

Officer Report on Planning Application: 15/00600/OUT

Proposal :	Outline planning application for the erection of up to 11 no. dwellings (full details to be considered for plot 1) (GR:357501/124494)
Site Address:	Land At South Street West Camel
Parish:	West Camel
CAMELOT Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr M. Lewis
Recommending Case Officer:	Dave Norris Tel: 01935 462382 Email: david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	6th May 2015
Applicant :	Mr Les Stevens (Parish Clerk)
Agent: (no agent if blank)	
Application Type :	Major Dwlgs 10 or more or site 0.5ha+

REASON(S) FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

This application has been referred to the committee to allow the benefits of the proposal to be considered against the other impacts.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





The application site is located on the southern edge of the village, adjoining existing development. The site is currently used for agricultural purposes and is host to a range of agricultural buildings.

This is an innovative scheme that has been led by the parish council and seeks to provide housing to meet the needs of the parish. Extensive consultations have taken place over the last few years and the results clearly showed that there was a need for new, smaller units that would allow locals to downsize together with some interest for affordable units.

This is an outline application that seeks permission for up to 11 dwellings and the ownership/tenure has been indicated as follows:

- 5 units of community housing
- 4 plots to be transferred to the parish council with the potential to be affordable units
- 2 plots (one for each of the landowners)

All of the plots will be the subject of a restrictive covenant that seeks to allow local residents to have the first option on the plots however it is recognised that the landowner's plots and the affordable units will have different restrictions. The applicant has submitted a draft covenant that indicates the covenants that will apply to both the open market 'local' dwellings and the affordable units.

Full details have been submitted in relation to Plot 1 as this adjoins the listed building however the details of the other plots would be considered through the submission of a Reserved Matters Application.

HISTORY

62071 - Application for residential development refused (1971)

POLICY

The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028) was adopted on the 5th March 2015. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the adopted local plan now forms part of the development plan. As such, decisions on the award of planning permission should be made in accordance with this development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Legislation and national policy are clear that the starting point for decision-making is the development plan, where development that accords with an up-to-date local plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

SD 1 - Sustainable Development
SS1 - Settlement Strategy
SS2 - Development in Rural Settlements
SS6 - Delivering Infrastructure
TA5 - Transport Impacts of New Development
TA6 - Parking Standards
EQ1 - Assessing Climate Change
EQ2 - General Development
EQ3 - Historic Environment
EQ4 - Biodiversity
EP15 - Provision of community facilities
HW1 - Provision of Open Space, Sports, Community Facilities
HG3 - Provision of Affordable Housing
HG5 - Achieving a Mix of Market Housing
TA4 - Travel Plans

National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 6 - Delivering a choice of High Quality Homes
Chapter 7 - Requiring Good Design
Chapter 8 - Promoting Healthy Communities
Chapter 10 - Flooding and Climate Change
Chapter 11 - Conserving Natural Environment
Chapter 12 - Conserving Historic Environment

CONSULTATIONS

Parish: Parish Council are the applicants.

Local Highway Authority: No objection subject to conditions (visibility, parking etc)

SSDC Highway Consultant: Support the view of SCC Highway Officer but suggest that the access to Plot 1 be relocated to the west of the frontage. Has also suggested that a passing bay be considered at the frontage of the development to enable cars and agricultural vehicles to pass more easily.

Area Development Officer (East): This is a community driven scheme that is meeting a need that has been identified by village consultations. Would appear to be a new and innovative approach to meeting need through a locally designed scheme and therefore we support this application. Need to ensure that the covenants/legal agreement are sufficiently robust to last in perpetuity.

Environment Agency: As this site lies in a zone of low flood risk and is less than 1 hectare does not fall within the Agency's remit.

Somerset Drainage Boards Consortium: No objection subject to a satisfactory surface water drainage scheme being implemented.

Wessex Water: No objection. A public sewer is located within the lane adjoining the site.

Housing Development Officer;

Planning policy requires 35% of new units to be affordable. There are currently 2 families on the Homefinder website that have expressed West Camel as their first choice.

Landscape Architect: Accept that this is a community initiative however this scheme does not have landscape support. Consider that the historic buildings demarcate the edge of the village and the Conservation Area and that the development of this field would erode this open character and be detrimental to the character of the Conservation Area.

Conservation Officer: If there is a proven need for this development then careful consideration needs to be given to the historic assets. The proposal is not in keeping with the pattern of the development and plot 1 should be moved forward to respect the grain of development in South Street. Parking space in front of properties is not appropriate. Plot 1 should be moved further away from Downlands and can be improved with the right details and materials

Somerset Heritage: Do not believe that there are any archaeological implications to this proposal and as such raise no objection.

Community Health and Leisure: There are no local recreational requirements and as such the only contribution sought is £80 per dwelling towards an artificial grass pitch in Wincanton.

Environmental Protection Officer: No objections

Council Ecologist: No concerns raised in relation to the survey that was submitted.

REPRESENTATIONS

8 letters of objection have been received making the following comments:

- Impact upon the adjoining listed building
- Plot 1 should be moved further away from the listed building
- Lack of clarity on the benefits of the scheme and how plots will be allocated
- Is this housing really meeting any local need or is it benefitting those who don't need it?
- What mechanisms will secure the benefits of the housing?
- Access should be moved to the west
- Development is not in keeping with surroundings and is ribbon development
- Potential for increasing flooding problems
- Impact upon privacy of Downlands
- Site is outside of Development Limits
- Too many properties being proposed. One or two plots may be acceptable.
- Seven plots should be a maximum
- Disruption caused during construction
- Outline application doesn't allow the design to be properly considered
- This is a commuter village and does not have the necessary facilities for new housing and would not be a suitable place for young families
- Lane too narrow to cope with extra traffic

5 letters have been received supporting the principle but making comments in relation to:

- Impact upon Downlands should be considered
- Agree with a much reduced scheme as this would be more in keeping with lane and less crowded
- In favour of the proposal but the surface water needs to be properly considered as this area is close to area that floods and the ground conditions are challenging.
- A positive impact could be the clearing of many drainage ditches in the area
- Adequate parking needed to ensure no parking on lane

31 letters of support have been received making the following points:

- Scheme is good for the village and will provide much needed local housing
- Will allow residents to downsize but stay in their village
- Will allow younger families to move into the village
- Families will be able to design their homes to meet their own needs
- Retention of hedges and trees will lessen the impact
- Linear form of development in keeping with this part of the village
- Additional families will keep the village viable
- Meeting the needs identified in Parish referendum
- The careful planning of this project is commendable and scheme is vital to continuing sustainability of village
- Releasing existing properties will bring 'new blood' into the village
- Housing will provide additional volunteers for community projects
- Scheme is a great example of 'localism in action'
- I would be very interested in renting a property
- Meet the needs of people with different incomes
- The disruption during construction is inevitable
- Davis Hall is a great facility that will benefit from more residents
- This is the correct location for the scheme as it is less sensitive

West Camel Parish Council was asked to comment on the representations received on the planning application 15/00600/OUT and the response is copied in full below:

Origins of the Project

West Camel Parish Council submitted its 'Statement of Community Involvement' and 'Design and Access Statement' as part of its Planning Application.

These two documents are effectively a précis of the last 3 years preparation of this project. They describe; establishing and quantifying a need for the housing, holding a village-wide, independently collated, referendum to establish a clear and unequivocal mandate. These were the fundamental principles before negotiating the complex, multi beneficial, proposal enshrined in the Planning Application, currently being considered by SSDC. The Parish Council believe that the benefits of this project will be felt by West Camel residents for generations to come.

Communication with residents on the Project

Parish Council Meetings - usually held on the first Thursday of alternate months (May, July, Sept, Nov, Jan, & March). Members of the public are welcome and each meeting starts with 'Electors Participation', a chance to ask questions of the Parish Council. The Community Housing Project (and the other 5 'Strategic Themes') are Standing Items on every Council meeting agenda and have been reported on at every meeting over the past 2 1/2 years. Annual Parish Meeting held in May. Every household receives a personal invitation to attend

with brief details of the main topics to be discussed and where the Community Housing project has been discussed for each of the past three years.

Notice Boards - All public meetings have been notified via the West camel Parish Council Notice Boards, as required by law, (there are two in the Parish + Davis Hall NB in Fore St).

West Camel Chronicle - produced quarterly and delivered free to every household, has included updates on progress, invitations to attend public meetings etc.

West Camel Web Site -Copies of all Full Council Meeting minutes are available on the web site.

Flooding

Properties in West Camel have been flooded several times in the last few years and flooding is of utmost concern to the Parish Council and its residents. The Environment Agency is the major player here and will no doubt make its views known to SSDC Planning Authority. Outline Planning Consent, will no doubt contain specific conditions requiring a Surface Water Drainage and Watercourse Management proposal to be drawn up and approved by both SSDC and the Parrett Drainage Board.

WCPC working with SCC will continue to strive to mitigate the risk of flooding. Over the past year the Parish Council have carried out its first programme of Flood Mitigation works, clearing ditches, unblocking surface water gullies and drains, clearing 'gripes' (the mini ditch from road edge to main ditch) and diverting existing ditches to safeguard homes at high risk from surface water inundation.

This programme of Flood Mitigation works will continue in 2015/16 and thereafter.

Traffic Increase

Both the SCC Highways report and the SSDC Highways Consultant's report didn't raise any major issues and they anticipate the proposed additional 11 dwellings will generate 'up to 8 additional car journeys at peak hours'. Given the nature of the proposed dwellings i.e. mainly retirees, journeys are unlikely to be co-incident with peak times.

To improve traffic sight lines some hedges will have to be moved or replanted to achieve the required visibility distances, mainly in South Street but we hope to retain much of the existing hedges, especially along Southmead.

The Parish Council will look at improving visibility on the junction of Southmead and the Bridgehampton Road as well as the creation of passing places in the narrow portion of Southmead.

Proximity to the Conservation Area

Several comments have been made regarding the proximity of Plot 1 to the edge of the village Conservation Area, not only by the immediate resident but also in General Observations.

To help mitigate the impact of the development along South Street, the West Camel Parish Council Community Housing Project Team have agreed with the land owners to reduce the width of plots 2 - 4 in order to create greater separation between 'Downlands' and Plot1. Revised drawings have been commissioned and should be submitted shortly. (Now been received)

Removing any of plots 1 - 4 would unbalance the overall benefit of the scheme to the Community and we believe the above modification represents a good compromise.

Potential Disruption During Construction

The proposal to allow villagers to buy and then develop their own plots was a conscious decision based on -

a) expression of interest forms indicating variable design requirements and
b) several of the original expressions of interests came from people living in 'flood blighted' homes. Typically these properties don't sell quickly or at their full market value and if all homes were developed simultaneously, there would be the potential for villagers to miss out on the 'down-sizing' opportunity, because a developer would need to recoup his outlay. In this scenario homes built for West Camel residents could by default be sold to non-residents. This in itself would have devalued the scheme in the eyes of the District Planning Authority.

In response to concerns raised, the landowners have been asked to consider arranging a certain level of pre-preparation of plots prior to sale, creating vehicular accesses, moving / replanting hedge lines and fencing of individual plots. The cost of these works would be passed on to the eventual plot purchaser

Additional (unplanned) Benefits

Interestingly several respondents' highlighted additional benefits to the proposed scheme, hitherto not captured within the proposal documentation -

- Clearing up the last remaining farm yard within the village is seen as greatly beneficial.
- Improving the value of existing privately owned housing in Southmead.
- Local families looking to 'up-size' into the larger houses vacated as people 'down-size'.

Conclusion

The Parish Council is determined to use its best endeavours to find a workable solution for the benefit of all residents, current and future.

Villages like West Camel and others in South Somerset face a fundamental problem of residents unable to find smaller suitable housing in their local community. Other than being forced to move away, residents are trapped in houses realistically too large for them and which have been designed for those of greater mobility. There are insufficient options for smaller dwellings as these are less profitable commercial developments and existing restrictions on building have hitherto been prohibitive.

This scheme is one possible solution to this problem. Initiated by the Parish Council after a period of consultation with the local community on what they perceive as their greatest need, it explicitly tackles the problem of 1-2 person households trapped in 4-5 bedroom housing. The proposed new housing into which such local residents could move will be designed as level access dwellings i.e. will support single level living.

We believe our scheme is proportionate to the village size and the demand for housing expressed. It will allow existing residents to remain in the village they love and new families to build sustainable lives in the village. It is locally needed housing for local people and the scheme moreover provides an enduring financial benefit to the community to attract families into new affordable housing and also pay for small infrastructure projects as central support may be withdrawn over future years ahead.

CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of Development

West Camel is identified as a 'Rural Settlement' within the recently adopted South Somerset

Local Plan and any proposals have to be assessed against Policy SS2. It is considered necessary to quote this policy verbatim as it is essential to understanding the acceptability of this scheme.

Policy SS2: Development In Rural Settlements

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.

This policy is accompanied by text that lists the necessary services and they include school, church, play area, shop, pub etc. The text also indicates that Policy SS2 is likely to be suitable for schemes of up to 50 units. West Camel benefits from several of these facilities.

This application is being justified primarily on the basis that it achieves the third bullet point (local housing need) and that this is based upon evidence that has been gathered.

Discussions have taken place between the landowners and the applicant and these have resulted in the application for 11 units. Further discussions have taken place as to whether there was any potential to reduce the number of units however the applicant believes that this is the minimum number required to make the scheme deliverable and meet the community need.

The parish council have shown 35% of the plots to be affordable however the detailed tenure and delivery are subject to further consultation within the village. The ability to secure these plots is a key factor in allowing the parish to respond to current and future needs.

The Area East Development Officer has confirmed that the Parish Council have carried out lengthy consultations and that the findings of this have identified the need for this scheme.

Recent appeal decisions in North Coker and Merriott have supported the view that settlements such as West Camel should only accept development where it is meeting a recognised need and is supported by the community. Whilst there have been some objections to the scheme this is clearly a parish led proposal that has widespread support and as such it is considered that the proposal accords with the principles of Policy SS2.

Design/Layout/Landscape Character and Impact upon Designated Heritage Assets

This piece of land was selected following various parish council meetings and discussions. It was clearly important to find a piece of land with a co-operative owner that was free of any insurmountable constraints such as a High Risk Flood Zone. The site does adjoin the Conservation Area and there is a listed building nearby however it is adjoined to the west by a row of more modern properties that form the edge of the village.

Both the Conservation Officer and the Landscape Architect have raised concerns about the impact of the development upon the property known as Downlands and the Conservation

Area. These concerns are fully understood and accepted and further negotiations have taken place to minimise the effect that this community scheme may have. The key change is Plot 1 has been moved further away from Downlands and the driveway moved to the other side of the plot. This has increased the separation from approx. 11m to 17 m and the dwelling is now several metres closer to the road to try and pay more respect to the traditional pattern of development.

The design for Plot 1 shows a large 3 bed farmhouse style property constructed of natural stone with clay roof tiles and timber windows. The property is quite substantial however it is considered that by being set back from the listed building will mean that it will not compete with it.

The council does have a duty to ensure that heritage assets are safeguarded however the impact upon such assets can be balanced against the benefits of the scheme

It has been agreed with the applicant that it is necessary to agree a Design Brief/Design Codes in advance of the detailed approval of any plot as it is important that there is a 'harmony' to the scheme that respects the character of the and the adjoining heritage assets. This code is particularly important in protecting the rural character of the lane as an inconsistent approach to boundary treatments could have a detrimental impact upon the area.

Traffic/Highways

Comments have been raised by some objectors about the suitability of this lane to serve up to 11 properties. It is recognised that the lane is quite narrow however it is a highway that already serves many dwellings and is a route into the village.

The County Highway Officer and South Somerset's consultant have looked at this scheme and both consider that the scheme is acceptable in principle subject to appropriate conditions. The access to Plot 1 has been moved to reflect the views of the consultant and it is suggested that a passing bay be formed at the frontage of the development to allow larger vehicles to pass.

Furthermore, the site currently hosts a range of farm buildings that would generate their own vehicle movements, many of which would likely involve larger agricultural vehicles.

Sufficient parking and turning will be provided within each plot to ensure that there is no 'on lane' parking.

Flooding

West Camel does have a history of flooding and this is one of the motivations of providing some other housing opportunities for local people. This site was selected on the basis that it is within Flood Zone 1 and therefore in the lowest risk category.

Whilst the site itself is not at risk it is important to ensure that any development here does not contribute towards flooding elsewhere in the locality. There is sufficient opportunity for the site to drain into the adjoining ditch network and members will see from the parish council comments that they are committed to improving drainage in the area through maintenance of waterways. It is however essential that a full surface water drainage scheme be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of development. The approved scheme will also have to incorporate elements of sustainable drainage to ensure as much of the water is dealt with as possible on site.

Trees/Hedgerow

There are no important trees within the site however the hedgerows are worthy of retention. A landscaping scheme is required that will ensure that the hedgerows are properly considered.

Neighbour Amenity

The orientation of this site and distance from existing properties will ensure that there is very limited impact upon the privacy of existing units.

Construction Disturbance

Most development does inevitably result in a degree of disruption however the impact can be controlled through the imposition of a planning condition (hours of construction etc.)

Summary

For the reasons listed above it is considered that this is a well thought out parish led project that accords with SS2 of the recently adopted Local Plan. The parish council have gathered the appropriate evidence and have been pro-active in producing a scheme which they believe will benefit West Camel for the foreseeable future. The scheme does have an impact upon the character of the area and the adjoining heritage assets however it is not considered to be harmful and the use of design codes will further assist the assimilation of the new housing.

SECTION 106 PLANNING OBLIGATION/UNILATERAL UNDERTAKING

A Section 106 agreement is required to ensure that the relevant plots remain available to meet an identified local need in perpetuity and that the £80 per dwelling towards facilities within Wincanton

RECOMMENDATION

That application reference 14/02020/OUT be approved subject to the prior completion of a section 106 planning agreement (in a form acceptable to the Council's solicitor(s)) before the decision notice granting planning permission is issued to secure:-

- (a) A mechanism that secures the housing for community benefit in perpetuity
- (b) A contribution of £80 per dwelling towards an AGP within Wincanton (if the number of units exceeds 10)

01. It is considered that the proposal for up to 11 dwellings in the village of West Camel is of an appropriate scale for a settlement that benefits from several local facilities. Furthermore, the application delivers a range of housing that is meeting an identified local need, evidenced through a range of surveys. The proposal will have an acceptable impact upon the adjoining heritage assets and the character of the area and the site is considered to be an appropriate location for a small extension to the village. The scheme will not have an adverse impact upon highway safety, ecology or flooding and it is considered that the benefits of the scheme outweighs any of the impacts.

SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun either before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission, or before the expiration of two years from the date of approval of the last of the reserved matters to be approved, whichever is the later.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010.

02. Application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the Local Planning Authority before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: As required by Section 92(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

03. Approval of the details of the layout, scale and external appearance of the building(s), the means of access thereto and the landscaping of the site (hereinafter called 'the reserved matters') shall be obtained from the Local Planning Authority in writing before any development is commenced.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2010.

04. No reserved Matters application shall be approved until a Design Code has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Code shall include details of:

- Scale and position of the dwellings
- Access points to dwellings
- Materials to be used for dwellings and surfaces
- Treatment of front and rear boundaries
- Parking within the plots and provision of passing bays
- Recycling/refuse facilities

All subsequent Reserved Matters applications will be assessed against the criteria contained within the approved Design Code

Reason: To ensure that the scheme is of an appropriate design that respects the adjoining designated heritage assets and the character of the locality.

05. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the amended drawings received on the 25th March 2015.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

06. No development shall commence until a surface water drainage scheme for the site, based on the hydrological and hydrogeological context of the development, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall subsequently be implemented in accordance with the approved details before the development is completed.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, to improve and protect water quality, improve habitat and amenity, and ensure future maintenance of the surface water drainage system in accordance with EQ1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

07. No development approved by this permission shall be occupied or brought into use until a scheme for the future responsibility and maintenance of the surface water drainage system has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved drainage works shall be completed and maintained in accordance with the details and timetable agreed.

Reason: To ensure adequate adoption and maintenance and therefore better working and longer lifetime of surface water drainage schemes.

08. There shall be no obstruction to visibility greater than 900mm above adjoining road level in advance of lines drawn 2.4m back from the carriageway edge on the centre line of the access and extending across the frontage of all plots . Such visibility shall be fully provided before the development hereby permitted is brought into use and shall thereafter be maintained at all times.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to accord with EQ1 and TA5 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

09. No development shall commence unless foul and surface water drainage details to serve the development, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and such approved drainage details shall be completed and become fully operational before the development hereby permitted is first brought into use. Following its installation such approved scheme shall be permanently retained and maintained thereafter.

Reason: To prevent the increased risk of flooding, to improve and protect water quality, improve habitat and amenity, and ensure future maintenance of the surface water drainage system in accordance with EQ1 and EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

10. No works shall commence upon any plot unless a Construction Management Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The submitted plan shall include details of the hours of construction, deliveries etc. The approved plan shall be adhered to during the development of all of the building plots.

Reason: In the interests of neighbour amenity.

11. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), there shall be no extensions to this building without the prior express grant of planning permission.

Reason: To ensure that the dwellings are able to meet the identified need in perpetuity.

Informatives:

01. This approval is granted following the completion of a Section 106 Agreement that restricts the tenure of some of the units.