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16 May 2024

Dear Cllr Flood,

**Sparkford Parish Council Annual Meeting – 8th May 2024
Land south of Cherry Blossom Way, Sparkford**

I wanted to start by thanking you and your colleagues for the opportunity to present our initial proposals for residential development to the south of Cherry Blossom Way, Sparkford at the recent Annual Parish Council Meeting on the 8th May. As I hopefully made clear to those in attendance our proposals remain at an early stage and we very much saw the meeting on the 8th May as the first step in our public consultation strategy. We are committed to on-going engagement and would hope that we can be judged not solely on the nature of our proposals but as much on how we listen and respond to local concerns and where we make commitments that we demonstrate these are delivered within any subsequent planning application.

Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the draft Plan we circulated to members and we are content for a copy of this letter and plan to be made available on the Parish Council's website and should needs be for it to be forwarded to anyone who contacts the Parish Council.

We are of course appreciative of the views and concerns expressed by Parishioners and Councillors who were in attendance at the meeting and we fully recognise that there will have been others who were unable to attend who will seek to engage with the project as we move forward. I can re-affirm our commitment to on-going engagement.

With this in mind I wanted to set out in writing the issues that we heard raised at the meeting and our initial response to the concerns. In some instances because we are early on in the project we don't have all of the answers or solutions but seek to set out the context in which any future update will be prepared.

Amount of development within Sparkford

Some residents raised the issue of this proposal being in addition to those already permitted and those that are still awaiting a decision with the concern being that further development will have an adverse impact on existing services and facilities including school places.

We continue to actively monitor the schemes that have been submitted and remain undetermined and we are fully appreciative of the impacts arising from development on services and facilities. The UK Planning system operates on the basis of securing contributions commensurate with the scale of development either through a Section 106 legal agreement (e.g. education and NHS contributions) or via the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Contributions to both education and the NHS are in the case of Somerset based on standard prescribed formula which comes direct from the Education and Health authorities. Any obligations secured need to be in compliance with planning guidance on the use of planning obligations.

The existing South Somerset Local Plan 2026-2028 was adopted nearly a decade ago and has not been the subject of a review (national policy requires a review every 5 years). South Somerset did commence a review but this was put on hold pending the local government re-organisation. Under that emerging document, Sparkford was due to be given an enhanced role within the settlement hierarchy as it proposed to be defined as a 'village' with a likely specific minimum housing requirement. This was proposed by South Somerset on the basis that they recognised that Sparkford was a more sustainable location than many other 'Rural Settlements' (as defined by current Policy SS2). In addition, Somerset Council continues to be in a position where it is unable to demonstrate a 5 Year Housing Land Supply, the most recent planning appeal decisions record this around 3 years. This ultimately means that the Council is not delivering anywhere near sufficient numbers of homes to meet the adopted requirement.

Adequate vehicular access

Residents raised concerns regarding the ability of local roads, including Cherry Blossom Way, to cope with development of the scale proposed.

As part of the pre-application process we will engage with the local highway authority (Somerset Council) regarding our proposed access arrangements. At the time of writing early discussions with the Highway Authority have now taken place with the early indications being that they would be prepared to support in principle development at this level provided that the access route meets current highway standards.

We have employed well regarded highway consultants who have considered and are working on the detail of an access proposal. Although an outline application is likely to be submitted the proposed access arrangement will be submitted in detail. In addition to the current width of Cherry Blossom Way we have an ability to widen the road by up to 0.5m, although at this stage we don't consider this to be necessary. In addition, Cherry Pie Lane is capable of being used as a secondary access, with use restricted to emergency vehicles only.

Under any application made it will be a requirement to submit necessary details to demonstrate that the access roads can be safely used by large vehicles including refuse vehicles. We are therefore confident that a suitable highways solution can be designed.

Surface Water concerns

Various concerns were raised in respect of surface water and we heard first hand that there have been recent surface water problems within the village both during recent storm events but also as reported by Cllr Hobhouse related to National Highways on-going highway improvements to the A303.

Flood risk and dealing with surface water as part of the planning application process is something that is very familiar to us given that it has been a significant issue for the County of Somerset over recent years. It is a central component of the planning system that development cannot be permitted if it would give rise to an increase in flood risk elsewhere.

In the case of the proposed Site, the entire Site is located in Flood Zone 1. Flood Zone 1 is the area of lowest risk and is deemed to have less than a 1 in 1000 (0.1%) annual probability of flooding in any given year. Residential development is considered by the Environment Agency and planning policy to be acceptable in such locations and is preferable to promoting such development in a higher risk zone (either Flood Zone 2 or 3). Given the size of the proposal (i.e. a site area of more than 1ha) the application will be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy.

Turning to surface water specifically, the Environment Agency have mapping which records both the potential risk and depth of surface water flooding. For almost all of the Site the site is not shown to be in a zone at any risk from surface water flooding. The only portion of the site which is shown to be at

low risk is adjacent to the watercourse which lies at the southern end of the Site and a small slither along Cherry Pie Lane. To be clear no residential development will be proposed within such zones and surface water attenuation features will also be located outside such zones.

As part of residential proposals there is a drainage requirement to show that surface water run off is maintained at greenfield run off rates (taking account of climate change). Accordingly, once developed surface water will not be allowed to leave the Site any quicker than it would otherwise have done had the Site not been developed. Such a position often results in a betterment than existing because carefully designed infrastructure operates more efficiently than the existing drainage situation.

Accordingly, any application made will be accompanied by sufficient detail which will demonstrate that the proposals will not give rise to an increase in flood risk and that surface water is appropriately controlled. We remain confident therefore that our proposals will be considered appropriate by the relevant authorities. Should this not be the case then planning permission would not be given.

Foul Water

We understand that there have been issues with the capacity of the foul water network. As we said at the meeting our intention at this stage, in order to deal with phosphates, is that we would seek to deploy a Package Treatment Plant which would be adopted by a licensed party approved by the industry regulator Ofwat (e.g. Albion Water). Where that is the case no additional foul water would be placed into the network.

Accordingly, our proposals would not involve any additional impact on the foul network.

Outline Schemes

We heard from a number of people that they have concerns with the submission of an Outline application as this doesn't provide sufficient control as to what is then delivered under a future reserved matters application.

We acknowledge that we intend to submit an outline which would approve the principle of development up to a certain number of dwellings (we currently envisage around 60 dwellings) and the fixed access solution. The reasoning being is that at this stage there is no developer lined up to take the Site forward and each developer will have their own house types which they will want to deploy.

However, this does not mean that additional controls can be introduced if Somerset Council (as determining authority) consider them to be necessary. For example, we are seeing increased use of tying in of parameter plans where an RM application would not to be consistent with or in some cases, provision of Design Codes, where the approach to design is particularly sensitive. In respect of ecological matters where mitigation measures need to be secured and managed this is often dealt with through specific ecological conditions. We would be happy to consider this further as the design evolves.

Sport and Recreation

We heard first hand at the meeting that the cricket club continues to thrive and has recently benefitted from the use of Section 106 funds to improve equipment. As we also discussed land for a new village hall was secured via the Cherry Blossom Way outline scheme.

We are keen to work with the Parish and other organisations to ensure that any contributions to sports and recreation are directed to locally important projects and we would be willing to engage in further dialogue with the Parish Council and other groups/clubs to understand how any Section 106 contributions can be secured. We should make clear that identifying a suitable project does not equate to an acceptance of the wider scheme., but we would urge for proactive dialogue on the basis that if

planning permission is granted the community has secured necessary and appropriate contributions for those projects it considers to be the most important. In a scenario where outline planning permission has been given it is then too late to make such requests. We can commit to engaging with the Parish Council and others on the content of any Section 106 contributions to ensure how they best assist local services and facilities.

Timetable

We indicated that the presentation of the Plan (as enclosed) to the Parish meeting was the first step in the process. We anticipate making a submission within the next week for formal pre-application dialogue with Somerset Council's planning team.

In the background, we will be continuing to prepare our evidence base and working with other consultees on aspects of any submission. We anticipate that we would look to hold a public consultation event within the village during the latter half of June or the early part of July 2024. We would then anticipate a submission before the end of August 2024.







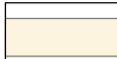


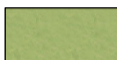








Should members of the community wish to contact the project team in the interim regarding the enclosed plan then this can be done via info@lva.co.uk.

We remain committed to bringing forward the project and look forward to working with the Parish Council and the community in shaping the proposals.

Yours sincerely



Alex Bullock
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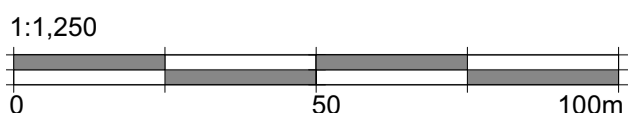
-  Site boundary
-  Potential all modes access
-  Existing pedestrian access
-  Existing pedestrian route
-  Realigned pedestrian route
-  Potential main access route
-  Potential street network
-  Potential development parcels / indicative frontage
-  Potential key building
-  Potential open space
-  Existing trees / hedges
-  Proposed trees / hedges
-  Proposed location for attenuation feature
-  Proposed location for phosphate treatment plant
-  Existing fence
-  Existing wall
-  Play area (off site)
-  Potential village hall site (off site)

Schedule of Areas:

Site Area: (red line)	3.29ha
Residential Development: (up to 60 dwellings)	1.71 ha
Green Infrastructure (includes public open space, hedgerows, trees and SUDS)	1.58ha



Draft



client:
LVA

project:
Sparkford II

drawing title:
Concept Plan

job number:
LVA106

scale:
1:1250 @A2

date:
April 2024

drawing number:
3003C

drawn:
AJ

status:
Preliminary

urbandesignbox.co.uk

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