

Great Chesterford Parish Council (GCPC)

Comments (17 May 2017) to PPWG re Landscape issues

Thank you Mr Chairman,

May I start by reiterating the remarks of my colleague Councillor Hall in respect of Item 4 on this agenda. The transport proposals in respect of this indicative development lack credibility and evidence, it is sadly, as simple as that.

Turning to the substantive item.

Members will recall that as part of the Chesterfords Neighbourhood Plan process we submitted and had included in the evidence base for this district wide Local Plan both a Landscape Character Assessment and Historic Environment Assessment. These documents were presented to the 23 August 2016 meeting of this committee.

That Landscape Character Assessment goes into great detail about the location and character of our settlements in the valley of the River Cam. Specifically in its analysis of the parish features, it identifies areas of “Major” and “Substantial” landscape sensitivity where the “landscape capacity” for development is “negligible or low” in ability to accommodate development.

Sadly the North Uttlesford Garden Village is proposed to be built in just these areas of sensitivity.

These concerns are supported by evidence from your own officers in the document in front of you.

Mr Smeedham states, *inter alia*;

“Overall this character area has relatively high sensitivity to change. The development would be predominantly on the highland areas of the site and would be a departure from major settlement patterns which have developed in the District.”

He further states

“Whilst it is accepted that extensive screen planting belts, and blocks of new planting would to some extent reduce the visual impact of the proposed development, such planting would in itself have a significant and detrimental affect on the historic pattern and character of the existing landscape.”

And concludes

“I am of the view that this site cannot accommodate the development shown in the illustrative masterplan ... without causing significant and unacceptable harm to the important visual qualities of the site and the wider landscape.”

Members of this committee may also recall that Bidwells, acting as agents for the consortium of landowners objected, unsuccessfully, to the inclusion in the Local Plan evidence base of our Landscape Character Assessment.

We now understand why they objected as the proposals brought forward and in front of you are deeply flawed, as UDC officers agree.

Furthermore Bidwells accept this point. As the statement at Paragraph 5.3.2 of the May 2016 desk based assessment commissioned by them on the North Uttlesford Garden Village makes clear.

It state;

“The Site is located in an undulating open landscape on the periphery of an historic village. The surrounding area is dominated by agricultural farmland which contains dispersed farms. The topography of the Site means that there is little to provide a visual barrier, meaning the development would be visible from the A11 and from Great Chesterford itself, resulting in a large impact on the historic landscape.”

We further note that a material fact that has not been considered is the damage to landscape character beyond the immediate boundary of Uttlesford District.

GCPC therefore strongly opposes development of a settlement at Great Chesterford as unsustainable on transport and other grounds.

We trust that in due course, the minutes when published, of “duty to cooperate” meetings with SCDC will show that proper consideration has been given, *inter alia*, to transport, landscape and historic environment issues.

Neil Gregory
For and on behalf of
Great Chesterford Parish Council