

## Officer Report on Planning Application: 18/01737/OUT\*\*

<b>Proposal :</b>	Outline application for residential development of up to 150 dwellings, public open space, landscaping and associated works with access from Lang Road
<b>Site Address:</b>	Land South Of KitHill, Crewkerne, Somerset
<b>Parish:</b>	Crewkerne
<b>CREWKERNE Ward (SSDC Member)</b>	Cllr M Best, Cllr R Pailthorpe, Cllr B Hodgson
<b>Recommending Case Officer:</b>	Andrew Gunn
<b>Target date :</b>	04 September 2018
<b>Applicant :</b>	Mr J Tizzard
<b>Agent: (no agent if blank)</b>	Pegasus Planning Group Ltd First Floor, South Wing Equinox North, Great Park Road Almondsbury Bristol BS32 4QL
<b>Application Type :</b>	Major

### REASON(S) FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

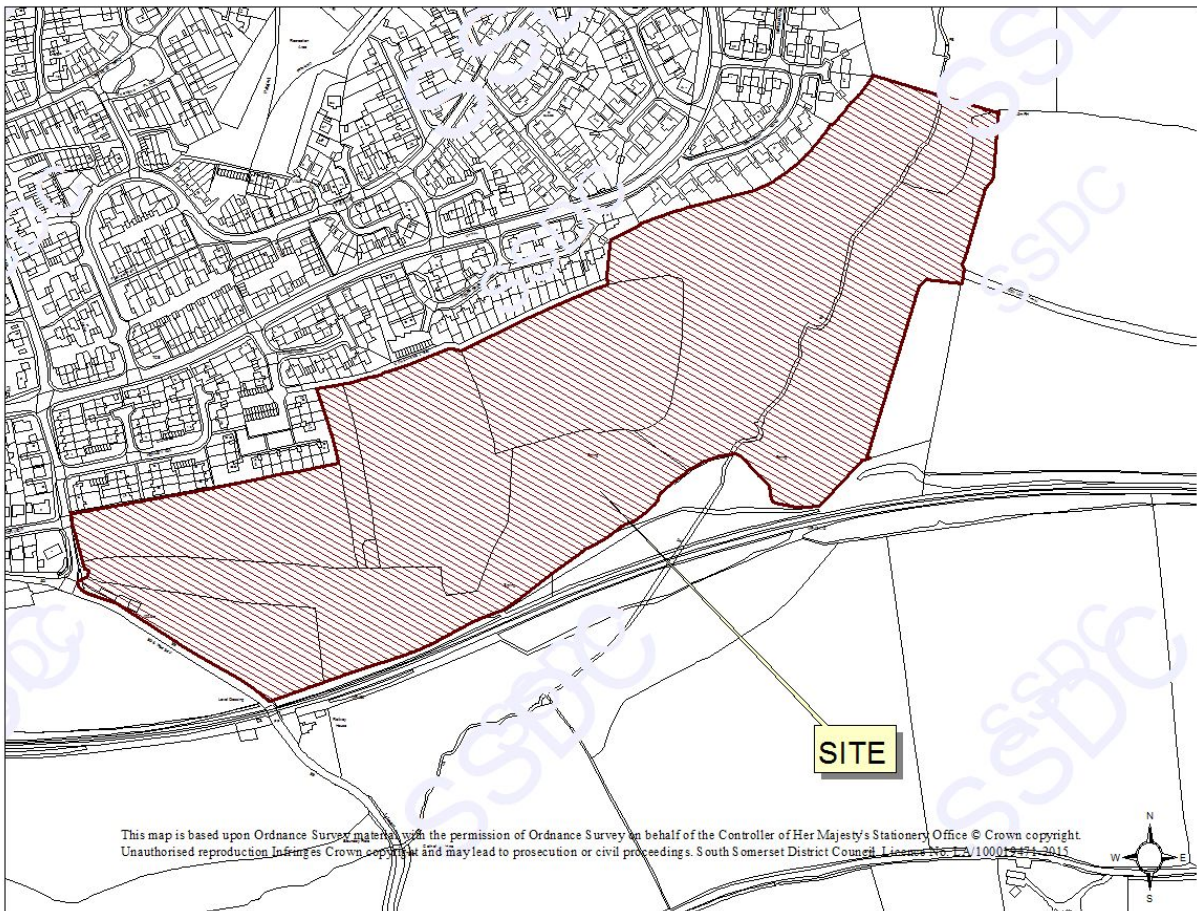
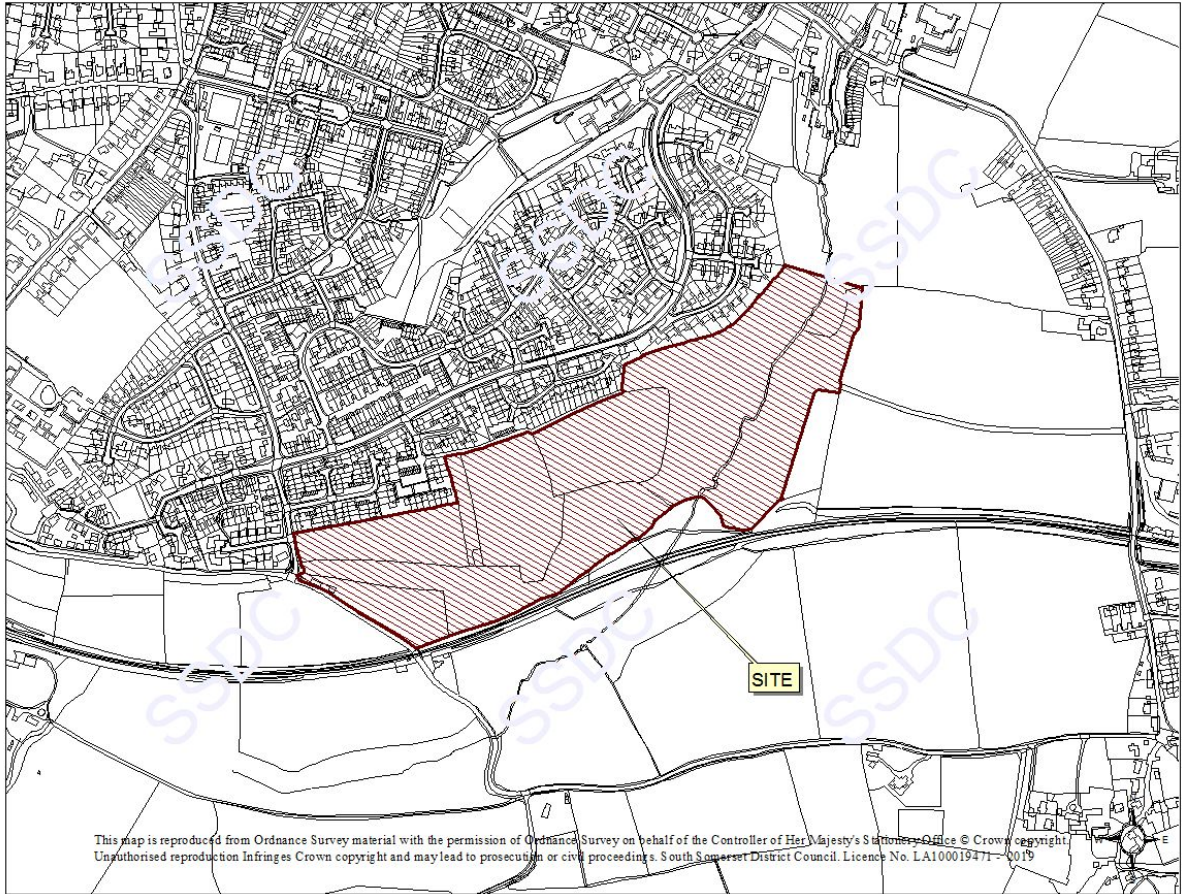
This application is referred automatically to Area West Committee as it is a proposal that exceeds 4 hectares and therefore constitutes a major-major application.

This application has also been 2-starred under the Scheme of Delegation - referral of applications to the Regulation Committee for determination. In collective agreement with the Leader, Portfolio Holder, Area Chairs, Director (Service Delivery), Monitoring Officer, and Lead Specialist (Planning) all major applications will be 2 starred for the immediate future to safeguard the Council's performance, pending a more substantive review.

The Area Committees will still be able to approve and condition major applications. However, if a committee is minded to refuse a major application, whilst it will be able to debate the issues and indicate grounds for refusal, the final determination will be made by the Regulation Committee.

### SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located on existing fields on the southern edge of Crewkerne, adjoining existing residential development to the north with sloping fields to the south. The railway line runs parallel with the site in the valley to the south. The total application area comprises over 15 hectares covering 9 fields. The proposed residential developable area will cover 3.8 hectares and include 3 of those fields. Public Rights of Way run through the site to the south of the proposed developed area.



## **PROPOSAL**

The application seeks outline consent for up to 150 dwellings, access from Lang Road, public open space, landscaping and associated works. The means of access is sought for approval at this stage with all other detailed matters relating to scale, layout, landscaping and appearance, reserved for any subsequent future reserved matters application.

This current application has been supported by a Design and Access Statement, Affordable Housing Statement, Draft Heads of Terms, Planning Statement, Transport Statement, Travel Plan, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, Ecological Statement and a Tree Constraints Appraisal and Plan. The Transport Statement has been subsequently updated during the course of the application. A site plan, illustrative masterplan and proposed access arrangement plans have also been submitted.

The scheme proposes access from Lang Road opposite the junction with Manor View with an emergency access point to be provided along the northern side of the site onto the lane that runs parallel with the application site, to the south of Seaborough View and Cowen Close. The submitted illustrative masterplan shows a main estate road running through the site with a series of smaller cul-de sacs being formed. Cycling and pedestrian links will be created to run throughout the development and those will link to existing footpaths and public rights of way on all boundaries of the site. This will provide links to the town, open space and the train station. The scheme will also provide allotments, woodland enhancement, street tree planting, green corridors and an orchard. 2 water attenuation areas will also be created towards the eastern end of the site.

## **HISTORY**

No planning history.

## **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

South Somerset Local Plan (Adopted 2015)

SD1 - Sustainable Development

SS1 - Settlement Strategy

SS4 - District Wide Housing Provision

SS5 - Delivering New Housing Growth

SS6 - Infrastructure Delivery

HG3 - Provision of Affordable Housing

TA4 - Travel Plans

TA5 - Transport Impact of New development

TA6 - Parking Standards

HW1 - Provision of open spaces, outdoor playing space, sports, cultural and community facilities in new development

EQ2 - General Development

EQ4 - Biodiversity

### Relevant Policy Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

Adopted Somerset County Council Parking Standards

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Crewkerne Town Council:**

Crewkerne Town Council have considered planning application 18/01737/OUT (Land south of Kithill, Crewkerne), including the amended plans issued on 19 October 2018 and on 24 June 2019.

In summary, the Town Council recommends refusal of this planning application on the grounds that it is an unsustainable location, both in terms of traffic impact on an already inadequate highways network and the lack of any associated improvements to local infrastructure.

These points are set out in more detail below.

#### 1. Traffic impact

1.1 The Town Council strongly supports the position put forward by Highways in their letter of 22 August 2018, where they state the following:

- "this planning application would represent a significant traffic impact on Cathole Bridge Road that could potentially represent a severe highway safety concern"
- "Cathole Bridge Road by reason of its restricted width is considered unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development. The proposal is therefore contrary to Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy TA5 of the South Somerset District Local Plan."
- "The proposal is contrary to Section 9 of the NPPF and Policy TA5 of the South Somerset District Local Plan since the increased introduction of conflicting traffic movements onto Cathole Bridge Road, such as would be generated by the proposed development, would be prejudicial to highway safety."

1.2 The Town Council supports the Highways' analysis that 57% of development traffic would use Cathole Bridge Road and considers that the estimate of 9% put forward by the applicant is grossly understated.

1.3 The junction of Lang Road and Cathole Bridge Road has very poor visibility and the vision splay of the junction of Cathole Bridge Road and Lyme Road, from the direction of Roundham, is so poor as to be positively dangerous. The Town Council is extremely concerned that the increased traffic generated by the proposed development would further compromise safety at these junctions.

1.4 The Town Council are strongly critical of the so-called "improvements" to Cathole Bridge Road put forward by the applicant in the 24 June 2019 amendment, which consist merely of formalising the currently informal passing places and in cutting back of verges to attempt to marginally widen the available carriageway and increase visibility. The fact remains that Cathole Bridge Road is already wholly unsuitable as a carriageway for vehicles and this will be greatly exacerbated by the increase in traffic caused by the proposed development.



- 1.5 The Town Council is very concerned that there is only one access road into this development as this could compromise the ability of emergency vehicles to gain access to the development. The Council is also concerned that the access road is on the brow of a hill and, as a result, has very poor sightlines.
- 1.6 The Town Council consider it wholly unsatisfactory that the traffic survey conducted was very cursory, being undertaken over one day only, and that the traffic assessment uses data from the 2011 census.
- 1.7 The railway crossing on Cathole Bridge Road would cause increased traffic to back up onto the bend of Cathole Bridge Road.

## 2. Infrastructure

The Town Council is very concerned that the town's existing infrastructure is barely coping, as evidenced by the fact that:

- There is frequently severe traffic congestion in the town centre.
- The schools are full.
- The GP surgery is struggling to meet demand.
- Public transport bus links are sparse.

The Town Council does not therefore support application 18/01737/OUT as it would mean 150 additional dwellings with no supporting infrastructure. With no additional local employment opportunities, many of the working-age residents of these 150 dwellings will need to travel by car to neighbouring towns for employment.

### **Misterton Parish Council: (adjoining PC) (First response)**

Misterton Parish Council has looked at this application as a neighbouring parish. The Councillors have asked me to write and register their concerns regarding the potential impact of this development on traffic levels through the village of Misterton. As you will be aware, Misterton supports an already extremely high volume of traffic through the village and the exit of traffic from this development will put pressure on Cathole Bridge Road, which is a small, single lane road and inevitably raise the volume of traffic in Misterton quite considerably.

Further comments received following submission of off-site highway works and updated Transport Assessment:

Misterton Parish Council met last night and considered this application as the neighbouring Parish. The Parish Councillors continue to oppose this application, supporting Crewkerne Town Council's refusal of the application last week. The reason for this is that Cathole Bridge Road is simply not an appropriate road for the increase in traffic associated with this development. The proposed upgrade of 'trimming' vegetation is not a significant enough amendment to make this suitable access for the development and, the PC believes, is prejudicial to highways safety. There is restricted width the entire length of the road, with poor visibility and difficult passing places. The increased volume of traffic along Cathole Bridge Road towards Misterton has significant implications for congestion and pollution levels in the village. The Parish Council would be grateful if you could ensure their comments are added to the portal.

### **County Highway Authority: (First response)**

I refer to the above-mentioned planning application received on 9 July 2018 and after carrying out a site visit on 18 July 2018 have the following observations on the highway and transportation aspects of this proposal:-

This is a planning application for 150 dwellings on land to the south of Kithill. This planning application proposes to utilise the existing access but make improvements to the access for this development. For the avoidance of doubt, the Highway Authority are making a recommendation of refusal for this planning application to the Local Planning Authority and the reasons are set out below.

The Highway Authority have made a comprehensive review of the Transport Assessment (TA) and the TA fails to demonstrate that the traffic impact from this development will not be severe.

Looking at the trip distribution of the proposed development, this should be revised to reflect the likely route of traffic to Yeovil, Chard & Ilminster via Cathole Bridge Road. The baseline traffic flows and traffic flow assessments are out of date and not considered representative when assessing the traffic impact from this planning Application. The site access junction has not been fully capacity assessed.

In its current form and until an appropriate assessment is conducted, it is the opinion of the Highway Authority that a recommendation of refusal on traffic impact grounds is considered appropriate.

When looking at the approach roads, the Highway Authority has significant Concerns with the approach road along Cathole Bridge Road. From my onsite observations, it was apparent that Cathole Bridge Road is narrow in its nature and there are parts where two way vehicle movements are difficult. Taking the proposed level of vehicle movements that the development would likely generate, it is the opinion of the Highway Authority that this planning application would represent a significant traffic impact on Cathole Bridge Road that could potentially represent a severe highway safety concern and would therefore be contrary to section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published July 2018.

Taking the above information into account, the Highway Authority would recommend refusal of this planning application for the following reasons (in no particular order):

1. Cathole Bridge Road by reason of its restricted width is considered unsuitable to serve as a means of access to the proposed development. The proposal is therefore contrary to Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy TA5 of the South Somerset District Local Plan (adopted March 2015).
2. The proposal is contrary to Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Policy TA5 of the South Somerset District Local Plan (adopted March 2015) since the increased introduction of conflicting traffic movements onto Cathole Bridge Road, such as would be generated by the proposed development, would be prejudicial to highway safety.
3. The submitted supporting documents are insufficient to enable the Local Planning Authority to make a full assessment of the traffic impact of this proposal.

**Officer comment and update to County Highway response/advice.**

Following receipt of the above response from the Highway Authority, the applicant submitted an addendum to the Transport Assessment. The Highway Authority confirmed that they were satisfied with the information and that the Transport Assessment is satisfactory. However, still raised concerns in respect of the approach roads, particularly Cathole Bridge Road. A couple of weeks after receiving this letter, the Highway Authority wrote to the case officer again to clarify their position. The Highway Authority stated that they do not wish to raise an objection to the application, however does have concerns with the potential increase of vehicle movements along Cathole Bridge Road. It is therefore a matter for the LPA to consider if there is an overriding need for the development that outweighs the concern.

At that juncture, without any proposed improvements to the off-site highway network, the change in Highway Authority advice was difficult to fully comprehend. The impact on highway safety was originally clearly considered to be significantly adverse to warrant a recommendation of refusal. There may be a need for housing but this should not be at the expense of identified highway safety issues that warranted refusal of the development.

The case officer sought the advice of the Council's highway consultant. He undertook his own site visit and surveyed the level of traffic and assessed the width and alignment of Cathole Bridge road and the key junctions. His main concern was in regard to the distribution of traffic. The applicant was stating 9% of development traffic would use Cathole Bridge Road, whereas the Highway Authority concluded it would be 57%. The Council's Highway Consultant assessed it at around 30% or 27 vehicles in the peak hour.

As a result of this assessment and the concerns about the traffic impact of the development, the applicant was asked to assess whether mitigation works could be undertaken to Cathole Bridge Road and the junction with the B3165. Consequently, the scheme has been amended to include the widening of the carriageway in certain sections to provide a minimum width of 4.8metres to allow the passing of a car and a large vehicle, 3 formalised passing places and the introduction of two priority sections of road. In regard to improving the visibility at the junction with the B3165, this is now proposed to be widened giving splays of up to 90 metres to the south west and 120 metres to the north east.

#### **County Highway Authority: (off site highway works)**

Comments are awaited in regard to the proposed off-site highway works and Transport Assessment addendum. An oral update will be given at committee in respect of any response received.

#### **Ecologist:**

I broadly agree with conclusions and recommendations of the Ecological Assessment (Ethos Environmental Planning, April 2018). The fields themselves aren't considered to be of any significant importance, but the boundary hedges are a 'priority habitat for the conservation of biodiversity' (Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006), and are also used by dormice and commuting/foraging bats, both of which are European Protected Species subject to the provisions of the Habitats Regulations 2017.

The main open space part of the site is part of Kithill County Wildlife Site. This is designated due to being a 'complex of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, scrub, unimproved calcareous, neutral and marshy grassland'. The proposals mostly retain the boundary hedges and the County Wildlife Site. Significant impacts have therefore been minimised.

Dormice are principally arboreal, are reluctant to cross open ground, and aren't generally found within urban environments. Therefore, despite retention of the majority of boundary hedges, some of these (particularly those that will be 'internal' to the development) will be unlikely to support dormice post development. These hedges are unlikely to be of any significant importance on a landscape scale, and the impact is therefore likely to be of local significance only.

However, to ensure planning policy and legislative requirements are met, I recommend compensation planting suitable for dormice will be required. The illustrative masterplan indicates new woodland planting within the open space. Provided the details of this new planting and other mitigation measures are consistent with the recommendations of the Ecological Assessment, then I'm satisfied that the Habitats Regulations test of 'maintaining favourable conservation status' will be retained.

In conclusion, I consider the proposed layout minimises ecological impacts, and that necessary mitigation and compensation for protected species could feasibly be delivered, to ensure that relevant legislative and policy requirements are satisfied. I therefore have no objections.

I recommend the following further details should be provided/addressed for the reserved matters application:

1. Full details of compensation habitat planting for dormice should be provided to demonstrate that the Habitats Regulations test of 'maintaining favourable conservation status' is satisfied (these details will require subsequent consultation to the county ecologist).
2. Landscape planting proposals within the County Wildlife Site should avoid any existing 'priority habitats', such as unimproved grassland.
3. Landscape proposals should be consistent with the recommendations in the Ecological Assessment. Although it isn't clear, the illustrative masterplan suggests a more formal landscape treatment of the hedge in the vicinity of point 5 (play area). For ecological and landscape impact reasons, I recommend the entire south and east boundary (save for a minimum number of pedestrian access points) should be native hedgerow, increased in width where it's thin, and managed infrequently, to provide functional and connected habitat for protected species and naturalistic landscape screening.
4. The following species should not be included in planting proposals. (a) Ash, due to Chalara (ash dieback disease); (b) Rowan doesn't naturally occur locally and doesn't do well on local soils; (c) Silver birch doesn't naturally occur locally.

In due course (e.g. for submission and approval by condition), I recommend the following:

1. A Management Plan for the open space, due to being a County Wildlife Site containing 'priority habitats and species', and legally protected dormice.
2. Full details of measures to 'incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments' (NPPF para. 175 (d)).

**Somerset Wildlife Trust:**

No objection to the scheme and have noted the supporting ecological statements. Concerned about the possible negative impacts on the adjacent Kithill Local Wildlife Site and therefore support the recommendations in the submitted Ecological Assessment.

**Lead Local Flood Authority: (LLFA) (first response)**

Whilst we acknowledge this is an outline application, and welcome the comments within the FRA to consider a full range of SUDS at detailed design, we question the feasibility and appropriateness of what has been proposed at this stage.

The site is located within a steep catchment, the development site would likely receive off site surface water flows and may form part of an overland flow route. This type of flooding is relatively shallow, but could be of higher velocity due to the steep site. The FRA should consider this risk and provide details of how the site would be designed to intercept and manage any off site flows. The development must remain safe and demonstrate no increase in risk to any third parties.

Part of the site has shown to be suitable for soakaways through initial testing. However, the soakaway report mentions the steepness of the site and suggested infiltration techniques might not be appropriate in certain areas of the site as they could cause slope instability. The FRA does not consider whether this risk is applicable to the areas where infiltration techniques are being proposed.



The remaining part of the site is proposed to drain to attenuation ponds, which in terms of SUDS is acceptable, but some consideration is needed as to how and where these are located given the topography to ensure their operation and ongoing maintenance. Attention should be paid to designing a drainage scheme that slows flows and provides a treatment element to improve the water quality prior to discharge.

The applicant is reminded that any proposed discharge to the ordinary watercourse, including any works and structures, would require Land Drainage Consent in addition to planning permission. We recommend that the above should be provided prior to the LPA granting permission.

Officer comment:

In response to the above advice from the LLFA, discussion was held between the LLFA and the applicant's drainage consultant. Further information was submitted and the LLFA confirmed that they were happy with the information provided for this stage of planning, but recommend a detailed drainage condition to ensure an appropriate SUDS design is forthcoming with any subsequent detailed planning application.

In addition, following the submission of details in respect of the off-site highway works, the LLFA advised that they would expect any increase to impermeable areas to be included within the drainage strategy for the site. Also suggest a suitable surface water drainage condition be applied to the application to ensure viable scheme for the lifetime of the development.

#### **County Rights of Way: (summary)**

No objection. There is a potential need to improve the adjacent rights of way due to the possible increased use and a financial contribution sought. Advice provided as to preferred pedestrian links from the development to connect to the existing rights of way. One preferred link would be located towards the centre of the site along the southern boundary and 2 connections at the eastern end of the development.

Following further discussion and request for clarification as to what financial contribution and practical works work may be sought, the Rights of Way Officer confirmed the following: 'The arrangement where the path exits the enclosed lane (eastern end opposite train station) and enters the field towards the development requires improving with a pedestrian gate, or a field gate being unlocked and serviceable. Also we request £15k for local footpath improvements, with the balance refundable 10 years after completion/full occupation. This would primarily be to improve the enclosed lane (if and when it might need it subject to demand). The terrain is too hilly to achieve anything more significant.

#### **County Archaeologist: (original response)**

The site lies within an area of archaeological potential as shown by geophysical surveys that have identified prehistoric settlement very close to the proposal site. However, there is currently insufficient information contained within the application on the nature of any archaeological remains to properly assess their interest.

For this reason I recommend that the applicant be asked to provide further information on any archaeological remains on the site prior to the determination of this application. This is likely to require a desk-based assessment and a field evaluation as indicated in the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 128).

Officer comment:

Following receipt of the above advice/response, the applicant's archaeologist contacted the County Archaeologist. Following advice, the applicant undertook fieldwork, under the supervision of the County Archaeologist, including digging of trenches to ascertain the nature of any archaeological remains. Prehistoric pottery and animal bones were found in parts of the

site. The County Archaeologist has requested that an archaeological watching brief condition is attached to any consent.

**County Education:**

A proposal for 150 homes in this location would generate the following number of pupils:

5/100 x150 = 7.5 Early years (8)

23/100 x150 = 34.5 (35) 1st school places

15/100 x150 = 22.5 (23) middle school places

9/100 x 150 = 13.5 (14) upper school places

This application site is in the school catchments area for the following schools:

St Bartholomew's First school, Maiden Beech Middle School and Wadham secondary. Our Early years commissioning team has advised me that they do require Early years spaces. St Bartholomew's First school is at capacity, also Maiden Beech is close to capacity, therefore we will require contributions towards these education providers in the area so that they would be able to improve facilities to enable higher numbers of pupils to attend.

Price per pupil has been recently updated in accordance with actual build costs of schools in Somerset so is currently:

Early years and 1st School= £17,074

Middle school =£20,967.50

Therefore Somerset County Council would require the following education contributions;

43 places at £17,074 = £734,182 for early years and 1st school providers in the area

23 places at £20,967= £482,241 for middle schools in the area.

As there are currently spaces in the upper school, we will not require contributions for that education provider.

**Housing Officer:**

35% affordable housing split 80:20 social rent: intermediate product. This would equate to 53 of the currently proposed 150 dwellings with the following split: 43 for social rent and 10 for other intermediate affordable housing solutions.

9 x 1 bed flat

2 x 2 bed flat

26 x 2 bed houses

14 x 3 bed houses

2 x 4 bed parlour house (available at a social rent)

The affordable homes should be spread throughout the site and in clusters of no more than 12 units and each cluster contains some social rented dwellings. The rented units will be expected to be made available to anyone registered on Homefinder Somerset.

**Community Health and Leisure:**

A total of £333,507 is sought towards the following:

£127,320 (plus £73,542 commuted sum) - Equipped play - on site LEAP

£25,000 - (plus £9,243 commuted sum) - Youth facilities - off site contribution towards expansion/enhancement of the skate park at Happy Valley Park.

£59,179 (plus £35,921 commuted sum) - Playing Pitches - off site contribution towards enhancing pitches at either a school site or recreation ground within Crewkerne.

Officer comment: Commuted sums are sought to provide for future maintenance of those facilities over a 10 year period.

#### Open Space (summary)

The amount of open space shown on the 'Illustrative Framework Plan' identifies an amount of Public open Space far in excess of that required for a development of this size. We are really encouraged by the plans provided for this development; the inclusion of a green entrance to the site, street tree planting and green corridors throughout the site breaking up the built form, as well as orchard tree planting and an allotment site are all great and welcome features which make this a well-designed development, appropriate and significant for the area.

The proposed footpath links through the further areas of open space to the south and east of the site help connect the development to its surrounding areas and to Crewkerne, the town, itself, and we would be encouraged to see these areas still used for grazing as this creates a well-managed, low maintenance area, full of native wild flowers and wildlife.

We are also encouraged by the attenuation features on site that not only serve a required function for the development but have been allocated and designed to incorporate them within the site, making them an attractive feature for the residents.

We have no objections to this application progressing, and look forward to seeing it develop.

#### **Designing out Crime Officer:**

No objection. Design advice provided that should be taken into account if outline consent is granted and a subsequent detailed application is submitted.

#### **REPRESENTATIONS**

50 letters/emails have been received with 48 raising objections and 2 making representations. A summary of the objections are as follows:

- Harmful impact to the character and appearance of the countryside.
- Loss of view and privacy to adjacent properties
- Loss of property value
- Harmful impact to ecology and wildlife.
- Development in this location has not been mentioned previously.
- Highway safety issues particularly the increased use of Cathole Bridge Road.
- Cathole Bridge Road is used as a rat run to avoid the town centre and the development will increase the number of vehicles using the road.
- It is largely single width with passing places and not suitable for additional traffic.
- Junction of Cathole bridge road and Lyme Road not safe.
- Cars have to reverse/backup to allow oncoming vehicles to pass.
- Increased danger to pedestrians/cyclists who use the lane.
- Do not agree with submitted highway statements that say few occupants will use Cathole Bridge Road.
- Will anything be proposed to improve safety of Cathole Bridge road and its junctions.
- Increased traffic on Lang Road and other local roads - they can't cope with additional traffic.
- Access into site is poor and a different access should be used. Access is too close to junction with Cathole Bridge Road which is substandard.
- Add to existing parking problems on local roads and in the town.
- Bus services have been cut, thus private vehicles will be only genuine option.
- Would impact on the main water pipe that passes through the field to the school.
- No more houses are needed in the town.
- Local facilities and infrastructure cannot cope with additional housing.
- Town needs more facilities

- Lack of employment opportunities.
- Increased flooding risk on site and to properties on lower ground.
- Redevelop previously used sites and CLR before greenfield land
- Steep gradient to the train station.
- Loss of valuable recreation space
- Harmful impact to residential amenity due to construction activity, particularly to residents in Manor View
- Lack of information regarding layout of the scheme

The 2 letters/emails making representations/general observations commented upon redeveloping brownfield sites/buildings, exacerbate existing traffic problems and harmful impact on character of area.

14 letters/emails have been submitted in response to the updated Transport Assessment and proposed off site highway works. Comments made are that these additional proposals do not address their original concerns about the highways impact of the proposals not only along Cathole Bridge Road but impact on other local roads and junctions. Previous points about the lack of appropriate infrastructure in the town are reiterated.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Principle of development**

Crewkerne is identified as one of the 4 Primary Market Towns in South Somerset sitting below Yeovil in the Council's settlement strategy in the adopted Local Plan. Objections have been received to the application concerned that the town either does not require any further housing or that it has inadequate facilities to cope with additional housing. The town does benefit from a wide range of services and facilities and is considered to be a very sustainable location for new housing development.

With the lack of delivery of the CLR site and any other major schemes in the town, Crewkerne has delivered very little housing in recent years. It is a contributing factor, along with other major sites in the district, as to why the District Council is not able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land. For these reasons, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable. An assessment therefore has to be made about whether there are any significant adverse impacts that warrant refusal.

### **Highways and parking**

The proposed scheme will have a single point of vehicular access from Lang Road. This will be located opposite the entrance to Manor View, where the junction will be redesigned to incorporate a raised table crossroad junction. The supporting information explains that this raised table will act to provide a natural pedestrian priority and reduce vehicle speeds across the junction. Dropped kerbs, tactile paving and speed ramps will be instated on each arm of the junction to improve pedestrian mobility and safety.

The layout design of the internal roads will adhere to the principles of "Manual for Streets" by providing a choice of direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists that follow key desire lines and will connect with existing routes leading to the town centre, adjacent residential areas, recreational open space or the train station. The access road into the site will be a 5.5m wide carriageway with a 2.0m footway on each side. Improvements to pedestrian facilities will also include a potential enhancement to the Kithill footpath that leads to the north of the site, off Cowen Close. This will also work as a secondary vehicular access to the site for emergency vehicles. Traffic calming features along the Principal Street will help provide low vehicular speeds throughout the development.

Since the original submission of the application, and as will be noted above in this report, additional improvements have been sought by the LPA along Cathole Bridge Road and at its junction with the B3165. These include the widening of the carriageway in certain sections to provide a minimum width of 4.8metres to allow the passing of a car and a large vehicle, the introduction of two priority sections of road where this width cannot be achieved, and improvements to the junction of Cathole Bridge Road and the B3165.

It is clear that the main issue in regard to this application is the highway impacts of the scheme, particularly in regard to the increased use of Cathole bridge Road but concerns also about the safety of the proposed access into and out of the site from Lang Road as well as increased use of other local roads.

The Transport Assessment (TA), as amended, has been assessed by the Highway Authority. Following the applicant undertaking further surveys/assessments of a number of local junctions, and trip distribution, the Highway Authority are now satisfied with the TA. Thus, they do not raise an objection to the overall traffic impact on the local highway network. However, whilst having originally objected to the scheme due to the substandard nature of Cathole Bridge Road and conflicting vehicle movements along this road, the Highway Authority whilst still raising concerns about the potential for increased vehicle movements along Cathole Bridge Road do not raise an objection to the scheme. However, as outlined earlier in this report, both the case officer and the Council's highway consultant retained concerns about the traffic impact along Cathole Bridge Road.

The overall level of traffic to be generated by the development is not in dispute. However, the Local Planning Authority's main issue is the distribution of traffic to and from the site. In other words, what would be the preferred/likely routes to various destinations for future drivers. The applicant considered that the use of Cathole Bridge Road would be at around 9% whilst the HA considered it much higher at around 57%. The Council's Highway consultant advised around the 30% mark - this would mean the equivalent of an additional 27 vehicles in the peak hour. Given the existing need to wait/give way or reverse to allow vehicles to pass, this would represent a significant increase in vehicles in the peak hour and increased safety concerns.

The District Council's consultant advised the case officer to ascertain whether any improvements could be made to Cathole Bridge road to mitigate the likely traffic impact. Moreover, to seek improvements to the junction with the B3165. Following discussions with the Highway Authority and applicant, further work was undertaken and additional off site highway works proposed.

In respect of improvements along Cathole Bridge Road, the widening of the carriageway in certain sections to provide a minimum width of 4.8metres to allow the passing of a car and a large vehicle, 3 formalised passing places and the introduction of two priority sections of road is considered to be an improvements over and above the existing situation. This would provide benefit to all future road users not just future development users. In regard to improving the visibility at the junction with the B3165, this is now proposed to be widened giving splays of up to 90 metres to the south west and 120 metres to the north east.

Given that the Highway Authority had not objected to the scheme prior to the submission of these additional off-site highway works, it is not expected that an objection would be forthcoming but their comments are awaited. An oral update will be given at committee.

In light of the Highway Authority's current recommendation and securing the off-site highway mitigation, as advised by the Council's Highway consultant, it is considered unreasonable to object to the scheme on highway safety grounds or conclude that the highway impact would be severe. On that basis, there is no objection to the scheme on highway grounds.

In regard to parking provision, this is one of the detailed matters that would be submitted for approval at the reserved matters stage.

### **Landscape**

Local concerns have been raised about the adverse visual landscape impact that would occur with development on this site. Clearly, a proposed development of this scale on the edge of the town has to be carefully assessed to ascertain whether the landscape impacts are acceptable to allow consent or significantly adverse to warrant refusal of the scheme.

In 2008, the Council's former landscape officer undertook a Peripheral Landscape Study, the various reports of which are available on the Council's website. This study was undertaken in response to the need to identify appropriate sites for both housing and employment development as part of the then emerging local plan process. The study focused upon the major settlements in the district including Crewkerne. The three fields south of Kithill which are proposed in the current application for housing, were included as part of the study. The conclusion of the study was that the site has a moderate to high capacity to accommodate built development. The site was therefore placed in category 2 out of the 5 landscape capacity categories with 1 being least sensitive and 5 being most sensitive in landscape terms. Residential development would therefore be acceptable but with a strong, integrated landscape buffer to the area's southern edge.

The Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) submitted with the application concludes along similar lines as the Council's study that the proposed development can be satisfactorily accommodated on the site without significant adverse harm to the landscape. It concludes that development should be restricted to the 3 fields only with no development on the slopes to the south. In regard to the latter, those areas will be left as public open green space. The retention of the existing southern hedgerow boundary on the edge of the residential development must be retained. In addition, significant additional planting will be undertaken, including woodland enhancement, to supplement the current landscaping and to ensure the strong landscape buffered southern edge as specified by the recommendations of the landscape study.

On the basis of the above, it is concluded that there is no principle objection on landscape grounds to the proposed development. Any future detailed scheme that is submitted however must adhere to the principles outlined in the LVIA and the Council's landscape study to ensure that its landscape impact is acceptable and adequately mitigated.

### **Flooding/Drainage**

Concerns have been received about the potential for flooding, particularly in regard to properties located on lower ground level as a result of this development. The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which means that it is at the lowest risk from flooding from sea or river sources. However, assessments have to be made to ascertain the most appropriate way to deal with surface water to ensure that the development does not increase the risk of surface water flooding off site. As the site exceeds 1 hectare, a Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken and submitted with the application.

The infiltration testing results, confirmed that about two thirds of the developable area is considered suitable for the use of infiltration-based Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SuDS). The proposed dwellings are likely to have individual geocellular soakaways located within garden areas. Permeable paving could be used for drive ways and private roads. Any adoptable roads would drain to their own geocellular soakaway located beneath areas of public open space. If additional storage is required, there is sufficient open space in the layout to include an infiltration basin.

The other third of the developable area is not considered to be suitable for infiltration-based SuDS. Therefore, attenuation-based SuDS, comprising attenuation basins will be used with a



discharge to the watercourse located to the south-east. The watercourse is located within the site boundary and, therefore, no additional rights will be required. The proposed drainage strategy would ensure that surface water runoff rates for the proposed development would be limited to greenfield rates for the operational lifetime of the development. As outlined earlier in the report, the LLFA confirmed that they were happy with the information provided for this outline stage, but recommend a detailed drainage condition to ensure an appropriate SUDS design is forthcoming with any subsequent detailed planning application.

The applicant consulted with Wessex Water to confirm capacity within the local foul sewerage network to serve the proposed development. The supporting information confirms that Wessex Water have indicated that an approximate 100m length of sewer within Lang Road would need upsizing, to allow connection to Kingswood Road to the north. It is likely that a pumping station will be required to connect to the foul sewer given the topography of the site.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the scheme can adequately deal with foul and surface water. Specific details will be required to be submitted at any reserved matters stage and shall be conditioned accordingly.

### **Ecology**

Concerns have been raised about the ecological impacts of the proposed development. An ecological survey was undertaken and report submitted as part of the application. This habitat survey identified the hedgerows as the most important ecological feature on site. Protected species surveys confirmed the presence of nesting dormice, commuting/foraging bats, breeding birds, and potential presence of hedgehog and badgers. The proposed ecological mitigation includes woodland and hedgerow planting, and creation of wildlife ponds.

The Council's Ecologist has assessed the proposal, the ecological report and the proposed range of mitigation. He advises that the fields themselves aren't considered to be of any significant importance, but the boundary hedges are a 'priority habitat for the conservation of biodiversity'. These are used by dormice and commuting/foraging bats, both of which are European Protected Species subject to the provisions of the Habitats Regulations 2017.

The main open space part of the site is part of Kithill County Wildlife Site. This is designated due to being a 'complex of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, scrub, unimproved calcareous, neutral and marshy grassland'. The proposals mostly retain the boundary hedges and the County Wildlife Site. Significant impacts have therefore been minimised.

The Ecologist has recommended compensation planting suitable for dormice. Provided the details of this new planting and other mitigation measures are consistent with the recommendations of the Ecological Assessment, he is satisfied that the Habitats Regulations test of 'maintaining favourable conservation status' will be retained. In conclusion it is considered that subject to conditions to secure appropriate and identified ecological mitigation, the proposed layout minimises ecological impacts. Accordingly, there is no objection to the outline scheme on ecological grounds.

### **Other matters**

Concern has been raised about the impact to local residents during the construction phase of the development, particularly those who live opposite the site entrance at Manor View. A condition shall be attached to any consent to agree a construction management plan to include works at the site entrance to ensure that local residents, particularly those that live and others that need to access Manor View are not inconvenienced during access works.

## **SECTION 106 PLANNING OBLIGATION**

The application be approved subject to:

- a) The prior completion of a section 106 planning obligation (in a form acceptable to the Council's Solicitor(s) before the decision notice granting planning permission is issued, the said planning permission to cover the following terms/issues:
  - 1) The provision of 35% affordable housing with a split of 80:20 rent /intermediate product;
  - 2) Contribution of £333,507 towards the provision of sport, play and strategic facilities,
  - 3) Contribution of £1,216,423 towards education provision;
  - 4) Submission of a Travel Plan;
  - 5) Provision and maintenance of open space;
  - 6) Provision and maintenance of compensatory ecological habitat, and
  - 7) Contribution of £15,000 towards local footpath improvements.

### **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)**

This development is liable for CIL at a rate of £40per sqm. A note shall be attached to any consent in respect of the CIL requirement.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Grant permission.

### **Conditions**

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun either before the expiration of three 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 (Article 5) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2015.

2. 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.

3. All reserved matters shall be submitted in the form of one application to show a comprehensive and coherent scheme with respect to design, layout, plot boundaries, materials, access arrangements and landscaping.

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

4. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

Drawing numbers: Site location plan, 4264-002 rev A, and 4264/0093 rev A.

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

5. No construction work shall take place or construction deliveries taken outside the hours of 08.00-18.00 hours Monday to Friday, 08.00-14.00 hours on Saturdays with no construction work or construction deliveries made on Sundays or Bank/Public Holidays.

6. The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of landscaping, which shall include indications of all existing trees and hedgerows on the land, and details of any to be retained, together with measures for their protection in the course of the development, as well as details of any changes proposed in existing ground levels; all planting, seeding, turfing or earth moulding comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the building or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation. In respect of the areas of open space, a management Plan for the open space, shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority as part of any reserved matters application.
7. No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that any archaeological interest are safeguarded to accord with the NPPF.

8. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced, 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 ensure that the development is properly drained to accord with the NPPF.

9. Before any of the construction starts on any of the dwellings hereby permitted, details of the internal ground floor levels of the building(s) to be erected on the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the amenities of the area to accord with Policy EQ2 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

Highway conditions are awaited from the Highway Authority and an oral update will be given at committee.

**Notes:**

1. Please be advised that subsequent full or reserved matters approval by South Somerset District Council will attract a liability payment under the Community Infrastructure Levy. CIL is a mandatory financial charge on development and you will be notified of the amount of CIL being charged on this development in a CIL Liability Notice.

You are required to complete and return Form 1 Assumption of Liability as soon as possible and to avoid additional financial penalties it is important that you notify us of the date you plan to commence development before any work takes place Please complete and return Form 6 Commencement Notice.

You are advised to visit our website for further details <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/cil> or email [cil@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:cil@southsomerset.gov.uk)

2. Any proposed works must not encroach on to the width of the PROW.

The health and safety of the public using the PROW must be taken into consideration during works to carry out the proposed development. Somerset County Council (SCC) has maintenance responsibilities for the surface of a PROW, but only to a standard suitable for the public use. SCC will not be responsible for putting right any damage occurring to the surface of a PROW resulting from vehicular use during or after works to carry out the proposal. It should be noted that it is an offence to drive a vehicle along a public footpath, public bridleway or restricted byway unless the driver has lawful authority (private rights) to do so.

If it is considered that the development would result in any of the outcomes listed below, then authorisation for these works must be sought from Somerset County Council Rights of Way Group:

- A PROW being made less convenient for continued public use.
- New furniture being needed along a PROW.
- Changes to the surface of a PROW being needed.
- Changes to the existing drainage arrangements associated with the PROW.

If the work involved in carrying out this proposed development would:

- make a PROW less convenient for continued public use; or
- create a hazard to users of a PROW,

then a temporary closure order will be necessary and a suitable alternative route must be provided. For more information, please visit Somerset County Council's Rights of Way pages to apply for a temporary closure: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/environment-and-planning/rights-of-way/apply-for-a-temporary-closure-of-a-right-of-way/> .

3. In respect of ecology, the applicant is advised of the following in respect of any reserved matters application that may be submitted:

- a) Full details of compensation habitat planting for dormice should be provided to demonstrate that the Habitats Regulations test of 'maintaining favourable conservation status' is satisfied (these details will require subsequent consultation to the county ecologist).
- b) Landscape planting proposals within the County Wildlife Site should avoid any existing 'priority habitats', such as unimproved grassland.
- c) Landscape proposals should be consistent with the recommendations in the Ecological Assessment. Although it isn't clear, the illustrative masterplan suggests a more formal landscape treatment of the hedge in the vicinity of point 5 (play area). For ecological and landscape impact reasons, I recommend the entire south and east boundary (save for a minimum number of pedestrian access points) should be native hedgerow, increased in width where it's thin, and managed infrequently, to provide functional and connected habitat for protected species and naturalistic landscape screening.

4. The following species should not be included in planting proposals. (a) Ash, due to Chalara (ash dieback disease); (b) Rowan doesn't naturally occur locally and doesn't do well on local soils: (c) Silver birch doesn't naturally occur locally.