

# Proposed New Housing Development Land South of B3153, Keinton Mandeville

## Landscape Statement

South Somerest District Council Planning Application no. 22/01720/OUT  
708 LA Rev P1

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report is prepared by The Landscape Practice and a chartered landscape architect (CMLI) on behalf of SHOCK (Stop Housing Obliterating the Character of Keinton) a group of local residents who object to the development proposals. The report examines a proposal for the development of a greenfield site for 120no. houses on land south of the B3153 at the western edge of Keinton Mandeville village.
- 1.2 A separate desk and field study has been carried out of the existing site and the surrounding context in order to appraise the development proposals in relation to this.
- 1.3 We believe that the scale and location of this proposed development will cause significant harm to the character and quality of Keinton Mandeville village and the surrounding rural landscape. The proposed development details can be scrutinised but it is the principle of development on this site which is discordant with this setting.

## 2.0 Landscape Baseline and Character

### Landscape Context

- 2.1 The proposed development site lies in *The Fivehead and High Ham Escarpments, Valleys and Moors Visual Character Region 1*, and the 'Clay Dipslope Character Zone' as identified in *The Landscape of South Somerset* (1993) published by South Somerset District Council. The relevant identified key characteristics reflect the surrounding landscape, however, this is analysed here in more detail to understand the character of the area around the site.
- 2.2 Keinton Mandeville village lies on the Lower Lias dipslope south of the long, winding escarpment and at its eastern extreme where it becomes less discernible meeting the end of the Polden Hills. The village is located on an indistinct plateau but the land around is gently undulating and falls broadly southwards over the surrounding area towards the River Carey.
- 2.3 There are relict small orchard fields close to the village but agricultural, predominantly open larger scale arable fields surround the village. The boundary hedgerows, including much elm, are of variable quality and with few hedgerow trees. Infrequent, small, and regular geometric woodland blocks punctuate the landscape. The context is overtly rural with some

far reaching views over lower ground towards the south and west.

### Settlement Pattern

- 2.4 From historic origins at its southern edge around the parish church of St Mary Magdalen's, the village has expanded northwards on Queen Street and along High Street/Castle Street (B3153) to take advantage of the old coaching road from London to the south west and with small quarrying sites developing close to the village. This has developed the village into its distinctive linear, 'T' shaped pattern where one plot depth from the road often provides



Figure 1 - OS Map 1885 (not to scale)  
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Figure 2 - OS Map 1904 (not to scale)  
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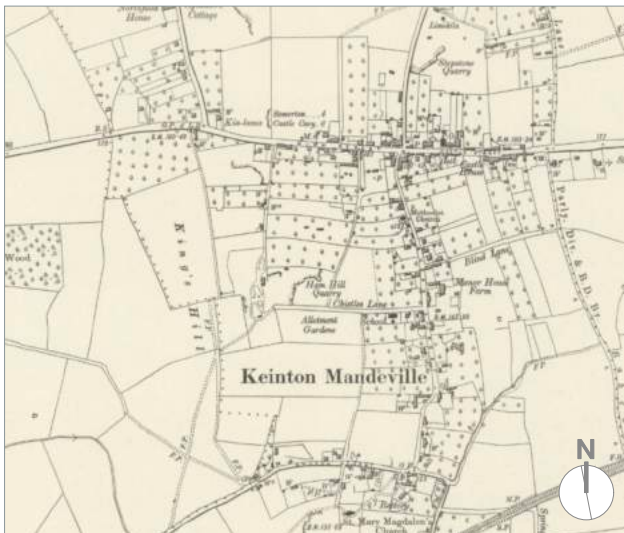


Figure 3 - OS Map 1930 (not to scale)  
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Figure 4 - OS Map 1962 (not to scale)  
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glimpsed views and a strong connection with the surrounding rural context. Historic Ordnance Survey maps 1885-1962 (**Figures 1-4**) show very little having changed in the settlement pattern over this period.

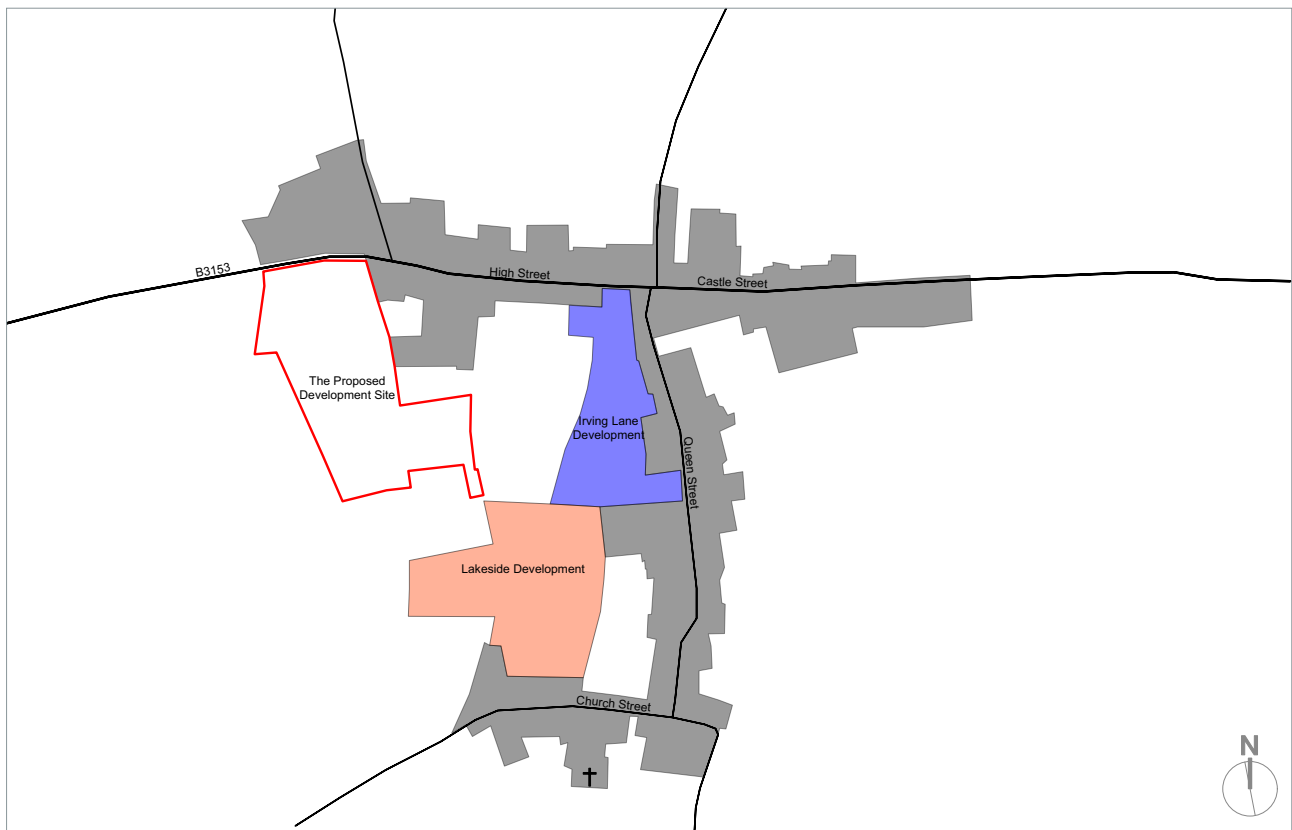


Figure 5 - Keinton Mandeville Settlement Pattern (not to scale)

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- 2.5 Further expansion in small numbers of houses by infilling along the two main roads through the village has largely maintained this pattern until the later 20th century when more disproportionate blocks of larger scale development along Irving Street, and more recently and more noticeably Lakeview. By their scale, location and form these have begun to erode the linear pattern and character. - see **Figure 5**.
- 2.6 Historically prevalent orchards and small scale quarrying sites have surrounded and interspersed the groups of houses and buildings of the village. These have all but disappeared apart from a few remaining and relict examples, particularly of the former. The mosaic of the orchard fields and the structure of their field boundary planting still remains creating space, a foil for the buildings, and a fragmented, soft edge character which is noticeable on the west side of the village where the bulk of the village is often not apparent in views from the surrounding area - see aerial view **Photograph 1** on the next page.



**Photograph 1**

An aerial view from a point approximately over Queen Street looking west towards the proposed development site. The linear settlement pattern is evident along the High Street, B3153. The existing development along Irving Road is in the foreground. Between lies the structure of the small scale orchard fields forming the soft edge to the village. Beyond the edge of the village there are larger scale agricultural and mainly arable fields in an open landscape which includes the area of the proposed development fields identified in red outline. The agricultural fields have variable hedgerows, few hedgerow trees, and there are small geometric blocks of woodland, including Luns Hill Wood in the centre.

## 3.0 The Existing Site

- 3.1 The proposed 'L' shaped development site of approximately 10.3 hectares is formed by three agricultural fields. The smallest field to the east lies between a paddock of Westfield House and the grounds of the village hall and its associated play area. This forms an important part of the mosaic structure of smaller open fields closer to the village which contribute to the fragmented, soft village edge. The larger two proposed development site fields, forming the

bulk of the site (approximately 8.2 hectares), lie west and beyond the edge of the village in open countryside. Although overlooked by several properties located at the north end, these two fields have a much stronger connection with the open expanse of fields south and west than with the village.

- 3.2 The site lies at the edge of a gently sloping plateau. The ground falls by approximately 5.0m north east to south west across the two fields and then more steeply at the south and west site boundaries accentuating its location in the surrounding landscape on the edge of the village plateau and beyond the edge of the village.
- 3.3 Three well used and locally valued public footpaths (L16/1, L16/2 & L16/13) on the west side of the village lying north/south connect the High Street to the southern part of the village and to the wider public footpath system beyond. They provide easy access to the surrounding countryside and also an important, safe pedestrian connection between the north and south parts of the village, the village hall and play ground, and the village school. The public footpath L16/1 lies along the east side of the two larger fields from where there are open, panoramic middle distance and far reaching views to the south and west - **Photograph 2**.



**Photograph 2** - View looking south west from public footpath L16/1 within the site to middle and far reaching views over open countryside. The proposed development site fills the foreground.

- 3.4 There is intersvisibility with Kingweston conseravtion area to the north west and there are quintessential English country views of All Saints Church, listed Grade 2\* with its distinctive spire, and Kingweston House, listed Grade 2 across the fields from the same public footpath - **Photograph 3**. There is a similar view from public footpath L16/13 by the play area.
- 3.5 Low hedges of variable quality bound the south and west sides of the site. The northern boundary hedge on the B3153 has recently been left to grow out - Google Earth images confirm this has previously been maintained as a low hedge. This has a high proportion of elm and, if left to grow out further, will in time succumb to Dutch Elm Disease as evidenced by



**Photograph 3** - View north west towards Kingweston conservation area, All Saints church with its distinctive spire and Kingweston House from public footpath L16/1 within the site. Proposed development would obstruct or severely compromise this view.

numerous similar situations in the local area. The east boundary hedges diminish southwards and neither this nor the former is enough to screen direct views over the site from adjacent properties.

## 4.0 Site Visibility Analysis

- 4.1 This analysis broadly concurs with the visibility envelope of the proposed development site identified in the submitted LVA. Some views presented here are similar to those in the submitted LVA in order to identify and reinforce particular observations and to demonstrate that the principle of allowing development on the proposed site would result in substantial harm to the fundamental character of the village and the local landscape.
- 4.2 Photographs have been taken with a Canon 6D Mark 2, full frame sensor DSLR and 50mm lens. A field visit was made on 2 August 2022. The weather was part cloudy but with good visibility.

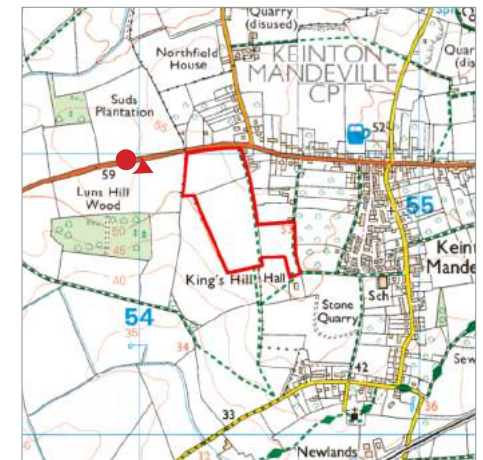


(Several photo frames stitched together to incorporate the approximate 70° view)

## Viewpoint 1

<b>Photograph Location:</b>	Looking towards site from B3153
<b>Grid Reference (National Grid):</b>	E: 501415 N: 193673
<b>Viewpoint Altitude (Ground Level):</b>	54m AOD
<b>Distance to Site Boundary:</b>	150m
<b>Direction of View:</b>	South East

The site is visible on the important western approach to Keinton Mandeville from the B3153 over a wide area and in front of the existing village boundary where a combination of small fields and some vegetation between the visible parts of built form currently create the setting and a soft edge character on the entrance to the village from the west. The submitted LVA describes the approach views on this road as '*glimpses*' and the significance of effects as '*no change - minor adverse*' whereas the proposed development would be visible as a stark contrast to the existing soft, fragmented village edge and the current open aspect over a wide area significantly altering the character at the entrance to the village.



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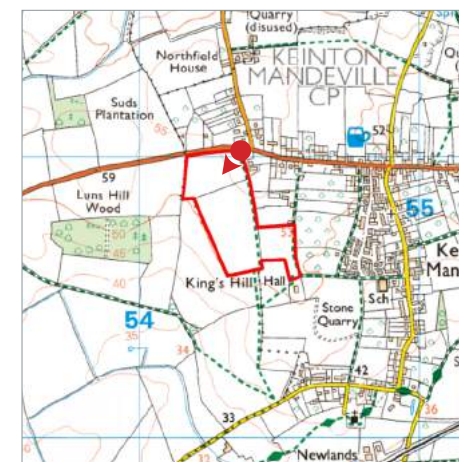


(Several photo frames stitched together to incorporate the approximate 105° view)

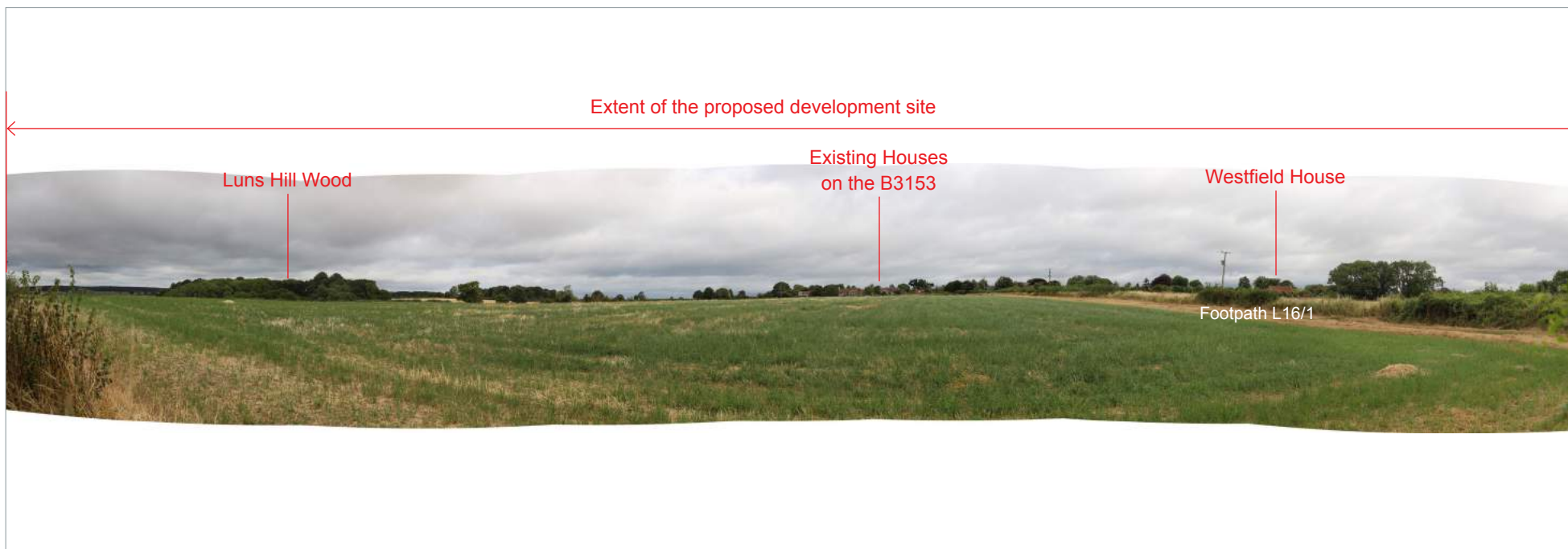
## Viewpoint 2

<b>Photograph Location:</b>	On public footpath L16/1 adjacent to B3153 looking over the proposed development site
<b>Grid Reference (National Grid):</b>	E: 501415 N: 193673
<b>Viewpoint Altitude (Ground Level):</b>	56.5m AOD
<b>Distance to Site Boundary:</b>	Within the proposed development site
<b>Direction of View:</b>	South west

The extent of the proposed development site fills the entire foreground field which currently clearly forms part of the open countryside beyond the existing edge of the village. The submitted LVA (view 1) describes the changes in the significance of effect on this view as having a '*neutral - moderate adverse*' effect on users of this path '*depending on the quality of architecture*' whereas the change would be substantial and built form would completely fill the view changing the open aspect and removing the panoramic rural views currently enjoyed.



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(Several photo frames stitched together to incorporate the approximate 187° view)

### Viewpoint 3

<b>Photograph Location:</b>	On public footpath L19/7 at the south boundary of the proposed development site
<b>Grid Reference (National Grid):</b>	E: 501415 N: 193673
<b>Viewpoint Altitude (Ground Level):</b>	51.5m AOD
<b>Distance to Site Boundary:</b>	Within the proposed development site
<b>Direction of View:</b>	North

The extent of the proposed development site fills the foreground agricultural field which currently forms part of open countryside beyond the existing soft edge of the village. Keinton Mandeville village is beyond the public footpath L16/1 on the right hand side of the photograph but the existing combination of small fields and vegetation creates the dispersed pattern of buildings and the soft edge of the village. The submitted LVA describes the changes in the significance of effect on this view (LVA view 5) as having a *'neutral - moderate adverse'* affect on users of this path *'depending on the quality of architecture'* whereas the scale of change would be substantial and would completely alter the open, undeveloped aspect over a wide angle of view.



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(Single frame photograph)

## Viewpoint 4

<b>Photograph Location:</b>	High Street, eastern edge of Kingweston village conservation area
<b>Grid Reference (National Grid):</b>	E: 501415 N: 193673
<b>Viewpoint Altitude (Ground Level):</b>	66.0m AOD
<b>Distance to Site Boundary:</b>	1.40kms
<b>Direction of View:</b>	East

Although at a distance of 1.4kms and partially screened by Luns Hill Wood, areas of the proposed development site fields (green) are visible between the vegetation. The submitted LVA describes the significance of effect as '*no change - minor adverse*' but this relies on screen mitigation planting at the west boundary. The proposed development would be evident for a significant amount of time as a block of houses between the vegetation which would be imposed on what is a currently a rural, undeveloped view from the conservation area.



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(Several photo frames stitched together to incorporate the approximate 45° view)

## Viewpoint 5

<b>Photograph Location:</b>	Public footpath L6/5
<b>Grid Reference (National Grid):</b>	E: 501415 N: 193673
<b>Viewpoint Altitude (Ground Level):</b>	46m AOD
<b>Distance to Site Boundary:</b>	1.32kms
<b>Direction of View:</b>	North east

The views of the proposed development site vary along the public footpaths to the west, but significant parts are visible between intervening vegetation. The LVA (view 19) judges the change in views as '*no change - minor adverse*' and yet the proposed development would be visible and noticeable within (apart from Lakeview) what is largely a rural, undeveloped view and against the current soft edge of the village. It can also be viewed over a long length of this footpath with the current Lakeview development which would cause a cumulative effect of large scale development further eroding the soft edge of Keinton Mandeville village.



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## 5.0 Development Proposals

- 5.1 The proposal is to develop 10.3 hectares of agricultural fields to include 120 houses. This in itself is a large residential development for a rural environment, but also one which is out of scale with the character of Keinton Mandeville village. This proposed development would add nearly 30% in area to the core settlement in one large development block which would overwhelm, detrimentally harm and unbalance the current setting of the village.
- 5.2 The scale and form of the proposed development is entirely discordant with the historic and inherent linear settlement pattern of the village. In common with many rural villages, this arrangement has evolved gradually and incrementally over a period of time to augment this pattern, and to add a large, square shaped development to this linear form would cause substantial harm to its form and character.
- 5.3 The proposed development site projects beyond the edge of the village into open countryside. The nature, scale and form of the development also conflicts with the dispersed pattern of the western side of the village and its soft edge. This damages the current fragmented layout with a solid mass of housing thus altering its fundamental character.
- 5.4 The LVA (paragraph 6.14, page 22) assesses overall landscape effects as ‘minor adverse’ on overall landscape character with additional measures as providing a ‘beneficial effect’. Whilst this is an underestimate of the potential harm this development would cause, Section 6, Landscape Assessment, appears to assess the effects only the actual proposed development site and does not take account of the context.
- 5.5 The submitted design and access statement (DAS) analyses the built character areas of the village but strangely not the settlement pattern or the rural context which is the more important part of the character of the proposed development site. The resultant design (Illustrative Masterplan, page 45), reflecting nothing of the historic context, proposes a routine, market led housing estate with a myriad of suburban cul-de-sacs and lines of unrelieved, evenly spaced house frontages which look tightly packed into repetitive, subdivided blocks. The standard, engineered road layout with paved squares and houses set a consistent distance from the kerb is more akin to an urban setting. This proposal reflects none of the fundamental characteristics of the core village settlement.
- 5.6 The ‘site constraints’ identified in the DAS show visual exposure of the proposed development site from south west and it recommends a belt of screen planting along the south and west site boundaries to address this. This is contradicted in ‘site opportunities’ by identifying

potential views out of the site and over the screen planting towards the south west. The resultant planting belt, which the proposals rely on for visual protection, also becomes much narrower on the illustrative masterplan than the concept diagram suggests. The long, linear strip of planting also doesn't reflect the pattern of woodlands in the area.

- 5.7 The mitigation planting is intended to address visibility issues but it does not alter or mitigate against the fundamental character changes and the harm to the character of the village this proposed development would create. Notwithstanding this, it will also take some time to form a screen. Assuming favourable conditions, good practice and aftercare planting management, ideal growth rates would suggest planting (assuming native transplant type planting) achieving a height of approximately 7.5m after 15 years.
- 5.8 This is based on an average annual growth rate of 30cm per year in the first 5 years which can realistically be assumed, and once established the plants' growth rate will increase and this can be anticipated to reach around 50cm a year for the next 10 years providing an approximate height of 2–2.5m in the first year and 7–7.5m after 15 years. However, local conditions should also give a guide and the hedgerows on the south and west boundaries in the location of the proposed screen planting are currently not thriving.
- 5.9 The proposed woodland strip planting (submitted LVA - Illustrative Landscape Strategy) indicates (apart from oak) little in the way of large scale screening trees which would be required to screen the proposed development. The species selection is also not entirely typical of the local area and it does not match the South Somerset District Council Area Species Guide for the local area.
- 5.10 Bearing in mind there is a 5m drop across the site towards the identified views in the surrounding landscape, an ideal planting mix would also need to reach at least 14m high (the ZTV in the submitted LVIA identifies proposed buildings at 9m high) to screen the housing development on the higher northern part of the proposed development site. Even with a more robust planting list than is proposed, it would take just under thirty years to achieve full screening. This is a particularly long time considering the exposed nature of the proposed development site beyond the edge of the village and the importance of protecting its visual exposure in surrounding landscape.
- 5.11 The submitted LVA wrongly assumes full screening of the proposed development by year 15. It also suggests that screening will make the proposed development acceptable, but this does not address the fundamental harm it will cause to the structure and character of the village.

- 5.12 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) recommend that tables and matrices are not relied upon to combine scores to arrive at results but are used to support narrative text to assess significance of landscape and visual effects. The submitted LVA relies on the tables set out in the methodology particularly for its visual assessment. However, the problem is that the tables with limited range also appear to be skewed somewhat towards a higher acceptance of impact which therefore generally underestimates the significance of effect of the proposed development and leads to rather diluted assessment of the actual effects. For example, the submitted LVA, Table 7.1, page 27, shows different 'overall sensitivity' and 'magnitude of change' for views from public footpath L16/1 (medium sensitivity and high magnitude) compared to views for B3153 road users (medium-low sensitivity and medium magnitude) and yet the result, the 'significance of effect' is the same for both.
- 5.13 In addition, 'neutral' significance is referred to, but this cannot possibly be the case particularly for the views from public footpath L16/1. The notes refer to the 'significance of effect' depending on the 'quality of architecture' not the fact that the current locally valued, panoramic and undeveloped rural views, including the fine views towards Kingweston conservation area, All Saints Church and Kingweston House, would be permanently obscured by buildings.

## 6.0 Summary Conclusion

- 6.1 Keinton Mandeville village has a gradually evolved, strong historic linear pattern and evident connection with the surrounding rural, agricultural context. This is diluted only by more recent larger scale hinterland development.
- 6.2 Fragmented fringes to the village in a pattern of dispersed buildings and small relict orchard fields still remain, particularly on the west side creating a transition into the surrounding landscape and a soft edge in views towards the village from the surrounding landscape.
- 6.3 The proposed development site lies beyond the village fringes in open countryside. The scale of proposed development is incongruous with the rural, village settlement adding disproportionately significant and harmful amounts of site area and numbers of houses.
- 6.4 The proposed development as a single, large rectangular block conflicts with the linear character of the village and the location compromises the fragmented, soft village edge causing substantial harm to the character of both.
- 6.5 As such, the proposed development conflicts with South Somerset District Councils Local

Plan Policies EQ2 and EQ3 in that it does not conserve or enhance landscape character, or reinforce local distinctiveness, or respect local context, or respect local character, and nor does it respect the historic environment and its pattern, scale and form.

- 6.6 Locally valued rural and panoramic views from well used public footpaths from the western edge of the village would be severely compromised by the proposed development and a classical English view of All Saints church and Kingweston House towards Kingweston conservation area would be severed. Several properties at the edge of the village currently with rural views of the site fields would be overwhelmed by the scale and nature of change caused by the development.
- 6.7 The proposed development is not sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area either in scale or design style. It is an inappropriate form of development for the village of Keinton Mandeville and the proposed location would compromise and cause substantial harm to the character and quality of the local context.

The Landscape Practice  
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