

Wycombe District Local Plan Examination

Matter 10 – Development Framework – Marlow, Bourne End & Wooburn

Bourne End Residents Association & Hawks Hill Widmoor Residents Group (representation nos 1011 & 1012)

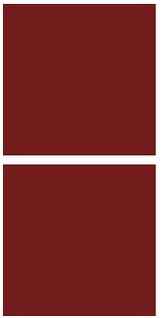
August 2018

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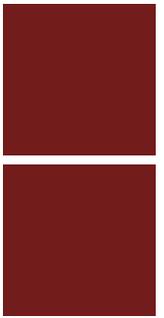
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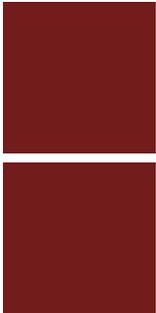
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1. This written statement focuses on matter 10.1 (D) which relates to policy BE2 Hollands Farm, Bourne End for which the question is: *'Are the following allocations soundly based and is there evidence that the development of the sites is viable and deliverable?'*
2. In relation to these questions it is argued that the allocation is not soundly based and there is evidence that the allocation is not deliverable.
3. The key arguments against the soundness of the Hollands Farm allocation have been set out in the Regulation 19 representations and in the written statement on Matter 6 relating to the Green Belt, which has already been submitted.
4. It is not intended to repeat these arguments here, apart from reiterating that it is considered that they are still pertinent and demonstrate that the allocation is unsound. However, in order to throw further light on the unsoundness of the allocation and that there is insufficient evidence of its deliverability and viability, this written statement focuses particularly on additional evidence now available, that was not available at the time of the Regulation 19 consultation in November 2017, namely:
 - the Regulation 19 representations submitted by the two land promoters of the Hollands farm site, namely Mr L Noe and Catesby Estates Plc;
 - issues raised by the Riversdale & Hedsor Road Conservation Area Appraisal, published in February 2018.
5. As a result this written statement focuses particularly on the two issues of access and conservation.



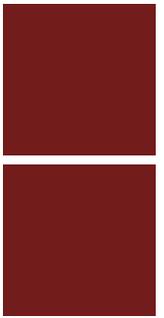
Access to the Site

6. Provision of access to a site is absolutely fundamental to it being both 'sound' and 'deliverable.' According to the Council's Local Plan policy BE2 Clause (2a), the site is to be served by '*a link road through the site linking to the Cores End roundabout and Ferry Lane.*' Clause BE2 (b) requires the provision of a '*redirected bus service and enhanced provision through the site.*' According to 'Manual for Streets,' streets on bus routes should not generally be less than 6 metres wide (p 72 paragraph 6.5.7). The link road is also intended by the Council '*to relieve the narrow Cores End Road into the village centre,*' (para 5.4.21). It is clear therefore that the road is intended to serve as a bypass and to take buses and large lorries.
7. These policy stipulations impose therefore a particular set of requirements for access to this site. In this respect it is important to note that neither of the accesses proposed by the Council are currently suitable to serve the proposed development and the significant level of development proposed, including 467 dwellings and a new primary school.
8. The access from the north from Cores End roundabout would come along Princes Road. Mr L Noe, the landowner of Jackson's Field, the northern part of Hollands Farm, submitted with his Regulation 19 Representations (ID979) a 'Highway Assessment,' by Cannon Consulting Engineers. This describes Princes Road as '*a local access road approximately 130m in length with a 5.5 m carriageway and 1.8 m footwaysA proportion of Princes Road is within the public maintainable highway with the western end under private ownership. The public maintainable highway extends approximately 60m from the junction with Cores End Road to just beyond the junction with Groves Close, with the remainder (approximately 70m) as a private unadoptable track.*'
9. It is clear therefore that Princes Road is not currently constructed to a standard where it could serve as a suitable access to the proposed development, with over half its length a



private unadoptable track. Along the stretch that is a private track there are residential properties in close proximity to the road and also very substantial screening from existing trees. To provide a 6.5 metre highway and 2 metre footways either side, which is likely to be required for the new access into the development site, would therefore involve major impacts on the amenities of the adjoining residential properties and significant environmental impacts through the removal of trees. However, no information has been provided by the Council on the exact alignment of the access; the amount of land take that would be required from adjoining residential properties or the number of trees that would need to be felled. Indeed, the private unadopted track is outside of the BE2 allocation as indicated on Local Plan Map 8 relating to Bourne End & Wooburn.

10. Nor is there any information available about who the owners of the private track are and whether the Council has established their willingness for the track to be upgraded into a link road carrying large numbers of buses, lorries and cars. Without this information the Council has not demonstrated that construction of the link road is deliverable, and so this crucial part of the allocation cannot be judged to be effective, and therefore fails this soundness test (NPPF para 182).
11. A curious feature of Mr Noe's Regulation 19 representations is that he is proposing the removal of reference to the link road in policy BE2.
12. Mr Noe makes a number of important points in his representations supporting the changes that he is seeking including that: *'The Transport section of the Policy contains a number of requirements that include the provision of a link road, a redirected bus service and enhanced provision through the site and off-site highway improvements, as required by the Highway Authority. These transport elements, however, need to be fully understood in terms of **appropriateness, deliverability and the overall highway benefits** they are intended to bring.'*



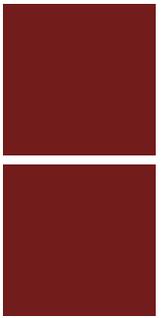
*'For the Hollands Farm Spine Road the full "benefits" are not clear since neither the **design parameters for the road** within the model **nor traffic flow and delay information** are known.'*

*'The modelled scenarios, with the inclusion of the Hollands Farm Spine Road, identifies that travel times on Furlong Road, Hedsor Road and Wessex Road are reduced due to the reassignment of traffic through the Hollands Farm site. However, the constraint and cause of the existing delays associated with Cookham Bridge remains unchanged. **The spine road simply diverts traffic from one link on to another.**'*

*'It is also **unclear whether the bus operator has been subject to any discussions regarding a service diversion.** However, in considering the provision of bus related access to new residential developments, a convenient walking distance to existing bus stops needs to be balanced against providing a new service route. An efficient bus routing strategy serving the majority of users (both existing and new) will be a priority **over a new and inefficient route.**'*

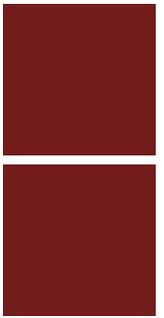
13. As Mr Noe is the landowner of Jackson's Field, which is the entry point for the new link road onto the Hollands Farm site, and the link road would then cross his land these comments raise fundamental questions regarding both the appropriateness of the link road and its deliverability.

14. As the link road is a firm proposal in the Local Plan, now at Examination stage, one would expect there to have been extensive discussions with Mr Noe regarding the provision of the link road across his land, what the specifications of the road are and what this would involve in terms of land take, and information about the agreement that the Council has reached with the landowners of the private track leading from Princes Road, which is to be upgraded to form part of the link road. It would also be expected that Mr Noe would have been made aware of the negotiations that the Council has been undertaking with the bus operators and



their requirements in relation to bus provision where this will cross his land. The fact that no such information has been provided or agreement reached with a crucial landowner means that the Council is unable to demonstrate that provision of the link road under policy BE2 is deliverable.

15. This is a fundamental omission as the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan states on page 90 that the 'delivery lead' for the link road across the Hollands Farm site will be the developers. It states that the cost of the link road is 'to be confirmed,' so it is clearly not currently available. It would seem, however, that it is the intention that the cost of the link road would be met by the developers as paragraph 14.3 states that the cost of site roads '*should be met by the developer.*' They presumably will also be given responsibility for negotiating with the landowners of the private track across which access will need to be provided. There is therefore no information indicating that provision of the link road is either viable or deliverable.
16. It would seem that the other land promoter of the Hollands Farm site, Catesby Estates Plc may also have doubts over the deliverability of the link road as they are proposing a 'primary movement corridor' leading to an access point on the narrow rural Heavens Lea on their 'Concept Masterplan,' which would not be necessary if the link road is provided.
17. The other entrance at the southern end of the site onto Hedsor Road is equally problematic as it consists of a farm track and is also narrow and would need substantial widening to form a new access into the development. There are residences either side, one of which is Southfields, which is described in the Riversdale & Hedsor Conservation Area Appraisal as being a 'significant unlisted building.' The Regulation 19 representations by Catesby Estates Plc, include a Masterplan Delivery Document (MDD) which includes at Figure 6 a plan which shows what would be involved in providing a primary access onto Hedsor Road. This would include taking a substantial slice of land from the adjoining 'Southfields' which would involve the removal of a number of trees and hedgerows which make a significant contribution to the character of the Riversdale and Hedsor Conservation Area and the

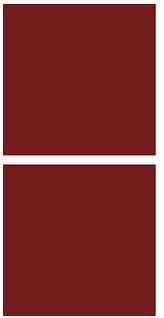


setting of this 'significant unlisted building.' The land required to make the necessary access is also outside of the site boundary of the BE2 site allocation as delineated on Local Plan Map 8 Bourne End and Wooburn.

18. Figure 6 in the Catesby Estates Plc MDD shows a simple T junction, where the primary access would be provided onto Hedsor Road. However, the Council has indicated on Map 8 that junction improvements would be required. However, no details are provided on the nature that these would take. Presumably, as the link road through the Hollands Farm site is intended to serve as a bypass from Cores End Road as well as serving 467 dwellings and a primary school, a major change in configuration would be required, potentially requiring the provision of a roundabout or traffic lights, and the simple T junction indicated would not be adequate. Provision of a roundabout or traffic lights, with associated road signs and lighting would involve very significant highway works, which would lead to substantial harm to the character of the Rversdale and Hedsor Road Conservation Area.

19. Given that the location of the access is in the Riversdale and Hedsor Road Conservation Area it is imperative that these details are provided now, as it is a necessary component of the proportionate evidence base. Once the allocation is made and it turns out that a significant negative impact would occur on the character of the Conservation Area, the Council could be faced with a choice of either damaging the character of the Conservation Area or refusing permission on heritage grounds and failing to deliver the allocated housing. This indicates why information on the junction improvements required is necessary to demonstrate soundness.

20. Another problem with providing access from Hedsor Road is that the access point is located in Flood Zone 3. The area in Flood Zone 3 currently includes the Hedsor Road where the new primary access would be provided, but also according to Figure 9 in the Catesby Estates Plc MDD, under the River Thames 100 year + 70% Climate Change Allowance Flood Extent the area affected would also include the first 100 metres of the access road into the site. As a consequence of this the MDD states that: *'As required by policy, to*

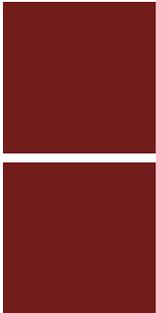


ensure safe means access and egress in times of flooding, a secondary access point is proposed which is outside of the flood zone. It therefore proposes a secondary access on Heavens Lea, which is shown on Figure 7. This secondary access which is shown as being 6.5 metres wide with 2 x 2 m footways, would go through the sensitive sloping hillside on the eastern part of the site where the illustrative layout in Local Plan Figure 39 is proposing no development at all but the planting of a tree belt. Providing an access in this location would therefore have a major detrimental visual impact. In addition, Heavens Lea is a narrow country lane with no footways, and adjoining hedgerows. Having a secondary access onto this road would require a significant widening of the road and footways provided, which would destroy the current character of the lane, and would introduce large additional volumes of traffic into this narrow rural lane making it unsafe for pedestrians and other road users.

21. The Council has provided no information about what would happen to the BE2 allocation in the event that it is not possible to provide the link road. Given the difficulties associated with providing both access points, the significant environmental impacts that would occur and Mr Noe's comments querying the need and deliverability of the link road across his land, this is evidently a real possibility. However, the Council has provided no contingency information. This is contrary to the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance which states that: *'Where the deliverability of critical infrastructure is uncertain then the plan should address the consequences of this, including possible contingency arrangements and alternative strategies.'* (paragraph 018 Reference ID: 12-018-20140306). The absence of any contingency arrangements means that the Council is unable to demonstrate deliverability and policy BE2 is therefore unsound.

Impact on the Riversdale & Hedsor Road Conservation Area

22. The BE2 site adjoins the Riversdale and Hedsor Road Conservation Area on its southern side and the access from Hedsor Road would be inside the Conservation Area. Policy BE2



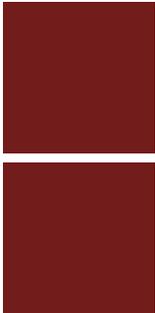
requires that *'Development of the site is required: 1. b) Not to have an adverse impact on the setting of Hedsor Road and Riversdale Bourne End and Wooburn Conservation Areas.'*

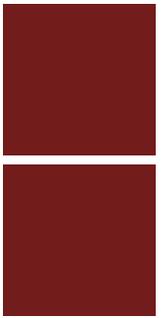
23. This is an undeliverable requirement, because not only will the development have a significant negative impact on the setting of the Conservation Area, but on the character of the Conservation Area itself.

24. This particularly arises from the access which as outlined above would require significant highway works at the junction of the link road and Hedsor Road, but would also result in a significant increase in traffic on Hedsor Road. The 'Hedsor Road and Conservation Area: Significant features and views' plan, which accompanies the Riversdale & Hedsor Road Conservation Area Appraisal (February 2018) shows several of the walls fronting the road to be 'significant walls,' and makes the following observations:

'Fronting Upper Hedsor Road are low brick or brick and flint walls. Some cottages have railings on low brick plinth walls (Roland Villas), others railings with no walling. The majority of railings are variants of the hairpin design. These low walls, mostly below a metre in height, define the edge of the road and bind the varied buildings of the hamlet together. They are a key element of the character of Area A, particularly in the various stretches with no or minimal pavements or verges,' (p18).

25. To the east of the proposed access into the Hollands Farm site, Hedsor Road narrows and there are either no footways at all or only very narrow ones. Some of the non listed 'other significant buildings,' also front directly onto the roadway. However, if the link road is provided an inevitable consequence would be a significant increase in traffic along Hedsor Road, especially given the congestion at Cookham Bridge, using it as short cut to Burnham and Slough. This would have a significant effect on the character of Hedsor Road, including its walls, as it would be likely to require highway improvements, that would adversely affect its character.

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26. The Hollands Farm development would, however, also have a significant impact on the setting of the Conservation Area. The Riversdale & Hedsor Road Conservation Area Appraisal states on page 2 that *'New development in the setting of the conservation area should take into account Historic England's publication Advice Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Dec 2017),'* (p2).
27. Advice Note 3 makes it clear that in considering the setting of heritage assets *'although views of or from an asset will play an important part, the way in which we experience an asset in its setting is also influenced by other environmental factors such as noise, dust and vibration from other land uses in the vicinity, and by our understanding of the historical relationship between places,'* (page 2). In this case the proposed development at Hollands Farm would have a fundamental impact on noise, dust and vibration as the new link road and its associated heavy traffic, arising both from the 467 dwellings and associated primary school and its function as a bypass, approaches and then goes through the Conservation Area. There would also be significant noise, dust and vibration during the construction of the new link road and the access onto Hedsor Road.
28. The draft Riversdale and Hedsor Conservation Area Appraisal, on which the Council consulted in the autumn of 2017, also identified significant views looking from the public right of way that crosses the Hollands Farm site, when looking towards the Riversdale & Hedsor Road Conservation Area. However, in the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal, (Feb 2018), these views have been downgraded to 'broader views.' Strangely, there are still two significant views looking towards the Conservation Area from locations south of Hedsor Road which would not be affected by the development at Hollands Farm. The setting of the Conservation Area on the south side of the road is detrimentally affected by the Flowerland retail development and associated car parking, while on the north side of the road there is a much longer line of buildings within the Conservation Area, a number of which are unlisted 'other significant buildings.' As the adopted Conservation Area Appraisal acknowledges Hedsor Road currently *'largely conserves its rural setting,'* with *'the fields com[ing] right up to the rear boundaries of the road frontage houses' rear gardens,'* (p6).



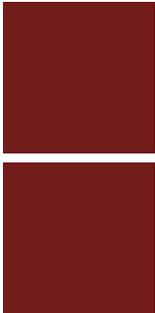
On Local Plan Figure 39 the proposal is to plant a tree belt along the rear of those properties in the Conservation Area on Hedsor Road, with residential development and the link road beyond. The rural setting of the Conservation Area would therefore be destroyed and the Conservation Area divorced from its setting. The indications are therefore that the important viewpoints identified on the Hollands Farm site, were downgraded, not on the basis of any objective evidence, but retrospectively so as not to conflict with the allocation of the Hollands Farm site for development.

29. Advice Note 3, which the Council refers to for guidance on setting, states that *‘For some developments affecting setting, the design of a development may not be capable of sufficient adjustment to avoid or significantly reduce the harm, for example where impacts are caused by fundamental issues such as the proximity, location, scale, prominence or noisiness of development,’* (p20). Given the scale of development proposed and the impact of the link road these comments certainly apply to the development at Hollands Farm.

30. Clause 1 (b) of policy BE2 is therefore undeliverable and the proposed development of Hollands Farm would cause substantial harm to the Riversdale and Hedsor Road Conservation Area and is therefore contrary to Government advice (NPPF, para 133) and the Council’s own Local Plan policy CP11 on the Historic Environment which states that *‘The Council will promote the conservation and enhancement of the Historic Environment of the District through:*

1. Conserving, and where possible enhancing, the character and appearance of designated and non designated assets...

2. Ensuring the setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets ...conserves or where possible enhances the character and appearance of the asset...’



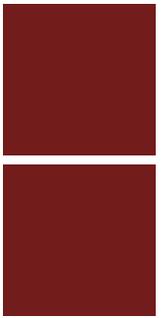
31. The proposal is therefore contrary to the Council's own proposed Local Plan policy and cannot therefore be the most appropriate strategy, and is not therefore justified; neither is the proposal consistent with Government policy, nor is it consistent with achieving sustainable development as the NPPF states that this includes '*protecting and enhancing*' '*our historic environment*,' (para 7). The proposed allocation is therefore fundamentally unsound.

Alternative sites

32. One argument that the Council has made is that there are no alternative sites, as the Council is already unable to meet its own identified housing need and other sites have been found to be unsuitable. This claim is considered very questionable and further comments are provided on this matter in Appendix A.

Conclusion

33. The proposed allocation of Hollands Farm for development is not soundly based, as it does not meet any of the soundness tests. In particular, to be sound the policy must be justified, which is that it must be the most appropriate strategy when considered against the reasonable alternatives. In this case this is clearly not the case, particularly as it is not possible to provide access to the site without significant detrimental environmental impacts. It has also not been demonstrated that the provision of the link road, which is the key to access to the site is deliverable.



Appendix A: Alternative Sites

1. One argument that the Council has made is that there are no alternative sites, as the Council is already unable to meet its own identified housing need and other sites have been found to be unsuitable. This claim is considered very questionable. For example, there is the Glory Mill site at Glory Park Avenue in Wooburn Green a large part of which is currently undeveloped. The Council has been seeking to retain this site for employment but it could potentially accommodate 110 dwellings. The site is currently subject to an application for 110 dwellings (17/06279/OUT) on which the applicant has appealed against non determination.
2. There are also other sites which have been put forward by landowners/developers at this Examination, some of which would seem to be subject to less severe environmental constraints than the land at Hollands Farm, and to which access could more easily be provided. Three in relative close proximity to Bourne End that would seem to merit further investigation are the land off Holtspur Avenue, Wooburn Green, (ID 1165); land at Old Moor Lane, Wooburn Moor (ID 0959) and land at Heath End Farm, Heath End Road, Flackwell Heath, which is located between Buckinghamshire College Group and the built up part area of Flackwell Heath (ID 0966).