

LANDSCAPE OFFICER'S REPORT:

08 May 2019

LOCATION: Dorset Self Storage Company, Gold Hill Business Park, Gold Hill

APP REF: 2/2018/0595/OUT

PROPOSAL: Develop land by the erection of 68 No. dwellings, form vehicular accesses, public highway improvement, parking, landscaping and open spaces. (Outline application to determine access).

LANDSCAPE OFFICER CONSULTATION COMMENTS

CASE OFFICER: Robert Lennis

Site Visit: 25/03/19

	No Comment
	Support
	Support subject to conditions
X	Unable to support (for reasons set out below)
	No objections

LANDSCAPE COMMENTS:

The proposed application is for outline permission for the principle of up to 68 dwellings and utilising the existing site access off Lower Common Road. An indicative layout plan has been provided with the application to illustrate how 68 homes may be accommodated on the site.

The proposed development site is situated on land currently occupied by the Gold Hill Business Park on the northern edge of Child Okeford, outside of the defined settlement boundary.

1. Local and national policy

1.1. North Dorset Local Plan

Policy 4 -The Natural Environment

The landscape character of the District will be protected through retention of the features that characterise the area. Where significant impact is likely to arise as a result of a development proposal, developers will be required to clearly demonstrate that that the impact on the landscape has been mitigated and that important landscape features have been incorporated in to the development scheme.

Paragraph 4.56 - The District-Wide Landscape Character Area Assessment identified 18 landscape character areas and set out the key features of these. If these features were harmed by development, the landscape character would be degraded. It is therefore important that all development is designed to fit with this landscape character, including the use of appropriate building materials and in relation to the scale of development.

Paragraph 4.57 - Where there is likely to be a significant impact on the landscape, development proposals should be accompanied by an assessment of the impact on the landscape character such as a landscape and visual impact assessment based on best practice. This should demonstrate how important landscape features will be integrated into development proposals and how the visual impact of a development has been mitigated.

2. Landscape Character Assessment

2.1. Clay Vale LCT:

Key land management guidance notes for the Open Chalk Downland landscape type:

- encourage maintenance and enhancement of boundaries, particularly along the vale and replant any gaps where necessary.
- plant new hedgerow oaks at regular intervals to replace existing mature stock.
- protect, restore and create new field ponds
- restore streamside habitats and wet woodlands and consider extending wet woodland, particularly around existing settlements and farmsteads.
- conserve and enhance management of neutral unimproved meadows and encourage restoration where appropriate.
- restore and manage pollard trees.
- protect the consistent pattern of regular enclosures and surviving strip and open fields.
- restore remaining coppice woodlands around the vale edge.
- conserve the pattern and character of small settlements and associated surrounding trees/copses/woodlands.
- conserve ponds which must also be properly assessed for protected species prior to determining any application for development
- identify, protect and conserve the long ranging views especially from roads, Rights of Way and key viewpoints to surrounding hills and ridges e.g. via Parish Action Plans, Village Design Statements and other Settlement Appraisals

3. Footpaths and visual amenity

There are a number of footpaths, trailways and bridleways in proximity to the application site and on higher ground to the south and south-east of the proposed site, these being:

- N35/5 (Footpath on southern and western boundaries of site)
- N39/1 (Bridleway/Trialway to the west of the application site)
- N35/10 (Footpath to the south of the site)
- N35/2 (Bridleway to the north of the site on Porter's Hill)
- Open Access Land on Hambledon Hill to the south-east of the site (Within the Dorset AONB)
- Open Access Land on Hod Hill to the south of the site (Within the Dorset AONB)
- N48/50 (Bridleway on top of Okeford Hill to the south-west of the site within the Dorset AONB)

The site is subject to partial and open views from a number of visual receptors within close, middle and long distance. The development will be viewed within the context of the Stour Valley floor.

4. Landscape character

The proposed development is on brown-field land outside the defined settlement boundary of the village. Currently, the average density of housing within the village is between 10 and 20 Dwellings per Hectare (DpH), which is appropriate for a rural village.

In the streets closest to the proposed site the DpH is:

- Gold Hill between Gold Hill and Ridgeway Hill – 10DpH
- Bower and Meadow View – 15DpH
- Aplands Close – 20DpH

The indicative proposed site plan illustrating how it is proposed to accommodate 68 dwellings on the site uses approximately 2.25ha of the application site area with the remaining 1.5ha being used for attenuation of storm-water and public open space. The proposed housing has a Dwelling per Hectare calculation of 30. I would suggest that this number of properties would create a much more suburban settlement beyond the edge of the village that is not in keeping with the existing situation and would impact on how the settlement is viewed within the landscape.

The overall management objective for this Clay Vale Landscape Type should be to conserve the pattern and character of small settlements and associated surrounding trees/copses/woodlands. One of the key characteristics of Child Okeford is its low density of housing interspersed with significant tree planting.

The submitted LVIA finds that *“With the removal of the large scale utilitarian units on the site and the replacement by smaller scale dwellings with less mass, this should be more representative of established development in the wider landscape. Therefore, the changes on the site have the potential to have a positive affect on the setting of the AONB, Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas and other designated assets above.”* However, I would argue that these large scale utilitarian buildings are an expected (and well represented) element within a rural landscape. I would further argue that an area of housing that is sub-urban in layout and significantly higher in density than the existing settlement would be more out of context than these utilitarian buildings. I anticipate that the landscape character of the area will be degraded by the introduction of a sizeable sub-urban scale development on land that is beyond the main village settlement.

5. Visual Amenity

In the previous section, I have made comments on how the proposed density of development will impact on the how the village is viewed within the landscape and will not repeat them in this section.

The existing buildings on the site are large agricultural buildings that are visible from as far a way as Okeford Hill to the south-west. The submitted Design and Access Statement suggests that *“the proposals will provide local visual amenity enhancements through loss of these existing buildings”*. However, I would argue that there is an expectation to see collections of large agricultural buildings within this landscape and these buildings are more prominent due to their bright colouring rather than them appearing out of context. Their removal and replacement with housing could reduce the visibility of development on this site but this would be dependent on landscaping and material selection (housing rendered with

pale render could be equally visible). An easier solution to the over-visibility of the existing buildings would be to paint them a darker colour as has happened at Deer Farm and Ridgeway farms to the north-east of the site.

RECOMMENDATION:

I am unable to support the principle of this scheme, given that the requirements of Policy ENV4 of the NDDC Local Plan have not been satisfied.

If you are minded to approve this application, the following items should be considered to ensure the scheme is integrated into the landscape:

- Dwellings per Hectare of the proposal should be reduced to reflect housing on the edge of a village.
- Materials and landscaping for the scheme should be selected to ensure the development has a character that matches the village character and is not obtrusive within views from the wider landscape.

Conditions:

See above

OFFICER: Paul Wyeth

TITLE: Specialist Services Manager

DATE: 08.05.19