

HOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL
Appendix to the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
held on Tuesday 5th July 2022 at 19.00
at Houghton Village Hall

Appendix

Submission of Houghton Parish Council Planning Appeal ref APP/C1760/W/22/3293740

Introduction

1.This submission is in response to the appeal against the refusal by Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) in respect of planning application 21/01960/FULLS for eight self-build homes on land west of Rose Cottage, Houghton, Hampshire. It should be read in conjunction with the Parish Council's objection to the planning application of the 23rd July 2021.

2.The submission includes an update on the Development Plan for the area and further comments on its policy objections in the light of the documents submitted by the appellant as included on TVBC's web site.

Further Submission

The Development Plan

3.The starting point for the Borough Council as the local planning authority (LPA) in considering proposals for development is the Development Plan for the area. Applications should be determined in accordance with the it unless material considerations indicate otherwise, ref section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Development Plan for the area is the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan adopted in January 2016 and the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan, May 2022.

Houghton Neighbourhood Plan

4. At the time, the decision to refuse the application was made by TVBC the Neighbourhood Plan had reached the Regulation 14 stage, a relatively early one in the process when only limited weight could be given to it. Significant progress was made after the application was refused by TVBC such that the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan has been the subject of independent examination and of a referendum in May 2022. Following the positive outcome of the referendum it was 'made' by TVBC. The incorporation of it into the Development Plan for the area is a significant change in the policy framework.

5.It is recognised that the Development Plan does not include a policy in respect of self-build homes. However, the Parish Council considers that self-build homes form part of the provision of open market housing as they are not meeting local needs based on affordability and are not considered to be a form of affordable housing (see NPPF definition). In that context, the Development Plan contains a number of policies which are relevant to the application and which the scheme is in conflict with.

6.The Neighbourhood Plan includes a number of policies relevant to the appeal see policies HTN1, HTN3, HTN4, HTN5, HTN9. (formerly Policy HTN8 in the Regulation 14 version applicable at the time of the Parish Council objection)).

7.The site is designated in the Neighbourhood Plan as a Local Green Space ref LGS3 under Policy HTN9. The purpose of the policy is to protect green areas of particular importance to communities and in designating them they should be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.

8.The approach to considering development within a Local Green Space is that it should be consistent as if a site was within a Green Belt i.e.; would need very special circumstances to justify a proposal, ref the NPPF para 103. It is the Parish Council's view that no such circumstances have been identified by the appellant.

9.The appellant has sought to justify the development on the basis that the homes would be self-build dwellings which would help address a shortfall in provision which it claims exist within Test Valley. The NPPG provides

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guidance on the Government's self-build and custom-build housing policies. In particular it sets out guidance on the definition:

'in considering whether a home is a self-build or custom build home, relevant authorities must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have primary input into its final design and layout. Off-plan housing, homes purchased at the plan stage prior to construction and without input into the design and layout from the buyer, are not considered to meet the definition of self-build and custom housing.'

Ref Paragraph: 016 Reference ID: 57-016-20210208 Revision date 8.2.21

10.The application is the subject of a full application and includes a site layout plan, house types, floor plans and elevations landscaping, parking and access. The scheme has been designed by the applicant and there is no reference in the submitted documentation to any input from those interested in undertaking a self-build scheme. It is clear that that there has been no primary input into the final designs submitted, for which permission is being sought, by the owners of any of the dwellings proposed. Given that the application is reliant on making the case for an exception to the Development Plan on the basis of providing self-build homes this is a fundamental flaw in the case being made. If there was a demand for eight self-build homes in Houghton, given that the scheme has been in preparation for some time, (a request for pre-application advice was made in December 2020 to TVBC) it would not be unreasonable to have expected an application to have been submitted which satisfied the definition.

11.In recognition that the application as submitted does not comply with the definition of a self-build scheme comply the appellant seeks to address that issue by suggesting the use of a section106 agreement and a draft wording is put forward. The legal agreement requires an application to be submitted for each individual plot which clearly demonstrates that the scheme, the inspector is being asked to approve, is not compliant with the definition of a self-build scheme.

12.The appellant also proposes the use of a planning condition but no specific wording has been proposed. In the draft Statement of Common Ground dated 27th February 2022, a condition is included which would control the layout of the site with reference to drawing 102A. Fixing the layout would appear to constrain interest in a self-build scheme by pre-determining the size of the plots available. No evidence is presented to demonstrate that there is a demand for these particular sized plots in Houghton by those who have registered on interest with TVBC for a self-build project.

13.The Parish Council understands that there is disagreement between the appellant and TVBC regarding the provision of self-build plots. In the event that the inspector formed the view that the proposed scheme satisfied the definition of self-build and that there was an unmet demand, it is the Parish Council's view that the provision of eight self-build dwellings on the edge of the village in the absence of any evidence of a local need for such accommodation, does not constitute special circumstances to justify the loss of the recently designated Local Green Space.

Housing Land Supply

14.The Parish Council's is of the view that self- build housing forms part of the open market housing market and in that context the current housing land supply position is relevant. TVBC can demonstrate that it has a five-year supply of housing land for the area within which the appeal site is located. As at the 1st April 2021 for the housing area within which the application site falls i.e.; Northern Test Valley there is 5.72 years supply, ref TVBC Authority Monitoring Report 2021 The addition of eight dwellings would only add 0.02 years to the supply based on the Local Plan annual requirement of 394 dpa. The marginal increase in the supply of housing is not considered justification for the loss of the designated Local Green Space. It should also be noted that a number of permissions for housing have been granted by TVBC in the last 5 years which has added to the stock of dwellings.

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15. In the context of a positive supply of housing land the Parish Council do not consider the extremely modest contribution that the scheme would make, notwithstanding the Government's aim of increasing supply, is justification for the loss of the designated Local Green Space and does not represent special circumstances.

Sustainable Development

16. The purpose of planning is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development ref para 7 of the NPPF. It is the Parish Council's view that the development of the site would not achieve sustainable development.

17. The appellant appears to rely on limited facilities aimed at tourists available at Houghton Lodge to contribute to meeting the day to day needs of the residents of the scheme and the village. ref para 2.1.5 of the Statement of Case, Feb 2022. There is a tea room and café which are not open all year (April to September) round and do not operate as a shop. A resident wishing to use the facilities which are provided at the Lodge could not do so safely on foot as there is no footway from the village to it. A pedestrian or a cyclist would have to negotiate two ninety-degree bends with poor forward visibility and travel along a section of the highway which is quite steep.

18. The nearest facilities which are available for day to day needs eg a convenience store, other shops, schools and a health centre are at Stockbridge approximately 3.2km to north of the appeal site. There is no continuous footway linking the site to Stockbridge making it most unlikely any residents would make the journey on foot. The journey by cycle involves a steep climb out of Houghton and a steady climb on the route back from Stockbridge which would not be attractive to casual cyclists.

19. The Parish Council does not agree with the appellant that the site has good access to public transport ref para 5.1 of the Statement of Common Ground. There is only a very limited bus service to Stockbridge and from there to Winchester. Stagecoach service 16 provides only two bus services Monday to Friday at 8.40am and 13.03pm to Winchester via Stockbridge and only one service from Winchester to Houghton at 12.15pm also Monday to Friday. From the site to the nearest bus stop at The Boot PH there is no footway and pedestrians would have to walk on the highway.

20. Service 54, ref para 2.1.6 of the appellant's Statement of Case, is operated by Hampshire Community Transport and provides one bus service to and from Romsey on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays leaving Houghton at 9.45am arriving at 10am and leaving Romsey at 12.30pm arriving back at 12.25pm. Users of the service have to register. Users of this service have to access it from a road with no pavement. The scheme relies on grant funding to operate.

21. The Public Rights of Way referred to by the appellant do not provide convenient routes to locations providing day to day services and facilities and are described by the appellant as recreation routes, ref para 2.5 of the Statement of Case. Public Right of Way 4 and By-way 12 provide routes across open countryside to Broughton, which has some facilities such as a public house and a community shop. The distance is approximately 4.8Km. It is unlikely that they would be used to access those facilities on foot or cycle unless they were incorporated into a leisure activity.

22. The Parish Council considers that the lack of safe and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists and the very limited public transport provision means that there is no genuine choice of transport modes and that the residents of the proposed development would be reliant on the private car.

Impact on character of the village

23. The appellant has sought to justify the proposed scheme by referring to a number of sites within the village which have been permitted. The Parish Council do not consider them to be comparable as they are all within the settlement policy boundary. They involved development within the curtilage of existing dwellings or involved the redevelopment of a complex of farm buildings see pages 21 and 22 of the Statement of Case of the appellant. The appeal site is in the countryside.

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Conclusion

24.The development is contrary to Policy SD1, Policy COM2, Policy COM7, Policy E1 and Policy E9 of the Local Plan and policies HTN1, HTN3, HTN4, HTN5, HTN9 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

25.A decision to permit development would severely undermine the community's involvement and confidence in the planning process given the lack of justification to depart from the Neighbourhood Plan which has only recently become part of the Development Plan. The inspector is respectfully asked to dismiss the appeal.

Houghton Parish Council
06.07.22