



# **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.**

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Date of Report: 1 June 2020

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## Contents

	Page
<b>Main Findings - Executive Summary</b>	3
<b>1. Introduction and Background</b>	3
• Queen Camel Neighbourhood Plan 2019–2030	3
• The Independent Examiner	4
• The Scope of the Examination	5
• The Basic Conditions	6
<b>2. Approach to the Examination</b>	6
• Planning Policy Context	6
• Submitted Documents	7
• Site Visit	7
• Written Representations with or without Public Hearing	8
• Modifications	8
<b>3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights</b>	8
• Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area	8
• Plan Period	8
• Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation	8
• Development and Use of Land	10
• Excluded Development	10
• Human Rights	10
<b>4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions</b>	10
• EU Obligations	10
• Main Issues	11
• Introduction	12
• Issue 1 – Housing, Employment and Community Facilities	13
- Housing	13
- Business and employment	18
- Community Facilities	19
- Community consultation	19
• Issue 2 - The Built and Natural Environment	20
- The Built Environment	20
- The Natural Environment	22
• Issue 3 – Local Green Spaces	23
• Issue 4 – Road Infrastructure, Footpaths and Parking	24
<b>5. Conclusions</b>	26
• Summary	26
• The Referendum and its Area	26
• Overview	27
<b>Appendix: Modifications</b>	28

## **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.

## *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><i>Open market housing should provide a mix of smaller 2 and 3-bedroom homes.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>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.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The provision of starter homes (as defined in the NPPF) and self-build plots will be supported.</i></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><i>safe</i></b>'.</p> <p>In d) add '<b><i>(in line with policy QC9)</i></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><i>safe</i></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.