

SECTION 1 – ITEM 6

Application No: 21/P/0803/FUL

Proposal: Construction of a Scout Headquarters and associated works

Site address: Land to the west of Wild Country Lane, Long Ashton

Applicant: Long Ashton Scout Group

Target date: 17.06.2021

Extended date: 23.07.2021

Case officer: Jessica Smith

Parish/Ward: Long Ashton Long Ashton

Ward Councillors: Councillor Stuart McQuillan Councillor Ash Cartman

REFERRED BY COUNCILLOR CARTMAN

Summary of recommendation

It is recommended that the application be **REFUSED**. The full recommendation is set out at the end of this report.

The Site

The application site is located off Wild Country Lane which is at the western end of Long Ashton. The site is approximately 300 metres to the south of the main Weston Road in Wild Country Lane and approximately 130 metres to the south of the mainline railway bridge. It is currently an agricultural field of 0.3ha in size on the west side of Wild Country Lane and is accessed by a field gate from Wild Country Lane. The site is bordered to the north by hedging and a number of established trees and a grassed bank some 5 metres high.

The Application

Full permission is sought for:

- the erection of a single storey timber cladded Scout HQ building measuring approximately 22.6m in length, 14.5m in width and 7.12m in height.
- the proposed building would include a hall and hall storage room, meeting/activities room, kitchen, kit store room and wc facilities
- the proposed building would be finished in vertical timber cladding and an insulated sinusoidal metal cladding
- the building would be designed to incorporate rainwater harvesting, use air source heat pump and have a living wall incorporating bug and bird boxes on the west side elevation

- the relocation of existing access and creation of a tarmac access and parking area for 13 vehicles with an additional 4 overflow parking spaces on grasscrete

The site would also include land for outdoor activity space and would be landscaped. The application includes supporting information including several appeal decisions and details of alternative sites

Relevant Planning History

No relevant planning history

Policy Framework

The site is affected by the following constraints:

- Within the Green Belt
- Outside the settlement boundary for Long Ashton
- Within Landscape Character Area B1 Land Yeo and Kenn River Flood Plain
- Within Zone C of the NS and Mendips Bats SAC

The Development Plan

North Somerset Core Strategy (NSCS) (adopted January 2017)

The following policies are particularly relevant to this proposal:

CS1	Addressing climate change and carbon reduction
CS2	Delivering sustainable design and construction
CS3	Environmental impacts and flood risk management
CS4	Nature Conservation
CS5	Landscape and the historic environment
CS9	Green infrastructure
CS10	Transport and movement
CS11	Parking
CS12	Achieving high quality design and place making
CS27	Sport, recreation and community facilities
CS33	Smaller settlements and countryside
CS34	Infrastructure delivery and Development Contributions

Sites and Policies Plan Part 1: Development Management Policies (adopted 19 July 2016)

The following policies are particularly relevant to this proposal:

DM2	Renewable and low carbon energy
DM6	Archaeology
DM8	Nature Conservation
DM9	Trees
DM10	Landscape
DM12	Development within the Green Belt
DM19	Green infrastructure
DM24	Safety, traffic and provision of infrastructure etc associated with development

DM28	Parking standards
DM32	High quality design and place making
DM33	Inclusive access into non-residential buildings and spaces
DM69	Location of sporting, cultural and community facilities
DM71	Development contributions, Community Infrastructure Levy and viability

Sites and Policies Plan Part 2: Site Allocations Plan (adopted 10 April 2018)

The following policies are particularly relevant to this proposal:

SA2	Settlement boundaries and extension of residential curtilages
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The Long Ashton Neighbourhood Plan

The Long Ashton Neighbourhood Plan was formally 'made' by the council on 10 November 2015, at which point it became part of the statutory development plan.

The following policies are particularly relevant to this proposal:

LC1	Support and make improvements to the Community Centre and sports facilities
LC2	Retain and improve sporting and recreational facilities
LC5	Protection of Assets of Community Value
T1	Encouraging sustainable modes of transport
LHN1	Providing well designed energy efficient buildings and places
LHN2	Securing sympathetic village design in compliance with Village Design Statement

Other material policy guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (February 2019)

The following sections are particularly relevant to this proposal:

- 2 Achieving Sustainable Development
- 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities
- 9 Promoting sustainable transport
- 11 Making effective use of land
- 12 Achieving well designed places
- 13 Protecting Green Belt Land
- 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- 15 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 16 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Development Plan Documents (DPD)

- North Somerset Parking Standards SPD (adopted November 2013)
- North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment SPD (adopted September 2018)
- Biodiversity and Trees SPD (adopted December 2005)
- Creating sustainable buildings and places SPD (updated March 2021)
- North Somerset and Mendip Bats Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Guidance on Development: SPD (Adopted January 2018)

Consultations

Copies of representations received can be viewed on the council's website. This report contains summaries only.

Third Parties: 1 letter of objection has been received. The principal planning points made are as follows:

- Danger to pedestrians due to no appropriate pavement
- No street lighting increasing pedestrian danger from vehicles at night
- Increase in traffic to A38
- Unacceptable in the Green Belt allowing for future development of the greenfield site
- Better location would be next to the existing Guide Hut allowing the Scouts and Guides to be more aligned on the same site which has good well lit access route including pavement and cycle path

134 letters of support have been received. The principal planning points made are as follows:

- New Scout HQ is overdue and a much needed youth facility in Long Ashton
- A much needed resource providing activities that support young people's physical, social and emotional health
- Waiting list of almost 100 children
- This location is close to the village without affecting residential properties providing safe outdoor space
- Despite searches in the village for alternative sites none could be found due to price of sites
- Many children already walk/cycle within the village and it will be accessible just off the Festival Way
- Well designed and sympathetic building to area and Green Belt
- Should be an exception to Green Belt restrictions
- Proposal will help enhance ecology

Long Ashton Parish Council: "We feel this proposal is exceptional and represents a justifiable development within the green belt - it's also support by Long Ashton's NDP which recognises the need for a new local Scout facility".

Other Comments Received:

Girl Guiding Group – Long Ashton:

Due to existing Guiding activities, Scouts could not be accommodated for within the existing Guide HQ. Not enough space or car parking within Guide HQ site to accommodate another building.

Principal Planning Issues

The principal planning issues in this case are (1) Green Belt (2) the principle of community use development in this location, (3) landscape impact, (4) highway safety, (5) parking (6) protected species (7) non-designated heritage assets and archaeology and (8) drainage.

Issue 1: Inappropriate development in the Green Belt

This site is located outside the settlement boundary for Long Ashton within the Bristol & Bath Green Belt. Development within the Green Belt is assessed in two stages namely: 1) whether the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development, and if so 2) the harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development in the Green Belt is 'inappropriate' unless for a limited number of purposes (these are listed in paragraphs 145 - 147 of the Framework). Policy DM12 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) echoes the NPPF and also sets out types of development that are not regarded as being 'inappropriate' in the Green Belt.

Although the proposed development would be for a Scout HQ building with some associated outdoor activity, the proposed development is not considered to fall within any of the categories of development listed in the National Planning Policy Framework or Policy DM12 and therefore constitutes 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt.

Given that the proposed development does constitute inappropriate development within the Green Belt, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt from the proposed development is considered. Policy DM12 states that a material change of use which maintains the openness of the Green Belt is not considered to be inappropriate development provided that it does not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt (for example agricultural or equestrian use). Paragraph 133 of the NPPF indicates that openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt referring to both the spatial and visual effect of the proposal.

It is noted that the proposed development may be of a sustainable design to be finished in timber cladding to appear more rural with some limited additional hedge and tree planting proposed with ecological benefits, however the proposed building would be large and visually intrusive within the Green Belt given that the existing site is a greenfield agricultural land with limited screening. The proposed hedge boundaries and additional trees would only be maintained at 1.2m in height and take some time to become established, resulting in an highly visible feature from wide reaching views across the Green Belt and open countryside. Moreover, the large scale of the proposed building with the associated parking area would result in the loss of openness and encroachment into an undeveloped area in the countryside reducing the spatial character and the purpose for including land within the Green Belt. The visual and spatial harm caused by the proposed development within the Green Belt is not considered to be overcome by the design of the building and ecological enhancements proposed.

It is therefore concluded that the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development that would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it. In doing so, it should be noted that all the information submitted

with the application, including the appeal decisions have been taken into account in the determination of this application.

Paragraph 143 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that: “inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”. Paragraph 144 states that: “When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ (VSC) will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

In this particular case, the details submitted with this application suggest that the proposed development does constitute VSC for the following reasons:

- The Long Ashton Scout Group are a well-established scout group who have been operating within the village for 90 years. The Scouting Association is highly regarded and considered to be an important part of the community, providing an invaluable experience for local children and through the charitable role it provides to the community and the proposal is supported by the Long Ashton Parish Council
- Form Scout HQ in Providence Lane was insufficient to meet the needs of the organisation
- Use of other existing venues is unfeasible due to restricted availability
- Outgrown former Scout HQ in Providence Lane with a waiting list of 97 children
- The proposed development is supported by the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Plan and Policy LC1 in particular
- No other suitable sites outside the Green Belt have been found during the search for a new site
- The proposal would provide a fit-for-purpose building that would be truly inclusive and accessible to all. The new building will be designed to support the needs of young people regardless of disability, through the provision of suitable access and facilities which allow more to benefit through being involved in scouting.

As set out below, while the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Plan is supportive of youth facilities in principle, the application site is not considered to be a sustainable or suitable location for such a facility. In addition, it is not considered that sufficient alternative sites have been assessed that would be within the settlement boundary or on previously development land more accessible to a variety of modes of transport. Although it is noted that the purpose of the proposed development is to have a fit-for-purpose building that is accessible to all, it is considered that a more sustainable option would be for the new Scout HQ building to be within the curtilage of the existing Guides HQ, which would be substantially more sustainable in its location and provide a multi-use, fit-for-purpose site to both Guides and Scouts.

Given the above, it is considered that the proposed development constitutes inappropriate development that is harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes for including land within it. While details of VSC have been submitted with this application, for the reasons set out above, the details of VSC are not considered to outweigh the substantial harm of the proposed development to the Green Belt. In this respect the proposed development is contrary to Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM12 of the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1.

Issue 2: The principle of community use development in this location

Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy states that community facilities outside settlement boundaries will be considered only where such a need cannot be met within or adjacent to settlement boundaries and that they are well related to the community which they are intended to serve.

Policy DM69 of the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 permits such facilities outside settlement boundaries only where the site is well related to the community it is intended to serve, is accessible by a wide range of transport modes and to disabled people.

The application site is located within the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Plan area where Policy *LC1: Support and make improvements to the Community Centre and sports facilities* identifies a need for and supports development for purpose built facilities for young people up to 19 years in order to provide essential support for youth activities if sufficient funds and suitable locations could be found.

Comments received have suggested that the new Scout HQ should be located within the curtilage of the Guides HQ as a more sustainable option for the proposed development. This would provide the opportunity to have both organisations utilising the same facilities within a sustainable location that is accessible by a variety of modes of transport as required by Policy DM69. While it is likely that there is sufficient space within the Guides HQ to accommodate an additional building or extend the existing building to accommodate the Scouts, the Guiding Group has confirmed that it would not allow for such development within their site and there would be insufficient space for a building and associated car parking.

From the information submitted with this application, it is understood that there are no other available sites within the wider area that would be a suitable and in a more sustainable location for the new Scout HQ building. It should be noted, however, that the former Scout HQ at 60 Providence Lane has not yet had planning permission for the redevelopment of the site following its sale by the Scout Group. Given that this current application has demonstrated a need for a community facility with Long Ashton, any future removal of the community facility at the former Scout HQ site in Providence Lane may be refused.

Whilst being close to the village (approximately 250m from Pear Tree Avenue or 300m to Weston Road), the site is outside of the built up area of Long Ashton and on the west side of Wild Country Lane which is separated from the rest of the village. In addition, the site is not very accessible as a result of only having a single footway on the eastern side of the road where there is limited street lighting located on the western side of Wild Country Lane only with gaps of approximately 50m between each street light. Given the distance from the settlement boundary and poor pedestrian and cycle access, it is considered that the site is not well related to the community which it intends to serve in Long Ashton where anyone using the site would likely be reliant of vehicular transport rather than other more sustainable modes of transport contrary to Policies CS33 and DM69.

In conclusion, although the proposed Scout HQ building is supported in principle by the Long Ashton Neighbourhood Plan if a suitable location can be found, it is considered that the erection of a single storey Scout HQ building and associated works in this location

some distance from the settlement boundary with limited access to more sustainable modes of transport is not a suitable location for such a use and is therefore unacceptable.

In this respect, the proposed development is therefore unacceptable in principle and conflicts with policy CS33 of the North Somerset Core Strategy and DM69 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1).

Issue 3: Landscape Impact

The site falls within the open countryside, outside the settlement boundary for Long Ashton. Policy CS33 of the North Somerset Council Core Strategy states that development outside settlement boundaries and service villages will be strictly controlled in order to protect the character of the rural area and prevent unsuitable development.

Policies CS5 and CS12 of the Core Strategy and policies DM10 and DM32 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) require a high standard of design in all new developments. These policies require that development is sensitively designed to respect the character of the site and its surroundings, taking the opportunity to enhance an area where relevant. In particular, consideration will be given to the siting, soft and hard landscaping, levels, density, form, scale, height, massing, detailing, colour and materials of a development and whether these characteristics respect those of the existing building and the surrounding area.

Policy DM69 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) states that outside settlement boundaries facilities will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that the scale, character or potential impact of the facility would be appropriate in its location and relating to the community it is intended to serve.

In addition to the above, the application site falls within the B1: Land Yeo and Kenn River Flood Plain Landscape Character Area and is predominantly characterised as an open grassland landscape with cattle grazing with a peaceful, rural ambience. The overall character of the area is considered to be moderate where the overall landscape condition is declining. The landscape strategy for the B1 area is to conserve the rural pastoral landscape and enhance the declining elements and areas such as the hedgerows and pastoral character of the area.

The application site is a relatively large parcel of open agricultural land approximately 0.3ha in size, located to the west of Wild Country Lane. The norther site boundary consists of mature trees and hedges where the eastern site boundary is made up of a lower hedge boundary and gated access. The western and southern site boundary has no existing boundary treatment, however there is an existing public Right of Way (LA12/4/10) adjoining the southern boundary of the application site which is accessed from the existing gate to the agricultural field. The site is very open when viewed from Wild Country Lane and the Public Right of Way to the south where the limited screening from trees located to the north and east of the site gives it a strong open and rural character.

Although the proposed development includes some soft landscaping features, the scale of the proposed development, the large area of tarmac surface and the creation of the new site boundaries to the west and south of the application site, means that the proposed development would be a visually intrusive feature within the current open agricultural field when viewed from Wild Country Lane, the Public Right of Way to the south and wider

views across the open countryside. The proposed development would therefore appear out of character with the open rural setting, thereby resulting in an encroachment of development into the countryside and the complete loss of the pastoral appearance of the site which forms an integral part of characterisation of the B1 Landscape Character Assessment Area.

In addition, although some additional planting has been included within the proposed development, given the scale of the proposed development and time required for planting to mature enough to assist in screening, this would not overcome the landscape harm caused. The proposed 1.8m high mesh boundary fences to the west and south of the application site would appear incongruous within the setting for a substantial length of time for the proposed hedges to mature enough to reduce the visual appearance of the fence boundaries.

Taking the above into account, it is considered that due to the openness of the landscape surrounding the proposed site, the proposal would appear disruptive to the rural setting, and harmful to the existing pastoral landscape of the application site thereby resulting in a further decline in the character of the B1 Landscape Character Assessment Area. In this respect, the proposed development is contrary to Policies CS5 and CS33 of the Core Strategy, Policies DM32 and DM69 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and the advice within the Landscape Character Assessment SPD.

Issue 4: Highway Safety

The application site is on the western side of Wild Country Lane. The current access to this site, through a field gate has restricted visibility onto Wild Country lane due to its position on the inside of a bend and heavy roadside vegetation.

It is proposed to relocate the site entrance around 200m south of the road bridge over the railway. This relocation, while improving visibility in both directions, moves the access out of the 30mph zone and into the rural de-restricted national speed limit of 60mph. While this would improve visibility onto Wild Country Lane when compared with the existing access, the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) requires visibility splays onto roads with a 60mph speed limit to be 2.4m by 215m. Due to the sinuous alignment of the road, and vergeside vegetation, a visibility splay of only 2.4m by 43m can be achieved. This would be an appropriate visibility splay dimension for an access onto a road with a 30mph speed limit (Manual for Streets) and falls short of the required 215m visibility distance for an access on a 60mph Road. Although the supporting information suggests that the sinuous alignment of Wild Country Lane is likely to reduce vehicle speeds to 30mph or below, making a visibility splay of 2.4m by 43m appropriate, no evidence in the form of vehicle speed surveys has been submitted to demonstrate this.

The supporting information submitted with this application suggests that the 30mph speed limit terminus on Wild Country Lane could be extended southwards to include the access to the development. This would then ensure that the claimed visibility splay from the access would comply with the speed limit. However, in order for the 30mph speed limit to be extended, the road would need to be subject to a vehicle speeds survey to determine whether the current speeds are close enough to 30mph for the change to be effective; and compliant with the council's speed limit policy. The current traffic regulation order would need to be amended before any change can take place.

Concern has been raised over the access to the site being dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists where there is no lighting. From the submitted plans, it appears that cycle and pedestrian access to site would be via the footway on the eastern side of Wild Country Lane, however no details of a safe and appropriate crossing point have been submitted with this application. In this respect, in order to demonstrate safe pedestrian access, if pedestrian access is proposed from the footpath on the eastern side of Wild Country Lane into the site, details of a safe and appropriate crossing point, with visibility splays for pedestrians is required. Moreover, given the limited existing street lighting on the western side of Wild Country Lane, details to the enhancement of the street lighting is required. In the absence of the details of the crossing point and enhanced street lighting, the application fails to demonstrate safe pedestrian access into the site.

Given the above and in the absence of a safe pedestrian and cycle access crossing into the application site and no vehicle speed surveys that demonstrate that the 43m visibility splay would be acceptable in this location or that there would be an improved visibility, the proposed relocation of the access and limited visibility is therefore considered to result in a detrimental impact to highway safety and is therefore contrary to Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM24 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and the advice in The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

Issue 5: Parking

The applicant proposes to provide 17 car parking spaces including 3 disabled spaces. Spaces for 2 mini-buses is also shown. The site plan also shows that an area of overflow parking which would be surfaced in grasscrete. The layout of the site would enable all these vehicles to safely park and turn clear of the highway. This accords with the North Somerset Parking Standards SPD. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would provide sufficient onsite parking provision. The proposal is therefore in accordance with policies DM24, DM28 and DM69 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1).

Issue 6: Protected Species

The site offers potential to support a variety of protected species such as badger, bats, reptiles, dormouse and nesting birds. While no impacts are anticipated on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites from the proposed development, in order to ensure that the proposal would maintain and enhance biodiversity onsite, a number of measures would be required. This would include suitable planting, lighting controls, sensitive construction management including badger and bat activity surveys.

Although it is noted that some of the above requirements forming part of the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal could be conditioned, many of the additional requirements are needed to be submitted to and approved prior to the determination of this application in order to ensure that there would be no harm to protected and un-protected species as a result of this proposed development.

In the absence of the submission of the required details as set out above, it has not been demonstrated that nature conservation and ecological enhancements to the area can be achieved, and that protected species will not be harmed. The development is therefore contrary to the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and to policy CS4 of

the North Somerset Core Strategy, policy DM8 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and the council's Biodiversity and Trees SPD.

Issue 7: Non-designated Heritage Assets and archaeology

The proposed development is in an area historically characterised as 'late medieval enclosed open fields created by local arrangement and exchange'.

Policy CS5 of the North Somerset Core Strategy states that the council will conserve the historic environment of North Somerset, having regard to the significance of heritage assets. Policy DM6 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) requires that archaeological interests be fully taken into account when determining application. Policy DM7 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) states that when considering proposals involving non-designated heritage assets the council will take into account their local significance and whether they warrant protection where possible from removal or inappropriate change including harm to their setting.

There are no designated nor non-designated heritage assets within the application site, but it lies within close proximity to the Scheduled Monument of the Small Roman town at Gatcombe (less than 250m to the north). The Scheduled Monument comprises a small Roman town, part of an associated field system and earlier Iron Age remains. The Scheduled Monument has been subject to extensive surveys, evaluations and excavations over a number of decades.

Surveys to the south of the railway line (west of the proposed development) have revealed potential evidence that the small town extends considerably further south than previously anticipated. It is possible that remains of the wider field systems or associated remains may extend south into the proposed development area.

In addition, there are numerous find spots in the vicinity including Bronze Age flints and part of a polished stone axe (c. 280m to the east), a medieval finger ring and a 17th century pottery scatter c. 300m to the south east.

No previous archaeological investigations are recorded at this location, but geophysical surveys, evaluations and excavations have been undertaken to the north of the proposed development, as detailed above.

Given that the proposed development has the potential to result in the loss of any archaeological remains present, a condition is required for the details of a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording to be submitted to the LPA and thereafter implemented in accordance with the approved details. This is to ensure that any archaeological remains are preserved by record, in accordance with paragraph 199 of the NPPF and Policies DC5 of the Core Strategy and Policies DM6 and DM7 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan.

Issue 8 Drainage

Details of foul and surface water drainage have been submitted with the application and a condition can be attached to any permission granted to secure their implementation. In this respect, the proposal is in accordance with policy DM1 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and section 10 of the NPPF.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

The proposed development will not have a material detrimental impact upon bio-diversity.

The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017

The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 or 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. A formal EIA screening opinion is not, therefore, required.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The proposed development will not have a material detrimental impact upon crime and disorder.

Conclusion

The proposed development constitutes inappropriate development that is harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes for including land within it. While very special circumstances (VSC) have been suggested, they do not overcome the harm to the Green Belt caused by reason of inappropriateness and the other substantial visual and physical harm caused to the Green Belt. In this respect the proposed development is contrary to Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy and Policy DM12 of the Sites and Policies Plan Part 1.

The location of the site some distance from the settlement boundary with limited access to more sustainable modes of transport means it is an unsustainable location for a community facility. Although alternative sites have been assessed prior to the submission of this application, it is considered that insufficient information has been submitted to sufficiently demonstrate that there are no other more sustainable located sites within the settlement boundary of Long Ashton that would be suitable for the proposed Scout HQ building. In this respect, the proposed development is therefore unacceptable in principle and conflicts with policy CS33 of the North Somerset Core Strategy and DM69 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1).

In addition to harm to the Green Belt and due to scale of the proposed development in a site characterised as being a visual open and rural pastoral landscape, the proposal would harm the rural setting, out of keeping with the existing pastoral landscape of the application site thereby resulting in a further decline in the character of the B1 Landscape Character Assessment Area. In this respect, the proposed development is contrary to Policies CS5 and CS33 of the Core Strategy, Policies DM32 and DM69 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and the advice within the Landscape Character Assessment SPD.

In the absence of a safe pedestrian and cycle access crossing into the application site and of vehicle speed surveys that demonstrate that there would be an acceptable visibility at the site entrance, the proposed relocation of the access is considered to result in a detrimental impact to highway safety and is therefore contrary to Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM24 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and the advice in The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.

Finally, in the absence of additional ecological surveys, plans and details as required by the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal it cannot be concluded that protected species will not be harmed. The development is contrary to the requirements of the

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, and to policy CS4 of the North Somerset Core Strategy, policy DM8 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and the council's Biodiversity and Trees SPD.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE for the following reasons:

1. The proposal constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt that would be harmful to the openness of the Green Belt and conflict with the purposes of including land within it. No very special circumstances outweigh the harm caused and the proposal is therefore contrary to policy CS6 of the North Somerset Core Strategy, policy DM12 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and section 13 the National Planning Policy Framework, notably paragraphs 143-147.
2. The proposed development in this location some distance from the settlement boundary with limited access to more sustainable modes of transport is not a suitable location for a community facility use where insufficient information has been submitted to sufficiently demonstrate that there are no other more sustainable located sites within the settlement boundary of Long Ashton that would be suitable for the proposed Scout HQ building contrary to policy CS33 of the North Somerset Core Strategy and DM69 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1).
3. The proposed development for a Scout building and associated works within a rural setting within the open countryside, with an open and pastoral character, would encroach upon the surrounding countryside and erode the rural landscape and as such would be contrary to policies CS5 and CS12 of the North Somerset Core Strategy, policies DM10, DM32 and DM69 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan - Part 1 and the guidance in the adopted North Somerset Landscape Character Assessment Supplementary Planning Document.
4. In the absence of a safe pedestrian and cycle access crossing into the application site and no vehicle speed surveys submitted to demonstrate that the achievable visibility splay is acceptable in this location, the proposed development will result in a detrimental impact to highway safety contrary to Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM24 of the Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1) and the advice in The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges.
5. Insufficient evidence has been submitted with the application to enable the Local Planning Authority to determine that the site does not accommodate protected species and/ or nature conservation interest, or that any harm caused by the development could be avoided, or mitigated to an acceptable level. In the absence of details to the contrary, the proposed development is likely to result in harm to nature conservation including protected species and their habitats, contrary to section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework, policy CS4 of North Somerset Core Strategy, policy DM8 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan (Part 1), the North Somerset 'Biodiversity and Trees' SPD and the North Somerset and Mendip Bats SAC SPD. The proposals may also contravene the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended).