3 advises that past build rates would suggest about 3 dwellings could reasonably be expected from conversions and infill development, but *'that more may be possible with the introduction of a settlement boundary'*. How that might be achieved is unclear when the settlement boundary defined on Map 7 is tightly drawn around the extant built up limits of the village, limiting the opportunities for infill development. I have serious concerns that the settlement boundary identified here has the potential to frustrate otherwise acceptable development on suitable and sustainable sites adjacent to the existing built settlement, that would accord with Local Plan policy SS2. I am therefore recommending that the text of the Plan and policy QC2 is modified to delete all references to the settlement boundary and that the settlement boundary is deleted from Figure 7. Consequential modification will also be needed to policy QC1b) to delete the words *'within the defined settlement boundary'*. I am also recommending modifications to policy criteria c) and d), to clarify that development should provide *'safe access'*, as the use of the word *'safer'* suggests any current access is inadequate which it may or may not be, and that the provision of off-road parking should comply with policy QC9. Subject to these modifications (**PM6, PM7, PM8 and PM9**), I am satisfied that policy QC2 would have regard to national policy would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development, and would be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, thus meeting the Basic Conditions.
- 4.21 Policy QC3 identifies land to the north side of West Camel Road for residential and recreational development. This site was brought forward following a *'call for sites'* in July 2017 when 5 sites for housing, and one for employment purposes, were put forward by interested local landowners. At that time, I note that that SSDC did not identify the need for a full SEA<sup>21</sup>, although sustainability checks were undertaken of all the sites to identify any significant impacts. Following public consultation on the potential development sites, two sites were carried forward into the Regulation 14 pre-submission Plan, which was subject to SEA. The QCNP carries forward the larger of the sites through policy QC3 which provides for the development of no more than 1.7ha of the field off West Camel Road for the development of about 30 dwellings, and provides for the development of the adjoining area, shown on Figure 8, for recreation land and archaeological interpretation.
- 4.22 Representations have been made that as the allocated site is subject to a number of constraints that could impact on its deliverability, it should be deleted from the Plan in favour of alternative smaller allocations that are potentially available and which could be brought forward over the Plan period. However, given the recommended modifications to policies QC1 and QC2, I see no reason why unconstrained sites in the village might not be brought forward for development, subject to meeting all the other policy requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan. In respect of the West Camel Road allocation, whilst the site is physically separated

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<sup>21</sup> Report on Site Assessments 2017, page 2.

by the recreation ground from the main part of the village, with the recent development of the health centre, Roman Way and the primary school, there has already been a westward shift in the focus of the village.

- 4.23 The land holding is of sufficient size that would allow for a landscape led design, in accord with policy criterion e), and the development would provide recreational benefits for the community as well as the opportunity for interpretation of the Roman remains known to lie within the eastern part of the field and on land to the east (policy criteria a) and b)). This accords with national planning policy and is in general conformity with Local Plan policy SS2, which requires that proposals for development in Rural Settlements should be consistent with relevant community-led plans and should generally have the support of the local community following robust engagement and consultation. I am satisfied that the allocation has been brought forward through such a robust and transparent consultation process over a period of time. SSDC has no objections in principle to the allocation, subject to the potential constraints identified in the Plan, and is currently considering an outline application for 43 dwellings on the site<sup>22</sup>.
- 4.24 I am satisfied that the criteria set out in policy QC3 are appropriate to secure an acceptable standard of development in keeping with the character of the area and which will enhance the vitality of Queen Camel, provide an opportunity for new recreational provision and positively plan for the conservation of heritage assets. Subject to recommended minor modifications to the supporting text, to clarify that the Roman villa is on land to the east and that highway connection is to the west of South View, and that c) refers to safe pedestrian and cycle access (**PM10**), I conclude that policy QC3 is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, has regard to national policy and would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development, thus meeting the Basic Conditions.

### Business and Employment

- 4.25 Policy QC5 of the QCNP supports proposals for the extension and alteration of existing business premises and the provision of new small-scale business premises. It accords with Government policy which supports a prosperous rural economy and paragraph 83 a) of the NPPF refers to the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. Adopted Local Plan policy EP4 is generally permissive of the expansion of existing businesses in the countryside, subject, amongst others, to it having operated successfully for a minimum of 3 years, and is a viable business. However, this stipulation no longer applies in the emerging Local Plan Review, reflecting the approach to supporting the rural economy set out in the 2019 NPPF and a new policy EP4 has been drafted to support new employment proposals in the

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<sup>22</sup> Application 19/01830/OUT.

Villages. Having regard to the NPPF and the intention of SSDC to change its policy and to delete the requirement for a business to be established for 3 years, I see no need to refer to it in the supporting text to policy QC5 in the Plan (**PM11**).

- 4.26 However, I agree with SSDC that it would be unreasonably onerous and could discourage a new business to locate in Queen Camel if it had to design its development, not for what it might need for its own operational purposes, but for re-use by some unknown alternative business if it were to fail. I am therefore recommending that the last sentence of policy QC5 should be deleted. Subject to this modification and some minor rewording of the policy criteria: to delete the reference in a) to the settlement boundary, to refer in b) to greenfield land, and to include a new criterion on flood risk, as advised in the SEA, I am satisfied that policy QC5 has regard to national policy and would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development (**PM12**).

#### Community Facilities

- 4.27 Queen Camel has a range of community assets that provide services and facilities for the local community. Both the Mildmay public house and the Old School site are registered as Assets of Community Value, and there are plans for the latter to be used as a community enterprise and education centre. A technical assessment by SSDC in 2014 supports village surveys that indicate there is a lack of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities in the Parish. Policy QC6 is supportive of proposals to improve the provision of community facilities and services and to avoid their loss. It accords with Local Plan policy EP15 which supports the provision of new community facilities and services and sets stringent tests to be met where proposals are put forward that would result in the partial or total loss of premises or services that contribute towards the sustainability of a local settlement. Local Plan policy HW3 similarly seeks to avoid the loss of equipped play areas and youth facilities. Having regard to the NPPF, in particular paragraph 83 d) on supporting a prosperous rural economy and paragraph 92 a) and c) on promoting healthy and safe communities, I am satisfied that policy QC5 meets the Basic Conditions and would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development.

#### Community Consultation

- 4.28 The PPG describes neighbourhood planning as giving communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. The SSLP refers in its Settlement Strategy policy SS2 to proposals for development having the support of the local community following robust engagement and consultation. To this end, the QCNP strongly encourages developers to consult local communities about developments, before making a planning application. It refers to the value of pre-application consultation, potentially leading to greater efficiency in project design and early



identification of issues of local concern and community aspirations. The NPPF refers at paragraph 39 to the significant potential of early engagement to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties and advises at paragraph 128 that *'applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective consultation with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot'*. In that policy QC15 encourages effective early community consultation by developers, it has regard to national policy, is in general conformity with the strategic policy of the Local Plan and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development that is supported by local people. It therefore fulfils the Basic Conditions.

- 4.29 Subject to the recommended modifications outlined above and set out in the Appendix being made, I conclude that the QCNP's policies on housing, employment and community facilities provide an appropriate framework to shape and direct sustainable development, have regard to national policy and guidance, are in general conformity with the strategic policies in the Local Plan and would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Thus, the Basic Conditions would be met.

#### *Issue 2 - The Built and Natural Environment*

- 4.30 Objectives in the Local Plan cover conservation, design and landscape and the Plan includes policies on the built and natural environment.

#### The Built Environment

- 4.31 National policy is explicit that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps makes development acceptable to communities<sup>23</sup>. The NPPF advises that neighbourhood plans can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how these should be reflected in development<sup>24</sup>. Policy EQ2 in the Local Plan requires that development is designed to achieve a high-quality scheme, which promotes local distinctiveness, whilst policy EQ3 refers to heritage assets which should be conserved and where appropriate enhanced for their historic significance.
- 4.32 Queen Camel is an attractive village with an imposing Grade I listed church and there are some fine stone-built houses in the High Street, much of which is designated as a Conservation Area. The river is a particularly pleasant feature running through the village and there are fine views to the hills to the north and east. As part of the preparatory work for the QCNP, a character appraisal was prepared of the village which identified features of local interest as well as the main characteristics of the existing development in terms of its layout, design and materials.

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<sup>23</sup> NPPF, paragraph 124.

<sup>24</sup> NPPF, paragraph 125.

- 4.33 The Plan's policy QC4 addresses the design of buildings, which should complement and reinforce the village's local distinctiveness, historic character and rural scale and nature. It refers to detailed design guidance set out in the Plan at Table 2 which gives more detail of the particular features of the buildings in the village. By setting out a detailed list of matters to be considered when preparing applications for development, the Plan gives clarity about design expectations but the level of detail is not so prescriptive that it would not allow for a suitable degree of variety, where this would be justified. In encouraging the sensitive inclusion of renewable energy and other energy-efficient measures, the Plan supports the transition to a low carbon future, in line with national policy<sup>25</sup>. In that policy QC4 has had regard to national policy and guidance, is in general conformity with strategic policies of the Local Plan, and would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development, it fulfils the Basic Conditions.
- 4.34 The streetscape is an issue of concern to the Parish Council and to local residents and photographs are included in the Plan of what are considered to be unnecessary and obsolete signs and poles cluttering the street scene. It is acknowledged in the Plan that many of the signs and installations are the work of statutory undertakers using permitted development rights, but the local community wishes to encourage more electricity and telecommunications lines to be placed underground and Section 4 of the Plan includes a project to liaise with the Highways Authority to remove street clutter. In that policy QC10 supports proposals to reduce and remove visible infrastructure that is seen as out of keeping with the rural and historic character of Queen Camel, it is a policy directed towards the development and use of land and the achievement of well-designed places. As such, I am satisfied that it meets the Basic Conditions.
- 4.35 Queen Camel has a large number of listed buildings, identified on Figure 5A and listed at Appendix 2, as well as other historic features which may be of lesser importance but which still contribute to the local distinctiveness and character of the area. Projects are included in Section 4 for the QCNP to assist SSDC in preparing a Conservation Area Assessment and a Local Heritage List. In addition, the Plan includes policy QC13 which seeks to ensure that development proposals do not harm buildings and features identified as being of local historic interest. Thirteen features are identified on Figure 11 and described in Table 4 of the Plan and range from the cobbled pathways leading to the Church, a Sir Gilbert Scott red telephone box in the High Street, Royal Mail postboxes, finger posts, a sheep bridge, to the remains of an old cottage in Grace Martin's Lane.
- 4.36 Policy EQ3 of the Local Plan deals with the historic environment and its supporting text at paragraph 13.40 describes the positive strategy that SSDC will develop for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic

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<sup>25</sup> NPPF, paragraph 148.

environment. In addition to a programme for the review of existing Conservation Area boundaries and the preparation of Conservation Area Assessments, it includes *'support for communities to identify locally significant historic buildings and in their preparation of Neighbourhood Plans'*<sup>26</sup>. It seems to me that that the QCPC's preparation of Table 4 is fully in accord with SSDC's strategy and that policy QC13 as drafted would provide helpful guidance to developers on identified heritage assets that are not designated, but which are considered to have significance and contribute to the historic and architectural character of the area. As such, policy QC13 supports paragraph 197 of the NPPF, which requires the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset to be taken into account in its determination. I conclude that policy QC13 meets the Basic Conditions.

- 4.37 The Parish has a rich archaeological heritage and part is identified in the Local Plan and SSDC's Historic Environment Strategy as an Area of High Archaeological Potential<sup>27</sup>. There is an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Camel Hill, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, as well as numerous non-designated archaeological features and sites. These are listed in Appendix 3 and their locations identified on Figure 6. In the interests of completeness, Figure 6 should also show the SSLP Area of High Archaeological Potential and reference made to it in paragraph 3.6.2 (**PM13**). Whilst policy QC14 requires that proposals for development are accompanied by an archaeological assessment, not all sites will necessarily need full investigation. I recommend a modification to the policy's supporting text to clarify that the scope of such an assessment will depend on the development proposed and the particulars of the site and could range from a desk exercise, indicating no archaeological interest, to detailed investigations and evaluation (**PM14**). Subject to the recommended modifications, policy QC14 would have regard to national policy and be in general conformity with Local Plan policy EQ3.

### The Natural Environment

- 4.38 It is Government policy to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF requires that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, amongst others, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. The Local Plan through policy EQ2 provides for development that promotes South Somerset's local distinctiveness, including conserving and enhancing the landscape character of the area, reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local context.
- 4.39 The village of Queen Camel has a rural setting, with the river running through, the wooded hills behind and the surrounding open farmland. One of the characteristics of the area, which I saw on my site visit, is the

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<sup>26</sup> SSLP, paragraph 13.40, last bullet point.

<sup>27</sup> SSLP, policy EQ3.



public views into and out of the village and, whilst not a designated landscape area, consultation responses show that local residents value Queen Camel's landscape and the surrounding countryside. Policy QC11 seeks to protect that rural character by requiring that development is sensitive to the village's rural setting, including the river corridor and views towards and from the wooded hillsides. The river is not publicly accessible along all its length through the village, but there are views of it from various paths and bridges, and the approximate extent of the village's river corridor setting is shown on Figure 10.

- 4.40 The 3 key views are indicated on Figure 10 and the Plan includes photographs. However, there is little detail as to what it is about them that is important and warrants particular policy protection. To be valued in NPPF terms, it is not enough for a landscape to have some valued elements, it should have something that lifts it above the ordinary. In response to my question, the QCPC provided detailed assessments of each of the views. All can be enjoyed from roads or public rights of way. Those from the top of Gason Lane and from Sparkford Copse offer far reaching panoramic views over the village with the church tower, a landmark feature. The third view is from the bridge looking up the hillside to Sparkford Copse, a local landmark, and which contributes to the attractive rural setting of the village. I am satisfied that these 3 views are special to the area and justify policy protection. Subject to the inclusion of the views' assessment as an appendix to the Plan (**PM15**) and to the title of Figure 10 referring to key views (**PM16**), I find that policy QC11 has regard to national policy and guidance, would be in general conformity with the Local Plan policy EQ2 and would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, thus meeting the Basic Conditions.
- 4.41 Providing that the modification set out above are made, I conclude that the policies for the built and natural environment will secure high standards of design and protect heritage and environmental assets in line with national policy and the need to be consistent with the achievement of sustainable development, and are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the SSLP. Accordingly, the Basic Conditions will be met.

### *Issue 3 – Local Green Spaces*

- 4.42 Section 8 of the NPPF addresses the way planning can promote healthy communities and Chapter 12 of the SSLP deals with health and wellbeing. Paragraph 99 of the NPPF enables local communities through local and neighbourhood plans to identify for special protection areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space (LGS), local communities are able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Thus, policies identifying LGSs must be consistent with planning for sustainable development and must complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. They should be capable of enduring beyond the Plan period.

- 4.43 Stringent guidelines on LGSs are set out in the NPPF at paragraph 100 and there is further advice in the PPG<sup>28</sup>. Policy QC12 designates 6 sites as LGSs and they are identified on Figure 10 and described in Table 3 with reasons for their designation and photographs. They vary in character and include the churchyard, playing field, amenity green spaces and woodland. Whilst it is national policy to resist the development of playing fields, they are also specifically mentioned in part b) of paragraph 100 of the NPPF as spaces of recreational value that can be designated as LGS. I am satisfied from the evidence provided, and what I saw on my site visit that the following spaces are local in character, not extensive tracts of land, are demonstrably special and hold a particular local significance and are in close proximity to the community they serve. They should therefore be listed in policy QC12. They are the playing field (LGS1), the Roman Way open space (LGS3), Ridge Copse (LGS5) and The Glebe open spaces (LGS6). The churchyard (LGS2) and the 'Iron Box' (LGS4), are already afforded protection by their location in the Conservation Area. However, both clearly have a particular local significance, are demonstrably special to the local community and I agree warrant the additional local benefit that would be gained by LGS designation. Accordingly, these sites should also be listed in policy QC12.
- 4.44 The NPPF advises at paragraph 101 that policies for managing development within a LGS should be consistent with those for Green Belts. I am not satisfied that policy QC12 as drafted, in requiring that development within or adjoining them should not harm their reason for designation and should be sensitive to their setting, is consistent with that guidance or national Green Belt policy. I am therefore recommending a modification to clarify that the LGSs should be managed in a manner compatible with their designation and that the list of LGSs is numbered consistent with that in Table 3 (**PM17**). I am also recommending that, in the interests of clarity, the Plan is modified so that the policy on LGSs is moved to follow immediately after Table 3, to which it refers, rather than being separated by the supporting text and photographs that relate to policy QC11 on Key Views (**PM18**).
- 4.45 Providing these modifications are made, I conclude that policy QC12 will appropriately provide for the designation and protection of LGSs, in accordance with national policy and guidance and the need to be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development, and is in general conformity with the policies of the SLP. Accordingly, the Basic Conditions will be met.

#### *Issue 4 – Road Infrastructure, Footpaths and Parking*

- 4.46 South Somerset is predominantly a rural district with subsequent diverse travel patterns and the Local Plan recognises that the car will remain an essential mode of travel. Section 3.4 of the QCNP deals with Getting About in Queen Camel and describes the concerns of local people about

<sup>28</sup> PPG Reference ID: 37-005-20140306 to ID: 37-022-20140306.

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the volume of traffic passing along the High Street, the A359 and one of the main roads from the A303 Trunk Road to Yeovil. Whilst the road is subject to a 7.5 tonnes weight limit, this does not apply to vehicles accessing local businesses and farms and is difficult to enforce. The traffic calming measures in the village may help to slow traffic but the Plan notes that they do create their own hazards. Their replacement was discussed as part of the Community Plan in 2005, raised again at the consultation stage on options for the QCNP and it is included as a project in Section 4 of the Plan.

- 4.47 It is national policy to promote sustainable transport. In assessing sites for development, the NPPF at paragraph 108 advises that it should be ensured that '*c) any significant impacts from development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree*'. The SSLP similarly requires that all new development shall be required to address its own transport implications and, more particularly, that the traffic generated would not have a detrimental impact on the character or amenity of the area or compromise safety (policy TA5 iii).
- 4.48 The QCNP, by seeking through policy QC7 to secure traffic calming measures to mitigate any adverse impact from new development on traffic and highway safety in the village, accords with national and local policy and would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development.
- 4.49 The public rights of way in the Parish are shown on Figure 4 of the Plan. Section 4 includes local projects to improve the attractiveness and safety of key routes, create new routes for cyclists and horse riders, and improve off road links. Development Consent Order proposals for the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dualling include improved access for walkers, cyclists and horse riders to the northern part of the Parish. The Plan through policy QC8 supports proposals that protect and enhance existing public rights of way and new safe walking, cycling and bridleway connections. Routes should be made accessible to those with special access needs and lit. This policy is in accord with national policy in the NPPF which promotes sustainable transport and healthy communities and is in general conformity with Local Plan policies TA1 and TA5 that encourage cycling and walking and improvements to existing routes. In so doing it will contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 4.50 The Plan identifies that parking is a problem in a number of places in the village. However, consultation with the community in 2017 indicated that this was not a particular problem of under provision of parking spaces in existing or new development and the Plan acknowledges that the County Council's parking standards appear to be locally appropriate. The NPPF advises at paragraph 105 on matters to be taken into account in setting local parking standards, including the availability and opportunities for public transport and local car ownership levels. Given that Local Plan policy TA6 applies the parking standards within the Somerset County

Council Parking Strategy, the first part of policy QC9 is an unnecessary duplication<sup>29</sup> and I am recommending that it should be deleted (**PM19**). I am satisfied, however, that it is reasonable, given the pressure for on-street parking in the village, particularly on the High Street, for policy QC9 to resist the loss of parking spaces and to encourage maximising the use of shared parking areas. In line with Government policy to encourage an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles<sup>30</sup>, policy QC9 requires that these are well located for residents and visitors. Subject to the modification set out above, I am satisfied that policy QC9 has had regard to national policy, is in general conformity with the Local Plan policy TA6 and would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

- 4.51 Providing that the modifications recommended above are made, I conclude that policies QC7, QC8 and QC9 of the Plan would appropriately guide development in the local area in respect of any need for road infrastructure improvements, improvements to public rights of way and parking. As such, I find that they accord with national policy and guidance, are in general conformity with strategic Local Plan policies, and would contribute towards the achievement of sustainable development, thus meeting the Basic Conditions.

## 5. Conclusions

### *Summary*

- 5.1 The QCNP has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard for all the responses made following consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, and the evidence documents submitted with it.
- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify a number of policies and text to ensure the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendum.

### *The Referendum and its Area*

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the referendum area should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The QCNP as modified has no policy or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Neighbourhood Plan boundary, requiring the referendum to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendum

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<sup>29</sup> NPPF, paragraph 16 f).

<sup>30</sup> NPPF, paragraph 105 e).

on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area.

#### *Overview*

- 5.4 I recognise that the Plan is the product of a lot of hard work by the Steering Group and the Parish Council and that it builds on many years of planning and engagement with the local community to bring forward projects like the new housing at Roman Way, the relocation of the primary school and the re-use of the Old School as a community and business centre. Subject to modification and referendum, the Parish will now have their own Plan that will guide the area's future development in a positive way with the support of the local community.

*Mary O'Rourke*

Examiner

## Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Figures 5A, 5B and 7	Include the Flood Risk Zones in the Legend and update to reflect the latest Environment Agency maps.
PM2	Page 27	Policy QC1 1 <sup>st</sup> line: Delete 'about' and replace with ' <b>at least</b> '.
PM3	Pages 24, 27 and Appendix 1	Update the text on affordable housing on page 24 as advised by SSDC in its comments on the QCNP.  Delete the 2 <sup>nd</sup> part of policy QC1 that starts 'All sites ....' And replace with ' <b>Where developments are providing for affordable housing, in accord with Local Plan requirements, the affordable housing will be subject to the local occupancy criteria set out in Appendix 1</b> '.  Correct the date in the definition of the Plan in Appendix 1.
PM4	Page 40	At the end of policy QC4 add the following:  <b>New housing should be designed to take account of the Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles.</b>  Provide additional supporting text giving details of the Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation, including references to and the date/s of relevant reports.
PM5	Page 27	Delete the last 3 parts of policy QC1 and replace with the following:  <b>To provide a wider housing mix:</b>

		<p><b>Open market housing should provide a mix of smaller 2 and 3-bedroom homes.</b></p> <p><b>Larger homes of 4 or more bedrooms should not make up more than 20% of the number of units per site, unless required by the particular character of the site and/or the surrounding area.</b></p> <p><b>The provision of starter homes (as defined in the NPPF) and self-build plots will be supported.</b></p>
PM6	Page 27	In policy QC1 b) delete the words ' <i>within the defined settlement boundary</i> '.
PM7	Pages 28, 30 and 31	Rewrite paragraph 3.1.2, the Policy Intention on page 30 and paragraph 3.1.3 to remove references to the settlement boundary.
PM8	Page 29	Delete the settlement boundary shown on Figure 7 and amend its title.
PM9	Page 30	<p>Modify policy QC2 as follows:</p> <p>Delete '<i>within the settlement boundary</i>' from the policy title.</p> <p>In the 3<sup>rd</sup> line delete the words '<i>within the defined settlement boundary</i>'.</p> <p>In c) change '<i>safer</i>' to '<b>safe</b>'.</p> <p>In d) add '<b>(in line with policy QC9)</b>'.</p>
PM10	Paragraph 3.1.4, pages 33-35	<p>Page 33 line 3 under Heritage, Landscape and Biodiversity Features change 'west' to 'east'.</p> <p>Page 35 modify line 8 to read 'connection to West Camel Road is shown to the west of South View, but alternative options may be possible'.</p> <p>In policy QC3 c) change '<i>safer</i>' to '<b>safe</b>'.</p>
PM11	Page 42	Under Policy Intention, in the 2 <sup>nd</sup> paragraph delete the 2 <sup>nd</sup> sentence starting 'The policy deliberately deviates ...'.



PM12	Pages 42/43	<p>In policy QC5 1<sup>st</sup> line change '<i>alternation</i>' to '<b><i>alteration</i></b>'.</p> <p>In a) delete the phrase '<i>(as defined by the settlement boundary)</i>'.</p> <p>In b) 2<sup>nd</sup> line delete the words '<i>a greenfield site</i>' and replace with '<b><i>greenfield land</i></b>'.</p> <p>Add a new criterion as follows:</p> <p><b><i>e) development is designed to reduce and manage the impact of flood risk, in line with the relevant policy EQ1 of the Local Plan and national policy on flood risk.</i></b></p> <p>Delete the last part of policy QC5.</p>
PM13	Page 15	On Figure 6 show the SSLP Area of High Archaeological Potential.
PM14	Page 64	<p>Modify paragraph 3.6.2 to include a reference to the SSLP Area of High Archaeological Potential shown on Figure 6.</p> <p>Add a new paragraph to the supporting text for policy QC14 to clarify that not all sites will necessarily need full archaeological investigation and that the scope of the assessment will depend on the development proposed and the particulars of the site and could range from a desk exercise, indicating no archaeological interest, to detailed investigations and evaluation.</p>
PM15	Page 55	<p>Amend the last paragraph to refer to a new Plan appendix providing an assessment of the views.</p> <p>Appended to the Plan a new Appendix with the Views Assessment provided by the QCPC in its response of 14.4.20.</p>
PM16	Page 57	Rename Figure 10 as Map showing Local Green Spaces, Key Views and Community Facilities.

PM17	Page 58	<p>In policy QC12 2<sup>nd</sup> line delete from the words '<i>and development ....</i>' to '<i>their setting</i>' and replace with '<b><i>and should be managed in a manner compatible with their designation</i></b>'.</p> <p>In policy QC12 list and number the LGSs to be consistent with Table 3.</p>
PM18	Page 58	Move policy QC12 to follow immediately after Table 3 and renumber.
PM19	Page 51	In policy QC9 delete the first 6 lines.

# **QUEEN CAMEL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2019 to 2030**



## **Foreword to the Draft Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2030**

I have pleasure in commending this Neighbourhood Plan covering the development of the village in the period to 2030. The Plan, when adopted, will form part of a hierarchy of plans at local levels within the National Planning Policy Framework. The NPPF provides a strict framework for developing plans, particularly on housing, which we have carefully observed. Taking this Plan through its remaining stages so that it can be a final approved Neighbourhood Plan to support all that we want is a very significant step for the village.

The background to the process to develop the plan is set out in the detailed sections which follow. I would emphasise that a very detailed analysis of the wishes of the village, covering in particular the housing needs and the availability of land for development, has been made by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group of the Parish Council (NPSG) along with the Parish Council itself and its advisor from Dorset Planning Consultant Limited and South Somerset District Council. Therefore do read the policies and the background to them thoroughly as a lot of careful analysis of what could be appropriate for the village is described in this document.

The Parish Council have carefully considered the range of comments that were made on the draft plan and made some changes as a result. We hope that, with these changes, this plan is in the best possible state to get it through its final stages for approval in a Parish referendum.

I would like to thank many people who have put a lot of hard work into developing this plan, particularly the NPSG comprising Rosemary Heath-Coleman (Chair), Parish Councillor Bryan Norman, John Corbett, Steve Millard, Kate Oram, Terri Plummer and Tim Cook from South Somerset District Council. Thanks go to South Somerset District Council's Community Heritage Access Centre for use of their photographs. I would also like to thank Jo Witherden from Dorset Planning Consultant whose invaluable advice has been essential to this project. Finally I would like to thank South Somerset District Council for its support in many technical areas and for the substantial funding provided.

Simon Thornewill, Chairman of the Parish Council  
November 2019

## Preface

Queen Camel is a parish steeped in history with valuable heritage and a community that should be supported and encouraged to develop. Investment and change in the years ahead will be worthwhile only if both make a real difference to the lives of local people and safeguard the future of the community

Neighbourhood Plans were introduced following the Government's Localism Act of 2011 and aim to give local people more influence about how their area is developed.

The Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) started when Queen Camel was awarded Frontrunner status following the enactment of the Localism Act 2011, with the specific objectives to trial aspects of planning as changed by the Act. The original draft Plan was publicised on the website but did not proceed to referendum. This edition is an update of the original draft Plan.





## How the Plan is organised

It is divided into four sections:

*Section 1:* gives an introduction that includes a portrait of Queen Camel, how the Plan fits into the planning system, its purpose and scope, and some of the significant constraints.

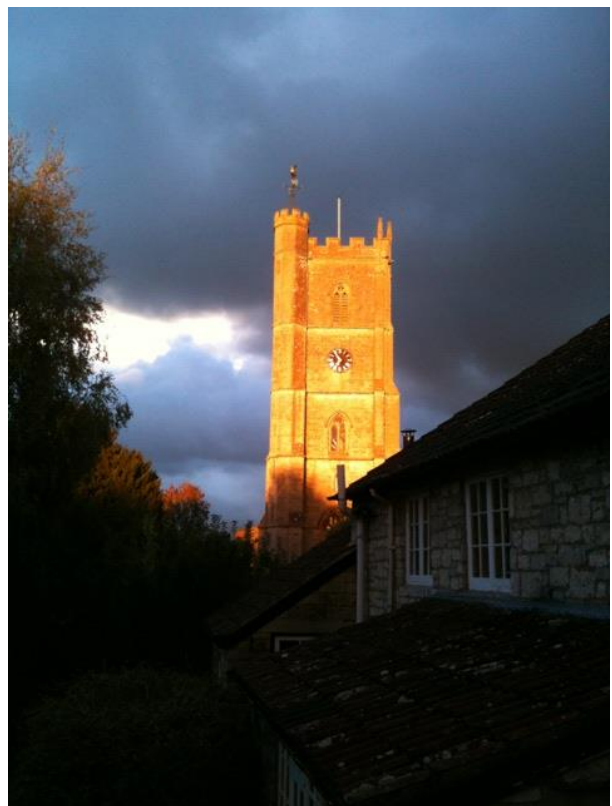
*Section 2:* describes the constraints on the parish, and how the people of Queen Camel would like the parish to develop in the years to 2030.

*Section 3:* sets out policies which will help Queen Camel to develop in this way.

*Section 4:* sets out some of the projects that we plan to achieve.



The Blackwell – Grade II listed  
(see Appendix 2)



St. Barnabas at night – Grade I listed  
(see Appendix 2)

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## **SUPPORTING EVIDENCE**

Additional supporting evidence referenced in creating this Plan includes:

- Basic Conditions Statement
- Community Plan 2005 and Development Plan 2009
- Consultation Statement
- Demographic Statistics
- Housing Needs Assessment 2017
- Site Assessments 2017
- Technical Assessment by SSDC of Community Facilities 2014
- Traffic Audit Report May 2017 / 2019

# **1. INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1. Introduction to Queen Camel's Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan)**

1.1.1. The Plan has been developed by a steering group on behalf of the Parish Council, supported by SSDC and with extensive consultation with the people of Queen Camel. It has built on the Parish Council's Development Plan of 2009 which evolved from the Community Plan of 2005. Some development proceeded in parallel with the earlier drafting of the Plan namely 20 affordable houses in Roman Way (completed 2015) and building a new County Primary School with integrated pre-school (opened 2016).

1.1.2. A Consultation Statement accompanies the plan and provides an overview of the consultation with the Parish and demonstrate that the Plan fully accords with legislative requirements on consultation under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Plan was amended where appropriate in response to the consultation comments received.

1.1.3. Under the provision of the Localism Act, Neighbourhood Plan policies must conform to higher level planning policy (see 1.1 below). The Basic Conditions Statement that accompanies the plan provides more detail on this.

1.1.4. The Plan covers the period to 2030. It provides a vision for the future of the Parish and sets out policies by which the vision can be achieved.

1.1.5. The policies in the Plan will be used as a guide to whether planning applications are approved or refused and so will help shape the future of the Parish.

## **1.2. How the Plan fits into the Planning System**

1.2.1. The Government's intention is that local people should generally decide what happens in their own Parish but the Localism Act 2011 sets out some important qualifications, in particular that all Neighbourhood Plans must comply with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and conform with the strategic policies of the Local Plan, in our case the South Somerset Local Plan which was adopted in 2015 and is now in the process of being updated.

1.2.2. The adopted Local Plan defines Queen Camel as a 'rural settlement'. District wide Policies SS3 and SS5 identify a requirement for at least 13.99 hectares of employment land and 2,242 dwellings respectively across all rural settlements over the Local Plan period.

1.2.3. Policy SS2: Development in rural settlements is particularly applicable to Queen Camel. This policy allows for the development of housing (market and affordable),

employment and community facilities to meet local needs if the rural settlement has two of more of the following: shop, Post Office, primary school, pub, children's play area/sports pitch, village hall, health centre, faith facility. Queen Camel has all of these. However, proposals should be in keeping with the scale and character of the Parish and generally have the support of the local community.

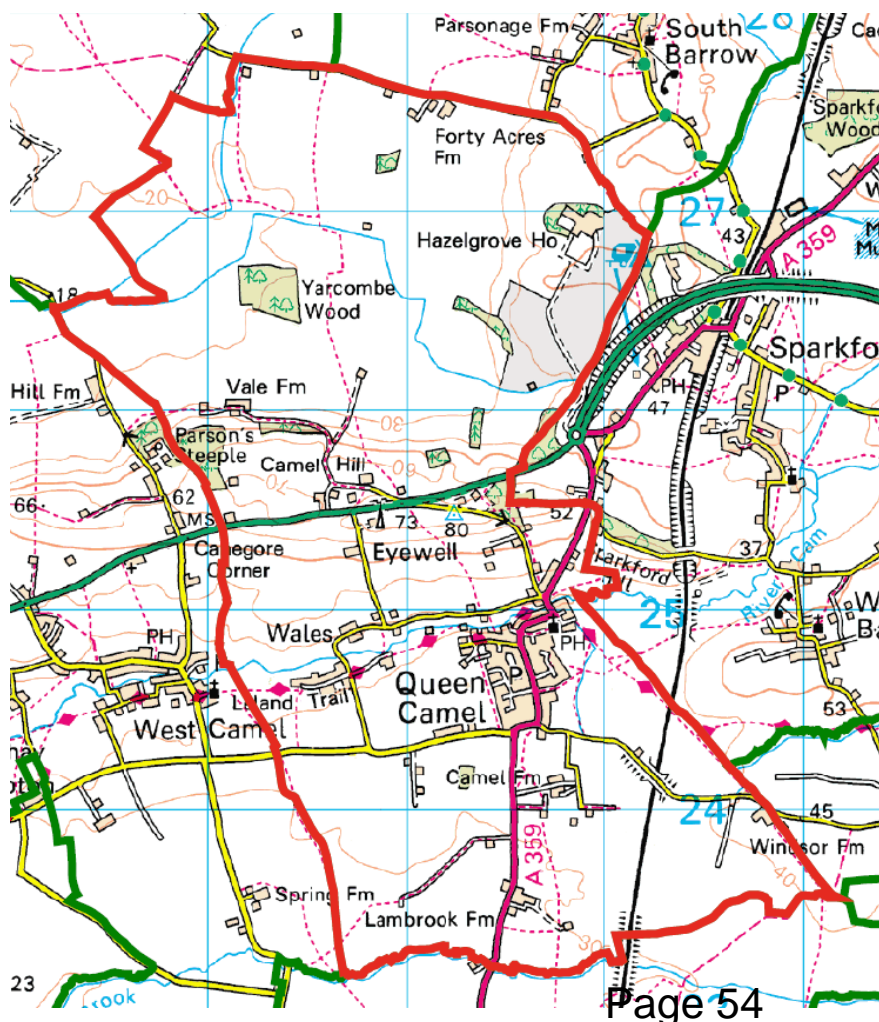
1.2.4. The Local Plan includes a range of development management policies covering housing, employment, transport, open space, energy, design and the environment. The Plan has locally derived policies which add further detail to the strategic policies in the Local Plan.

1.2.5. Neighbourhood Plans must also be in line with European regulations on strategic environmental assessment and habitat regulations.

### 1.3. Its purpose, boundary and scope

1.3.1. The *purpose* of the Plan is to provide a legal framework that will help to ensure that Queen Camel develops in accordance with the wishes of its residents.

1.3.2. The *boundary* of the Plan is the whole of the parish (Fig 1) as designated through an application under the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (part 2 S6) and approved by South Somerset District Council on 7 March 2013.



**Fig 1 - Parish Boundary**

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1.3.3. The *scope* of the Plan covers six areas:

1. Housing
2. Business and Employment
3. Community Services and Facilities
4. Getting About
5. Environment
6. Heritage

## **1.4. Precursors of the Plan**

1.4.1. The Parish Council has played an active role in the development of the village and in 2005 published a Community Plan which set out how residents hoped to see their Parish develop. A number of parish groups were set up to implement that Community Plan. These groups reported regularly to the Parish Council and included local volunteers who were not Councillors. In 2009 the Planning & Development Group produced a Development Plan. The Parish's Community Plan and Development Plan are two of the base documents that have provided useful background for the Plan.

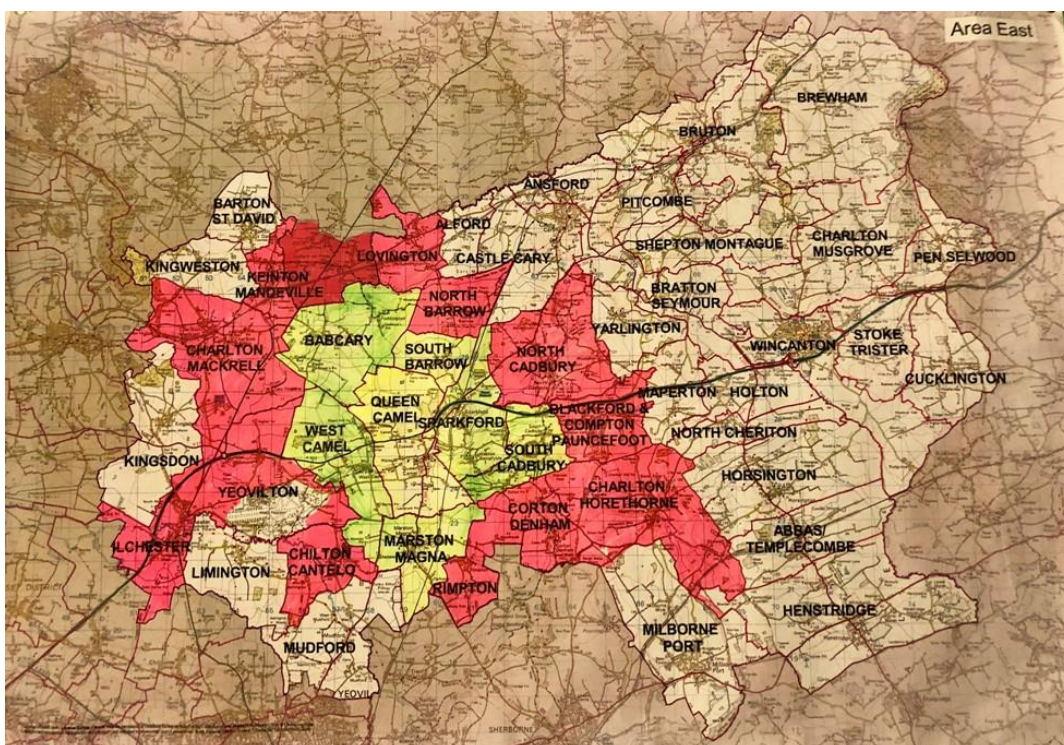
1.4.2. The steering group has liaised closely with several other parish organisations. These included the Parochial Church Council, the County Primary School, the Memorial Hall Committee and the Playing Field Committee, each of which contributed to the Plan.

1.4.3. In 2015 there was a significant change in the make-up of the Parish Council. New Councillors had reservations about the policies covering housing, the old school site and aspects of the Playing Field and in July 2016 the Parish Council commissioned a village questionnaire covering these policies. The resulting 'Survey '16' now forms an evidence document referenced in the Consultation Statement together with the 'Consultation '17' survey.

## **1.5. A Portrait of Queen Camel**

1.5.1. To plan successfully for Queen Camel's future it is necessary to understand its present which in turn is a product of its past, so a brief review of the Parish's geographical and historical legacy is a sensible starting point.

1.5.2. Queen Camel is situated some six miles north of Yeovil in South Somerset. Comprising over 2000 acres of farmland it is bisected by the river Cam running roughly east to west, with a low-lying alluvial plain on the south bank and the Sparkford and Camel hills to the north. There are around 1,000 residents: most live in the core village but there are smaller settlements around Hazlegrove House (now an independent preparatory boarding school) in the north of the parish, in the hamlet of Wales and at Eyewell in the west and on five outlying farms.



**Fig 2 - Map of South Somerset District Council Area East**  
with Queen Camel and the surrounding parishes  
coloured to depict the 3-tier cascade (see also Appendix 1)

1.5.3. Traces of Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age life have been found within the parish along with remains of a substantial Roman villa. In the eleventh century what was then called East Camel belonged to the Godwin family but after Harold Godwin's son was killed at the battle of Hastings it was confiscated by the crown. In the Middle Ages the queen consort was frequently granted a life interest in the manor and it came to be known as Queen's Camel. In 1558 it was bought by the Mildmay family who eventually sold their estate in the 1920s

1.5.4. For most of its history Queen Camel had mainly depended on agriculture and the cloth trade, along with tanning and quarrying. Its past prosperity is attested by the large 14th century church but it was hard hit by the long agricultural depression of the late nineteenth century and over the last 150 years most of its retail businesses closed. However, due to its excellent road and rail links to local, regional and national centres<sup>1</sup>, its fortunes have revived and over the last 100 years more than 200 new houses have been built in a dozen public and private developments (see 1.4.1 and the pictorial history of developments in Appendix 3). Today the village enjoys the benefits of

<sup>1</sup> The A303, the major trunk road linking south-east and south-west England, passes through the parish and the A359 passes through the middle of the village. Twenty minutes away by car are stations on the two main railway lines linking London with the South West; both can be reached by public transport.



thriving community services and facilities and is a rural hub for the surrounding villages and hamlets.

1.5.5. There follows a brief description of the six main areas covered by the Plan.

## **Housing**

1.5.6. Queen Camel has a slightly higher proportion of older people than the District and national average (13.4% aged 75 and over compared to 10.4% for South Somerset and 7.8% in England, 2011 Census). Some residents find that as they age their housing needs change and they are confronted with a lack of choice within the Parish as housing suitable for older owner-occupiers is limited. As a result, some residents find themselves either having to live in unsuitable properties or having to move away from their friends in the local community. This potential lack of mobility can affect the housing market, with young families unable to find family properties and the assets of older residents locked up in larger properties than they neither want or need. Nevertheless, the Parish needs a good range of all types of houses to allow it to be a thriving community.

1.5.7. There are many housing styles in the Parish. Most of the older properties are constructed of local, natural stone with slate, thatched or tiled roofs. There are three terraces of 1920/30's semi-detached and terraced red brick houses along roads radiating from the core village. Within the core there are three estates and several smaller developments whose detached and semi-detached houses and bungalows are mainly constructed from reconstituted stone with slate or tiled roofs.

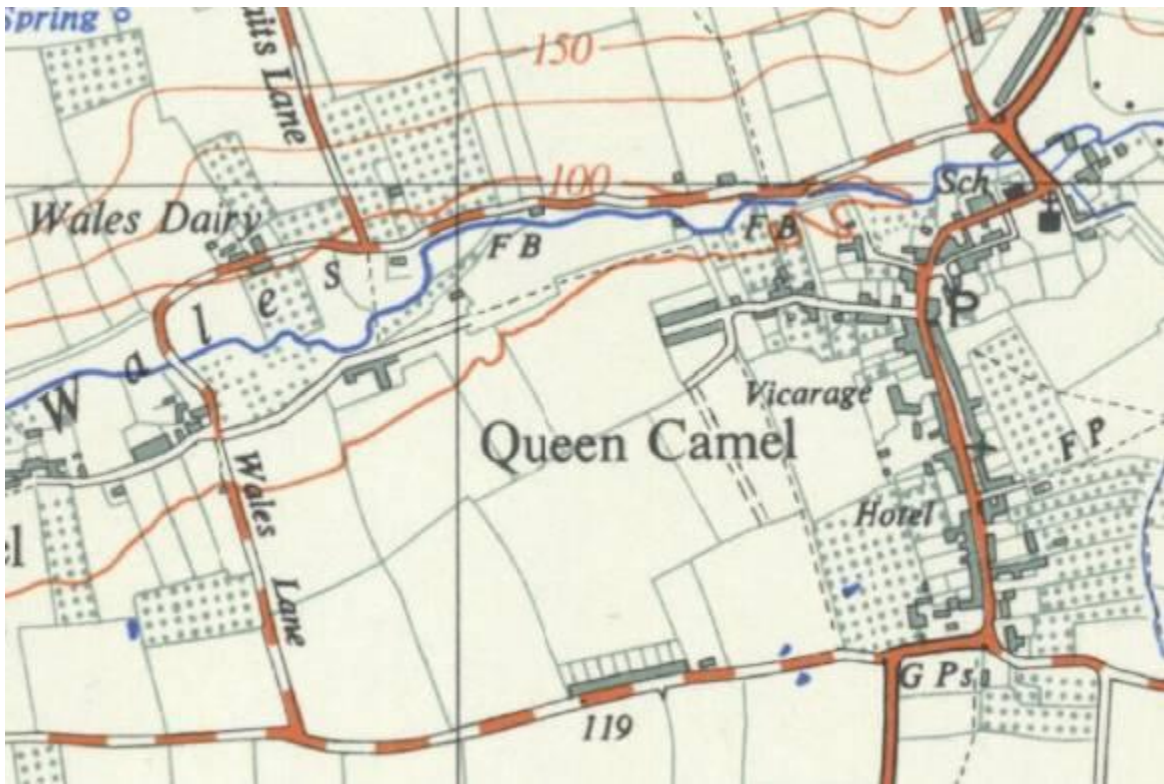
### **Extract from Community Plan 2005 regarding housing developments:**

*Not many years ago The Glebe and Cleaveside on the south and Mildmay Drive and Orchard Close on the east of the High Street were new developments. They are now integral parts of the village (as are the developments at Rectory Close, Rectory Farm and Old Farm Court). Without these developments the village population would have dwindled and we would not have been able to sustain the service and facilities we do still have and enjoy, including the new Medical Centre, nor would we have had the contribution that many of the people living in these developments bring to the village. These developments, however, do not come within the bracket of 'affordable starter homes' and, apart from The Glebe, there are few families, most residents being retired.*

*Without some innovative, creative planning and development of some affordable housing, the age range of the village will continue to move up with a consequential effect on business, school, social and community events and services, and there may come a time when there is no one locally to do any of the 'service' type jobs that everyone needs, particularly as age increases.*

*The Parish should become proactive in planning for the future to meet the needs of the local community*

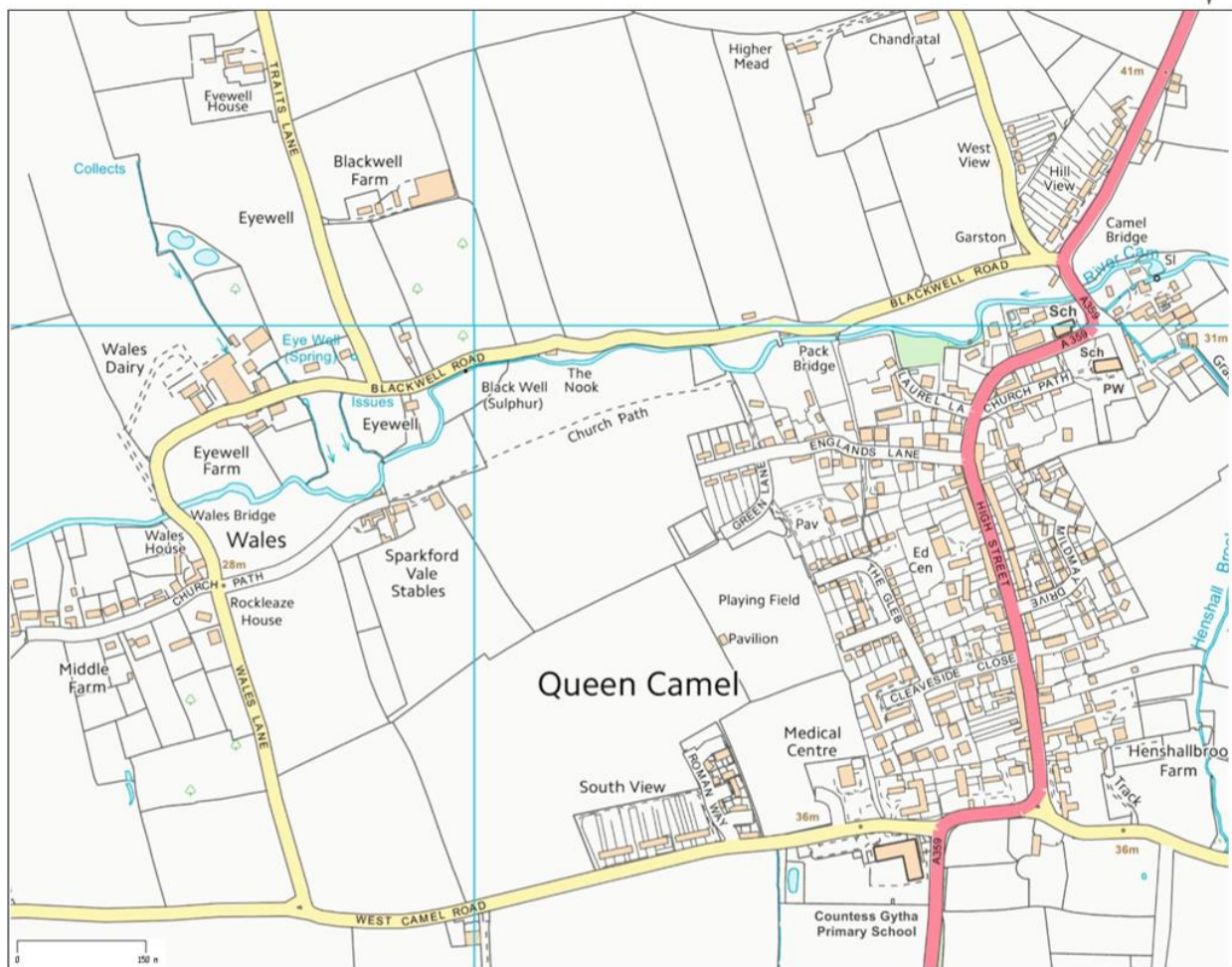




**Fig 3A - Queen Camel village and Wales 1959**

ParishOnline

Queen Camel CP



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**Fig 3B - Queen Camel village and Wales, 2018**

## ***Business and Employment***

1.5.8. Queen Camel is a rural settlement classified by SSDC as a more sustainable service centre because its County primary school, Medical Centre, village shop and Post Office and Playing Field provide significant services for the surrounding smaller villages.

1.5.9. The major employers within the Parish are the schools and the Medical Centre. Other employers include the village shop, Post Office, the pub, several farms and other small businesses. The level of self-employment is 20% (compared to a national rate of 13.9%). Many of the working population travel to work by car (72%) and 11% walk to work (national average of 6.9%). Public transport accounts for only 1.5% of work travel.

## ***Community Services and Facilities***

1.5.10. The Parish has a Medical Centre, village shop and Post Office, an Anglican church, a pub, a County pre and primary school, and also a private preparatory school that offers some sporting facilities, e.g. swimming pool.



1.5.11. There is a well-maintained village hall that can comfortably seat 120 (without tables) but there is parking for only a dozen cars and no safe space outside for children to play.



1.5.12. There is a 6-acre Playing Field with a cheaply constructed pavilion, two football pitches, a cricket square, basketball court and a young children's play area together with an adjacent bowling green with clubhouse and two floodlit tennis courts (with land recently purchased for two more). There are limited public indoor sporting and recreational facilities for youth, older people or those with special needs. Residents who wish to access such facilities have to travel outside the parish.

### ***Getting About***

1.5.13. Nearly 90% of households have at least one vehicle, (compared to a national average of 75%) and this is the principal means of transport for residents. However, some properties have little or no off-road parking (e.g. High Street) and there are no public car parks. This results in roadside parking (see also 2.3 below).

1.5.14. The parish has a commercial bus service run by South West Coaches. Weekday services run roughly once an hour to the district centre of Yeovil and the small towns of Castle Cary and Shepton Mallet. These services connect to mainline rail services (at Castle Cary, Yeovil Pen Mill and Yeovil Junction railway stations) and also to Berry's Express Coach Service to London.

1.5.15. Roads and lanes in the parish are also much used by cyclists, runners, horse-riders and walkers but because of the speed and density of motor traffic this has become hazardous. There are effectively no bridleways or cycle paths but there is an extensive network of footpaths (Fig. 4).







## **Environment**

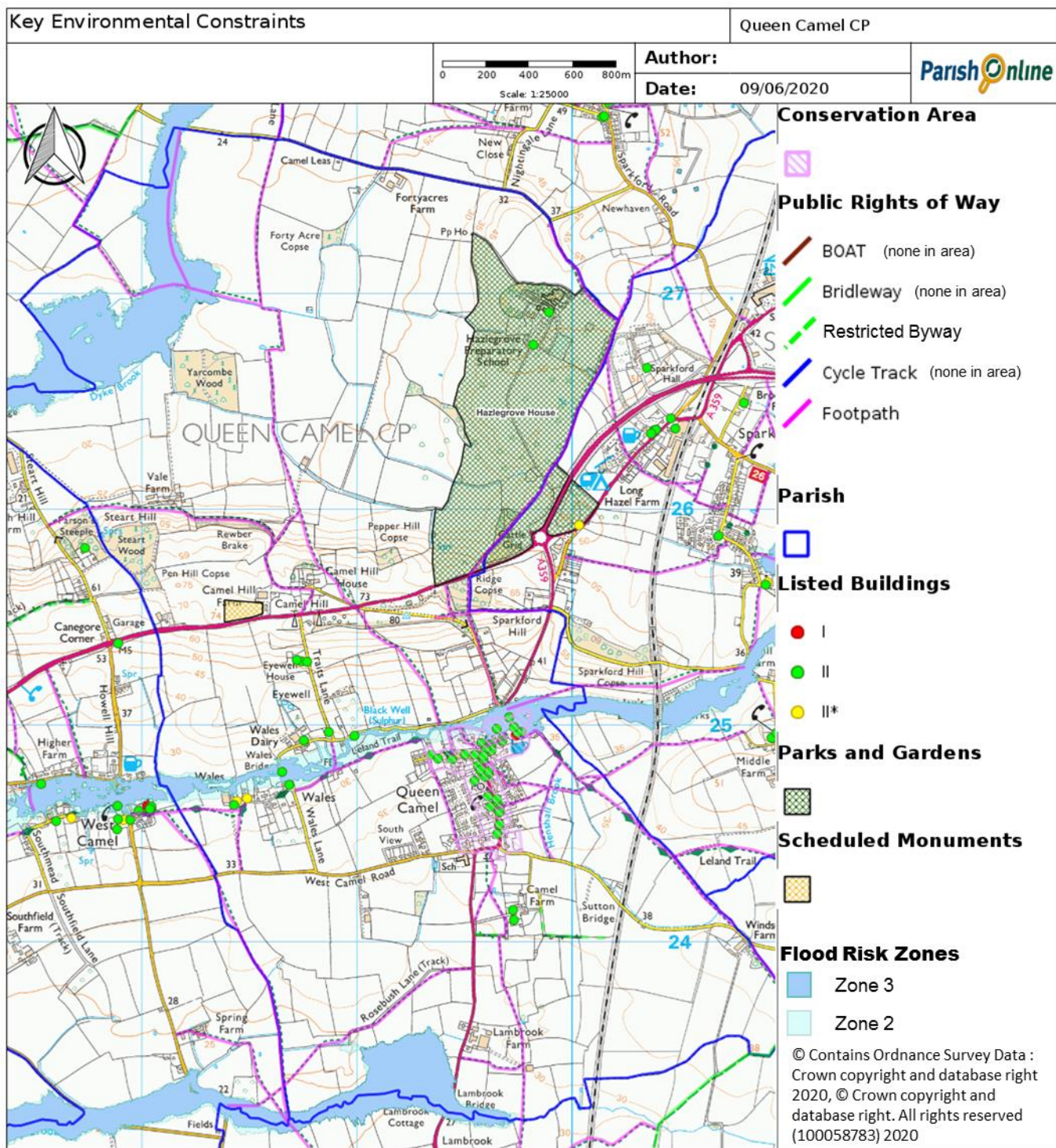
1.5.16. Queen Camel is an appealing village with an attractive High Street, an imposing Grade I listed church and some fine houses, much designated a Conservation Area (Figs 5A & 5B). The scenic contrast between the rolling hills in the northern part of the parish, the flatter countryside in the southern part and the river that separates them creates some very pleasant views.

1.5.17. Part of the village is on a designated flood plain (Figs 5A & 5B): on several occasions in recent years the main road (A359), the vacated primary school and nearby houses have been flooded. Recent work by the Environment Agency seems to have reduced but not eliminated the risk of future flooding.

1.5.18. In recent decades the streets and lanes in the parish have become increasingly cluttered with unnecessary signage, ugly cables and urban style road markings.

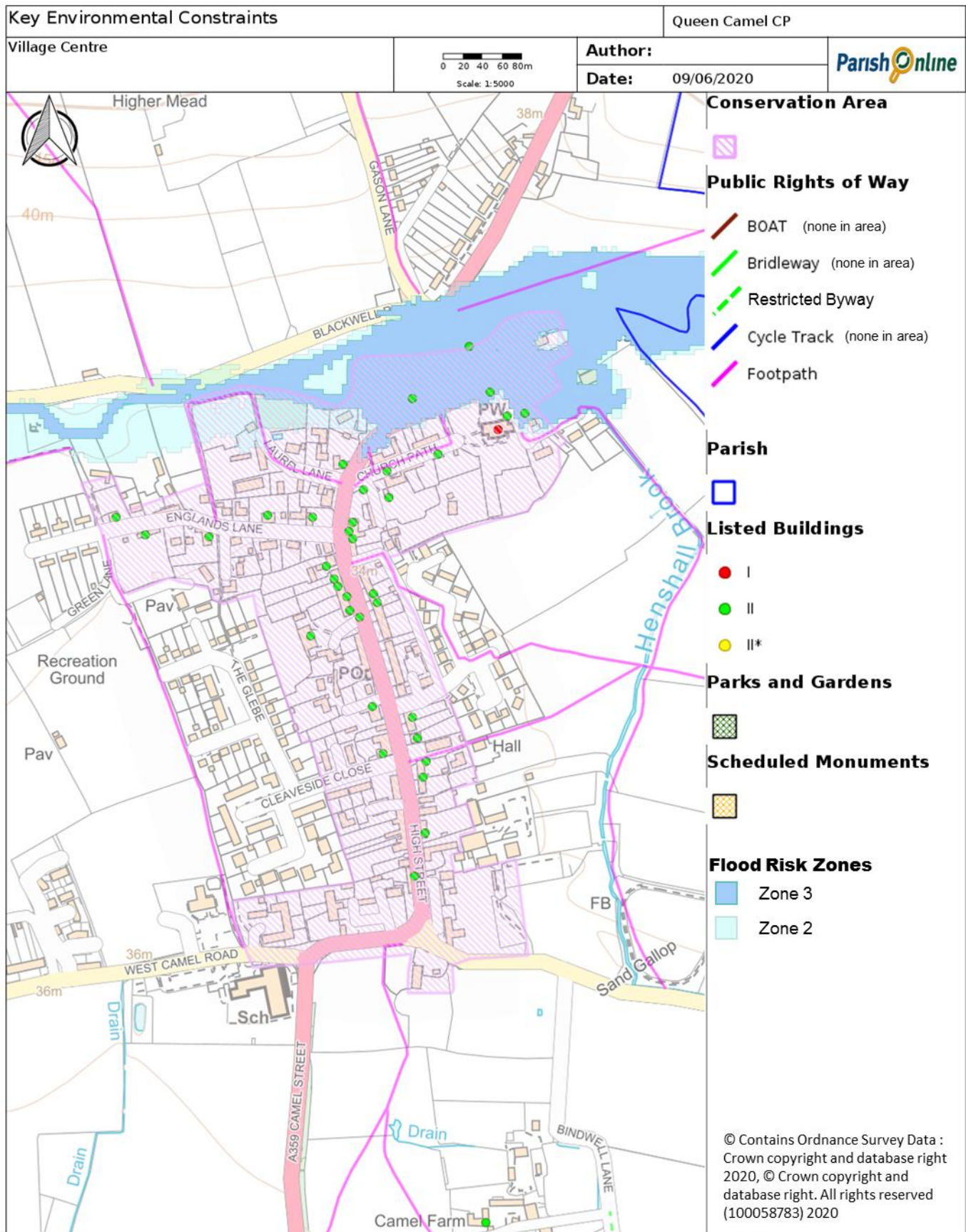
1.5.19. The increasing volume and the speed of traffic along the High Street is causing danger to pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders and is a danger to health through pollution both noise and fumes.





**Fig 5A – Environment Map**





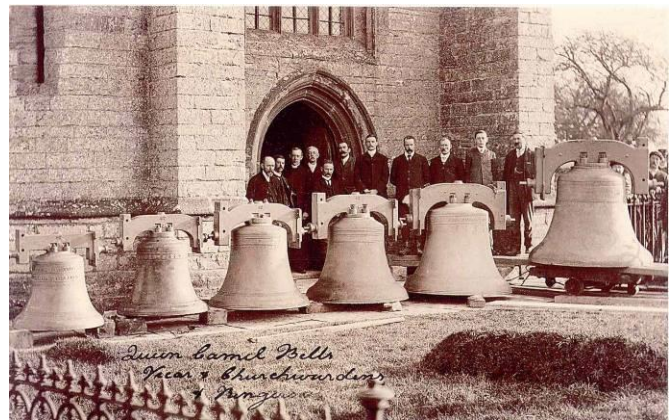
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**Fig 5B – Map enlarged for village centre**



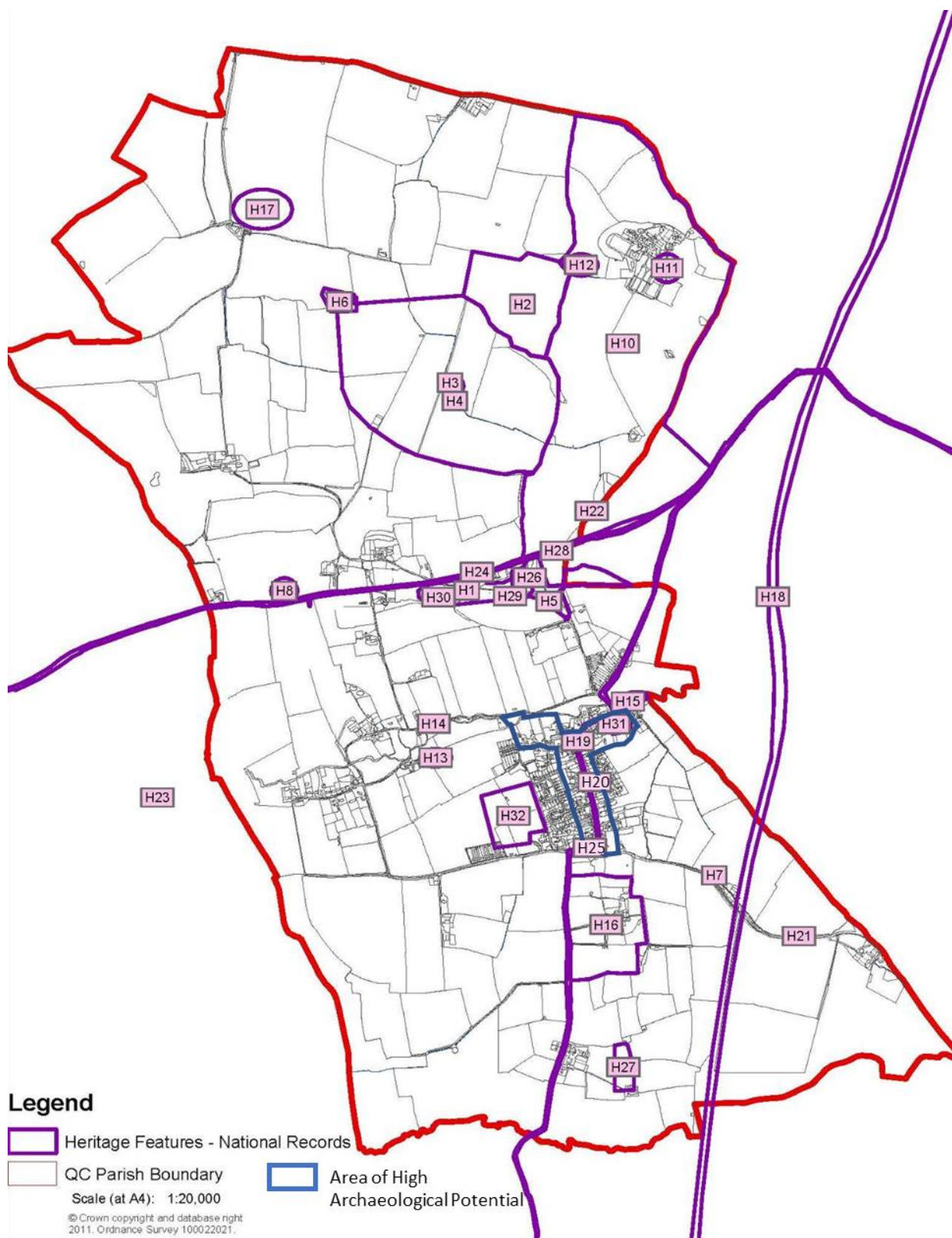
## Heritage

1.5.20. In addition to the Conservation Area, Queen Camel has many buildings, walls, railings, bridges and other features listed by Historic England (see Appendix 1 and Figs 5A and 5B). These include the only Grade 1 listed building: St. Barnabas Church, built between 1350/1380 and having a lofty tower containing the heaviest peal of six bells in the world, and also many Grade II listed buildings including the old schoolhouse and Hazlegrove House. Other features of historical interest include a cobbled path to the church, a telephone box, a pillar box, two wall post boxes, two finger signposts (see Table 4 and Fig 11 in Section 3).





1.5.21. There is one scheduled Iron Age settlement site in the parish (north of the A303) and many other archaeological sites including a Roman villa on land adjacent to the Affordable Housing in Roman Way (See Appendix 2 and Fig 6).



**Fig 6 - Locations of Archaeological Sites, Monuments and other Heritage Features**

## 1.6. Community Engagement and Consultation

1.6.1. The Plan has been prepared by the people of Queen Camel. There has been substantial input from the community through the Parish's Community Plan of 2005 and Development Plan of 2009 and through a number of public consultations including Annual Village Meetings, ad hoc Village Meetings, a 'Planning for Real' programme and, in respect of housing, the old school and the Playing Field, a village questionnaire in 2016 and a public consultation in November 2017. This information is detailed in a Consultation Statement.



## 1.7. Local Plan Review

1.7.1. The review of the Local Plan has commenced, and consultation on the Preferred Options ran from June through to September 2019. The draft plan proposes a change to the approach taken in the adopted Local Plan, by adding a further category of 'village' between the rural centres and rural settlements. Queen Camel is named as one of the 12 villages. As a village, there are no identified development areas, but the supporting text states that growth is expected to take place "adjacent to the existing built settlement". The level of growth anticipated across South Somerset (as set out in draft Policy SS2) is 'at least' 14,322 dwellings for the plan period 2016 to 2036, of which 1,314 is to be provided within the villages (of which 592 have been completed or committed as at 31 March 2018). The Local Plan suggests (in the case of Queen Camel) the housing target for a village would be the pro-rata proportion of the remaining need for growth (ie  $722/12 = 60$ ), but this may change (and could go higher or lower) in response to the feedback received through the consultation and possible updates to the national housing need projections.

1.7.2. The potential change in Queen Camel's status, if agreed through the Local Plan examination (likely to be late 2021 at the earliest), would trigger the need for the Parish Council to consider an early review of the Plan. This would allow the

community the opportunity to consider the changes to Local Plan policies and what changes, if any need to be made to the Neighbourhood Plan.

## **1.8. Monitoring**

1.8.1. In order to assess whether this Neighbourhood Plan is achieving its objectives, and to inform the timing of its review, the Parish Council will monitor on an annual basis:

- Progress on the Local Plan Review
- The capacity of the Countess Gytha Primary School and projected need for its expansion
- New dwellings created within the parish (net)
- New employment space created within the parish (net)
- Road traffic accident data within the parish
- The extent of any increase / improvements made to safe routes in and around the village for horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians
- The extent of any increase / improvements made to recreation facilities within the parish
- Any issues raised in regard to loss or harm to any historically significant monuments and features within the parish

## **2. CONSTRAINTS**

### **2.1. Conservation Area & Listed Buildings**

2.1.1. The centre of Queen Camel is a designated Conservation Area (Figs 5A & 5B). The natural stone dwellings on and off the High Street are notably irregular and varied in size, style, roofing materials (including thatch) and roofing levels. There are some 52 buildings and other features in the parish that are listed by Historic England (Appendix 1). These include the registered parkland surrounding Hazlegrove House.

2.1.2. The controls associated with a Conservation Area and listed status restrict development opportunities to ensure development does not harm a listed building or its setting or harm the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This helps to protect Queen Camel's architectural heritage and character, to the benefit of residents and visitors alike.

### **2.2. A Flood Plain**

2.2.1. Queen Camel has suffered flooding too often and feels particularly vulnerable to the more extreme weather predicted to be a feature of climate change. The River Cam together with Henshallbrook, a tributary, sometimes overflow after heavy rainfall,

especially when the River Yeo into which the River Cam discharges has also burst its banks. Parts of Queen Camel near the river lie within a flood plain designated in 2016 as Zone 3 (Figs 5A & 5B) which has flooded on a number of occasions in recent years.

2.2.2. The County Council's Flood Risk Management Team would expect to see a strong SuDS (Sustainable Drainage System) approach on individual application sites and developments to meet any local policies in terms of discharge rates. A Developer Guide can be found on their webpage: <https://www.somerset.gov.uk/waste-planning-and-land/sustainable-drainage-in-somerset/>.

2.2.3. The now vacated primary school buildings which lie on the flood plain have been severely flooded more than once and this is a significant reason why a new school has been built in a new location (and why the Environment Agency has made clear that the Old School Site would not be suitable for housing).



## 2.3. Main road

2.3.1. The A359 which runs through the village links a major trunk road (the A303) with Yeovil and Sherborne and carries a substantial and increasing volume of commuter traffic. New housing developments (ongoing and proposed) on the northern and eastern fringes of Yeovil and in Sherborne and Wincanton will lead to substantial further increases in traffic volume. As a result the roads and lanes are becoming increasingly hazardous for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders and there is increasing pollution on the High Street. The commuter traffic does, however, make a major contribution to the viability and commercial success of the village shop.

2.3.2. There is a 7.5t weight restriction on all the roads and lanes in the Parish but there is an exemption for commercial vehicles serving local farms and businesses (between Queen Camel and Yeovil and Sherborne) are exempt and in recent years there has been a substantial increase in commercial vehicle sizes and movements thus adding substantially to the safety risk for pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders, especially for children and older people.



2.3.3. There is a particular problem on the High Street where many cars are always parked along the roadside because the village shop and a number of the older houses have no private parking. One effect of this roadside parking is to narrow the carriageway and this help to slow the traffic down, but it also increases congestion and consequent pollution. The only satisfactory answer is to build a bypass.

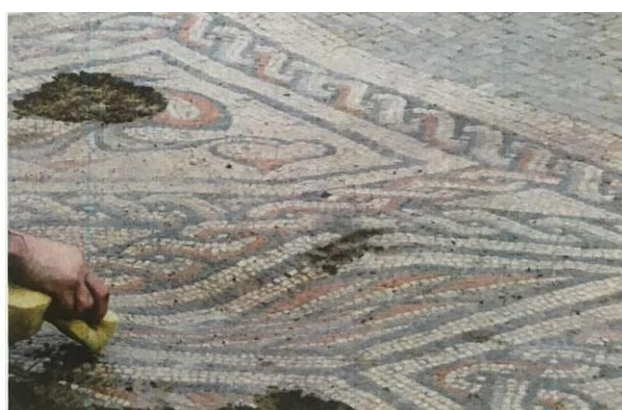
2.3.4. The northern half of the parish including Hazlegrove estate lies on the far side of the A303 which is extremely busy, especially during weekends, in holiday periods and for much of the summer. Crossing it at such times is hazardous, involving either a dash across the busy carriageway or a detour through the neighbouring village of Sparkford. However, because of the A303 barrier the northern part of the parish is comparatively unfrequented and offers excellent walking to those who can manage to get there.

2.3.5. In August 2018, Highways England submitted an application for a Development Consent Order as part of the overall proposal to upgrade the A303 to a high-quality dual carriageway generally following an alignment close to the existing A303, with construction planned to start in the Spring of 2020 and complete within two/three years. This will impact on the Plan's proposals in respect of a bridleway between Traits Lane and Gason Lane, but it will make crossing the A303 on foot easier and safer.



## **2.4. Archaeological sites**

2.4.1. The discovery of a significant Roman villa off West Camel Road has restricted recent development and was the main reason the new primary school was built on a less favoured site. These archaeological discoveries contribute to Queen Camel's rich historical heritage and could be exploited to attract visitors to the parish (see map at Fig 6).



## **2.5. RNAS Yeovilton**

2.5.1. Queen Camel lies near a flight path for RNAS Yeovilton and the noise can be intrusive.

## **2.6. Public Transport**

2.6.1. Queen Camel has limited public transport facilities (see 1.4.4 above).

## **2.7. Minerals Safeguarding**

2.7.1. Much of the area is a minerals' safeguarding area for building stone (as defined in the Somerset County Minerals Plan). This does not preclude development provided what is proposed does not sterilize an economically viable resource that could be extracted without harm to local communities or the environment.

## **2.8. Vision for how we see the Parish in 2030**

2.8.1. Queen Camel will be a parish that provides its residents with accommodation and services appropriate to their needs so that if they wish they can live comfortably in the parish throughout their lifetimes in good quality housing and with appropriate levels of care.

2.8.2. There will be an enhanced standard of local service provision delivered by the Shop and Post Office, Medical Centre, School with community facilities, regular bus service, public car parking and sports and social facilities including the Pub, Playing Field and Community Enterprise and Education Centre at the Old School Site, which will include



a number of small business units giving local small businesses, artisans and young people the opportunity to start or to grow their businesses.

2.8.3. The health and well-being of residents and visitors alike will be enhanced by a network of well-maintained footpaths and bridle/cycle-paths linking both halves of the parish (either side of the A303) and Queen Camel with its neighbouring parishes.

2.8.4. A wide range of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities will meet the needs and the aspirations of local residents of every age and ability.

2.8.5. The village will have retained its character and remained attractive to residents and visitors thanks to:

- an improved built environment, with energy-efficient buildings and well-maintained roads, drains and rivers.
- increased and improved open spaces with some wildflower areas;
- the removal of redundant or unnecessary street signs and clutter;
- the removal of overhead cables within the Conservation Area; and
- an upgraded riverside walk, with seats and rest areas suitable for every age and ability.

2.8.6. Historically significant sites, buildings and features (unless privately owned) will be accessible to all, preserved and, where appropriate, developed to enhance their educational appeal to residents and visitors alike, contributing to Queen Camel's heritage.

## **2.9. Aims of the Plan**

- To create new opportunities for local people to live and work in the parish and so strengthen the community and the local economy
- To make sure new development strengthens Queen Camel's character
- To support businesses which provide services and employment within the community
- To improve and extend safe routes in and around the village for horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians
- To make sure there is sufficient off-road car parking for existing and new development
- To preserve existing green spaces that are valued by local residents
- To maintain, improve and extend recreational facilities to meet better the needs of local residents of every age and ability
- To preserve and enhance the historically significant monuments and features

## 3. POLICIES

### 3.1. Detailed Policies

3.1.1. Section 2 sets out the overall vision and aims of the Plan. This Section 3 sets out the detailed policies through which that vision and those aims could be realised. Each policy is preceded by a justification – a short description of the problems, situations and circumstances which the policy seeks to address - and by a Policy Intention that details the aims of the policy.

3.1.2. Please note that where the word 'should' or the words 'where feasible' are used in a policy, the requirement is not "optional" and does need to be met if at all feasible. However, if there are good reasons why, for instance, the policy requirement is not achievable on a particular site, this should be clearly explained in the application documents so that this can be taken into account in coming to a decision.

### 3.2. Housing

#### ***The Amount and Type of New Housing***

3.2.1. Outside South Somerset's market towns and larger rural centres, the Local Plan does not specify how much housing needs to be built in smaller villages or the wider rural area. It expects that development in villages such as Queen Camel should be 'commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement' and should 'meet identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing'.

3.2.2. Looking at a range of factors, as shown in Table 1, a housing target of an average per year of about 2 to 2½ homes would be appropriate for the Plan period, primarily focused on delivering two and three-bedroom homes comprising both open market and affordable homes.

3.2.3. A growth rate of around 2 to 2½ homes a year would mean about 22 – 28 homes could be built within the Plan's 11 year period.

3.2.4. The South Somerset Local Plan (2015) sets a target of 35% affordable housing on sites of 6 or more dwellings (although at the time of writing this plan, this threshold was only being applied to sites of 11 houses or more, and is expected to be reviewed through an update to the Local Plan), accepting that a lower proportion may be justified on some sites to make developments viable.

**Table 1 - Queen Camel's Housing Need Assessment**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Potential requirement</b>
<b>Local Plan and associated projections and targets</b>	1.9 to 2.4 dwellings per annum, derived from the Local Plan's target for rural settlements.
<b>Past Build Rates during period 2006-2017</b>	2.1 dwellings per annum
<b>Affordability and evidence of local housing need</b>	2 dwellings per annum, primarily 2 to 3-bedroom suitable for people with more limited mobility.
<b>Market demand</b>	Suggests that supply is not currently meeting demand, and focus should be on 2 and 3-bedroom and more affordable homes.
<b>Service provider views</b>	Suggests additional housing unlikely to cause significant infrastructure issues, and that some facilities would positively benefit.
<b>Local resident's views</b>	Acceptable level of growth primarily depends on the sites chosen, although up to two dwellings per annum would appear to be supported by most residents based on the consultation evidence.
<b>Census and population / housing stock data analysis</b>	Suggests that 1, 2 and 3-bedroom properties are required, with larger home styles, if incorporated, potentially being designed to allow flexible changes in the form of annexed accommodation (e.g. for carers or dependent relatives) or separately accessed apartment/bedsits, to address better the range of potential needs.
<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>1.9 - 2.4 dwellings per annum</b> The provision should be focused on 2 and 3 bedroom and more affordable homes.

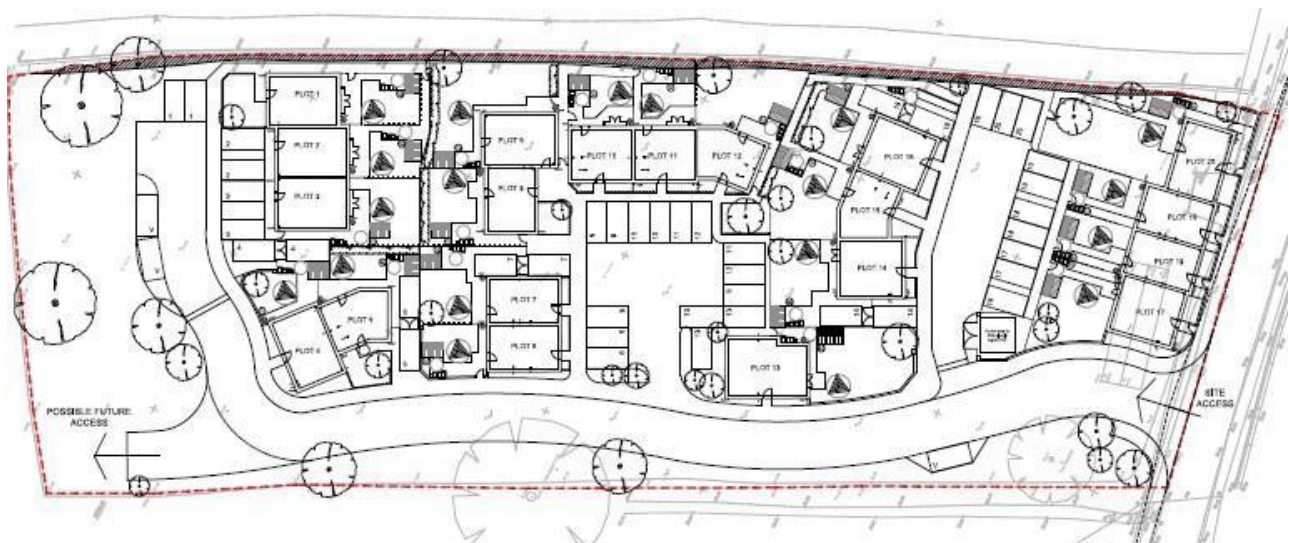
3.2.5. The age profile of the parish is broadly aligned with South Somerset, with the main difference being the high proportion of young school-aged residents (possibly due to the presence of boarders at Hazlegrove School), a slightly higher level of adults aged 75 and over and a distinct lower level in the 20 – 34 age range. This points towards an ageing population (with associated housing needs), a shortage of younger families and affordability difficulties (exacerbated by the higher proportion of detached and 4 or more-bedroom homes that make up the housing stock).

3.2.6. Anecdotal evidence also suggests that properties situated on the High Street are less attractive to families with young children due to the proximity to the main road.

3.2.7. The housing needs assessment identifies a clear need for Affordable Housing, more affordable types of open market housing (such as semi-detached and smaller properties) and there is a continuing need to cater for both young adults and an ageing population through a variety of house types designed for their needs.

3.2.8. The definition of Affordable Housing continues to expand through changes in national guidance to reflect different methods of provision that can be appropriate (see definition in the Glossary at Appendix 1). The inclusion of self-build plots could provide some bespoke and innovative designs to be included within a development and may be more affordable and attractive to younger adults and families and also to those wishing to downsize, that struggle to find the right housing for their needs.

3.2.9. A Community Land Trust was set up in December 2011 and its first priority was to provide 20 Affordable Houses at what became Roman Way. The houses were built in partnership with Hastoe Housing Association on what was exception site land that was first identified by Planners and subsequently supported locally during 'Planning for Real' community consultations. In view of its success the Community Land Trust may be well placed to deliver and manage future affordable housing elsewhere within the parish.



**The layout of the 20 Affordable Houses at Roman Way**

### **Policy Intention**

3.2.10. To provide sufficient housing of the right type to meet anticipated local needs, taking into account the ageing population, normal expansion, the relative lack of young adults and younger families and the benefits of providing housing to meet the likely needs of the parish. For example, this would suggest the inclusion of bungalows and wheelchair-adaptable homes for the needs of an ageing population, and allowing designs that would provide flexibility for a carer to support people in their home.

3.2.11. Restrictions should be imposed on affordable housing to ensure that people who live in the parish or have a local connection (i.e. who have jobs, family or work responsibilities locally) or have specific needs are prioritized over those without any local connection or eligibility. The affordable housing should remain affordable in perpetuity. The Local Connection criteria and cascade allocation is depicted in Fig 2 and set out in the Glossary at Appendix 1.

## **Policy QC1. Housing**

**Provision is made for at least 30 new homes to be built in Queen Camel parish between 2019 and 2030, to meet the projected local needs of the community. These should be delivered through**

- a) Sites allocated for development (Policy QC3)**
- b) Infill or redevelopment opportunities (in line with Policy QC2)**
- c) Conversions or replacement of dwellings (in line with the Local Plan policies or permitted development rights)**
- d) Rural exception sites for affordable housing.**

**Where developments are providing for affordable housing, in accord with Local Plan requirements, the affordable housing will be subject to the local occupancy criteria set out in Appendix 1.**

**To provide a wider housing mix:**

- Open market housing should provide a mix of smaller 2 and 3-bedroom homes.**
- Larger homes of four or more bedrooms should not make up more than 20% of the number of units per site, unless required by the particular character of the site and/or the surrounding area;**
- The provision of starter homes (as defined in the NPPF) and self-build plots will be supported.**

### ***Infill development within the village of Queen Camel***

3.2.12. In addition to sites allocated specifically for development, the principle of limited infill development and redevelopment within the village was broadly supported. Any such development would need to be in line with adopted Local Plan Policy SS2, which strictly controls development in places such as Queen Camel. Land within or in close proximity to the flood risk zone (primarily in the vicinity of the church) should not be built on in order to limit flood risk. It is also expected that any development should be appropriate to the general character of the area in sustainable locations and acceptable in terms of distance from key community facilities in the village.

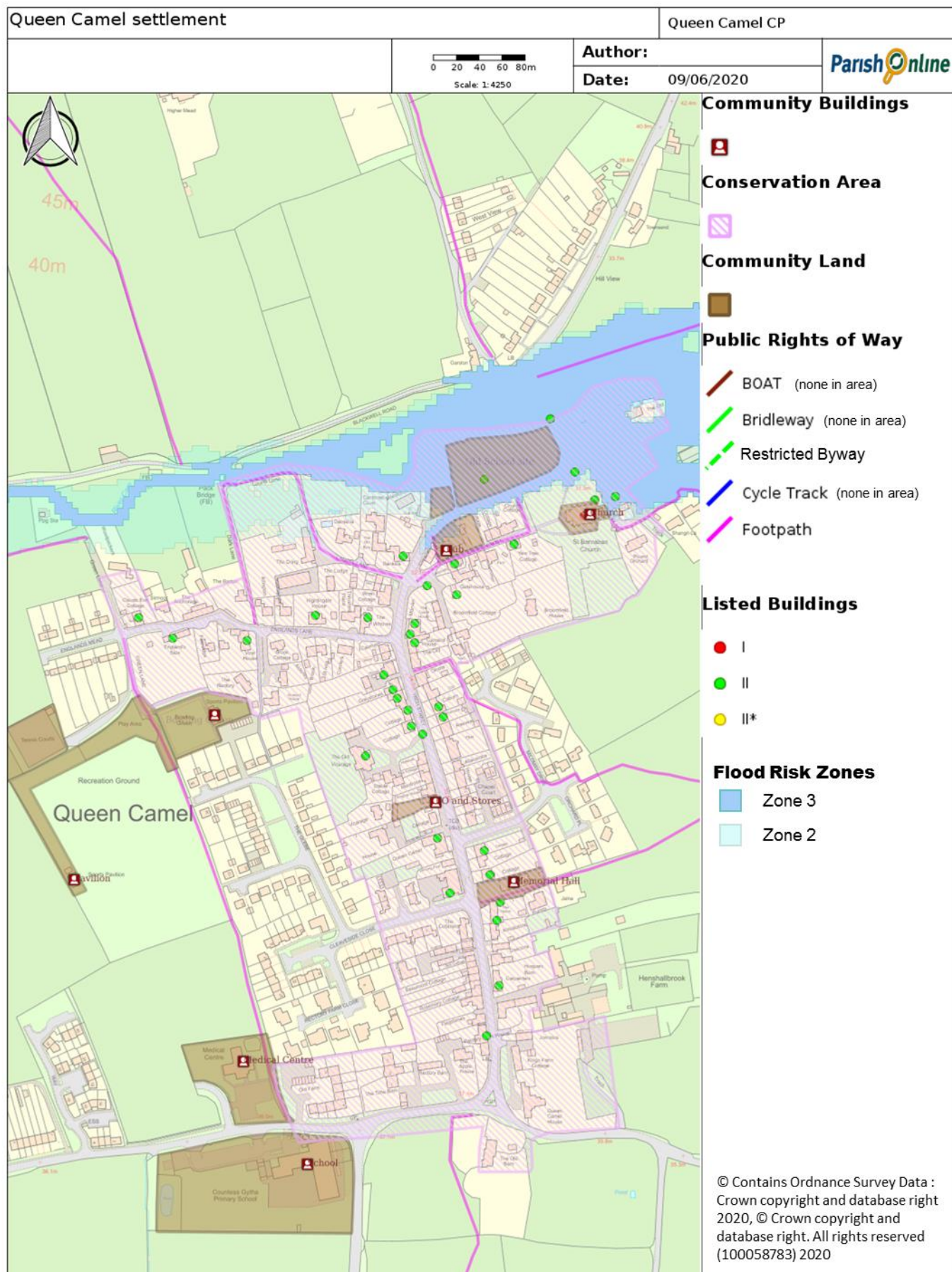
3.2.13. Infill development in the neighbourhood plan refers to the development of a relatively small gap between existing buildings within the village, with its main access onto an otherwise built up frontage or on other sites within the village where the site is contiguous with and closely associated with existing buildings. The potential for housing development is specifically permitted for reasons stated in Policy QC1 (i.e. the

site allocation including the affordable housing element, infill opportunities, conversions and rural exception sites).

### **Policy Intention**

3.2.14. The following policy is intended to provide guidance on what infill development would in principle be supported, and factors that would indicate that development would be inappropriate, such as loss of residential amenities (e.g. privacy, loss of daylight), insufficient parking or if the development would adversely impact on the village's character.





**Fig 7 The village of Queen Camel**



## **Policy QC2. Infill development**

**Infill development, including the replacement, conversion of a building or subdivision of an existing dwelling, will be supported in the village subject to:**

- a) the protection of important local green spaces**
- b) the protection of heritage assets (both designated and non-designated), and their setting**
- c) the provision of safe access by pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles**
- d) sufficient off-road parking (in line with Policy QC9)**
- e) the protection of community facilities**
- f) the protection of residential amenities (of the occupiers of the proposed and nearby properties)**
- g) the sympathetic design and layout of the proposed development being in keeping with, or enhancing, the character of the village**
- h) the type and size of housing built should be in accordance with Policy QC1.**

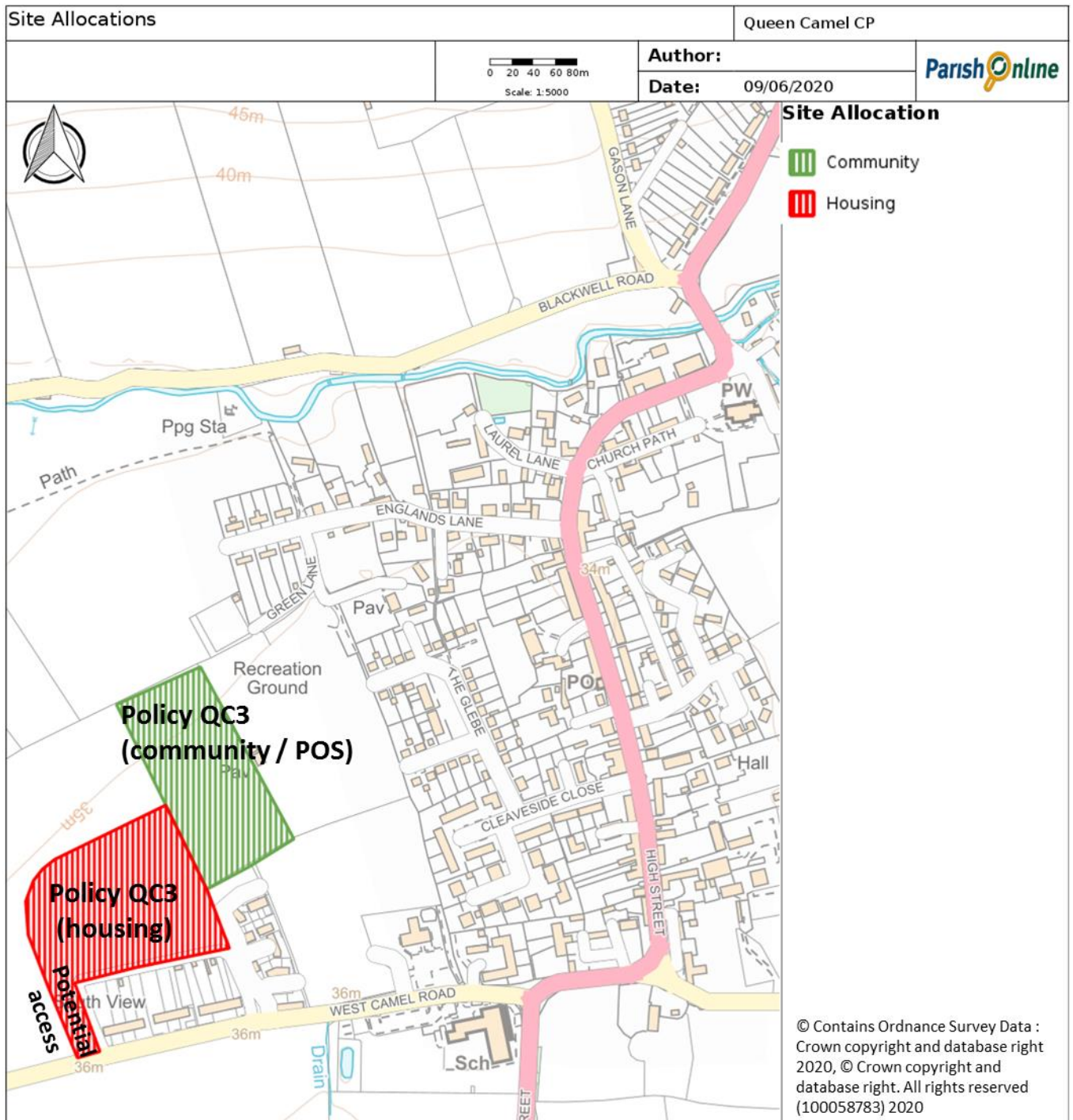
### ***Greenfield Sites for Housing and associated development***

3.2.15. As the potential for conversions and infill development within the village of Queen Camel is limited, it was clear that reliance on this source would not deliver the amount of housing needed over the Plan period. A local call for sites was undertaken as part of this plan's preparation. Five sites around the village, and a further area alongside the A303 which could be considered for employment, were submitted by owners. Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, together with their planning advisor, visited all of the sites, and took notes of possible issues. Their findings were made available as part of the site options consultation, and professional support was also sought from the District and County Councils regarding landscape, heritage, highways, flooding and contaminated land considerations.

3.2.16. As a result of this work, two sites were originally selected for inclusion in the plan, and as a result of feedback received through the pre-submission draft consultation, this has been reduced to one site. The allocated site was assessed as the most suitable by local residents, scored well against the Plan's objectives, and did not raise any significant sustainability concerns (although it would result in the loss of some of the better quality agricultural land).

3.2.17. This site should be able to deliver about 30 new dwellings, focusing on smaller and more affordable housing types, custom or self-build dwelling plots and homes specifically designed for an ageing population, together with the extension of the Playing Field and potential for an archaeological heritage interpretation centre.

Additional sites may be identified and allocated in a future review of this plan, as and when needed.



**Fig 8 Site Allocations**

### ***Land on the north side of West Camel Road, behind South View***



#### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

3.2.18. A large and relatively flat field, gently sloping down to north, providing medium grade farmland. The entire field extends to about 8.7ha, and is therefore far in excess of the area likely to be required for development. It is relatively open and exposed, visible from the approach to Queen Camel along West Camel Road, from the Playing Field and the community green space on Roman Way, and in longer distant views from footpaths on rising ground to north and south.

#### **ACCESS**

3.2.19. The site is within reasonable walking distance of most community facilities. Roman Way provides potential access subject to landownership / archaeology, otherwise a new access would need to be formed on land to the west of South View.

#### **HERITAGE, LANDSCAPE AND BIODIVERSITY FEATURES**

3.2.20. The site is some distance from the Conservation Area and any Listed Buildings. However, the site of a Roman Villa lies within the eastern portion of the field identified for housing, and on land to east. This archaeological find is currently classified as of local interest, but potentially of national interest. A geophysical survey and some excavations have previously been carried out to establish the size of the mosaic pavement, the nature of the building in which it lay and the likely extent of the surviving remains.

3.2.21. Advice received from the Senior Historic Environment Officer at Somerset County Council in response to the site options consultation, was that the site identified for housing would require geophysical survey and most likely trial trenching prior to determination of a planning application. Dependant on the results of the evaluation it

is likely that mitigation will be required involving excavation of any remains prior to the site's development.

3.2.22. The area identified for recreation land and archaeological heritage interpretation includes the location of the Roman villa and so will require special attention as it is potentially of national significance. A management strategy would have to be developed prior to any planning application being determined (the details of which would depend on the intended use of the site and the treatment of the Roman period remains).

3.2.23. There are distant views out from the site to the church tower as a local landmark.

3.2.24. There is a mature oak tree on site boundary within the established hedgerow, of landscape and possible ecological interest.

### **FLOOD RISK, CONTAMINATION AND OTHER MATTERS**

3.2.25. No major flood risks have been identified in the initial site appraisal, although consideration will need to be given to managing surface water run-off given the size and sloping nature of the site. The County Council should be contacted regarding the potential need for prior extraction of minerals resources. No other matters were noted.

### **PROPOSED USE**

3.2.26. The landowner has proposed that part of the field to the north side of South View could be developed for housing (extending to about 2.7ha) allowing an extension to the existing recreation field (and possibly the provision of allotments), a multifunctional car park, an interpretation area of the Roman Villa, vehicular access from West Camel Road and associated strategic landscape buffers around the site boundaries. The amount of housing land proposed is significantly more than what is required within the plan period, and therefore a more modest level of development is proposed (with a smaller site area), whilst securing suitable community benefits.

### **Policy Intention**

3.2.27. It was clear from the consultation that local residents considered that the recreational benefits tipped the planning balance in favour of housing development in this location.

3.2.28. The allocating of the site for housing will help meet the identified needs, with criteria to ensure the site is appropriately designed relevant to its location, and a range of community benefits. There was also support for further opportunities for local residents and visitors to appreciate the archaeological find of the Roman Villa.

The land proposed for community use (recreation and heritage interpretation) should be transferred to the Parish Council, and a financial contribution sought towards its provision and ongoing maintenance.

3.2.29. A limit is placed on the number of dwellings to be provided, in order to restrict the scale of growth to be consistent with the adopted Local Plan's spatial strategy relating to rural settlements. On this basis, it is anticipated that about 30 dwellings should be built within the site. The site area is potentially larger than the land area likely to be required for this level of development, taking into account the potential need to include some flexibility pending further archaeological assessment and also to allow for landscaping and green spaces within the site appropriate to its village character. The highway connection to West Camel Road is shown to the west of South View, but alternative options may be possible.

### **Policy QC3. Land to the north side of West Camel Road**

**Land to the north side of West Camel Road, as shown on Fig 8, is allocated for about 30 dwellings, to be built on an area of no more than 1.7ha. in the southern part of the site, and the adjoining area to the east is allocated for recreation land and archaeological heritage interpretation. This development is subject to all of the following requirements:**

- a) The area to the north of Roman Way, as indicated on Fig 8, is provided for community benefit in perpetuity, for recreation and/or an archaeological interpretation area, with a contribution towards its provision and future maintenance secured in line with the requirements set out in the Local Plan.**
- b) A detailed evaluation of the archaeological interest of the site is provided to inform the layout and appropriate mitigation secured to avoid harm, including a management strategy in relation to the Roman Villa remains.**
- c) A suitable safe vehicular access point onto West Camel Road is provided, and measures secured to enable safe pedestrian and cycle access connecting to the village High Street.**
- d) The type and size of housing accords with Policy QC1**
- e) The design of the development is landscape-led and of high quality, and accords with Policy QC4**
- f) The existing hedge / tree planting along the site boundary with Roman Way should be retained, and strategic landscape planting belts, using native species, are secured along the western and northern boundaries and any new vehicular link from West Camel Road as part of any landscaping and biodiversity enhancement plan. These should be of sufficient width and incorporate suitable planting (including large specimen trees) to provide a soft transition with the**



**countryside and reduce the prominence of any built development in wider views, and provide recreational route linking from the Playing Field.**

### ***Design of Buildings and their surroundings***

3.2.30. Village design describes the distinctive characteristics of a locality and provides design guidance to influence future development and improve the physical qualities of the area. Understanding the characteristics of the parish is important in designing new developments, and those within or adjacent to the Conservation Area (Fig 5B in Section 1) must preserve and enhance the character of the area. This should not prevent high quality innovative design, ideally the design of new or the conversion of existing buildings should reflect the best design principles of their time so that the richness of varied character continues and is extended into the future, and the buildings are energy efficient and functional to today's living requirements.

3.2.31. A character appraisal of the village was undertaken during the preparation of this Plan. This helped identify features of local interest, as well as the main characteristics in terms of layout, design and materials.

3.2.32. The core village sits on fairly flat land and has a strong north – south emphasis. Its character is derived mainly from its built form rather than any surrounding landscape features, although Sparkford Hill at the northern end is significant as is the meandering route of the River Cam. The approach from south is well defined, owing to the established hedge and trees on south side of Marston Road. This opens out quite suddenly when one turns north towards High Street. From the north the Church and bridge dominate the village approach. Around the Church to the north the area has a largely open and spacious character, which contrasts with the tightly defined and picturesque Church Path with its gently curved alignment and cobbled path terminating with the Church tower.

#### ***Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation***

*Features that underpin 'age-ready' housing (HAPPI design principles):*

- *Generous internal space standards*
- *Plenty of natural light in the home and in circulation spaces*
- *Balconies and outdoor space, avoiding internal corridors and single-aspect flats*
- *Adaptability and 'care aware' design which is ready for emerging telecare and tele-healthcare technologies*
- *Circulation spaces that encourage interaction and avoids an "institutional feel"*
- *Shared facilities and community 'hubs' where these are lacking in the neighbourhood*
- *Plants, trees, and the natural environment*
- *High levels of energy efficiency, with good ventilation to avoid overheating*
- *Extra storage for belongings and bicycles*
- *Shared external areas such as 'home zones' that give priority to pedestrians*

3.2.33. Away from the historic streets the village has grown during the C20th primarily to the west and to a lesser degree the east, with little impact on the historic core. These modern areas have a less distinct character, and the suburban estate forms does not reflect the prevailing village character and should not be seen to have set a precedent.

3.2.34. New sites should reflect local styles and settings, with non-repetitive layouts and a variety of local materials, and should give a sense of place so that in 100 years people will still want those homes.

3.2.35. In designing new homes, thought should also be given to the future occupants, particularly bearing in mind that Queen Camel already has a higher than average number of older people, and that these residents have told us that there is limited choice within the Parish for old-age friendly housing. With this in mind, the principles identified in 2016 by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care for Older People, known as the HAPPI(3) principles (Housing our Ageing Population: Positive Ideas) provide clear guidance on this point<sup>2</sup>.

**Table 2: Detailed Design Guidance**

Feature	Materials
<b>Building form and layout</b>	Generally, buildings are two storeys in height and are often grouped together in terraces. Most buildings are vernacular in style and fairly modest with a relatively low eaves height. Buildings sit at the back edge of the pavement on west side of High Street but are generally set back slightly further on east side. Where buildings are set back the front boundaries are well defined by stone walls and railings (some are listed), supplemented by formal clipped hedges to the front of some properties, adding to the well-defined street frontage. Almost all buildings face the road with eaves parallel to the road, creating a really well-defined street frontage particularly at southern end. The building line is very important along the High Street. Buildings are generally flat fronted, with occasional small porches and bays but these aren't common.
<b>Wall materials</b>	Pale grey/white lias stone is used almost exclusively through the historic core. There is almost no render and very little brick. The prevailing colour is pale grey and white derived from the consistent use of the local stone. Stone is generally evenly coursed and dressed, although there are some examples of rubble stonework.
<b>Roofs</b>	Nearly all roofs are covered in orange and red clay tiles, with some

<sup>2</sup> The full report can be found here, which details the advice shown in the box in this plan [https://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_assets/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Other\\_reports\\_and\\_guidance/HAPPI3\\_Report\\_2016.pdf](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Other_reports_and_guidance/HAPPI3_Report_2016.pdf)



	darker concrete replacements. There are a few examples of thatch and isolated examples of slate and corrugated. Roofs are steeply pitched and roof lines are irregular.
<b>Windows</b>	Nearly all window frames are painted white and are mainly sash or casement in style with small panes divided by glazing bars. Timber windows are the traditional material and contribute more to local character than modern replacements in uPVC (which should not be used on Listed Buildings or generally within the Conservation Area).
<b>Doors</b>	Where historic doors remain, they are generally painted of a traditional four or six panelled design. Traditional dark paint is often used.
<b>Architectural detailing</b>	There are some ham stone surrounds to openings, though most openings are dressed walling stone and fairly plain. Timber lintels and low stone arches support the masonry above window and door openings. Brick chimneys sit on gables or party walls and contribute to the skyline character when looking up from High Street. Buildings are generally plainly detailed apart from the old schoolhouse, the Church and the boundary wall to Morven. There are some historic surfaces worth noting, particularly the cobbles on Church Path.

3.2.36. The parish is not on the gas grid, making heating costs more expensive for most residents. Future residential development in the village should, therefore, include high energy efficient measures. Additionally, the Conservation Area makes the adoption of renewable energy options in development more sensitive.

### Policy Intention

3.2.37. To preserve and enhance the character of the village whilst using the best design features characteristic of the local area. This does not require developers to replicate past designs, as contemporary and innovative design and build techniques and features can contribute positively to the local distinctiveness and historic character of the village. All designs will need to ensure that the historic character of the area is preserved.

3.2.38. Although Neighbourhood Plans cannot require energy efficient standards in excess of the current Building Regulations, for reasons of climate change resilience and particular vulnerability of residents to fuel poverty, measures to achieve higher energy efficiency standards in the parish are encouraged.

## Design Features

Local stone, excellent pointing



Irregular roof line – typical throughout the village



Wall with typical 'cock & hen' topping



Stone built houses generally have windows with glazing bars dividing the glass panes. Brick built housing outside the Conservation Area have not generally followed this design. style.



The newest estate at Roman Way used a mixture of white lias stone, warm red brick and some render, to bring together materials used within the village. The roof line is irregular, the windows have glazing bars and the front doors are a mixture of dark blue, red, green. The estate layout can be seen on page 25.



## **Policy QC4. Design of Buildings**

**Development should be designed to complement and reinforce the local distinctiveness, historic character and rural scale and nature of Queen Camel. Proposals should be based on a detailed site and character analysis and include reference to and consideration of all of the following matters, as described in more detail in Table 2:**

- The building form respecting the prevalence of 2-storey buildings and irregular roof lines, and the layout respecting the traditional building lines and groupings found in the local area.**
- The use of stone walls and railings or hedges as boundary treatments**
- The use of local, natural building materials, e.g. white lias stone and clay tiles**
- The use of panelled painted doors, and white sash / casement windows with glazing bars on domestic buildings.**
- The visual interest provided by appropriate detailing**
- The incorporation of parking and turning areas, service, utility and storage provision, including waste and recycling, should be shown clearly in the designs in order that their impact can be assessed.**

**Views of the Church, Old Schoolhouse & bridge should be respected as a landmark group. Where possible clear views of the church tower should be allowed for in the layout and design of new development.**

**The sensitive inclusion of renewable energy and other energy-efficient and eco-friendly measures over and above that required by building regulations will be supported, subject to avoiding harm to nearby heritage assets.**

**New housing should be designed to take account of the Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles.**

### **3.3. Business and Employment**

3.3.1. The 2011 Census data shows economic activity levels are broadly similar to the rest of South Somerset, with 68% of all usual residents aged 16 to 74 in employment, 2% unemployed and 20% retired.

3.3.2. The Business Register and Employment Survey 2016 (available at ward level) shows the main business sectors (in terms of employees) to be public administration and defence; education; accommodation and food service activities; water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities. These account for approximate 62% of all local jobs.

3.3.3. The main employers within the Parish include the two schools (Countess Gytha County Primary School and Kings School Bruton's junior school at Hazlegrove House) and the Medical Centre. The pub, village shop, the local farms, the 'Tin Shed' on the junction with Blackwell Road, the Fabric Barn just south of the village and the Shell garage and restaurant on the A303 also provide local employment.

3.3.4. Business enterprises that provide local services are considered to provide wider benefits other than employment opportunities. The growth of existing businesses and community facilities, farm diversification and the development of small sites close to the village or with good links to the A303 may provide further employment opportunities.

3.3.5. The number of people who work from their homes is quite significant, accounting for 23% of the working population in 2011 (and possibly more today). If their businesses grow they may benefit from relocating to small business units nearby, and the Old School Site has been identified as a potential location that may provide rented accommodation for start-up businesses.

### **Policy Intention**

3.3.6. To retain and increase opportunities for local employment, commensurate with the scale and rural nature of the village. Businesses that will provide a facility or service to the local community are particularly encouraged.

3.3.7. A flexible approach is also taken that would allow new small-scale enterprises elsewhere within the Plan area, providing there is reasonable prospect that the business use will be viable, and the premises could support other businesses that would also contribute to the local economy.

3.3.8. Where appropriate, conditions will be used to ensure that potential detrimental impacts would be controlled (for example, by the restriction of operating hours to avoid disturbance to neighbours either late at night or very early morning, limiting the level and type of traffic movements to that appropriate to the highway network, controlling the level of external lighting where this would adversely impact on local character) and to ensure that permitted development rights could not be used to result in inappropriate development that would not otherwise have been allowed.

3.3.9. Given the following is a generic policy, matters such as flood risk will be considered in line with the relevant Local Plan and national policy.

### **Policy QC5. Business & Employment**

**Proposals for the extension or alteration of existing business premises (including local services and facilities), and the provision of new small scale business premises, will be supported provided:**



- a) The site is well-related to the village or to an existing business premises, or the proposed business would re-use an existing building that has a good connection to the highway network;**
- b) Any previously developed land related to the site is used in preference to development of greenfield land;**
- c) There would be no adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the area, or on environmental or heritage designations, arising from the proposed use, design, parking and storage requirements, signage and lighting;**
- d) The proposed use will not be detrimental to local residential amenities or other neighbouring uses through noise, odours, traffic movements or other disturbance;**
- e) development is designed to reduce and manage the impact of flood risk, in line with the relevant policy EQ1 of the Local Plan and national policy on flood risk.**

### **3.4. Community Services and Facilities**

3.4.1. The village has a modest range of community assets that provide services and facilities used and valued by the community:

- Mildmay Arms public house
- Car park opposite the Mildmay Arms public house (used in association with the Church, Pub and Old School Site)
- Supply Stores and Post Office
- Countess Gytha Primary School
- The 'Old School Site'
- Memorial Hall
- Medical Centre
- St Barnabas Church (the churchyard is proposed for protection as a Local Green Space – see Policy QC12)
- The Allotments (currently associated with the church - these may need to be relocated at some point in the future when the existing site is needed for use as a burial ground, but it is not anticipated that this need will arise during the lifetime of this Plan).
- The Sports Pavilion and Playing Field (proposed for protection as a Local Green Space – see Policy QC12)
- Bowling Green and Clubhouse



– Tennis Courts

3.4.2. Where appropriate, community assets can be protected by registering them as Assets of Community Value (ACV). Similarly, outdoor recreation areas can be protected as Local Green Spaces provided they meet the criteria stipulated in national policy. The pub was registered as an ACV by the Community Land Trust when the pub's future was in doubt, before its purchase by the current owner. The 'Old School Site' was registered as an ACV by the Parish Council in August 2016. The Playing Field is identified as appropriate for designation as a Local Green Space. Retaining all these assets will be crucial if the community is to continue to thrive.

3.4.3. Surveys of residents and also a Technical Assessment of Community Facilities by SSDC (2014) have both concluded that there is a lack of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, for both young people and also for the older generation. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a well-maintained Playing Field it is generally considered to be very much under-used by the local community and this is probably because it lacks facilities. Requests for improvements include a youth shelter, facilities for youth and running circuit, better changing and shower facilities and a new pavilion/club house or an integral community centre that meets the needs of the community and adjoining parishes that may use its facilities.

3.4.4. Currently, there is no venue dedicated for indoor sports or one big enough for gatherings in excess of 120 apart from the church (which has mainly fixed pew seating and was originally stated as having 'sittings for 320 persons'). The Memorial Hall provides a venue for various clubs and activities such as Pilates, karate and table tennis. The new school includes a hall (10m x 16m) and some associated facilities (toilets, kitchen etc.) that were designed to allow for community use when not required by the school.

3.4.5. Service providers operating in the area were contacted in 2017 to get their views on the possible impact of further development in the parish. A number recognized that an increase in population would support the viability of their services. The main potential impact of increased housing noted was on the provision of recreation, with the tennis club and Playing Field suggesting that they may need to invest in improving and extending their facilities to cater for additional demand. Whilst the school is near or at capacity, in response to the Community Facilities survey undertaken as part of this Plan's preparation, the Head indicated that any additional classrooms that may be required can be built within its curtilage, and also confirmed that a swimming pool is no longer an aspiration.

### Policy Intention

3.4.6. To retain and support the improvement and viability of the community assets that provide services and facilities used by the community.

3.4.7. A number of community PROJECTS are being progressed, that may help deliver some of the improvements suggested:

1. **Old School Site project:** the Community Land Trust has acquired the old school site and planning permission has been granted for its use as a 'Community Enterprise and Education Centre' that would include uses such as start-up artisan-type businesses that will provide learning opportunities; office/archive facilities; health & wellbeing, potentially incorporating a café; a sensory garden; and car parking.
2. **Playing Field's project:** the Playing Field Committee is planning in the short-term to upgrade the play area and provide a shelter and equipment for youth and in the longer term, and in conjunction with the Parish Council, to extend the field to create space for a new pavilion and car park.

## **Policy QC6. Community Facilities**

**Development proposals to improve the provision of community facilities and services (including those listed below) in a manner in keeping with the character of the area will be supported.**

- **Mildmay Arms public house**
- **Car park opposite the Mildmay Arms public house**
- **Supply Stores and Post Office**
- **Countess Gytha Primary School**
- **The 'Old School Site' as a community enterprise and education centre**
- **Memorial Hall**
- **Medical Centre**
- **St Barnabas Church and burial grounds**
- **The allotments**
- **The Pavilion associated with the Playing Field**
- **Bowling Green and Clubhouse**
- **Tennis Courts**

**Every effort should be made to work with the local community and relevant authorities to investigate potential solutions to avoid the loss of community services and facilities, including the provision of an alternative facility of equal value and accessibility for community use.**

3.4.8. Policy QC3 deals with the provision of extension to the Playing Field and is likely to provide a suitable site for a replacement Sports Pavilion and parking, subject to avoiding areas which are of high archaeological interest.

### **3.5. Getting About**

3.5.1. Resolving the problems of getting about safely in Queen Camel and to and from adjacent parishes is a high priority for local residents.

#### ***Road Safety***

3.5.2. The volume of heavy agricultural and goods vehicles passing along the High Street is a cause of great concern (reference Traffic Audit Reports of May 2017 and May 2019, which recorded a total vehicle count over a 12-hour period of 6,846 on 11 May 2017, and a further increase in 2019). The A359 between Sparkford and Yeovil is subject to a weight limit of 7.5 tonnes but there is an exemption for commercial vehicles serving local farms and businesses (including Perry's Recycling at Marston Magna and Hopkins off Sutton Montis Road) and this makes policing the weight limit more difficult.

3.5.3. Another major concern is the number of vehicles thought to be exceeding the 30-mph limit through the village. Residents consider the number, size and speed of vehicles passing along the High Street such a hazard, to cyclists and horse-riders as well as to pedestrians, that they fear crossing the road.

3.5.4. A traffic-calming scheme operates along the High Street with the road narrowing to a single lane in three places: on the bridge over the River Cam and at two specially constructed 'pinch points'. These may help to slow the traffic but they also create their own hazards. Some motorists try to beat oncoming traffic to the gap, resulting in intermittent confrontation, angry exchanges, near misses and log jams particularly at the southernmost pinch point (opposite the Memorial Hall) because of the adjacent bus stop and road junction with Cleaveside Close.

3.5.5. The Community Plan of 2005 had suggested the removal of the pinch points in the High Street, with the idea that these should be replaced by chevrons, flashing speed signs or a camera. This and alternative options were tested through the Neighbourhood Plan options consultation in late 2017, with respondents asked to select the options that best reflected their opinion at this time. The most popular idea was the extension of the 20mph limit. Retaining the pinch points and installing flashing speed signs were also supported. There were a significant number of comments and alternative suggestions, particularly relating to better enforcement (in relation to HGVs and cars parking on pavement).

#### **Policy Intention**

3.5.6. Improvements to traffic-calming measures on the High Street do not need to be included in a policy given that they will not require planning consent but are instead noted as a PROJECT that will be pursued by the Parish Council working with

the County Council as the Highways Authority. Contributions may be sought towards this project to mitigate adverse impact on traffic and highway safety within the village.

### **Policy QC7. Road Infrastructure Improvements**

**Where development could have an adverse impact on traffic and highway safety within the village, planning obligations (as financial contributions) may be sought to secure traffic-calming measures in order to mitigate this impact.**

#### ***Footways, Public Footpaths and Bridleways***

3.5.7. The Community Plan of 2005 cited a key need as the 'resolution of access problems throughout the Parish for those with special needs'.



3.5.8. One particular problem area is at the southern end of the High Street, opposite the Iron Box. The narrow nature of the carriageway, the sharp bend and restricted visibility on the corner means that long vehicles and HGVs travelling north have to hug the inside corner, often with wing mirrors overhanging the pavement which is particularly narrow at this point (at just 86cm whereas the generally accepted minimum width for such footways is 1.8m). This footway provides the main pedestrian access from the village to the school and Medical Centre south of the village. Although the public right of way (WN23/29) across the 'Medical Centre' field to the link into The Glebe has been surfaced to provide an all-weather alternative, it is a footpath (and therefore not for use by cyclists) and a gate has been installed between the field and Playing Field which cannot easily be operated by all users.

3.5.9. Similarly, stiles and kissing-gates on some of the most popular footpaths effectively exclude many of those with mobility problems.

3.5.10. Residents have also called for lighting on the footpath between The Glebe and England's Lane (WN23/4) and between England's Lane and the Playing Field/Tennis Courts.

3.5.11. There are effectively no bridle or cycle paths within the Parish but there are some 50 horses and ponies belonging to residents and many children attending Countess Gytha school live within easy cycling distance and should also be encouraged to cycle as a leisure pursuit. However high traffic speeds and narrow carriageways on the A359 and minor roads make them particularly hazardous for both horse riders and cyclists.

3.5.12. A project to develop safe off-road routes has been identified through this Plan. This looks at the feasibility of providing bridle or cycle paths between Queen Camel and West Camel and Queen Camel and Marston Magna, and upgrading footpaths to make them accessible for all.

### **Policy Intention**

3.5.13. To improve the attractiveness and safety of footpaths and create some cycle or bridleways within the parish, particularly key routes linking the main areas of settlements and community facilities.

3.5.14. The main focus in the short-term is:

- improving the off-road links from Queen Camel to West Camel and between Traits Lane to Gason Lane,
- the replacement of gates and stiles that are not easily used by people with mobility limitations, and
- the installation of low-level lighting on the main off-road pedestrian route between the Glebe and Englands Lane (WN23/4).
- The installation of lighting between England's Lane and Playing Field/Tennis Courts.

3.5.15. Improving the off-road links to Marston Magna is also seen as a priority. Further details will come forward as a PROJECT, as these are worked up in consultation with the various landowners.

3.5.16. Improvements to existing Public Rights of Way do not need to be included in a policy given that they will not require planning consent but are instead noted as PROJECTS that will be pursued by the Parish Council working with the County Council as the Highways Authority. Contributions may be sought towards these projects



where developments would result in increased use of these routes, insofar as this may be necessary to make the development acceptable.

### **Policy QC8. Improving Public Footpaths and creating Cycle Paths/ Bridleways**

**Developments will be expected to protect the network of existing Public Rights of Way in the Parish (see Fig 4).**

**The enhancement of existing and provision of new safe walking, cycling and bridleway connections will be supported, including making routes accessible to those with special access needs and the provision of low level lighting.**

**Planning obligations (as financial contributions) may be sought to secure improvements to the rights of way network to provide safer access into the village for all users, where the location and level of trips generated justifies the need for mitigation.**

### ***Parking***

3.5.17. There are a number of areas where parking is a significant problem. These include the High Street, Playing Field and adjacent Bowls and Tennis Clubs, as well as West Camel Road where the increased school staffing and volunteer levels and parents dropping and picking up children has put further pressure on parking.

3.5.18. The 2017 options consultation investigated whether the parking problems are potentially exacerbated by insufficient residential parking spaces. Of those that participated in the survey, nearly all (96%) considered that the amount of parking spaces available at their home was adequate. The data showed quite clearly that, of those responding, the number of cars was equivalent to the number of adults living in the house. Given the occupancy levels recorded in the 2011 Census, this would suggest that on average any development should seek to provide the equivalent of 2.2 car parking spaces per dwelling.

3.5.19. The County Council's parking standards (adopted 2013) require 2 parking spaces for 1- bedroom dwellings, 2.5 spaces for 2-bedroom dwellings, 3 spaces for 3-bedroom dwellings, and 3.5 spaces for 4-bedroom dwellings unless a lower level can be justified. The above analysis would suggest that these should be required, and that a lower level of provision is unlikely to be justified. In addition, consideration does need to be given to the inclusion of sufficient car charging points to ensure that these will be available for both occupants and visitors.

## Policy Intention

3.5.20. Although the Plan cannot necessarily resolve existing problems, it can encourage the efficient use of existing parking (including shared arrangements), and the provision of sufficient parking in future developments.

3.5.21. The redevelopment of the Old School Site may provide an opportunity to secure parking for the church when not required by the site users. Making the car parking area at the school accessible by arrangement for public parking out-of-school hours would also provide additional parking for events on the Playing Field, if these cannot be provided on-site. The parking at the Memorial Hall and the parking area opposite the Mildmay Arms have historically provided much-needed spaces for visitors.

## Policy QC9. Parking

**The loss of parking will be resisted (even if the parking area is no longer in the same ownership or has been physically separated from the use it has served).**

**The layout of development sites to include opportunities for shared parking areas will be encouraged. Car charging points should be clearly shown on site layout plans in relation to the parking areas, to demonstrate provision will be feasible for both occupants and visitors**

## Streetscape

3.5.22. Many years ago, overhead cables in the south/west of the village were put underground but the funding did not extend to the overhead cables in the north/east. In 2012 the Parish Council commissioned a review of unnecessary signs and poles. This was updated in 2018 (see Appendix 4). It shows that some poles have been removed (by the local Environment Group) but few if any of the obsolete signs have been removed despite past commitments by Highways. It is important that any developments avoid unnecessary signage and clutter in the street scene.



## Policy Intention

3.5.23. Although aspects such as the installation or replacement of electric and telecommunication lines can generally be undertaken under permitted development rights, the Parish Council would encourage consideration that these are placed underground with suitable provision made for ease of maintenance, as the proliferation of poles and cables can easily detract from the street scene.

## Policy QC10.Streetscape

**Proposals to reduce and remove the clutter of signage, cables and other visible infrastructure out of keeping with the rural and historic character of Queen Camel, including the undergrounding of utility cables, will be supported.**

3.5.24. The Parish Council will continue to liaise with the County Council as the Highways Authority to remove street clutter as a PROJECT.

## 3.6. Environment


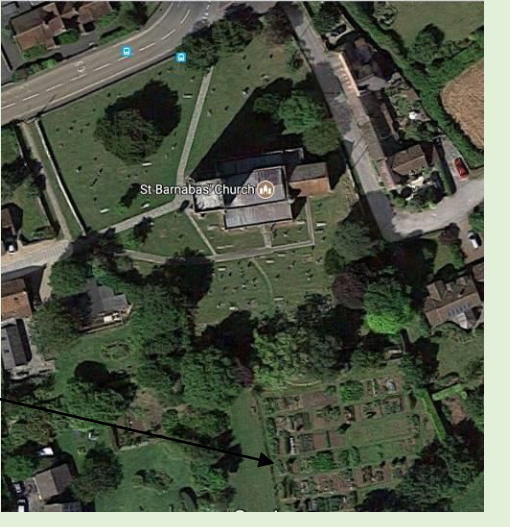


3.6.1. Queen Camel lies within the Yeovil Scarplands landscape. This is described as having a rural character, despite being crossed by the busy A303. The land is primarily in agricultural use, with arable predominating on the good, fertile soils. Other landscape attributes include small woods, copses and scrub are typically found on the steep ridges. Willow pollards and alder line many stream sides, particularly in the vales. Hedgerows are thick, some with substantial hedge banks, and can include veteran or ancient, hedgerow trees.

3.6.2. The adopted Local Plan policies require that all proposals for development will incorporate beneficial biodiversity conservation features where appropriate. This reflect national policy and in many cases a biodiversity mitigation and enhancement plan will be required to accompany planning applications, particularly greenfield sites and in other locations where protected species or important wildlife habitats may be present. As this is already covered in the Local Plan, there is no need to suplicate such a policy in this plan.



### ***Important Local Green Spaces, Woodlands and Key Views***

3.6.3. There is a strong desire to preserve existing publicly accessible green spaces within and close to the village. Within the village, the local green spaces that are particularly valued by the community are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Important Local Green Spaces**

Green Space	Reasons for designation	
<b>LGS1 - the Playing Field</b>	A 6-acre Playing Field, valued for its recreational value and accessibility to all. It includes an equipped children's play area, two football pitches, a cricket square and a basketball court.	
<b>LGS2 - the Churchyard</b>	<p>Of historical significance, providing the setting of the Grade I Listed church, as well as being the burial ground for villagers and place of quiet contemplation.</p> <p>The area currently used as allotments is included.</p>	
<b>LGS3 – Roman Way Open Space</b>	A small area of informal recreational community space.	
<b>LGS4 – The Iron Box</b>	The Iron Box and its set of stone steps is a historical green triangle and local landmark in the village.	



<b>LGS5 – Ridge Copse</b>	Ridge Copse is a woodland area easily reached from the village via footpaths providing a popular walking area where the richness of wildlife and flora can be enjoyed, and where scouts and other young people enjoy outdoor activities	
<b>LGS6 – The Glebe open spaces</b>	Used by individual residents for relaxation and by the village for some community events like Jubilee tea parties, outdoor services.	

## Policy QC11. Local Green Spaces

The following areas (as shown on Fig 10) are designated as Local Green Spaces, and should be managed in a manner compatible with their designation:

- **LGS1 - The Playing Field**
- **LGS2 - The churchyard**
- **LGS3 - The community space adjacent to Roman Way**
- **LGS4 - The Iron Box**
- **LGS5 - Ridge Copse**
- **LGS6 - The open green spaces within The Glebe.**

3.6.4. The corridor of the river Cam that flows along the northern edge of the village is another feature that is of particular local value.

Although not publicly accessible along its entire length, views of the corridor and its wooded edge are enjoyed from the Leland trail and footpath that leads up to Sparkford Copse.



3.6.5. Views of the vale are also enjoyed from the top of Gason Lane (Fig 9A) and from Sparkford Copse (Fig 9B), both looking across the village surrounded by open



countryside, as well as from the Bridge upwards to Sparkford Copse. Appendix 5 provides an assessment of these views.



**Fig 9A – Wide view of village from top of Gason Lane**



**Fig 9B - Wide view of village from Sparkford Copse**



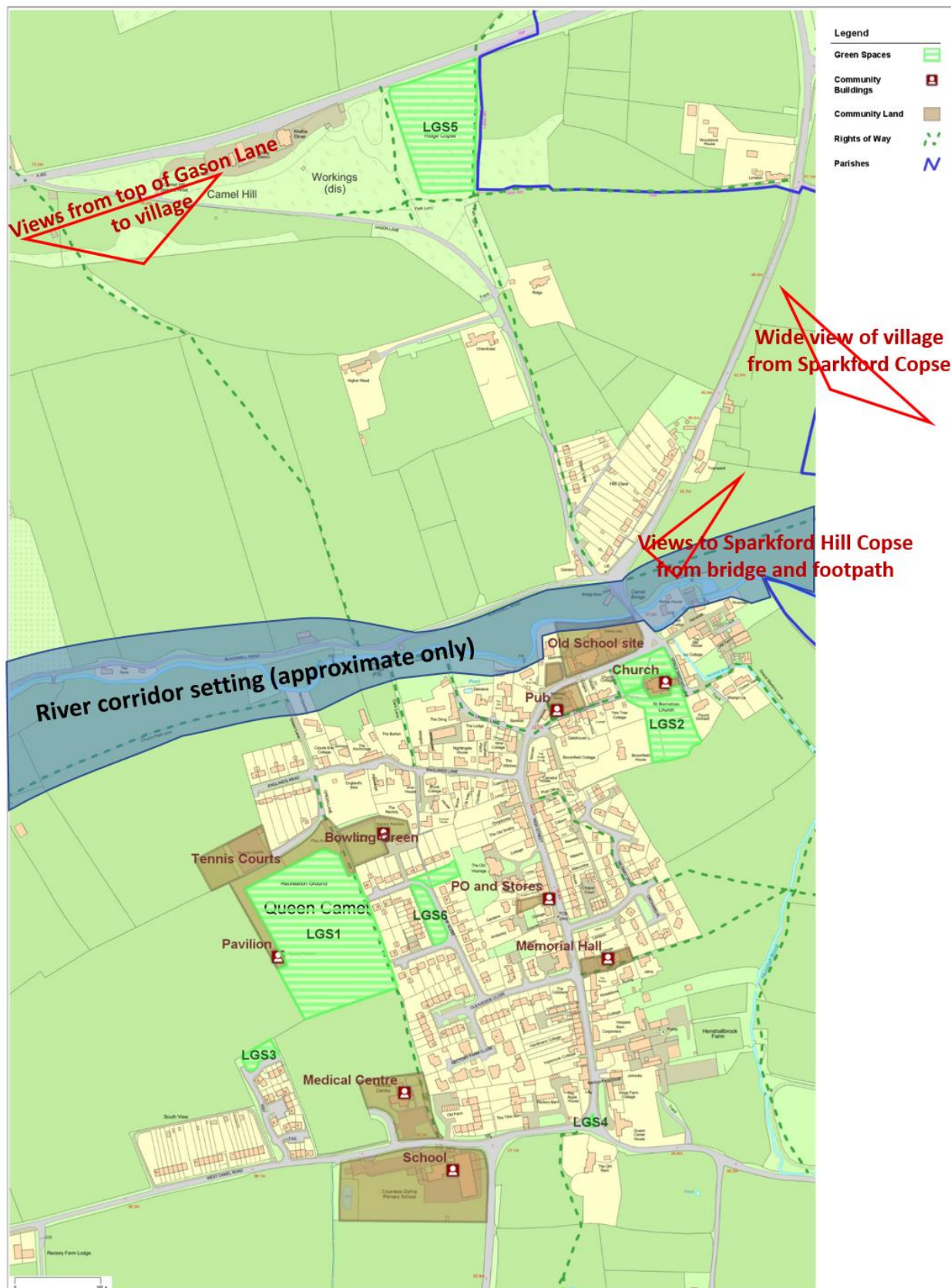
**Fig 9C – View from Bridge upwards to Sparkford Copse**

### **Policy Intention**

3.6.6. To protect the rural character of the village and to provide places where residents can individually and together enjoy outdoor recreation opportunities, enjoy the beauty of the countryside nature, and its wildlife and tranquility.

### **Policy QC12. The Rural Setting of the village and Key Views**

**Development should be sensitive to the rural setting of the village, including the river corridor and views towards and from the wooded hillsides – most notably Sparkford Hill Copse and Ridge Copse (including views from the top of Gason Lane).**



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**Fig 10 - Map showing Local Green Spaces, Key Views and Community Facilities**  
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### **3.7. Our Heritage - historic buildings, archaeology and other features**

3.7.1. The Plan area is rich in earthwork remains, including medieval settlements, Roman villas and prehistoric forts, settlements and ritual sites. Much of the village is designated as a Conservation Area and includes many Listed Buildings and other features of local historic interest. For these reasons, heritage is at the heart of village and community. It is therefore vital that the characteristics and historic features of the village are understood, preserved and protected. Protection and enhancement of our heritage must be taken into consideration when planning and designing new developments.

#### ***Buildings and Features of Local Historic Interest***

3.7.2. There are a large number of buildings and other build features listed by Historic England. These are listed in Appendix 1 and their location is shown on Figs 5A & 5B in Section 1.

3.7.3. There are also heritage assets and features of local historic, architectural and visual interest that contribute to the local distinctiveness and character of Queen Camel. In the absence of a Conservation Area Appraisal or Local List, the Plan has taken the opportunity to identify a number of these, as listed in Table 4 and shown on Fig 11. Local listing, and any potential changes to the Conservation Area boundary, are a matter for the Local Planning Authority to consider and cannot be carried out through the Plan. However, the Parish Council would wish to support the Local Planning Authority in appraising the Conservation Area, with the aim of ensuring that significant features noted in this Plan are given suitable protection, and this is therefore identified as a PROJECT.

3.7.4. The community has a responsibility to ensure that the heritage of the Parish is retained and preserved for future generations. This applies to both features in the public domain, and those in private ownership.

#### **Policy Intention**

3.7.5. Buildings and features not listed but of local historic and architectural and visual interest should be preserved and protected from inappropriate development. Opportunities should be taken to restore features that are falling into disrepair, and to enhance their setting.

3.7.6. The preservation and restoration of buildings and features of Local Historic Interest in the public domain (or via agreement with the appropriate landowner) is identified as a PROJECT.



## **Policy QC13.Conserving and enhancing local heritage assets**

**Development proposals should avoid harm to buildings and features of Local Historic Interest (as listed in Table 4 and shown on Fig 11) and their settings. The proposals should:**

- **have regard to the contribution the asset makes to the historic and architectural character of the area;**
- **consider the potential to avoid harm, e.g. through changes to the scheme design.**

**The decision maker should also take into account the likely public benefits of the proposed development.**

**Proposals to restore, preserve and enhance buildings and features of Local Historic Interest are encouraged and should be supported.**



**Table 4: Buildings and Features of Local Historic Interest**

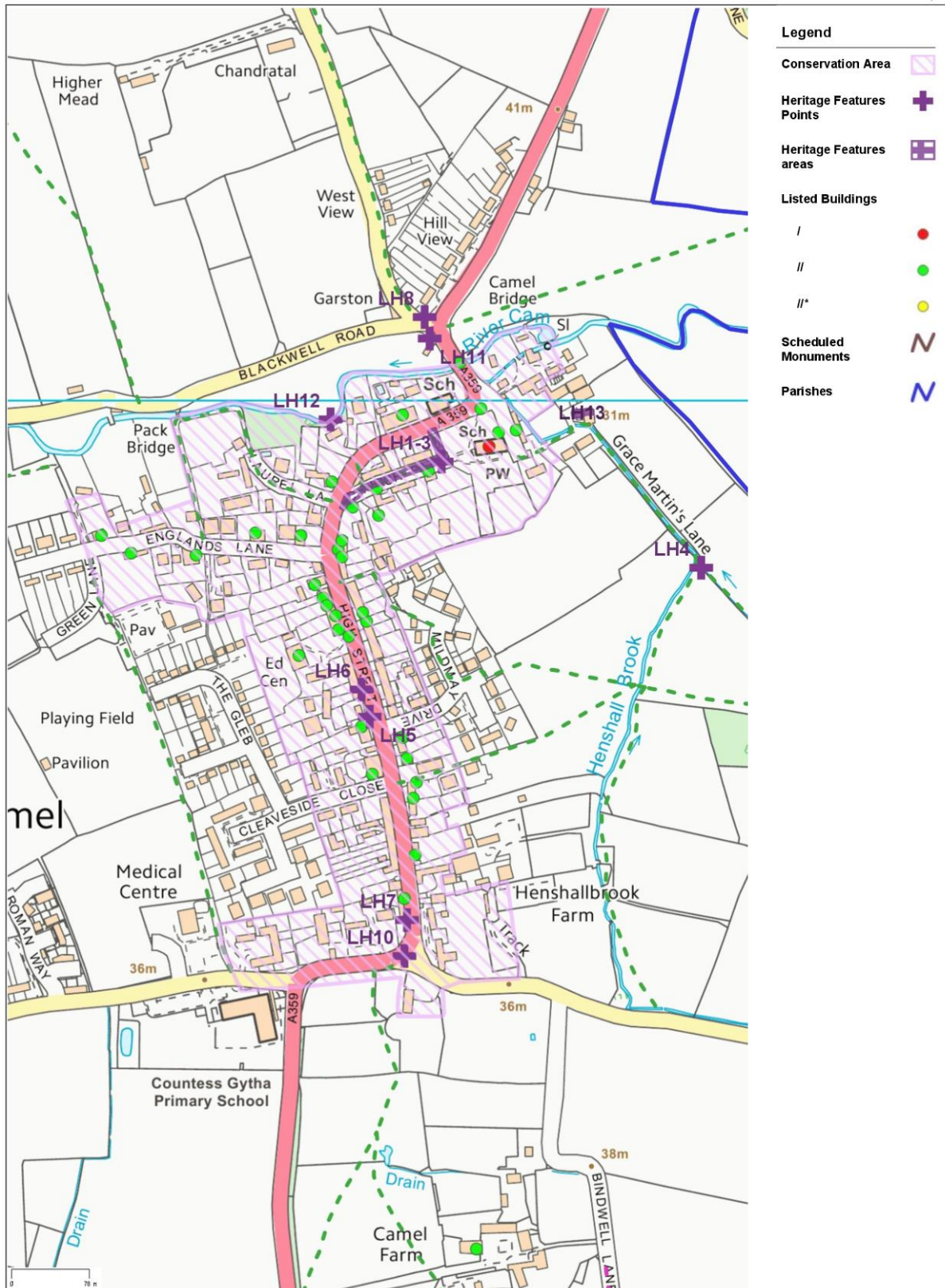
Ref	Description	
LH 01	<p><b>The cobbled pathway (Church Path) – North-South</b></p> <p>Church Path connected East (now Queen) Camel and West Camel parish churches (part of the public footpath to West Camel is called Church Path).</p> <p>The easternmost section of Church Path, the cobbled pathway (LH01), would have been heavily trafficked with many people going to church and to the Manor House (which lay beyond the church to the east) so it may then have been paved with the cobbles. It was also thought to have been the main thoroughfare until what became the High Street was extended to Camel Bridge, possibly at the time the Victorian Schoolhouse was built (which may also have been when the north-south path LH01 was made).</p>	
LH 02	<p><b>The cobbled pathway (Church Path) – East-West</b></p> <p>The cobbles along east-west were re-laid in 1986 under the sponsorship of the County Council. The funding was raised through the 'sale' of cobbles for which certificates were issued.</p>	
LH 03	<p><b>The Standpipe in Church Path</b></p> <p>Standpipes were all over the village at one time, probably until the 1920/30s, but this is believed to be the last one remaining.</p>	



<p><b>LH 04</b></p>	<p><b>Stone Stile on footpath to Windsor Farm</b></p> <p>Using blue lias flagstones set vertically was a traditional way of allowing pedestrian access to footpaths but preventing vehicles accessing them.</p>	
<p><b>LH 05</b></p>	<p><b>Telephone Box, High Street</b></p> <p>The village's red telephone box is of a typical design for public telephones in the UK designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in the 1920s with the Queen Camel one being a modified design (the K6) produced from 1935. The Parish Council bought the telephone box in 2013 when it became redundant with British Telecom. It is now used as a charity collection point.</p>	
<p><b>LH 06</b></p>	<p><b>Royal Mail Pillar-box (outside the Supply Stores)</b></p> <p>There are a variety of post boxes showing their evolution from the c19 onwards, with minor changes in design have been made over the years. In the 1950's there was much complaint about the small posting apertures of the smaller wall boxes, as a result some were modified and received a wider slot.</p>	
<p><b>LH 07 - south and LH 08 - north</b></p>	<p><b>Royal Mail Post-boxes</b></p> <p>Roadside wall boxes first appeared in 1857 as a cheaper alternative to pillar boxes, especially in rural districts. These first boxes were manufactured by Smith &amp; Hawkes. Minor changes in design have been made over the years but essentially today's wall boxes are little different to those of the 1930s.</p>	

<p><b>LH 09</b></p>	<p><b>Flagstones at entrance to houses</b> (particularly on High St)</p> <p>Blue lias flagstones were used both internally for flooring and externally for door steps and paths in the older properties.</p>	
<p><b>LH 10-11</b></p>	<p><b>Finger Signposts</b> (on the Iron Box and at Blackwell Road) In the 1960s, councils were advised to remove all fingerposts and replace them with 'modern' standardised road signs which can now be found all over the country. This advice was ignored in Somerset and the result is that Somerset still has a wonderful back catalogue of fingerposts....which are still in danger of disappearing as lack of preservation and restoration take their toll.</p>	
<p><b>LH 12</b></p>	<p><b>Sheep Bridge over River Cam</b></p> <p>The bridge, which was of traditional construction, allowed sheep to graze on either side of the river.</p>	
<p><b>LH 13</b></p>	<p><b>Remains of one of the oldest cottages in the village</b> (by the wooden bridge over Henshallbrook in Grace Martin's Lane).</p> <p>There were many old cottages dotted around the village. These are some of the last ones not to be restored and enlarged.</p>	





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**Fig 11 - Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and Features of Local Historic Interest**

## **Archaeology**

3.7.7. The parish has a rich archaeological heritage of which it should be proud. The archaeology ranges from Iron Age settlement to WWII observation posts. Some sites are designated assets (for example the Scheduled Monument, the Iron Age and Romano-British settlement at Camel Hill) but most are non-designated and are recorded on the Somerset Historic Environment Record. These are listed in Appendix 2 and their location is shown on Fig. 6 in Section 1, together with the Area of High Archaeological Potential which is also identified in the Local Plan.

3.7.8. These heritage assets can provide enjoyment, education and a sense of place. The archaeological assets in the parish are unique and irreplaceable and therefore deserve appropriate management and protection to ensure their preservation, wherever possible. There are likely to be many more sites yet to be identified some of which may be of very high significance. The discovery of a nationally significant Roman villa demonstrates that the archaeological assessment of potential development sites is an important consideration.

### **Policy Intention**

3.7.9. The archaeological resources in Queen Camel will be properly conserved and managed in a way that increased our understanding of the rich history of the area. Due to the extensive areas of potential archaeological interest, it is suggested that an archaeological evaluation should be carried out for any greenfield site where building works are proposed. Not all sites will necessarily need full archaeological investigation and that the scope of the assessment will depend on the development proposed and the particulars of the site and could range from a desk exercise, indicating no archaeological interest, to detailed investigations and evaluation.

3.7.10. The potential for the future heritage interpretation of the Roman Villa site is allowed for in Policy QC3. This is likely to require significant resources and its feasibility is therefore highlighted as a PROJECT.

### **Policy QC14. Archaeology**

**Archaeological assessment shall be required for sites prior to the determination of a planning application, unless previously assessed.**

**Appropriate mitigation will be required to ensure preservation in-situ or recording of the asset prior to development. Proposals to manage sensitively archaeological finds for education (including as a visitor / tourist attraction) will be supported.**

### **3.8. Community Consultation**

3.8.1. Developers are strongly encouraged to consult local communities about developments before a planning application is submitted. Pre-application consultation can potentially lead to greater efficiency in project design, with earlier identification of issues of local concern and community aspirations. Consultation immediately prior to the submission of a planning application is unlikely to be able to influence the design at such a late stage in the process.

3.8.2. This is particularly important for significant development, which would include residential development over three dwellings and non-residential development of 100m<sup>2</sup> or more.

#### **Policy Intention**

3.8.3. That the community is involved and has influence over significant development proposals in the parish. This involvement should start before detailed plans are drawn up, in order that community views and aspirations can be incorporated at an early stage in a development proposal.

#### **Policy QC15. Community Consultation**

**Applicants proposing significant development are encouraged to undertake consultation with the local community in Queen Camel at an early stage in drawing up planning applications. Prospective applicants should ensure that sufficient publicity and notice is given and that efforts are made to include all sections of the community.**



## 4. PROJECTS

4.1.1. This Section sets out the PROJECTS that have been identified in Section 3. Further work will be required by the Parish Council and other organisations to take these projects forward. Financial contributions that are generated as a result of any developments within the Plan should be used towards the delivery of the projects.

	PROJECTS	Description and Project Lead
3.3	<b>Community Service and Facilities</b>	
	Development of the Playing Field Policies QC3 & 6 relate	<p><i>Project 1 – short term (within 12 months of this Plan):</i> upgrade of play area, provision of shelter and equipment for youth, feasibility study on expanding area adjacent to the Bowls Club for additional car parking.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> Playing Field Committee</p>
		<p><i>Project 2 – longer term (within the period of Plan):</i> provision of a new pavilion, additional car parking and a trim trail and outdoor gym.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> Parish Council working with the Playing Field Committee.</p>
3.4	<b>Getting About</b>	
	3.4.1 Road Safety - Traffic Calming Measures Policy QC7	<p><i>Project – short term (within 12 months of this Plan):</i> Extension of 20 mph limit throughout the High Street and along the West Camel Road, with consideration of flashing speed signs.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council working with the County Council.</p>
	3.4.2 Footways, Public Footpaths, and Bridleways: Policy QC8	<p><i>Project 1 – short term (within 12 months of this Plan):</i> Replacement of gates and stiles within the Parish boundary that are not easily used by people with mobility limitations. A phased programme to be prepared by the Parish Council's Footpath Warden in conjunction with the County Council's designated Officer.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council working with the County Council and respective land owners.</p>
		<p><i>Project 2 – medium term (by 2025):</i> Provision of low level lighting on the pedestrian route between the Glebe and England's Lane (WN23/4).</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council working with SCC.</p>
		<p><i>Project 3 – longer term (within the period of Plan):</i> Provision of lighting on the lane and link between England's Lane and the Playing Field/Tennis Courts.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council working with SCC.</p>

	PROJECTS	Description and Project Lead
		<p><i>Project 4 – medium / longer term:</i> Provision of a cycle path between West Camel and Queen Camel, wherever feasible by upgrading footpaths. <i>A proposal identifying route, funding and delivery to be prepared by 2022</i></p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council working with the Parish Council of West Camel and respective landowners.</p>
		<p><i>Project 5 – in step with the A303 dualling:</i> Provision of a bridleway by repositioning and upgrading the footpath between Traits Lane and Gason Lane during the dualling of the A303.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council previously in conjunction with the MOD and now with Highway's England as this has become entangled with the A303 dualling.</p>
		<p><i>Project 6 – medium / longer term:</i> Provision of a bridleway between Queen Camel and Marston Magna within the timeframe of the Plan. <i>A proposal identifying route, funding and delivery to be prepared by 2022</i></p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council working with the Parish Council of Marston Magna, the County Council's Highway's department, the District Council and respective landowners.</p>
	3.4.4. De-cluttering of street signs.	<p><i>Project – short term (within 12 months of this Plan):</i> Removal of obsolete street signs and redundant poles during 2019.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council will liaise with the County Council as the Highways Authority.</p>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Our Heritage</b>	
	3.6.1 – Protection of heritage assets and features	<p><i>Project 1 – short term (within 12 months of this Plan):</i> A Conservation Area appraisal. This to include consideration of listing on the Local Heritage List the heritage assets and features noted in Table 4 to ensure that such heritage items are given suitable protection.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council through a community led group with support from the District Council.</p>
	Preservation, restoration and enhancement of buildings and features of local historic interest. Policy QC13	<p><i>Project 2 – short term (within 12 months of this Plan):</i> A proposal with costs and timescales to be prepared for the preservation and restoration, and where appropriate the enhancement, of buildings and features of local historic interest in the public domain as described in Table 4.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council, possibly through a Parish Group, and in conjunction with relevant landowners.</p>
	3.6.2 – Archaeology – Roman Villa Policy QC14	<p><i>Project – longer term (within the period of Plan):</i> The future interpretation of the Roman Villa – development as a community education and tourist attraction. A proposal with feasibility study to be considered during the period of this Plan.</p> <p><i>Project Lead:</i> The Parish Council or the Community Land Trust - or another organization with similar objectives.</p>

## APPENDIX 1: Glossary of Definitions & Terms

**Affordable Housing** (as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019) means housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

- **Affordable housing for rent:** meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).
- **Starter homes:** is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.
- **Discounted market sales housing:** is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.
- **Other affordable routes to home ownership:** is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.
- Homes that do not meet the above definition of Affordable Housing, may not be considered as Affordable Housing for planning purposes.

### **Allocation Cascade for Rented or Shared Ownership Affordable Housing:**

- First: an Eligible Person with a Local Connection with the principal area, and for rented housing to be in the order of local authority category gold, then silver, then bronze.
- Second: an Eligible Person with a Local Connection with the second area, and for rented housing to be in the order of local authority category gold, then silver, then bronze.
- Third: an Eligible Person with a Local Connection with the third area, and for

rented housing to be in the order of local authority category gold, then silver, then bronze.

**Defined Area** in respect of Affordable Housing means:

Principal Area: Parish of Queen Camel

Second Area: Parishes including their hamlets that abut Queen Camel, namely: Babcary, South Barrow, Sparkford, South Cadbury & Sutton Montis, Marston Magna, West Camel.

Third Area: Parishes in Somerset that abut the Second Parishes (excepting Mudford and Castle Cary in respect of persons in housing need but not anyone with a Local Connection), namely Charlton Mackrell, Keinton Mandeville, Lydford-on-Fosse, Lovington, North Barrow, North Cadbury, Compton Paunceford, Charlton Horethorne, Corton Denham, Rimpton, Chilton Cantelo, Ilchester, and the village of Yeovilton and its hamlets.

**Eligible Person** means: a person or persons aged 18 or over who has a Local Connection and is unable to secure or sustain permanent accommodation suitable for their needs in the open housing market within the Defined Area.

**Local Connection** means:

- 1 Residence in the Defined Area for periods totalling at least three of the last ten years, excluding residence in a hospital, care home, holiday let or prison; OR
- 2 Permanent employment or a permanent workplace within the Defined Area for at least three years of the last ten with a minimum of sixteen working hours per week; OR
- 3 A close relative (parent sibling or other dependent relative requiring care and support) living in the Defined Area and who has done so throughout the whole of the past five years; OR
- 4 Such other special circumstance which the Registered Provider, the CLT and the Council (each acting reasonably and properly) agree create a significant connection to the Principal Area such agreement to be documented in writing.

**Other Definitions:**

The Parish of Queen Camel embraces:

- the village of Queen Camel,
- the hamlet of Wales, which lies about half a mile to the west of the village,
- Lambrook Farm and Cottages to the south,
- Windsor Farm to the south-west, beyond the railway line,
- part of Sparkford Hill, and
- land to the north of the A303 (approximately 50% of the Parish by land area), which includes the major settlement of Hazlegrove House now housing Hazlegrove School (the preparatory school for Kings School, Bruton), Camel Hill House and Farm, Vale Farm and further north, on the road to Babcary, Fortyacres Farm.

The Plan means the Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2034

SCC means Somerset County Council

SSDC means South Somerset District Council



APPENDIX 2:  
Buildings and Features Listed by Historic England

Map Ref.	Name	Grade	List Date	Grid Reference
1	BANKSIA AND FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS	II	24/03/1961	ST 59578 24918
2	BARN ABOUT 10 METRES SOUTH WEST OF WALES FARMHOUSE	II	24/03/1961	ST 58429 24631
3	BOUNDARY WALLS TO NORTH AND WEST OF MORVEN, AND FRONT GATES AND RAILINGS	II	24/03/1961	ST 59599 24892
4	CABURN	II	06/03/1986	ST 59609 24786
5	CAMEL BRIDGE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59707 25038
6	CAMEL FARM COTTAGE	II	24/03/1961	ST 59729 24099
7	CAMEL FARMHOUSE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59724 24145
8	CAMELOT	II	24/03/1961	ST 59588 24842
9	CARPENTERS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59662 24542
10	CHURCH OF ST BARNABAS	I	24/03/1961	ST 59737 24953
11	CLOUDS END COTTAGE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59346 24864
12	COTTAGE ATTACHED TO SOUTH OF JESSAMINE COTTAGE, WITH FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59585 24769
13	COUNTESS GWYTHA COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL (ORIGINAL BUILDING ONLY) WITH SOUTH BOUNDARY WALL AND RAILINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59649 24985
14	EAST BOUNDARY WALL AND GATEWAY ABOUT 15 METRES EAST OF EYEWELL HOUSE	II	06/03/1986	ST 58768 25295
15	EAST BOUNDARY WALL AND GATEWAY ABOUT 45 METRES EAST OF THE OLD VICARAGE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59595 24762
16	ENGLANDS SIDE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59376 24846
17	EYEWELL HOUSE	II	09/03/1982	ST 58741 25296
18	GATEHOUSE	II	24/03/1961	ST 59625 24884
19	GATEWAY AND WING WALLS 400 METRES SOUTH OF HAZELGROVE HOUSE	II	24/03/1961	ST 59819 26763
20	GRACE COTTAGE	II	24/03/1961	ST 59764 24970
21	GREYSTONES	II	06/03/1986	ST 59569 24801
22	HAYLEY COTTAGE, FRONT BOUNDARY WALL AND COTTAGE ATTACHED ON SOUTH SIDE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59649 24660
23	HAZELGROVE HOUSE	II	24/03/1961	ST 59892 26914
24	HENSHALLBROOK FARMHOUSE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59663 24615
25	HOUSE BETWEEN MORVEN AND CAMELOT	II	24/03/1961	ST 59584 24850
26	JESSAMINE COTTAGE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59582 24783
27	JEY MONUMENT IN CHURCHYARD ABOUT 2 METRES NORTH OF NORTH AISLE, CHURCH OF ST BARNABAS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59746 24967
28	LANTERN COTTAGE AND FORMER BOUNDARY WALL	II	06/03/1986	ST 59654 24639

29	LAVENDERS	II	24/03/1961	ST 59623 24911
30	MORVEN	II	24/03/1961	ST 59588 24859
31	NIGHTINGALE HOUSE WITH THE FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59501 24866
32	OVERTON HOUSE WITH FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59561 24814
33	PRIMROSE COTTAGE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59613 24777
34	QUEEN CAMEL COTTAGE AND FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59608 24671
35	QUEEN CAMEL HEALTH CENTRE AND FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59619 24623
36	RANGE OF OUTBUILDINGS ATTACHED TO NORTH OF EYEWELL HOUSE	II	06/03/1986	ST 58720 25303
37	RECTORY FARMHOUSE AND RECTORY FARMHOUSE SOUTH	II	06/03/1986	ST 59651 24498
38	ROADSIDE AND PATHSIDE WALLS TO CHURCHYARD, CHURCH OF ST BARNABAS, INCLUDING NORTH AND WEST GATEWAYS AND SQUEEZE TO NORTH WEST CORNER	II	06/03/1986	ST 59728 24992
39	THE BLACKWELL	II	06/03/1986	ST 58988 24952
40	THE EYEWELL	II	06/03/1986	ST 58869 24969
41	THE OLD SMITHY WITH FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 59573 24793
42	THE OLD VICARAGE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59545 24743
43	THE THATCH	II	19/01/1979	ST 59660 24599
44	THE WITCHES	II	06/03/1986	ST 59547 24864
45	VINE HOUSE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59441 24844
46	WALES BRIDGE	II	24/03/1961	ST 58652 24785
47	WALES COTTAGES, ROW OF COTTAGES ABOUT 10 METRES NORTH EAST OF WALES FARMHOUSE	II*	06/03/1986	ST 58490 24662
48	WALES DAIRY HOUSE	II	24/03/1961	ST 58753 24931
49	WALES FARMHOUSE	II*	24/03/1961	ST 58442 24649
50	WALES HOUSE WITH FRONT BOUNDARY RAILINGS AND EAST SIDE WALLINGS	II	06/03/1986	ST 58685 24725
51	YEW TREE COTTAGE	II	06/03/1986	ST 59675 24928

## APPENDIX 3: Archaeological Sites, Monuments and other heritage features

### Map Ref. Description

H1	Inhumation cemetery and sword find, Queen Camel Hill, Queen Camel
H2	Padel deserted village, W of Hazelgrove House, Queen Camel
H3	Coages Park, W of Hazelgrove House, Queen Camel
H4	Moat and fishpond, SW of Hazelgrove House, Queen Camel
H5	Limekiln, S of Ridge Copse, Queen Camel
H6	Medieval building, moat & fishpond, NE of Yarcombe Wood, Queen Camel
H7	Roman finds, Sutton Bridge, Queen Camel
H8	Iron age settlement, Camel Hill, Queen Camel
H9	Pound, Queen Camel
H10	Park, Hazelgrove House, Queen Camel
H11	Roman pottery finds, Hazelgrove House, Queen Camel
H12	Deserted medieval village, Hazelgrove House, Queen Camel
H13	Mill, W of Queen Camel
H14	Black well, Black Well Lane, Queen Camel
H15	Mill, Queen Camel
H16	Deserted village, Camel Farm, Queen Camel
H17	Possible Roman villa, N of Queen Camel
H18	Frome to Yeovil railway
H19	Village cross site, Hazelgrove
H20	Medieval Occupation, High Street, Queen Camel
H21	Sheepwash, east of Sutton Bridge, Queen Camel
H22	Saw Pit, west of Sparkford roundabout, Queen Camel
H23	Parish School, Back Street, Queen Camel
H24	Turnpike Road, Petherton Bridge, Martock, to Sparkford Bridge, Sparkford
H25	Turnpike Road Sparkford Hill, Sparkford, to Marston Inn, Marston Magna
H26	Quarry, Ridge Copse, Queen Camel and Sparkford
H27	Medieval settlement, E of Langbrook Farm
H28	Milestone, Ridge Copse, Queen Camel
H29	ROC observation post, Camel Hill, Queen Camel
H30	ROC observation post, Camel Hill, Queen Camel
H31	Church of St Barabas and churchyard, Queen Camel
H32	Roman villa, Queen Camel

### Scheduled Monuments

1020936	Romano British Settlements East of West Camel
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## APPENDIX 4: Pictorial History of Development to 2016



**Queen Camel date unknown but prior to 1970**



## HERITAGE IS AT THE HEART OF VILLAGE AND COMMUNITY

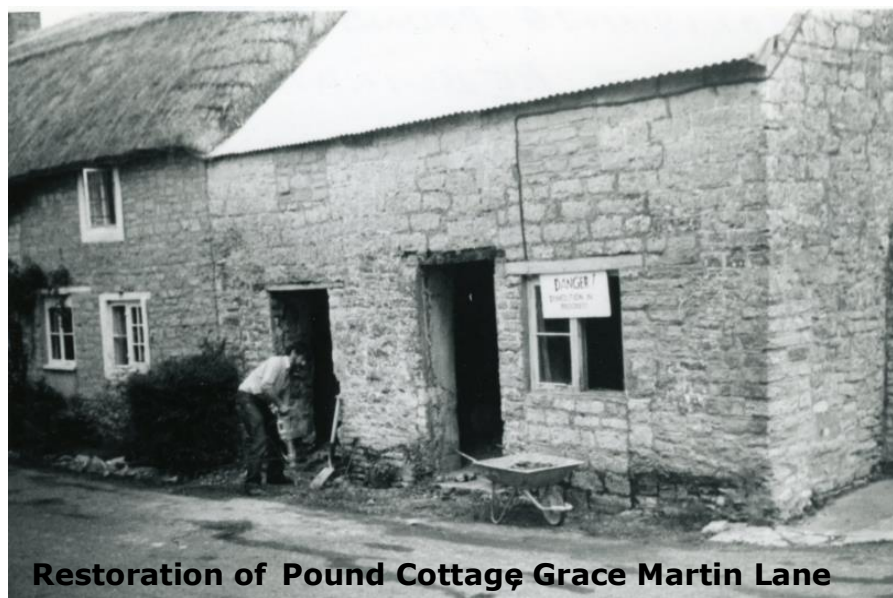


**Ivy Cottage, rebuilt by Geoff Brooks**





**Biggins the Butchers**



**Restoration of Pound Cottage Grace Martin Lane  
by Stuart Reeves**



**The Cobblers before restoration**





## The High Street of Queen Camel - then and now

Then



Now











**There follows significant Developments in Queen Camel since 1970**



## 1970 Planning Approval

22 houses/garages – became Orchard Close and Mildmay Drive



## **1977 Planning Approval**

**33 houses/garages between Cleaveside & England's Lane – became The Glebe**



**1977 20 bungalows/2 dwellings and common room - became Cleaveside Close**





## 1979/80 Planning Approval Tithe Barn conversion into 3 dwellings





**1980 9 bungalows – became Rectory Farm Close**

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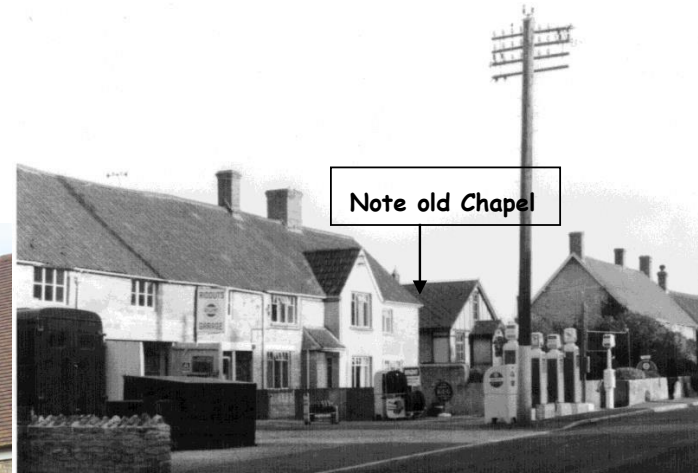
**1994 9 terrace bungalows – became Old Farm Court**

**Camelot Pub – now 8 or 9 dwellings  
(date of approval unknown)**



2003

Sedna Service Station to become Chapel Court





**2013 Planning Approval  
20 houses –  
became Roman Way**



**The field with its old shed, now Roman Way.  
Cobbles from the shed floor have been laid  
across the roadways to the houses**

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## 2014 Planning Approval - Countess Gytha County Pre and Primary School moved to new site June 2016



## APPENDIX 5: Surplus Signs and Poles – A359

### Safety and Conservation Area Implications

The Community Plan of 2005 identified 'too many public road signs'. Comments like *"It was illogical to be strict with buildings whilst allowing such unsightly cables and a profusion of signs (government and private), some not maintained in good order"*, were made. The Community Plan found:

*"There is a profusion of signs. At the south entrance to the village there are, for example, a 'Traffic Calming...' sign that cannot be seen until the driver is almost level, two new signs relating to the new roundabout, the old style road sign facing the traffic but with no arm identifying which way to the village or the A359, and another new sign 'Road narrows – single file' is confusing."*

Members of the Environment Group prepared a report on signs/poles considered to be unnecessary or wrongly sited. These were then all within the boundary of the conservation area but since that time have multiplied. There are now so many signs that drivers have overload and those that do provide a necessary safety warning are in danger of being blanked out with the rest.

Some of the surplus (and rusty) poles were later removed by members of the Environment Group. The rest need higher authority action and are included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

#### **Traffic Calming signs at both ends of the village**

These were erected at the time the 'give ways' at Camel Bridge and the two pinch points were installed. During parts of the year these signs cannot be seen or read until the driver is right 'on them'. It is considered that the Marston Road sign serves no useful purpose **and should be removed**.



Sparkford Road



Marston Road



## Driving from Sparkford Road (east) entrance to Queen Camel

**30 mph speed limit** – nearside sign obscured and when photographed was broken due to HGVs hitting it. The signs are positioned much too far within the village boundary thus allowing additional risk to public safety on both sides of the road. The Parish Council has asked many times for them to be moved up the Sparkford Road (and currently with a reduction to 20 mph), which would resolve the obscurity and damage issues, and above all slow traffic passing the entrance to the property on the left, which is currently very risky indeed



Then follow three signs in quick succession. The first and third '**Reduce speed now**' and '**Give Way**' are clear. The middle sign '**School**' became obsolete when the school moved in June 2016. This sign has a drop-down board for use in the event of a road closure. We propose that this drop-down board is transferred to the first sign 'reduce speed now'.



There are then two '**20 mph/school**' signs on the bend and before the bridge (but there is no longer a school) plus the 'Give Way' and 'Priority' signs either side of the bridge.



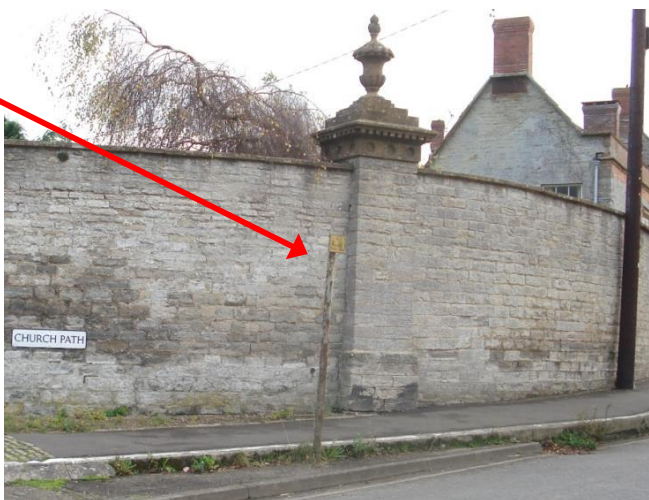
The 'River Cam' sign is often obscured and has been damaged. The request is that this sign is lifted onto the 'Give Way' sign to correspond with the sign on the 'Priority' side of the bridge.



**The then ugly triangle** was previously included in this document but the broken poles etc. have been removed and the triangle transformed with attractive planters surrounding a simple wooden seat for bus passengers. Yes, it is a bus stop!



and the rusty poles with no purpose have been removed – we wonder if anyone noticed!





**'Single File Traffic'** – we puzzled a long while as to the purpose for this sign then realised it matched the one opposite the pub so must be for the pinch point. We assume that this was the only vacant spot for the sign erectors! However, it is so far ahead of the pinch point that no driver would link the two, and there is no corresponding sign coming from the other direction. The pinch point by the bus shelter is clearly visible so we consider this sign is also superfluous. The yellow arrow sign, if it has a purpose, could be transferred to either the telegraph pole further on or to the bus stop sign, however we also ask why the rusty and dirty bus stop sign and timetable is permitted when there are no others and the bus generally stops near the telephone box.



**Weight Restriction** – The picture below on the left was taken in 2005 for the Parish Plan; the one on the right was taken November 2012 (and there is a corresponding sign on the other side of the road). Same sign, slightly repositioned, but turned to face the opposite direction and with a weight derestriction on the reverse (i.e. now as coming into the village)! The A359 is restricted so there should be no de-restriction, nor should there be any overweight traffic leaving the A359 to travel along the West Camel Road. If a sign is needed it must surely be at the start of this B classified road at Yeovilton.



### **Three signs relating to the roundabout,**

this one was fairly new in 2012 and very clear 'reduce speed now'.

How many do we really need, noting that on the main A359 there are only two? Why is the one in the middle of the three necessary? **We would like it to be removed.**




### **REFURBISHMENT**

**Two Finger Signposts**, one next to the Tin Shed and one on the Iron Box, were originally promised to be repainted by the time of the Jubilee weekend! **The Parish Council has approved the restoration of these two heritage items – is there a timescale or do they simply disintegrate?**

**Road names:** As well as the two finger signposts there are a number of road names that need cleaning/repainting (and some need growth to be kept pruned, e.g. the 'Gason Lane' road signs are often partially hidden on both sides of the lane – who is responsible?). It would be good if the sign for Englands Lane/Mead could include 'leading to Playing Field/Bowling Green/Tennis Courts', rather than have the individual and un-matching signs for these village amenities.


**Why designate an area 'Conservation' if what is within it is neither beautiful nor maintained?**


## APPENDIX 6: Key Views Assessment

Name of Viewpoint	View of Sparkford Copse from Queen Camel																				
Location and grid ref	From the A359 and also footpath WN 27/2 which runs alongside the River Cam. Grid ref approx 359700 125070																				
Type of Viewpoint	<input type="checkbox"/> Established viewpoint <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Right of Way <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Highway corridor <input type="checkbox"/> Rail corridor <input type="checkbox"/> Public open space <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor destination <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe)																				
Type of view	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focused corridor <input type="checkbox"/> Panoramic																				
Direction of view	<input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NE <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> SE <input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> SW <input type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/> NW																				
Type and level of users	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motorists</td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> high</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> moderate</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> low</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> n/a</td></tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Walkers</b></td><td><input type="checkbox"/> high</td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> low</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> n/a</td></tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cyclists</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> high</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> moderate</td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> n/a</td></tr> <tr> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equestrians</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> high</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> moderate</td><td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> n/a</td></tr> </table>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motorists	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Walkers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cyclists	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equestrians	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motorists	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a																	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Walkers</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a																	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cyclists	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a																	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equestrians	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> moderate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a																	
Additional notes	The view of Sparkford Copse is possible from the A359 heading north-east (from the northern side of the bridge across the River Cam) and also the footpath ascending up its lower slopes. This is the reverse direction of the circular walk (approx 2.6km) from the bridge, up Gason Lane Ridge Copse, across to Sparkford Hill, and back via WN 27/2 which is popular with local residents.																				
Key landmarks visible in view	Sparkford Copse																				
Detracting features in view	n/a																				
Description of view and reason for importance	View takes in the sweeping slopes up to Sparkford Copse, a key local landmark above the church of St Barnabas.																				
Photos																					

Name of Viewpoint	View of Queen Camel from top of Gason Lane
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Location and grid ref	From Gason Lane and also from footpath ref WN 23/10 descending down into Queen Camel from Gason Lane Grid ref approx 359320 125500 (Gason Lane) and 359190 125350 (footpath)
Type of Viewpoint	<input type="checkbox"/> Established viewpoint <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Right of Way <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Highway corridor <input type="checkbox"/> Rail corridor <input type="checkbox"/> Public open space <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor destination <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe)
Type of view	<input type="checkbox"/> Focused corridor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Panoramic
Direction of view	<input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> E <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/> NE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SW <input type="checkbox"/> NW
Type and level of users	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motorists <input type="checkbox"/> high <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> n/a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Walkers</b> <input type="checkbox"/> high <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> n/a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cyclists <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> n/a <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equestrians <input type="checkbox"/> high <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Additional notes	Glimpses of the view are possible from travelling south-east direction along Gason Lane in a vehicle, and also from the footpath descending down into Queen Camel from Gason Lane. There is an equestrian centre to the north of the A303 (and limited off-road bridleways).
Key landmarks visible in view	St Barnabas Church tower (with Old School to the front)
Detracting features in view	Industrial character of some farm buildings on lower slopes
Description of view and reason for importance	Panoramic view from top of Gason Hill looking down across the vale in which Queen Camel sits. The church tower of St Barnabas is clearly visible. On a good day the view stretches to the county of Dorset
Photos	
Name of Viewpoint	View of Queen Camel from Sparkford Copse

Location and grid ref	From Sparkford Copse accessed from Sparkford Hill Lane, and also footpath WN 27/2 which runs below the ridge and crosses the slightly further east. Grid ref approx 359990 125370 (Sparkford Hill Lane) and 360020 125180 (footpath)
Type of Viewpoint	<input type="checkbox"/> Established viewpoint <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Right of Way <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Highway corridor <input type="checkbox"/> Rail corridor <input type="checkbox"/> Public open space <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor destination <input type="checkbox"/> Other (describe)
Type of view	<input type="checkbox"/> Focused corridor <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Panoramic
Direction of view	<input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> NE <input type="checkbox"/> E <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> S <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/> NW
Type and level of users	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Motorists <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Walkers</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cyclists <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equestrians <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> high <input type="checkbox"/> high <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> moderate <input type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> low <input type="checkbox"/> n/a <input type="checkbox"/> n/a <input type="checkbox"/> n/a <input type="checkbox"/> n/a
Additional notes	The view is on the parish boundary with Sparkford, and is possible from Sparkford Hill Lane in a vehicle, and also from the footpath descending down into Queen Camel. The circular walk (approx 2.6km) from the bridge, up Gason Lane Ridge Copse, across to Sparkford Hill, and back via WN 27/2 is popular with local residents.
Key landmarks visible in view	St Barnabas Church tower
Detracting features in view	n/a
Description of view and reason for importance	Panoramic view from the slopes around Sparkford Copse looking down across Queen Camel village. The church tower of St Barnabas is clearly visible. On a good day the view stretches to the county of Dorset.
Photos	



## Queen Camel Parish Council

**Chairman – Simon Thornehill**

Peter Paddon  
Lead Specialist Strategy & Commissioning  
South Somerset District Council  
Brympton Way  
YEOVIL  
Somerset  
BA20 2HT

17 June 2020

Dear Peter

I have been delegated responsibility by Queen Camel Parish Council to provide SSDC with the Parish Council's comments on the Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's report. The Council met on 8 June 2020 at which meeting the Council Resolved its comments (below).

Please see the attached revised version of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP), which includes the Examiner's modifications. Please do not assume that since the Parish Council has provided this revised version, it indicates that the Parish Council accepts the Examiner's modifications (that is not a Decision for the Parish Council).

Please also see the following comments from Queen Camel PC on the draft NP Examiner's report (1 June 2020). The Parish Council has discussed the Examiner's report and made the following Decisions:

1. The PC wants to retain the Settlement Boundary in the NP, as it provides clarity as to the area where general infill would be appropriate and was supported by local residents in preparing the plan;
2. SSDC should include the Settlement Boundary or make other suitable modifications;
3. that the Parish Council want the NP to be in conformity with the LP;
4. that the NP is given significant weight by SSDC when making development management (planning) decisions, as soon as possible; and
5. that the NP is taken to Referendum as soon as possible.

Clearly the Localism Act 2011, Schedule 10 requires the Local Planning Authority to make Decisions on the Examiner's report, not the Parish Council. Nevertheless, it is appreciated that SSDC has afforded the Parish Council time to consider and provide these comments, for consideration by SSDC's Executive Committee in August 2020.

**Stephen Hill**

Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer to Queen Camel Parish Council  
5 Woodpecker Meadow, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4GB  
tel: 07949 150 888  
email: [clerk@queencamelpc.org.uk](mailto:clerk@queencamelpc.org.uk)

It's important to note that the Examiner's suggested modification to remove the Settlement Boundary has created tensions within the community, which the Parish Council is trying to manage. That significant modification in preparation of the NP is regrettable and the Parish Council is surprised that this fundamental modification has arisen at this late stage, and that the Examiner did not feel it necessary to discuss this change with the District or Parish Council.

I understand that the NP must be in conformity with the LP and therefore removal of the Settlement Boundary would promote that conformity; there are also other options that could be explored.

The Parish Council wants to retain the Settlement Boundary as it provides clarity on definition of infill development. Removal of the Settlement Boundary also reduces the likelihood of rural exception sites to be brought forward for AH development under Policy QC1, as the NPPF directs these to other sites that would not otherwise be used for housing.

It would be helpful to see a draft of your report to the Executive Committee. It is contrary to the Parish Council's objective (to have the NP approved as soon as possible), for SSDC to decide not to accept the Examiner's modifications (ie for SSDC to retain the Settlement Boundary) for defined reasons; it is recognised that that would require re-consultation and potentially re-Examination with the inherent time delays. Nevertheless, so that Members are fully informed, I expect that the report to Executive should include the Option for SSDC not to accept the Examiner's modifications.

I understand that the Examiner's report will be considered by the SSDC Executive at its meeting in August 2020. The Parish Council is likely to send a representative to the Executive Committee and may speak on the matter.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Hill  
Parish Clerk

cc.

Leader: Val Keitch  
Deputy Leader: Peter Seib  
Environment Portfolio: Sarah Dyke  
Protecting Core Services Portfolio: Tony Lock  
Economic Development Portfolio: John Clark  
Chairman of East Area Committee: Henry Hobhouse

Chairman: Paul Maxwell  
Vice Chairman: Jenny Kenton

Crispin Raikes: Chairman of Scrutiny Committee  
Sue Osborne: Vice Chairman of Scrutiny Committee

Alex Parmley: Chief Executive  
Kirsty Larkins: Director of Strategy and Commissioning  
Simon Fox: Lead Specialist Planning  
Tim Cook: Locality Team Manager  
David Clews: Policy Planner

Jo Witherden: Dorset Planning

Simon Thornewill: QCPC Chairman  
Sue Gettings: QCPC Vice Chairman  
All QCPC Councillors

**Stephen Hill**

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## Disposal of Churchfields Office, Wincanton

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Tony Lock, Protecting Core Services
Strategic Director:	Clare Pestell, Commercial Services and Income Generation
Service Manager:	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property, Land and Development Manager
Contact Details:	Robert.orratt@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462075

## Purpose of the Report

1. To seek a decision from members on the disposal of this surplus operational property asset.

## Forward Plan

2. This report did not appear on the District Executive Forward Plan. We have received offers for the sale of the property and seek a decision to enable us to conclude the previously approved principle, to dispose of Churchfields Wincanton, following the conclusion of the marketing and sale process .

## Public Interest

3. The efficiency of the council's operations and use of operational assets impacts on the effective use of the revenues available to the council and the delivery of services to South Somerset.
4. Securing re-use of this substantial property in Wincanton is environmentally sound and will also contribute to the quality of the town and its economic base.
5. The capital receipt is to be ring-fenced within the budget for the Wincanton regeneration project.

## Recommendations

6. That the District Executive:
  - a. Approve the recommendation for sale of the property asset contained in the confidential appendix.
  - b. Delegate to the Director of Commercial Services and Income Generation approval of detail of the sale providing the price and basis remain in accordance with the information provided.

## Background

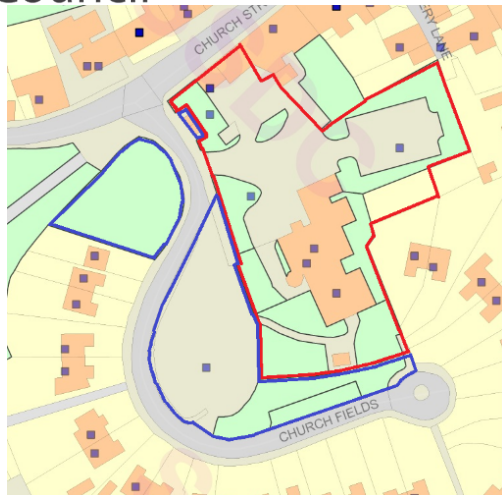


## South Somerset District Council

7. A report was provided to District Executive on 1 March 2018 “SSDC Review of Operational Office Accommodation – Progress Report”.
8. The report set out principles for developing a revised Area Presence which were endorsed by District Executive and have been progressed.
9. District Executive approved the recommendation for disposal of and/or redevelopment of its current Area Offices over the next 2 years in accordance with relevant governance and policies.
10. The Churchfields Office, Wincanton is one of the Area Offices within the scope of that decision. Work has been progressed to create the replacement arrangements and to end the operational use of the property. This having been achieved, a project to secure disposal has been implemented.
11. Offers have been received from interested parties. These are summarised in the confidential appendix along with a recommendation as to which to accept for the sale to be concluded.

### Realisation Strategy

12. One of the reasons for the recommendations made in March 2018 was that the council had significantly more office accommodation than it required. It was recognised in the report that the Area Offices were not suitable for our operational needs as an agile style of working is introduced alongside the wider Transformation Programme.
13. The Commercial Strategy (approved by District Executive in August 2017) includes the overarching principle for existing assets that unless they either contribute positively to a policy objective, and represent value for money compared to other ways in which the same benefit could be achieved, or provide an adequate financial return on investment, they should be considered for disposal.
14. The Churchfields Office was identified as not meeting the criteria for retention. Officers have therefore progressed work to evaluate options for realisation and prepare for that. The operational asset which is intended for disposal comprises the area edged red on the plan below. The areas edged blue are the other ownerships of the council in the immediate vicinity comprising public car parking, public conveniences and landscape.
15. Consideration was given to three realisation options:
  - a. Direct development
  - b. Joint venture development
  - c. Sale



16. The likely future use for the property is residential. That may require planning consent but permitted development rights exist nationally for change of use from offices to residential.
- a. Direct development was not considered prudent. The council property team does not include specialist capacity to operate as developer on a conversion. Embarking on such a project would dramatically divert resource away from the established objectives. While there is prospect of developer's profit, that is reflective of the risks involved. It is considered preferable to leave development specialists with experienced teams to take that on.
  - b. Joint venture has the potential to blend capabilities with the advantage of ownership. The relatively small scale of the project, and the inherently higher risks and uncertainties with conversion and refurbishment led to the conclusion that the effective outcome would be better if the developer is unfettered by a JV contract, and that the costs of setting one up would not be justified in this case either in quantum or prospect for successful conclusion.
  - c. Sale – this was considered the best option. It allows interested parties flexibility around their vision for future use, does not exclude the possibility of buyers for purposes that differ from residential conversion, and allows the buyer to operate flexibly and under their individual judgement. Offers might be unconditional or subject to planning but either way this option should provide the council with a relatively early disposal, capital receipt and ending of the facility management costs.
17. In preparation for the disposal, discussions were held with the two tenants of parts of the building to give them time to consider future options and relocate. One has already moved from the building and the other will do so shortly.
18. A selection process was operated to appoint marketing agents in the expectation of a private treaty sale process. The agents all provided their views on marketing strategy.



## South Somerset District Council

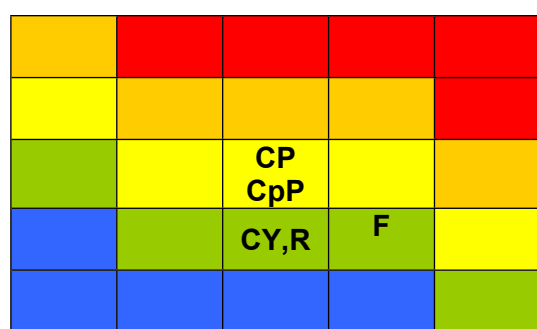
19. Marketing of the property commenced in April 2020. There was uncertainty as to market response as this was just after COVID-19 lockdown commenced. However, there was a reasonable level of interest and a satisfactory number of viewings. The interest was brought to a conclusion with best offers sought from interested parties. In view of the commercial sensitivity of the bidding process, information on the bids and the recommendation for the party to sell to is contained the in the confidential appendix.

### Financial Implications

20. The potential capital receipt from the sale of this asset is stated in the Confidential Appendix. The receipt is to be ring-fenced for the Wincanton regeneration project.
21. There are expected to be continuing net revenue savings. The net annual expenditure over the last five years has averaged above £20,000. This £20,000 ongoing pressure can now be removed from the Medium Term Financial Plan.

### Risk Matrix

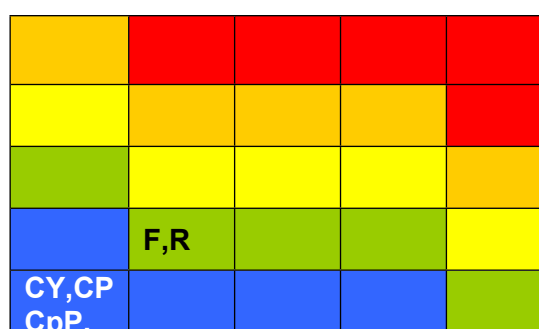
**Risk Profile before officer recommendations**



Likelihood



**Risk Profile after officer recommendations**



Likelihood



#### Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

### Council Plan Implications

22. This report links to the following Council Plan objectives:

- Protecting Core Services
- Take a more commercial approach to become self-sufficient financially





## **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

23. Reduced operational estate footprint and carbon emissions. Re-use of physical assets with any aspects subject to Building Regulations meeting current standards.

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

24. This report does not involve any equality or diversity implications.

## **Privacy Impact Assessment**

25. There is no personal information included in this report.

## **Background Papers**

- SSDC Review of Operational Office Accommodation – March 2017
  - SSDC Commercial Strategy 2017
  - Churchfields Offices, Disposal - Inclusion of public car park – report to Area East Committee, February 2020
-

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

## Investment Assets Quarterly Update Report

Executive Portfolio Holder: John Clark, Economic Development inc Commercial Strategy  
Director: Clare Pestell, Commercial Services and Income Generation  
Service Manager: Robert Orrett, Commercial Property, Land & Development Manager  
Contact Details: [Robert.orratt@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:Robert.orratt@southsomerset.gov.uk) or 01935 462075

## Purpose of the Report

1. To provide a quarterly update to members on progress with implementing the commercial investment component of the Commercial Strategy agreed by Council.

## Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the latest District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of September 2020. This report commences quarterly reporting rather than the previous half-yearly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Public Interest

3. The Council's commercial strategy forms an important part of the Council's Corporate Plan ("Council Plan") and its Financial Strategy. Delivery of the Commercial Strategy enables the council to protect services to residents in the light of reduction in funding and to deliver its ambitions for South Somerset, for example the regeneration of town centres and high streets.
4. This report is to update members on progress made to date on the Property Investment component of the Commercial Strategy. The Council agreed to receive updates on progress every six months with the previous update being reported to District Executive in June 2020. At that meeting, District Executive decided to receive quarterly summary update reports on Investment Assets until further notice in light of the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. The report includes updates on rent collection, tenancies, the financial performance of investments, the purchasing of new commercial investments, and progress with projects.
6. These contribute to delivery of the objectives of SSDC's Financial Strategy originally agreed in September 2017 and the Commercial Strategy agreed in



## South Somerset District Council

August 2017, and updated with the review by District Executive and Full Council of the Financial Strategy and Commercial Strategy in September 2019.

7. The aim of this report is to give Members and the public an update on the performance and impact of the commercial investment to date including its contribution to mitigating the impact of reductions in Government funding and protecting services.
8. Due to the sensitive commercial nature of investment acquisitions, and the need to manage risk and protect the value of the Council's investments over the long term, **certain detailed information is included in a confidential appendix and not to be disclosed.**

### Recommendations

9. That the District Executive:
  - a. Note the resilience of the property investment portfolio thus far in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - b. Note progress made to date in acquiring new commercial investments and the asset management following acquisition.
  - c. Note the return being achieved across the portfolio which is slightly above the Council's target of 7%.
  - d. Note progress being made in securing income from our existing assets and the contribution to the revenue budget towards the revised £3.35m target.

### Background

10. While presenting the "Commercial Services Income Update" report to District Executive in February 2018, members requested regular updates to show progress made in meeting the Commercial Strategy (approved by Council in August 2017). These detailed reports have normally been provided at six monthly intervals but are now to be presented quarterly with a summary report in between the full six monthly reports.
11. This report is a succinct update of high level figures for new investments since 1 May 2020, updated to 31 July 2020 with commentary on the management of the investment property assets.
12. The Commercial Property Team has been stable in terms of staffing since the last report.

### COVID-19





13. The pandemic has impacted on all aspects of society and is affecting economies across the world. The Office for National Statistics has reported that the UK economy is in a technical recession after Quarter 2 (Apr to June) 2020 saw a record fall of 20.4%, following a significant shock since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic; this follows a fall of 2.2% during Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2020. Monthly GDP rose by 8.7% during June 2020 but is 17.2% below February 2020 levels.
14. A recent forecast published by Deloitte gives their analysis and opinion that the most likely scenario assumes a rebound in economic activity in the second half of this year, following the sharp squeeze to activity in the second quarter. The rebound is constrained by continued, though reducing, social distancing requirements, and caution exercised by businesses and consumers. They expect the recovery to continue throughout 2021, with activity reaching pre-pandemic levels only in the following year, two years after the sharp decline. They model cases either side of this base case which perhaps demonstrate the challenge of producing forecasts.
15. Looking internationally, Deloitte recognise that other major economies also registered record contractions in GDP and face the expectation of similarly prolonged periods for recovery.
16. Looking at UK commercial property investment, as would be expected, the volume of investment transactions fell dramatically at the start of lockdown. Savills have reported that Q2 2020 saw the weakest quarter on record for investment activity in the UK commercial property market. The volume of investment that quarter overall was only 21% of the 5-year average. But, June was over 60% higher than the April/May levels which suggests the market is starting to return.
17. The very limited market means there is a shortage of comparable evidence. Vendors are still trying to achieve pre-COVID-19 value levels. Some buyers are seeking a lower level.
18. Our analysis and forecasting based on a range of expert commentary is that we believe it likely that market rental and capital values will fall over a period before generally recovering - but the outlook is far from clear. It is likely that the industrial/warehouse sector will be the most resilient and high street retail the most strongly impacted. Office markets have the possibility of structural change following the massive national adoption of home-based working during the pandemic although there are diverse views on how great the long term impact will be for the amount and types of office space required.

## **Rent collections**

19. Commercial rents are typically paid quarterly in advance in late March, June, September and December. Pre COVID-19 we would have expected 100%



## South Somerset District Council

collection of rents due from all the “new” assets and a few smaller rents to nurture amongst the earlier local investment properties.

20. For the March quarter, it took considerably longer than normal to recover the rents and a lot of engagement with the tenants. We have recovered 90% of the expected rents. One tenancy amounts to a further 8% of the rent roll and we are renegotiating their lease to gain a longer, inflation linked income and give them some short term breathing space. For the June quarter, we have recovered 65% so far. If all tenants with whom we have agreed monthly arrangements keep paying, then we would achieve 82%. We have the same 8% to resolve as last quarter, so we have about 10% at risk, and continue to work on that.
21. We would hope to see no worsening in September quarter and improvement by December.
22. Reports of large property investors indicate that we have achieved towards the upper end of the range. Typically, landlords specialising in the retail sector have seen the greatest impact. Examples include Howard de Walden Estate, a major central London landlord that reported collecting 53% of the March-June quarter rents due. British Land plc, one of the largest property development and investment companies in the United Kingdom, reported collecting 97% of office rents and 43% retail rent being collected for that quarter, and 88% of office rents and 36% retail rent being collected thus far for the June-September quarter.

### Tenancies

23. We have completed legal proceedings to forfeit one tenancy at Trafalgar House, Taunton. The tenant breached the terms of the lease relating to assignment or sub-letting. They had also carried out alterations that did not meet Building Regulation requirements.
24. Also at Trafalgar House, we have completed a new letting on a small unit that was vacant when we acquired the property. The lease was completed in May 2020.
25. There are no other changes to the tenancies across the portfolio. We are maintaining close contact with tenants and supporting them during the pandemic with some short term arrangements that allow rent payments to spread over time.

### New Assets

26. We are continuing to seek to acquire good opportunities that meet our investment criteria and particularly the target for 7% initial gross return. We are looking for a discount from pre COVID-19 levels generally of 5-10%. Our analysis shows that for the right assets, that gives enough cover for the risks around serious recession and an extended dip in values.



## **South Somerset District Council**

27. In July and August, we have progressed on several opportunities, including two which we wished to proceed with. One was approved by IAG but another party offered above of our valuation. Another is not currently proceeding, as the seller has changed their expectation and is wanting a price higher than they suggested and giving no discount from pre-COVID-19 levels.
28. Overall, we are sustaining our activity levels. We expect there to be more abortive work than applied before the pandemic with purchases more difficult to conclude, because the market has more disparity of views about value and outlook. We hope that we may be able to secure some better than typical opportunities during this period.
29. We are proceeding with a new energy infrastructure asset. The situation is part way through the set-up process and we are subject to a non-disclosure agreement. We are implementing this through the established SSDC Opium Power Ltd company structure and have made a first stage loan to the company of £2.35m in relation to this new project. We will report publicly on the non commercially sensitive elements of this asset as soon as we are able to do so, which we anticipate to be during September.
30. Recent half yearly reports have included graphs indicating actual progress against budget for income and for capital invested. As there have been no concluded purchases, and the last report was only one quarter ago, new versions have not been produced in order to save the officer time involved in updating.

### **Residential Development, Marlborough**

31. We previously reported that water damage had occurred to a number of flats due to a serious failure in the new hot water installation in one of the upper level flats. Work to repair this, and indeed marketing generally could not proceed during the most stringent period of the lockdown.
32. The three houses are being marketed now. The building contractors have returned to site to reinstate the flats, following which marketing of the flats will resume.
33. Management arrangements for the property are in place, keeping landscape and external areas in order and we are regularly checking the property.
34. Residential property sales are being supported by a stamp duty holiday from 8 July 2020 until 31 March 2021. This particularly benefits properties under £500,000 and thus applies to all of the homes in this project.

### **Energy Storage Scheme**



## **South Somerset District Council**

35. The Fideoak, Taunton, battery storage scheme is owned via a company, SSDC Opium Power Ltd (SSDC OPL), a joint venture between SSDC and Opium Power Ltd, which purchased the site in 2018.
36. Official confirmation that the scheme had passed the final test conducted by National Grid was received in early June 2020. This enabled the scheme to commence its trading activity. The returns will become known after the first quarter of trading (as previously reported revenue is paid in arrears) and should be available for the next quarterly report.
37. Work on Phase 2 for an additional 5 MW was delayed by around one month due to COVID-19 lockdown but has since progressed smoothly while meeting COVID-19 guidelines. The main installation works have now been completed and final manufacturer's commissioning is due in late August. This will be followed by the activities required to meet requirements for final approval and National Grid tests. Overall these should be completed by October following which that phase will also be able to commence its trading activity. There will be a further three-month period before results are known. From that stage, the two phases will operate as a single entity. At present it is anticipated that phase 2 will therefore be revenue generating earlier than was originally forecast despite COVID-19 delays.
38. The budget for Phase 2 was £2,500,000 and the final cost is expected to be below budget.

### **Financial Implications**

39. The financial implications for the progress with commercial investments are set out above within the report and also in further detail in the Confidential Appendix.
40. SSDC has approved a large sum for commercial investment. The commercial strategy has been operating for 36 months, and excellent progress has been made, ahead of target timeframes.
41. Detailed and robust due diligence has been completed with extensive involvement of SSDC's finance and legal specialists together with external advisors (e.g. valuers, tax specialists, legal advisers, sector specialists) to support the property team in completing robust business cases that underpin recommendations and investment decisions. The decisions made have been through the agreed governance arrangements as approved by SSDC with the Investment Assessment Group providing deferrals, refusals and unanimous recommendations to the Council Leader and Chief Executive for final decisions. Arrangements have been reviewed by Internal Audit and the minor improvements recommended have been implemented.



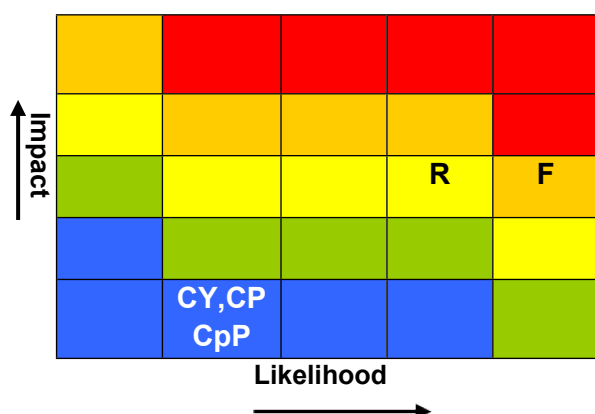


## South Somerset District Council

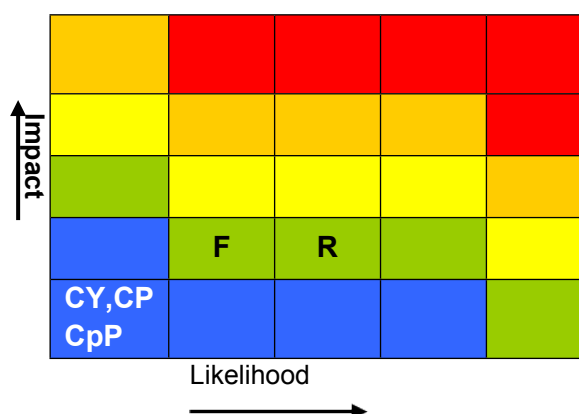
42. The financial implications of completed acquisitions including costs, income and funding arrangements will continue to be incorporated in budget setting and monitoring processes, in line with SSDC's financial procedures framework.

### Risk Matrix

Risk Profile before officer recommendations



Risk Profile after officer recommendations



### Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R = Reputation	Red = High impact and high probability
CpP = Corporate Plan	Orange = Major impact and major probability
Priorities	Yellow = Moderate impact and moderate probability
CP = Community Priorities	Green = Minor impact and minor probability
CY = Capacity	Blue = Insignificant impact and insignificant probability
F = Financial	

### Council Plan Implications

43. This report links to the following Council Plan objectives:

- Protecting Core Services
- Take a more commercial approach to become self-sufficient financially
- Supporting the Regeneration of Chard, Yeovil and Wincanton
- Supporting local businesses

### Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

44. The council reviews energy performance as part of its purchase due diligence and seeks opportunities for improvement of this with assets it owns. We are prioritising work to identify projects of environmental benefit.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

45. This report does not involve any equality or diversity implications

### **Privacy Impact Assessment**

46. There is no personal information included in this report

### **Background Papers**

SSDC Commercial Strategy 2017 and 2019

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

## **Reconstruction & Adoption of roadway, Chard Business Park, Chard**

Executive Portfolio Holder: John Clark, Economic Development inc Commercial Strategy  
Strategic Director: Clare Pestell, Commercial Services & Income Generation  
Service Manager: Robert Orrett, Head of Property Services  
Lead Officer: Dan Bennett, Property Development Project Manager  
Contact Details: dan.bennett@southsomerset.gov.uk or 07971 111889

## **Purpose of the Report**

1. This report seeks to highlight an emerging issue with a section of roadway at Chard Business Park, outline the potential implications of the issue and identify the potential costs involved. The paper also seeks approval to progress preliminary investigation works to identify the full extent of the works required.

## **Forward Plan**

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2020.

## **Public Interest**

3. This is an urgent report generated in response to an emerging issue concerning the condition of the roadway at Chard Business Park.

## **Recommendations**

4. It is recommended that the District Executive committee:-
  - i. Approve the preliminary investigation works to the roadway to establish a full scope and cost of works required. The preliminary investigation works will be undertaken by external consultants with a maximum anticipated cost of £7,000 excluding VAT. To be funded from General Reserves.

## **Background**

5. The construction of Chard Business Park was a joint venture between SSDC and The Blackburn Trust, that was undertaken in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The trust represented the estate of a major local landowner and worked jointly with SSDC to set out the plan for the business park and adjacent residential area.
6. SSDC were granted an interest in the business park in exchange for an undertaking to construct the roadways and footways and have these adopted by the County





## South Somerset District Council

Council in due course. A legal agreement was signed by both parties to ensure that this obligation was complied with.

7. The Blackburn Trust submitted a planning application in 2018 for a major residential development adjacent to the business park on farm land still within the trusts retained estate. A decision on this application which seeks to provide 295 homes plus football pitch facilities is expected shortly. (18/04057/OUT)
8. The proposed development takes all vehicle access from Thorndun Park Drive, over an existing short spur road.
9. During the course of the application a dialogue was opened between the applicant and Somerset County Council over the status of the spur road. It appears that although SSDC were able to construct and secure the adoption of the main roadway through the business park (Thorndun Park Drive) the other estate roads (including the spur road) were not formally adopted at the same time but the undertaking and obligation remains.
10. The Property Team were contacted by the Blackburn Trust in May 2020 when the unadopted road was raised and is now required for the new development to proceed as a condition of the application. A review of the records from the time revealed that the estate roads were suitable for the industrial and business uses but not suitable for adoption at that time. As the 'phase 2' development was not forthcoming and the roadway served only two industrial units and a farm access the matter was not considered further.
11. As the new development takes all its vehicle access over this short spur road the County Council have requested that the construction improvements to adoptable standards of the spur road form one of the planning conditions for the new development.
12. The Blackburn Trust have reminded SSDC that the obligation to have the road adopted has not yet been complied with. The roadway is now in poor condition so many years on and will require works to reach an adoptable standard.
13. This report seeks approval from District Executive to commit to £7,000 of expenditure to enable preliminary investigation works to be undertaken. This investigation will allow for a full scope of works to be established and costed so that a further report can be taken to District Executive to deal with the funding of required reconstruction works.
14. To date we know that the roadway will need resurfacing and that the street lighting will need to be renewed. The investigation works will include taking core samples of the road base construction and detailed CCTV surveys of the drainage system. Should a full reconstruction be required it is envisaged that the works would come at a substantial cost. This cost will be reviewed in light of the findings of the investigation works and District Executive will be updated accordingly.

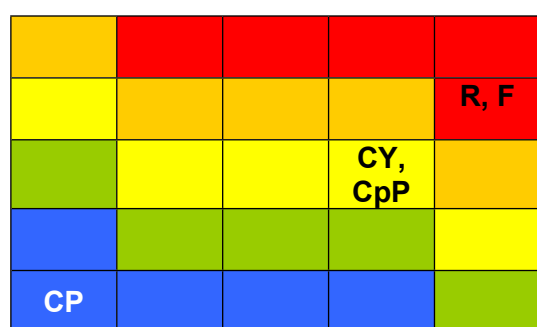
## Financial Implications

15. The cost of undertaking the work required to bring the roadway up to an adoptable standard is likely to be significant and as no detailed costings have been undertaken to date, no budget allowances have been made at present.
16. Once adopted SSDC will no longer be responsible for maintaining and repairing this section of road, so there will be a small reduction in our future maintenance liabilities. Other minor roads on the estate remain unadopted and within SSDC ownership, so an ongoing maintenance liability would remain for the wider estate.

## Risk Matrix

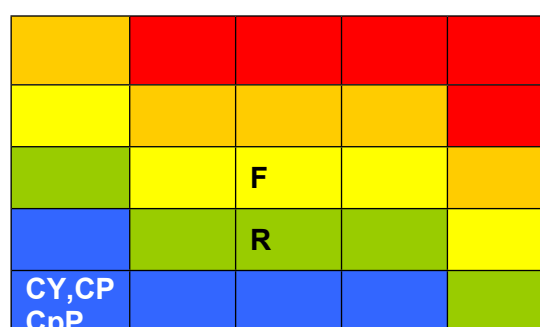
The risk matrix shows risk relating to the Corporate Plan headings.

**Risk Profile before officer recommendations**



Likelihood  
→

**Risk Profile after officer recommendations**



Likelihood  
→

### Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

## Council Plan Implications

This matter does not form part of the Council's Priority Plan, however a large unbudgeted expenditure may impact the delivery of other plan projects.

## Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

There are no direct carbon emission and climate change implications arising from this report.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

There are no direct equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

### **Privacy Impact Assessment**

No impact arising from this report.

### **Background Papers – Appendix 1 photos**



**Appendix 1**  
Photos showing roadway condition







Roadway highlighted pink below, showing relationship to new development.



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## Shared Building Control and Somerset Independence Plus Service

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Tony Lock, Portfolio Holder for Protecting Core Services
Ward Member(s)	All
Strategic Director:	Netta Meadows – Director, Service Delivery
Lead Officer:	Jan Gamon, Programme Director, Stronger Somerset
Contact Details:	jan.gamon@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935462095

### Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek District Executive approval to consider expanding the existing Somerset Building Control Partnership and the existing Somerset Independence Plus agreement to include South Somerset (SSDC) within the existing agreements in place with Mendip District Council (MDC), Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT), Sedgemoor District Council (SDC) and Somerset County Council (SCC).

### Forward Plan

2. This report does not contain a key decision and therefore there is no requirement to publish this on the forward plan. However, the actual bring forward of the Business Case and recommendations will be a key decision and needs to be published on the executive forward plan accordingly.

### Public Interest

3. Having an effective and successful Building Control and Aids and Adaptations functions are fundamental to the successful delivery of frontline services to our businesses and residents.
4. Approving the recommendations set out in this report will enable the Council to explore the expansion of the existing building control partnership and home improvement service to ensure the most resilient, efficient and effective delivery of services to our customers and communities. This would also further our desire to work collaboratively and in partnership with the other District Councils' in Somerset.

### Recommendations

That District Executive:-

- a. Note the contents of this report.
- b. Authorise the development of a business case for an expanded Somerset Building Control Partnership and Somerset Independence Plus Partnership in collaboration with any or all of MDC, SDC, SWT and SSDC.

## Background

### **Building Control**

5. The Somerset Building Control Partnership (SBCP) was formed in March 2016 by MDC, SDC and SWT (formerly Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council). The SBCP is the largest Local Authority Building Control Partnership in the South West and provides a modern, flexible building control service to businesses and householders on behalf of its partner Councils. The SBCP is governed by a Joint Committee, comprised of representatives from each Constituent Authority.
6. When the SBCP was initially considered, SSDC opted not to join the partnership at the time. However, SSDC have since expressed a willingness to work with the other partner Councils to develop a business case to consider joining the SBCP.

### **Somerset Independence Plus**

7. The Somerset Independence Plus (SIP) service is a Home Improvement Service provided by the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership, which is a partnership between SDC and SWT. The shared service was formed in August 2018, following the expiration of the contract between Somerset County Council (SCC) and the four district councils with Aster Living for the delivery of a Home Improvement Agency (HIA). SIP is commissioned by SCC to provide an integrated service, including adaptations, home improvements and prevention services for disabled and vulnerable people in Somerset, to enable them to be more independent, improve their housing and to live safer in their homes. SCC, MDC, SDC and SWT are the commissioning partners of the service.
8. When the shared SIP service was initially considered, SSDC were not a part of the previous HIA contract with Aster and had no core funding, so at that time we opted not to join the partnership. However, SSDC have since expressed a willingness to work with the other partner Councils to develop a business case and join the SIP partnership.
9. This report, therefore, seeks authority to investigate further a shared Building Control Partnership and shared Home Improvement service with MDC, SDC SWT Council and SSDC
10. If the recommendation is approved, SSDC will work collaboratively with the other parties to develop a business case for the expansion of the partnerships.
11. The business case will be brought back to District Executive for approval.

## Report Detail

12. Somerset's four District Councils are currently developing a bid which seeks to reform local government in Somerset by establishing two unitary authorities within





## South Somerset District Council

the County. The two unitary authorities would retain and deliver a number of statutory services and strategic functions respectively. Unitary work aside, there is a strong desire that we consider more collaboration and integration between authorities, through sharing a number of enabling services, which would support the District Councils, Town and Parish Councils, and wider partners.

13. If a Unitary bid were successful then the proposed changes to these services (Building Control and Home Improvement functions) would mean that the Partnerships would work across any new unitary authorities.
14. It is therefore proposed that all four councils consider the business case together to establish whether there is a case for all four councils being part of a shared Building Control Partnership and an expanded Home Improvement service, to promote cooperation between the authorities, provide resilience and achieve savings through economies of scale. To do this, a business case will need to be prepared. This business case will need to take account of each council's service needs, public procurement law and the external regulatory framework for the delivery of building control and home improvement services. The main benefit of widening the service to include SSDC will be in respect of SSDC's customers and communities being able to access a robust and resilient service that is delivered consistently across the whole of Somerset. A full benefit analysis will be considered as part of the business case development.
15. If District Executive approves recommendation 2 of this report, further work will be undertaken by SSDC to develop a business case to join the existing Somerset Building Control Partnership and Somerset Independence Plus Partnership, with the support of the other District Councils.
16. The Business Case will take into account the requirements of each independent authority (and their respective constitution and corporate priorities) whilst considering the advantage of combined and shared services, noting the reflective nature of the options progressed in respect to the District Unitary Business Case.
17. The outcome of this work is to develop a business case, which will be brought back to District Executive.

### Financial Implications

18. Widening the existing Somerset Building Control Partnership and Somerset Independence Plus service will reduce the cost of the services.
19. A full analysis of the costs and potential savings will be done as part of the business case. Value for Money will be considered as part of the development of the business case.
20. Any change to the current partnership and service agreement will have financial implications (including set up costs) for SSDC. However, it should be noted that building control and Somerset Independence Plus are a fee earning service. The





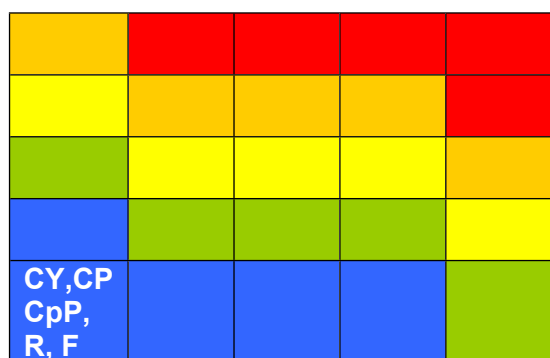
## South Somerset District Council

financial implications will be explored in more detail in the business case and managed within a budget as agreed by the Unitary Programme Board.

### Risk Matrix

21. A full risk and opportunities register will be developed and presented as part of the business case. At this point in time, Officers are only requesting permission to develop a business case.

**Risk Profile before officer recommendations**



Likelihood



**Risk Profile after officer recommendations**



Likelihood



### Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

### Council Plan Implications

22. The recommendation put forward in this report will help deliver the council's core values of

- Customers first - Designing plans and services around our customers
- Working collaboratively - Working with partners to enhance outcomes for our communities

### Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

23. There are no direct climate change implications, however any new service will, where possible, ensure that services are delivered with minimal environmental impact

### Equality and Diversity Implications

24. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken when the business case is developed and prior to any decision to approve the Business Case.

### **Background Papers**

25. None

## Shared Legal Services

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Peter Seib, Portfolio Holder for Finance & Legal Services
Ward Member(s)	All
Strategic Director:	Nicola Hix – Director, Support Services
Lead Officer:	Nicola Hix
Contact Details:	nicola.hix@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935462612

## Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet/Executive approval to explore the establishment of sharing legal services between Mendip District Council (MDC), Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT), South Somerset District Council (SSDC) and Sedgemoor District Council (SDC).
2. Approval of the recommendations will enable the Council to investigate further the different options available for the future delivery of its legal services function. This is a vital business support function that enables the Council to deliver its frontline services and corporate priorities and progress the collaborative working agenda, irrespective of the Government's decision in regard to Unitary Council(s) for Somerset.
3. This proposal is complementary to the District Councils' bid to create two Unitary Authorities in Somerset.

## Forward Plan

4. This report does not contain a key decision and therefore there is no requirement to publish this on the forward plan. However, the actual bringing forward of the Business Case and recommendations will be a key decision and needs to be published on the executive forward plan accordingly.

## Public Interest

5. Approval of the recommendations will enable the Council to investigate further the different options available for the future delivery of its legal services function. This is a vital business support function that enables the Council to deliver its frontline services and corporate priorities and progress the collaborative working agenda, irrespective of the Government's decision in regard to Unitary Council(s) for Somerset.

## Recommendations

6. That District Executive:
  - a) Note the contents of this report.

- b) Authorise the establishment of a project team to work on the development of a business case and options appraisal for the sharing of legal services between Mendip District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council, South Somerset District Council and Sedgemoor District Council.
- c) Authorise the Director of Support Services, following consultation with the Districts' Unitary Programme Board and Unitary Steering Group, to take any and all decisions as deemed necessary to enable the business case and options appraisal to be developed to include, without limitation, finalising, approving and signing Heads of Terms and engaging any external advisers.
- d) Agree a contribution of up to £5,000 to fund the Councils one quarter share in relation to the engagement of any external advisors to be funded from existing service revenue budget for 2020/21.
- e) Authorise Director of Support Services to review the progressing of the shared legal services project in the event that Central Government decide to proceed with one Unitary Authority for Somerset

## Background

- 7. Since 1 April 2015, Mendip District Council has hosted a shared legal service with Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) (previously Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council) and provides adhoc support and resources to South Somerset District Council (SSDC) and in relation to two shared projects, Sedgemoor District Council (SDC). The original arrangement was due to expire on the 31 March 2020, but by agreement has been extended for a further year until 31 March 2021.
- 8. SDC also provides legal services to other local authorities in Somerset (District and Town/Parish).
- 9. As the agreement for the shared legal service between MDC and SWT is due to expire in March 2021, the opportunity has been taken to consider a countywide legal services partnership between the four District Councils in Somerset to serve the requirements of all District Councils as well as any future proposed local government model that would serve the County of Somerset.
- 10. The operation of the existing MDC/SWT shared legal service is governed by an Inter-Authority Agreement entered into by the parties. The initial term of these shared arrangements was due to conclude on 31 March 2020, but MDC and SWT have agreed to extend this by one year whilst future options for the delivery of shared legal services are considered, especially within the context of the changes that have occurred in the local government environment since 2015, for example where complex commercial transactions have become the norm rather than the exception.

## Report Detail



11. It is proposed that all four District Councils collectively consider the options to establish whether there is a case for a four Council shared quality legal service to promote co-operation between the authorities, create greater resilience, and achieve savings through economies of scale. In order to do this, a business case will need to be prepared, including an options appraisal for different delivery models and legal structures.
12. This approach is complimentary to and will align with any future model of local government that sees two unitary authorities serving the County of Somerset. The Director of Support Services will therefore consult with the Districts' Unitary Programme Board and Unitary Steering Group made up of the Leaders and Chief Executives of the four District Councils to ensure that any proposals arising from the business plan are in line with the Districts' bid for two unitary authorities.
13. The business case will propose a new service delivery model for the legal function across all four authorities. Each authority would retain strategic oversight (including retaining the statutory role of the Monitoring Officer) of their respective legal function, but other elements of the legal function would be pooled between the authorities.
14. This business case will need to take account of service needs, public procurement law and the external regulatory framework for the delivery of legal services. The main focus of a new shared service will be on delivery of a quality legal service back to the District Councils, but the business case will also seek to understand the scope for trading beyond the District Councils in providing a legal service to City, Town and Parish Councils, charities and other public sector bodies beyond the Somerset boundary as well as, if appropriate, current and future private sector businesses and organisations. The delivery of legal services is subject to external regulation by the SRA (The Solicitors Regulatory Authority).
15. Discussions are at an early stage but high level Heads of Terms are in preparation. These Heads of Terms are being prepared collaboratively by the four District Councils.
16. Approval of the recommendations listed would allow all options to be considered through a business case which will be presented to the Cabinet/Executive of each District Council in a future report.
17. The Council could choose not to collaborate with the other District Councils or MDC and SWT could seek to refresh the scope and remit of the existing Inter-Authority Agreement, but this would mean that not all options could be fully considered before making a decision on the future of legal services delivery.

## **Financial Implications**

18. Any change to the current shared service will have financial implications (including set up costs) for the Council and these will be explored in the business case.



## South Somerset District Council

19. If the recommendations in this report are approved, the development of the business case (including the joint engagement of external advisers) will be managed within a budget. The Executive are therefore being invited to agree a contribution of up to £5K representing a one quarter share of the costs of appointing any external advisors. Each Council to contribute an equal share. This will be funded from within existing revenue budgets.

### Legal Implications

20. The councils have the power to establish, participate in and purchase from a shared legal service. The exact legal structure/delivery model will be considered as part of the business case. The Council's relevant powers include the General Power of Competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. The application of the Council's powers will be considered further in the business case.

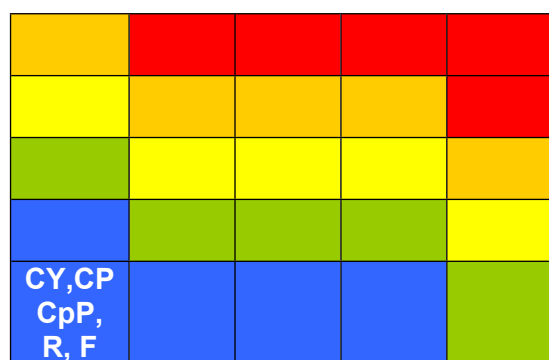
21. Any purchases by the Council must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's contracts standing orders.

22. The delivery of legal services is subject to external regulation. This will be considered further as part of the business case development.

### Risk Matrix

23. A full risk and opportunities register will be developed and presented as part of the business case. At this point in time, Officers are only requesting permission to develop a business case.

**Risk Profile before officer recommendations**



Likelihood



**Risk Profile after officer recommendations**



Likelihood



#### Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability



### **Council Plan Implications**

24. Robust legal advice is fundamental to the successful delivery of frontline services to our customers, communities and the operation of the Council. Approving the recommendations set out in this report will enable the Council to explore the most efficient and effective options for the delivery of a quality and sustainable legal service in line with the four District Councils working collaboratively or through the formation of unitary authorities.
25. The Council's legal function is an essential facilitator of the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities and this report will help deliver the Council's core values of working collaboratively - Working with partners to enhance outcomes for our communities.

### **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

26. There are no direct climate change implications, however any new service will, where possible, ensure that services are delivered with minimal environmental impact. For example, meetings will be carried out virtually where possible and a paperless approach will be taken. The shared service will adopt any other necessary carbon reduction initiatives to serve the existing corporate priorities in relation to the climate emergency agenda for each Council.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

27. A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken when the business case is developed and prior to any decision to approve the Business Case.

### **Privacy Impact Assessment**

28. There are no privacy implications at this juncture

### **Background Papers**

None

## **Urgent Decision – Support for Leisure Provider**

Executive Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Mike Best, Health & Well-Being
Ward Member(s)	All
Strategic Director:	Kirsty Larkins, Director - Strategy and Commissioning
Service Manager:	Lynda Pincombe, Specialist - Strategic Planning
Lead Officer:	Jo Nacey – S151 Officer
Contact Details:	Jo.Nacey@SouthSomerset.Gov.Uk

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of this report is to notify Members of an urgent executive decision made by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-Being and the Section 151 Officer, to offer a letter of support with agreement in principle to provide funding to mitigate the losses incurred by LED Leisure Management Ltd due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

### **2. Forward Plan**

This report did not appear on the District Executive Forward Plan as the need for a letter of support was not anticipated prior to the approach from LED Leisure Ltd, (LED).

### **3. Public Interest**

This report outlines the position of the leisure provider and the Council's need to offer funding to enable the facilities to re-open.

### **4. Recommendations**

That District Executive note the urgent executive decision made by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Council Leader and Portfolio Holder for Health & Well-Being to provide a letter of support to our Leisure providers, LED with an agreement in principle to provide adequate funding. Any further requests of funds to be taken through the formal democratic route.

### **5. Background**

Following the requirement to close all sites, LED wrote to SSDC on 29th May to present their initial revenue projections for the remainder of the current financial year based on all wet and dry facilities re-opening in the first week of July 2020. The re-opening rules were subsequently revised by Central Government.

LED presented projections based on 40%, 60% and 80% of expected revenue performance. LED like many leisure providers suffered significant loss of income due





## **South Somerset District Council**

to closure of the facilities, it would not be viable for them to re-open without funding from SSDC. LED Leisure indicated that they would need a decision from SSDC on this by mid July 2020.

### **6. Re-opening Options Considered**

Following dialogue, LED Leisure modelled the following scenarios:

- All three facilities fully opening at the beginning of July 2020 (subsequently found to not be possible).
- A phased re-opening of facilities at all sites, with gym and health and fitness re-opening in July and pools at Wincanton and Goldenstones opening in September.
- Phased opening of health and fitness at Westlands Sport and Fitness Centre and Wincanton, with Goldenstones not re-opening at all until September (on the basis that Westlands would be able to accommodate much of the gym and fitness provision for Yeovil).

The financial implications for each scenario is set out in Confidential Appendix A, Section 1

The LED proposals were based on key principles which are included in Section 2 of the Appendix.

### **7. Financial Implications**

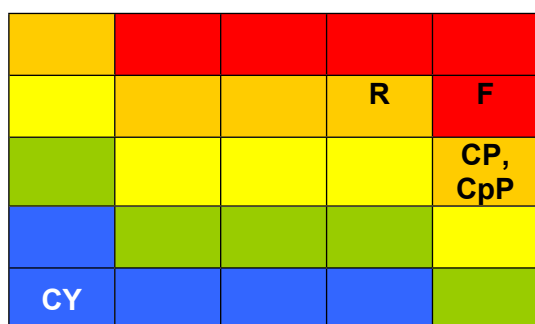
The Council have given this agreement in principle under the following terms as set out in the letter of support to LED Leisure Management Ltd, "On the understanding that all dry side facilities will re-open from 25th July 2020 and all facilities (including both pools) from the beginning of September 2020, we confirm that South Somerset District Council (SSDC) will support LED with initial funding. This is offered on the basis that LED Leisure Management agree continued cost mitigations and an "open book" monthly review meeting SSDC to discuss progress to date and any further funding requirements".

This urgent decision was taken due to LED's need to satisfy its auditors and in order to plan re-opening.

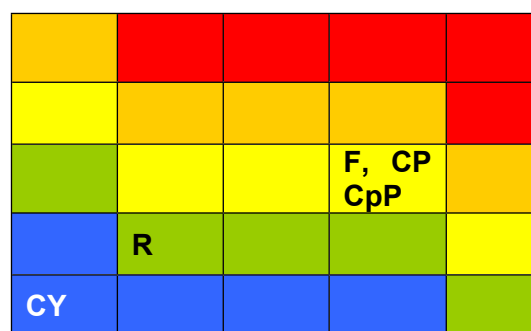
We are hoping to secure funding from Central Government to mitigate this pressure and recognise the importance of re-opening leisure sites and swimming pools. We do not, as yet, have details of the plans MHCLG have to support councils with in-house and externally provided leisure provision. In the meantime, we are comfortable that we can fund this pressure from our General Reserves.

### **8. Risk Matrix**

The risk matrix shows risk relating to the Corporate Plan headings.



Likelihood  
→



Likelihood  
→

### Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

## 9. Council Plan Implications

The recommendation put forward in this report will help deliver the Council's core values of:

- Working collaboratively - Working with partners to enhance outcomes for our communities
- Work with partners to support people in improving their own physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Enable quality cultural, leisure and sport activities

## 10. Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

There are no Carbon Emissions and Climate Change implications from this report.

## 11. Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality and diversity implications from this report.

## 12. Privacy Impact Assessment

There is no personal information included in this report.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

## District Executive Forward Plan

Executive Portfolio Holder: Val Keitch, Leader, Strategy and Housing  
Strategic Director: Kirsty Larkins, Strategy and Commissioning  
Lead Officer: Angela Cox, Democratic Services Specialist  
Contact Details: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

## Purpose of the Report

1. This report informs Members of the current Executive Forward Plan, provides information on Portfolio Holder decisions and on consultation documents received by the Council that have been logged on the consultation database.

## Public Interest

2. The District Executive Forward Plan lists the reports due to be discussed and decisions due to be made by the Committee within the next few months. The Consultation Database is a list of topics which the Council's view is currently being consulted upon by various outside organisations.

## Recommendations

3. That District Executive is asked to:
  - a) approve the updated Executive Forward Plan for publication as attached at Appendix A
  - b) note the contents of the Consultation Database as shown at Appendix B.

## Executive Forward Plan

4. The latest Forward Plan is attached at Appendix A. The timings given for reports to come forward are indicative only, and occasionally may be re scheduled and new items added as new circumstances arise.

## Consultation Database

5. The Council has agreed a protocol for processing consultation documents received by the Council. This requires consultation documents received to be logged and the current consultation documents are attached at Appendix B.

## Background Papers

6. None.



## SSDC Executive Forward Plan

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
10 <sup>th</sup> September 2020  10 <sup>th</sup> September 2020	The Future of Local Government in Somerset (Stronger Somerset)	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Service Delivery	Jan Gamon, Lead Specialist (Strategic Planning)	Special District Executive  Special South Somerset District Council
October 2020	Quarterly Corporate Performance Report	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Cath Temple, Specialist (Performance)	District Executive
October 2020	Transformation Update	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Brendan Downes, Specialist (Procurement)	District Executive
October 2020	Planning appeal decisions – Government submission	Portfolio Holder - Protecting Core Services	Director Service Delivery	Barry James, Interim Planning Lead Specialist	District Executive
October 2020	Covid 19 Update Report - financial and service impact	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	District Executive
November 2020	The Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy	Portfolio Holder - Environment	Director Strategy and Commissioning	David Crisfield, Specialist (Strategic Planning)	District Executive
November 2020	Capital & Revenue Budget monitoring reports for Quarter 2	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Support Services	Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	District Executive

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
November 2020	Remote Meeting Protocol for SSDC	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Angela Cox, Specialist (Democratic Services)	District Executive
December 2020	Recycle More - information on the extended recycling programme	Portfolio Holder - Environment	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Chris Cooper, Environment Services Manager	District Executive
December 2020	Transformation Update	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Brendan Downes, Specialist (Procurement)	District Executive
December 2020	Covid 19 Update Report - financial and service impact	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	District Executive
December 2020	Quarterly Corporate Performance Report	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Cath Temple, Specialist (Performance)	District Executive
December 2020	Supporting Families and Improving Life Chances, project update	Portfolio Holder - Health & Well-Being	Director Place	Alice Knight, Specialist (Housing)	District Executive
December 2020	Investment Asset quarterly update report	Portfolio Holder - Economic Development including Commercial Strategy	Director Commercial Services & Income Generation	Robert Orrett, Commercial Property. Land & Development Manager	District Executive

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
December 2020  December 2020	Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Service Delivery  Director Service Delivery	Sharon Jones, Customer Focussed Team Manager	District Executive  South Somerset District Council
February 2021	Capital & Revenue Budget monitoring reports for Quarter 3	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Support Services	Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	District Executive
February 2021  February 2021	Council Plan 2021/22	Portfolio Holder - Strategy & Housing  Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Strategy and Commissioning  Director Support Services	Kirsty Larkins, Director (Strategy and Commissioning)	District Executive  South Somerset District Council
February 2021  February 2021	2021/22 Revenue and Capital Budget	Portfolio Holder - Finance, Legal & Democratic Services	Director Support Services  Director Support Services	Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	District Executive  South Somerset District Council
Meeting Date	Leisure Contracts	Portfolio Holder - Health & Well-Being	Director Service Delivery	Lynda Pincombe, Specialist - Strategic Planning	District Executive
Meeting Date	Dualling of A303 from Sparkford to Ilchester	Portfolio Holder - Protecting Core Services	Director Strategy and Commissioning	Lynda Pincombe, Specialist - Strategic Planning	District Executive

Date of Decision	Decision	Portfolio	Service Director	Contact	Committee(s)
Meeting Date	Allowenshay mains water connection	Portfolio Holder - Health & Well-Being	Director Support Services	Tim Cook, Locality Team Manager	District Executive



## APPENDIX B - Current Consultations – September 2020

Purpose of Document	Portfolio	Director	Response to be agreed by	Contact	Deadline for response
<p><b>Public Works Loan Board: Future lending terms HM Treasury fundamental review of business rates: call for evidence</b></p> <p>This call for evidence seeks views on how the business rates system currently works, issues to be addressed, ideas for change and a number of alternative taxes.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hm-treasury-fundamental-review-of-business-rates-call-for-evidence">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hm-treasury-fundamental-review-of-business-rates-call-for-evidence</a></p>	Finance and Legal Services	Director – Service Delivery	Officers in consultation with Portfolio Holder	Helen Morris, Specialist – Revenues Jo Nacey, Section 151 Officer	18 September 2020
<p><b>Developing a tree strategy for England</b></p> <p>We are seeking views across a wide range of topics on trees and forestry to help inform the development of an England tree strategy.</p> <p>This consultation will inform a new England Tree Strategy which we will publish later this year. The strategy will set out policy priorities to deliver our ambitious tree planting programme. It will focus on expanding, protecting and improving our woodlands, and how trees and woodlands can connect people to nature, support the economy, combat climate change and recover biodiversity. This will ensure that trees are established and managed for the many benefits they provide for people, the economy, the climate and nature itself.</p> <p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-a-tree-strategy-for-england">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/developing-a-tree-strategy-for-england</a></p>	Environment	Director – Service Delivery	Individual responses by Portfolio Holder and relevant Officers. Parish Environment Champions have also been encouraged to respond.	Katy Munday, Leisure & Recreation Manager	11 September 2020

Purpose of Document	Portfolio	Director	Response to be agreed by	Contact	Deadline for response
<b>Planning for the future</b>  The Planning for the future consultation proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.	Protecting Core Services	Director - Service Delivery	Officers in consultation with Portfolio Holder	Barry James, Lead Specialist – Development Management	29 October 2020

# Agenda Item 14

## **Date of Next Meeting**

Members are asked to note that there will be a special meeting of District Executive on **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> September commencing at 9.00a.m.** to discuss the Future Somerset report. This will be a virtual meeting via Zoom meeting software.

The next scheduled meeting of the District Executive will take place on **Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020** as a virtual meeting via Zoom meeting software commencing at 9.30 a.m.



## **Exclusion of Press and Public**

The Committee is asked to agree that the following item (agenda item 16) be considered in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under paragraph 3:

“Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).”

It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption from the Access to Information Rules outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.



# Agenda Item 16

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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