



JOINT AREA COMMITTEES IN SOUTH SOMERSET

Officer Report on Planning Application

09/00229/FUL

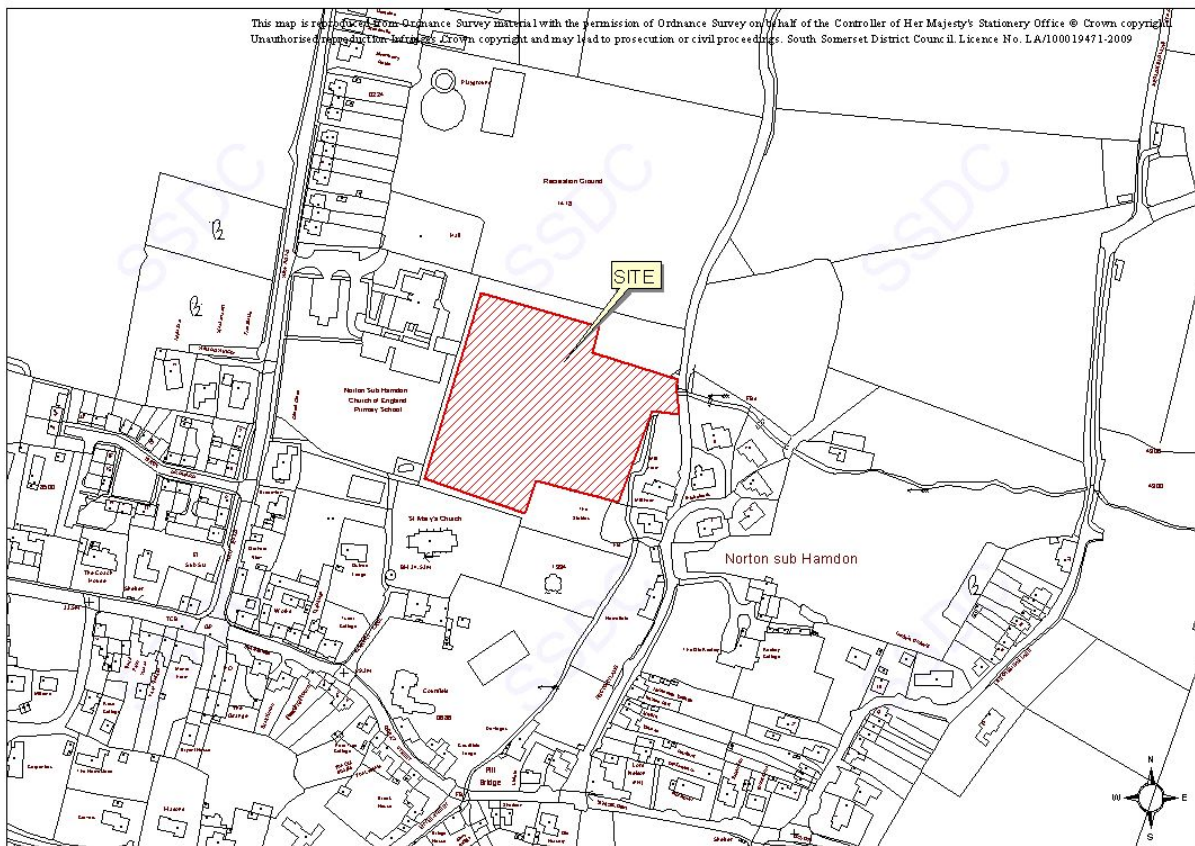


Proposal :	The erection of a single storey eco house (GR 347198/116003)
Site Address:	Mill Farm Rectory Lane Norton Sub Hamdon
Parish:	Norton Sub Hamdon
Ward : (SSDC Member)	HAMDON Sylvia Seal (Cllr)
Division (SCC Member)	MARTOCK John Bailey (Cllr)
Recommending Case Officer:	Andrew Gunn Tel: (01935) 462192 Email: andrew.gunn@southsomerset.gov.uk
Target date :	30th April 2009
Applicant :	Mr S Weir
Agent:	Mr T Gascoyne, Mark Orme Architects Ltd Street, Somerset BA16 0EH
Application Type :	Minor Dwellings 1-9 site less than 1ha

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application has been referred to the Joint Area North Committee as an objection has been received from a statutory consultee.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL



The site is located on the western side of Rectory Lane, in the village of Norton Sub Hamdon. It will be sited outside of the development area, in part of a field that forms part of

larger small holding totalling 1.3 hectares. The rest of the holding includes a vineyard, orchard and garden. Norton Sub Hamdon Primary School is located to the west with St Mary's Church to the south. There are fields to the north and residential properties to the east, along Rectory Lane.

The application seeks permission to construct an eco dwelling on land to the north west of Mill Farm. It will be located adjacent to a vineyard and to the north of an orchard. Access will be gained off Rectory Lane to the east. The Design and Access Statement includes details of two open days held by the applicant to inform the local community about the project and to invite views and comments. Upwards of 60 people attended and copies of 30 sets of comments supporting the project are included in the Design and Access Statement.

The Design and Access Statement outlines the principles that inform this development.

The dwelling will be constructed using a mix of materials. The west elevation will be 50% glazed and faced with local ham stone, serving the 3 bedrooms. The south elevation will be 85% glazed to benefit from solar gain, with use of triple glazed Passivhaus windows. Ham stone will be used for the remainder of the south elevation. This elevation will serve the dining and kitchen areas. The dwelling on the southern elevation will have a substantial overhang and louvres to reduce intense solar radiation. The louvres and overhangs will be constructed from locally sourced western red cedar.

The north elevation will be 95% earth banked to provide very high natural insulation, finished with a sedum roof. One small window will be inserted into this elevation providing natural daylight to an office room. The east elevation, serving a plant room, cold room and entrance lobby will be constructed of rammed earth faced with ham stone. The only openings on this elevation will be two entrance doors and small window in the entrance lobby. The east wall of the living area will be clad in western red cedar. This elevation will also contain a covered parking area.

The sedum roof has been designed in strips to reflect the linear form of the adjacent vineyard and hedgerows. The sedum roof will slope down to the ground on the northern elevation and part on the southern elevation. The main living area is positioned at the southernmost part of the house to benefit from solar gain. The kitchen is central to the dwelling and will act as the hub of the house - this will have a large glazed section in the roof to maximise sunlight.

The utility, cold and plant rooms are located away from the main living areas, to the east and north parts of the house. Windows are not provided for these rooms, thus controlling heat loss. The bedrooms will be located on the western side of the house - these rooms will be the last in the day to benefit from solar gain.

The building will be constructed using the latest technologies. It will have a double skin timber frame construction and the earth elements will be sourced from site and local quarries. Windows will be high performance argon filled double or triple glazed units. The double skin wall will provide a near thermal envelope. High levels of insulation and quality glazing will reduce heat loss. It is calculated that there would be a saving of around 3,000 litres of heating oil or 6 tons of wood pellets per annum.

The dwelling will also be fitted with free standing solar thermal panels to supply most of the hot water needs of the property during the summer months and provide significant levels of heating throughout the winter months due to the low heat load required and low water temperatures needed for underfloor heating. A wood burning stove will be used to provide the heat load. A heat exchange pump extracts heat from the ground or air using an electric pump.- this reduces reliance on fossil fuels. Photovoltaic solar panels and micro hydro power

will be used to provide the power for the pump. The combination of these renewable technologies seeks to provide a carbon zero heating system. The level of insulation and thermal mass will reduce the need for mechanical cooling in the future. Lighting will be low energy and powered by the technologies outlined above.

The sedum roof will drain to a rainwater harvesting tank and will in turn overflow to a soakaway and Reed Bed. This will provide water to the toilets, washing machine and outside taps. The driveway and hard landscaped areas will be covered in porous materials to control drainage from those areas. A biodigester deals with foul water, turning it into a clear effluent and non toxic sludge, which is then filtered through the reed bed and then to the existing watercourse.

In terms of the layout and siting of the dwelling, the agent outlines that the dwelling will be cut back into the site to reduce its visual impact from Ham Hill. The landscaping scheme will provide further visual screening and aim to provide shelter for the dwelling. In terms of the wider landscape approach, all existing trees and landscape features will be retained as part of a comprehensive landscaping of the application site and adjacent land within the applicant's control. Upon entering the site from the east, one would drive/walk into an entrance court. A track will then lead down to the south towards Mill Farm House, the main garden and orchard. Continuing west from the entrance area, one would then enter a tree lined gravelled drive towards the eco house. To the south of the house will be a lawn area along with patio area and Mediterranean themed garden. The existing boundary hedgerow to the north of the dwelling will be maintained to provide a buffer between the site and a track to the north. A detailed description of the landscape proposals has been submitted and is attached to the report (appendix A).

HISTORY

Various applications relating to extensions/alterations to Mill Farm and a flood alleviation scheme, but none directly related or relevant to this current proposal.

POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 repeats the duty imposed under S54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and requires that decision must be made in accordance with relevant Development Plan Documents unless material considerations indicate otherwise,

Relevant Development Plan Documents

Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West (RPG10) (adopted September 2001)

VIS 1 - Expressing the Vision

VIS2 - Principles for future development

Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan (adopted April 2000)

STR6 - Development outside Towns, Rural Centres and Villages

Policy 11 Areas of High Archaeological Potential

Policy 49 - Transport Requirements of New Development

South Somerset Local Plan (adopted April 2006)

ST3 - Development Areas.
ST5 - General Principles of Development
ST6 - Quality of development
ST8 - Sustainable Construction.
EC3 - Landscape Character
EH12 - Areas of High Archaeological Potential.

PPS's/PPG's

PPS7 - Sustainable development in the Countryside.
PPG13 - Transport

South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy

Goal 8 - Quality Development
Goal 9 - Homes (low carbon homes).
Goal 10 - Energy
Goal 11 - Environment
Goal 12 - Environmental Education.

CONSULTATIONS

Parish

My Council would recommend approval of the application but would wish to make that subject to certain conditions:

1. that any future sub-division of the plot or further development of it be prohibited (so that no precedent is set by this application)
2. a condition to the effect that the eco and sustainability elements of the application, in the domestic organisation etc. be retained for the lifetime of the building.
3. a planting scheme be retained for the lifetime of the building and a maintenance requirement for the green roof and other elements.

I am aware that these conditions are not worded in appropriate planning style and would appreciate your legal planning interpretation of my Council's wishes.

Local Highway Authority

The proposed development site lies outside the Development Boundary Limits for Norton Sub Hamdon and is distant from adequate services and facilities, such as, education, employment, health, retail and leisure. In addition, public transport services are infrequent. As a consequence, occupiers of the new development are likely to be dependant on private vehicles for most of their daily needs. Such fostering of growth in the need to travel would be contrary to government advice given in PPG13 and RPG10, and to the provisions of policies STR1 and STR6 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review (Adopted: April 2000).

In detail, Rectory Lane is restricted in width to such an extent that there is an inability for two vehicles to pass. As a result, in the event of two vehicles meeting at this point manoeuvring may take place on the highway. Whilst it is acknowledged that the speed and volume of passing traffic at this point is extremely limited an increase in its use would be a highway safety concern. The proposal to serve a new dwelling off this access is likely to result in this increase.

As a result of the above, I would recommend that the application be refused on highway grounds for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development would be located where it is remote from adequate services, employment, education, public transport, etc, and will therefore increase the need for journeys to be made by private vehicles which is non-sustainable and in conflict with advice given in PPG.13, RPG10 and Policy STR1 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Review Plan (Adopted April 2000).
2. The approach road, Rectory Lane by reason of its restricted width and poor alignment is considered unsuitable to serve as a means of access for the type of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 49 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review (Adopted April 2000).

Officer comment

In response to the comments received from The Highway Authority, the applicant forwarded the following response:

I refer to the Highway's response to the above application, the contents of which do not appear to reflect the true extent of facilities and services in the immediate area nor a realistic effect on the traffic in Rectory Lane. It is suggested that the development site is distant from adequate education, health, retail and leisure facilities and that public transport is infrequent.

I would like it noted that education is locally provided at Infant and Junior level in the village school 125mts from the site. - Secondary and adult further education is available at Stanchester, and we have an excellent health service provided by Hamdon Medical Centre and pharmacy, plus adjacent dental practice, all within walking distance located in Stoke sub Hamdon. - The Norton Stores Spar shop, 3 minutes walk from the site, stocks over 3000 lines, the Post Office being housed in the same building. - The village has a barbers shop/hairdresser and a visiting library. - Sports facilities are available on the adjacent recreation ground, which includes a modern MUGA court and the village has many active interest and leisure groups. Our new village hall supports a huge number of events. - Public transport is excellent, directly connecting the village with Stoke sub Hamdon, South Petherton, Crewkerne and Yeovil. There are 21 buses calling on the village every weekday and eleven on Saturdays!

It is also suggested that this development would have a measurable detrimental effect on traffic flow and safety in Rectory Lane. It is a cul de sac, traffic consists of the few residents cars and occasional delivery vehicles and one would certainly not describe it as a 'flow'. The section of Rectory Lane North of Mill Farm house, which would service the proposed development, does not provide access to any other residence and is only occasionally used by a local resident taking feed to animals. As far as the 'type of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development', we are a one car family and on current and future use, plus deliveries, would anticipate an average of 2 vehicle movements per day over this stretch of the road.

Highway Authority (response to applicant letter above):

In the response comment is made regarding the suitability of the site in sustainability terms and the standard of Rectory Lane to cater for the likely traffic in connection with the residential development.

It is clear from the information submitted by the applicant that the village of Norton Sub Hamdon has a level of services and facilities which this development could help to sustain and support. However, while it may have a post office, and a primary school I am not aware that the village has much employment or comparison shopping. In order to access these

facilities occupiers of the new development will need to access other larger settlements such as Yeovil and Crewkerne.

Whilst several bus services pass through the village of Norton Sub Hamdon and the stop itself is in close proximity to the site the frequency of the services are limited. The N12 service, which provides access to the settlement of Crewkerne, operates for a brief spell in the morning. The only return journey back to Norton Sub Hamdon appears to be the 11:30 service.

The 81, and main bus service through the village operates on approximately a service every hour and connects the village to the adjacent settlements of South Petherton and Yeovil. However, the latest service appears to be no later than 17:00. The latest return journey back to the village appears to be around 18:00 on a weekday. On Saturdays the service is more infrequent with the service operating on a one every two hour frequency, again with no service later than 17:00. The latest return being 17:45. Therefore, whilst it is acknowledged that the site is in close proximity to the local bus stop, given the frequency of the services it is unlikely that this would encourage modal shift and that occupiers of the new dwelling would use alternative modes of transport to that of the private car.

In the Highway Authority's response to the application concern was also raised regarding the standard of Rectory Lane to serve the additional dwelling. Rectory lane is restricted in width to such an extent that two vehicles are unable to pass. The width is also restricted to such an extent that a vehicle and a pedestrian are unable to pass. The lane also suffers from poor alignment and as a consequence, at certain points the level of forward visibility is limited. It is noted that a public footpath is present at the northern end of the lane. Given the above limitations there are concerns regarding the potential for conflict between pedestrians and vehicles at this point. On average a residential unit generates between 7 - 10 vehicular movements per day and whilst it is clear that traffic movement at this point is limited the creation of a new dwelling in this location will result in an increase in vehicle movement and therefore potential for conflict at this point.

Other

Planning Policy:

The proposal is located outside any development area where Policy ST3 of the adopted South Somerset Local Plan restricts development to that which benefits economic activity, maintains or enhances the environment and does not foster growth in the need to travel. Being a dwelling, the proposal is unlikely to benefit economic activity; and the countryside location means that the proposal will foster growth in the need to travel, and is therefore contrary to Policy ST3.

Special justification is required for isolated new houses to be built in the countryside: "very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking" (para 11, PPS7). The applicant claims that Level 5 of the Code for Sustainable Homes will be achieved as a minimum, which could be argued as meeting the PPS7 justification. However, there is no specific evidence or calculations to demonstrate that Code Level 5 would be met.

The design should be "truly outstanding and ground breaking" (para 11, PPS7); I do not think the proposal's design meets this criteria, although I suggest consulting the Conservation team on this particular issue.

The proposal is located within an Area of High Archaeological Potential, where Policy EH12 of the SSLP restricts development unless it would outweigh the significance of the archaeological remains. It does not appear that the applicant has addressed this issue,

although the County Archaeologist should provide detail as to the archaeological value of the site.

In conclusion, I do not consider that the proposal meets the special justification required for a dwelling in this location, and therefore I raise an objection on planning policy grounds.

Landscape Architect:

I have reviewed the application documents submitted in support of the above application. I have also visited the site, and viewed it in its wider landscape context.

The proposal is for an 'eco-dwelling' of original single-storey design, with a design philosophy that intends a low-impact, sustainable, energy-efficient house of appropriate scale, utilising renewable technologies with the intention of meeting 'level 5' for sustainable homes. Whilst the site lays outside the defined development area for Norton sub Hamdon, the application argues that its location is justified by the high and innovative quality of the design, as allowed for by PPS7 para 10 and 11. This states (para 10) 'Isolated new houses in the countryside will require special justification for planning permission to be granted...' and (para 11) 'Very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission.... The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area'.

The site lays to the north side of the village core, outside the development area, but abutting the conservation area to the south where the church stands, and to the east alongside Mill Farm and the millstream. It is sited within a 'green wedge' of small paddocks and fields that runs north toward open farmland from the church, laying between New road, and Rectory Lane with their respective areas of development. A detailed element of this settlement pattern, is that development associated with Rectory Lane lays to the east of the Mill Stream.

In two respects, the proposal is immediately seen to be at variance with these settlement characteristics, in that the building is located in the centre of the 'green wedge', thus disrupting the linkage of this open non-developed area with open countryside; and it lays outside the distinctive linear stream-side settlement pattern of Rectory Lane. It is acknowledged that the geometric plot pattern is a microcosm of the regularity of the wider landscape pattern, yet in-principle, the new house location is not consistent with local settlement character. Visually this is less of an issue, for the single-storey design is low-key, and with the green-roof finish, would blend more readily into the pattern and texture of the village edge than traditional construction. Light at night will be a little more evident, and in laying somewhat aside from the settlement pattern, again the house location is not the most sympathetic.

Returning to para 11 of PPS 7, in terms of the proposal's capacity to deliver 'significant enhancement' of the immediate setting, it is pertinent to review the landscape proposal. The landscape plan submitted for the application builds upon the current geometric pattern of the hedge-enclosed paddocks, adding a formalisation to the layout with additional linear and rectilinear plantings; creating vistas along avenues; and incorporating features of interest, many of which project out from the house and its immediate surround. The layout also provides the raw material to assist with self-sufficiency, such as the vegetable and fruit growing areas, plus planting for biomass.

Whilst the landscape proposal develops the current garden pattern with interest and empathy, it neither provides substantive areas of landscape or biodiversity benefit that is credible on a district-wide scale, which is an appropriate base against which to assess 'exceptional'; nor does it provide a level of garden design that is consistent with the quality

associated with the highest design standards, for example National Trust Gardens, which can be used as an indicator of what is clearly outstanding in terms of design and heritage. In terms of the proposal's responsiveness to local character, the site layout is clearly subservient to the church - as it should be - and whilst the house location is contrary to (and thus at variance with) settlement character, the garden layout is not uncomfortable within the pattern of the 'green wedge'. In this respect the proposal is suitably understated - but understated is not exceptional, and ultimately this is where the proposal fails the PPS 7 para 10-11 test. Whilst I applaud the objectives of this proposal, I do not see it as meeting the PPS7 objectives, nor does it satisfy local plan policy ST5 para 4, in that the house location is at variance with local character, consequently I am unable to support it.

County Archaeologist

The site lies within an Area of High Archaeological Potential and remains relating to both the medieval manorial site and a later mill may be impacted by this proposal. For this reason, the county archaeologist recommends that the applicant be required to provide archaeological monitoring of the development and a report on any discoveries made. A model 55 condition is recommended to be attached to any consent.

Engineer - no comments.

REPRESENTATIONS

5 letters have been received supporting the application. The following comments have been made:

- an exciting and interesting project
- sustainable homes are vital for the future
- educational opportunity for the village and school children to view sustainable construction
- impressed by the quality of the proposal and innovative design.
- a good case can be made for a PPS7 exceptional house
- add to the village's housing stock
- not harm the character of the village and blend in with its surroundings.
- would demonstrate good 21st century design.
- Demonstrates how we need to build in the future to deal with changing climate, how we use resources, and reduce our demands for water and energy.

CONSIDERATIONS

The key issues with regard to this application are the principle of development on this site, does the dwelling meet the PPS7 'exceptions' house, the design, layout and landscape, impact of the development on its setting, and highways/access issues.

The first consideration is to establish whether the principle of development on this site is acceptable. The site is located outside of the development area and thus there is a presumption against residential development. A planning application for residential development would normally be refused unless a proven need or adequate justification has been demonstrated. In this case, the argument is made within the Design and Access Statement that the submitted proposal satisfies the provisions of paragraph 11 in Planning Policy Statement No. 7.

Paragraph 11 states the following:

Very occasionally the exceptional quality and innovative nature of the design of a proposed, isolated new house may provide this special justification for granting planning permission. Such a design should be truly outstanding and ground-breaking, for example, in its use of materials, methods of construction or its contribution to protecting and enhancing the environment, so helping to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas. The value of such a building will be found in its reflection of the highest standards in contemporary architecture, the significant enhancement of its immediate setting and its sensitivity to the defining characteristics of the local area.

The details of this proposed scheme were forwarded to the case officer before formal submission of the planning application in order for the applicant to obtain pre-application advice as to whether this proposal could be accepted as a PPS7 'exceptions' house. As the advice and opinion given at the pre-application stage is still relevant to the current application, it is considered appropriate and useful to outline the advice given at the pre-application stage.

The advice given at the time following discussion with colleagues in the conservation team, and also after a review of the literature on this subject, mostly in relation to appeal decisions, was that the scheme did not meet the requirements of PPS7. The advice given was that for a proposal to be successful, the requirements that need to be met are that the quality of the design must be exceptional, innovative, truly outstanding and ground breaking. Whilst the view is that the proposed scheme is well designed, of modern construction, and avoids pastiche, the conclusion is that the proposal does not meet those PPS7 requirements.

In addition, from a landscape view, there are concerns that the proposal would not meet the requirements as considered necessary and as outlined by the council's landscape architect, in particular the scale of the development and overall plot size.

The landscape architect advised that the prime landscape interests would appear to be:

- i) Is the proposal truly outstanding in terms of its landscape design?
- ii) Would it significantly enhance its immediate setting and wider surroundings?
- iii) Has proper account been taken of the locality's defining characteristics?

The landscape architect advised that 'demonstrating 'exceptional' qualities, would present a clear challenge in developing this proposal, because the scale of the plot is not great, and is unlikely to enable the development of an outstanding garden design'. 'A 'small is beautiful' approach has few precedents at this minor scale'. Thus, it was considered that an application on this site would not meet the landscape requirements of a PPS7 dwelling.

A further point was also raised during the pre-application discussion that the guidance for a 'PPS7' house refers to an 'isolated new dwelling'. The available literature on this subject does not deal specifically with this particular issue or indeed defines what 'isolated' means. The available cases relate to dwellings and curtilage that is much more remote than the proposal at Mill Farm. A proposal may be justified in such close proximity to established settlements but none of the cases reviewed are as closely related to settlements. The general view is that this site would not be considered an 'isolated' site. Thus, an application for a 'PPS7' house would also fail on those grounds.

In terms of the landscape impact of the proposal, the Landscape Architect has raised concerns in relation to this proposal and is not able to support the application. The arguments in relation to whether the proposal would meet the landscape requirements of a PPS7 dwelling have been outlined above.

With regard to landscape character, an objection is raised by the Landscape Architect. The location of the dwelling is considered to be at variance with local settlement character, due to

its siting, in the centre of a 'green wedge' between paddocks and fields. Thus built form is intruding into an area that links undeveloped open areas with open countryside. The development will also be located outside of a distinct linear stream side settlement pattern of Rectory Lane.

In terms of its visual landscape impact, the landscape architect has concluded that this is less of an issue than harm to landscape character impact due to its single storey design and green roof finish. Moreover, it would blend more readily into the landscape at the edge of the settlement than a more traditional dwelling. On those grounds, it is not considered that the dwelling is visually intrusive and would not visually harm its immediate or wider setting.

It is important to state that the advice and opinion given at the pre-application stage in relation to a PPS7 'exceptions' house has not changed following the submission and consideration of the formal application. Thus, the principle of creating a dwelling on this site could not be justified under the exceptions policy outlined in PPS7. Therefore, can the eco dwelling be justified on any other grounds?

Notwithstanding the officer's position regarding a 'PPS7' house, it is accepted that the dwelling, due to the construction techniques, design and layout, will provide a highly sustainable residence in terms of water, energy and waste efficiency. The aim to achieve at least Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 will ensure that this dwelling is likely to be one of few new dwellings to be built to this standard at the current time, certainly until Level 6 is required for all new homes by 2016. Even then, achieving 100% Code level 6 for all new homes will no doubt be a tough challenge. Therefore, it is considered that it can be viewed as an exemplar project in terms of how dwellings need and should be built for the future.

The South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy (SSSCS) 2008-2026 lists 12 goals. This is a very important document as those goals will influence the spatial element of development that will emerge from the Development Plan Documents adopted in the coming years ie it will influence how and where homes will be built. It is considered that this development would meet several of those goals.

Dealing with each goal in turn, it would meet Goal 8 - Quality Development. This seeks, amongst its other aims, the construction of high quality sustainably located and built homes. It is considered that this dwelling through its construction, layout and use would meet that goal.

Goal 9 focuses on homes and in particular the need to provide a balanced housing market with a range of low carbon affordable housing. Whilst the proposal is not an affordable home to be taken on by a Registered Social Landlord, it clearly will be low carbon dwelling and contribute to the range of housing available in the village. Moreover, the text outlining why Goal 9 is important does encourage self build eco-homes. It is considered that this dwelling will contribute to Goal 9.

Goal 10 deals with energy and moving towards a carbon neutral economy. An important element of this is reducing energy in both the construction of homes, energy saved in terms of how homes are built and used, making better use of natural resources, for example water/rainwater, and dealing with waste. It is considered that this dwelling would make a positive contribution to Goal 10.

Goal 11 relates to the protection and enhancement of our natural environment and biodiversity. An important aspect of reducing human activity on the natural environment and thus helping to preserve our environment is by reducing our CO2 emissions and other polluting activity. In particular, the construction of low or zero carbon homes will make an important contribution to this goal. Clearly, one new eco dwelling on its own won't save the

environment but will make its own important contribution to this goal. Importantly, it will provide a good example of how dwellings and indeed other buildings should be built in the future to help protect our environment.

Goal 12 focuses upon environmental education. As outlined above, the applicant held 2 open days to explain their project and to invite views/comments from villagers and any other interested parties. The applicant has also stated that they would welcome the opportunity for local schoolchildren to visit the project and to learn about how the dwelling has been constructed and how the layout and use of materials will minimise its carbon footprint. Thus, it is considered that this project has and will help raise awareness of how we should construct and use homes in the future. Thus, it is considered that this application will make a contribution to Goal 12.

Therefore, whilst it is considered that there are wider sustainability issues and concerns as raised by the Highway Authority, landscape character issues as raised by the landscape architect, and no specific proven need for the dwelling, it is considered that the proposal will meet several of the goals in the SSSCS. Therefore, on balance, it is considered that the benefits/merits of the scheme outweigh the concerns that have been raised.

In terms of highways issues, the response of the Highway Authority is outlined above. The concerns in relation to the sustainability of the development ie: fostering growth in the need to travel by private vehicle and accessibility to services and facilities has been outlined above.

The Highway Authority has also raised concerns in relation to additional vehicles using Rectory Lane as a result of the proposed development. The Highway Authority is particularly concerned about Rectory Lane's restricted width and associated highway safety issues resulting from vehicles meeting along the lane. The Highway Authority has stated that two vehicles are unable to pass along Rectory Lane and indeed, even a vehicle and pedestrian unable to pass. Forward visibility is also limited. In response to those concerns, the applicant sought to address those concerns and forwarded a letter to the Highway Authority. However, due to the potential for highway conflict along Rectory Lane, the Highway Authority has maintained its objection. On those grounds the application is recommended for refusal.

SECTION 106 PLANNING OBLIGATION / UNILATERAL UNDERTAKING

Not applicable to this application.

RECOMMENDATION

Refuse permission.

01. The approach road, Rectory Lane by reason of its restricted width and poor alignment is considered unsuitable to serve as a means of access for the type of traffic likely to be generated by the proposed development. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy 49 of the Somerset and Exmoor National Park Joint Structure Plan Review (Adopted April 2000).

Appendix A – Landscape proposals 09/00229/FUL

09 / 00229 / #



SUMMARY

The Landscape Design Philosophy

Our clients are sensitive stewards who care for their land in a way which is responsive to the rural location adjoining farmland. On the land which forms this application, the owners and applicants for this planning submission, Mr and Mrs Simon Weir have established a substantial smallholding. This includes a non-commercial vineyard, an orchard and vegetable plots. This is set within a framework of vegetation including planted and managed areas of new native and ornamental hedgerows, native tree plantations, individual trees and grassland.

The proposed development builds on the principles established in the formation of the existing smallholding in terms of the environmental sensitivity, respect for local character and a very 'green' and innovative approach to the development.

The landscape design proposals recognise the importance of the location in sympathy with the local character and by reinforcing it; particularly with regard to the impact on views from Ham Hill and local footpaths. The proposals develop a synergy so that architecture and landscape become one. The established landscape patterns are reflected in the design through the gridded, hedge-enclosed layout, the geometric lines of the established vineyard and the grid pattern of the establishing orchard.

The landscape enhances and complements the 'green' credentials of the proposals to provide substantial environmental gain and, collectively, the proposals present an innovative approach

Landscape Design Proposals

Existing Site

The site is compartmentalised by a series of well maintained beech and indigenous mix hedges that broadly quarter the plot – the southwest sector contains the orchard; the northwest sector contains the vineyard and a grass area; the southeast sector is essentially grass with a few orchard trees, some soft fruit cages and a small shed, the northeast sector contains the winery, store and vegetables and the main access to the site. There are also substantial areas of well managed and established indigenous tree and shrub planting. These will all be retained and managed.

The proposed house is sited within a very gently sloping area of grass adjacent to the existing vineyard in the northwest sector of the site and to the north of the existing orchard. The vineyard and orchard are well established and well managed and have been laid out in an orderly, geometric fashion – the orchard trees form a grid pattern and the vines are grown in closely spaced rows broadly in alignment with the fruit trees. The

**The Landscape Practice
Chartered Landscape Architects**

**Proposed Dwelling adjacent to Mill Farm – Norton Sub Hamdon
Landscape Design Statement**

**Page 1 of 6
8 January 2009**