



Ms. Debra Bell
Development Services,
Huntingdonshire District Council,
Pathfinder House,
St Marys Street,
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN

Date: 09 June 2022

Dear Ms. Bell,

Re: Warboys Parish Council Letter of Objection to Application 22/00412/FUL – the erection of 48 affordable dwellings and associated works at Land North of Sewage Pumping Station, Station Road, Warboys.

On behalf of Warboys Parish Council (our clients), I write to raise objections to Application 22/00412/FUL, which was submitted by the Longhurst Group. Application 22/00412/FUL comprises a full application for the erection of 48 affordable dwellings and associated works at Land North of Sewage Pumping Station, Station Road, Warboys.

These representations assess the acceptability of the proposal, highlighting how the proposal conflicts with policies within the Huntingdonshire Development Plan, which was adopted in 2019, and the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) which determined sites for allocation within the adopted Development Plan.

Countryside Development

Our clients wish to rebut the justification provided by the Planning Officer to the clerk of Warboys Parish Council in an email dated 20 May 2022. Within the email, the Officer asserted that "*this site is considered to be within the built-up area of Warboys and therefore gains support in principle under Policy LP8 Development proposals within the Built-up area of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.*" However, pages 629–630 of the HELAA highlight that the area in which the site is situated comprises "*agricultural land which has **not been previously developed** with the exception of a small parcel of land formerly in industrial use.*" It also notes that the area around Fox Hole Hill, which arguably includes the application site, comprises "*open countryside*". Therefore, using Policy LP 8 as a justification for Application 22/00412/FUL is misguided.

Considering the above, Warboys Parish Council wish to highlight that not all Local Plan policies applicable to development of the application site were considered within the submitted Planning Statement. Policy LP 10: The Countryside establishes rules for countryside development within the district, which is applicable here as the site is situated outside of the development extent of Warboys.

To quote Policy LP10, "*all development in the countryside must:*

a. seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value:

i. avoiding the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) where possible, and

ii. avoiding Grade 1 agricultural land unless there are exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the loss of land;

b. recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and

c. not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others."

Firstly, it should be noted that the application site comprises Grade 2 (very good quality) agricultural land. Therefore, development of the site would conflict with Policy LP 10 (a), unless a substantial need for development is highlighted (see below for further details). Our client wishes to highlight that other sites adjoining Warboys, which comprise lower quality agricultural land, were submitted for inclusion as part of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (2019); there is no indication that the suitability of other, less contentious sites adjoining Warboys was considered before Application 22/00412/FUL was submitted.

In terms of the site's intrinsic character, the HELAA that informed the adopted Local Plan advised that the area in which the application site is situated (see Appendix A) "***forms an important part of the setting of Warboys with the landform falling away to the east making the area highly visible. The undeveloped land in this area is considered to offer no capacity for development***". Warboys Parish Council wish to note that there has been no material change in the landscape to override the HELAA's conclusion, and that there are local footpaths that benefit from the rural character of the site and the surrounding area.

While the site subject to this application was not considered in the HELAA, primarily because it was not submitted, a site to north of Heath Road in Warboys was assessed. This site arguably was more closely related to built-up fabric of Warboys compared to Land North of Sewage Pumping Station, Station Road. Interestingly, the site at Heath Road was considered unsuitable for development, despite the fact that it had fewer constraints compared to Land North of Sewage Pumping Station, Station Road. The lack of further allocations emphasised the unsuitability of Warboys for further allocations.

Overall, the proposed development would have a perverse impact on this important natural frontage to the east of Warboys. If approved, development of the site would undermine the guidance established in LP 10 and the HELAA used to inform the adopted Local Plan.

Site Layout Concerns

The Parish Council are of the view that a softer transition between the development and the open space should be required; the proposed arrangement, particularly the road to the back of the site that abuts the open countryside, would create a disjointed environment that is visually unappealing.

Moreover, the Parish Council are of the view that the proposed site layout, which contains a road immediately connected to undeveloped green space, establishes an unacceptable principle for further encroachment into the open countryside around Warboys. Approving the layout would contradict the HELAA's conclusions regarding the area's capacity for development and would entirely undermine the countryside safeguarding initiatives within the Local Plan.

Impaired Residential Amenity

The Parish Council are of the view that site's proximity to the sewage pumping station has not been fully addressed. It is likely that the amenity of any forthcoming residents to the site would be impaired by odour and noise nuisances arising from this facility; no formal noise or odour assessment was submitted as part of Application 22/00412/FUL. There are also documented issues for existing residents

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associated with the operation of this facility. These issues are likely to be intensified by the addition of flows from a further 48 dwellings.

In addition, the site is located immediately south of an existing industrial estate, which has a lawful use for B2 General Industrial operations. Paragraph 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises the following:

"[where] the operation of an existing business or community facility could have a significant adverse effect on new development (including changes of use) in its vicinity, the applicant (or 'agent of change') should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed."

Under *The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020*, industrial processes which can be carried out within a residential area without detriment to its amenity (Use Class E) are considered differently to other general industrial processes (Use Class B2). As such, it is the Parish Council's view that additional information (e.g. a Noise Impact Assessment) and any necessary mitigation measures should be provided, which outline how the neighbouring B2 uses would impact nearby residents. Without this information, the proposal does not accord with the requirements of the NPPF.

Connection to Local Amenities and Sustainable Transport

Warboys Parish Council want to emphasise that the application site does not represent a sustainable location relative to other available sites in Warboys and will likely contribute to an intensification in unsustainable transport if developed. To comply with Policy LP 16: Sustainable Transport, *"new development will be expected to contribute to an enhanced transport network that **supports an increasing proportion of journeys being undertaken by sustainable travel modes**."*

An assessment of the reasonable walking distance zones for amenities in Warboys, which formed part of the HELAA's assessment for development in the settlement, has been included in **Appendix B**. To summarise the analysis, the site is situated outside the reasonable walking zones for local shops, the local primary school, and the local doctor's surgery. Furthermore, there is a lack of viable public transport services that would serve the site as the area only benefits from a sporadic bus service. The limited connectivity afforded by both public and active transport networks would ultimately reinforce a reliance on private vehicles for any incoming residents.

Although it is recognised that the proposal includes cycle parking and a pedestrian loop, these inclusions are unlikely to catalyse an increase in the proportion of journeys being undertaken by sustainable travel modes, particularly to local services or surrounding settlements. In summary, the proposals arguably conflict with the aims of Policy LP 16.

Rural Exception Sites

The Parish Council are aware that Policy LP 28 offers local policy exemptions to proposed housing developments that are well-related to a built-up area. However, it is considered that development of the site does not satisfy the criteria for rural exception sites that are listed as part of Policy LP 28. For a site to be classified as a rural exception site, Policy 28 states that it must be demonstrated that:

¹ According to the Glossary within the Local Plan, sustainable travel modes comprise *"any efficient, safe and accessible means of transport with overall low impact on the environment, including walking and cycling, low and ultra-low emission vehicles, car sharing and public transport."*

- a. at least 60% (net) of the site area is for affordable housing for people with a local connection;
- b. the number, size, type and tenure of the affordable homes is **justified by evidence that they would meet an identified need arising within the settlement** or nearby small settlements (as defined in 'Small Settlements') **through a local needs survey** or other local needs evidence;
- c. the remainder of the site area is available as open market housing or plots suitable for custom or self-build homes tailored to meet locally generated need; and
- d. the amount of development and location of **the proposal is sustainable** in terms of:
 - i. **availability of services and existing infrastructure;**
 - ii. **opportunities for users of the proposed development to travel by sustainable modes;** and
 - iii. **effect on the character of the immediate locality and the settlement as a whole.**

Although Application 22/00412/FUL comprises an affordable housing development, there is no evidence to suggest that it is intended for the affordable housing needs of people with a local connection, as required by part a of Policy LP 28. This is compounded by the fact that no local needs survey or other local needs assessment was submitted as part of the application, therein failing to satisfy part b.

Meanwhile, the above commentary on the sparsity of public transport services, the site's distance from key amenities and services, and the negative ramifications that development would have on this countryside frontage of Warboys demonstrate that the proposal fails to satisfy any of the sustainability criteria of part d.

Furthermore, the Parish Council are sceptical that the affordable housing proposed at Land North of Sewage Pumping Station, Station Road, Warboys are necessarily addressing a local need. Warboys is a small settlement in the district, hosting a population of circa 3,900 people². According to Freedom of Information (FOI) request response, a total of 118 affordable homes have been constructed in Warboys since 2015, and 103 affordable homes have been granted planning permission in Warboys since 2017. However, according to the response to the FOI request, there is limited data on the specific need in Warboys and affordable housing is considered a "*district-wide resources (e.g. a person in need in Warboys could apply to be housed in Huntington)*". Given the mechanisms of affordable housing distribution underpinned by the planning policy adopted by the District Council, the Parish Council is confused as to why this site on the edge of Warboys has been prioritised for affordable housing development over other available sites in more sustainable locations.

Public Consultation

It was noted within the various reports presented to Council Committees that public consultation was to be undertaken prior to the preparation and submission of the application. However, robust public consultation has clearly not occurred, with the submission of Application 22/00412/FUL being the first time many people were made aware of the development proposals. Public consultation may have allowed the Parish Council and residents to help influence the scale and form of development, as well as improve the design of the layout which clearly contradicts the advice contained within Section 12 of the NPPF.

² City Population, 2022. *Warboys: Built-up Area*. [Online] Available at: https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/eastofengland/cambridgeshire/E34000979_warboys/

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Summary

Overall, Warboys Parish Council are of the view that Application 22/00412/FUL is extremely controversial, and that approval of the application would undermine the policies within the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (2019) and the evidence base that formed it. This letter provides a summary of the Parish Council's response and should also be read in conjunction with the report produced by the Clerk to Warboys Parish Council, which was presented to and endorsed by the Parish Council on 06 June 2022. This document accompanies this letter.

Unfortunately, it would appear that support for this application is predicated on the basis that the site is owned by Huntingdonshire District Council who have entered some form of joint venture with the Longhurst Group. It is also interesting to note that no mention is made of this link, except in the details of ownership contained in the Application Forms for Application 22/00412/FUL. To prevent allegations of bias, the application should have been fully assessed to demonstrate that it fully accords with both local and national planning policy. In this particular case, the applicant should have also justified why the assessments provided within the HELAA are not relevant to development of the application site.

A number of local objections have now been raised against Application 22/00412/FUL, and there continues to be a lack of necessary evidence that would be required for other, comparable development proposals. Warboys Parish Council are of the view that approval of Application 22/00412/FUL would be unjustified, perverse, and contradictory to the point that it completely undermines the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan (2019), and it could be susceptible to legal challenge if the concerns detailed in this letter are not addressed in full before the application is determined.

Yours sincerely,

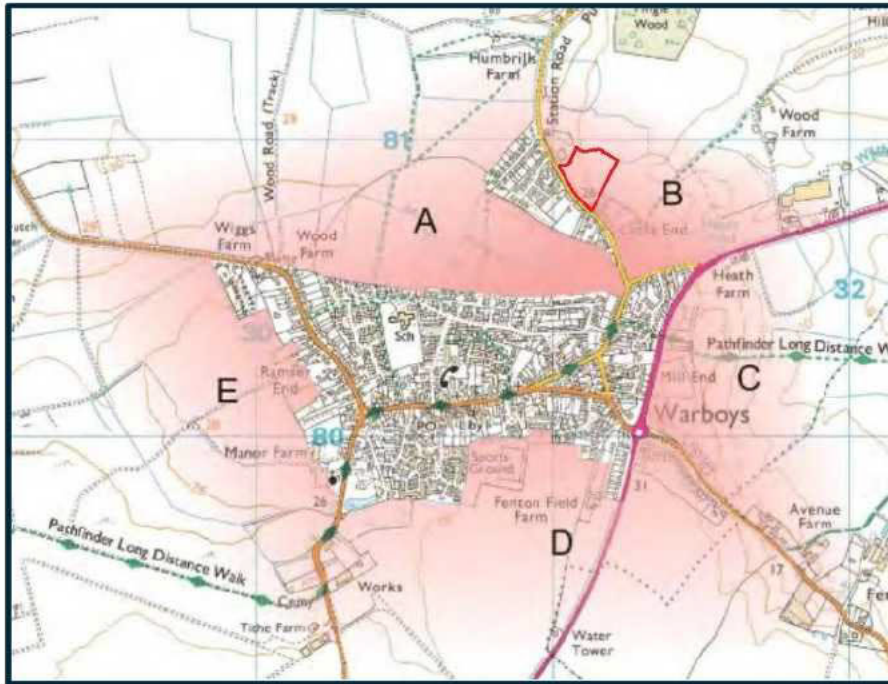
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Director of Planning

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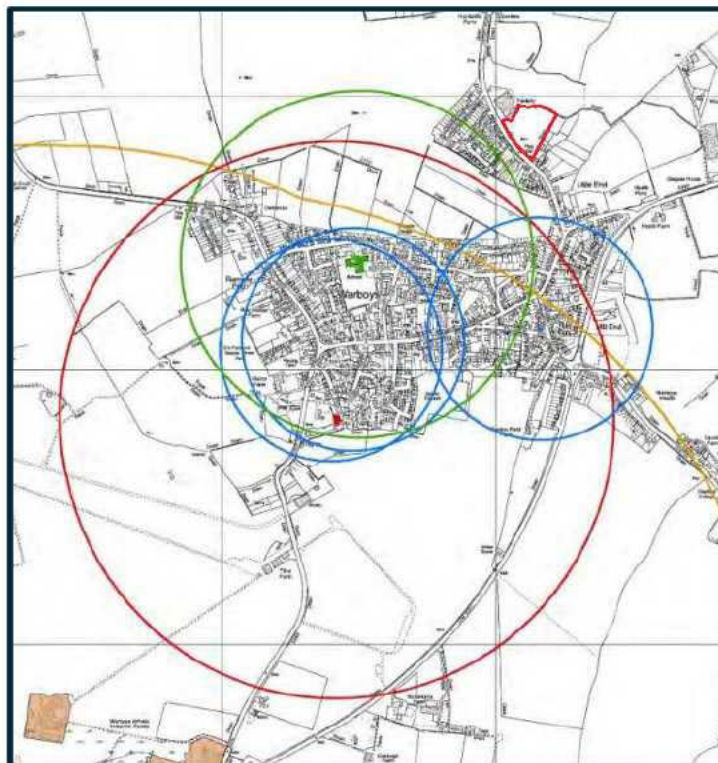
Appendix A

Warboys Broad Locations assessed within the HELAA conducted for the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (see Page 629 of the HELAA). Site outlined in red.



Appendix B

Analysis of reasonable transport distances to local shops (blue circles), the local primary school (green circle) and the local doctor's surgery (red circle) included on Page 628 of the HELAA. Site outlined in red.



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