



Sir/Madam Consultations Mendip  
Mendip District Council

Direct Dial: 0117 975 0725

Our ref: P01557961  
29 March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam Mendip

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015  
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**LAND WEST OF FORTESCUE FIELDS NORTON ST PHILIP FROME SOMERSET  
Application No. 2023/0247/FUL**

Thank you for your letter of 23 March 2023 regarding the above application for planning permission. On the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

**Historic England Advice**

The application site, Fortescue Fields, is on land adjacent the Mead, which is located within the heart of the Norton St Philip Conservation Area. The site itself sits against the boundary of the conservation area in green open fields with a small portion falling within the designated area.

The site has been the subject of a number of applications and a dismissed appeal (2013). Impact on the conservation area was one of the areas of concern. The latest scheme (LPA ref - 2019/2976/FUL) was withdrawn

The current scheme focuses on the western part of the site. The previous scheme was for 30 units which was split between the site west of the extant Fortescue Fields development and also to the south. The southern portion have been the subject of a separate application. The applicant is now proposing development on the western portion, with development focussed on the western edge of the site.

**Significance of Norton St Philip**

Norton St Philip has its roots in a medieval settlement that most likely originally grew up around the church. It quickly developed into two separate settlements with distinct characters, the other focused around the marketplace and the George Inn. The two settlements are now linked by Bell Hill, which appears to have formed the historic route between them and is characterised by historic incremental development to the north of the road.



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The village has a rural setting and is surrounded on all sides by farmland. While modern developments have had a marked impact on the layout of the village and its Conservation Area, its historic significance lies in the legibility of its medieval form and development and the survival of two distinct character areas that stand out in a prominent position within the wider landscape.

### **Impact of the proposed development**

The current application has reduced the number of units from 19 to 8, limiting development to the eastern section of the western parcel.

Although the numbers have been reduced the scheme continues to introduce modern development into the green rural setting of the conservation area, particularly in views from the Mead. Even with that reduced number, the proposals would result in the incremental erosion the green swath that contributes significantly to the experience of the conservation area.

We note that the visualisations rely heavily on the seasonal vegetation to screen the proposals. Even so the roofscape will be prominent within views and will truncate the appreciation of the raising land in key views from within the village. During the winter months the development would be clearly visible from the Mead itself, introducing modern development along the immediate southern boundary of the conservation area.

Consequently, the impact would be detrimental to the understanding and legibility of the historic development of the village, negatively intruding on the rural setting between the two identified character areas.

Although modern development has had some impact, the two distinct medieval settlements are still legible today as identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal. This was also identified as a key element within the appeal, where the inspector clearly identifies that *the open undeveloped nature of the appeal site has a positive role in the significance of the Conservation Area, allowing for an appreciation and understanding of the historic evolution of Norton St Philip.*

Whilst the number of units has been reduced the overall impact has not been avoided. Consequently, the scheme would have a harmful impact on the appreciation of the historic development of the conservation area and therefore its special interest.

### **Policy and Position**

The application has taken steps to reduce the impact of the proposals through the reduction in the number of units across the entire site. However, this proposed development would continue to incrementally erode the understanding and historical





values associated with the development of the village of Norton St Philip and its designated Conservation area.

It would incrementally erode the rural setting of the conservation area, which has been consistent through its history, acting as a clear green buffer between the two historic groups. It's therefore, allows for the two centres to retain a sense of separation once more formally linked via the historic incremental development on Bell Hill.

In our view, the scheme cannot be shown to enhance or better reveal the significance of the asset (Para 206, NPPF). Where harm is identified, this should be clear and convincingly justification as required under para 200, NPPF. The Council as the decision maker should integrate the justification presented within the application. The council should not proceed to the planning balance until the identified harm has been justified and be confident that any justified harm is outweighed by the benefits offered by the proposal (NPPF, Para 200 and 202).

### **Recommendation**

Historic England has concerns regarding the application on heritage grounds.

We have identified, although reduced in size, the development of the west parcel of land would begin to incrementally erode the legibility of the two historic cores of Norton St Philips Conservation Area and consequently does not preserve or better reveal the significance of the affected heritage asset (Para 206).

The council should therefore determine the application in line with National Legislation and policy.

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas.

Your authority should take these representations into account and seek amendments, safeguards or further information as set out in our advice. If there are any material changes to the proposals, or you would like further advice, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

**Rhiannon Rhys**

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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