

Landscape Report

Application P/2013/0572

Land to the West of Collaton St Mary

Landscape Character

The site falls within an Area of Great Landscape Value which is recognised for its special character and quality. It lies within LCT Type 1 Rolling Farmland defined in the Torbay Landscape Character Assessment. The landscape type is subdivided into local areas and the site lies within 1L Blagdon Barton.

The site is steeply sloping open grassland which forms part of an attractive rural valley on the edge of the village of Collaton St Mary. This site forms an important part of the rural setting of the village and its historic centre, including the church, as seen in views approaching the village from the east along the A385, from the churchyard and on the approach to the village from the west along the A385.

A scattering of houses along the A385 to the south of the site and a large caravan park to the west are well integrated within the rural landscape, when viewed from the lanes around Higher, Middle and Lower Blagdon to the north and the site clearly forms part of the rural area rather than urban area of Paignton to the east.

Impacts on Landscape Character

I consider that the proposed development would have a significant adverse impact on the character of the site and the rural setting of the village. It is a large scale development, parts of which are on steeply rising ground elevated above the village centre. Whilst boundary hedgerows to the north west and north east would be retained and supplemented by additional planting, the nature of the rising ground means the development would still be very apparent in key views from the A385 approaches to east and west, from the church and from elevated viewpoints to the north and north west. In my opinion the development would not relate well to the existing village, which is sited within the folds of the valley on lower ground. It would not conserve or enhance the character of the valley but would introduce an urban development into the rural landscape.

The requirements for vehicle access and potentially road widening along the A385 are likely to lead to the urbanising of this currently rural road. The vegetation along this boundary is in many places poor and would require removal, opening up views to the properties where there are currently views across the valley and to the church. Whilst there are opportunities to replace and increase the planting along this road boundary in the proposals, this would be in an urbanised context and the countryside views would be lost.

Visual Impacts

Viewpoint 1 is in my opinion of high sensitivity. There are number of views from within the churchyard and adjacent the Parish Church which is Listed Grade II*. The development, particularly that on the high ground, would be very noticeable in these views, including views with the church in the foreground. The development would have a significant adverse impact on these views and on the experience of the rural setting of the church.

There are a number of more open views from the A385 than the one illustrated in Viewpoint 2 and all views will be more open in the winter months. Residents and pedestrians as well as drivers can currently appreciate the views across the open countryside and there are also views of the church in its rural setting. There would be a significant adverse impact on these views.

Views from St Marys Park (3) are likely to be of roof tops behind the existing houses along the A385 and are not considered significant.

Views from the adjacent holiday park (4) are limited by existing vegetation which could be supplemented by additional planting and are not considered significant.

Views from the east, approaching the village along the A385 (6) include views from the brow of the hill east of the viewpoint, where the upper parts of the site are prominent and form a rural backdrop. There would be a significant adverse impact on these views.

Views from the north around the Blagdons include clear views from Blagdon Road near Whitewells/Stone Hill Farm, and from gateways along Old Widdicombe Lane east of Middle Blagdon and Old Widdicombe Road near the barns, south east of Buttshill Cross. The view from Barton Pines on the lane at Hunters Lodge/The Stables/Barnstormers is considered of high sensitivity and is an open, elevated view. In all these views the site is clearly seen in a strongly rural context and not related to the urban area.

Conclusion

I consider that the proposed development would have a significant adverse impact on the character of the site and the rural setting of the village. In my opinion the development would not relate well to the existing village, which is sited within the folds of the valley on lower ground. It would not conserve or enhance the character of the valley but would introduce a large scale urban development into the rural landscape. The proposal would have a significant adverse impact on views from the church and approaches to Collaton St Mary along the A385 from the east and west. In views from the north the site is seen within a strongly rural context and urban development would appear incongruous. Whilst local landscape area 1L Blagdon

Barton is recognised as being less sensitive overall, the degree of change proposed on this site cannot in my view be successfully accommodated without harm and would not contribute to a gateway and sense of arrival to Torbay in a positive way. The proposal is not considered acceptable in landscape terms and is not supported.

Olwen Maidment, CMLI

Landscape Officer, Teignbridge District Council

5 July 2013