

Technical Note.

Project name: Staplegrove Road, Taunton
Author: Patrick Clark CMLI
Date: 16 March 2026
Project number: P25-2954
Reference: Landscape and Visual – pre-application note

1. Landscape and Visual Constraints and Opportunities

- 1.1. A number of key landscape and visual constraints and opportunities have been identified as part of an analysis of the landscape and visual baseline (including field work and desk study).
- 1.2. These have been used to inform the design evolution of the Proposed Development and the role and function of any mitigation that is included as part of the masterplan.
- 1.3. It is considered that notwithstanding the Green Wedge designation, there is potential for some development of the Site in landscape and visual terms, in accordance with the lower sensitivity and potential for development of the Site vicinity identified in the Somerset Landscape Sensitivity Assessment. This reflects the key considerations of:
 - Influence of adjacent development to the north-west and south and along the corridor of Staplegrove Road.
 - Containment from the wider landscape by the wider urban area, to be expanded through the Staplegrove Urban Extension.
 - Potential to provide extensive new open space along the north-eastern edge of the Site to maintain the sense of openness in moving along the PROW corridor and increase access to open land within the Green Wedge.
- 1.4. This would be subject to the following considerations (illustrated in **Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan**).
- 1.5. As the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment sets out, development to the south-east and west provides a context of wider settlement within the urban area of Taunton.
- 1.6. Whilst inevitably resulting in a loss of openness within the Green Wedge to an extent, any development should seek to maintain the distinctive character and identity of the historic part of Staplegrove, notwithstanding the coalescence with Taunton that has already

occurred; and the functional links that it already has with the wider urban area to the south-west and south, which includes Staplegrove Village Hall and Staplegrove Post Office.

- 1.7. On this basis, development should be set back from the northern and eastern edges of the Site, to preserve a sense of openness in moving around, to and from the historic part of Staplegrove, as experienced from the recreation ground and PROW corridor. Development focused in the southern and western part of the Site, associated with the existing development at Westerkirk Gate and north of Staplegrove Road; would reduce the physical and perceived interruption of the existing openness of land within the settlement along the PROW route; and set development in the context of the existing extents of development to the west and south. This would preserve the distinct sense of place and identity of the historic part of Staplegrove (**Green Wedge Objective 1**).
- 1.8. The extent of the set-back from the north and east should be governed by the evolving visual experience when moving along the PROW corridor northwards (views of Quantock Hills, Pomeroy's Farmhouse, the church tower and Kibby's House, in that sequence); and southwards (views of the Blackdown Hills). Whilst in terms of **Green Wedge Objective 3**, this Green Wedge is noted in the Green Wedge Review (2025) to make only a limited contribution, the proposed approach would maintain long-distance views out to the hills to the north and south which provide a visual interrelationship between the urban area and distinctive features in the wider landscape (**Green Wedge Objective 6**). There is potential for a low, trimmed hedgerow to be re-instated along the PROW route to restore landscape structure whilst not preventing long-distance views out. There is also potential for the corridor to be broadened and enhanced through provision of a swathe of landscape accessible from the PROW, in accordance with published landscape character guidance.
- 1.9. This provision of open space to the north and east would occur at a point where the Green Wedge is most open, to the north of the woodland belt flanking the south-eastern edge of the Site. This would maintain a strong perception of an open break in the urban form (albeit reduced from existing) but importantly, providing increased public access to land forming a 'green lung' contributing the health and well-being for residents (**Green Wedge Objective 2**), as well as providing an increase in accessible informal recreation space (**Green Wedge Objective 4**).
- 1.10. In accordance with the Green Infrastructure Strategy, Strategic GI Opportunities, there is an opportunity to provide the identified Green Link along the western edge of the Site. This link would provide a direct connection between the open spaces at Hudson Way and Manor Road and thereby enhance links towards the open countryside to the north (**Green Wedge Objective 3**).
- 1.11. Vegetation reflecting that evident in the Staplegrove Road corridor generally and reflecting the wooded structure of the south-western side of the corridor opposite the Site, should be extended along the roadside hedgerow inside the Site, in accordance with Development Management Guidance set out in the published landscape sensitivity assessment, to reinforce the vegetated frontage to the roadway. This would reflect the existing canopy

vegetation in the vicinity, in both character and function: it would maintain a perception of moving from one residential area to another along Staplegrove Road, as is typical of the role of vegetation along the road corridor. Access to numerous dwellings from Staplegrove Road would also reflect the existing character of the roadway where there are many side-lanes serving dwellings and clusters of dwellings set back from the roadway.

- 1.12. In a similar way, tree planting around the northern and north-eastern green infrastructure corridors within the Site would provide a locally-characteristic softening and integration of built development; as well as providing a perception of distinction of character and identity surrounding the southern edge of the historic part of Staplegrove, as part of a neighbourhood of distributed focal features. This planting should be carefully selected for form and height and positioned to ensure existing glimpsed views through to the wider elevated landscape can be maintained. As part of this, locally-distinctive orchard planting should be considered as a means to provide visually-interesting, productive and diverse vegetation, whilst maintaining visibility across the landscape above canopy level. In combination with the potential for wildflower meadow planting in this area, there is potential for enhanced wildlife habitat connectivity (**Green Wedge Objective 5**)
- 1.13. Tree planting within the development will provide visual interest in the canopy and will reflect locally-characteristic structural vegetation within the settlement area. This distinctiveness of character within Staplegrove should be retained by enabling landscape structure to flow through development, including distinctive canopy trees. Notably, there would be potential to create a corridor of planting extending perpendicular away from Staplegrove Road, reflecting the pattern seen at Manor Road to the north-west of the Site, the PROW corridor to the east and either side of Hudson Way recreation ground to the south-west.
- 1.14. In addition to re-instating hedgerow along the eastern boundary, existing vegetation to the west and south should be retained and reinforced to provide a sense of softening and integration of built development. The existing hedgerows, and the distinctive mature trees at the northern edge of the Site, will require suitable built form offsets (subject to specialist arboricultural advice). The existing ephemeral pond within the woodland belt on the southern boundary of the Site should be retained as a feature of structural and visual interest.
- 1.15. There is furthermore potential to provide drainage features emphasising the legibility of the landform of the vicinity, reflecting the pattern of north-south drainage that is evident across the wider area. This is notably the case in the eastern part of the Site where there is potential for SuDS features extending down the gentle valley form, complementing the existing pond to the east in providing legibility of the valley form.
- 1.16. In these respects, in relation to **Green Wedge Objective 6**, the Site currently has limited provision of the cited landscape features that contribute to landscape value. The current vegetation can largely be retained and reinforced – there is also potential to provide more of the structural vegetation and SuDS that would accentuate the legibility of the landform.

- 1.17. Overall, there is an opportunity to provide significant extents of new green infrastructure as part of a 'green lung' of accessible, structurally-diverse, multi-functional vegetated landscape, in accordance with **Green Wedge Objective 7** and the aims of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, in place of the monoculture of existing agricultural use. In accordance with paragraph 4.18 of the Core Strategy, this would continue to provide linkages from the urban area into the countryside but would provide greater potential for wildlife and leisure activities than the private agricultural field currently offers. This would also reflect policy SP2 which seeks the development of the network of blue and green infrastructure across the town; and principles set out in the Taunton Garden Town Design Checklist, notably in respect of legibility of the townscape, provision of parks and reflection of locally-distinctive character.

2. Landscape Strategy

- 2.1. The illustrative strategic landscape design has been divided into character zones with distinct functions and design approaches, described below (refer to figure **Landscape Character Zones Plan**).

2.2. Zone 1: Staplegrove Common

- A meadow grassland common forming the open setting to pedestrian corridor linking different parts of Staplegrove.
- Openness in the form of wildflower meadow.
- View corridors to key focal points including trees buildings and hills.
- Orchard trees to provide softening of built frontages but placed to enable views.
- Orchard planting acts as a focal point for existing and future residents to share.
- Create an inviting, visually interesting setting for users of the PROW Footpath to the east.
- Fruiting trees set within wildflower grassland provide structural and seasonal variety, as well as biodiversity opportunity.
- SuDS features including swales with associated riparian wildflower species, extending southwards towards an attenuation basin with permanent pond.
- Hedgerow planting along the western side of the PROW corridor to restore field boundary character.
- Positive frontages of built form to provide surveillance and sense of ownership, increasing perceived safety.
- Managed hedgerows to provide low-level softening of domestic frontages including car parking and other paraphernalia.
- Planting to soften frontage of built form to the south of Kibby's House.

- Indicative species include: Field maple, birch, apple, pear, cherry, willow, dogwood.

2.3. Zone 2: Westerkirk green corridor

- An informal semi-natural public open space corridor
- Cycle path set between orchard trees, providing opportunities for recreational walking and cycling route linking GI assets.
- Positive frontages of built form to provide surveillance and sense of ownership, increasing perceived safety.
- Managed hedgerows to provide low-level softening of domestic frontages including car parking and other paraphernalia.
- Creating an inviting, visually interesting setting for users of the PROW Footpath
- Fruiting trees set within wildflower grassland provide structural and seasonal variety (subject to suitable relationship with service corridors).
- Potential for edible edge of hedgerow to west, featuring fruiting species.
- Indicative species include: cherry, apple, plum, pear, damson.

2.4. Zone 3: Staplegrove Road

- Roadside hedgerow: retention where feasible, re-location where needed for visibility splays and reinforcement with canopy trees to soften built frontages and reflect role of existing trees along roadway corridor.
- Provision of inviting gateway character to pedestrian and vehicle corridors.
- Indicative species: Lime, field maple, hawthorn, blackthorn, holly.

2.5. Zone 4: Southern edge

- Retention and reinforcement of existing belt of canopy and understorey vegetation
- Riparian shrubs and wildflower species to soften and create distinctive character of swale.
- Retained ephemeral pond to south-west retained and shade-tolerant riparian wildflower species introduced to enhance structural diversity and sense of place.
- Indicative species: oak, birch, sycamore, field maple, willow, dogwood.

2.6. Zone 5: Entrance avenue and central green

- Provide a clearly defined tree-lined route into the Proposed Development.
- Avenue trees within rain-garden tree pits to act as SuDS features.
- A central, communal space with a sense of shared ownership to act as a focal space for the neighbourhood.

- Canopy trees on green forming focal points in view along entrance corridor and way markers from the wider development.
- Passive surveillance onto this space from the adjacent housing, reinforcing the activation of the space and enhancing safety.
- Indicative species: birch, oak, field maple, scots pine, beech, lime.

2.7. Zone 6: Lanes

- Inviting corridors leading off entrance avenue and central green to connect to peripheral landscape.
- Positive frontage of built form to small home zones and communal spaces.
- Occasional small street trees, where feasible, to create structural interest, guide the eye and movement and soften built frontages.
- Shared hard surfacing to create a pedestrian-friendly environment and reduce the influence of vehicular movement (subject to agreement with Somerset Highways).
- Indicative species: rowan spp, birch spp, ornamental cherry.