

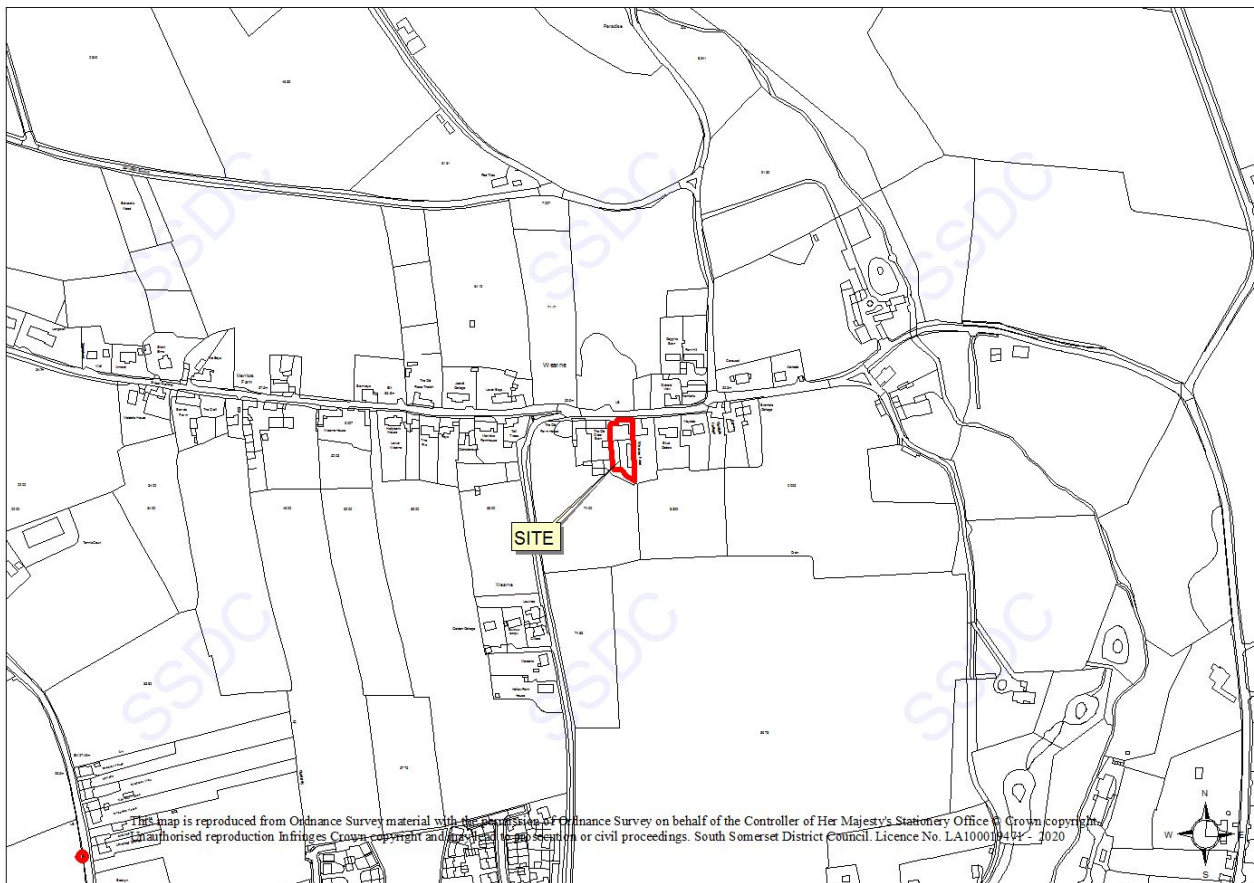
## Officer Report On Planning Application: 20/01078/FUL

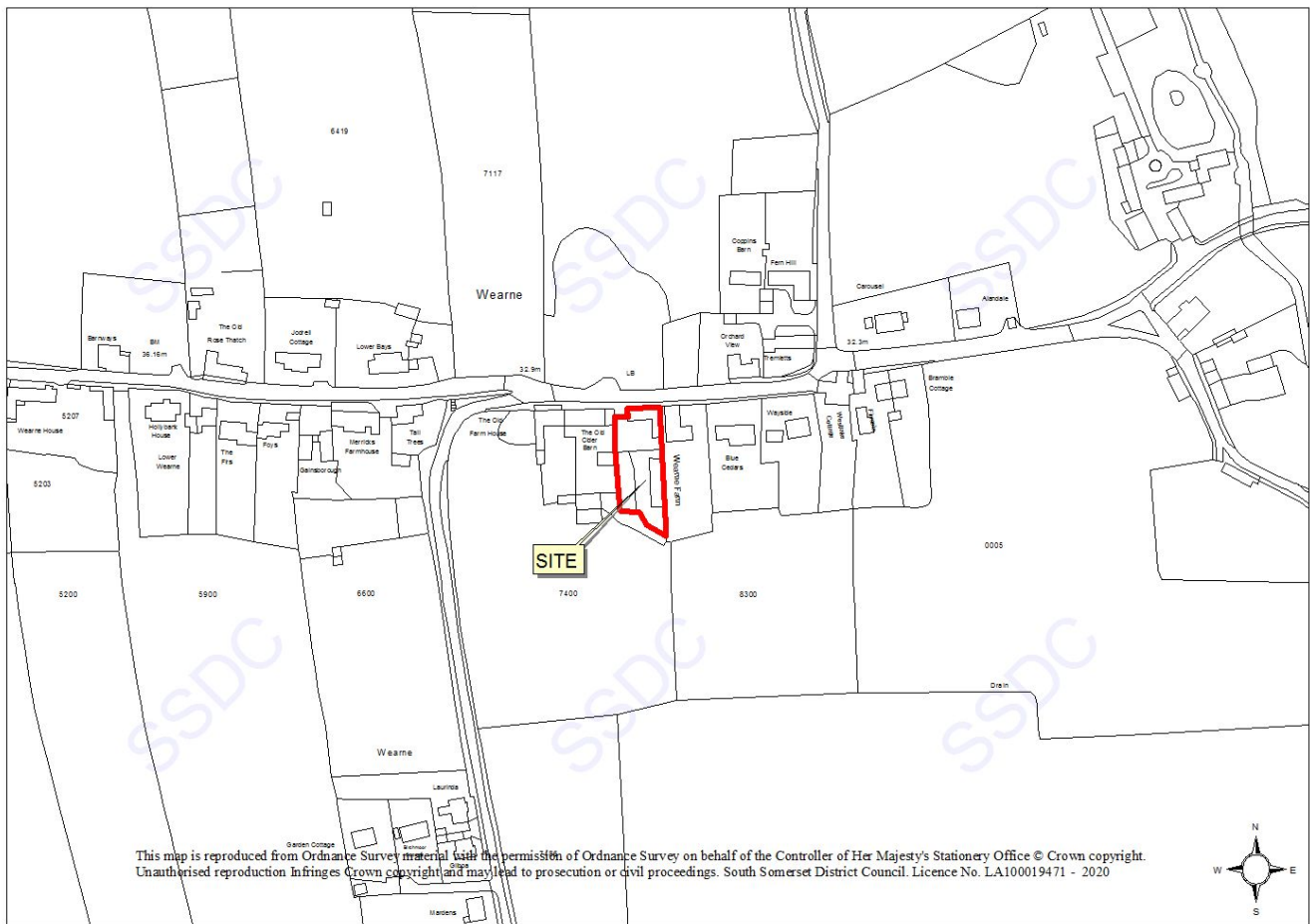
<b>Proposal :</b>	Demolition of buildings, the erection of a dwelling and the conversion of an existing building into ancillary living accommodation and garaging
<b>Site Address:</b>	Land At Wearne Farm, Wearne Main Road, Wearne TA10 0QJ
<b>Parish:</b>	Huish Episcopi
<b>CURRY RIVEL, HUISH &amp; LANGPORT Ward (SSDC Member)</b>	Cllr T Osborne Cllr C Paul
<b>Recommending Case Officer:</b>	Mr Robert Brigden
<b>Target date :</b>	10th June 2020
<b>Applicant :</b>	Margaret Cook
<b>Agent: (no agent if blank)</b>	Michael Williams, Sanderley Studio, Kennel Lane, Langport TA10 9SB
<b>Application Type :</b>	Minor Dwellings 1-9 site less than 1ha

### REASON FOR REFFERAL TO COMMITTEE

The Ward Members disagree with the Case Officers recommendation and consider the site to be sustainable. The Area Chairman agreed that the matter should be referred to committee for further debate.

### SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





The site comprises land located on the southern side of Wearne Road, and contains three buildings - an L-shaped structure running alongside part of the site's northern and eastern boundaries, and two light-weight, agricultural structures located at the southern end of the site. The submitted information states that the site is currently in use for caravan storage. The northern building is Grade II listed, and forms part of a range of structures connected to Wearne Farm House. The site forms part of a very small rural settlement, which contains no key facilities.

This planning application proposes the demolition of the two southern buildings and their replacement by a detached, single-storey dwelling, and the conversion of the northern building to ancillary accommodation and a car port. The associated curtilage area would contain garden, parking, and manoeuvring spaces, with vehicular access being taken through the existing access onto the highway.

## HISTORY

There are no previous planning decisions at the site of particular relevance to the proposal.

Pre-application advice has previously been given in relation to a scheme for three dwellings, including two at the site (reference: 19/00479/PREAPP). It was concluded that the site is not located in a sustainable location and that this harm would not be outweighed by other material considerations in this case.

## **POLICY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of determining current applications, the adopted Development Plan comprises the policies of the South Somerset Local Plan 2006-2028 (adopted March 2015).

### Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028)

SD1 - Sustainable Development

SS1 - Settlement Strategy

SS4 - District Wide Housing Provision

SS5 - Delivering New Housing Growth

SS6 - Infrastructure Delivery

TA5 - Transport Impact of New Development

TA6 - Parking Standards

HW1 - Provision of open space, outdoor playing space, sports, cultural and community facilities in new development

EQ1 - Addressing Climate Change in South Somerset

EQ2 - General development

EQ3 - Historic Environment

The following are material planning considerations:

### National Planning Policy Framework

### Planning Policy Guidance

Climate change

Design

Adopted Somerset County Council Parking Strategy

Somerset County Council Highways Development Control - Standing Advice

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Huish Episcopi Parish Council** - No objections.

**SSDC Highways Advisor** - Acceptance to the principle of the proposed development in this location must be largely a planning matter to determine. The traffic impact of the scheme on the local highway network is unlikely to be significant or severe, especially when considering the type and volume of traffic that could be generated by the agricultural building that would be demolished. The means of access seems reasonable. While the westerly visibility splay may fall below standard, given that this is an existing entrance and bearing in mind the issue above about comparable traffic generation, I am minded to accept the splay in that direction. The roadside building appears to have an existing entrance directly onto Wearne Lane. I note that it is proposed to retain this feature but for the access to be permanently closed. Provided the roadside building is used ancillary to the main residence (the new dwelling) and not as a separate dwelling (which can be conditioned) I believe the scheme can be supported on highways grounds. I recommend the imposition of conditions securing the submitted visibility splays, on-site parking and turning as shown, the use of the roadside building ancillary to the main residence and the provision of an electric vehicle charging point. The access already appears to be consolidated

and surfaced - any improvements would be a matter for the applicant to consider provided the first 5m remains bound and properly surfaced and the gates being set back at least 5m from the edge of the carriageway.

**Highway Authority** - Standing advice applies.

**Ecologist** - No objections; conditions recommended.

**Heritage Advisor** - The proposal has two parts. The first is to convert the listed barn along the street front into a studio. The second is to demolish the existing Dutch barn and other agricultural structures in the yard beyond a dividing lias wall and to replace them with a single storey stone and brick H shaped three bedroom dwelling.

#### Part 1

I would agree with previous advice that according to historic map evidence there was a continuous street frontage which included this barn so when applying curtilage tests the barn would be considered as part of the listing.

The current plans would preserve the character of the street front and overall the character and fabric of the building appears to be preserved and improved as far as can be judged by the description. I would consider this part of the proposal overall acceptable. I note the retention of the existing boundary walls.

#### Part 2

This area is part of the historic farm yard with intervisibility to the listed building and direct views to and from the village street. I would not consider the existing agricultural buildings harmful, neither would I object to their demolition and construction of a new dwelling in this location if and only if, the replacement dwelling would preserve the agricultural character of the setting of Wearne Farm. It would have to contribute to the significance of a heritage asset and be sympathetic with the vernacular character of this farm and village in design, materials and placement.

While the materials are sympathetic, the shape and massing of the proposed replacement building is not agricultural or locally distinctive but domestic. The proportions of the building and the design of the elevations facing the road and the listed building are in my view not compatible with the historic context and would have an adverse effect on the setting of the listed building.

I would doubt that comparison with similar local historic farmsteads would be able to identify a building of this form and proportions.

I recommend refusal of the application in its present form.

**Archaeologists** - No objections.

## REPRESENTATIONS

One representation has been received from the general public, which supports the proposal.

"We walk our dog past this site most days and live within 1 mile of the application site. We consider that the scheme will offer enhancements to the wider site setting and local area.

Our reasons for supporting the scheme are as follows:

- The site is located within the existing built-up part of Wearne and will provide a natural infill dwelling;
- The principle of the development is acceptable as the existing barn (proposed ancillary building) could've been converted to a modest dwelling without major or complete re-construction, so there would be a realistic fall-back position for the applicant;
- The dwelling will offer benefits for housing supply, where SSDC cannot currently demonstrate a secured 5 year rolling supply;
- It will enhance the landscape setting of the site through the removal of unsightly and unsuitable agricultural buildings, replacing them with a well designed and sensitive infill dwelling;
- -It will create enhancements to the historic setting of adjoining listed buildings;
- It will provide bio-diversity gains within its construction;
- Overall trip generation from the site will be reduced in comparison to the lawful commercial use as a caravan storage site. It will therefore not foster growth in the use of private cars to a harmful extent;
- Local services in Huish and Langport are a short walk or bike ride from the site, so cars can be left at home;
- SSDC should be consistent in their approach to this development and take into regard the decision made at Merriots Farm, which is a short walk from the site."

## **ASSESSMENT**

### **Principle of Development**

Policy SS1 (Settlement Strategy) of the South Somerset Local Plan highlights the areas where new development is expected to be focused, grouping certain towns and villages into a hierarchy of settlements including the Strategically Significant Town (Yeovil), Primary Market Towns, Local Market Towns and Rural Centres. All other settlements, are 'Rural Settlements', which policy SS1 states "will be considered as part of the countryside to which national countryside protection policies apply (subject to the exceptions identified in policy SS2. Policy SS2 states:

"Development in Rural Settlements (not Market Towns or Rural Centres) will be strictly controlled and limited to that which:

- Provides employment opportunities appropriate to the scale of the settlement; and/or
- Creates or enhances community facilities and services to serve the settlement; and/or
- Meets identified housing need, particularly for affordable housing.

Development will be permitted where it is commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement, provides for one or more of the types of development above, and increases the sustainability of a settlement in general. Proposals should be consistent with relevant community led plans, and should generally have the support of the local community following robust engagement and consultation. Proposals for housing development should only be permitted in Rural Settlements that have access to two or more key services listed at paragraph 5.41 (i.e. local convenience shop, post office, pub, children's play area/sports pitch, village hall/community centre, health centre, faith facility, primary school)."

Usually, proposals for residential development in locations such as this would be considered contrary to the settlement strategy contained within Local Plan policies SS1 and SS2. However, the Local Planning Authority is currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of housing land. As such, several recent appeal decisions have confirmed that, in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, these policies should be considered out of date, as they are relevant to the supply of housing.

In such circumstances, the main consideration will be whether any adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the guidance in the NPPF taken as a whole. The site is located in Wearne, which is a very small rural settlement that does not contain any

key services. The nearest services are located around 800m away by road. Safe access to these on foot is limited and the proposal's future occupiers are most likely to access services by car. As such, the location of the proposal is not considered to be sustainable.

The applicants have referred to the recent granting of planning permission for two dwellings in Wearne (17/01301/FUL) and state that the Council should be consistent in its decision making. However, the decision in that case was a balanced one, where the harm by reason of an unsustainable location was considered to be outweighed by the other benefits, including the replacement of visually harmful structures. The same benefits are not apparent in the case now under consideration, where the existing structures are not considered to be visually harmful. The two structures to be removed have a light-weight, agricultural appearance and views of them from the highway are fleeting as people pass the site entrance by car, with the northern building and neighbouring buildings serving to screen the site. Moreover, as will be discussed below, the design of the proposed replacement building is considered to be harmful to the setting of the listed building.

A letter of support has been received making the following points in relation to the principle of development, and these will be addressed in turn.

- The site is located within the existing built-up part of Wearne and will provide a natural infill dwelling;

Wearne is a small, rural settlement lacking key services. The location of the site is not considered to be sustainable and the proposal is therefore contrary to Local Plan Policies SS1 and SS2.

- The principle of the development is acceptable as the existing barn (proposed ancillary building) could've been converted to a modest dwelling without major or complete re-construction, so there would be a realistic fall-back position for the applicant.

In the absence of supporting information to the contrary, it is unclear whether the listed building would be capable of being converted to a dwelling in a manner that would provide an acceptable standard of accommodation; would not result in unacceptable harm to the character of the building; and would be financially viable. Therefore, based on the information available, a realistic fall-back position has not been demonstrated.

- The dwelling will offer benefits for housing supply, where SSDC cannot currently demonstrate a secured 5 year rolling supply;

As discussed above, even in the absence of a five year housing land supply, the provision of a dwelling in an unsustainable location is not justified in this case, and is contrary to policy.

- Local services in Huish and Langport are a short walk or bike ride from the site, so cars can be left at home;

The pedestrian links to the nearest services are not considered to be safe, either involving unlit pathways or walking along main roads.

- SSDC should be consistent in their approach to this development and take into regard the decision made at Merriots Farm, which is a short walk from the site.

That proposal involved mitigating factors which were deemed sufficient to outweigh the harm identified. The harm identified in relation to the proposal now under consideration is not outweighed by other considerations.

The proposal is unacceptable in principle.

## **Access**

Policy TA5 of the Local Plan states that the nature and volume of traffic and parked vehicles generated by a proposal should not compromise the safety and/or function of local or strategic road networks.

A letter of support states that overall trip generation from the site would be reduced in comparison to its lawful commercial use as a caravan storage site. It would therefore not foster growth in the use of private cars to a harmful extent.

The Highway Authority has raised no objections to the proposal, subject to compliance with their standing advice. The Council's Highways advisor has raised no objections subject to the use of conditions to secure safe access arrangements.

Subject to the use of the aforementioned conditions, it is considered that the proposal's vehicular access and parking arrangements would have an acceptable impact in relation to highway safety, and be in accordance Policies TA5 and TA6 of the Local Plan.

The proposed pedestrian access arrangements are not considered to be safe, however, this is considered to be of greater significance in relation to the sustainability of the location and therefore the principle of development.

## **Visual Impact and Heritage Assets**

Policy EQ2 of the Local Plan states that development should preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the district.

Policy EQ3 states that "heritage assets will be conserved and where appropriate enhanced for their historic significance and important contribution to local distinctiveness, character and sense of place... All new development proposals relating to the historic environment will be expected to:

- Safeguard or where appropriate enhance the significance, character, setting and local distinctiveness of heritage assets;
- Make a positive contribution to its character through high standards of design which reflect and complement it and through the use of appropriate materials and techniques..."

A letter of support states that the proposal would enhance the landscape setting of the site through the removal of unsightly and unsuitable agricultural buildings, replacing them with a well designed and sensitive infill dwelling and that it would create enhancements to the historic setting of adjoining listed buildings.

The Council's Heritage Advisor does not raise any objections to the proposed conversion of the listed building. The existing buildings are not considered to be harmful to the setting of the listed building, however, in relation to the proposed dwelling:

"While the materials are sympathetic, the shape and massing of the proposed replacement building is not agricultural or locally distinctive but domestic. The proportions of the building and the design of the elevations facing the road and the listed building are in my view not compatible with the historic context and would have an adverse effect on the setting of the listed building."

Given the suburban design and proportions of the proposed dwelling, it is considered that it would not be in keeping with the historic character of its immediate surroundings, and that it would be harmful to the setting of the listed building. The identified harm to heritage assets is less than substantial and public benefits that outweigh this have not been demonstrated in this case. In terms of its effects on heritage assets and the character of the area, the proposal is contrary to Policies EQ2 and EQ3 of the Local

Plan, and the guidance contained in the NPPF.

### **Local Amenity**

Policy EQ2 of the Local Plan states that development proposals should protect the residential amenities of neighbours, and that new dwellings should provide acceptable amenity space.

It appears that the proposed development would provide sufficient internal living and amenity space areas to ensure an adequate standard of accommodation for future occupiers.

Bearing in mind the existing situation, given its siting, scale, and design, it is considered that the proposal would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenities of neighbours, in terms of their outlook, privacy, or access to natural light, or in terms of general disturbance, and it is therefore in accordance with Policy EQ2 of the Local Plan.

### **Drainage Arrangements**

Policy EQ1 of the Local Plan concerns flood risk and drainage arrangements in relation to new development.

The site is located in Flood Zone 1, which is at the lowest risk of flooding.

The submitted information states that the proposed foul drainage measures are unknown. The surface water drainage arrangements would employ soakaways. A condition is recommended to secure specific details and the implementation of a scheme of foul and surface water drainage measures.

Subject to the use of this condition, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy EQ1 of the Local Plan.

### **Ecology**

A letter of support states that the proposal would provide bio-diversity gains within its construction.

The application is supported by an ecological report and the Council's ecological advisors have raised no objections, subject to the use of conditions intended to secure measures for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. Subject to the use of these conditions, it is considered that the proposal would not result in harm to nature conservation interests and would be in accordance with Policy EQ4 of the Local Plan.

### **Conclusions and Planning Balance**

The location of the site is not considered to be sustainable and the design of the proposed dwelling would be harmful to the setting of a listed building and the character of the area. The benefits of the proposal, including the provision of a new dwelling to meet the district's housing needs; a possible reduction in the number of vehicle movements from the site compared to the existing situation; along with very modest biodiversity enhancements, are not considered sufficient to outweigh the identified harm.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Refuse planning permission.



**FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

01. The site is located in Wearne, which is a very small rural settlement that does not contain any key services, and the proposal's future occupiers are most likely to access services elsewhere by car. As such, the location of the proposal is not considered to be sustainable, and the proposal is contrary to the district's settlement strategy, including Policies SS1 and SS2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.
02. Given the suburban design and proportions of the proposed dwelling, it is considered that it would not be in keeping with the historic character of its immediate surroundings, and that it would be harmful to the setting of a listed building. The identified harm to heritage assets is less than substantial and public benefits that outweigh this have not been demonstrated in this case. In terms of its effects on heritage assets and the character of the area, the proposal is contrary to Policies EQ2 and EQ3 of the Local Plan, and the guidance contained in the NPPF.