

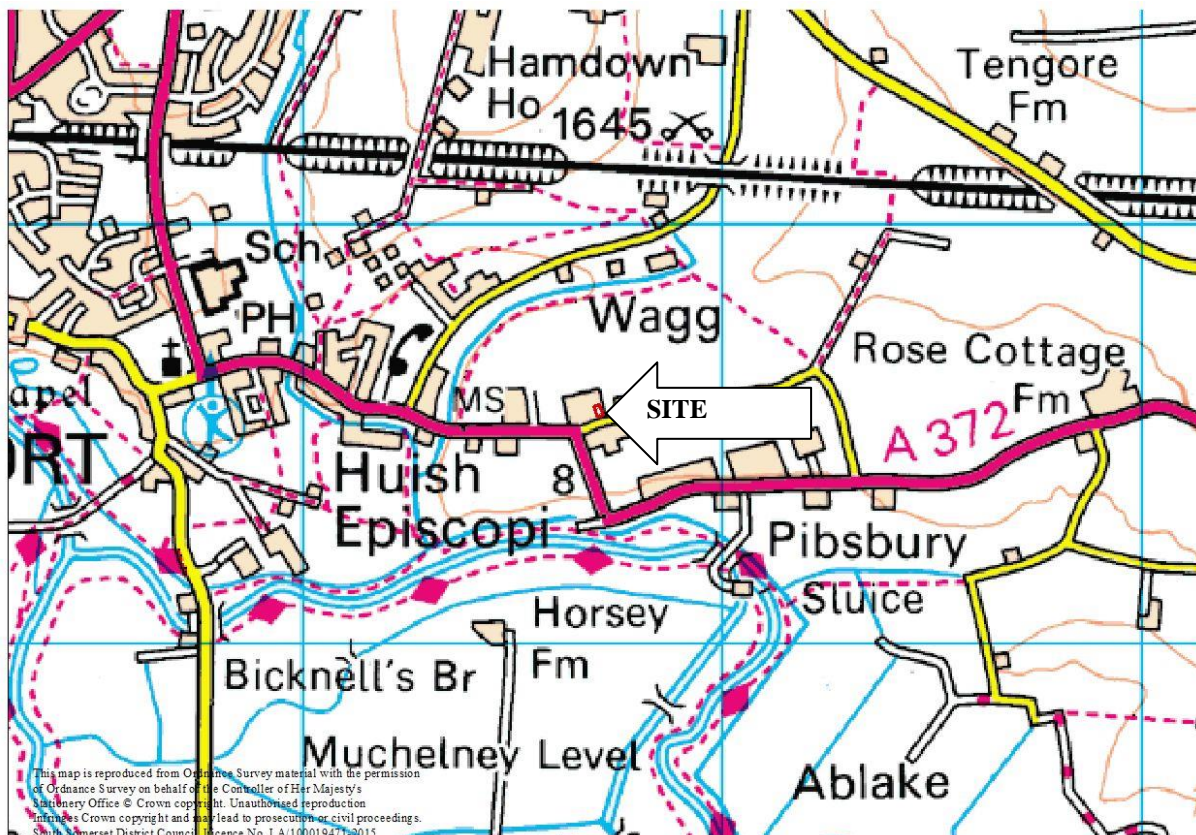
## Officer Report On Planning Application: 15/00879/FUL

Proposal :	Proposed erection of a 2 bedroom dwelling (GR: 343722/126519)
Site Address:	Land Adjoining Highfield Farm, Windmill Lane, Pibsbury.
Parish:	Huish Episcopi
LANGPORT AND HUISH Ward (SSDC Member)	Cllr Clare Aparicio Paul
Recommending Case Officer:	John Millar Tel: (01935) 462465 Email: john.millar@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	20th April 2015
Applicant :	Mr D Russell
Agent: (no agent if blank)	Mr Clive Miller, Sanderley Studio, Kennel Lane, Langport, Somerset TA10 9SB
Application Type :	Minor Dwellings 1-9 site less than 1ha

### REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

This application is referred to committee at request of the Ward Member with the agreement of the Area Chairman to enable the issues raised to be fully debated by Members.

### SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





The application site is a farm situated on the north side of Windmill Lane in Pibsbury, a loose linear collection of properties located along the A372 to the east of Huish Episcopi and outside the development area as defined by the South Somerset Local Plan. The site is a small plot of land in between a former farmyard, which is now subject to planning permission for a barn conversion and outline consent for the provision of two dwellings, and an existing bungalow. Neighbouring properties are located to the east, west and south with open land to the north of the site. The site is also located approximately 585m from Wet Moor SSSI and 325m from Muchelney Level County Wildlife Site.

The application is made for planning permission for the erection of a one and a half storey, 2 bedroom dwelling house. The development is proposed to be constructed from natural stone to the southern, road-facing elevation, with render to the other three elevations. The roof is proposed to be constructed from double roman tiles. The site will make use of an existing field gate, with a formal access, drive and parking area for two cars to be provided.

## HISTORY

None

## 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.

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

SD1 - Sustainable Development  
SS1 - Settlement Strategy  
SS2 - Development in Rural Settlements  
EQ2 - General Development  
EQ4 - Biodiversity  
TA5 - Transport Impact of New Development

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

Core Planning Principles - Paragraph 17  
Chapter 4 - Promoting Sustainable Transport  
Chapter 6 - Delivering a Wide Choice of High Quality Homes  
Chapter 7 - Requiring Good Design  
Chapter 11 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment

### **National Planning Practice Guidance**

Design  
Natural Environment  
Rural Housing

### **Policy-related Material Considerations**

Somerset County Council Parking Strategy (September 2013)  
Somerset County Council Highways Development Control - Standing Advice (June 2013)

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Parish Council:** No objection, however do note that it is incorrectly stated within the supporting planning statement that there is a bus route in this location. As far as Councillors are aware, there is only a student bus to Bridgwater College on this road. The main buses run Taunton-Langport-Somerton-Yeovil.

**SCC Highway Authority:** No objection. It is noted that the visibility splays (2.4m x 43m) are insufficient for the speed limit passing the site, however it is acknowledged that actual speeds are unlikely to be high due to the proximity to the A372 junction. As such, visibility is considered to be acceptable at this point. It is also noted that there is sufficient parking and turning space on site to park vehicles and also allow them to enter and exit in a forward gear. The Highway Authority have requested the imposition of appropriate conditions in respect to forming a properly consolidated access and appropriate parking and turning provision on-site.

**SSDC Highway Consultant:** The Council's Highway consultant has commented on the sustainability of the site, noting that it is over 1km to Langport, although there is a continuous footway from Windmill Lane to Langport. In considering the key highway safety issues, there is limited forward visibility for vehicles turning right into Windmill Lane from A372, although the number of these movements would be minimal. Visibility at site access (2.4m x 43m) should be achievable. On-site parking and turning, and details of access, surfacing, drainage should be conditioned.

**Natural England:** No objections.

**SSDC Ecologist:** Having considered the information submitted, the Council's Ecologist has no comments or recommendations to make.

**SSDC Landscape Architect:** The Landscape Architect advises that the site is a grassed narrow infill laying between a former farm building group (now being converted) and a short row of bungalows. The narrow gap is considered to have negligible landscape value, as such no issues are raised relative to the principle or form of development. It is requested that details of a planting scheme are conditioned, which should aim to provide hedgerow enclosure of both north and south boundaries.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

None

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Principle of Development**

The application site is located to the north of the settlement of Pibsbury, which is a small group of dwellinghouses, with no local services. The nearest key services available are those within Huish Episcopi and Langport, to the west. In this case, the site is approximately 380m from the edge of the Huish Episcopi defined development area, 700m from the public house, 1km from the entrance to Huish Episcopi Academy and 1.8km from Langport town centre (junction of The Hill and North Street/Cheapside). It is separated from the developed edge of Huish Episcopi by open countryside.

In policy context, national guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, advising that "local planning authorities should avoid new isolated homes in the countryside unless there are special circumstances." Paragraph 49 of the NPPF also states housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as does policy SD1 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028).

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

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

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

Development will be permitted where it is commensurate with the scale and character of the settlement, provides for one or more of the types of development above, and increases the sustainability of a settlement in general. Proposals should be consistent with relevant community led plans, and should generally have the support of the local community following

robust engagement and consultation. Proposals for housing development should only be permitted in Rural Settlements that have access to two or more key services listed at paragraph 5.41 (i.e. local convenience shop, post office, pub, children's play area/sports pitch, village hall/community centre, health centre, faith facility, primary school)."

The applicant seeks to justify the proposal by stating that the site is well related to the existing settlement of Huish Episcopi and Langport in that there is a continuous footpath from the junction of Windmill Lane and the A372 and that there are local services within easy walking distance (i.e. the Rose and Crown Public House and Huish Episcopi Academy and Sports Centre, as well as the other key services available within the Huish/Langport area). It is argued that the site is sustainably located within easy reach the Huish and Langport services and other recent approvals for infill dwellings are quoted, which are at similar (and greater) distance from the edge of Huish/Langport. The applicant also quotes a recent appeal decision (Goldwell Farm in Crewkerne), where the Inspector agreed with statements made by the appellant that "with reference to documents such as Manual for Streets, the appellants considered that 800m is a 'comfortable' distance to walk and that 2km is a 'reasonable' walking distance, though not a maximum."

While the proposed development does not strictly comprise an isolated new dwelling as this is an infill plot, close to the existing group of dwellinghouses at Pibsbury, it is still subject to the same degree of protection as the open countryside. It is therefore considered to be unsustainable by virtue of its distance from local services and the level of separation from the adjoining settlements of Langport and Huish Episcopi. There is a continuous footpath linking the site to Huish Episcopi, however this isn't considered sufficient to indicate that this is a sustainably located development. The applicant's reference to the distance from key services and the quotes of the Inspector on the Goldwell Farm appeal are noted, however this is taken slightly out of context in that the Crewkerne application was for a large-scale development of over 100 homes immediately adjoining the developed edge of a Primary Market Town. This application site is well separated from Huish Episcopi by open countryside and is located within a small rural settlement with none of its own services. Overall, the application provides no justification for the proposed residential development and therefore does not meet the requirements of policy SS2, as stated earlier, as this does not meet the needs of any formally identified housing need or represent the type of "essential need" required to comply with paragraph 55 of the NPPF.

### **Scale, Design and Appearance**

Notwithstanding the overriding policy objection to the proposed development, the scheme is considered to be generally acceptable in respect to its design and appearance. The plot is relatively small, however it is not considered to be of such a disproportionate scale that the development would not respect the pattern of development at this part of Windmill Hill. Overall, the site is considered to be able to accommodate a new dwelling satisfactorily. The proposed dwelling is a detached two bedroom property and of similar scale to the neighbouring properties to the east. Its design also has barn-like characteristics that also respect the adjoining barn conversion to the west. The proposed materials of the main house, being natural stone to the frontage, render to the rest and a tiled roof, are considered to be acceptable and relate to the appearance of the neighbouring dwellings also.

The Council's Landscape Architect has raised no objections in principle, however has suggested that a planting scheme be conditioned, aiming to provide hedgerow enclosure to the north and the south boundaries. Overall, it is not considered that the proposal would have an adverse impact on local landscape character or the general appearance of the area.

## **Residential Amenity**

The proposed dwelling is located between the adjoining bungalow (Ponderosa) and the barn conversion at Highfield Farm. There are no first floor side openings on any of these properties that would be interfered with so there are no overlooking concerns. There are ground floor windows on the side elevation of the proposed dwelling and also to the rear of the barn conversion, looking onto the site, however the proposed 1.8m high boundary fence is considered to effectively prevent overlooking of these openings. Siting of the dwelling is such that it will also avoid unacceptable harm to residential amenity of neighbouring properties by way of overshadowing or general overbearing impact.

## **Highway Safety**

The application seeks to provide access via an existing field gate, with improvements made to provide appropriate levels of visibility. Splays of 43m in each direction are shown. The Highway Authority have commented, noting that these splays are insufficient for the speed limits on Windmill Hill (60mph), however advise that the proximity of the site to the A372 junction means that vehicle speeds are unlikely to be as high as 60mph. It is therefore concluded that the level of visibility proposed is acceptable on this occasion. It is further noted that there is adequate parking and turning space identified within the site and the first 6m of access will be properly consolidated. On this basis it is considered that the proposal will have no adverse impact on highway safety.

If approved, the Highway Authority have requested conditions to ensure that the access is constructed in accordance with the submitted plans and that allocated parking and turning space is kept available for parking and turning of vehicles in connection with the use of the development.

## **Other Issues**

The site is also near to Wet Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Muchelney Level County Wildlife Site, however the proposed development is not considered to have any adverse impact on these national and locally important sites.

## **Conclusion**

The site is poorly related to key local services, by virtue of distance to these services, and the development fails to provide for an essential need. The development proposal is therefore considered to be unacceptable and fails to meet the aims of sustainable development.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Refuse permission

## **FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:**

01. The proposal would represent new residential development in open countryside, for which an overriding essential need has not been justified. The application site is also remote from local services and therefore constitutes unsustainable development that is contrary to policies SD1, SS1 and SS2 of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006-2028) and to the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework.
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