



# MARK COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

## 12 new affordable homes, Northwick Road

## RESPONSE TO OBJECTIONS

### 1. SITE SELECTION - 'ALTERNATIVE SITES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED.'

Sedgemoor District Council identified a number of possible exception housing sites in the local area through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). In addition Mark CLT advertised for sites in the Parish Newsletter and approached potential landowners who might have suitable land. See map below plotting sites considered.

Through this exercise 16 potential sites were identified and reviewed against the key criteria:

- Affordability
- Availability
- Acceptability (adjacent to village development boundary, accessible, outside flood zone 3, no overhead services, no legal constraints)

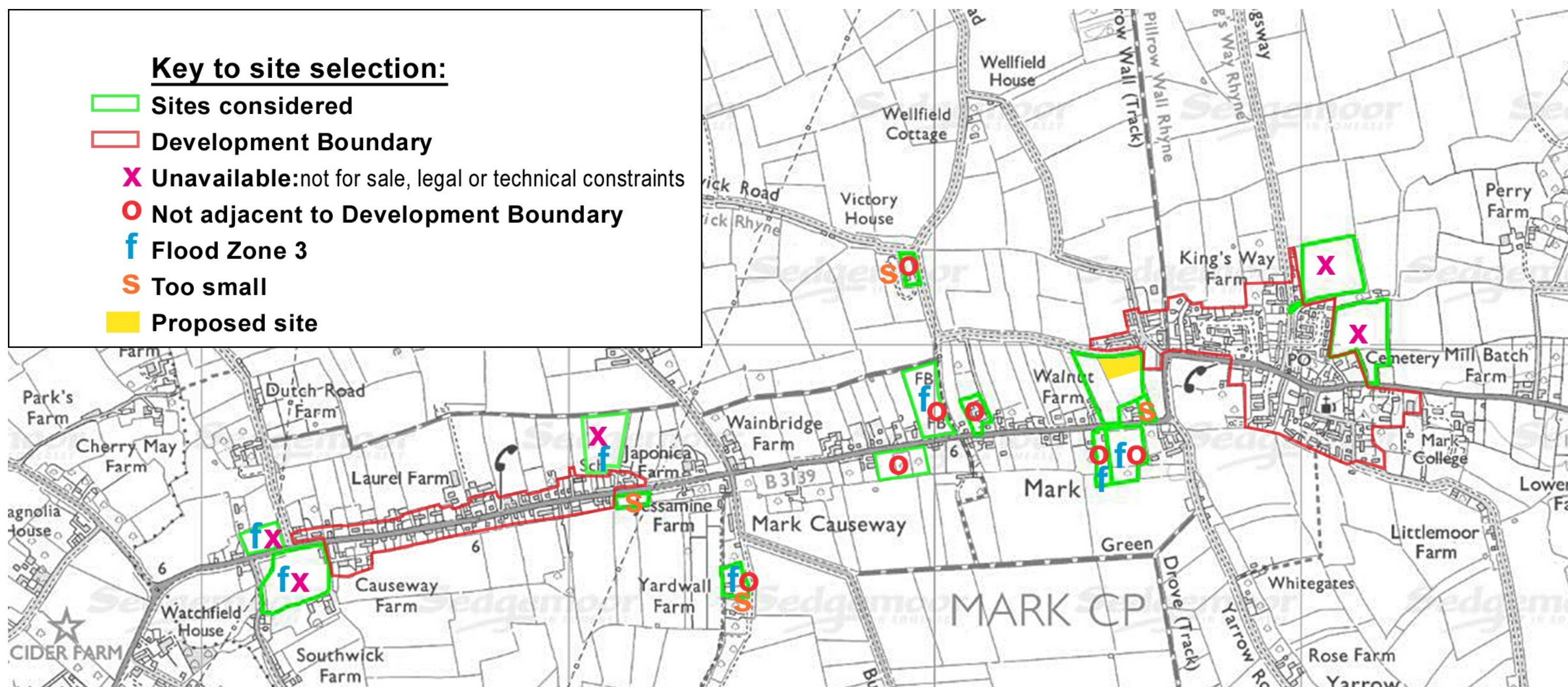
A shortlist of four sites were discussed with the Local Planning Authority and Northwick Road was confirmed as most acceptable in respect to planning policy.

The process of site selection and the site recommended by the CLT was shared with attendees of a public meeting in September 2015. A show of hands at this meeting showed a 70-30 majority in favour of this site.

**AT THIS POINT THERE ARE NO ALTERNATIVE SITES AVAILABLE THAT MEET THE NECESSARY CRITERIA**

### Key to site selection:

- Sites considered
- Development Boundary
- X Unavailable: not for sale, legal or technical constraints
- O Not adjacent to Development Boundary
- f Flood Zone 3
- S Too small
- Proposed site







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### 2. HIGHWAY SAFETY - 'NORTHWICK ROAD IS UNSUITABLE.'

Early public consultation identified concerns from local residents in Northwick and Vole Road that the road serving the site was narrow and has no footpath for pedestrians, and that the junction with Vole Road is difficult with restricted width and visibility. A further concern of increased risk from additional vehicles parking in the road was also raised.

Mark CLT have employed professional consultants and undertaken surveys and consultation with the County Highways Authority. A fixed traffic count and speed survey was carried by an independent consultant on Northwick Road immediately to the west of the site, and to the east adjacent to the junction with Vole Road.

The traffic count demonstrates that traffic numbers on Northwick Road are low - as would be expected on a relatively minor road. Traffic speed to the west of the site averages **27-30 mph** and at Vole Road traffic is typically moving at **16-17 mph**.

A number of mitigations have been proposed as part of the development including improving visibility at the Vole Road junction with maintenance of the verges and overhanging hedges that currently exist.

Generous parking provision (above the minimum required by SCC guidance) is included within the site to minimise the likelihood of off-site parking

**Somerset County Highways have reviewed the application and raised no objection with regards site access or wider highway safety issues.**

### 3. 'THE DEVELOPMENT WILL INCREASE THE RISK OF FLOODING.'

As part of the preliminary assessment of the site, a Flood Risk Assessment was carried out. The site is one of the few in the local area that is outside the highest flood risk category. There is a recent history of local flooding on Northwick Road and Vole Road and these issues were explored in consultation with the relevant drainage bodies.

The historic problems of local flooding were caused by lack of maintenance of drainage ditches in the area and consultation with the Somerset Drainage Board have confirmed that maintenance has now been carried out that should avoid this problem recurring. Going forward the site will be managed by South Western Housing Society whose main office is in Rooksbridge. SWHS have a detailed understanding of the need for maintenance and will ensure that the site and surrounding ditches are properly maintained in the future.

The surface water drainage for the development has been designed to provide a sustainable drainage solution that will include flood storage and flow reduction to avoid surcharging the surrounding ditch drainage system during heavy rainfall. The drainage has been designed to achieve an equivalent **Greenfield Run-off rate - i.e. creating no increased flow over the existing condition.**

**The Somerset Drainage Board have reviewed the application and raised no objection to the development of the land on the basis of drainage or increased flood risk.**

### 4. NEED - 'THERE IS NO NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOMES HERE.'

Figures from the 2014 Housing Need Survey identified that only 5% of local housing stock in Mark provides affordable homes (28 homes) and that no new affordable homes have been built for over ten years. The 2015 housing need survey identified 15 households with connections to the Parish in need of affordable housing for rent. The mix of homes proposed in the development reflects the needs identified in the housing survey.

The CLT, working with Sedgemoor District Council and South Western Housing Society have been able to obtain funding of over £1m to deliver a scheme of affordable homes on this site. **This funding will be lost if the project is delayed or does not achieve planning approval.**

### 5. VISUAL IMPACT - 'THE NEW HOMES WILL OVERLOOK HOMES ON NORTHWICK ROAD AND SPOIL THE VIEW.'

The proposals have been carefully designed to form a natural extension to the village with a mix of orientations and heights. The layout of the homes is low density with lots of space between homes leaving open views. A detailed landscape proposal including tree and hedge planting is included (see below) to screen the site and ensure the finished development will blend into the rural context.

The distance between the main elevation of Northwick Road and the new homes is over 57 metres (187 feet) **which is nearly three times the distance normally considered to be a minimum between frontages.**



## 6. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTED SPECIES

Consultation has identified concern over loss of natural habitat and potential impact on protected species.

The open fields provide foraging areas for bats and birds, and the surrounding ditches provide natural habitats.

A detailed Ecological assessment has been carried out and there is no evidence of protected species within the site area. The survey identifies the adjacent Willow Tree to the east of the site (outside the development area) as a potential roosting place for bats.

A detailed landscape proposal for the site has been prepared which includes generous tree planting and native species hedging to the perimeter of the site. These landscape features will screen parking areas and soften the visual impact of the development. The landscape planting will also provide new habitats and corridors for animals to connect with adjacent open fields.

**There will be no street lighting within the development.**

