

Buckinghamshire Draft Local Plan 2024-2045 Chearsley CPC Response to Initial Consultation

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Note: Throughout this document: Buckinghamshire Council is referred to as BC Chearsley Parish Council is referred to as CPC

Suitability of a Site Proposed for HELAA Inclusion

Summary

1. This site was proposed for inclusion in the 2021/2023 Call for Sites. This document sets out the reasons why this site should not be included in the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). This section details the concerns of CPC at the serious, negative potential impact on the village should the site be included in the eventual HELAA. Furthermore CPC is concerned that there appears to be no future consultation planned for proposed HELAA sites and therefore feels it essential to comment now to ensure our comments are taken into account.

The conclusion is that the site is not suitable for HELAA inclusion.

Introduction

2. This document is part of the submission from CPC in response to the request from BC for comments on the First Draft of the 2027-2045 Local Plan for Buckinghamshire.
3. The HELAA is part of the Local Plan and in response to the 2021-23 Call for Sites, a site within the Chearsley Parish boundary was submitted to BC.
4. This submission discusses the characteristics of that site in the context of the village of Chearsley and the potential consequences should the site be included in the HELAA and subsequently developed.

Chearsley Context

5. Chearsley village can trace its history back to the Anglo-Saxon king Ceolred from whom the village name derives. It has existed as a settlement since at least since Norman times and gets a brief Domesday Book mention.
6. Over the intervening time it has developed steadily but slowly, resulting in the emergence of the distinctive character that the village exhibits today. This is evidenced for example by its narrow 'sunken' lanes (or 'holloways' a most unusual feature in settlements today), the large proportion of very old and/or thatched properties and the high proportion of listed properties in the village, testament to the determination of villagers over the years to maintain its character.
7. It is often referred to by visitors as a beautiful village - showing that people not involved with the village also recognise its character.
8. Much of the village is a designated Conservation Area (Figure 1)

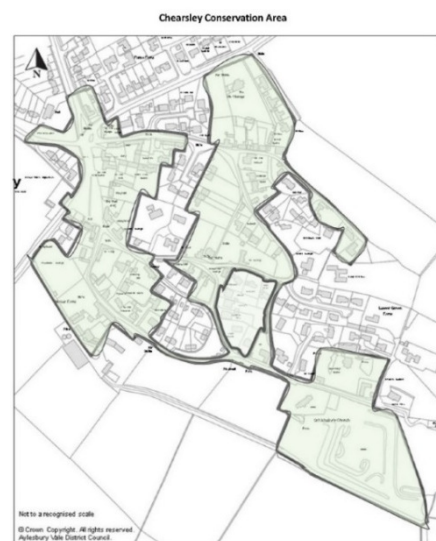


Figure 1 Chearsley Conservation Area

Summary

15. In summary, Chearsley is an historic, very small village that retains many historic buildings and layout features. It sits comfortably and naturally in an attractive landscape, to which its built form contributes significantly.
16. It is appreciated as a very attractive place by residents and visitors alike

The Site

Details

17. The site in question, Ref 3 (BC map of the site location), is designated in 'Sites already submitted' on the BC website as 'Opus 3156 Land to the North of Crendon Road, Chearsley'.
18. Figure 4 shows the site at its location on the Western side of Chearsley and illustrates this in the context of the landscape discussion above, using part of Figure 2 as the base map.

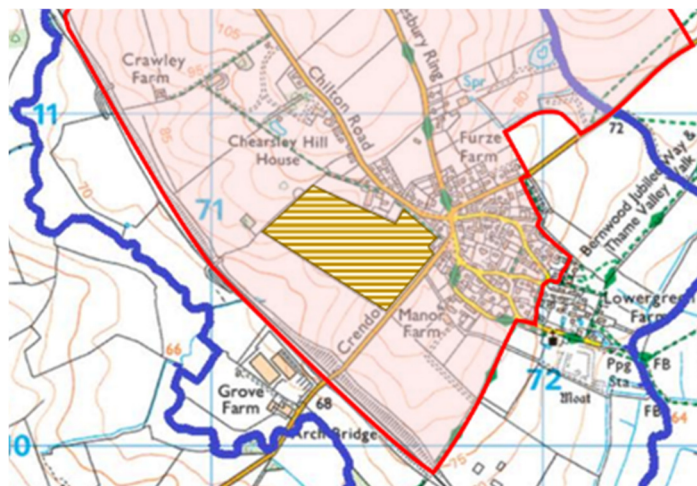


Figure 4. Position of the subject site, marked in brown

19. The site:
 - a. is approximately 27 acres in size, much the same size as the whole of the existing village;
 - b. at typical housing density for new rural developments, would accommodate 110-150 properties if fully developed, an increase of up to 64% on the existing housing stock. At its maximum, a typical 30 dph density would result in this site potentially housing 300 dwellings. Such a large development would clearly swamp the village.
 - c. if fully developed with modern design properties, it would change the housing mix of the village from roughly 50/50 old and modern to more like 70% modern;
 - d. lies within the Chearsley Ridge AAL (LCA 9.7) and would represent a very significant visual intrusion into that landscape;
 - e. is currently prime grade I/II agricultural land that would be lost to that purpose, contrary to VALP.

20. The village sewerage system has long shown signs of creaking due to age and previous, modest, housing developments. This would surely add an intolerable load.

Previous Planning Applications

21. Part of this site has been the subject of numerous planning applications, in particular 2014 - 14/00308/AOP and again in 2018 APP/J0405/W/3209418
22. The applications were opposed by CPC and by BC, both went to appeal and both were rejected. The common problem with the application was their impact on the local landscape and visual amenity. The reasons for rejection were robust and remain valid, this decision must be considered and given full weight. The Appeal decisions are at Ref 4 & Ref 5.

Detail from the Draft Local Plan

BC Settlement Review

23. The Settlement Review (Ref 6) provides key data about all 114 Settlements in Buckinghamshire and is key to assessing the sustainability of proposed developments. It will be highly relevant in assessing if sites should be included in the HELAA.
24. Chearsley is denoted as a Tier 5 (smallest) settlement in the review. This is due to its residents having access to just 3 out of 7 Key Services (village hall, playing field/sports facilities and pub) and 1 out of 5 Non-Key Services (the church). Also taken into account are employment premises (one - the Bell), public transport availability ("Limited") and distance from a large settlement (8 miles to Aylesbury).
25. The village ranks 109 out of a total 114 settlements on the list on population size (544 in 2021), and 43 out of 47 in Tier 5. On Key and Non-Key Services it ranks 35 out of 47 in Tier 5.
26. These figures demonstrate it is close to being the smallest settlement in the County.

Draft Local Plan Part A - Spatial Strategy

27. There are a number highly relevant references to landscape value in the Spatial Strategy:
28. Page 8 - Local Plan Vision includes:

*"In 2045, we have sustained the essential rural character of Buckinghamshire, with its network of small towns and villages, maintaining its rich and varied historic environment"
Buckinghamshire continues to successfully protect and enhance our valued green spaces, local landscapes and our biodiversity*

29. Page 9 - Objective 1: *“Aim: To conserve and enhance Buckinghamshire’s valued natural, historic, and built environments, to ensure they are protected from inappropriate development.”*
30. Page 32 - Approach 6: *“This approach focuses on development in our more sustainable rural villages both within and outside the Green Belt.”*
31. Page 38 - Summary of Approaches includes:
 - Approach 6: 13-15,000 houses.*
 - Windfall: 7,400 houses*

Chearsley would much more rationally be seen as a source of Windfall housing rather than being included in Approach 7.

Draft Local Plan Part B - Development Management Policies

32. Page 32 Policy HO10 Windfall: Tier 5 sites: *“...up to a scheme size of 10 homes will be permitted”*
33. Page 125 Policy NE17 Development in the Countryside outside the Green Belt. This policy essentially says there will be no such development unless exception(s) apply. One such exception is that it accords with a made Neighbourhood Plan.
34. Page 130 Policy NE19 Landscape Character & Visual Amenity. All developments must meet all of a number of listed criteria.
35. Page 170 Policy IN2 Wastewater
36. Page 175 Policy BE1 Sense of Place.
37. Policy BE4 Heritage Assets

Inclusion of the site in the HELAA

38. It is understood that not all sites identified by the Call for Sites will necessarily be included in the HELAA; many sites will fall away because of technical reasons as to why they might be undeliverable. However, CPC cannot see when the Council plans to consult the public for those sites that might be considered deliverable. It is imperative that this takes place to ensure transparency and lawfulness of a future Local Plan.
39. CPC asserts that this site should not be included because it is totally unsuitable for inclusion, because:
 - a. There are numerous statements in the draft Local Plan against which the site would be completely unsustainable;
 - b. There are other reasons, including common sense community reason, for not including it.

Size of the site if developed

40. CPC asserts that if this site is included in the HELAA, it WILL over time (i.e. probably within the period of this Local Plan) be developed to its maximum potential. Development may be

spread over a number of small batches, but with every successful application will come the increased likelihood that a subsequent application will be approved, both on 'precedent' and due to the gradual diminution of the arguments against.

41. The evidence for this assertion is:
 - a. Two previous planning applications to build on the site, pursued to appeal after rejection by both CPC and the then AVDC (para. 21).
 - b. The plan submitted with that application included a short section of road with no clear purpose but directed towards the remainder of the current site (see Attachment 1)
 - c. The tendency of the applicant to expand. The applicant also owns a cattle fattening station at Grove Farm to the SW of the subject site which has been the subject of 8 planning applications since 2014 (Attachment 1) for new or enlarged barns, storage and a house on site.
42. Were the site to be included in the HELAA, the village would be subjected to an increase of some 64% to its housing numbers, coupled with a major shift in the general character of that housing (para 19).

Landscape

43. The proposal would fail to accord with the designated character appearing as a finger of development sticking out of what is a small and uniform village centre. The land levels at play would result in a development that is highly visible from far afield to the detriment of the existing character.

Sustainability Issues

44. The Settlement Review shows that Cheersley is one of the smallest, least sustainable villages in the County (paras 23 to 26). Although there are no housing allocations in Ref 1, it cannot be expected that a Tier 5 settlement might be required to increase in size by over 60% (para.19c) and almost double it's built area
45. A development of this size would be completely unsustainable as it offers: not alternative modes of transport; few bus links and other services; no footpaths linking to the village centre; no employment or office space nearby to reduce car usage; few jobs and no schools or medical facilities in the village.
46. The development would explicitly contradict:
 - a. The first point in the draft Plan Vision for 2045 (para. 28)
 - b. Objective 1 of the draft Plan Spatial Strategy (para. 29)
 - c. the proposed approach for rural villages of Approach 6 in Part B of the draft Plan (para 30).
 - d. Policy NE19 - Landscape Character & Visual Amenity (para. 34). Noting that this development would likely fail against items a, c, d, f, g and probably h.
 - e. Policy BE1 - Sense of Place (para. 36), item 1.
- f. Policy BE4 - Heritage Assets (para. 37). Current AALs are Heritage Assets under the NPPL Whist this consideration may fail if AALs are not designated in the Local Plan, it's worth noting that

their exclusion would not remove their attractiveness and hence support of other comments above).

Highways and Traffic Issues

47. Access to a site of that size would likely require junctions onto Crendon Road, Chilton Road or both. To accommodate the amount of traffic generated would require significant junctions with all that entails in terms of street hardware.
48. The effect would be to change the appearance of the approach to the village from its current rural feel to one of a more urban appearance.
49. Much of the traffic generated would regularly use the junction in the centre of Chearsley. That is already a difficult, some say dangerous junction and it would potentially have to be significantly enlarged to cater for the traffic load. CPC has long argued for improvements to the junction but this would be of a different order of magnitude, adding to the urbanisation of the village.
50. A large part of the traffic departing/entering the development would route via Long Crendon, aggravating the already congested nature of Chearsley Road at the Long Crendon roundabout.

Infrastructure Issues

51. It will be imperative that conversations take place between the Council and utility companies. It is expected that water and electricity companies are unlikely to support such a large development in this rural area because of the necessary upgrades needed to provide services. While the developer might be expected to pay for necessary upgrades this could fundamentally undermine other important infrastructure investment (e.g. affordable housing provision on the site) thereby failing to achieve any benefit for the local population.
52. It is inevitable that a development of this size will result in pressure on local council services like schools as well as provision of medical or dental services. This fails to achieve the Council's sustainable objectives.

Commentary

53. CPC recognises the difficulties faced by BC in finding enough new site capacity to meet the Local Housing Need requirement of 74,000 homes across the County over the Local Plan period. It also recognises the consequences of BC not being able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. It means that difficult choices have to be made.
54. Though difficult, choices also have to be consistent. CPC has sought in this document to demonstrate that including the Site in the HELAA would be completely inconsistent with significant policy and other direction statements elsewhere in the draft Local Plan.
55. It has also, we hope, demonstrated that through precedent (i.e. repeated rejections of planning appeals by the Planning Inspectorate) and from a plain common-sense point of view, this site should not be permitted to be developed.
56. CPC would also point out that work is currently in hand to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the village. Whilst at an early stage, we are in active dialogue with local landowners with a view to seeking to identify locations that could be available for small-scale development.

57. This would be consistent with Policy NE17, Development in the Countryside outside the Green Belt (para 33), which supports potential development of sites included in a Neighbourhood Plan. It effectively places a responsibility for identifying options for small scale development on local communities and CPC wholeheartedly supports this approach.
58. The Council should consider less important and undesignated areas of land before looking to introduce large scale development parcels in areas that have already been designated as having positive landscape characteristics. The VALP and its designations has relatively recently been considered appropriate, and thus its conclusions remain valid. The CPC recognises that most villages are likely to have to accept their share of housing to help meet the significant demand, however this can and must be done sensitively, taking into account site context, housing requirements and sustainability objectives.
59. The call for site process must not be reduced to an any site is acceptable basis or a political bun fight, we implore local representatives to come together collaboratively in order to work out a cross-party solution for this very difficult issue.
60. CPC is already investigating options for sustainable housing development on the edge of the village. One landowner has proposed a site which CPC is actively considering.

Conclusion

61. This document demonstrates that inclusion of the subject site in the HELAA would be entirely inconsistent with other significant aspects of the draft Local Plan and potentially lead to a serious, negative impact on for the village
62. The site is therefore considered to be not suitable for inclusion in the HELAA and CPC requests that it is not.

References

1. [Chearsley Ridge](#) Area of Attractive Landscape
2. [Aylesbury Vale Landscape Character Assessment](#) 2008, re-issued 2015
3. Call for Sites 2012- 2023. [Map showing sites submitted](#).
4. [Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/A/14/2222284](#) - Land south-west of Chilton Road, Chearsley, Aylesbury HP18 ODN
5. [Appeal Ref: APP/J0405/W/18/3209418](#) - Land south west of Chilton Road, Chearsley
6. [Buckinghamshire Settlement Review, Augst 2025](#). A Local Plan Evidence document

Attachment 1 - Planning Application History

Proposed 2014 Development



Planning Applications at Grove Farm

25/01809/AGN Extension of existing agricultural building.

23/00703/APP Erection of an agricultural building and associated hardstanding.

22/00112/APP Erection of a steel framed building for the storage and production of animal feed.

21/00812/AGN Erection of a new building for storage and production of animal feeding.

20/00268/APP Provision of a permanent agricultural workers dwelling.

17/01807/APP Erection of agricultural building.

14/03197/APP Extensions to both ends of existing cattle buildings.

14/01437/AGN Erection of agricultural building for storage of machinery and feed products.