

Comments to PPWG - 29 June 2017

Following its Call for Sites, in April 2016 Great Chesterford Parish Council sent detailed comments on UDC's assessment of the Chesterford Settlement site. Amongst its many objections, the Parish Council stated as regards transport:

"...given the size of the proposed Settlement, the adverse impact on the B184, the M11/A11 and all surrounding roads, will be very significant. There is no reasonable basis, in UDC's Suitability Conclusion, to claim that there is "good access" to the strategic road network: access can be gained only via the B184 and the A11. It is plain...that the Assessments are so superficial as to be meaningless" [para 26, UDC's Draft Site Assessments: Great Chesterford Parish Council's Response on Matters of Fact, 7 April 2016].

Yet here we are, 15 months later and despite repeated requests from the Parish Council in recent weeks in correspondence with UDC, when meeting Bidwells on behalf of the Settlement landowners at a meeting convened by UDC, and at PPWG meetings in May and last week, still no residual traffic impact assessments have been undertaken.

That much was confirmed in response to my question about the Stump Cross/Saffron Walden section of the B184 to UDC's transport consultant, Mr Gregory of YSG, who stated last week that "at this stage of the local plan, work had not occurred at such a high level of detail to anticipate traffic growth and mitigation measures on the B184" [PP78, Minutes, PPWG meeting held on 22 June 2017].

As members will see from last week's statement I made to PPWG - the text of which is attached to the Minutes - I said in conclusion that:

"... it is clear....that the viability of Great Chesterford is based almost entirely on the wholly speculative premise that walking, cycling and availability of enhanced bus and rail services can replace car use to such an extent that the existing road network, in particular the B184, can cope with the additional traffic that the Settlement will generate for Saffron Walden and elsewhere".

The absence of any detailed transport assessment relating to the Chesterford Settlement is itself sufficient to torpedo the draft Plan before you.

Worse still, UDC's Economic Viability Study undertaken by Malins specifically concludes, in relation to Great Chesterford, that the site is "...financially viable and therefore able to deliver over the Local Plan period" and that "the proposal will meet all primary road infrastructure requirements". However, this view is subject to the specific major qualification that "a full transport assessment would be required i.e. standard requirement for larger schemes like this" [para 9.7 and Appendix A], Malins Study].

There being no detailed local transport assessment for the Chesterford site, it follows that no assurance as to its economic viability yet exists either.

It is for these and the other reasons set out in the Parish Council's letter dated 5 June 2017 addressed to you, Chairman, that PPWG and UDC were requested to reject Great Chesterford as a site for further consideration, and to exclude the Settlement from the draft Plan.

If, despite these repeated warnings, UDC proceeds to include Great Chesterford in its Plan, it will fail on these grounds alone before the Planning Inspector next Spring, and that will remain the position unless these and all the other fundamental issues identified by the Parish Council are properly and fully addressed in any final Plan that is submitted.

Cllr David Hall
Great Chesterford Parish Council