

These are some of the questions Somerset Cllr Sarah Wakefield raised (in black) and replies received (in red) after attending the Save the Blackdown Vale meeting at Stoke St Mary Village Hall.

Sarah is asking following up questions and will circulate the replies in due course.

The National Landscape area above and looking down on the Orchard Portman land is equivalent to a National Park and therefore should have a 2km buffer between it and any new urban development. This is (almost) the case with the Staplegrove urban extension and the Quantocks. Is this a correct assumption and will it be applied to the Orchard Portman land? **National Landscapes and National Parks do not have a statutory 2km buffer, but the landscape impact of any preferred allocation will be assessed and published as part of the next stage Local Plan consultation.**

The Local Plan should 'conserve and enhance the natural environment' and also 'protect and improve' it. This being the case, when will the landscape assessment relating to the Orchard Portman area be carried out? Will the results be published? **Any landscape assessment will be published at the next stage consultation alongside the Council's preferred allocations. The landscape impact work for all the sites we identify as preferred allocations will need to be carried out before the next Local Plan consultation in September 2027.**

What further opportunity(s) will there be for engagement with the local plan making process by those opposed to the inclusion of the Orchard Portman Farm land? When will they happen? **The draft Engagement Strategy sets out how we will be engaging with interested parties going forward. We will also be doing workshops for the larger settlements to consider the key issues, infrastructure requirements and sites being promoted in the larger settlements.**

Is it possible that only part of the TW owned land at Orchard Portman will be included in the Local Plan designations? As there are enough sites being promoted without the inclusion of this land to make up the required 75k homes is it still possible that it will not be included in the final allocation? **It is too early for me to provide you a definitive answer to this question. We need to undertake the detailed site assessment work to inform what is required.**