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Dear Ray

**Response to Committee Report - Proposed development for
47 mixed-tenure dwellings, vehicular access from Beach
Road, public open space, landscape works and associated
infrastructure - Reference S/2317/11**

The Planning Committee Report for the proposal for 47 dwellings at Cottenham has now become available. It should be noted that since the publication of the report the National Planning Policy Framework has been adopted, which supersedes all PPSs and PPGs.

The comments that I wish to make to the report are:

Five Year Housing Supply

The NPPF retains the need for Local Planning Authorities to provide a five-year supply of housing, indeed this is strengthened by increasing the requirement by at least 5%.

The NPPF no longer retains the criteria contained in, the now cancelled, paragraph 69 of PPS3 'Housing'; rather, paragraph 49 of the NPPF states "Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up to date if the Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable sites". Paragraph 14 refers to the presumption in favour of sustainable development and "...where the development plan... is out of date, [Local Planning Authorities should] grant permission unless; any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole". The NPPF gives clear support to the principle of the development.

Development Control Policy ST/5 – developments with over 30 dwellings

Established above, where a five-year housing shortfall exists, the local planning policies on housing cease to be up to date and the relevance of the 30 dwelling guide would therefore also cease to be relevant. Nevertheless, Core Strategy Policy ST/5 provides the 30 dwelling number as an "indicative maximum" and paragraph 2.21 of the policy goes on to say:

"However, in order to ensure that residential development is not promoted in unsustainable locations, the acceptability of developments above group scale in Minor Rural Centres is dependent on existing facilities and services being improved. The areas in which a particular village performs less well against the Structure Plan criteria should be improved as part of any development over 8 dwellings. Developer contributions will be sought to obtain the necessary improvements."



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All s106 contributions that have been requested of the applicant have been agreed to, and no substantive objections have been made to the application with regard to the impact on facilities (schools, doctors, public transport for example). This directs that Cottenham can accept the 47 dwellings proposed and no harm would arise to the facilities and services of Cottenham. Indeed further residents would help ensure the local shops and services remain viable and well used.

Council's Strategic Vision

The report makes reference to the Spatial Vision as directed by paragraph 69 of the now cancelled PPS3. The Spatial Vision of the Local Planning Authority is set out at section 2 of the Core Strategy; the proposal performs well against the vision. Most notably it helps to meet ST/a and b (to provide a continuous supply of land for housing in sustainable locations) ST/e (to protect the character of villages by ensuring that the scale and location of development in each village is in keeping with its size, character and function).

Affordable Housing

The provision of 19 affordable homes is an important element of the proposal. Paragraph 54 of the NPPF states: "Local Planning Authorities should, in particular, consider whether allowing some market housing would facilitate the provision of significant additional affordable housing to meet local needs".

Local Acceptance

The applicant has taken seriously the Localism agenda and has spoken and met with local groups including the Parish Council, Cottenham Village Design Group and headmasters of the local schools. The discussions have proved most useful with the scheme responding to comments made and matters such as the safer route to school improvements, and the suggestion of linking the public art to the safer route to school coming from the community.

1982 Appeal decision

The 1982 appeal referred to in the report appears to be given significant weight by Officers. A decision some 30 years old, made well before the existing policy framework and prior to the Calvin Close dwellings being constructed can only be given limited weight. It is also not clear 30 years ago, whether the significant tree and hedge planting to the boundary was in situ or mature. The existing boundary planting is a significant feature and screen to the site which will be maintained, and for which maintenance plans have already been discussed.

Green Belt and Countryside Impact

The Officer report does not highlight the landscape appraisal that has been undertaken and submitted to the Authority, which was based on site visits and assessing the site from various vantage points; a summary of key vantage points is enclosed to this letter. The outcome of the appraisal is favourable to the development and underpins that the development has been worked up with the landscape architect, ecologist and architect to be a landscape-led design.

The Green Belt is located to the west side of Beach Road. Only one restricted view of the site from the Green Belt is possible from close-quarters from the private residence of No 60 Beach Road to the west of the site. Any other view attained is from standing further to the south, outside of the Green Belt. To Beach Road a soft frontage would be retained in front of the proposed dwellings and would be in context of the nearby dwellings along the Beach Road frontage as one travels into Cottenham. The houses are pushed away from the southern boundary and the significant boundary planting is to be retained, enhanced and managed.

It is important to note that the Urban Design Officer, Landscape Officer, Cottenham Village Design Group and Parish Council do not raise objection to any perceived impact to the nearby Green Belt or countryside.

In conclusion, Officers do not raise a reason for refusal on the principle that the development is outside of the village framework, rather to the number of dwellings that are proposed, and the perceived impact to the nearby Green Belt and the countryside. However, the proposal forms an application to which planning permission can be granted for the following reasons:

- Much needed affordable housing and a mix of housing;
- Smaller family homes which are sought in the community;
- The provision of developments above 30 dwellings is permitted, where the impact on services and facilities is acceptable (or can be made acceptable);
- Acceptance and support to the scheme from the local community, including a recommendation of approval from the Parish Council;
- Commitment to improvements beyond the policy minimum (off-site equipped play, zebra crossing to the High Street, improved crossing to Beach Road, relocating 30mph speed limit further out of Cottenham) in addition to those sought by policy (contribution to pre-school, primary school, community facilities, rights of way, household recycling centre, waste receptacles, open space maintenance);
- The impact on the adjacent Green Belt and the countryside character is minimal as demonstrated through the landscape appraisal, and more trees and hedgerows will be introduced to the site;
- At 47 dwellings the scheme is viable and can afford the S106 package, including the above policy-requirement elements. A scheme below 30 dwellings would not be an efficient use of the site and would not be able to afford all of the improvements that have arisen out of consultation with the community; and
- Supported by NPPF guidance.

I trust this letter is useful to you to explain the relevance of the adopted NPPF and why the development should be found acceptable.

Yours sincerely



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Enc: Additional Supporting Plan

Cc: Planning Committee Members