**WELFORD PARISH COUNCIL**

CLERK TO THE PARISH COUNCIL – MR IAN KELLY

For the attention of:

Eamon McDowell

Area Planning Officer: Planning Department (Daventry Area)

Growth, Climate & Regeneration

Place and Growth Directorate

West Northamptonshire Council

Dear Mr. McDowell,

**Re: WND/2023/0148 Land To South West Of A14 Junction At Cold Ashby, Northampton Road, Cold Ashby.**

**Outline application with all matters reserved except means of access for the development of three Use Class B8 units.**

Welford Parish Council Planning Committee met on Wednesday 5th Aril to discuss the above application. I can advise you that there were also 10 residents present who had all attended the meeting for this item.

The issues that had been identified by Councillors that were of concern were raised during the meeting and in many cases agreed with the views of the residents:

*1. A number of Policies this contravenes in the Local Plan*

*2. Conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework*

*3. Concerns about the level of contamination in the ground from previous use as an unmanaged waste disposal site*

*4. Run off of water into sources of the River Avon*

*5. Impact on local wildlife, flora and fauna*

**WNC Planning Policy**

**Policy RA6 Open Countryside**

**The intrinsic character, beauty and tranquility of the open countryside of the District will be recognised.**

This application is to be installed in an agricultural area and is not located near to any similar developments. The site will be seen from nearby villages and light pollution will greatly affect the area.

**Policy S1 - Development and economic activity will be distributed on the following basis:**

**A) development will be concentrated primarily in and adjoining the principal urban area of Northampton**

**B) appropriate development of a lesser scale will be located in and adjoining the sub-regional centre of Daventry town**

**C) the development needs of the rural service centres of Towcester and Brackley and the rural areas will also be provided for**

**D) new development in the rural areas will be limited with the emphasis being on:**

**1) Enhancing and maintaining the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities;**

**2) Shortening journeys and facilitating access to jobs and services;**

**3) Strengthening rural enterprise and linkages between settlements and their hinterlands; and**

**4) Respecting the quality of tranquility.**

This proposal is contrary to these Policy statements in that this is a site in a distinctly rural location with small villages within viewing range of the buildings when built. Furthermore the policy indicates development will take place nearer to the main towns within West Northamptonshire and not a location 10 miles and more from any of the towns mentioned in the policy.

**Policy RA3 - The Other Villages perform a predominantly local role in providing a limited number of services and facilities for their residents**

**A. Development at the Other Villages will be located within the confines of the**

**village.**

**B. Development outside the confines will be acceptable only in the following circumstances;**

**iii. Economic development that will enhance or maintain the vitality or**

**sustainability of the Other Village or would contribute towards and improve**

**the local economy**

**C. To ensure that the role of these villages is maintained, all development at the**

**Other Villages, within or outside the confines shall also meet the following criteria;**

**i. Be small scale; and**

**ii. Not result in the loss of existing services and facilities important to the**

**sustainability of the settlement and its role as an Other Village; and**

**iii. Protect the form, character and setting of the village and areas of historic or**

**environmental importance including those identified in conservation area**

**appraisals and village design statements; and**

**iv. Protect the integrity of garden or other open land that makes an important**

**contribution to the form, character and setting of the settlement; and**

**v. Be accessible by walking and cycling to the majority of services and facilities**

**within the settlement; and**

While Cold Ashby is a village noted as an ‘Other Village’, Welford and Naseby do not form part of the other villages mentioned in this policy. There is no local need for this development and it is certainly not small scale. There are two public footpaths which cross the site, CK/002 and CK/003. The development will seriously affect the access to and enjoyment of these routes. Furthermore, the character of the surrounding villages will be greatly affected by the impact of the development.

**Policy EC4 –Strategic Employment AreasTo ensure a vibrant economy proposals for B1 (b, c), B2 and B8 uses will be supported. The expansion of any existing business within these use classes will be supported, provided it promotes and supports the role and performance of the employment area and does not harm the amenity of surrounding residential properties.**

**And**

**Policy E1 - POLICY E1 – Existing employment areas to help support a vibrant, successful and developing local economy existing and allocated employment sites and industrial estates across west Northamptonshire will be retained for uses within use classes B1, B2, B8 and appropriate non-b employment generating uses.**

While the application is for B8 use, there is no existing business within the area and the employment on offer will be unskilled and therefore require workers to be recruited from further afield than the local villages. The developer argues that the requirement for jobs is key to the development. However, the National Policy Planning Framework indicates the following:

***Paragraph 85.****Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.*

***Paragraph 100.****Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.*

As has been stated above, the area is not well served by public transport. Furthermore, public rights of way will be severely impacted by the development. As such the NPPF indicates under Section 8 that Planning Policy should encourage healthy and safe communities. Thus jobs do not trump the local ecology and wellbeing of the communities affected by this development.

**POLICY S10 – Sustainable Development Principles**

**Be located where services and facilities can be easily accessed by walking, cycling or public transport;**

* **Maximise water efficiency and promote sustainable drainage;**
* **Protect, conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and heritage assets and their settings;**
* **Minimise pollution from noise, air and run off.**

Due to the nature of the buildings, there will be a large amount of water run-off from the buildings into the local eco-system. Due to the serious contamination to the land, a water treatment plant would need to be installed in order to reduce the impact on the contaminants in the ground which could run off into the sources of the River Avon and affect the local eco-system.

While the A14 and A5199 run adjacent to the development, the local bus service has been greatly reduced and will not support any workers getting to the site during normal operating hours. There is no natural cycle route to the development and due to the volume of traffic on the A14 cyclists do not normally use this route for leisure or other pursuits. As the development is some distance from built up areas, it will be some distance for any walker to travel on foot to the site and there is no footway linking the site to any of the surrounding villages.

**POLICY C1 – Changing behaviour and achieving modal shift priority will be given to proposed transport schemes that will contribute to behavioural change by:**

**1) Providing access by walking, cycling and public transport to key facilities and services;**

**2) Promoting the use of walking, cycling and public transport over and above private car trips;**

**3) Maximising the use of existing capacity within transport infrastructure; and**

**Any capacity improvements should support economic growth and/ or safeguard strategic routes and/ or reduce transport energy use**

**In order to achieve behavioural change the following measures will be introduced across west Northamptonshire:**

**A) The delivery of a comprehensive public transport network.**

**C) The provision of effective cycling networks across the existing urban and rural area linked to key transport interchanges.**

**D) New development should be accessed by fibre to the premises (fttp) technology enabling access to superfast broadband and speeds of at least 30 megabits per second.**

**Information communication networks, such as superfast broadband, will be supported across the whole of west northamptonshire to reduce the need to travel and be a requirement for new developments.**

As indicated in response to Policy S10: The local transport structure for bus services has been greatly reduced and will not support any workers getting to the site during normal operating hours.. The A14 and A5199 run adjacent to the development and will encourage those who need to travel to work by car or similar means to use that infrastructure which will lead to increased traffic volumes on the surrounding roads and villages. There is no natural cycle route to the development and due to the volume of traffic on the A14 cyclists do not normally use this route for leisure or other pursuits. As the development is some distance from built up areas, it will be some distance for any walker to travel on foot to the site.

Within the transport plan submitted by the developer, they acknowledge that the bus service travels to the nearby villages, however it does not touch on the infrequency of the service and that it is not available at weekends.

**Policy C2 -New developments**

**New housing, employment, commercial and retail development in the four towns of Northampton, Daventry, Towcester and Brackley and primary service villages will be expected to achieve the modal shift targets (in paragraph 6.13) by maximising travel choice from non-car modes.**

**Development will be required to mitigate its effects on the highway network and be supported by a transport assessment and travel plan prepared in accordance with current best practice guidelines as issued by the department for transport or the relevant local authority.**

**Sustainable urban extensions, as allocated within this plan, will additionally be required to:**

**A) provide access via walking, cycling and public transport routes to a mix of uses including local employment, housing and retail facilities;**

**B) ensure that new or enhanced public transport services are secured on occupation of the first dwelling when this is appropriate;**

**C) secure the most efficient networks for walking, cycling and public transport within the development;**

**D) ensure sufficient density across the site in order to sustain public transport and other local services.**

The issue around public transport has been indicated in answer to previous policies. However, unless there was a significant improvement to the local bus service providing access at key times for workers at the site, the development would not meet this policy as warehousing is usually operates 24/7 business and the current bus service would not meet 1% of the requirement for transport needs.

**Policy BN2 -Biodiversity**

**Development that will maintain and enhance existing designations and assets or deliver a net gain in biodiversity will be supported.**

**Development that has the potential to harm sites of ecological importance will be subject to an ecological assessment and required to demonstrate:**

* **the methods used to conserve biodiversity in its design and construction and operation**
* **how habitat conservation, enhancement and creation can be achieved through linking habitats**
* **how designated sites, protected species and priority habitats will be safeguarded**

**Development management decisions will reflect the hierarchy of biodiversity and geodiversity designations attaching appropriate weight to the status of the site which would be affected. In cases where it can be shown that there is no reasonable alternative to development that is likely to prejudice the integrity of an existing wildlife site or protected habitat appropriate mitigation measures including compensation will be expected in proportion to the asset that will be# lost. Where mitigation or compensation cannot be agreed with the relevant authority development will not be permitted.**

Since the site was abandoned by Northamptonshire County Council, the site has evolved a significant ecological character. The Great Crested Newt and other wildlife and flora has been established on the site since the waste site was closed. There is no significant net gain on the site for this wildlife and there are proposals to relocate the habitat to other locations.

The development will have a significant moderate to adverse landscape impact on both the immediate vicinity, the wider area and heritage assets.

**Traffic**

Furthermore, the Council is concerned with the likely increase to traffic flows through Welford. The High Street has a number of old houses that are already suffering damage to their structures from current HGV traffic flows.

When the A14, M1 or M6 are closed for planned works, there are agreed diversion routes with Highways England that minimize the impact on Welford. Where there is an unplanned diversion such as an accident on one of these routes, Welford sees a significant increase in traffic flows. The centre of the village is narrow in places and has seen lorries mount the pavements to avoid colliding with each other. For this site, diverted traffic flow would be greatly increased through Welford by the HGV weight limit restricting access to the site via Cold Ashby limiting access to the site from West to be either via Welford or from Northampton and through other villages.

The construction of the M1/M6/A14 interchange does not have a link to the M1 south on the eat bound A14. Consequently vehicles are supposed to travel to junction 1 of the M6 and return on the south bound lane to the M1. Where a vehicle is unable to access Junction 1 of the A14 it will lead to increased traffic flows in the locality.

The proposal talks about driver education to avoid local villages. While there will be lorries directly based at the site, there will also be suppliers who are not necessarily bound by any rules, requirements or education needs, but are time constrained on their route.

**Environment**

The Land Contamination Report submitted by the developers highlights some significant environmental issues within the report, namely:

* The central eastern portion of the site is an historic refuse tip. In the present day this can be seen as a vegetated mound feature ~1.00-2.00m above the surrounding ground. A number of gas monitoring wells are present across the mound and surrounding it although some have been vandalised
* The former gravel quarry to the east of the site is labelled as a landfill on

mapping dated 2006.

* The contamination study notes that there is “a moderate to high risk to construction persons during any development and a moderate risk to future site users”, as well as noting that there are 3 landfill areas on the site, one of which the contents of which are unknown. The resulting impact to users of the site is therefore unknown and potentially could have a significant impact on the surrounding environment if disturbed, contrary to National Planning Policy Framework Section 8 and 15.Significant volumes of ground gas in the form of methane and carbon dioxide were noted during an inspection

This report indicates that further work will have to be undertaken before any development is even considered.

The development is within 2km of a specified landscape area and the buildings in excess of 50 feet tall will have a severe impact on this land.

The NPPF indicates the following:

***Paragraph 174.*** *Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.*

As there is the presence of the Great Crested Newt, the rewilding of the local area with newly established flora and fauna and the public footpaths, these should be protected when the need for these buildings away from the urban areas where employment and other infrastructure cannot be met.

Furthermore, the potential for contamination of the River Avon if the previously unregulated rubbish tip is disturbed will be noticed for many miles within that ecosystem.

Finally, there is a former waste disposal site on the other side of the A5199. This site is at a higher point above sea level than the proposed site and therefore subject to contaminant run off onto the proposed site and beyond.

**Comment in relation to supporting statements**

The applicant recognises that the proposal is contrary to so many established and lawful policies and states that these should all be set aside to support local economic growth with no evidence provided to support that case. Welford Parish Council cannot find a single policy to support the proposal and would like to comment further on the applicants supporting statements:

Traffic

No attempt is made to analyse local traffic impact but much is made of the safety of turning movements. It is naive if not misleading to claim 0% HGV traffic will leave and arrive to the site through Welford where serious traffic impacts already exist. The applicant recognises that the A5199 is entirely unsuitable to HGV traffic. No account is taken of the increase in LGV and car traffic ( 28% of all such traffic). Proposals to mitigate the traffic impact (driver education, leaflets, car sharing etc) are unrealistic and unworkable in the long term.

Demand

Daventry District and the now cojoined areas of Northampton and South Northants have made one of the largest contributions to B8 development in England over recent years and the combined plans of the authorities make ample and reasoned future provision. A spurious argument is espoused by the applicant that the market is not providing “this size” of Buildings” which clearly not the case. The size of buildings appears to be driven more by the accident of site geography and boundaries than anything else. The applicant is not seeking approval to site layout and design which could be changed at future RM stages.

Landscape impact

The findings of the applicants landscape appraisal that there is “moderate to adverse” landscape impact to the local vicinity, SLA, and heritage assets is dismissed by them as irrelevant with a statement that the site has been carefully designed to minimise landscape impact. Design approval is not sought at this stage and it would appear that the draft design proposals just align the buildings with site boundaries.

Ecology

Since abandonment of the site by NCC , the site has evolved a significant ecological character with Great Crested Newt population and other priority and high value habitats. These habitats cannot simply be relocated elsewhere as they survive on the unique characteristics of the site. The applicant recognises that no net gain is feasible and therefore proposes to destroy the entire habitat.

Precedent

The applicant is seeking approval to abandon all existing policy and to do so would set a dangerous precedent not only on the adjoining quadrants of this junction but also all undeveloped junction s in open countryside with the Authority’s area.

**Summary**

Welford Parish Council has considered the concerns of residents and also using the knowledge and experience of the Councillors. The position of Welford Parish Council is that they strongly oppose the proposed B8 Warehouses and associated development.

Yours sincerely

**Ian Kelly**

**Clerk to Welford Parish Council**

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**11th April 2023**