

## **DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL SITE ALLOCATIONS EXAMINATION OCTOBER 2016**

### **Written Statement Matter 7 Policy LA1: Marchmont Farm, Hemel Hempstead - Inspector's Questions 1-4 - Michael Nidd**

I am Michael Nidd, Secretary of Piccotts End Residents' Association and local resident for 40 years.

#### **Question 1: Is a reference to the Conservation Area needed within the policy?**

Yes. The policy should certainly recognise that the immediately adjacent Piccotts End is a conservation area consisting largely of 19<sup>th</sup>. and 19<sup>th</sup>. Century dwellings. The current separation between the new-build at Grovehill and the conservation area that is the hamlet of Piccotts End is achieved by Marchmont Fields which separate two distinct and architecturally disparate communities. When Grovehill was planned, great care was taken to achieve low roof-lines to reduce to a minimum the visual intrusion of new-build so as to preserve the views across the river valley, including those of Piccotts End itself. Extensive new-build so close to a conservation area is undesirable.

When the Link Road was built, Piccotts End was extensively used as a “rat-run” especially during the morning rush period, as a means of avoiding congestion at the roundabout on the Leighton Buzzard Road. This resulted in a number of largely unsuccessful attempts at “traffic calming”, some of which still disfigure the locality. The proposed Marchmont Fields development, access to and egress from which, it is proposed, would be from a new roundabout part-way up the Link Road, will impede traffic flow along the Link Road but, worse, much of the traffic from the proposed development at Chaulden (LA3) would add, via Galley Hill, to congestion at the Leighton Buzzard Road/Link Road roundabout and thereby greatly increase the risk of a return to the rat-run through Piccotts End, where it would encounter backed-up traffic on the the Link Road, caused by the new roundabout, and back-up in Piccotts End as a result.

#### **Question 2: Is a wider planted buffer necessary along the western boundary of the site and if so is reference to this necessary in the policy?**

Yes, to minimise the visual intrusion of new-build. If the policy contains no reference to the need, there is no likelihood of its being met.

#### **Question 3: is the site viable with the provision of a traveller site?**

Far less likely than without a traveller site. However, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites was revised in

2015 and incorporated a rather more challenging definition of travellers such that the special distinction will only apply to those “who lead a genuine travelling lifestyle. Ministers insisted this would mean that any application for a permanent site, including caravan sites, by someone who does not travel will be considered in the same way as an application from the so-called settled population.

There appears not to have been any reassessment of traveller sites needs against the new Government definition of “travellers”, and it may well be that the site projected for Marchmont Fields would not, in the light of such a review, be justified, which would remove any threat of non-viability. At the least, an evidence-based reassessment of needs should be carried out, in concert with the review of the Core Strategy.

**Question 4: Should the site come forward prior to 2021 if it is available?**

No. The NPPF, subsequently further clarified by Ministers, indicates that in the absence of exceptional circumstances being adduced to justify removing land from the Green Belt, the principles set out in the Core Strategy would not be observed if this, or any other of the Local Allocations, were removed from the Green Belt either before 2021 or before the Core Strategy has been reviewed and completion of consultation on a new Core Strategy or a successor Local Plan.

Ends.