

Haddenham Parish Council

Planning Committee 29th January 2024

23/04009/AOP | Outline planning application with all matters reserved except access for the erection of up to 86 dwellings (Use Class C3) including affordable housing, together with creation of new areas of open space and a LAP, a new access off Lower Road and through Fairfield Close, landscaping and all enabling and ancillary works. | Land South Of Lower Road And East Of Fairfield Close Haddenham Buckinghamshire

The Parish Council OPPOSES this application for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development is contrary to VALP policies S1 (Sustainable development for Aylesbury Vale), S2 (spatial strategy for growth) and S3 (development in the countryside) of the VALP and the NPPF (December 2023). Although VALP policy S3 designates Haddenham as a strategic settlement for growth, the application site is **not** an allocated housing site in VALP, nor can it be considered as infill.
2. The proposed development is contrary to VALP policy D3 (policies for non-allocated sites at strategic settlements). The VALP allocated 1082 homes to Haddenham over the period 2012-2033. Since the start of that period, 1162 homes have been approved, nearly all of which have already been built or are under construction, including the three major sites. Haddenham has taken its share of allocated development.
3. The applicant's challenge on the 5 Year Housing Land Supply has been superseded by December's NPPF, which dropped this requirement for a 5 year period following adoption of a Local Plan; VALP was adopted in September 2021. Therefore the "tilted balance" does not apply to this application and the exceptional circumstances in VALP policy D3 are not triggered. As the new NPPF was introduced with immediate effect and prior to registration of this application, the transitional arrangements do not apply (unlike application 23/0031/APP on land east of Churchway).
4. The proposal is outside the accepted village footprint and is contrary to the assessment of the wider site shown as HAD009 (5.6 Ha at Fairfields Farm) in the 2017 HELAA (Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment) for the VALP. The HELAA concluded that the majority (4.17 Ha) of HAD009 located behind Stanbridge Road, including the proposal site, was **unsuitable** for development due to its poor relationship with the north and south of the village and the impact on views from the Chilterns. Only one section of the site, 1.43 Ha fronting onto Stanbridge Road, was allocated for 40 houses; in fact, 72 have been approved, all submitted by the present applicant, but under 3 separate planning applications (16/0412/AOP, 17/01692/APP, 23/00843/APP). A further permission for 16 homes at Nursery Field (18/01037/AOP) on adjoining land further adds to the quantum of approved development here.
5. The proposal is contrary to the Inspector's findings under appeal APP/J0405/W/20/3257840 by Rectory Homes for non-determination of their planning application 19/02145/APP for 43 homes essentially in the same location. In the planning balance the Inspector found that the development would harm the rural character and appearance of the area in conflict with the then Policies GP 35 and GP 38 of the AVDLP (now within VALP) and dismissed the appeal. The Inspector's objections as expressed in paras 19-27 are material to the present

application: “unacceptable encroachment into open countryside”; harm to the rural character of the surrounding countryside; introducing a suburban appearance when approaching the village from the Aylesbury direction; and “leap frogging” resulting in greater depth of build form both visually and physically.

6. The proposal entails the loss of BMV (Best & Most Versatile) agricultural land so is contrary to VALP policy NE7 and NPPF. In particular, the latest December 2023 NPPF strengthens the presumption against loss of food production on better quality land.
7. Approval would undermine and be contrary to the decision by BC’s Central Area Committee in January 2024 to refuse the hostile application 23/0031/AOP for 89 properties on land east of Churchway, where the material issues are very similar to the present application.
8. The proposal is **not** sustainable development. In its representations on the above application 23/0031/APP the Parish Council briefed the Area Committee about the impact of being a strategic settlement with 50% growth by over 1000 homes, around 2,500 people on a village of just 4,500. Sustainability is frequently seen in transport terms but is not only about having a railway station. It also means having the social and community infrastructure to support development and its new residents. Public services are already overstretched in Haddenham, and that’s before any completions on Redrow’s large development of 273 homes. This is evidenced by:
 - The Parish Council has met with the Headteachers of both the Junior school and the larger of the two Infants schools (the application incorrectly states that Haddenham has 2 Junior schools). The impact of growth has been described to us as “profound”. All three Haddenham schools are now at capacity, with class sizes increased to the maximum allowed, higher levels of special needs to be addressed, increased staffing needs, and internal alterations. This all must be managed within existing budgets: S106 does not provide more teachers or classroom assistants. There is a real possibility that the children of more new residents will not find places in Haddenham schools. Far from the few minutes’ walk to school envisaged by the applicant, children may well end up being driven to schools elsewhere.
 - The Health Centre is overstretched as evidenced by the patients’ liaison group and the Lead Primary Care Manager’s response to the current application. S106 may provide a building extension, but it does not pay for more health staff, who in any event are very difficult to recruit. Villagers are struggling to get appointments, so again new residents may have to travel outside Haddenham.
 - Haddenham Community Library is referenced as a facility but in fact is facing a £10,000 reduction in its grant from Buckinghamshire Council from April 2024.
 - Pubs are similarly referenced as important amenities, but of the 5 pubs in the VALP’s assessment of community assets, 3 have since closed and only 2 survive to serve the expanding population, contrary to NPPF expectations to safeguard such assets in the rural economy.

There is a strong feeling in this community that it has exhausted its capacity to absorb the cumulative impact of growth.

9. The applicant states that there is no impact on heritage assets. But the additional traffic generated by new development is already impacting the historic environment with damage to verges, wicket walls and buildings. The new developments at Aston Road and Stanbridge Road have increased traffic through Church End and along Station Road westwards towards Thame, adding to congestion and safety concerns caused by St Mary’s School parking and

eroding Church End's registered village green. Creating a vehicle access from this development through Fairfield Close will encourage use of this route.

10. We further object to creating an access at Fairfield Close which was designed as a cul-de-sac serving 14 homes in a low-traffic pedestrian-friendly road. These residents attended the Parish Council's Planning Committee to express the not unreasonable expectation that their new homes were bought on this understanding. Indeed, one property accesses their parking by crossing the road from directly outside their frontage. Creating this second access also provides a potential cut-through between the Lower Road towards the Thame-Risborough road to the south.
11. We do not agree everyone will walk from this development to the railway station; some will undoubtedly seek to park at the station. This will exacerbate two problems. The first is that there is a major problem of people seeking to avoid station car park charges by parking in residential roads near the station, to the much-voiced frustration and annoyance of residents demanding action. Secondly, use of the station car park itself is now picking up post-covid with more people returning to their offices, but this has coincided with the closure of the car park's upper tier as a dangerous structure. No decision has yet been taken on how to deal with this problem and it looks unlikely to be resolved in the short or even medium term.
12. The junction of Stanbridge Road, Woodways and Lower Road is a local accident black-spot located on the principal east-west and north-south routes through the village. OS average speed data shows speeds of around or exceeding 30mph along Stanbridge Road. Our Speedwatch monitoring on Stanbridge Road shows frequent breaches of the 30mph limit. On occasions vehicles fail to slow down for the Woodways junction, overshoot it and end up in the gardens of the adjoining properties. The proximity of the proposed development to this junction will add more traffic here. If the Council were minded to approve this application, the Parish Council asks that the Section 106 agreement includes funding of the traffic calming measures set out in our "Streetscape" project undertaken with consultants Philip Jones Associates, particularly the proposals designed to calm speeds and improve pedestrian crossings along the length Stanbridge Road. This work results from a Neighbourhood Plan obligation on Buckinghamshire Council to carry out a traffic impact assessment and is part-funded by the Community Board and supported by public consultation. The project identifies particular village problems and includes the feasibility of a village-wide 20mph zone which the Parish Council is discussing with BC colleagues: details are on the Parish Council's website.