

DON'T DESTROY BOURNE END

To: Planning Policy Team – Wycombe District Council

5 September 2016

“Draft Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft Wycombe District Local Plan” dated July 2016

We refer to the Wycombe District Council (“WDC”) document having the title quoted in the heading above and dated July 2016. On behalf of the “Don’t Destroy Bourne End” group, we hereby submit the following comments on that document. There are currently 1232 members of the group.¹ Please take into account the comments expressed below.

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¹ The group is currently organised on Facebook and we posted saying that we were going to send this letter on their behalf and asking for their backing to do so. All the responses to that post received have been positive ones.

A. BACKGROUND

1. Requirement for WDC to produce Sustainability Appraisal Report:

(i) Sustainable development definition The principal central government planning policy document (the National Planning Policy Framework of 27 March 2012, as amended: the “**NPPF**”), in its “Achieving Sustainable Development” section near the start, defines sustainable development by reference to UN Resolution 42/187 as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. That NPPF policy also endorses 5 guiding principles of sustainable development (living within the planet’s environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly) and says that there are three dimensions to sustainable development and that these dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles: economic, social and environmental².

(ii) Green Belt policy prevails over sustainable development WDC is required, by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the “**2004 Act**”), to prepare its local plan “with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development”³. The NPPF states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that local plans should reflect that presumption **BUT** the presumption in favour of sustainable development will give way to other policies that conflict with it, including Green Belt policies⁴.

(iii) Sustainability Appraisal Report required WDC is required by the 2004 Act⁵ to carry out an appraisal of the sustainability of the proposals in the draft local plan and to prepare a “sustainability appraisal report”⁶. This should state the process by which the sustainability appraisal has been carried out; the baseline information used; the results of that process; and the extent to which implementation of the plan will achieve sustainable development. This report will normally incorporate the Environmental Report referred to at A2 below.

2. Requirement for WDC to produce Environmental Report:

(i) Environmental Report required The draft Sustainability Appraisal Report produced by WDC acknowledges the need for an Environmental Report under Directive 2001/42 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive or “**SEA Directive**”), but states that this Environmental

² • **an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

• **a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and

• **an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

³ Section 39(2) of the 2004 Act.

⁴ Paras 14 and 15 and footnote 9 to para 14 of NPPF.

⁵ Section 19(5)(b) of the 2004 Act.

⁶ Given that name by Regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Report “will be produced later in the plan-making process”. Both the SEA Directive and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the “**SEA Regulations**”) require an environmental assessment to be carried out and an Environmental Report to be prepared at an early stage of drafting of certain plans. The relevant plans are those that set the framework for future development consent of projects listed in Annexes I and II to the Directive 85/337/EEC on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment, as amended (known as the “**Environmental Impact Directive**” and now consolidated into Directive 2011/92). Annex II includes “urban development projects” and “construction of roads”. There is an exclusion (in both the SEA Directive and the SEA Regulations) from the need for an assessment and Environmental Report where the plan “determines the use of a small area at local level”. There does not appear to be a definition of “small area”, but even if we use the high thresholds that would trigger the requirement for an environmental impact assessment if an actual development of Hollands Farm were proposed by a developer in the future⁷, it is likely that the extent of the Hollands Farm proposals for urban development and roads would exceed those thresholds and so the “small area” exclusion would not apply. Accordingly the Environmental Report envisaged by WDC must address the Hollands Farm proposals in the draft local plan.

(ii) Consultation on scope and detail of Environmental Report required The scope and detail of an Environmental Report are addressed in regulation 12 of, and Schedule 2 to, the SEA Regulations as set out in Attachment 1 and are to be determined after consultation with the consultation bodies: Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. The scope is to be extensive. Once prepared, the Environmental Report is to be sent out for consultation, including consultation with the above consultation bodies and certain public consultees⁸.

(iii) Early public participation required The purpose of the SEA Directive (and the appraisal to be carried out, and Environmental Report to be produced, under it) is to identify the best options at an early planning stage (contrast the Environmental Impact Directive which addresses actual proposed projects that come through at a later stage). It implements the Aarhus Convention which is directed at fostering the provision of information to, and public involvement in, the preparation of plans relating to the environment (such as the WDC local plan). Those members of the public who are affected, likely to be affected or have an interest in the environmental effects of implementing the plan should also be consulted at an early stage. The Directive states that the Environmental Report should be taken into account during the preparation of the plan.

⁷ The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011 (the “**EIA Regulations**”) state that assessment is needed for (inter alia) developments which are:

- **urban development projects**, including the construction of shopping centres and car parks, sports stadiums, leisure centres and multiplex cinemas; where (inter alia) the development includes more than 150 dwellings; or the overall area of the development exceeds 5 hectares;
- **construction of roads** where the area of the works exceeds one hectare;

if the development is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

⁸ Regulation 13(2) of SEA Regulations:

- (2) As soon as reasonably practicable after the preparation of the relevant documents, the responsible authority shall—
- (a) send a copy of those documents to each consultation body;
 - (b) take such steps as it considers appropriate to bring the preparation of the relevant documents to the attention of the persons who, in the authority's opinion, are affected or likely to be affected by, or have an interest in the decisions involved in the assessment and adoption of the plan or programme concerned, required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Directive (“the public consultees”);

B. COMMENTS ON WDC SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL REPORT

Notes: In these Comments, WDC's "Draft Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft Wycombe District Local Plan" is referred to as the "**SA Report**". Some of these Comments cross refer to items in our DDBE 6 August 2016 comments on the draft local plan because those items are equally applicable as comments on the SA Report and, for ease of reference, the DDBE 6 August 2016 comments are attached as Attachment 2.

1. Environmental role of sustainable development neglected

Regarding A1(i) above: The SA Report gives insufficient attention and weight to the environmental role to be played in "sustainable development" i.e. "contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy." The irreversible harm that would be done by proposals to take land from the Green Belt - particularly when: it is recommended for ANOB status; it is adjacent to a conservation area and listed buildings; it has a wide variety of flora and fauna; it is grade 2 agricultural land; its development is not well sited to avoid traffic pollution and would cause traffic chaos; and its removal from the Green Belt is not necessary for meeting housing needs.

2. Green Belt policies' predominance neglected

Regarding A1(ii) above: the SA Report gives insufficient attention and weight to Green Belt policies, which are to prevail in any conflict with sustainable development. Please see item 2 of Attachment 2 - Removal of Land from Green Belt for our further comments on this.

3. Lack of data on basis of which conclusions are reached

Regarding A1(iii) above: the SA Report leaps to the results of the process without giving the baseline information used to attempt to justify those results. A report such as the SA Report normally also addresses the matters to be covered by an Environmental Report (referred to at A2 above). The SA Report does not do this (despite its assertion to the contrary at paragraphs 1.19 and 1.20) and this contributes to the lack of baseline information. The lack of baseline information prejudices the credibility of the SA Report and prevents a proper consultation with the public on the SA Report.

4. Lack of Environmental Report undermines the SA Report

Regarding A2(i) and A2(ii) above: the lack of preparation of an Environmental Report casts serious doubt upon the validity of the SA Report given that, during its preparation, it has not had the benefit of assembling the data needed for an Environmental Report or of the consultation with Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency that is required regarding the scope and level of detail of the Environmental Report (please see Attachment 1). Also an Environmental Report, in addition to considering the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the draft local plan, is required to identify, describe and evaluate "reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme"⁹. For example, the discussion in the SA Report of identifying where housing needs could be met excludes from the potential housing supply a number of identified greenfield, brownfield, and previously developed sites, all of which are outside the Green Belt.

⁹ Article 5(1) of the SEA Directive.

5. Delay in producing Environmental Report prejudices public consultation regarding:

- (i) **scope of SA Report** Absent the necessary Environmental Report, there is no indication in the SA Report that any consultation with the consultation bodies mentioned at A2(ii) above has taken place regarding the scope and level of detail of the Environmental Report. If any such consultations have been carried out, absent the necessary Environmental Report, there is no statement of what they revealed. There is thus no opportunity at this stage for the public to engage with WDC in any meaningful debate on matters that would no doubt arise from such consultations insofar as they would also have been relevant to the SA Report. Such a debate should have taken place much earlier in the preparation of the draft local plan. The public has been deprived of the opportunity to engage at an early stage in a meaningful consultation on the matters that ought to be addressed before the draft local plan proposing to remove Hollands Farm from the Green Belt was advanced to its present stage;
- (ii) **environmental issues in the SA Report** Absent the necessary Environmental Report, there is no indication in the SA Report that any studies have been carried out to address the matters at para 6 of Schedule 2 to the SEA Regulations (referred to at A2(ii) above and in Attachment 1) regarding Hollands Farm, namely: biodiversity; population; human health; fauna; flora; soil; water; air; climatic factors; material assets; cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; landscape; and the inter-relationship between the above matters. If any such studies have been carried out, absent the necessary Environmental Report, there is no statement in the SA Report of what they revealed. There is thus no opportunity for the public to engage with WDC in any meaningful debate of these matters at this stage when reviewing the SA Report. Such a debate should have taken place much earlier in the preparation of the draft local plan. In addition, if the local plan proceeds without proper studies being carried out and without the benefit of proper consultation, there is the danger that the proposals regarding Hollands Farm, if implemented, would breach European or domestic environmental protection law.

6. Housing needs can be met without taking land from the Green Belt

The SA Report does not adequately address the points raised at item 1 of Attachment 2 - Housing Needs.

7. Comments on p 124 of the SA Report - Hollands Farm

Attachment 3 reproduces the table in the SA Report of the importance placed by WDC on various sustainability matters (referred to as scoring) relating to Hollands Farm, and, in adjacent columns, states our DDBE scoring and our comments to date on WDC's table. Given the lack of engagement of the public by WDC in these issues as outlined in comments above, we reserve the right to supplement these comments in the future, including during consultation on the Environmental Report. Unlike the Significant Effects mentioned regarding other sites, the Significant Effects section omits and totally disregards material problems (including: removal of land from the Green Belt; coalescence of communities; landscape impact; loss of Grade 2 farmland - contrast loss of inferior Grade 3a farmland being mentioned as a Significant Effect for several other sites; loss of countryside recommended for AONB status; scope for significant biodiversity impact; proximity to a Conservation Area and to listed buildings; and distance from local services). This section also downplays the flood risk of the site.

8. Comments on p 123 of the SA Report - Slate Meadow.

Attachment 4 reproduces the table in the SA Report of the importance placed by WDC on various sustainability matters (referred to as scoring) relating to Slate Meadow, and, in adjacent columns, states our DDBE scoring and our comments to date on WDC's table. Given the lack of engagement of the public by WDC in these issues as outlined in comments above, we reserve the right to supplement these comments in the future, including during consultation on the Environmental Report. As with the assessments of the Hollands Farm and Land off Northern Heights (BE2 and BE3) sites, the details noted for Significant Effects for the Slate Meadow (BE1 site) are extremely limited and insufficient as can be seen on page 123, which merely states for this site that :

"Significant effects relate to the site being a greenfield site, with at least 40% best and most versatile agricultural land (based on incomplete survey). 43% of the site is in Flood Risk Zone 2 and more than 10% at high or medium risk from surface water flooding".

9. Comments on p 125 of the SA Report – Land off Northern Heights

Given the lack of engagement of the public by WDC as outlined in comments above, including engagement regarding the issues addressed by the table on this page of the SA Report, we reserve the right to comment on these issues in the future, including during consultation on the Environmental Report. At this stage we would comment that the table, Significant Effects and Potential Mitigation on this page of the SA Report all show that there are significant sustainability issues and other problems with developing this site. We understand that a separate document commenting on page 125 of the SA Report is being prepared on behalf of residents who live at Northern Heights with a view to submitting it within the time deadline for submitting comments.

Yours faithfully,

(Penny Drayton)

for and on behalf of the
Don't Destroy Bourne End
group

Attachment 1

Extracts from: Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Regulation 12 Preparation of environmental report

- (1) Where an environmental assessment is required by any provision of Part 2 of these Regulations, the responsible authority shall prepare, or secure the preparation of, an environmental report in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of this regulation.
- (2) The report shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of—
- (a) implementing the plan or programme; and
 - (b) reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.
- (3) The report shall include such of the information referred to in Schedule 2 to these Regulations as may reasonably be required, taking account of—
- (a) current knowledge and methods of assessment;
 - (b) the contents and level of detail in the plan or programme;
 - (c) the stage of the plan or programme in the decision-making process; and
 - (d) the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process in order to avoid duplication of the assessment.
- (4) Information referred to in Schedule 2 may be provided by reference to relevant information obtained at other levels of decision-making or through other [EU] legislation.
- (5) When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies.
- (6) Where a consultation body wishes to respond to a consultation under paragraph (5), it shall do so within the period of 5 weeks beginning with the date on which it receives the responsible authority's invitation to engage in the consultation.

SCHEDULE 2 INFORMATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

Regulation 12(3)

- 1** An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
- 2** The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.
- 3** The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.
- 4** Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to [Council Directive 79/409/EEC](#) on the conservation of wild birds and the Habitats Directive.
- 5** The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.
- 6** The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues such as—(a) biodiversity; (b) population; (c) human health; (d)

fauna; (e) flora; (f) soil; (g) water; (h) air; (i) climatic factors; (j) material assets; (k) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (l) landscape; and (m) the inter-relationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l).

7 The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.

8 An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.

9 A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with regulation 17.

10 A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9.

Attachment 2

**DON'T DESTROY
BOURNE END**

To: New Local Plan team – Wycombe District Council

6 August 2016

Draft New Local Plan Consultation Response

On behalf of the “Don’t Destroy Bourne End” group, we submit this response to your Consultation on the draft new local plan. There are currently 1,165 members of the group.¹⁰ Please take into account the views expressed below.

We wish to protest to Wycombe District Council (“**WDC**”) in the strongest possible terms to the proposed redesignation to housing of land currently in the Green Belt around Bourne End (Hollands Farm and Land off Northern Heights) and to the release for development of Slate Meadow. We set out below the problems that we have identified by our research in the limited period made available by WDC for consultation, which period coincides with the summer holiday period and within that period the WDC website was unavailable for a material time. Our research will continue and if it shows that there are further problems we shall be in further contact with you.

1. Housing Needs

The 2016 Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), produced for Buckinghamshire County Council, states that the Objectively Assessed Need for housing in the WDC area is around 15,000 homes. The draft Local Plan states that it has been agreed for 5,000 of those homes to be offset to Aylesbury Vale, leaving a target housing WDC area supply of 10,000 homes. The WDC housing supply data is contained in the 2016 Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (“**HELAA**”) produced by WDC, which details every site that is considered developable over the 2013 – 2033 period of the draft local plan. The HELAA demonstrates an existing supply of 9,083 homes which comprises current development sites; approved development sites; sites considered developable; the Reserve Sites; and the Princes Risborough expansion sites. All of those sites are outside the sites proposed for removal from Green Belt designation in the draft local plan, including the

¹⁰ The group is currently organised on Facebook and we posted saying that we were going to send a protest letter on their behalf and asking for the group’s backing to do so. All the responses to that post received have been positive ones – some people saying things like 'yes fully support', others saying that they have 'liked' the post. We also put the text of the letter on Facebook at least 12 hours before emailing it.

Green Belt sites at Hollands Farm and Northern Heights. This yields an unmet housing supply of 917 homes. Our comments are as follows.

1.1 Over supply of housing The Green Belt sites proposed for housing in the draft local plan would wrongly yield significantly in excess of that 917 shortfall in the housing supply. Green Belt sites must not be sacrificed in this way.

1.2 Non Green Belt sites would meet housing needs Our in depth and careful research of predominantly firm data has shown that available incremental housing supply (wrongly not identified by WDC in the draft local plan) which is abundantly in excess of 917 homes is easily achievable without any land being removed from Green Belt designation. This incremental housing supply derives from:

- higher WDC figures for homes already completed than in the HELAA figures;
- exclusion from the HELAA figures of sites outside the Green Belt identified in draft local plan policies as being available for housing;
- higher figures for the Princes Risborough expansion being in the draft local plan than in the HELAA figures;
- two alternate strategic growth options for Princes Risborough in the Lepus sustainability appraisal (which are options outside the Green Belt and have no significant adverse effect on sustainability) have not been pursued, with no record or assessment in the draft local plan as to why these options have been discounted;
- HELAA housing supply figures very significantly under stating the number of changes of use from office to residential use over the 2013 -2016 period;
- in the HELAA housing supply figures the density of housing development of some of the Reserve Sites for housing (that are not constrained by flood zone designations and other issues) being fundamentally lower than in the effective use of land principle in Government guidance;
- there is a large number of long-term privately-owned unoccupied houses in the WDC area. In addition there are WDC-owned long-term unoccupied houses, private registered providers' unoccupied houses (e.g. Red Kite) and other public sector long-term unoccupied houses. WDC is empowered to bring these houses back into use, thereby contributing to the unmet housing supply - we believe the draft local plan should include a specific Empty Homes policy. The long-term unoccupied houses at this bullet point, if brought back into use, would wholly satisfy the housing need that WDC's draft local plan proposes to satisfy in a different way - by removing sites from the Green Belt to the detriment of future generations; and
- HELAA excluded from the potential housing supply a number of identified greenfield, brownfield, and previously developed sites, all of which are outside the Green Belt. Although sustainability appraisals would be needed

for these sites, such appraisals would no doubt conclude that housing development on these sites would cause less harm than housing development in the Green Belt.

1.3 Aylesbury Vale You have noted the joint working with neighbouring Districts and their ability to absorb some of the unfulfilled housing needs of the WDC area. In particular you have detailed the contribution that Aylesbury Vale will provide in this respect. However, since commencing your Consultation, Aylesbury Vale has revealed their new “garden town” strategy and has stated that of the some 70 hectares of land originally set aside for employment needs, only approximately 22 hectares will now be required. The 48 hectares that are no longer required for their employment needs purpose are to be released for other needs, including housing. This significantly increases Aylesbury Vale’s ability to assist WDC to meet any unfulfilled WDC housing needs.

2. Removal of Land from Green Belt

2.1 Sustainable Development principle is subject to Green Belt policy Each Local Planning Authority preparing a local plan is legally required to do so with the objective of contributing to achieving sustainable development¹¹. This is defined in the relevant national Government planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework of 27 March 2012 as amended (the “NPPF”)¹², by reference to UN Resolution 42/187¹³. The NPPF also refers to five guiding principles of sustainable development¹⁴ and says that there are three dimensions to sustainable development (economic, social and environmental¹⁵). The NPPF provides for a presumption in favour of sustainable development¹⁶ and also says that “All plans should be based upon and reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development...”¹⁷. However it is quite clear that this presumption in favour of sustainable development must always give way to Green Belt policy and that “far from there being any indication that placing the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the

¹¹ Section 39(2) of the 2004 Act

¹² “Achieving Sustainable Development” section near the start of NPPF

¹³ “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

¹⁴ living within the planet’s environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly

¹⁵ These can be summarised as follows: (i) **Economic** Supporting growth and innovation and providing infrastructure; (ii) **Social** Providing housing to meet present and future needs; creating a high quality environment, with accessible local services reflecting the community’s needs and supporting its health, social and cultural well-being; and (iii) **Environmental** Protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change

¹⁶ Para 14 of NPPF

¹⁷ Para 15 of NPPF

heart of the Framework is intended to effect a change in Green Belt policy, there is a clear statement to the contrary”¹⁸.

2.2 Green belt policy re retention of land as Green Belt Local plans must have regard to national Government policy. This is stated in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the “**2004 Act**”)¹⁹. National Government policy states that “The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts.”²⁰ It is absolutely clear that “protecting the Green Belt remains one of the Core planning principles, the fundamental aim of Green Belt Policy to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land open, the essential characteristics of Green Belts, and the five purposes that they serve, all remain unchanged”²¹. The five purposes are in para 80 of the NPPF: “Green Belt serves five purposes: to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas; to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another; to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.” “The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established.”²² “Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered in exceptional circumstances”²³.

The Green Belt at Hollands Farm has over the years restricted the growth of Bourne End towards the surrounding communities of Upper Bourne End (Hawks Hill and Harvest Hill) and Upper Hedsor Road (which is a semi-rural community partly in the Parish of Hedsor, surrounded by Green Belt). Developing Hollands Farm would constitute the sprawl of a built up area and encroach on the countryside by removing the undeveloped land which prevents the coalescence of these individual - and somewhat historic – settlements. The character of these settlements and their communities that have stood the test of time would be irreversibly damaged by such development and would be lost forever to the detriment of future generations. The individuality of these settlements is not reflected in the WDC assessment of the Hollands Farm site that was carried out as part of the WDC assessment of the Green Belt. We understand that this assessment of the Green Belt was carried out in great haste and with very little time spent at each location. A proper assessment of the Hollands Farm land and its setting does not uphold the argument made for release of that land for potential development.

It is abundantly clear from the other provisions of this letter that: (i) the recycling of derelict and other urban land would be neglected by the development of the Green Belt sites proposed in this draft local plan; and (ii) no exceptional circumstances have been established for changing the Green Belt boundaries round Bourne End. Accordingly the draft local plan does not have regard to national Government policy and, if adopted, would be exposed to attack in the courts as being a plan which is not

¹⁸ Per Sullivan LJ (referring to Footnote 9 of para 14 of NPPF) in the Court of Appeal case of Redhill Aerodrome Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and other [2014] EWCA

¹⁹ Section 19(2) of the 2004 Act

²⁰ Para 79 of NPPF

²¹ Per Sullivan LJ in the Court of Appeal case referred to in footnote 9 above

²² Para 82 of NPPF

²³ Para 83 of NPPF

“sound” within the provisions of the 2004 Act²⁴ and hence is liable to being quashed as being “ultra vires”²⁵.

3. Best Agricultural Land Loss

The Ministry of Agriculture Land Classification of the Hollands Farm Green Belt land is Grade 2, Very Good, agricultural farmland. This means that it is land defined by national Government planning policy as the “Best and most versatile agricultural land”²⁶. Only 21% of the farmland in England is of such high quality. The Agricultural Land Classification map for this area shows that the vast majority of the land in Buckinghamshire is not Grade 1 or 2, so the land at Hollands Farm is of an exceptionally high quality compared to other land in Buckinghamshire. Not only that, the land is also certified as fully organic. Organic farming represents only 3.2% of the total agricultural land use within the UK. Only 8% of this rare organic farmland goes on to produce organic wheat and cereals like Hollands Farm (per DEFRA). So this farmland is particularly rare and valuable. As the population grows, we will need more houses, but also more food. It makes absolutely no sense to build houses on the best most productive farmland.

3.1 Not sustainable development As stated at 2.1 above, national Government planning policy defines sustainable development by reference to Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly, which defines sustainable development as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Building houses on some of the very best farmland in the UK is not sustainable development. If we build houses on the best food producing land now:

- it will be more difficult for future generations to produce enough food; and
- destroying agricultural land that is close to Bourne End will ultimately lead to more food miles for future generations to the detriment of the environment.

3.2 Contrary to other national Government policy The draft local plan’s proposals for the Hollands Farm Green Belt land are contrary to specific national Government planning policy because such policy states that:

- WDC should “take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land”²⁷ so that development on such land should only take place if such development is demonstrated to be necessary (we have demonstrated at 1 above that such development is not necessary); and
- even if development of agricultural land were necessary, WDC should “seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality”²⁸. WDC’s proposal to build on this Grade 2 farmland does not comply with this policy.

²⁴ Section 20(5)(b) of the 2004 Act

²⁵ Section 113 of the 2004 Act and *Blythe Valley District Council v Persimmon Homes (North East)* [2008] EWCA

²⁶ Annex 2 to NPPF

²⁷ Para 112 of NPPF

²⁸ Para 112 of NPPF

3.3 Failure to assess soil quality of Hollands Farm and other potential sites

Planning authorities have been advised that they should ensure that sufficient detailed site specific Agricultural Land Classification survey data is available to inform decision-making. There is no evidence to show that WDC has assessed the soil quality of the land at Hollands Farm and compared it to the soil quality of all or any of the other land that was under consideration for development (but has been excluded from development), in order to assess whether more appropriate alternative development land was available.

3.4 Failure to consult Natural England From the materials we have reviewed, it is not apparent that WDC has consulted Natural England regarding the loss of this “Best and most versatile agricultural land” (or regarding 4 below).

4 Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Loss

Natural England has the power to designate areas of outstanding natural beauty in England that are outside national parks and are considered to have such natural beauty that it is desirable that they are conserved and enhanced (“**AONB**”s)²⁹. This power is subject to the power of the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to confirm, refuse, modify or vary any order made by Natural England to establish an AONB.

The Chilterns Conservation Board has submitted a proposed AONB boundary variation which includes land around Bourne End. The attached map has been supplied by The Landscape Access and Geodiversity Team at Natural England. It illustrates the local context and shows that Hollands Farm falls within this new proposed AONB boundary.

Due to resource constraints within the team at Natural England, their initial assessment of this proposed boundary variation will not start for some time. National Government planning policy states that land which qualifies as AONB has the “highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty” and that “great weight should be given to conserving”³⁰ that landscape and scenic beauty. Accordingly this recommendation of inclusion of the Hollands Farm Green Belt land in the AONB category is a relevant factor and the outcome of that recommendation needs to be known before any decision regarding whether or not to remove that land from the Green Belt is made. Removal of the Hollands Farm land from the Green Belt before this outstanding issue is resolved would appear to be unsound from a planning perspective.

5 Traffic Problems

5.1 Traffic congestion The proposed Green Belt developments will add thousands of vehicle movements per day not only by the additional residents and visitors to the sites but also by vehicles providing services to those residents. This will exacerbate the already impossible traffic congestion in the surrounding roads, including: the huge tail backs on the A4094 to Cookham Bridge and on the A404 to

²⁹ Section 82 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

³⁰ Both quotations are from para 115 of NPPF

Bisham roundabout; and the heavy use of narrow country lanes from Hawks Hill and Hedsor Road to Cliveden to avoid Cookham Bridge and also to gain access to Taplow Station, Maidenhead, the M4 and Slough. Use of Taplow Station by the additional residents, particularly when it becomes a crossrail station, would no doubt add further to the country lanes problem. We cannot imagine how the studies on transport and travel that must be carried out when such significant amounts of movement are generated³¹ could possibly address these severe traffic problems. In this context we note that Cookham Bridge is a single track road with a weight restriction and has Grade II listed status. It cannot be modified to increase its capacity. Additional use of Bourne End and Wooburn facilities by the large number of new residents of Green Belt houses would no doubt generate additional traffic jams in and around Bourne End and Wooburn.

The traffic problems outlined above would be further exacerbated by the additional traffic that would be generated if (as proposed in the draft local plan) Policy C16 is removed, thereby removing the shielding from intensive development of the area covered by Policy C16.

5.2 Road safety compromised The proposal to put a busy new bypass road through a proposed new housing development (the proposed Hollands Farm Green Belt development) seems to be very “unsound” (to use a planning term which is charitably non-pejorative) and to be in conflict with national Government planning policy, which requires safe and secure road layouts.³²

5.3 Pollution increase The proposed new bypass road referred to at 5.2 above will suffer the traffic jams and add to the heavy usage referred to at 5.1 above and additional traffic jams would be created on it where that bypass road exits onto other congested roads. This would add significantly to air pollution in a residential area and certainly does not “support reductions of greenhouse gas emissions” envisaged in national Government planning policy on transport.³³ The adding of further traffic to the other already congested roads in the area would also increase traffic jams and give rise to their associated air pollution.

5.4 Parking problems Despite representations made by the public and by local organisations concerning the current unacceptable parking issues in both Bourne End and Wooburn, you have failed to make any proposals regarding additional car parking facilities that would be required to support the additional use of shops, services and transport facilities by residents of any additional houses built in the

³¹ Transport Statement/Assessment under para 32 of NPPF or Travel Plan under para 36 of NPPF

³² Para 35 of NPPF

³³ Para 30 of NPPF

Green Belt. WDC is required by national Government planning policy to seek to improve parking in town centres³⁴ whereas the draft local plan proposals would significantly worsen the already unacceptable situation. There will not be sustainable economic commercial centres without joined-up thinking and action in this respect. The current draft local plan proposals fail to address this issue and consequently conflict with the three dimensions to sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) referred to at 2.1 above and summarised in the footnote there.

6 Flood risk and risk of overflowing drains/sewers

Housing development on Hollands Farm would severely reduce the soak away on the site and would cause rapid run off of water onto areas which are subject to flooding (e.g. the A4094 from Bourne End to Cookham Bridge; e.g. the proposed entrance to the site at Cores End, which is in the flood plain) and onto places which contribute to a very high groundwater level in certain areas (e.g. the extensive sites of the old watercress beds between Cores End and Bourne End). This would increase the incidence of flooding and would be likely to cause drains and sewers to overflow.

7 School Places Inadequate

Clearly any development on the scale being proposed in the Green Belt land would require the provision of new schools to meet the demands of a population increase (which could be around 2,000). The infrastructure proposal for schooling (15 more places per year group at Claytons primary school) is totally inadequate and will not cope with the number of additional children of primary school age. Class sizes in Wycombe secondary schools are already in excess of 30 and will need to cope with the extra pupils from the proposed large number of new homes in Wycombe, so adding to class sizes to cater for the extra pupils from the Green Belt land is not a viable option.
Nursery places in short supply?

8 Doctors' Surgeries Shortage

Local Doctors' surgeries are already struggling to cope with existing numbers. The Cookham practice will not accept additional people from the WDC area. The two practices in Bourne End are already under great pressure and seeking, so far without success, to combine and to secure accommodation so that a larger medical centre can be formed. The problem would be increased enormously by the huge increase in local population that would result from the Green Belt land development proposed in the draft local plan.

9 Habitat Loss

The limited time allowed by the consultation period was insufficient for us to gather detailed information about the flora and fauna of the site and we reserve the right to

³⁴ Para 40 of NPPF

provide more information as and when available. However our initial comments are as follows. The loss of habitat for flora and fauna that flourish in the proposed Hollands Farm development area would be material. The development area has beautiful poppies (photographs of which feature on websites) and wild flowers. We have seen roe deer, muntjac deer, buzzards, falcons, tawny owls & skylarks to name but a few. Bats are known to live in the area, seen flying down the back of properties in Hedsor Road, and in and around the old orchard that protrudes into the development area.

10 Recreational Value Loss

The Hollands Farm land has a long history of being used for recreation. There are public footpaths over it, used by the public for walking, jogging and exercising dogs. The Hollands Farm horse livery would go if the development proceeded, closing down another recreational activity. WDC acknowledges that there is a shortage of recreational green space within Bourne End, so transferring this large area from Green Belt to housing would add hugely to this shortage.

11. Conclusion re Green Belt Sites

On the basis of the above, the removal of the above sites from the Green Belt and designation of them as suitable for housing render the draft local plan not “sound” within the statutory definition³⁵ and therefore not suitable for presentation to an Inspector.

12. Slate Meadow Site – Draft Policy BE1

While the Slate Meadow site is not in the Green Belt and much of the above deals with Green Belt issues, we would comment as follows on the release of that site for development.

- **Other sites capable of meeting housing needs** The material at 1.2 above shows that sites other than the proposed Green Belt housing sites and Slate Meadow are capable of meeting WDC’s housing needs without using the proposed Green Belt housing sites and Slate Meadow for housing.
- **Aylesbury Vale** The ability of Aylesbury Vale to absorb more of the WDC housing needs because of their new “garden town” strategy referred to at 1.3 above also undermines any argument that Slate Meadow is needed for housing.
- **Traffic** Any housing on the Slate Meadow site would increase use of the roads identified at 5.1 above. Such increases would therefore give rise to similar problems to those identified at (i) 5.1 above - Traffic congestion; (ii) 5.3 - Pollution increase; and (iii) 5.4 above - Parking problems.
- **Flood risk** Much of the Slate Meadow site is in Flood Risk zones 2 and 3. A site specific flood risk assessment ought to have been carried out before the site was released for development so that the siting and number of any houses on the site could reflect the assessment’s findings.

³⁵ Section 20(5)(b) of the 2004 Act

- **School places** The pressure on school places referred to at 7 above is also relevant regarding the Slate Meadow site.
- **Doctors' surgeries** The shortage of surgeries referred to at 8 above is also relevant regarding the Slate Meadow site.

Yours faithfully,

(Penny Drayton)

for and on behalf of the
Don't Destroy Bourne End
group

Attachment 3

We disagree with the scoring that WDC has given to the Hollands Farm development in the column headed WDC in the table on page 124 of the SA Report reproduced below and have inserted our scoring and comments in the columns headed DDBE and DDBE Comments below. The explanation in the SA Report of what is covered by each of items 1 to 15 in the table is unclear but we have responded to the best of our ability in these circumstances.

	WDC	DDBE	DDBE Comments
1. Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Negative -	Very Negative --	-Please see item 9 of Attachment 2 – Habitat Loss. Further, the site forms a natural corridor for wildlife to travel along between the Thames and the naturally formed Wye valley (Wooburn Green, Flackwell Heath and beyond). -Please also see the DDBE Comment at item 1 of Attachment 4.
2. Landscape & Countryside	Negative -	Very Negative --	-Please see item 4 of Attachment 2 - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Loss. -If a landscape character assessment has been conducted by WDC it should be readily accessible as part of this consultation but no assessment has been seen. - We have photographs to show that housing development on the Hollands Farm site would be highly visible from surrounding areas. These areas include footpaths at Winter Hill, Cock Marsh, north of Willows Road and north west of Slate Meadow, the country lane called Heavens Lea and (if it were retained) the public footpath which runs through the Farm. Photographs taken from AONB areas are from the woods above Wilton Farm at Little Marlow (north west of Hollands Farm) and from the footpath running down to Pigeon House Farm, south west of Flackwell Heath. All of the above areas are popular walking routes. – Development in the Green Belt would surely, by itself, put this proposal into the Very Negative category. -Please also see 10 below regarding coalescence of currently separate communities.
3. Heritage & Townscape	Very Negative --	Very Negative --	Agree.
4. Water & Flooding	Neutral 0	Very Negative	There is a flood risk from the Thames at the lower end of the development. However, the

		--	need for drainage of considerable volumes of run-off water (including from the hill at the top end of the proposed development) is a material risk - please see item 6 of Attachment 2 – Flood risk and risk of overflowing drains/sewers.
5. Energy efficiency, Climate Change & Waste	Neutral 0	Very Negative --	-Energy wasted and pollution caused by increased traffic and congestion from this large increase in population in an area badly served by roads would be huge – please see item 5 of Attachment 2 – Traffic Problems. -The site is not located close to amenities or to public transport and any buses provided would simply add to the traffic problems referred to above.
6. Best use of land, including soil	Negative -	Very Negative --	-We do not understand why a very negative rating has not been given to use of this site for housing as it fails on all best use of land criteria. -This site consists of rare extremely high quality (Grade 2) farmland. Please see item 3 of Attachment 2 – Best Agricultural Land Loss. - Land outside the Green Belt that previously has been developed should be used in preference to Green Belt land. Please see item 2 of Attachment 2 – Removal of land from Green Belt. --The lack of data referred to at item 3.3 of Attachment 2 is a clear example of the lack of baseline information being made available in the SA Report as referred to at B3 of our comments on the SA Report.
7. Transport	Negative -	Very Negative --	-The particular and severe traffic problems of this site must not be overlooked - item 5 of Attachment 2 – Traffic Problems refers. -Any bus service to the site would be affected by the traffic jams. -The railway line is only a branch line and the station is remote from the site. -Please also see the DDBE Comment at item 7 of Attachment 4.
8. Population & Housing	Positive ++	Very Negative --	-We have demonstrated that housing needs can be met without removing land from the Green Belt to the detriment of future generations. Please see item 1 of Attachment 2 – Housing Needs. -Regarding housing affordability, the economics of developing the Hollands Farm site would prevent the developer from offering any significant number of affordable houses. What research has WDC conducted into these economics in relation to the

			Hollands Farm site?
9. Accessibility	Negative -	Very Negative --	<p>Apart from the distance of the site from school, retail and other facilities, and the removal of recreation facilities from the present population as stated at item 10 of Attachment 2 – Recreational Value Loss, the following should be taken into account as adding to the inaccessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • item 5.1 of Attachment 2 – Traffic congestion; • item 5.4 of Attachment 2 – Parking problems; • item 7 of Attachment 2 – School places inadequate. This would result in children having to travel long distances to find schools with available places; and • item 8 of Attachment 2 – Doctors’ Surgeries Shortage.
10. Place-making, creating sustainable communities	Positive +	Very Negative --	<p>-Housing development on this site would show disrespect for existing buildings, land use and habitats and the resulting urban sprawl would cause the very negative effect of coalescence of currently separate communities, as discussed at item 2.2 of Attachment 2 – Green belt policy re retention of land as Green Belt.</p> <p>-The additional pressures on transport networks and local social infrastructure, including health services, schools, etc. would not create a sustainable community.</p> <p>-The necessary infrastructure to support this new community is not available and the community is not sustainable.</p>
11. Health	Positive +	Very Negative --	<p>-As instructed by WDC’s notes, the problem of access to health care problem is addressed at Accessibility above.</p> <p>-The deterioration of the present health situation for existing residents needs to be considered too – please see item 10 of Attachment 2 – Recreational Value Loss.</p> <p>-The increase in pollution is addressed at item 5.3 of Attachment 2 – Pollution increase.</p>
12. Strong & sustainable economy	Positive +	Negative -	<p>-The site is currently in employment use and the proposed housing development would destroy:</p> <p>(i) agricultural jobs on the site; and</p> <p>(ii) jobs associated with the Hollands Farm horse livery on the site.</p> <p>-Any increase in business in the form of. local</p>

			shops' and amenities' benefits from extra business provided by the new housing occupants would be severely constrained by the traffic problems in the local area and lack of parking facilities, resulting in much of that business being diverted to businesses outside the area. Please see items 5.1 and 5.4 of Attachment 2 – Traffic Problems. -Please also see the remarks on employment for the new housing occupants at 13 below.
13.Levels of employment	Positive +	Negative 0	-As stated at 12 above, the site is currently in employment use and the proposed housing development would destroy: (i) agricultural jobs on the site; and (ii) jobs associated with the Hollands Farm horse livery on the site. -Employment for the new housing occupants would need to be mainly outside the area because of the large number of occupants of the housing and the limited availability of jobs for them in the area.
14.Education, Skills & Training	Neutral 0	Negative	The problems of access to school places referred to at item 7 of Attachment 2 – School Places Inadequate and the travel difficulties and long distances of travel for children in accessing their schools must surely lower educational attainment. The effect would be negative.
15. Business & economic development	Neutral	Neutral	Please see 12 and 13 above. Adding a huge population without adding jobs cannot help the local economy.

Attachment 4

We disagree with the scoring that WDC has given to the Slate Meadow development in the column headed WDC in the table on page 122 of the SA Report reproduced below and have inserted our scoring and comments in the columns headed DDBE and DDBE Comments below. The explanation in the SA Report of what is covered by each of items 1 to 15 in the table is unclear but we have responded to the best of our ability in these circumstances.

	WDC	DDBE	DDBE Comments
1. Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Negative -	Very Negative --	When all three Bourne End sites (BE1, BE2 & BE3) are taken into account the cumulative impact on biodiversity and geodiversity within the Bourne End is greater and should therefore be analysed within the SA Report.
2. Landscape & Countryside	Negative -	Negative -	WDC acknowledge in the SA Report (pages 72-73) that <i>'there could be issues about the coalescence with surrounding and adjoining but distinct communities as a result of development,'</i> and <i>"Slate Meadow occupying the only gap between Bourne End and Wooburn"</i> . The issue of coalescence is clearly dealt with in the NPPF, which should be followed. This is of great concern to local residents.
3. Heritage & Townscape	Neutral 0	Very Negative --	WDC note that in the SA Report "Environmental impacts are potentially significant" and add:- <i>"because of rising land on parts of the edge of the</i>

			<p><i>settlement”</i></p> <p>They further state in the SA Report that:</p> <p><i>“The local topography can make development on the edge of the town visually prominent either because of views from local viewpoints, or because of rising land on parts of the edge of the settlement. Impact on heritage and townscape will be dependent on site location”.</i></p> <p>Slate Meadow has prominent views across open flood plain from the river Wye to the rising hillside beyond and is a highly significant feature of the local historic landscape.</p>
4. Water & Flooding	Negative -	Very Negative --	43% of the site is in Flood Zone 2, with the potential for significant flooding, so to state that it is merely negative is a complete understatement as it should clearly be rated as very negative.
5. Energy efficiency, Climate Change & Waste	Neutral 0	Neutral 0	
6. Best use of land, including soil	Very Negative --	Very Negative --	
7. Transport	Positive	Very Negative	WDC’s assessment is completely at odds with its own comments <i>“Significant levels of growth in and</i>

	+	--	<p><i>around the Bourne End would add significantly to traffic congestion on a network that is already very heavily congested in many places” and adds “the scope to fully mitigate the associated growth in traffic is doubtful”.</i></p> <p>A point acknowledged by WDC’s own consultants (Jacobs) who reported in their Infrastructure Presentations to the Slate meadow Liaison Group that there was little that could be done to mitigate these issues.</p>
8. Population & Housing	Positive +	Very Negative --	Please see item 8 of Attachment 3.
9. Accessibility	Neutral 0	Very Negative --	<p>The accessibility of the site is one of the main issues of the proposed development. The accesses of Frank Lunnon Close and Willows Road onto Cores End Road cannot be redesigned in transport terms to provide safe and suitable access for any new major development.</p> <p>Regarding access to health care, please see item 11 below,</p>

10. Place-making, creating sustainable communities	Positive +	Unknown ?	In the absence of an Environmental Report it is not possible to judge whether or not the development of the Slate Meadow site proposed within the draft new Local Plan is sustainable and positive in this respect.
11. Health	Negative -	Very Negative --	NHS Provisioning Services are currently unable to provide the necessary doctors' surgeries and doctors for the existing shortfall in the vital service within our District. The situation is not improving and will be made worse by this development.
12. Strong & sustainable economy	Neutral 0	Neutral 0	
13. Levels of employment	Neutral 0	Neutral 0	
14. Education, Skills & Training	Positive +	Negative -	The proposal indicated within the draft new Local Plan within respect to the limited provision of school places to meet the development on Slate Meadow has already been absorbed by the increasing number of planning applications for "change of use" development within the Parish. In the absence of any proposal in to mitigate what is already an inadequate supply of school places, Policy BE1 fails to meet the requirements of

			the NPPF.
15. Business & economic development	Neutral 0	Neutral 0	