

### Summary of Parish Council Site Submission

Cold Ash Parish Council **objects** to this site being included as a 'preferred site' in the DPD. The main issues being:

- The development would reduce the rural gap between Ashmore Green and Cold Ash.
- The presence of Grade 2 listed, historic farmstead, in the centre of the site.
- The site is in the line of downhill surface water flows which has lead to the land and houses in and around the site being badly flooded in the past (see photo below). Building here will cause greater run-off from the site, endangering surrounding houses.
- The farm access road is not suitable as a site entrance.

To come to this conclusion the Parish Council has worked through the WBC Site Assessment, SA/SEA and Site Commentary documents. Over the following pages we highlight areas where we consider changes are required.

With regard to our Parish Council comments in the WBC consultation documents, it appears that our submission to Ms L Alexander on 7th March 2014 has not been included. We have added those again in the following pages and insist that WBC documents are updated as if our submission in March had been recognised.



Photo 1 - Field just south of COL002 in 2007

**Possible Alternate Site**

The Parish Council submits that consideration should be given to a small number of starter homes along the entrance track to Poplar Farm. This would not detract from the rural gap between Ashmore Green and Cold Ash. Also it would not cause the flooding issues with the existing proposal.

### Site Selection - Site Assessment

#### Summary of Site Assessment

**Key Issues:**

**Add:**

Poplar Farm is a Greenfield site, on the slopes of Cold Ash Hill, with a considerable flooding risk both for itself and as a contributor of surface water downhill to both the existing surrounding housing and lower fields. The floods of 2007 were just one indicator of what could be worse flooding if this site were built upon.

The site has limited access via a single track which indicates that any building will necessitate the construction of a further access road to be built in the fields adjoining. The volume of traffic on Cold Ash Hill (44.8k movements per week) means that egress onto the main road will be both difficult and dangerous (50% of cars exceed the 30mph limit). The site's position on the road will necessitate the building of significant traffic calming measures. The lack of adequate public transport through the village leads to a high car dependency, which in turn leads to a greater volume of traffic in and through the Parish.

The site sits at the southern gateway to this picturesque village. The building of a second line of housing, further extending the building line up hill, will have a negative impact on the village environment and is out of character with the built environment. Development would have the effect of reducing the rural gap between the settlements of Ashmore Green and Cold Ash, and would in-fill the green spaces between the existing house groupings abutting the site furthering the unacceptable urbanisation-incurSION of a rural environment.

The presence of Grade 2 listed, historic farmstead, in the centre of the site and that the site sits outside the village settlement boundary compounds the unsuitability of this site for development.

#### Site Assessment

<p><b>Parish Council consultation response:</b></p>	<p><b>Add the following, which was communicated to L Alexander on 7/3/14, but not included in the DPD documents:</b></p> <p>This site is unsuitable for the following reasons:</p> <p><b>Environment</b></p> <p>The main village of Cold Ash is situated on a ridge and lays immediately adjacent to the North Wessex Downs AONB. Building on these sites would contravene NPPF guidelines that states that highly visible areas such as exposed ridges, landforms and open slopes should normally be protected. Areas of sporadic dispersed or ribbon development should normally be excluded from development, this combined with the Parish being on the fringe of the AONB means that any open spaces should be safeguarded from development. The wider setting and important views should be taken into account when proposing development.</p> <p><b>Traffic/Access</b></p> <p>Traffic is already a problem within and through the Parish. Hermitage Road, The Ridge, Ashmore Green Road, Stoney and Lane Fishers Lane are old farm tracks with poorly constructed paving to carry the now substantial volume of traffic using these roads as rat runs to the M4 and A34 and Newbury. Additional traffic volume would overwhelm the Parish and cause substantial deterioration in the quality of life for the Parishioners.</p> <p><b>Flood Risk</b></p> <p>Cold Ash Parish is built mainly on a ridge, an escarpment, the geology of which (complex area of drift geology, with sands, gravels and clays over a chalk and clay bedrock) means that there is a history of flooding downhill from the main village, both from surface water run-off and ground water (2007 &amp; 2014) flowing downhill from the Parish to the towns and villages in the Kennet Valley. Current flood retention ponds being built at the bottom of Cold Ash Hill, on the northern border of Thatcham, are specified for the existing run-off volumes. Any additional building in above these ponds will only add to the problem.</p> <p><b>COL002: Land at Poplar Farm</b></p> <p>There are limits to development of this site because of a listed building and the site being in a line</p>
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	<p>of flooding.</p> <p>This site lies directly in the path of surface water run off from further up the escarpment (See flooding in the past few weeks on Poplar farm). Any building would be situated on a drift geological formation that exacerbates flooding further downhill. There is an existing Grade 2 listed building on the site. The site forms a significant part of the open views from the village over the surrounding open slopes and farmland.</p>
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B) Considerations			
Criteria		Yes / No / Unknown	Comments
<b>Flood Risk</b>	Groundwater flood risk	Y	Site in the line of downhill surface water flows which has lead to the land and houses in and around the site being badly flooded in the past, the 2007 inundation being an example. Building further houses and a new access road will lead to greater run-off from the site.
	Surface water flood risk	Y	
	Critical Drainage Area	N	
<b>Highways / Transport</b>	Access issues	Y	Existing access track is unsuitable for two way traffic, no existing traffic calming measures to mitigate excessive speeding on CA Hill (50% of vehicles exceeding 30mph), significant traffic volumes (44.8k vehicle movements per week) make egress dangerous.
	Highway network suitability	Y	No traffic calming measures in existence, 44.8k vehicle movements per week on CA Hill / Speeding in excess of 30mph is 50%. Current site access road is single track
	Public Transport network	U	Poor bus service (5 per day at 2 hourly intervals), nearest railway station is 3.7km away.
	Footways/Pavements	U	Narrow pavements and the 15% incline make pedestrian access to local services difficult
<b>Landscape</b>	Other		Notable views to the West of Cold Ash Hill
<b>Green Infrastructure</b>	Open Space / Playing field / Amenity Space nearby	N	The nearest open space / playground is 1km away up a 15% hill with limited width footpaths.
	Rights of Way affected	N	Affects the views from the public footpath that passes close to the site
	Play areas nearby	N	Nearest playground is 1km away up a 15% incline with limited footpath widths.
<b>Relationship to surrounding area</b>	Relationship to settlement	N	The site is outside the settlement boundary.
	Incompatible adjacent land uses	N	
<b>Heritage</b>	Archaeology	Y	Area of high sensitivity, historic landscape character.

	Listed building		A Grade 2 listed farmstead building is present on the site (Poplar Farmhouse).
<b>Utility Services</b>	Presence of over head cables / underground pipes	Y	A culvert transverses the site.
<b>Relationship to / in combination effects of other sites.</b>	COL 011		COL 002 and COL 011 are almost opposite each other on Cold Ash Hill, the combined development would exacerbate the flooding risk and add to the issues of road safety on Cold Ash Hill. Also, the combination of the sites would increase the urbanisation of the Southern gateway of this rural Village.

**Site Selection - Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment**

Objective	Criteria	Effect	Justification	Comment
2	Support active lifestyles?	0	Cycling is too dangerous given the volume and speeds of traffic on Cold Ash Hill. Urbanisation will further exacerbating the heavy car dependency.	
	Increase opportunities for access to sports facilities?	-	The Cold Ash sports field is 1km away up a 15% incline on footpaths of limited width.	
	Protect/enhance the green infrastructure?	-	Construction on this site would reduce the green infrastructure of the Parish by the loss of a green field as a habitat.	
4	Increase travel choices?		No effective public transport; Walking to station not feasible; 5 buses per day; cycling difficult due to topography (15% hill)	
	Reduce accidents?	-	Poor access onto Cold Ash Hill into the flow of considerable traffic volumes (44.8k movements per week) that regularly exceeds the 30mph will lead to heightened risk Increase of road accidents. No existing traffic calming measures.	Negative impact on environmental sustainability.
5	Conserve biodiversity?	-	Surrounding woods and streams will be negatively impacted by the development of this site. Local deer and dormouse populations will be affected.	Needs habitat surveys to establish the impact on Birds, Reptiles and Bat biodiversity
	Conserve character of the landscape?	-	The site sits at the southern gateway to this picturesque village. The building of a second line of housing, further extending the building line up hill, will have a negative impact on the village environment and is out of character with the built environment. Development would have the effect of reducing the rural gap between the settlements of Ashmore Green and Cold Ash, and would in-fill the green spaces between the existing house groupings abutting the site furthering the unacceptable urbanisation-incursion of a rural environment.	
6	Conserve character of the built environment?	-	There is a Grade 2 building in the middle of the site	
10	Reduce contribution to greenhouse gases?	--	There would be increased car dependency leading to increased emissions in the Village.	See CAPC Annex A, up to 90% car dependency

	Site at risk from flooding?	--	The site is in the natural downhill flow of surface water and has been subject of significant flooding in the past, notably recent floods in 2007. Surface water runoff from this site will contribute to flood risk further down Cold Ash Hill and into North Thatcham.	SuD's will certainly be needed However SuD's implementation cannot be legally enforced
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**Summary**

Add: There are numerous significant sustainability impacts from this site. Poplar Farm is located outside the village settlement boundary, with poor access to local services and the limited facilities within the village, all of which will have a negative impact on sustainability. There is a high degree of car dependency for travel to employment and access to higher level services and facilities, which will have a negative impact on sustainability in terms of an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and additional traffic volumes. The greenfield landscape of the site is of a high sensitivity-historic nature; the rural character of the village would be damaged by further development. There is potential for protected species on the site, and should this be confirmed and appropriate mitigation would be required to ensure that development does not have a negative effect on environmental sustainability. The site is subject to surface water flooding, without appropriate and enforceable mitigation, flooding will have a negative impact on all elements of sustainability.

## Site Selection - Site Commentary

### Justification:

Add: not considered developable because the site lies directly in the path of surface water run off from further up the escarpment. Any building would be situated on a drift geological formation that exacerbates flooding further downhill. The site forms a significant part of the open views from the village over the surrounding open slopes and farmland. The building of a second line of housing, further extending the building line up hill, will have a negative impact on the village environment and is out of character with the built environment. Development would have the effect of reducing the rural gap between the settlements of Ashmore Green and Cold Ash, and would in-fill the green spaces between the existing house groupings abutting the site furthering the unacceptable urbanisation-incursion of a rural environment.

### Discussion:

#### Site Description:

This site is on a steep slope on the west side of Cold Ash Hill, it is currently partly a green field site and partly old farm buildings with a Grade2 listed building in the centre of the proposed site that sits outside the settlement boundary of the Parish. The site sits at the base of the 15% incline that is Cold Ash Hill, it is at considerable distance from services.

#### Flood Risk

The site is in the direct path of surface water run-off from the hills (15% incline down Cold Ash Hill) and slopes that surround the site, the site itself and housing in the immediate area have in the past suffered considerable flooding, see reports of 2007. The site adds to potential for downhill flooding in north Thatcham. The site is on a complex area of drift geology, with mixed sands, clays and gravel. There have been multiple incidences of flooding, WBC had to implement a French Drain around houses adjacent to the site to mitigate flooding in the past. To make it a viable building site, it would require a major investment in downhill flood retention ponds and berms, along with an effective and enforced SuDs implementation.

#### Environment

This site would cause a significant loss of the visual gateway of the southern access to Cold Ash. The landscape is of a high character and represents a front-line buffer zone to the AONB. The Slopes of Cold Ash hill are of particular note, this site would intrude into the landscape and reduce the visual amenity value at the entrance to the village. Residents of the village and those bordering the site in particular would experience further erosion of the considerable rural nature of the area surrounding



their houses.

The site is outside the settlement boundary of Cold Ash, the development of Poplar farm would significantly erode the green-space and rural buffer between Cold Ash and Thatcham settlements and exacerbate the ribbon development of the village. NPPF guidelines state that maintaining green space between settlements is necessary to maintain the nature of what is a rural village.

#### **Highways /Transport:**

Traffic would exit onto Cold Ash hill, the main road through Cold Ash. This road already has traffic volume problems (44.8k per week) compounded by speeding problems (50% of traffic exceeds the 30mph limit). At peak times egress would be difficult. Currently the site is accessed by a narrow single track, to build on the site would necessitate the construction of a separate and additional access road. To enable access to the site, considerable traffic calming measures would have to be built.

#### **Education:**

Local primary school provision is at capacity. This site will not add to that capacity. The school is 1km away up a 15% incline via narrow footpaths on a busy road.

#### **Parish Council:**

**Add the following, which was communicated to L Alexander on 7/3/14, but not included in the DPD documents:**

This site is unsuitable for the following reasons:

#### **Environment**

The main village of Cold Ash is situated on a ridge and lays immediately adjacent to the North Wessex Downs AONB. Building on these sites would contravene NPPF guidelines that states that highly visible areas such as exposed ridges, landforms and open slopes should normally be protected. Areas of sporadic, dispersed or ribbon development should normally be excluded from development, this combined with the Parish being on the fringe of the AONB means that any open spaces should be safeguarded from development. The wider setting and important views should be taken into account when proposing development.

#### **Traffic/Access**

Traffic is already a problem within and through the Parish. Hermitage Road, The Ridge, Ashmore Green Road, Stoney and Lane Fishers Lane are old farm tracks with poorly constructed paving to carry the now substantial volume of traffic using these roads as rat runs to the M4 and A34 and Newbury. Additional traffic volume would overwhelm the Parish and cause substantial deterioration in the quality of life for the Parishioners.

### Flood Risk

Cold Ash Parish is built mainly on a ridge, an escarpment, the geology of which (complex area of drift geology, with sands, gravels and clays over a chalk and clay bedrock) means that there is a history of flooding downhill from the main village, both from surface water run-off and ground water (2007 & 2014) flowing downhill from the Parish to the towns and villages in the Kennet Valley. Current flood retention ponds being built at the bottom of Cold Ash Hill, on the northern border of Thatcham, are specified for the existing run-off volumes. Any additional building in above these ponds will only add to the problem.

#### COL002: Land at Poplar Farm

There are limits to development of this site because of a listed building and the site being in a line of flooding.

This site lies directly in the path of surface water run off from further up the escarpment (See flooding in the past few weeks on Poplar farm). Any building would be situated on a drift geological formation that exacerbates flooding further downhill. There is an existing Grade 2 listed building on the site. The site forms a significant part of the open views from the village over the surrounding open slopes and farmland.

### SA/SEA

There are numerous significant sustainability impacts from this site. Poplar Farm is located outside the village settlement boundary, with poor access to local services and the limited facilities within the village, all of which will have a negative impact on sustainability. There is a high degree of car dependency for travel to employment and access to higher level services and facilities, which will have a negative impact on sustainability in terms of an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and additional traffic volumes. The greenfield landscape of the site is of a high sensitivity-historic nature; the rural character of the village would be damaged by further development. There is potential for protected species on the site, and should this be confirmed appropriate mitigation would be required to ensure that development does not have a negative effect on environmental sustainability. The site is subject to surface water flooding, without appropriate and enforceable mitigation, flooding will have a negative impact on all elements of sustainability.