

## **PAULERSPURY PARISH COUNCIL**

### **DETAILED RESPONSES TO THE APPLICANTS' SUBMISSION**

#### **SNC Planning Reference S/2013/1496/MAO**

The following pages contain the Parish Council's comments on three of the documents submitted by the applicants (David Wilson Homes and The Kler Group) in support of the above planning application lodged with South Northamptonshire Council (SNC).

The three documents are entitled:-

- 1. Design and Access Statement**
- 2. Planning Statement**
- 3. Highways Report**

and each comment is referenced to the relevant numbered paragraph in the applicants' submitted documents.

Paulerspury Parish Council

04 December 2013

**Parish Council Comments  
on the  
Design and Access Statement**

# 1 Design and Access Statement

Paragraph	Parish Council Comment
1.7	The second bullet point refers to “an urban realm”. But Paulerspury has been a rural settlement for over 1000 years. “An urban realm” would be completely out of character. The layout does not “maximise(s) accessibility for all” as it is only accessible by vehicles from Tews End Lane which is narrow and restricted. Biodiversity exists at the present. It is hardly likely to be enhanced by “an urban realm”.
2.3	It is the view of the Parish Council, that section 7 of the NPPF is not satisfied by this development when compared to any of the bullet points listed.
2.5 and 2.6	The requirements of South Northamptonshire Local Plan, saved policies EV1 and EV21 are not met by this proposal.
3.4	The applicants seek to create “an urban realm” in what they accept is “open countryside”. This is hardly sustainable development.
3.10	There is no reference to the Higher Level Agricultural Improvement Scheme (in place through the Countryside Stewardship arrangements) which designates the site as of Environmental Importance.
3.14	The convenience store (in the B P Garage) is located on the edge of, not “within”, the surrounding area.
3.18 to 3.20	The Parish Council’s comments on Highway Access and Movement are dealt with separately.
3.23	The Parish Council fails to understand how the proposed development can “secure landscape benefits” beyond the open countryside aspects that now exist.
5.1	Current footpath links are infrequently used as most journeys are by car, not on foot.
5.2	Local residents are well provided with good open space at Spinalls Field, off the High Street and located between the public house and the Village Hall.
8.3	The applicants and Bidwells may well consider that “the amount of development is....appropriate” but they produce no evidence to back up this statement. The view of the Parish Council, reflecting the views of residents, is that this development is not appropriate.
8.5	There is considerable car use in this village and experience has shown that the number of off-road parking spaces is insufficient.
8.8	The need and extent of affordable housing was established following a survey by SNC in 2008 as being six dwellings, subsequently doubled to twelve by SNC.
8.10	There is bound to be “impact on the level of amenity currently enjoyed by the surrounding residents” whose properties currently are adjacent to, and overlook, open countryside.

# 1 Design and Access Statement

Paragraph	Parish Council Comment
8.13	The Parish Council does not understand what “good natural surveillance to the areas of publically accessible space” means. The balancing pond would need to be fenced for safety reasons. This would hardly make it a pleasant feature in the landscape.
8.16	No development of any sort that involves buildings can be said to enhance an area of open countryside.
8.19	The appearance of new buildings is controlled by the Paulerspury and Pury End Village Design Statement (VDS). There is no mention of this anywhere in Bidwell’s documentation. The final bullet point referring to “low density development” conflicts with reference to “increased housing density” in item 7.3.
8.20 and 8.21	The question of access to and egress from the site is dealt with elsewhere in the Parish Council’s comments.
9.3	This does not answer the question raised in 9.2.
9.5	Experience shows that relatively few current residents walk to village facilities.
9.7	Public transport use in the village is minimal at the present time despite good pedestrian links from the newer developments off the High Street. Like it or not, folk still prefer to use cars.
9.11	Again, there is no reference to the VDS.
9.13	There are really no landscape features in the site to be removed.
9.21	Experience, particularly in Stony Hill and Newbolt Close, shows that vehicles are not always parked within plots. Short of double yellow lines, there is no way to “ensure” that they are.

**Parish Council Comments  
on the  
Planning Statement**

## 2 Planning Statement

Paragraph	Parish Council Comment
1.9	Again there is reference to “an urban realm” which the Parish Council considers totally inappropriate for an established village located in a rural environment.
2.4	Bidwells state that “the Site is located in open countryside” but in 4.14 they say the site is not in a rural area. The Parish Council fails to comprehend how open countryside is not rural !
2.8	The Village Hall, Church and Chapel are also located within Paulerspury. The Garage/convenience store is on the edge, if not just outside, the village.
3.1	Is it proposed that the improved footpath will be used for cycling ? Is this not against the law ? (See the Highway Code).
4.9	Bidwells omit to say that the presumption in favour of sustainable development in the NPPF goes on to say: <i>For decision making this means approving proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.</i> As there is not yet any formal development plan for South Northamptonshire, the saved policies in the South Northamptonshire Local Plan apply and Policy EV2 clearly states that development will not normally be granted in open countryside. This site is located in open countryside and therefore development is not in accordance with policy EV2 and does not satisfy the listed exceptions.
4.12	Bidwells have not produced any evidence for “much needed homes” nor “a community facility”. A survey carried out in Paulerspury in 2008 established a need for six affordable homes although this number was subsequently increased to twelve by South Northamptonshire Council (SNC). The community facilities that exist in Paulerspury at the present time (school, churches, village hall, public house, restaurant, playing field, shop/garage, etc.) are adequate.
4.13	Any development of housing or employment will increase local spending. This is hardly a consideration to over-ride other objections.
4.14	The statement that “The proposed development is not located in a rural area” is beyond belief. Such a ridiculous fallacious statement by a supposed qualified and responsible firm such as Bidwells calls into question the validity of their whole Report.
4.15	Road safety issues have been dealt with separately in the Parish Council’s comments. In this section, Bidwells maintain that the development is not in a rural area but elsewhere in their documentation they say that the site is in the open countryside, which of course it is. Furthermore Bidwells now classify the village of Paulerspury as a “town” !

## 2 Planning Statement

Paragraph	Parish Council Comment
4.17	There are approvals for extensive “house building levels” in Towcester, Brackley, Silverstone and other nearby villages. The only identified need for housing in Paulerspury is for six affordable homes as previously stated.
4.21	Bidwells produce no evidence to back up their statement that “dwellings adjacent to residential development in Paulerspury is acceptable and will not give rise to any harm to the local community”. A public meeting took place in the village on 21 November 2013 attended mainly by residents whose properties are adjacent to the proposed development and they were unanimous in their objections, as letters to SNC will, no doubt, confirm.
4.25	Enquiries appear to establish that Tews End Lane and Longcroft Lane are historic Hollow Ways. No mention of this has been made in the archaeological report submitted by the applicant.
4.31	Bidwells set out in tabular form a number of statements being assessments relevant to Policy G3. The table is full of non-sequiturs and statements/opinions not substantiated by any evidence.
4.32	Bidwells may maintain that “the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with all of the criteria contained within Policy G3 and is therefore considered acceptable”. This is an opinion not a statement of fact. The Parish Council takes the opposite view.
4.35	Affordable housing has already been referred to.
4.36	This confirms Saved Policy EV2 “that development will not normally be granted in the open countryside”. This proposal does not meet any of the exceptions listed.
4.50	There is no mention of the Paulerspury and Pury End Village Design Statement (VDS), which has been accepted by SNC as a Supplementary Planning Document. Principle 1 of the VDS says: “Any development which seeks to increase the size of the village by breaking through the existing village boundary or adversely affect the rural nature of the surrounding countryside will not be acceptable”. Clearly this proposal contravenes Principle 1.
4.51	Over 90% of the settlements in England and Wales do not have a Neighbourhood Plan nor have applied to instigate one such.
4.58	The Parish Council is not aware that Ministerial Statements constitute planning law.
4.68	Bidwells maintain that the document : Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England is “capable of being regarded as a material planning consideration”. They produce no evidence to support this opinion and furthermore this development will not drive the local economy nor create jobs.

## 2 Planning Statement

Paragraph	Parish Council Comment
5.10	The ecological assessors appear to be ignorant of a Higher Level Agricultural Improvement Scheme implemented through Countryside Stewardship which applies to and protects certain plant species on this site and for which the present owner has received grant monies. The Parish Council considers that this should be investigated further by the Local Planning Authority.
5.20 to 5.22	The archaeological assessment makes no reference to the designation of certain roads in Paulerspury as important historic Hollow Ways, amongst which are Tews End Lane and Longcroft Lane. Information about these has been provided by the Rockingham Forest Trust and specific reference to Tews End Lane is contained in a report by Glenn Foard and Tracey Pardita. The Parish Council understands that further information is available from the Historic Environment Office of the County Council (Christine Addison) and from the County's Record Office. It is further understood that local planning departments have been informed about the Hollow Ways and that applications to have them scheduled by English Heritage may be in hand. The main point is that the formation of a new access to the proposed development would result in the destruction of part of this important heritage asset.



**Parish Council Comments  
on the  
Highways Report**

### 3 Highways Report

Paragraph	Parish Council Comment
1.5	There are three bullet points which quote objectives from within the 'National Planning Policy Framework' (NPPF). Paragraph 6.6 states that this Highways Report demonstrates that these objectives have been met. It is our contention that the report does not show this. [See further comment below in §6.6.]
2.4.5	It is also possible that the two personal injury accidents (PIAs) involving cars emerging from Grays Lane across the A5 traffic streams were caused by driver frustration at the junction delay giving rise to undue risk being taken by the driver.
2.4.7	The lack of recent observed PIAs on Tews End Lane or Longcroft Lane may well be due to current low traffic usage on both lanes with cars being driven carefully on single track roads. However, with higher flow rates, predominantly towards the A5 in the morning peak, then there would be opportunity for gridlock at the A5 junction; to avoid this, some drivers are likely to take increased risks to join the A5 traffic. [See 5.5 and 5.6.]
2.7.5	Although there is an hourly bus service to Northampton and Central Milton Keynes, there is no Sunday service. The last buses to Paulerspury leave Northampton at 17.46 and Central Milton Keynes at 19.19, respectively so there is little scope for evening or Sunday leisure trips.
3.2.2 and 3.2.3	The proposed treatment of the access to the site in Tews End Lane would lead to major destruction of part of one of Paulerspury's surviving hollow ways. A report for Rockingham Forest Trust on the important heritage associated with these local hollow ways has been lodged <sup>1</sup> with the Historic Environments Office at Northamptonshire County Council.
3.2.6	Apart from mention here of the weekly access to the proposed site of a large refuse vehicle, in all of this Highways Report the only vehicles referred to are cars. There are, however, many other vehicles which use village roads. They range from small vans to much larger delivery vehicles such as heating oil tankers and construction vehicles. Even with the proposed two passing places in Tews End Lane, this lane is so narrow that it may not be possible for two delivery vehicles to pass one another.
3.3	This whole section 'makes the right noises' about pedestrian access but current experience in Paulerspury is that relatively few existing residents actually walk to places in the village. It is even more unlikely that residents living in the proposed 'urban realm' would do so from their rather isolated and somewhat self-contained site. [In fact, §4.4.1 states that the proposed 50 dwellings would generate, in the peak hours, two pedestrian trips, no cycle trips, one bus trip and, curiously, two train trips.] They would tend to use a car instead and add to vehicular movement and parking issues within the village.
3.4.1	Although the application is only for outline permission, there is an apparent commitment to provide two parking spaces per dwelling. However, if one of these spaces is in a garage or the two spaces are arranged in tandem, then only one car is likely to be parked off-street with any further vehicles parked in the street.
4.2.2	The BWB Highways Report defines the daily peak traffic flow periods as 0800 to 0900 and 1700 to 1800. The Paulerspury Traffic Survey of May 2010 found that although the peak evening flow <i>on the A5</i> at Paulerspury was also from about 1700 to 1800, the morning peak started earlier and was slightly longer from about 0730 to 0845. However, the peak daily flow rates of <i>traffic arriving along Grays Lane</i> at the A5 junction occurred in the period 0800 to 0900 as defined in the TRICS database.

### 3 Highways Report

### 3 Highways Report

Paragraph	Parish Council Comment
5.2	This section states that the majority of traffic to and from the site would travel to the A5 along Tews End Lane. In the morning peak, this traffic would be predominantly in one direction towards the A5, reversing direction in the evening.
5.4	Data given in §4.2.4 and §5.3 forecast that 16 vehicles would travel to the A5 junction along Tews End Lane between 0800 and 0900. These vehicles would join the daily average of 100 that arrived along Grays Lane at the A5 junction over three years ago. They would also be very likely to experience delay in accessing the A5 – especially if wanting to turn right towards Milton Keynes. To do this, there requires to be two coincident and large enough gaps in the north- and south-bound A5 traffic streams – something which is getting less and less likely since the survey in 2010 . The increased number of dwellings in Paulerspury and elsewhere locally will have generated both more traffic already on the A5 and more trying to join it from feeder roads such as Grays Lane.
5.5 and 5.6	These two sections are too simplistic. Tews End Lane is very narrow (2.8 metres) at least for two or three hundred metres to its junction with the A5 and therefore one or more vehicles waiting to access the A5 would prevent any other vehicle actually turning off the A5 to travel up Tews End Lane towards Paulerspury. Stationary traffic on the A5 in peak periods would not be conducive to road safety. The proposed passing places (their distance from the A5 currently being unspecified) would not be reachable by an incoming vehicle all the while that there was a queue of traffic waiting to join the A5 flows.
5.7	The number of PIAs is really only a measure that, if it is high enough, might be used by the Highways Agency to consider whether to modify the A5 or one of its junctions. Given the potential for unidirectional traffic to block Tews End Lane, especially in the morning peak time, it is naive to claim that ‘there is <i>no reason</i> to consider that the proposed development would increase the potential for PIAs’.
6.4	As challenged above regarding sections 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 of the BWB Highways Report, it is misleading to conclude that the provision of two passing places in Tews End Lane would ‘mitigate (i.e. render negligible) the impact associated with the intensification in vehicle movements along this route’.
6.5	As the BWB Highways Report analysis has not addressed potential flows through the Tews End Lane/A5 junction and the likely sustained traffic tail-backs along the lane at peak times, it is disingenuous to conclude that ‘no further mitigation measures are necessary’.
6.6	For the reasons explained immediately above, it has by no means been demonstrated by the report that the three objectives of NPPF have been met (Ref.§1.5).
6.7	Finally, the conclusion ‘ <i>that the impacts of the development are not severe, and thus there is no reason the development should be prevented or refused on transport grounds</i> ’ has not been demonstrated. After all, the County Highway Authority has signs currently posted at each end of Tews End Lane saying ‘NOT SUITABLE FOR HEAVY GOODS VEHICLES’. Also, in order to meet tight financial constraints, the Authority is considering changing some rural roads to single track operation and reducing the level of maintenance on lightly-trafficked rural single track roads.

1. Report of a study, commissioned by The Rockingham Forest Trust, entitled ‘Historical Environment Report: Zone2, Whittlewood: A Royal Forest, by Tracey Partida.

### 3 Highways Report

#### Postscript

One of our parish councillors has made a personal response to the consultation on the planning application. The Parish Council feels that his comments relating to §3.10 and §5.5 to §5.7 of the BWB Highways Report, usefully expand on those given in the immediately preceding table. They are repeated here.

§3.10 The Landowner of the development site is understood to be currently receiving public monies under the terms of a ten-year Higher Level Environmental Stewardship scheme in recognition of the site's environmental and ecological importance. The Ecological Appraisal by FPCR (Para 2.1) claims it has made appropriate enquiries of '*both statutory and non-statutory nature conservation organisations*' including MAGIC but bizarrely it remains in ignorance of the Landowner's commitment to an HLS. The Appraisal also claims the site has no ecological importance, but it stresses in Para 5.13 that '*[the] guidance states that as the presence of protected species is a material consideration in any planning decision, it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent to which they are affected by proposals is established prior to planning permission being granted. Furthermore, where protected species are present and proposals may result in harm to the species or its habitat, steps should be taken to ensure the long-term protection of the species, such as through attaching appropriate planning conditions for example.*'

The discrepancies in the Ecological significance of the site need investigation as there is a direct conflict of opinion between the protection implicit in the granting of an HLS and the Ecological Appraisal conducted by FPCR. The Landowner is in receipt of public money to protect this site, on the basis of a detailed assessment of the site, and yet he wishes to destroy it. That is totally unacceptable.

§5.5 to §5.7 The Highways Assessment makes unjustified assumptions on traffic flows and ignores the dangers of the A5/Tews End Lane Junction. The document does not even show a drawing of the A5 junction. This junction has an inadequate splay, and inadequate metalled width at the junction to allow cars to safely access the lane while traffic is queuing to exit it. There is no central protected box on the A5 for traffic wishing to execute a right turn off the A5 southbound carriageway into Tews End Lane.

During the critical morning rush hour, traffic would inevitably queue in Tews End Lane waiting to turn right onto the A5. The queue would block the lane so that any traffic wishing to turn *into* Tews End Lane would be prevented from doing so. Southbound traffic on the A5 would sit in an unmarked central position on the highway thereby blocking the exit of traffic in Tews End Lane wishing to turn right (southbound) onto the A5. Traffic on the A5 (northbound) wishing to turn into Tews End Lane would be forced to wait in the northbound A5 carriageway, especially when northbound vehicles wanted to turn into the lane. These are identifiable scenarios, based on experience, and would, without doubt, occur. These scenarios are dangerous and a serious accident would be likely to result.