

Agenda Item 6 - CB/16/00637/FULL

Supporting statement for Planning Application CB/16/00637/FULL

The application site is located within the village of Totternhoe and is presently in mixed commercial use including Offices (B1), General Industry (B2) and Storage/Distribution (B8). Currently the site is occupied by two large commercial buildings, a number of hard surfaced areas used for parking/servicing including various containers and structures. There is a brick building/structure to the south of the site and open air storage of caravans/containers takes place within the site.

The site has been in commercial use since 1970, with no restrictions on the site in terms of hours of operations, noise levels or outside storage. The site has previously been operated by the landowner on a 24 hour basis with HGV vehicles entering and leaving the site day and night

The proposal relates to a residential development of 20 dwellings within the village of Totternhoe including 30% affordable housing and an area of open land to be landscaped and retained to the south of the site.

Local Support

The application is strongly supported by the Parish Council as well as neighbours, to date 18 neighbour letters / e-mails of support have been submitted to the Council.

The Council have recently conducted a 'call for sites' to inform the new local plan in meeting the future housing needs of Central Bedfordshire. The Parish Council were consulted as part of the 'call for sites' and are working on a Neighbourhood Plan. They have had considerable difficulty identifying land for anything other than minor infilling. The Parish Council therefore welcome the development and the much needed housing it would provide for the village.

The Committee report cites four reasons for refusal, each reason is addressed below:

1. Green Belt

- Development in the Green Belt is generally not appropriate however, paragraph 89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) allows for the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt provided one of six exceptions is met. One of these exceptions is the

limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it than the existing development.

- The site is previously developed (brownfield) land.
- The overall volume of the proposed housing would be less than the existing buildings on the site.
- The developed area does not extend as far south as the adjacent residential mobile home park.
- Reducing encroachment of development into the countryside by retaining a landscaped area to the south of the site.
- Members may recall granting approval, January 2015, for a scheme for 13 dwellings in the Green Belt at Lower Wood Farm, Sundon Road, Harlington where commercial buildings were replaced with housing. Members may also recall granting approval for 12 dwellings at Prebendal Farm, Slip End in September 2015. This site was also in the Green Belt. Unlike the site at Totternhoe this site was outside of the village boundaries and contained no existing buildings at the time it was reported to the Development Management Committee.

2. Sustainability of the site

- The village has a range of facilities including public houses, primary school, village hall, pre-school group, butchers, sports facilities, high quality cricket and football grounds, a football clubhouse and numerous clubs and organisations.
- Local facilities and services within Totternhoe will be supported by future residents of the development.
- Reduced traffic movements from the proposed development in comparison to vehicle movements which would result if the site was operating at full commercial capacity.

- New homes would support the local school which is low on numbers. Ofsted considers the school to have good to outstanding features.
- There are regular bus services to Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and the surrounding villages.
- Cycle storage would be provided on site – Both Eaton Bray and Edlesborough are within easy cycling distance, where there are ample facilities, including health care and shopping.
- Increased local population would mean busier local facilities and in turn increased local employment.
- Construction jobs for local people.

3. Landscape and visual impact

- The volume of built development would be less than what is existing.
- Due to the significant drop in levels across the site there would be clear views from Totternhoe Knolls across to Dunstable Downs and Ivinghoe Beacon (see attached photographs).
- Will not impact on fields in the Eaton Bray Clay Vale. The redevelopment of the site will improve openness where the site meets these fields and vales.
- The proposed housing development would be a visual improvement on the existing site and the wider area by removing unsightly commercial buildings, structures and open air storage from the site.
- The dwellings would be set back from the highway and would be screened behind number 165 Castle Hill Road. There exists the opportunity to provide additional planting along the eastern and western boundaries of the site as well as planting to the open area at the southern end of the site, softening the appearance of the development in the wider landscape.
- It is acknowledged within the committee report that the density of the development at 24 dwellings per hectare does not constitute high density development.

4. Layout and Design

- Each of the dwellings would have a private garden and at least two off street parking spaces.
- The proposed dwellings will not create overlooking to neighbouring properties and each will have a good quality environment with respect to sunlight and daylight.

- A section of the Cypress hedge along the eastern boundary will be replaced with boundary fencing while the rest of the hedge will be retained. There will be no loss of privacy to neighbouring properties to the east of the site.
- The tree officer has not objected to the removal of this section of hedge and replacement with boundary fencing, nor has the Council's ecologist objected to the development.
- The proposed dwellings would be constructed from a palette of materials in keeping with existing development in the village.

Summary of benefits

- Will remove a commercial/industrial use in the village which has no restrictions in terms of noise, hours of operation, outside storage and will prevent the site being sold to an operator who can intensify the use of the site comparable to what has occurred at the Totternhoe lime works site.
- Will reduce commercial vehicle movements through the village.
- Effective use of previously developed (brownfield) land.
- The development would contribute to meeting the Central Bedfordshire five year housing land supply and is deliverable.
- The recent approvals at Sundon Road, Harlington and Prebendal Farm, Slip End relate to development in the Green Belt.
- The openness of the Green Belt is preserved as the volume of the proposed housing would be less than the existing buildings on the site.
- Would provide much needed housing including affordable homes.
- Totternhoe Lower School is low in numbers and needs more pupils from local families.
- The village is working on a Neighbourhood Plan and would welcome the site as part of the emerging plan.
- Traffic calming measures are needed in the village, the development would provide these through a highways agreement.
- Additional residents will support local businesses as well as generate Council Tax revenue.
- Job creation during construction as well as job creation following on from increased spending in the village by new residents.

Totternhoe



View from bottom of Knolls that will be improved by our proposal in removing the front right building and opening up the views.



Our proposal removes the building on the right, which will open up and improve the countryside views.



View further along bottom of Knolls that shows our development will not be seen as view not changing.



Height of existing commercial buildings are same as 2 storey housing.



Show commercial coverage of site.

Shows commercial use of site including hard standing extends to furthest part of site abutting the countryside. Our proposal gives this end of the site back as open countryside with no buildings on it.



The site

Development further along the village

View from top of the Knolls. Arrow shows only the very end of the site can be seen (commercial containers) which we are giving back to open land with no buildings on.

Totternhoe



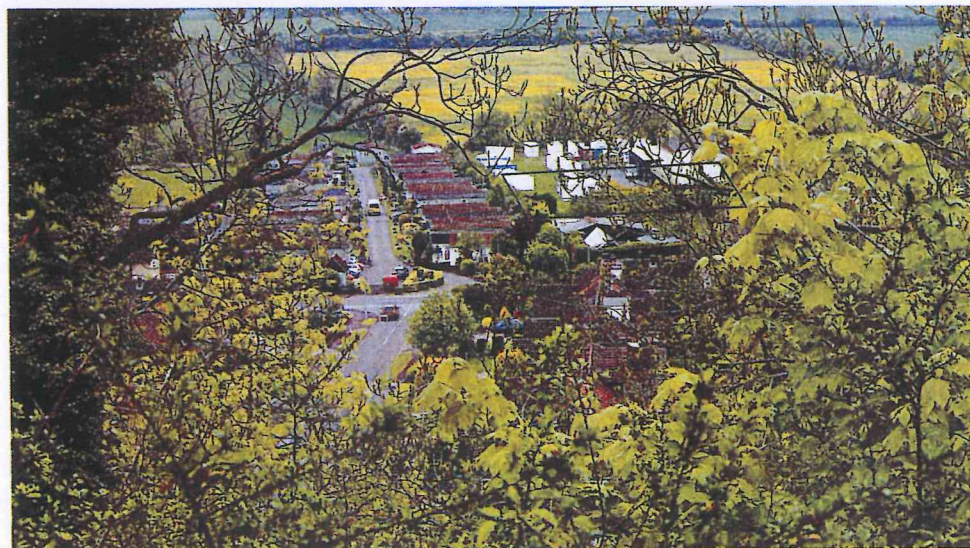
One of only 3 views available of the site from public rights of way on the Knolls.



Shows commercial use extends to furthest end (bottom) of site



General views seen from public rights of way on the Knolls highlighting how views are generally way over the top of our site such that the sight cannot be seen



Second of the 3 views where the site can be seen from the Knolls demonstrating how views of countryside will not be harmed and in fact improved as further part of site given over to open land



Another general view from the Knolls showing how views will not be adversely affected by our proposal.