

LA3: DEF Quotes and Questions from the meeting with DBC and developers 20/05/19

These issues were raised under Item 11 of the Agenda, which included:

5. Traffic
6. Education – Primary School
7. Local Centre
8. Health
9. Gypsy and Traveller Site
10. Phasing and Housing Mix
11. Landscape / Open Space

Under each sub-topic, the background summarised by a DEF representative appears under "**Quote(s)**", followed by the key questions asked and any responses obtained.

11.1 Lack of distinction between Public Open Space and Wildlife Corridors.

Quotes (via DEF Objection)

The planning documents are contradictory. The Design and Access Statement designates "Green Corridors" including: 1) The hedgerow roughly 100m to the West of the Chiltern Way; 2) The West – East strip of existing hedgerow, which is also designated as a cycleway 3) North of the gas pipeline, while the Illustrative Green Infrastructure Strategy just lists the E-W hedgerow as a "Green Connection to Shrubhill Common". Neither document designates the Chilterns Way (or apparently any other Green Network route) as a "Wildlife Corridor". Cross-section diagrams cc' and gg' of the E-W route on pages 77 and 81 respectively of the Design And Access Statement label the grassed sections of these "Green Corridors" as "Public Open Space", not as Wildlife Corridors. In contrast to these documents, the Planning Statement 44829424.pdf, Para. 6.48 promises to "Protect a Wildlife Corridor along the eastern side of the development adjoining Fields End." This is the Chiltern Way route that we support.

Question: Do you accept that neither "Green Corridors" nor "Public Open Spaces" are Wildlife Corridors?

Answer: (Roger Smith of Savills)

Agreed that these terms are "all-encompassing" and do not distinguish one category from another. Specific designation of a Wildlife Corridor can not be guaranteed.

11.2 Inadequate width of Wildlife Corridor for Shrubhill Common Local Nature Reserve.

Quotes

Martin Hicks, HCC Senior Ecology Officer, Feb 2019

"As you know I argued for the whole field width (*as far as hedgerow referred to in 11.1 above*) which was a strong argument strategically and in landscape terms keeping the thrust of the open ground going one way and radially out from Hemel....

In respect of the corridor, where SHC is linked at its thinnest points (essentially both sides of the playground) to the outside world now, this is around 20m. So it could be argued that if we think SHC survives at present with such a link, this is the minimum width required....

However, if the Green Lane itself is going to be more disturbed anyway, and more used if upgraded then its intrinsic value and corridor role will be degraded by virtue of increased disturbance / compaction / erosion etc. of the Green Lane"

(DEF Objection)

DEF's measurements of these two openings ... are 22.5 metres and 32 metres respectively for the Paddock Way and Lucks Hill sides, making a total of 54.5 metres.

Space could be found by removing some of the 200 homes that are in excess of the original Core Strategy. Unless the whole field width is left a new hedge should be planted to protect the Wildlife Corridor

Questions: Have you checked DEF's measurements of the existing gap? What width do you believe you have allowed? Do you own the right hand hedge and are you prepared to restore it in places where it has become degraded? (a recent 'photo was shown) Are you prepared to remove some of the 200 homes in order to provide an adequate corridor? Are you prepared to leave the whole field width or to plant a new protective hedge?

Answer: We are waiting for a reply from Martin Hicks on these issues.

11.3 Missed opportunities to encourage wildlife in suburban landscapes at very little cost.

Quote: in PARIS, 6 May this year the UN reported that – Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – and the rate of species extinctions is accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world now likely. The Report finds that around 1 million animal and plant species are now threatened with extinction, many within decades, more than ever before in human history.

“The diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems, as well as many fundamental contributions we derive from nature, are declining fast....”

Loss of biodiversity isshown to be not only an environmental issue, but also a developmental, economic, security, social and moral issue as well.

The primary cause of this is changes in land and sea use....”

And according to the RSPB (Summer 2018), Barratt homes believe that giving people a home needn't mean squeezing out nature. On the contrary they are breathing wildlife into new housing by measures such as:

- Putting Swift bricks in every building (manufactured by Manthorpe)
- Planting hundreds of native trees, including a community orchard.
- Lining roads with new hedging, whilst preserving ancient hedges.
- Planting grass verges with native wildflowers
- Making small holes in the bottom of fences to make easy access for hedgehogs, frogs and newts.
- Planting the pools and channels of the planned sustainable drainage system with native vegetation.
- Installing wildlife tunnels under main roads, bat friendly street lighting and amphibian friendly kerbing and.
- Inspiring new residents about these nature friendly measures by using a show home and garden

And Ian Sadler, managing director for North Thames branch of Barratt said of the Kingswood development (near Aylesbury). “This is absolutely the right thing to be doing. What has surprised us is many of the ideas have so much benefit at little or no extra cost.”

Question: Can Barratt assure us that they will include these features into the housing they build on this new estate in Hemel Hempstead? (and if not why not?)

Answer: We shall do these if so advised by (statutory) consultees

11.4 Lack of proposals for housing to be “sustainable” or “zero carbon”.

Quotes: At a previous meeting between Barrett Developments PLC, (BD) DBC, and The Dacorum Environment Forum (DEF) to discuss the developments in West Hemel (LA3), the DEF submitted the view that this new estate should be built as a “Flagship Development” in order:

- To mitigate the loss of Greenbelt, and

- To enhance the reputation of Dacorum as a forward thinking Local Authority, and that of BD to as a builder of the highest possible standards.

Since then, the IPCC has raised it's "threat level" of uncontrollable climate change by carbon emissions, the Rt Hon Michael Gove has made radical policy decisions regarding the electrification of road transport, and Ms Greta Thunberg has embarrassed world and corporate leaders by drawing attention to their inaction. The suggestions made by DEF at that meeting now have added cogency, and we feel that two in particular need special consideration in this respect.

- We suggested that **all the houses and buildings with suitable S, SW, or SE facing roofs should be equipped with solar panels or solar tiles.** Given that such panels would (typically for a 4kW array)¹ give enough energy to drive an electric car for 1600 miles, this would be a very attractive selling point, and the cost to *BD* (much less than retro-fitting) would be recovered at the time of sale. (We note that the Govt has recently opened up consultation regarding a new tariff for solar energy)². Residents would effectively have a free fuel pump at the house, but would of course benefit from the energy produced, even if not car owners.
- Considerable CO₂ emissions reductions, with consequently smaller household heating bills can be achieved by **using insulation of the highest standard, and we suggest that code 6 is adhered to throughout.** Proportionally a small cost to the purchaser, but recoverable by *BD* at the point of sale, discerning purchasers would factor to this into their budgets, particularly if advertised in the "show homes"

Notes:

1 Evidence of energy yield based on DEF member's own installation.

2 "Solar panel households to be paid for surplus power under new scheme" (Future build, industry insider, no. 95 Jan 14th 2019)

Questions:

- Will *DBC* and *BD*, in partnership with each other, accept the urgency of tackling Climate change, and the current political and popular support for doing so?
- Specifically, have you changed your position on either of the above questions (Solar Panels, Code 6) since 2017?
- If not, what is the justification of this?

Answer: (James Doe) The Council has no powers to enforce these.

11.5 Requirement of proof that throughflow and groundwater flow to the Shrubhill Common LNR will not be reduced.

Quote. From DEF Objection

The Application must demonstrate that throughflow and groundwater flow to the Shrubhill Common LNR will not be reduced.

Question. Has this been done? Are there plans to do it?

Answer: It will depend on what Affinity Water and the Environment Agency tell us.

11.6 Requirement of proof that that supply of the extra water will not be to the detriment of flows in either the Gade or Bulbourne Valleys.

Quote. From DEF Objection

The Application must demonstrate that water can be supplied to the proposed development without detriment to the flows in either the Gade or Bulbourne Valleys.

Question. Has this been done? Are there plans to do it?

Answer: It will depend on what Affinity Water and the Environment Agency tell us.

11.7 Visual impact from the Bourne Valley to be mitigated by removing some of the extra 200 home

Quote: CPRE Herts.'s objection letter which includes the powerful point that the application had apparently not been referred to the Herts Design Review Panel, an important omission for such a major and significant expansion of the town. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Para 129) supported the use of Design Reviews.

Question: Are you seeking such a review?

(Shortage of time prevented this question even being asked)

Quote:

Sir John Lawton's 2010 Government-commissioned report 'Making Space for Nature' and HCC's Landscape Character Assessment, under which LA3 forms parts of the "Little Heath Uplands" and "Lower Bulbourne Valley" areas of study.

Question:

Have the Council and Developers taken adequate note of this important reference point?

Answer: No confirmation of this

Quote: from DEF Objection:

Table 6.23 of the Environmental Impact Landscape Character and Visual Amenity statement, 44827589.pdf contains a couple of dozen sites from which "Moderate Adverse" effects would result. Some clarity for the term "Moderate Adverse" is provided at Para. 6.9.3 which couples it with the adjective "Significant." Elsewhere in the application are maps showing in shaded blue the surrounding areas which will be affected. These appear to be based on a computer simulation that includes proposed building heights, and refer to numbers in groups of buildings that would be visible, in some cases quite small numbers. In line with stated policies in the Core Strategy and elsewhere within the application, the visual impact should be further minimised by removing these buildings from the plan. This can be accommodated by a reduction of the 200 extra homes that the plan proposes in excess of the original Core Strategy figure.

Question: Are you prepared to do this?

Answer: (James Doe) This is under active consideration.

11.8 Site Clearance Scheduling

Quotes:

From Draft Master Plan 2014 3.12

All habitats on the land are suitable for use by breeding birds, with further detailed studies recommended. Site clearance should be undertaken outside the breeding season and mitigation should be considered through the detailed design process.

From EIS Summary of mitigation and residual effects 44827597 - Application 2019

Any clearance of potential nesting habitat will be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season **or immediately following confirmation by a suitably qualified ecologist** that no active nests are present.

Questions: When is Site Clearance Scheduled? Identity of Qualified Ecologist? Terms of Reference for?

Answer: We are waiting for a reply from Martin Hicks on this issue

James Doe invited attendees to contact him with any further issues or points of clarification, and in view of the limited time allotted to important topics such as sustainability in building standards, this offer is likely to be taken up.