

Attachment to letter from CG and KJ Parsons dated 6 Sep 2024 providing specific comments on Appendix 2 to the Aug 2024 Reg 14 Consultation version of the NSP NP

“NSP004 Ringwell Meadow

An OALS (004) and identified as Stage 3 Greenspace, the site contributes to the village's rural character and street scene. The natural features of the land form an attractive and tranquil part of the village, while providing relief from the residential development to the east, along The Barton and to the West, at Springfield. The open space can be seen through breaks in the vegetation which surround it and the openness creates important views from Ringwell Lane, which open up suddenly on approach. Vegetation in the gardens to the south provides a visually pleasing backdrop to the views from Ringwell Lane. The importance of this meadow to the historic character and appearance of the village has been endorsed in 4 recent Appeal decisions dismissing development proposals on the site.”

1. The Name Ringwell Meadow

The name Ringwell Meadow dates from work in 2017 to develop an earlier version of the NSP NP and the MDC Local Plan Part II. Prior to this the parcel of land was known locally as a (derelict and overgrown) paddock and 2 gardens, all separated by well-defined lawful boundaries and fences. The back garden of The Barton, The Barton has never been known as a meadow, or even part of a meadow and it is possible that the name was applied to the land by some in the village, supported by the PC, to give it an undeserved degree of local historic provenance. Indeed, the name Ringwell Meadow was chosen after an attempt in 2016 had been made to call it a water meadow, which it most definitely is not. The veracity of the obsolete and moribund land designation, OALS, is dealt with in paragraph 8.

2. Greenspace Designation

The Somerset Council Stage 3 Greenspace designation, adopted in Feb 2023, was intended to provide a, ‘starting point for further work’. Specifically, work to evidence and justify or otherwise:

designation as Local Green Space, a status recognised in national legislation,

or

designation as important greenspace, a status not recognised at the national legislative level.

No evidence has been presented or can be found that any further work has been conducted to develop the Stage 3 designations for Norton St Philip, which seems wrong given that the NP is the logical place for this work to happen. Rather, the Reg 14 August 2024 version of the NSP NP appears to rely solely on the historic and proven unsatisfactory evidence used to inform the many previous versions of the NP and Local Plan. As such this latest version of the NP might well be considered as yet another attempt to forestall any development that does not meet the unevidenced and unjustified demands of the Parish Council.

Notwithstanding, the SEA and HRA reports associated with the August 2024 NP refer to Green Spaces and do not mention important greenspaces. There is no indication anywhere that “Green Spaces” are the same as “important greenspaces” or even “greenspaces” – are they synonymous? If so, it needs to be stated somewhere. In any case, neither of the associated reports evidence or justify any of the important greenspaces proposed in the Aug 2024 NSP NP.

3. NSP004

NSP004 is owned by 3 different entities and is bounded by tall hedges and walls on the South and West side, and houses to the North and East. The land in question was previously part of a parcel of well-defined and contiguous agricultural fields (including the land upon which the properties known as Lyde Green and Pond Barton are built), farmyard and farm buildings that were sold for development in the 1970s. The Barton, The Barton and its garden is sited in part on one of the fields. NSP004 is wholly within the Conservation Area and is inside the development limits of the village with its northern end bordering on open fields. The archaeological survey of NSP published by Somerset County Council in 2003 identified that the land was used as a quarry in the 18th Century.

4. The Residential Garden of The Barton, The Barton

Approximately one third of NSP004, fenced and easily identifiable in Land Registry records, is the private residential back garden of The Barton, The Barton, BA27NE, which was established as a garden in the 1980s by the previous owners. The remainder is part of another garden, and a small agricultural field. The other garden is being restored as a wild area. The field is better maintained now than it was in 2020 and is used agriculturally to graze sheep throughout the year, most recently in early Aug 24.

The garden of The Barton, The Barton has been in being as part of a private residential property for over 30 years. It is laid mostly to lawn with several mature, well-maintained trees, a gravel recreation area and a large children's climbing frame and swings, shortly to be supplemented with a football goal, patio and shed. It has been used for two family weddings and multiple other family events and as a well-used residential garden, it is not known for its tranquillity. Furthermore, an ecological survey in 2016, refreshed in 2020, did not find any wildlife of significance in the garden.

The garden also hosts, under a wayleave agreement, a medium size SSE electrical substation and associated pole and cabling that supplies converted electricity to approximately 50% of the village. The existence of the substation demonstrates that the garden has already been built on and further contradicts any thought that the garden is either tranquil, especially significant or indeed an important greenspace.

5. Evidence that supports the Significance of the Garden and Consultation

The August 2024 NP and associated documentation do not provide any up-to-date evidence as to why the private residential garden of The Barton, The Barton is of any significance at all to the local community let alone of exceptional significance. No up-to-date evidence has been found anywhere else and the Parish Council has not consulted with the owners of The Barton, The Barton in the preparation of this version of the NSP NP. Such a lack of consultation with the owners of the private garden who are retired residents of the village appears most undemocratic and may well impact of the lawfulness of the plan.

6. A Comment on NSP's Local Green Spaces – they are not relevant

The Aug 2024 NP notes that the Local Green Spaces in earlier versions of the NP were deemed lawful. Whilst this is true, it is also true that the LGSs in NSP have never been properly tested against specific guidance on green spaces in the National Planning Policy Framework. Rather the LGSs were assessed by a NP examiner in early 2019 as meeting the Basic Conditions required for endorsement of a Neighbourhood Plan. Such a test required that LGSs be developed using a Planning Authority approved process, which they were. But the process used, as developed by the then Mendip District Council, was deemed at the Planning Inspectorate inspection of the MDC Local Plan later in 2019 to be deeply flawed. In consequence the former MDC annulled their LGS designation process and removed all LGSs from the Mendip Local Plan. Such actions must draw into question the compliance with the NPPF and therefore lawfulness of any of the former LGS sites in NSP, developed as they were with a deeply flawed and withdrawn process. Such a fact renders irrelevant any mention of LGSs in this version of the NP and such mentions should be removed.

7. The Views

The Ringwell Lane Boundary of NSP004, i.e. the boundary across which the area would be viewed, is made up of high walls and hedgerows that include recently planted hedging trees. We have both looked very carefully at the 'open and important' views from Ringwell Lane in all seasons and have sought comment from friends about the same, including from an experienced Town and Country Planner. All of us agree that the view is not open and obtaining a useable sight line requires deliberate and careful manoeuvring. Even then, only the lower part of the garden between the Brook and Ringwell Lane can be seen because the other part of the garden is screened by mature trees and a hawthorn hedge. What views that exist are certainly not of the type that casual passers-by would see, let alone appreciate. And they will become increasingly compromised over time as hedging grows and matures.

8. Why were the 4 Planning Applications Refused

The 4 planning applications referred to in the NSP NP were all refused for the same reason, which was most definitely not because of the "*importance of this meadow to the historic character and appearance of the village*". The actual reasons for refusal were that whilst a district level Local Plan

review was underway, planning applications for individual dwellings were deemed as not the appropriate vehicle for questioning the veracity or otherwise of Mendip's designation, Open Area of Local Significance. OALS is a 1990s vintage land designation not recognised by the NPPF for which there is nothing on record that identifies what criteria were used for designation, what data was collected and what analysis was conducted or, when they were designated or even reviewed thereafter. Previous assessments suggest most of the OAsLS have never been properly reviewed and are not compliant with the NPPF. It seems entirely unreasonable that a 20+ year old OALS designation is being used as the root of the 2024 'important greenspace' designations proposed for NSP NP, including residential back gardens. In consequence, any mention of the 4 planning applications in this version of the NP is irrelevant and such mentions should be removed.

9. Summary

The private residential garden of The Barton, The Barton does not host rare or protected species of plants, insects, or animals and is therefore not ecologically significant.

The private residential garden of The Barton, The Barton has no historical or cultural importance. and is therefore not historically or culturally significant

The private residential garden of The Barton, The Barton has no community value. It has never been open to the public, never been used for educational purposes and never contributed at all, let alone significantly, to the local community. It has no community value and cannot in any way be recognised as a community asset.

To suggest that the private residential garden of The Barton, The Barton is an important greenspace, whatever that may be, is absurd, unreasonable and unfair.

Signed on original

CG and KJ Parsons

6 September 2024