

FURTHER AND FINAL COMMENTS FROM GREENS NORTON PARISH COUNCIL on
Planning Application reference S/2020/1376/MAO
Land South of Blakesley Hill, Greens Norton
Outline Application for up to 69 dwellings and access

Further to its communication of September 2020, the Parish Council wishes to **OBJECT** to this application on the following grounds;

- **Planning Policy principles:** The application is outside the village confines in open countryside and therefore contrary to the Development Plan which comprises the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan (SNLP) and the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS). Planning permission for a larger development in this location was refused under S/2015/0718/MAO and S/2016/1891/MAO for around 128 dwellings.

Even if this 'in principle' objection to the scheme did not apply, further objections are raised regarding the following issues

- **Unacceptable impact of additional traffic** on the village, and the A43 junctions
- **Unacceptable Impact on the landscape**
- **Archaeology**
- **No identified need for affordable housing in Greens Norton.**

These objections are expanded upon below.

Principle of development on this site

Paragraph 47 of the NPPF details how "Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

This is set out under Paragraph 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which states that: "If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

If these current proposals are to be supported, it would need to be demonstrated that there are material considerations sufficient, in accordance with Paragraph 38(6), to overcome any conflict with the Development Plan.

SNC's 2020 Housing Land Availability Study

(<https://www.southnorthants.gov.uk/downloads/download/13/five-year-housing-land-supply>)

demonstrates that the Council has an 8.26 year housing land supply. This figure demonstrates that the development plan is not absent, silent or out-of-date (NPPF - Paragraph 11) and as such these current proposals must have regard to and be considered against its policies.

The Development Plan for South Northamptonshire (relevant to this application) comprises:

- the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan (Adopted July 2020)
- the adopted West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (December 2014)

Although the JCS is over five years old, both plans form part of the development plan and the NPPF (paragraph 213) specifies policies should not be considered 'out-of- date' simply because they were adopted or made prior to the adoption of the Framework.

A review was undertaken of the JCS policies in accordance with the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) which requires local planning authorities to review a local development document within prescribed time periods. In respect of a local plan, the review must be completed every five years, starting from the date of the adoption of the local plan.

A report was taken to the Council's Planning Policy and Growth Strategy Committee on 22 January 2020 which identified that the policies in the JCS remain up to date and consistent with the NPPF, and it is on this basis that it was recommended they should continue to be given full weight for the purposes of decision making. Full details of the plan review can be found on the Councils website at <http://svc-sql-modg-01:9075/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=352&MId=3804&Ver=4>

The application site is located in the open countryside, beyond the built-up area of Greens Norton. Planning policy only supports residential development in a limited number of circumstances in the open countryside. With regards to the JCS these are identified in Policies H3 and in particular, R1.

Policy R1 – Spatial Strategy for the Rural Areas of the JCS states “within the rural areas of West Northamptonshire there is an identified need...for 2,360 dwellings within South Northamptonshire to be provided between 2011 and 2029. Residential development in rural areas will be required to:

- A. provide for an appropriate mix of dwelling types and sizes, including affordable housing to meet the needs of all sectors of the community, including the elderly and vulnerable; and
- B. not affect open land which is of particular significance to the form and character of the village; and
- C. preserved and enhance historic buildings and areas of historic or environmental importance including those identified in conservation area appraisals and village design statements; and
- D. protect the amenity of existing residents; and
- E. be of an appropriate scale to the existing settlement; and
- F. promote sustainable development that equally addresses economic, social and environmental issues; and
- G. be within the existing confines of the village.”

The proposal directly conflicts with B, E, F and G of the above Policy.

Policy R1 further states that “development outside the existing confines will be permitted where it involves the re-use of buildings or, in exceptional circumstances, where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities or would contribute towards and improve the local economy.”

Policy R1 further states that “once the housing requirement for the rural areas has been met through planning permissions or future allocations, further housing development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it:

- i. would result in environmental improvements on a site; or

- ii. is required to support the retention of or improvement to essential local services that may be under threat; and
- iii. has been informed by an effective community involvement exercise prior to the submission of a planning application; or
- iv. is a rural exceptions site that meets the criteria set out in Policy H3; or
- v. has been agreed through and adopted Neighbourhood Plan.”

None of these exceptions apply to this planning application.

With regards to the Local Plan, which identifies Greens Norton as a Secondary Village (A), the circumstances in which development outside the village confines may be appropriate are set out in policy LH1(2). These criteria are further expanded upon in policies LH2 – LH7. In this instance, a major housing development beyond the existing boundaries of the settlement, the exemption criteria are not relevant.

The agent in the Planning Statement calls Green Norton one of the most sustainable location for development in South Northants, this is clearly not true.

This planning application is a reduced version of two previous applications on a larger site. However, the reduction in site size and the number of dwellings still represents a significant extension to the village (around 140 residents to a village of 1500) and would be disproportionate and inappropriate to a Secondary Village.

Accordingly, the proposal is in direct conflict with the policies of the Development Plan and should be refused planning permission on that basis.

Unacceptable Impact on the Landscape

The Landscape Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application (LVIA) states that ‘the most significant effects relate to the higher sensitivity residential receptors overlooking the site (Falcon View and Benham Road) where visual effects are considered to be adverse. Although the nature of change will be high for transient users of the adjoining vehicular routes Blakesley Hill and Bury Hill), these receptors are less sensitive as the development will be viewed at speed while passing, and residential development is not uncharacteristic of the approach to the village from the west, where the existing settlement edge is already clearly apparent. The proposed mitigation planting proposed at the western boundary of the site will provide a softer settlement edge and will assist in assimilating the development into the wider landscape.’

It is inconceivable that the impact on the landscape as a whole is not important in the decision-making process. The view of the proposed built development when approaching from the west would be very harmful. Just because the ‘receptors’ i.e. users of the road are likely to be using their cars and travelling at speed, does not negate the permanent impact on the landscape. The photographs in the LVIA show that the existing edge of the village very prominent in the landscape, but in actual fact, the bulk of the dwellings are almost hidden over the brow of the hill and the proposal would increase the visual impact.

The landscape in this part of South Northamptonshire comprises small villages set in open fields with an open and undulating landscape characterised by arable fields and far reaching views. It is not considered that the proposed landscape planting would mitigate the visual impact of the proposed new

development because such landscaping would not be appropriate for the setting and context of the village. The new development would spill over the hill and be unacceptably intrusive in the landscape.

Impact of additional traffic

The traffic impact caused by the development of 69 houses in this location would be significant to the village, with additional traffic having to use Blakesley Hill to travel into the centre of the village, or to travel to destinations to the east and north. On High Street traffic is already a big problem, because the centre of the village was built before cars came into use. The majority of the houses lining these streets do not have parking themselves and accordingly, parking is on-street and always occupied, day and night. There is a yellow lined overtaking spot intended to maintain traffic movement on the Mill Lane part but the High Street is much less simple, traffic parks on both sides and is sometimes impenetrable with cars queuing in both directions particularly at peak hours. Since the Pub was given planning permission to extend into the car park, there are fewer spaces available in general. The village green is now much worse in terms of parked cars and is regularly impassable for emergency vehicles. The Parish Council have been lobbying to get parking restrictions in this area of the village.

The majority of traffic to and from the proposed development would travel down Blakesley Hill, round the sharp corner then either through the village or up Towcester Road towards the A43/A5 junction. The A43 junction, despite improvement over recent years, is already over capacity. Highways England are yet to comment on this issue and therefore the application should not be determined until their response is received.

No traffic calming measures are considered necessary by the applicant and none are proposed. However, the significant scale of these proposals would have an adverse impact on traffic through the village, particularly given potential cumulative impacts from other proposals (e.g the current application at Mill Lane for 76 dwellings) and possible future expansion of the village.

Distance from village facilities

The distance from the proposed development is too far for new residents to walk to them in preference to getting in the car. The Community Centre and Medical Centre would be 10 minutes walking time, over 800m. The village shop would be about 550m from the entrance to the proposed development. The school would be over 900m away and it is unlikely that the majority of parents would walk that distance with their primary age children. All these distances exceed the 400m (5 minutes) accepted distance within which people would be likely to walk and therefore would encourage new residents to use their cars to access these facilities necessitating vehicular trips through the village centre, impacting on the existing parking and congestion difficulties in the village centre.

Archaeology

Archaeological evaluations on the site have not been properly carried out prior to the submission of the application in conflict with the NPPF paragraph 189 (also see NCC Archaeologist response 7/9/20). Potentially this site may have important archaeological constraints which could conflict with the development proposals on this site. There may also be remnants of ridge and furrow on the field, which should be protected from removal.

Affordable housing requirement

50% affordable housing is proposed to be provided complying with Local Plan requirements. No viability assessment has been carried out or presented with the application, so there is no certainty that 50% can be provided and no local information to suggest what would provide appropriate size and tenure to the local population in housing need. The HNS for Greens Norton is out of date (2007). Although it is accepted that affordable housing provision is important, it is not considered that affordable housing provided on the site would be of benefit to residents and it would not justify the construction of additional dwellings in this location and the adverse impacts that that would cause.

Conclusion

The proposal would fail to comply with the core planning principles of the NPPF to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, to conserve and enhance the natural environment and to reuse land that has been previously developed. The proposal would cause harm by the significant adverse visual impact on the area of the development site, its immediate setting and the wider landscape. The development would fail to contribute positively to, or enhance, the natural environment and it would not complement the character of the area or the context of its setting by reducing open land which contributes to the form and character of the area.

In addition, given the site's location outside of a settlement which has a limited amount of key services, it is considered highly likely that there would be a significant reliance on the private car thus not ensuring a locationally sustainable site for development. The significant traffic impact upon the village, which already suffers congestion and a difficult traffic environment for pedestrians and emergency services, would be unacceptable. This is contrary to the Development Plan and to advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.