

South Bucks Core Strategy Public Examination

Land at Church Farm, Farnham Royal

Written Statement on behalf of the Consortium of landowners who have interests in
land to the south of Farnham Royal

Comment on Core Documents CD11/02, CD11/03, CD11/11 and CD11/22

Representor ID: 58
Representation Number(s):2205-2211

November 2010

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Ref: 15130/A5/P13a/DRB/slh

Date: November, 2010

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0.0 SOUTH BUCKS CORE STRATEGY EXAMINATION COMMENT ON CORE DOCUMENTS CD11/02, CD11/03, CD11/11 AND CD11/22

Introduction

- 0.1 Barton Willmore LLP has prepared these written representations on behalf of a Consortium of landowners who have interests in land to the south of Farnham Royal.
- 0.2 The Consortium has collaborated in a Master Planning exercise and submitted a Development Vision Document (February 2010) to the Council regarding their site interests, which was also submitted with their Preferred Options representations (Representation Number(s) 2205-2211). We respectfully draw the Inspector's attention to these previous representations and this particular document.
- 0.3 Barton Willmore had been instructed to represent the Consortium in the Examination. This Statement is submitted on the Consortium's behalf.
- 0.4 The following sections of this statement provide comments on some of the additional papers submitted by Council as Core Documents during the Examination. Section 1.0 addresses Core Documents CD11/02 and Section 2.0 addresses Core Document CD11/22.
- 0.5 Having reviewed Core Documents CD 11/03 and CD11/11 we have no further comments. We however, respectfully draw the inspector's attention to our previous Hearing Statements for Parts 1 and 2 – Objectives and Spatial Strategy, CP1 Housing Provision and Delivery, and CP3 Affordable Housing which outline our concerns on these topics which are still relevant in light of the Councils additional papers.

1.0 CD11/02 AMENDMENTS TO PPS3: HOUSING

- 1.1 We note that CD11/02 was submitted to the Examination following discussions in the hearing session on Core Policy 1 (10th November) on how the Council will address the amendments to PPS3 in the determination of planning applications.
- 1.2 In our earlier representations for the session on Core Policy 1 we raised concerns over the impact of the perception of the type of development sometimes referred to as 'Garden Grabbing' on the deliverability of sites through the development control process (paragraphs 1.12).
- 1.3 We acknowledge that Appendixes 1 and 2 of CD11/02 provide evidence that Planning members have been advised of the revisions to PPS3, and how officers have interpreted the changes and are looking to apply them with regard to proposed development in the district. However, it is still our opinion that the changes to PPS3 regarding previously developed land and minimum densities will have a more significant impact on the information contained in the SHLAA, and on development control decisions than the Council is concluding.
- 1.4 Our original concerns over the following still remain.

Interpretation of the revised definition of Previously Developed Land.

- 1.5 In the Council's statement on their PDL target (CD1/34), following the changes to PPS3, it is stated that:

"Housing development that involves the demolition of an existing dwelling (or several dwellings) and their replacement with a scheme involving development partly on the footprint of the old properties, and partly on the former private residential garden land will be regarded as PDL development. In other words, only new housing developed solely on residential back garden land will be counted as greenfield development."

- 1.6 In our view the Council's interpretation of the revised PPS3 definition for PDL does not adequately capture the revision to the definition; for example, if the Council's definition was applied to a site that involved the demolition of one house to provide access for the re-development of an area of land made up from the back gardens of other adjoining dwellings would they be regarding this as PDL? The Council's approach further exacerbates our concern

over the robustness of the evidence supporting housing provision in the district, and whether they can actually demonstrate that there are sufficient deliverable and developable sites to meet their housing requirements and maintain a rolling 5/10/15 year supply without a review of the boundaries of the Green Belt.

Perception of the revised definition of PDL

- 1.7** Although the removal of private residential gardens from the definition of PDL does not preclude this type of land from development 'in principle', it is considered that there will be a perception that there is an 'embargo' on this type of development particularly from a public perspective, which will in turn place pressure on members to react accordingly. This will have an impact on the deliverability of this type of development because going forward there is likely to be far more opposition than there has been to date. We are concerned that the Council Officers have chosen not to circulate all Councilor Members with their advice about how the Council will interpret PPS3, since without this knowledge Members cannot adequately deal with their constituents enquiries regarding the Council's intentions on PDL and back gardens.

Densities

- 1.8** In paragraph 2.14 of CD1/33 the Council states that high density developments are few and far between and that new development in two of the three Principle Settlements in the district (Beaconsfield and Gerrards Cross) are characterized by larger properties in spacious grounds. It goes on to say that new development in these settlements (and others) has tended to be at relatively low densities, to ensure it is in keeping with its surroundings, and to help minimize any adverse impact on townscape character. The figures in the most recent AMR indicate that the average density of new permissions in the Principle Settlements (in which new development will be focused) in 2008/09 was 20.01 dwellings per hectare (dph).

Principle Settlement	Average Density of New Permissions 2008/09
Beaconsfield	21.66 dph (average of 8 sites)
Burnham	32.66 dph (average of 4 sites)
Gerrards Cross	12.04 dph (average of 8 sites)
All Sites (in the Principle Settlements)	20.01 dph (average of 20 sites)

- 1.9** It is noted that this calculation was based on dwellings completed with the previous PPS3 minimum density of 30 dph in existence, and it is clear that despite these requirements the

Council failed to deliver housing at a reasonable density, from our review of the situation, largely on the basis of impact on the character and appearance of the area which justified a deviation from PPS3 standards.

- 1.10 In response to the removal of the national indicative minimum of 30 dph, the Council performed a sensitivity analysis of the potential capacity of the sites in the SHLAA (paragraph 3.18 CD1/33), concluding that the deletion of the indicative minimum has allowed the Council to propose expressing its density target as a range, centered on 30dph. However, this is not reflected in the figure of 547 dwellings being identified as the potential yield from SHLAA sites in Table 1 of the proposed Core Strategy (CD1/36). The reduction in this figure simply reflects the latest housing monitoring data (updated to 1st April 2010), rather than including post PPS3 amendments. The figures for potential housing in appendices 7 and 8 of the SHLAA are still calculated using 20, 35 and 45 dwellings per hectare as set out in paragraph 2.23 (CD 2/01). The figures in the SHLAA are overly optimistic and do not reflect the historic trends in the district for density (See 1.8 above for information on densities from the most recent AMR 2008/09), which in our opinion, are likely to decrease further with the changes to PPS3.

Town Cramming

- 1.11 Bearing in mind the points raised above regarding PDL and densities it is clear that should the Council progress the strategy for housing as set out in the Core Strategy (CD 1/36) for 2,200-2,800 dwellings focused on previously developed land within existing settlements it will have an adverse impact on the character of those settlements. The density assumptions used to forecast the potential yield from SHLAA sites do not reflect the historic averages and to achieve the densities forecast there is likely to be a significant amount of apartment or flatted development on relatively small urban sites which will not reflect the context of the sites. The Council has produced no evidence to demonstrate that the scale of development proposed within the settlements will be deliverable, nor have they demonstrated that the quantum of unit numbers can be achieved. The Core Strategy (CD1/36) is therefore unsound on this basis.

2.0 CD11/22 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL - SITES

2.1 Paragraph 4.43 of PPS12 states that:

“The Sustainability Appraisal should perform a key role in providing a sound evidence base for the plan and form an integrated part of the plan preparation process. Sustainability Assessment should inform the evaluation of alternatives. Sustainability Assessment should provide a powerful means of proving to decision makers, and the public, that the plan is the most appropriate given reasonable alternatives.”

2.2 When talking about other options (sites for development) in paragraph 19 of Appendix 2 (Briefing Note – Contingency Land (Summer 2009)) it is stated with regard to other sites put forward by land owners and developers that:

“Whilst some of these have merit, in terms of access to local facilities and public transport services, they *do not fit* with the emerging spatial strategy.” (Our added emphasis)

2.3 It is our opinion that removing them from the Sustainability Assessment on the basis that they ‘do not fit’ with the emerging spatial strategy undermines the robustness of the evidence base and the Council’s approach to the provision of housing in the district. In the absence of a completed sustainability appraisal of all of the sites submitted to the Council, the Core Strategy has not robustly considered all reasonable alternatives.

2.4 Paragraph 4.38 of PPS12 outlines the importance of the ability of being able to demonstrate that the plan is the most appropriate when considered against reasonable alternatives. The way in which the Council has approached the strategic approach to development and allocation of ‘opportunity’ sites in the Core Strategy does not provide us with the confidence that the Strategy is sound.

2.5 With regard to housing, one of the central roles of Spatial Planning is to ensure that land is available at the right time and the right place to deliver the new housing required. The Council’s approach does not ensure that the land being identified for development is in the right place. It is our opinion, for example,

that the 'opportunity sites' identified in the Core Strategy are not the most sustainable locations available within the district, or that they will become available having failed to do so in the last 15 years.

Housing Land Supply

- 2.6 In CD11/22 at paragraph 4 we are advised that it is important to note that when the Council were considering 'contingency locations' for development the Housing Land Supply position was very different from now. In March 2009 the Council advised that there was a housing land supply of between 1,872 and 1,972 units over the plan period. At April 2010 the Council advises (see CD11/11) that there is a Housing Land Supply of approximately 2,121 units. The question has to be asked, is a 7% difference a 'very' different position? So significant to warrant the decision not to proceed with contingency sites?
- 2.7 As set out above in section 1 of this statement we have concerns with regard to the Council's approach to the changes to PPS3 and the profound and serious implications this has on the yield from SHLAA Sites and consequentially their ability to fulfill the requirements of PPS3 to identify specific, deliverable sites to deliver housing in the first 5 years, and specifically, developable sites for years 6-10 and 11-15.

Appendix 1 of CD11/22

- 2.8 Having reviewed the information contained in the Appendix 1 for the Land south of Farnham Royal we have the following observations and comments:
- 2.9 **SBDC Core Strategy: Assessment of Possible Future Development Options (Page 39):** The description for the site is '6 hectares in Green Belt. Could deliver up to 180 dwellings at average 30dph. Suggested by R Watkins & Consortium'. There is however no reference made to the Development Vision Document prepared and submitted to the Council in February 2010 which provides an outline of a form of development that could be achieved on the site at Farnham Royal which was developed in response to the sites context, and its constraints and opportunities. The site which has been put forward in the 'Vision Document' is 3.5 hectares of the 6 hectares to which the Council refers, with 2.1 hectares of developable land. The low density development suggested in the 'Vision' has been sensitively designed to respect the newly designated

Conservation Area, and retain a 'green swathe' from east to west from the Woodland trust land in the west, across the old quarry called 'The Dell' and encompassing St Mary's Church and churchyard, before continuing into Stoke Park golf links.

- 2.10 **Sustainability Objective 2 in the table of Site Assessment Criteria:** It is stated that with regard to the reduction of anti-social activity etc. there are no site/location specific issues to be considered. This statement is incorrect; the site has significant issues with antisocial behavior and illicit activities as observed and documented by Wessex Archaeology when the area was assessed as part of the proposed (now designated) Conservation Area. Paragraphs 2.4.22 to 2.4.25 of the report (extract attached as Appendix A) address 'Problems, pressures and the Capacity for Change.
- 2.11 **Sustainability Objective 15 in the table of Site Assessment Criteria:** It is stated that there would be no loss or gain in employment on the site. It should be noted that if the development that was proposed in the Development Vision Document was considered as part of the assessment there would be the potential for jobs to be created if some form of sheltered accommodation for older persons was incorporated as suggested in the redevelopment of the site.