

***Houghton Regis Town Council***  
**Planning Committee**  
**19<sup>th</sup> August 2019 at 7.00pm**

Present: Councillors: D Dixon-Wilkinson Chairman  
J Carroll  
D Jones  
M S Kennedy  
S Thorne  
K Wattingham  
T Welch

Officers: Debbie Marsh Corporate Services Manager  
Louise Senior Head of Democratic Services

Public: 44

Also present: Councillors: T McMahon  
S Goodchild  
A Ryan Central Bedfordshire Council

**10006 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

None.

**10007 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Members of the public raised several concerns regarding the planning application CB/19/02056/FULL

- The access track was owned by existing residents not Central Bedfordshire Council
- Property was out of keeping with the area
- Access to the proposed building would be only available through conservation land containing trees with TPO's (Tree Preservation Orders)
- The property would be sited on conservation land
- Loss of heritage site due to the possible destruction of tunnels situated on the land
- Parking issues as the application does not meet Central Bedfordshire Council parking requirements
- Over development of the land
- Loss of privacy to existing properties and lack of privacy of the new build
- Damage to the environment
- Building site would be too close to existing properties
- Plans would involve the removal of tree tops
- Turning circle would be too tight for vehicles which would go across resident's land
- Access road too tight for emergency vehicles
- Protected land should not be given over to developers
- Houghton Regis valuable heritage was disappearing with new developments
- Track road was also used for pedestrian access

- Health and care services were already overstretched, this property would stretch capacity further
- There was access to the rear of number 134, however this was for number 134 only
- The residents were not correctly notified of the application for the proposed property

Residents were assured that their comments and concerns would be passed on to Central Bedfordshire Council.

Members of the public raised several concerns regarding the planning application CB/19/02053/OUT

- The land for the proposed access would be over conservation land, which was the habitat for many species
- The natural spring would not be maintained with the loss of protected species and their habitats i.e. badgers, water voles etc.
- The information presented was not current information
- The plans did not show new road infrastructure
- Previous applications had been rejected in 1981 and 1984 by the Secretary of State
- The Brook had not been tended since the new road was opened

Residents were advised of the report from the Houghton Regis Town Council planning consultant. Members suggested that the Central Bedfordshire Council Councillor for that ward represent residents at the Development Management Committee meeting. Residents were assured by Councillor Ryan that she would call this application in.

#### **10008 SPECIFIC DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **10009 MINUTES**

The Committee received the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019 for consideration.

**Resolved To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019 and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

#### **10010 PLANNING MATTERS**

**(a) The following planning applications were considered:**

*Non - Delegated*

CB/19/02130/FULL Demolition of existing residential dwelling and erection of 121 dwellings including the creation of a new vehicular access, recreational open space, parking infrastructure and associated landscaping and ancillary works.  
The Gates Land East of Bedford Road Bidwell  
For: Jarvis Homes Ltd  
*Members received a report from the Town Councils planning consultant in relation to this application.  
Members were advised that this planning application would not be officer delegated but would be presented to Development Management Committee.*

**Comments:** The Town Council raises objections to the scheme as proposed, for the following reasons:

- The layout of the buildings adjoining the Bedford Road frontage should be changed so that these homes face the road reflecting the layout of the original hamlet and with respect to the setting of the adjoining listed building,
- The dwellings facing Bedford Road should be designed to reflect the materials and scale of the hamlet,
- The children's play area should be relocated elsewhere in the site to avoid placing close to a road and not adjoining a pond for reasons of safety,
- The spine road through the estate should be re-designed to reduce traffic speeds, reduce the lengths of straight carriageway and use the resulting design to introduce more landscaping into the street scene and reduce the appearance of a dense urban setting

The Town Council would review its objections if an amended scheme which incorporates all these changes were submitted, but in view of the scheme being in advance of any nearby service, shopping or community facilities, would seek a s.106 contribution being negotiated towards these being provided, plus a play facility aimed at young teenagers, and a bus service to connect the site with the facilities in the town centre.

## 1. Description

1.1 Bidwell is a small group of mostly homes and farm buildings either side of the Bedford Road, currently separate from Houghton Regis, located at the foot of the hill north of the town centre. The site is situated on the eastern side of Bedford Road, with a frontage onto the road and includes the paddocks at the rear which extend to the southern edge of the Rugby Club. A footpath / right of way (Chiltern Way) runs north-south along the eastern boundary. There is a small row of terraced houses fronting Bedford Road north of the site and the Red Cow Farm, a grade II listed building to the south.

1.2 The site is not included in the Masterplan Area for Houghton Regis North development and under the current Local Plan (2004) is within a green belt designation. The proposed Local Plan (the Examination period has recently concluded and the Inspectors' conclusions are awaited) contains one allocation for development at Bidwell – HAS28 in the Small / Medium Allocations, for 40 homes on the Bidwell Gospel hall site.

1.3 The Design & Access Statement supporting the application illustrates that the HRN Masterplan proposals will see Bidwell including the application site, enveloped by new development; immediately to the east of the site will be a landscape belt carrying the current right of way with housing beyond.

1.4 The site is just over 4ha in size, a gentle slope to the north, currently with a house and various out-buildings. There are trees and hedges on the site mostly along its boundaries and between the house and Bedford Road, otherwise the site comprises rough-grazing / pasture.

1.5 The proposal is wholly residential, demolition of the existing buildings and 121 new homes made up of a mix of houses and flats:

Private Dwellings (Total 85); 7 x 4 Bed Houses; 46 x 3 Bed Houses; 23 x 2 Bed Houses;  
9 x 2 Bed Flats.

Affordable Dwellings (Total 36); 1 x 4 Bed House; 6 x 3 Bed Houses; 10 x 2 Bed Houses;  
13 x 2 Bed Flats; 6 x 1 Bed Flats.

1.6 The balance between private and affordable dwellings accords with the Central Beds requirements. The affordable dwellings are in two groups: one near the boundary with the rugby club and the other on the southern edge.

1.7 The site would be served by a single road access point from the Bedford Road frontage with pavements either side, leading to a spine road connecting to a number of cul-de-sacs. The scheme includes two areas of open space, one with a play area adjoining an attenuation pond on the Bedford Road frontage next to the access road, the second a ribbon of grass and planting along the eastern boundary retaining the hedgerow and trees plus an access pathway.

1.8 There are 236 car parking spaces shown, a mix of allocated / on-plot spaces and unallocated / visitor parking. A Travel Plan report accompanies the application which highlights the walking / footpath opportunities, cycling and bus stops / routes close to the site.

The location of the development means that access to local school(s), community facilities, shops and Houghton Regis centre would be the most important to facilitate to avoid unnecessary car-based journeys. The Design & Access Statement describes the facilities available in Houghton Regis, those which will be provided within the HRN development, and the excellent (car-based) connections northwards to the A5 dual carriageway and southwards to Houghton Regis and Dunstable.

## 2. Planning Policy

2.1 The Planning Statement supporting the application balances three policy matters: the requirement to determine applications in accordance with the adopted local plan (2004), the anticipated matters which the draft Central Beds Local Plan will need to embrace before that can be adopted, and thirdly the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) support for sustainable development.

2.2 The recent Local Plan Hearings have given rise to a considerable number of issues which, it is likely, the Inspectors will require further work by Central Bedfordshire to produce evidence or justification, and which may itself involve a period of further consultation.

2.3 This is unlikely to affect the progress of the Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 developments, where sites are already commenced with levelling and infrastructure being installed.

2.4 The Statement with this application also refers to the HRN Framework (2012) which guides the HRN development, however as stated above Bidwell is not included in the Framework area.

## 3. Issues

3.1 Policy: Ordinarily the current green belt designation in the adopted local plan would require a high bar of justification to be demonstrated to enable development, then usually only a limited range of types – infill, required in connection with agriculture etc.

However the approval of the HRN development in 2012 and the subsequent reserved matters approvals for its implementation, around Bidwell, which will in the near future leave it as an ‘island’ between HRN and Houghton Regis means that the purposes identified for green belt in the National Planning Policy Framework – to prevent settlements merging, to protect open countryside, have very limited application.

3.2 It should be noted that other applications for development between Houghton Regis and Bidwell have been approved –

CB/17/02512/OUT

Outline Application: Residential development of up to 1.03ha of the site with formation of two accesses, sustainable urban drainage and associated landscaping

Land South of the bungalow, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 6JS

CB/19/00668/OUT

Outline application for the erection of 7 detached dwellings with associated access, turning and parking.

Land East of Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, Beds LU5 5ES

CB/18/00067/OUT

Outline Application: Formation of a new access to serve existing residential development and a residential development of up to 24 dwellings together with an enhanced footpath link and associated landscaping

Highfield Barns, Bedford Road, Houghton Regis, Dunstable, LU5 6JP

3.3 On balance, the current green belt designation has little relevance or justification. However the development will have little in the way of local community facilities, schools or retail opportunities until the development on HRN progresses, and a S.106 agreement is recommended to contribute towards these and to support public transport into Houghton Regis.

3.4 Scale and Density: The design and layout achieves 121 dwellings on a little over 4ha, a density of approximately 30 to the hectare which is in the medium / high range, more akin to an urban setting rather than a village or hamlet. There is no specific policy in the Local Plan in relation to Bidwell and its future development except the site at Gospel Hall, but NPPF paragraph 122. States

Planning policies and decisions should support development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account:

- a) the identified need for different types of housing and other forms of development, and the availability of land suitable for accommodating it;
- b) local market conditions and viability;
- c) the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services – both existing and proposed – as well as their potential for further improvement and the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use;
- d) the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens), or of promoting regeneration and change; and
- e) the importance of securing well-designed, attractive and healthy places.

3.5 Reference to an area's prevailing character and setting is a consideration but with the exception of the listed building adjoining to the south there is little to justify major changes to the scale or density. However some issues regarding design and layout may affect the overall number of houses on the site.

3.6 Layout & Design: The main concerns are with the southern part of the site fronting Bedford Road. This part of Bidwell still retains characteristics of a small hamlet and the site frontage should reflect this. The dwellings nearest the Bedford Road frontage present the side elevation / gable end to the road and should be re-designed so the front elevations are fore-most, and would be more in keeping with older houses nearby. This front elevation should have design features which reflect the simplicity of the local vernacular.

3.7 A major part of the scheme's appearance from Bedford Road is the pond and open space with houses placed around it on two sides and the estate spine road on the third. However placing the children's play area next to the pond and the spine road raises concerns over safety and the play area should be relocated elsewhere in the site. The pond and open space is the main landscape feature and the rest of the site lacks planting with the houses presenting an 'urban' appearance which would be relieved with more landscaping.

3.8 The purpose of the two footpath connections shown leaving the site on the eastern boundary should be clear, e.g. links to proposed facilities in new development.

3.9 the scheme as it stands makes no mention of traffic calming / speed restrictions on the spine road, and this should be incorporated to help reduce traffic speeds as a safety feature for pedestrians, cyclists and children. The scope for road bends and narrows would also allow more new planting.

3.10 In order to justify being considered 'sustainable' the scheme should show electric charging points for dwellings and parking spaces, with solar panels and water heating panels incorporated in the house designs.

CB/19/02056/FULL New dwelling.  
Greenside, 134 High Street, LU5 5DT  
For: Nextgen Properties Ltd  
***Members received a copy of a letter of objection in relation to this application.***

**Comments:** The Town Council strongly objects to the scheme as proposed, for the following reasons:

- Inappropriate development in the setting of the Conservation Area;
- Overdevelopment, the proposed development appears cramped for the site;
- Concerns over the loss of trees that are protected;
- Lack of parking provision;
- Lack of an adequate Environmental Impact Assessment;
- Lack of suitable Archaeological Assessment, desktop study not sufficient;
- Lack of Conservation Area application;
- Due to the proposed location of refuse collection, this would cause the refuse lorry to stop on a pedestrian crossing which could lead to harm of pedestrians and other road users.

Whilst not a planning matter, the access road is not in the ownership of the occupiers of the proposed dwelling, therefore access cannot be gained.

CB/19/02053/OUT Outline Application - for the provision of up to 350 residential dwellings and associated works  
Land to the east of Houghton Park Road Houghton Regis  
For: Bellcross Homes  
***Members received a report from the Town Councils planning consultant in relation to this application.***  
***Members received a copy of a letter of objection in relation to this application.***  
***Members were advised that this planning application would not be officer delegated but would be presented to Development Management Committee.***

**Comments:** The Town Council raises major objections to the outline application as proposed for the following reasons:



- the proposal avoids any of the education, community or other facilities required for a new community of this size and / or those anticipated for this part of the HRN development shown in the Framework Plan,
- the proposal fails to integrate with the broader transport scheme for HRN by not showing the central north-south road / bus route through the site, and would therefore not enable this essential part of the transport infrastructure to be implemented,
- the proposed scheme would rely on all road traffic to and from the site passing along Conquest Road before joining Parkside Drive. This would be a major detriment to the residents on Conquest Road by virtue of noise, disturbance and possibly safety and pollution problems.

b) The current application should be refused or withdrawn in favour of a scheme which shows an integrated approach to the development of this area, showing the proper provision of community facilities and transport provisions.

## 1. Description

1.1 The outline application seeks permission for up to 350 houses and the access arrangements, all other issues, design, materials etc being reserved for later approval. The site is given as 14.72 hectares and the outline application is supported by an Illustrative Masterplan, and plans with broad proposals for Land Use, Density and Building Heights, Green and Blue Infrastructure, and Movement and Access. If approved there would be further submissions showing more details of layout, design, arrangement of open space, surface water drainage, etc, however at this outline stage only the broad proposals for land use – residential, and access are being put forward.

1.2 Beyond the current extent of the Parkside estate, the land to the east is a ‘greenfield’ site, un-developed rough pasture. The Ouzel Brook drains southwards towards the River Lea, and the Woodside Link has been constructed from the M1 / A5 junction, running north-south between the brook and the motorway.

1.3 The site is located to the east of Houghton Park Road, roughly rectangular in shape, extending from Fenwick Road in the south, northwards to the edge of the existing housing on Houghton Park Road, with the southern edge of the Kingsland site beyond. The site is approximately 100m wide and does not include all the land up to the brook.

1.4 The Movement and Access Parameter plan shows a single main access point for vehicular traffic to the site from the end of Conquest Road with a second 'emergency access' to the north from Houghton Park Road. On the eastern side of the site the plan shows two points for road access to future development (up to the brook) and two footpath links, connecting with cycle / footpath routes across the site.

1.5 The land-use plan shows a mix of residential development and open space, served by two road loops from the central access road. The open space is shown as five parks within the site, some with play areas, a linear feature following the brook where it crosses the site, and a green / landscaped strip around the western, southern and northern site edges.

## 2. Planning Policy

2.1 There is a requirement to consider applications in accordance with the adopted local plan (which is currently the South Beds Plan from 2004), which shows the site as green belt. The draft Central Beds Local Plan has reached the stage of awaiting consideration after the recent examination. As such although not finalised or adopted, this Plan should be given some weight in assessing this application. It shows the site as part of the Houghton Regis North scheme, for which the Framework was approved in 2012. The outcome for the Local Plan is unlikely to affect the progress of the Houghton Regis North 1 and 2 developments, where sites are already commenced with levelling and infrastructure being installed. The Woodside Link is a major element of the Framework.

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires applications to be considered in light of adopted plans; in the absence of an up to date adopted plan, there is support for sustainable development.

2.3 The HRN Framework (2012) indicates the whole of the area between Parkside and the brook being developed with a mix of residential, schools and a community hub served by a main road and bus network route running north-south. This proposed road would serve the area with a main junction on the Woodside link to the south, and would continue through to the residential and other development proposed to the north (part of the Kingsland site).

## 3. Issues

3.1 Policy: Ordinarily the current green belt designation in the adopted local plan would require a high bar of justification to be demonstrated to enable development, then usually only a limited range of types – infill, required in connection with agriculture etc. However the approval of the HRN

development in 2012 and the subsequent reserved matters approvals for its implementation, means that the purposes identified for green belt in the National Planning Policy Framework – to prevent settlements merging, to protect open countryside, have very limited application. In addition, it would appear unlikely at this stage that whatever the outcome of the Central Beds Local Plan examination, it would produce any major changes to the HRN developments.

3.2 This policy position, combined with the thrust of the NPPF towards supporting sustainable development, especially in the absence of an up-to-date adopted local plan means that the outline application should be given very careful consideration.

3.3 Scale and Density: The layout gives an overall average density of 24 per hectare, although this will increase if the areas of green / open space are excluded. Nonetheless these densities would be considered broadly acceptable.

3.4 Layout & Design: There are three main concerns with the proposal layout and design:

- firstly, that the proposal avoids any of the education, community or other facilities anticipated for this part of the HRN development shown in the Framework Plan,
- secondly, the proposal fails to integrate with the broader transport scheme for HRN by not showing the central north-south road / bus route through the site, and would therefore not enable this essential part of the transport infrastructure to be implemented,
- thirdly the proposed scheme would rely on all road traffic to and from the site passing along Conquest Road before joining Parkside Drive. This would be a major detriment to the residents on Conquest Road by virtue of noise, disturbance and possibly pollution.

3.5 Conquest Drive is currently a cul-de-sac, with the side gable walls of some houses and the rear gardens of others facing the road. The road is used for casual parking and has a turning-head at the edge of the application site, which the scheme proposes to utilise. There is no data with the application on anticipated traffic flows or the adequacy of Conquest Road or the junction with Parkside Drive.

CB/19/01907/FULL Erection of a single storey storage building to existing Autobox/BCS House  
Bcs House, Blackburn Road, LU5 5BQ  
For: Mr S Penwright

**Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council has no objections to this application**

CB/19/02214/FULL Double storey side extension  
1 Fareham Way, LU5 5RE  
For: Mr & Mrs Michalski

**Comments: Houghton Regis Town Council has no objections to this application**

CB/19/02165/FULL Part First Storey, Part Double Storey Side & Single Storey Rear Extension  
2 Olma Road, LU5 5AF  
For: Mr P Scoropan

Members were advised that this property was in Dunstable, therefore Houghton Regis Town Council made no comment.

**(b) The following decision notices were noted:**

*Permissions / Approvals / Consents*

*Refusals:*

None received.

*Withdrawals:*

None received.

**10011 BUDGET REVIEW**

Members received the Planning budget to date.

**Resolved: To note the report.**

**10012 LAND AT OAKWELL PARK, THORN ROAD – 48 NEW RESIDENTIAL UNITS**

Members were advised that amendments to this application were due to be received and be considered at the next planning meeting. As the Town Council raised concerns in regard to the previous application members were requested to seek the support of the town council's retained planning consultant, when responding to this application.

**Resolved: To request that the Town Councils retained planning consultant review the amended planning application and to provide a report to members for the meeting to be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019.**

### **10013 LOCAL PLAN**

Members were advised that the Hearing Sessions closed on 25 July 2019. Further information regarding the next stage of the examination process would be available in due course.

**Resolved: To note the information.**

### **10014 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

At the meeting of the Planning Committee held on the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019 Members were advised that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group at its meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019, considered the public consultation quotations received and reported that they were unable to approve any of them. Following this conclusion, the Steering Group were then made aware that there could be possible support for the regulation 14 consultation, from an alternative source. At the meeting it was resolved that further investigations be undertaken in seeking alternative sources of support for the Regulation 14 consultation and to receive a recommendation from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group at the next planning meeting.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group at its meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019 considered a quotation of works received from BRCC (Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity) detailing the work they were able to do in order to support the Steering Group in meeting the Regulation 14 obligation. This quotation was significantly lower than the price detailed in the tender documents, £15,000.

The Town Council received a grant from Locality which still has over £3k remaining. Unfortunately, this grant was itemised over specific headings which could not be used for anything else. It was proposed to contact Locality to obtain consent to vire headings to support the Regulation 14 consultation. If members were supportive of the group working with BRCC then it was anticipated that the cost could be in the region of £7,500, this included costs for additional support not listed i.e. a further community drop in event. As previously stated, if agreed with Locality some of these costs could be offset against the grant already received.

Members asked if there was any opportunity to seek alternative quotes for some of the work required, i.e. leaflet printing and distribution. Officers informed members that the group were able to pick any of the elements of the quote without penalty.

In addition to the group and BRCC's support, it was anticipated that officer support would also be required.

**Resolved:**

- 1) To support the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group with their request to work with Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity in order to fulfil the Regulation 14 obligation;**
- 2) That the funds for this, up to the value of £7,500, to be taken from budget code 401-4062 Neighbourhood Plan.**

**10015 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES/LOCAL PLAN–  
UPDATE/PROGRESS**

**Woodside Link** – No substantive update to report.

**A5 M1 Link** – For information this major road project opened on the 11<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

**All Saints View** – No substantive update to report.

**Linnere** – Bellway, Morrisons, Barrett have all expressed an interest in development of this land. It was anticipated that applications, totalling 600 dwellings were expected around September time. The extension to Thornhill School had been agreed with Central Bedfordshire Council who would initially fund the project until funds could be taken back from s106 monies.

**Bidwell West** – No substantive update to report.

**Kingsland** – No substantive update to report.

**Windsor Drive** – No substantive update to report.

**Section 106 Monies** – No substantive update to report.

**Resolved: To note the information**

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.55pm**

**Dated this 9<sup>th</sup> day of September 2019**

**Chairman**