Oldbury Site Selection

Further considerations and evaluation

Oldbury on Severn Parish Council

LB planning

LB Planning for Oldbury Parish Council **August 2019**

Contents

Introduction 3

The Heritage of Oldbury Village and Environs 4

Site Assessment Process and Shortlist 6

Remaining Short-listed Sites and further Heritage considerations 8

Greenbelt Policy Issues 15

References: 15

Appendix 1: Comments from South Gloucestershire Council 16

Appendix 2: Comments from English Heritage on draft Screening Report 20

Appendix 3: Locally Listed Buildings and Structures in Oldbury 22

Acknowledgements: Thanks are due to officers from South Gloucestershire Council and Historic England for assistance with compiling this report. Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group provided valuable local knowledge and assisted with site visits and field work. Any mistakes are of course all my own.

Liz Beth

LB Planning

August 2019

Introduction

1.1 The Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of September 2017 undertaken by JPA Consulting, and the AECOM Site Assessment Report of 2018, considered a comprehensive set of potential sites adjacent to the settlement boundary of Oldbury village as part of the evidence base for the ONDP. The Parish council were keen to provide a small number of new mainly affordable houses in the village. The Parish is significantly constrained however, with Natura 2000 sites and a RAMSAR site nearby on the Severn Estuary and flood zones 2, 3A and 3B covering much of the Parish. Further constraints include the Green Belt covering the southern section of the Parish and heritage assets. The latter include a scheduled monument within and adjacent to the village of Oldbury and a Grade 2* listed parish church with an outstanding setting on a small hill in the generally flat estuary landscape.

1.2 The AECOM Report considered heritage impact with a relatively light touch, and at an initial high level. The proximity of the asset to a site was considered and an initial assessment of whether or not mitigation would acceptably reduce any adverse impact. The assessment of the heritage constraints for each site in the Report are considered by Historic England to require more detailed assessment before they can form a view of whether or not the site allocation is acceptable in heritage terms. As their Site Allocation guidance indicates, the specific setting of individual historic assets needs to be considered before impact can be fully assessed.

1.3 Since the AECOM Report was finalised, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has been revised. This allows neighbourhood plans to make minor changes to Green Belt boundaries where strategic review of the green belt is underway. The NPPF also allows in some circumstances minor sites for affordable housing in the green belt. Thus it is considered sensible to review the site assessment work in the AECOM Report with a more detailed consideration of heritage issues with each shortlisted site, and the changed green belt policy situation – which AECOM felt in May 2018 restrained then from suggesting any site in the green belt was potentially suitable.

1.4 Oldbury Parish Council has therefore commissioned this report to examine in greater depth heritage constraints on short-listed sites, and the most recent national and local strategic policy on development in the green belt. It has used guidance on heritage issues for each potential site from the Local Planning Authority and their Conservation Section (Appendix 1), as well as initial comments from Historic England on a draft screening report for the Oldbury NDP (Appendix 2). Fieldwork and the Oldbury Village Character Assessment have also informed revised site proposals.

The Heritage of Oldbury Village and Environs

Figure 1: Listed Buildings and scheduled monuments in and around Oldbury

Building or Feature	Listing or schedule	Notes
Vine Farmhouse	Grade 2	
Rook Farmhouse	Grade 2	
Holly Tree Farm - well	Grade 2	
Westend Farmhouse	Grade 2	
Camp House	Grade 2	
Pullens Green Farmhouse	Grade 2	
Anchor Inn	Grade 2	Former Mill house – village landmark
Pill Cottages	Grade 2	
St Arildas Church	Grade 2*	Particularly fine setting on a hill, views important
Monuments - Churchyard	Grade 2	
Iron-age Fort 'The Toot'	Scheduled Monument	Unusual feature in a lowland estuary setting. Some of the feature included within gardens of dwellings.

Table 1: Listed Buildings and scheduled monuments in and adjacent to Oldbury village and sites

2.1 Figure 1 and Table 1 above show the nationally listed buildings and scheduled monument in and adjacent to Oldbury. Listed buildings shown are mostly grade 2 farmhouses originally constructed in the 17th Century, or dwellings from the agricultural past. The Anchor Inn was a former mill house. They are located in the level valley of the Severn estuary, and often sit within the traditional built form of the village. Adverse visual impact on these heritage assets will be most likely from development adjacent or close to them and their curtilage.

2.2 St Arildas Church, a rarer grade 2* listed building, has elements dating from the 15th Century. St Arildas was a Saxon saint, who probably also gave Oldbury its name (derived from 'Aldberie'). As the church may be built on an older tumulus on this small but prominent hill, it is likely historic links are more ancient that the current building. The historic importance of the hilltop location, and the visual prominence of the church within the wider flat estuary landscape, makes the setting sensitive to adverse visual impact from development over a much wider radius than the other listed buildings. In line with guidance in the Historic England's Good Practice Advice Note 3 on the setting of heritage assets, further assessment including fieldwork has been undertaken on the impact on the setting of St Arildas Church.

2.3 Oldbury Camp, known locally as 'The Toot' is a scheduled monument and probably iron-age fort. It is unusual for its lowland location, and was occupied in later times as well – influencing the form of the medieval village which has resulted in current dwellings being located on the former site of ramparts.

Locally Listed Buildings

2.4 South Gloucestershire has drawn up a list of buildings and features with heritage importance for heritage (Appendix 3). The Gate at St Arilda's, and the Primary School on Church Hill, are both immediately important for the setting of the listed church. As shown in figure 3, none of the original 5 sites are located in close proximity to any of the grade 2 listed buildings in the village. Any assets in reasonable proximity to the sites detailed below, including locally listed heritage assets, are shown on the relevant site plan.

Site Assessment Process and Shortlist

3.1 As most of Oldbury Parish is within Flood Zones 2 and 3 as defined by the Environment Agency, any site allocations required an initial Flood Risk Assessment be undertaken. This considered 14 potential sites that collectively surrounded the current village settlement boundary, and discounted three of them from further consideration. Site 3 was the scheduled monument, and Sites 10 and 11 had unacceptably high levels of flood risk, both fluvial and tidal. A Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) was then commissioned on the remaining sites from JBA Consulting, and a final report produced in September 2017. This report ranked the remaining sites as shown in Table 2, with 1 being the site having the lowest flood risk.

RANK	SITE NUMBER
1	8
2	2
3	9
4	13
5	7
6	1
7	14
8	12
9	4
10	5
11	6

Table 2: Sites ranked according to flood risk (1 = lowest)

3.2 The AECOM Site Assessment Report worked from the site assessment in the Level 2 SFRA, widening the factors considered with each site to include the usual range of constraints and requirements. The findings of this Report (Executive Summary) were that Site 2 was the most appropriate, and that parts of Site 13 along Westend Lane also had potential. Site 8 and Parts of Sites 7 and 9 were also felt to have potential if their location within the green belt could be overcome. Figure 2 shows the location of sites assessed by the AECOM Report and Level 2 SFRA.

3.3 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) decided to work with a shortlist of these five sites (Figure 3). For village character and landscape considerations Sites 7,9 and 13 were reduced to that part of the site immediately adjacent to an existing lane. During the NPSG consideration of sites, Site 2 was withdrawn as no longer available. In fact further information from the conservation section of SGC indicated that there were considerable heritage concerns about this potential allocation and the recommendation in the AECOM Report. The site being immediately adjacent to the most prominent part of the scheduled monument, visual impact was a serious concern, and screening may well not mitigate the impact on views of the monument. In the absence of professional assessment of potential impact on setting and whether mitigation is possible it was felt the site should not be allocated.

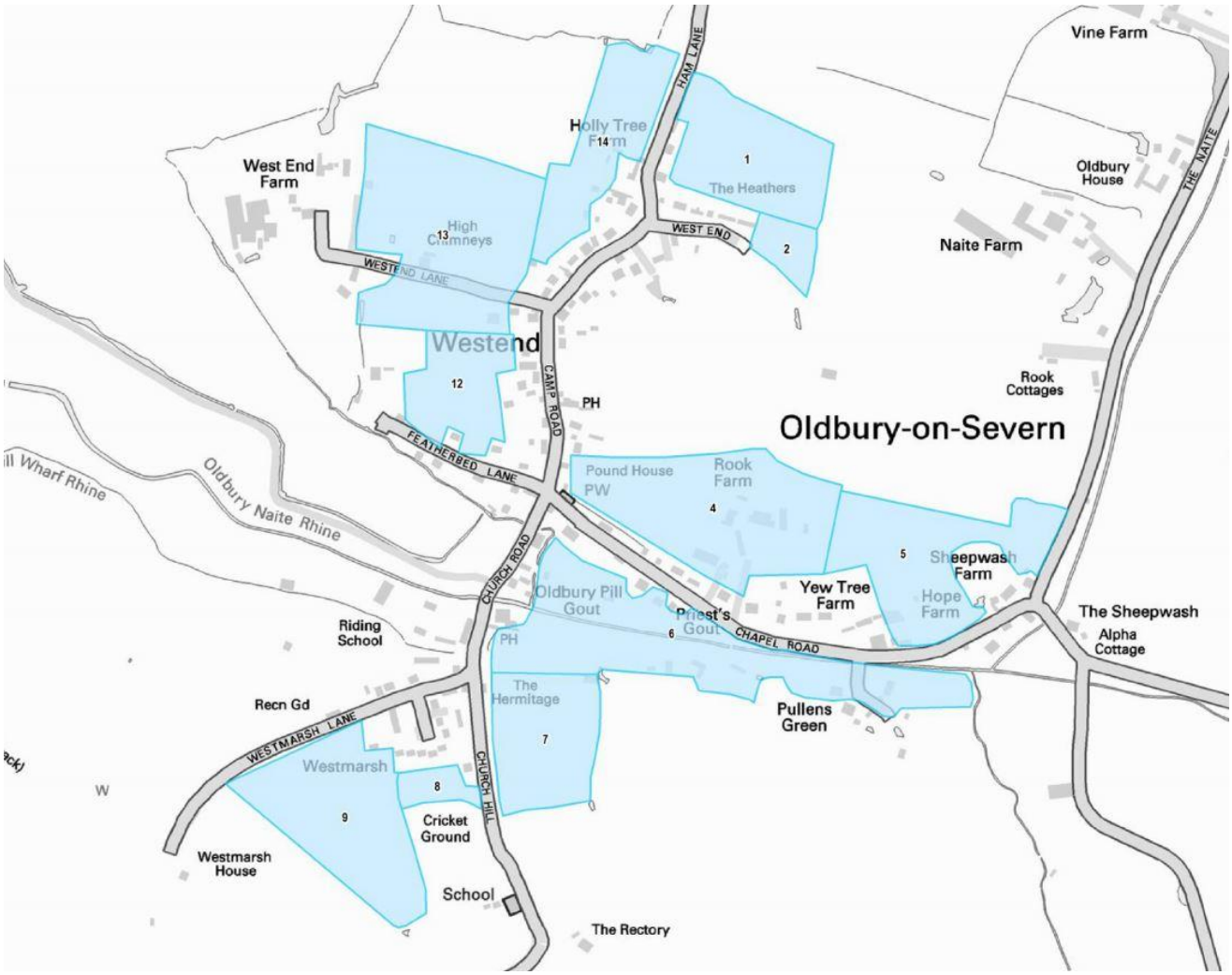

Figure 2: Sites Assessed in the Level 2 SFRA and AECOM Site Assessment

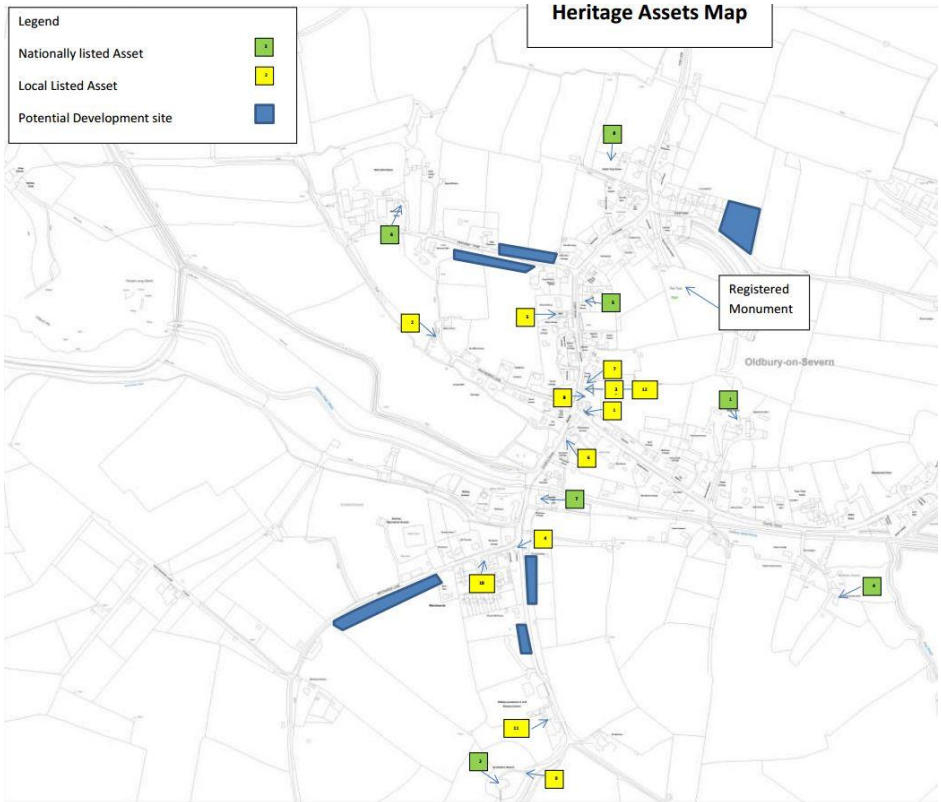

Figure 3: Original Shortlisted sites and Heritage asset locations *(indicative of sites only)*

Remaining Short-listed Sites and further Heritage considerations

Site 13 (part) Westend Lane

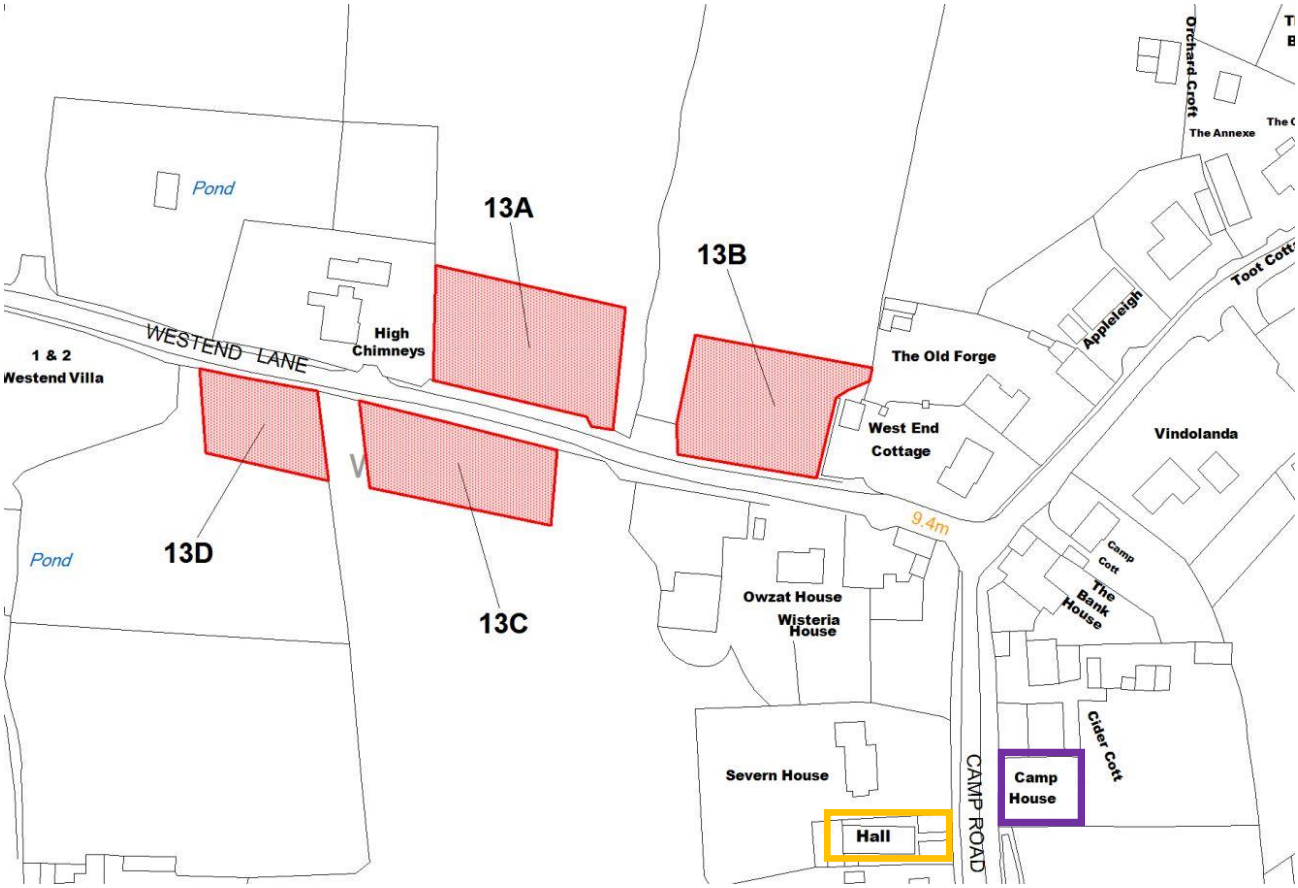

Figure 4: Westend Lane (formerly part of Site 13): *Grade 2 asset - purple; local listing - orange*

4.1 The Conservation Team at SGC have advised (considering the whole of the site) that development here would have little impact on the Scheduled Monument, but the Medieval manor house of Oldbury could be located in the area. The designated site has, as suggested by Conservation, been greatly reduced from the original Site 13, and a watching brief condition can be required as part of the brief for the site. The site has been reduced to dwellings fronting Westend Lane only, partly in order to respect the character of the village but also because development needs to be of a scale suited to a small village with considerable constraints.

4.1.1 Camp House is a grade 2 listed building, but the proposed sites are separated from it by other development and there is no significant impact from them on Camp House or the locally listed Village Hall opposite Camp House. With the reduction in size of the allocation, and with a recommendation for a 'watching brief' condition, the heritage impact of development here is acceptable.

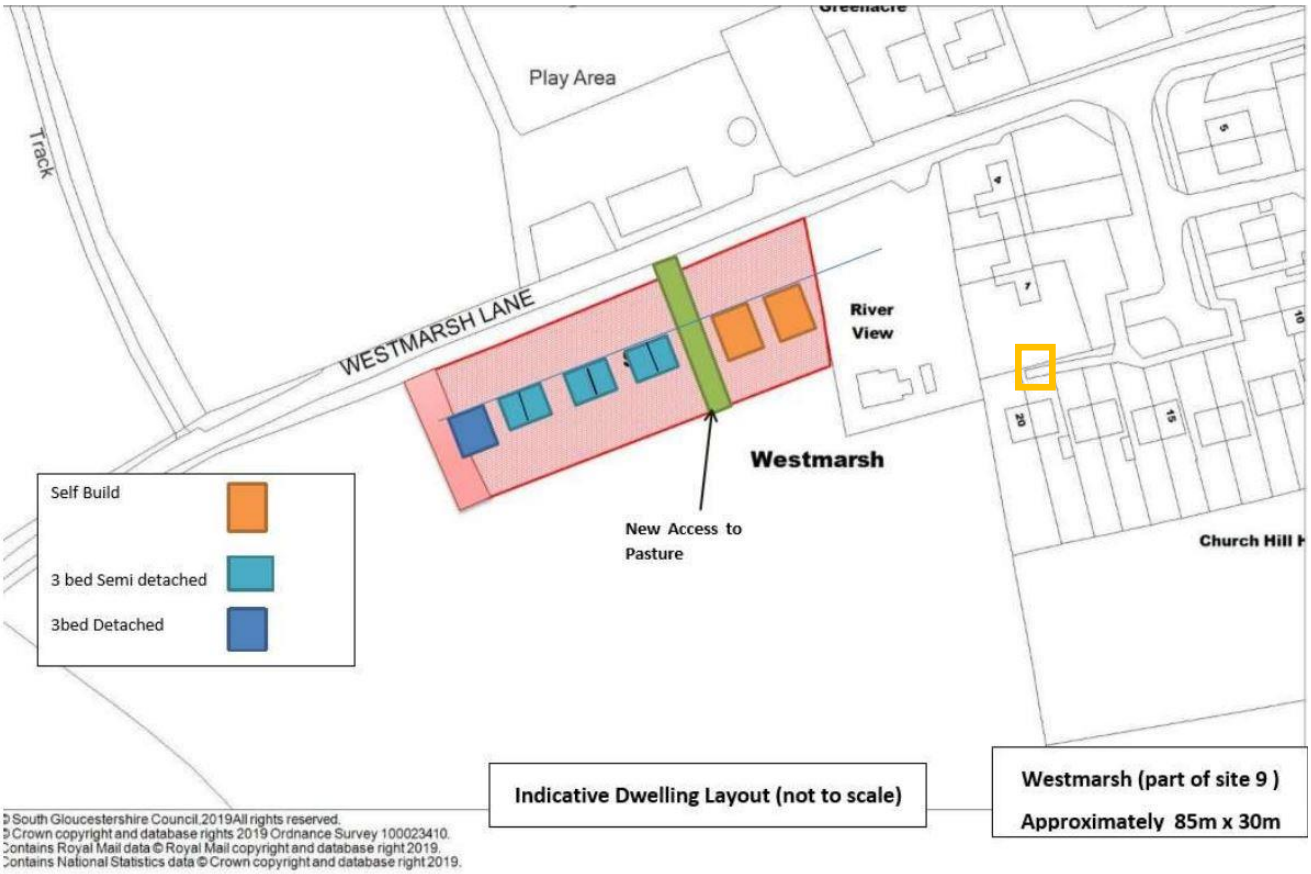

Figure 5: Westmarsh Lane (formerly part of Site 9) indicative layout: *Pump - locally listed orange*

4.2 Conservation advised that there were no major below ground archaeological concerns here, although the site may be near a possible deserted medieval village connected to the St Arilda's Church. These comments relate to the original whole Site 9, which extended someway up the hill towards the church. The archaeological comment (appendix 1) suggested heritage impact would be acceptable in principle with a reduction in the site area, and a watching brief condition. The nearest listed building is the Anchor Inn, which is separated from the site by considerable residential development. There is no significant impact on Anchor Inn from development of the site. The locally listed pump accessed via the cul-de-sac on Westmarsh Lane is separated from the site by existing residential development.

4.2.1 Conservation comments also considered the design and layout best suited to the site in its' reduced format (referred to as "Westmarsh Lane" to avoid confusion), and advised against the development proceeding too far along Westmarsh Lane or presenting a middle-distance view of housing close-packed together. It was suggested that development could go further back into the field on the Westmarsh Lane site, but this is something the NPSG wish to avoid, in line with the Village Character Assessment, which guides development to continue the dwellings fronting existing lanes format. As this part of Westmarsh Lane leads out into the countryside, it is appropriate that development on it transitions from the 'Vintage Village' of Westmarsh Lane at the junction with Church Hill, to a 'Leafy Lane' with trees and hedgerow retained and planted to the roadside and the

built form outline softened by soft landscaping and adequate separation of buildings. The proposed access to pasture in the middle of the site will assist with the visual appearance of development on the site, and the development brief will specify semi-detached dwellings with adequate spacing and the retention of trees on site in order to maintain more distant views of the development as nestled within a green setting.

4.2.2 With the proposed layout and the reduction of Site 9's original length along Westmarsh Lane, the scale and visual impact is considered acceptable in terms of village character and maintaining the openness of the green belt at this location. With the removal of a significant section of the site that extended up the hill towards the church, the impact on views of the church and its setting is considered acceptable by the conservation section of the LPA. A watching brief condition will be required in the development brief in order that any archaeology discovered during future construction works can be recorded.

Figure 6: Approximate visual impact of Westmarsh Lane (reduced Site 9): from LPA advice.

Figure 7: Church Hill West (was Site 8)

4.3 The Conservation Section have indicated they have serious concerns about this site, and the potential visual impact on the historic site and setting of the Grade 2* listed St Arilda's Church. They state:

"From the main road running through the village at points near the village pub, the buildings either side of the street frame an important view up towards the church, which is viewed in isolation high above the village. In this view, directly below the church is the gable of Churchill House (who's garden forms site 8). The garden of Churchill House is higher than the house, rising further to the south. It is clear therefore that any new housing on this site would be higher and compete in these views of the church. Similarly, in views of the church from Westmarsh Lane, the open countryside setting would be eroded, and development would be visible in a much higher position on the hill. In my opinion the erosion of this sense of open space around the church would be harmful to its significance."

4.3.1 Further consideration of the heritage impact on Site 8, Church Hill West, indicates that development here is not acceptable in terms of heritage impact. The AECOM Report's initial suggestion that heritage impact could be mitigated therefore has been found on closer inspection to be misplaced: mitigation is not possible and development should be avoided in order to maintain the setting of the church, which is a crucial aspect of its heritage value.

Site to be removed as an allocation in the Oldbury NDP.

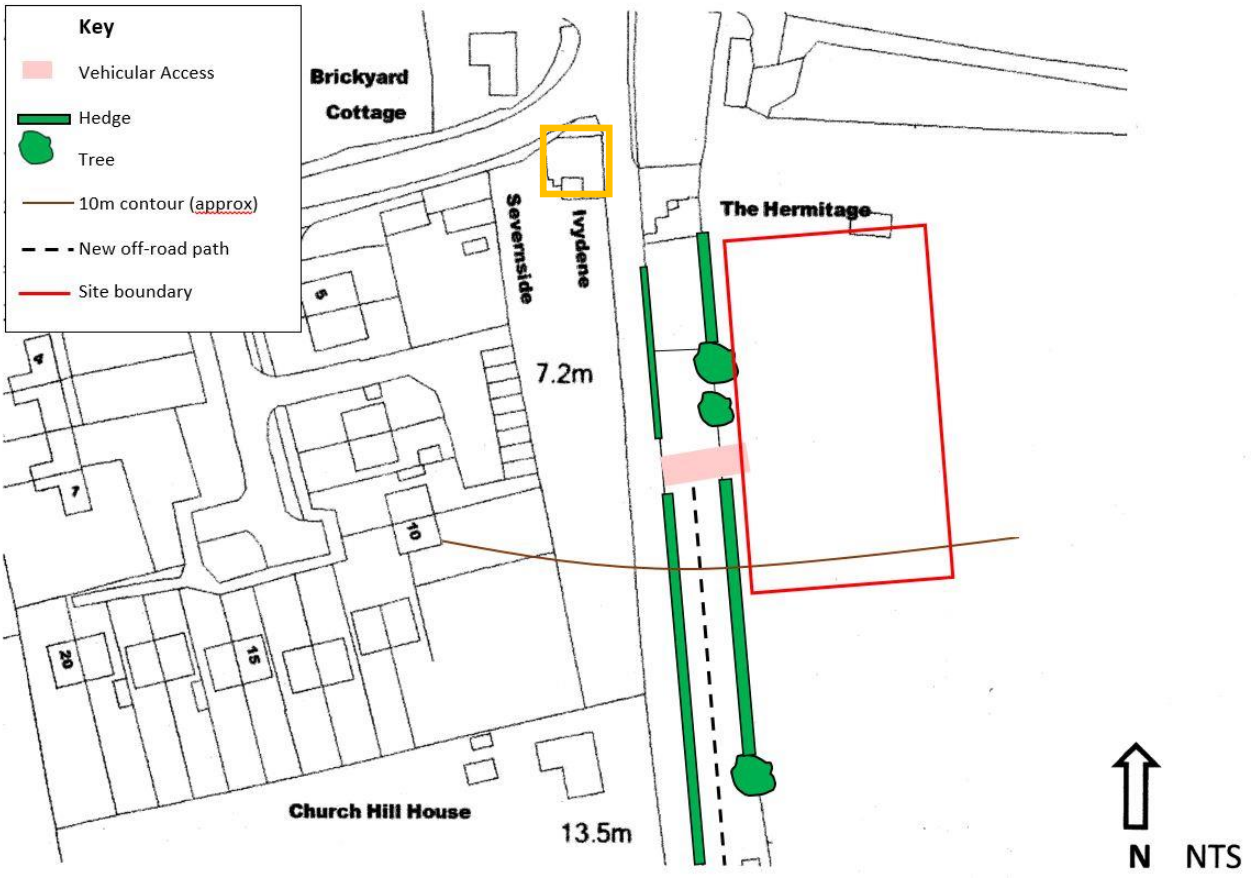

Figure 8: Church Hill East (formerly part of Site 7) revised indicative layout: *Ivydene locally listed*

4.4 The Conservation section of the LPA had the following concerns about this site:

"*There is a risk of development in this area being visible above the existing settlement and encroaching up the hill towards both the Rectory and Church, eroding the sense of isolation and separation between the historic buildings and the village. This is likely to be more perceptible in longer distance views from Picked Moor Lane and Kington Lane where the church and rectory can be seen on the hill (in some views together). In addition to this, access into the site would appear to be constrained heavily by the different levels, the alignment of the road and the existing hedges and vegetation that are an important part of the character of Church Hill. Removal of extensive stretches of hedge for visibility splays, an overly engineered access into the site, and the potential need for a safe walking route into the village would likely be very harmful to the character of the village.*"

4.4.1 Ivydene, a locally listed dwelling is in reasonable proximity to the site, but potential impact on this asset is not significant. This assessment is based on the existing two storey residential development at The Hermitage lying between the asset and the site, and the retention of hedges and the Lagger further maintaining the setting of Ivydene. A site visit and fieldwork in the surrounding environs confirmed that the proposed siting of the Church Hill East Site would potentially impact on views of St Arilda's Church and thus its setting. It was felt however, that a review of the site allocation proposals offered remedies to this potential impact and revised proposals are shown in figure 8. The location of the site has been moved further downhill, and layout details will specify that to the south

of the access lane development shall only be single storey bungalows with enhanced mobility standards, and that the footprint of these dwellings will not extend beyond the 10m contour. The development brief will specify that a visual impact assessment will be needed for any development proposals, with particular regard to impact on St Arilda's Church.

4.4.2 Figure 9 below shows a glimpsed view of the site from the footpath leading east from the Anchor Inn, with the Church on the hill behind it. Proposed development is shown in red on the photo – indicative only. Generally in the immediate village, views of the Church are heavily constrained by trees and other vegetation from roads and paths, particularly in the summer. Longer range views of the church will not be impacted by development keeping ridgelines well below the 20m contour, as it is located above the 35m contour, with a spot height of 40m. Figure 10 shows contours in relation to the Church and this site.

Figure 9: View of Church Hill East site from Footpath with approximate visual impact indicated. *The 20m contour follows the southern boundary of the field.*

4.4.3 The revised layout for this site makes it clear that apart from an access way from Church Hill, the existing hedges and Lagger will be retained. A short service drive will lead to dwellings, set at the back of the existing trees and hedgerow to the east of the Lagger. This will take in level differences between the road and site, as well as retaining most of the vegetation that gives Church Hill its character. The Lagger is also proposed to offer an off-road route up towards the school from the access lane, as a benefit to the wider community. Although conservation comments about the need for a safe walking route into the village for the site are noted, this is already a bigger issue for the school further up Church Hill. Church Hill is now a 20mph zone, and as part of this development,

wider improvements to Church Hill for pedestrian safety within a shared access environment should be made. This would provide a safer walking environment for the school where there was no footway or the new footpath and retain the existing hedgerow. As discussed in the Oldbury Village Character Assessment, the character of the lanes in Oldbury would be spoilt with the addition of footways. Thus safe access for residents on this development needs to be provided within the context of shared use of Church Hill.

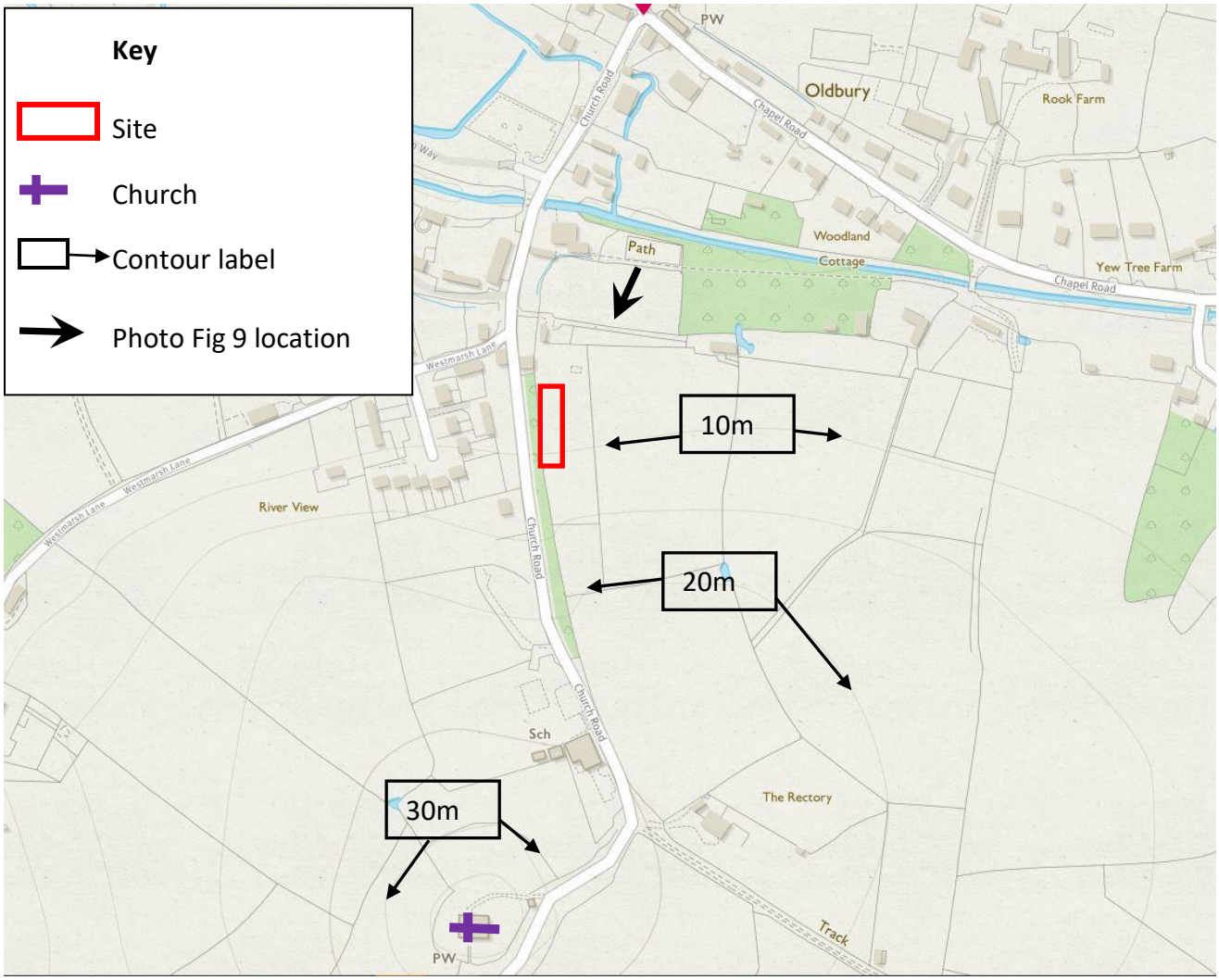

Figure 10: Relative heights of St Arilda's Church and revised Church Hill East Site

Greenbelt Policy Issues

5.1 The Bristol Green Belt is currently under review within South Gloucestershire, as part of the work on the New Local Plan. The NPPF 2019 (para 136) allows neighbourhood plans to make minor changes to the green belt in the neighbourhood area if the strategic planning process has established a need for review of the green belt. The LPA has supported the principle of minor adjustment to the green belt if necessary in Oldbury, and so the caution against any potential allocation in the AECOM Site Assessment can now be amended in principle.

5.2 The preferred option for development was for it to be undertaken on several small sites that followed the existing form of the village. A form described in the Village Character Assessment as a dispersed settlement with development fronting several lanes that intersect at the centre of the village. Site allocations within the current green belt boundary offers a more satisfactory dispersal of new housing among several small sites, and keep each site small and in scale with the existing village character. The shortlisted sites within the green belt are all within the top 5 ranking for lower flood risk, and indeed the green belt covers much of the higher land in the village. Sites 7 and 9 were both within the green belt, and with the allocation of only a small part of each of these sites in the neighbourhood plan, the required alteration to the green belt is minor and suited to the degree of alteration the NPPF allows neighbourhood plans to make in specific cases.

5.3 The new NPPG (para 145) also states that affordable housing for local need within the green belt, and limited infilling in villages, can be acceptable green belt development in some circumstances. Thus the revised NPPF now offers support for the limited site allocations in the green belt in the Oldbury Neighbourhood Plan, that the AECOM Report did not feel able to recommend.

References:

Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment September 2017 JPA Consulting

Oldbury Site Assessment May 2018 AECOM

Advice from South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) Conservation Team Jan 2019 (by email)

Archaeological advice from SGC Conservation Team Nov 2018 (by email)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019

Historic England – 'The Setting of Heritage Assets' 2nd Edn 2017

Historic England – 'Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic Environment' 2018

Historic England – 'The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans' 2015

https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/ accessed 1st August 2019

Oldbury Village Character Assessment 2018

Oldbury NDP – in progress

www.megalithic.co.uk accessed 1st August 2019

Appendix 1: Comments from South Gloucestershire Council

South Gloucestershire Council – Specialist advice on built heritage issues on draft Oldbury on Severn Neighbourhood Plan January 2019

In response to your request at our meeting of 14th January, our Planning Conservation Officer has conducted a site visit and looked through the draft NDP for Oldbury and would make the following observations:

- Policy 11 focuses on Local Heritage Assets but overlooks designated heritage assets which carry greater weight in the planning system, there being a statutory duty on LPAs to give great weight to preserving the asset or its setting. The document should include a list of the designated assets, not just the non-designated ones.

- There is no Local List SPD 2018 – the adopted Local List SPD is Feb 2008

- Site Allocation Church Road (Site 8). Having viewed the site from various vantage points, I would concur with previous conservation advice on the potential allocation of this site. *Development on site 8 would be prominently visible in views from and towards the church. From the main road running through the village at points near the village pub, the buildings either side of the street frame an important view up towards the church, which is viewed in isolation high above the village. In this view, directly below the church is the gable of Churchill House (who's garden forms site 8). The garden of Churchill House is higher than the house, rising further to the south. It is clear therefore that any new housing on this site would be higher and compete in these views of the church. Similarly, in views of the church from Westmarsh Lane, the open countryside setting would be eroded, and development would be visible in a much higher position on the hill. In my opinion the erosion of this sense of open space around the church would be harmful to its significance. Development on this site is also in the direct line of view from outside the north porch of the church. The north porch is the main entrance and exit point and (along with the tower) forms the only surviving fifteenth century parts of the building, (the remainder rebuilt in 1899). The views over the village and Levels from this point are of great significance. There is planting around the churchyard and this screens the school quite well, however the planting is sparse in some areas and particularly so in views towards the site. Whilst the rooftops of housing beyond the site are visible, development of this higher land would elevate built form higher than any of the other housing in the village. In my opinion this would harm the setting of the church site, undermining the sense of separation from the village.* I would also make the observation that views from the public footpath leading to the yacht club also allow a greater appreciation of the church in its isolated, elevated position, dominating the village below. The school and rectory are unobtrusive and there is no discernible evidence of the encroachment of housing into the setting of the church. Development within this site would, therefore, be harmful and there is, therefore, an in-principle objection from a heritage perspective.

- Site Allocation Westmarsh Lane (Site 9). The area now being considered is reduced from that previously assessed and is now limited to a narrow strip fronting the roadside. The site sits alongside the 1920s housing which itself is set quite deep from the lane. Riverview is also set back from the Lane with its rear gardens cut into the natural slope of the land, this

area along the Lane historically being a clay pit. From Westmarsh Lane, the land rises steeply up to the church which is seen against the skyline, with the tower and roof rising above the trees within the churchyard. From further afield, on the Severn Way footpath to the sailing club, the church is much more visible on the hill, distinct from the village and with an apron of trees, hedges and the open field of Site 9 below it. The roofs of Riverview and the 20th century housing to the east are visible through the trees (not in leaf), nestling at the base of the hill. In the immediate foreground are the single storey structures associated with the playing fields and the business adjacent to Cowhill Wharf Rhine. From the north side of the church tower looking towards the site, the playing fields are visible through the churchyard vegetation, as is the uppermost section of the open field of Site 9. Due to the topography and vegetation, Riverview and other buildings along the lane are largely out of sight. There may be potential for a limited amount of development in this roadside location but further assessment of the inter-visibility and co-visibility of development along this Lane with the Church would need to be carried out to inform the design, layout and quantum that would avoid harming the setting and views to/from the church. In this respect, development should not extend too far to the west to avoid housing obscuring views of the field and hillside on which the church is positioned, especially in views from the Severn Way. There **might** be scope to make better use of the depth of the site compared to Riverview, bringing the houses closer to the lane, perhaps as paired cottages set perpendicular to the lane to reduce the pressure on extending too far west. They should also avoid development creating a solid block when viewed from the Severn Way which is the problem with the linear, close packed development to the east. There needs to be a sense of openness, informality and permeability at the edge of the village, something which is not achieved with tightly packed detached dwellings set in a linear fashion along the Lane. The policy suggests 'custom builds' accessed from their own driveway or a shared drive which would imply large buildings on large plots - this could push them too far to the west so the form/scale/layout needs careful consideration in addition to quantum. I would suggest that development not extend beyond the area in red below which would reduce the risk of development appearing to stretch out beyond the village. This would roughly equate to the terrace of 4 houses to the east in terms of plot sizes (including off-street parking and good-sized front and rear gardens.

This would correspond roughly with the area shown below:

- Site Allocation Church Hill East (site 7). This area of land occupies rising fields on the east side of Church Hill. It is not an area that has a direct visual connection with the church but it does form part of the hillside on which it is positioned and is experienced as one leaves the village heading up to the church and, conversely, as one leaves the church heading down to the village . From Church Hill, the field is set behind a double hedge and it is set above the level of the road, with the land rising up towards the Rectory (locally listed). There is a risk of development in this area being visible above the existing settlement and encroaching up the hill towards both the Rectory and Church, eroding the sense of isolation and separation between the historic buildings and the village. This is likely to be more perceptible in longer distance views from Picked Moor Lane and Kington Lane where the church and rectory can be seen on the hill (in some views together). In addition to this, access into the site would appear to be constrained heavily by the different levels, the alignment of the road and the existing hedges and vegetation that are an important part of the character of Church Hill. Removal of extensive stretches of hedge for visibility splays, an overly engineered access into the site, and the potential need for a safe walking route into the village would likely be very harmful to the character of the village. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I would not recommend this site be considered for housing.

Archaeology Comments from South Gloucester Council: Our initial archaeological comments for all the sites are set out below to inform your report on the same basis that you are using the other conservation comments ie we are happy for officer comments to be taken into account in any further work undertaken on heritage assessment but feel these were not provided to be published as evidence base in themselves. A final point made by the conservation team is that their comments

were on specific sites as requested by ourselves and therefore sites without comment may not necessarily mean that no heritage issues are present (however due to time and resource issues were unable to comment on all sites).

***Westend (was site 2)**: I have grave concerns about the impact to the setting of the scheduled monument with any development in this area. Currently, I hold the opinion that development would amount to substantial harm to the setting of this scheduled monument and would be opposed. At this stage design and screening cannot be used as a method for offsetting harm as the creation of screening may, in itself, be harmful to the setting of the monument, whose significance likely relies on the openness and visibility to, from and across it. Development would likely impact upon this. As the Iron Age ramparts survive in their best form directly south of this proposed site, the impact would be upon the most visually significant part of the site. The only real option here would be for the applicants/allocators to commission a setting assessment by a professional heritage company who could properly assess the harm. Until then, this area cannot be allocated.*

***Westend Lane (was Site 13):** I am far less concerned with the impact to the setting of the scheduled monument in this location as the western extent of the monument has been eroded and is screened by existing housing. However, the Historic Environment Record indicates that this is the general area for the location of the Medieval manor house of Oldbury. I don't think this necessarily precludes allocation, but it has to be warned that any planning application will likely require pre-determination assessment and parts of the site may need to be redesigned or avoided to ensure protection of the archaeology.*

***Westmarsh Lane (was site 9) and Church Road East (was site 7) and Church Road West (was site 8):** I have no major below ground concerns for archaeology here, although they are near the possible deserted medieval village at St Arilda's church. Largely I think below ground archaeology could be dealt with through the planning system, although like Westend Lane there will likely be a requirement for pre-determination assessment and potential redesign/reduction in numbers.*

Appendix 2: Comments from English Heritage on draft Screening Report

From: Stuart, David [mailto:David.Stuart@HistoricEngland.org.uk]

Sent: 30 May 2019 17:01

To: Planning Policy <PlanningPolicy@southglos.gov.uk>

Subject: Oldbury on Severn Neighbourhood Plan: SEA Screening Opinion

Thank you for your SEA Screening consultation on the emerging Oldbury on Severn Neighbourhood Plan.

This is our first involvement with the preparation of this Plan since an initial consultation from the community in October last year (see attached). You will see that this relates to their aspiration to allocate sites for development within the Plan and our advice about the procedures which we recommended they followed. Generally with such Plans it is proposals to allocate sites for development on which our attention focuses and it does so here.

We note from the Screening Version of the Plan which you have sent that it proposes allocating 4 sites for development in Policy 1 and elaborates on the criteria for their development in Policies 5-8. While supporting information in the Plan identifies the basis for their inclusion and highlights many of the issues which successful development will need to take account of their in-principle suitability appears to be essentially derived from the AECOM Site Assessment Report dated April 2018. As this was produced before our advice was given to the community last autumn it is not clear how the guidance it refers to has been accommodated in preparing the evidence base for the Plan.

Though not submitted as part of this consultation given the role of the AECOM Report in substantiating both the draft Plan and your authority's SEA Screening Report we have accessed it from the Plan's website and used it to inform this response.

The Report is generally disappointing as there is no evidence that our guidance, which has been referred to AECOM for such exercises on many previous similar occasions, has been utilised. It is not clear how relevant heritage assets have been identified and an understanding of their heritage significance, and especially their setting, upon which the determination of the potential for impact or harm must depend, has not been set out. Reference to heritage assets relative to sites where it occurs tends to limit observations to essentially intervisibility and distance, and such considerations in themselves and in isolation cannot be assumed to be accurate determinants of potential for impact on heritage significance.

Regardless of whether sites in the Report have been selected for inclusion in the Plan, pp 3, 9, 12, 15, 21, 27, 39 & 45 of Appendix A apply the same approach where heritage assets

have been identified. The Site Appraisals might identify where there is potential for impact on the setting of heritage assets but do not elaborate on the form or severity that this might assume. On this basis it therefore cannot automatically follow that careful location and design is a logical response to the issues which have been identified and can satisfactorily avoid any *harm* to heritage assets, which, in accordance with the imperative to protect and enhance the historic environment set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), should be pursued rather than assuming that *mitigation* is automatically an appropriate option.

We also take issue with the manner in which heritage assets are identified as Heritage Considerations in the Site Assessment Proforma as this limits their identification to whether they are within or adjacent to a designated heritage asset rather than on the basis of their location within their setting. There is a risk with this approach in principle that relevant assets may be overlooked and necessary evidence omitted in conclusions on which proposed site allocations might be based.

This does not imply that the allocation of the sites in principle is unacceptable and that the criteria for safeguarding the historic environment associated with them are not capable of discharging that objective. But based on the supporting documents available we do not believe that the Plan is sufficiently well evidenced to demonstrate that the sites in their in-principle allocation will not harm the setting of heritage assets or if so that the safeguarding criteria identified are sufficient to ensure that harm can be avoided, or minimised or mitigated, to an acceptable degree.

However, we are conscious at the same time that the community has also, as we recommended, had discussions with your authority on the suitability of the sites originally considered and this exercise may have involved assessment of the proposed sites by your own conservation officers to determine their suitability and their accommodation within the Plan from a heritage perspective (Plan; para 4.1.3., p12). If so, it would be useful to document this approval as such information can legitimately help address the evidence gaps we have identified. If such involvement has not taken place it represents a straightforward and relatively quick means of doing so.

In the meantime, we are obliged to advise that we cannot agree that the evidence supports the view that there is no likelihood of significant environmental effects and that a full SEA is not required.

Kind regards

David Stuart

Appendix 3: Locally Listed Buildings and Structures in Oldbury

- Cart Wash Camp Road Oldbury on Severn
- Chapel House Nupdown Lane Sheperdine Oldbury on Severn
- Cider Press Fishermans Cottage Church Road Cowhill Oldbury on Severn
- Dutch Barn Oldbury Lane Oldbury on Severn
- Gate St Arilds Church Church Road Oldbury on Severn
- Ivydene Westmarsh Lane Oldbury on Severn
- Nuclear Power Station Oldbury on Severn
- Oldbury Memorial Hall Camp Lane Oldbury on Severn
- Pound House Camp Road Oldbury on Severn
- Pump West Marsh Lane Oldbury on Severn
- School Church Road Oldbury on Severn
- St Mary The Virgin Church Nupdown Lane Shepperdine Oldbury on Severn
- Stable Albion House Featherbed Lane Oldbury on Severn
- Telephone Box The Row Camp Lane Oldbury on Severn
- Wall Pound House Camp Road Oldbury on Severn
- Welsleyan Methodist Chapel Chapel Road Oldbury on Severn
- Wheelbarrow Cottages Kington Lane Kington Oldbury on Severn
- Workshop Church Road Oldbury on Severn