

# LOCHAILORT INVESTMENTS LIMITED

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Ian Hasell  
Chairman  
Norton St Philip Parish Council  
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Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

Dear Ian

## **Fortescue Fields Phase II, Norton St Philip**

The Parish Council will have been notified by Mendip that the *Local Plan Part II* Inspector's Report has now been published.

### ***Local Plan Part II: the Inspector's Report***

The Inspector's Report strongly supports the allocation of site NSP1 for "*not less than 27 dwellings*" (at paragraphs 123-138), and fully endorses the policy criteria which Lochailort supported during the further hearings in October and November last year.

Consequently, we are now moving forward with Mendip to conclude the minor revisions to our current planning application (reference 2020/2053/FUL) and secure planning permission for the additional homes that the Inspector concluded are so desperately needed.

### ***Looking ahead: the imminent Local Plan Review***

The *Local Plan Part II*, whilst fulfilling Mendip's housing requirements in the immediate short-term, is very much a sticking-plaster rather than a long-term solution. At paragraphs 32-35 the Inspector explains why this is the case, and underlines the urgency of Mendip immediately starting to look for additional housing land and adopted a *Local Plan Review* within the next 36 months:

*"For the above reasons, MM1, setting out a new policy (LP1) and explanatory text, makes provision for a Local Plan Review, or Development Plan Review. This is to commence within two months of the adoption of this Plan, and I note the commitment by the Council to submit a successor development plan to the Inspectorate within three years of its commencement."*

We have always said that our West site at Norton St Philip is a sustainable and appropriate location for residential development. Following the allocation of NSP1 for residential development, we will be robustly promoting our West site for development in the imminent *Local Plan Review*. Given the characteristics of this site, we believe that we stand a very good chance of success.

### ***Mendip's 5-year housing land supply position***

Meanwhile, Mendip's 5-year land supply figure is already marginal and looks likely to fall below the minimum 5-year supply after only a short period. There will inevitably be a need for planning applications to be approved on unallocated sites, and we are closely monitoring the situation as it evolves. Lochailort will not hesitate to assist Mendip in rectifying its 5-year housing land supply deficit as soon as this is necessary.

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## ***The Somerset Unitary Authority***

When the new Somerset Council replaces Mendip and the other existing Somerset Local Authorities in April 2023 there is certain to be a period of readjustment and reflection. We have experienced this elsewhere in the county, such as in Bedfordshire, where inevitably the incoming new Unitary authority must provide services and plan across a number of previously self-contained Districts. The complex requirements of joining-up formerly fragmented forward planning can often result in significant delays to a much more wide-ranging Local Plan reviews. This in turn will worsen the 5-year housing land supply situation and result in additional requirements for unallocated greenfield sites to be granted planning permission for residential development.

## ***Working with the Parish Council***

We have previously informally presented our proposals for a “once-and-for-all” masterplan for all our landholdings at Norton St Philip, which in summary proposes:

- (i) 27 dwellings on allocated site NSP1, fully in accordance with the *Local Plan Part II*, and 2 additional dwellings on the *Laverton Triangle*;
- (ii) 20 dwellings on our West site, divided into two pockets of 10 dwellings on each side of a new swathe of open space connecting Church Mead with the MUGA and wider countryside. This is on a site that is capable of accommodating 45 dwellings or more, thus providing a one-off opportunity to control future development;
- (iii) The gifting of the entirety of our remaining landholding to the Parish Council (including the Multi-Use Games Area & allotments site, our retained land around the ponds, and the undeveloped parts of the West site) – with the potential for residents of Fortescue Fields Phase I to extend their gardens

Enclosed once more for ease of reference is our proposed masterplan.

In respect of draft LSG007 & LSG008, we estimate that 80-85% would be publicly-accessible Parish Council/Management Company land, with the remaining 15-20% remaining in private ownership as houses/gardens/driveways.

The additional allotments/MUGA land, although not currently proposed as Local Green Space, would almost entirely offset this 15-20%.

None of LGS008 is currently publicly-accessible and we truly believe that the creation of this new “country park” link between Church Mead and the countryside to the south, safeguarded in perpetuity, would benefit Norton St Philip for generations to come.

## ***The community benefits of a comprehensive masterplanned approach***

Other than the extensive new open spaces that would be gifted to the community in perpetuity, this joined-up masterplanned approach would also greatly assist the Parish Council in

- (i) Defending against unexpected planning applications on unallocated greenfield sites elsewhere in the village
- (ii) Arguing that no further growth should be allocated to the settlement in the *Local Plan Review*
- (iii) Preparing a modestly updated *Neighbourhood Plan* that provides sufficient growth in the village for an entire generation

Additionally, our masterplan offers a host of further community benefits:

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## Social benefits

- **Affordable housing** that we propose in the form of *First-Time Buyer* properties that are affordable for local people to buy
- **New footpaths** between existing and proposed facilities alike will enhance pedestrian linkages;
- **Completion of the MUGA/allotments**, enhanced with a **new community orchard** – both s106 matters
- Additional residents will assist in the **viability of the village school** which continues to be at risk from falling pupil forecasts
- **Focus on some smaller homes**

## Economic benefits

- **Increased patronage** of the shop, pubs etc
- **New Homes Bonus** payment to Mendip and **Section 106** contributions;
- **New jobs** during the construction phase as well as induced jobs (gardeners, building maintenance, cleaners etc) once the development is occupied
- **Working from home**: many of the homes would have a separate study

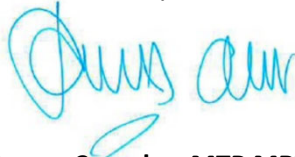
## Sustainability/Green agenda

- Specifically-designed **bat habitat mitigation** & improvement measures are proposed
- **Net biodiversity gain** through the provision of targeted habitat enhancements;
- **New tree and hedgerow planting** would enhance the immediate and wider landscape, mitigating the visual effect of the development and making a modest ongoing contribution to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets;
- Swales and a new attenuation pond form part of a **new sustainable drainage system**
- **Landscape enhancements**, including **new tree belts** and additional planting across the site
- Enhanced a **sustainable energy package** with the target of **net zero carbon**

We would be happy to present our masterplan in a public meeting and answer questions from the community, so that we can continue to work proactively and constructively with the Parish Council and interested parties in bringing forward a comprehensive solution that deliver certain and a wide range of benefits to the community in both the short and long term.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely



**James Croucher MTP MRTPI**  
Planning Director

Enclosed:        Concept masterplan, September 2021