

Summary of Parish Council Site Submission

Cold Ash Parish Council has ***considerable concerns*** about this site being included as a 'preferred site' in the DPD. The main issues being:

- Views from The Ridge southwards will be reduced significantly.
- Will impact on the views from across the entire valley.
- The site is not close to any local services and the lack of footpaths likely to mean a large number of car journeys.

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.

Site Selection - Site Assessment

Summary of Site Assessment

Key Issues:

Add:

The St Gabriels Farm site is situated on the eastern gateway of the village of Cold Ash. This is a Greenfield site, outside the settlement boundary, sitting atop a ridge overlooking the Kennet Valley. The Cold Ash ridge is a significant natural feature of the area and can be seen from many miles away. The North Wessex AONB abuts the site to the north, making this site part of the fringe or buffer-zone of the AONB; views from The Ridge southwards will be reduced significantly.

The site would fill a natural gap, a green space, between existing houses. It starts on a ridgeline and a south-facing downward slope with significant views across the Kennet Valley. Building on this site would further add to the filling in of the gap between housing, adding to the ribbon-development character of the existing housing. NPPF guidelines specify that natural gaps should not be filled and ridgelines not be built upon (see Appendix 12 of NPPF).

The existing road, The Ridge, suffers from excessive traffic volumes and speed on what is a rural road. There are no pavements or footpaths to connect the site to the rest of the village, thereby adding to the already considerable vehicle traffic (10.5k vehicle movements per week) accessing the limited facilities and services of the village and nearby Thatcham and Bucklebury.

Site Assessment

<p>Parish Council consultation response:</p>	<p>Add the following, which was communicated to L. Alexander on 7/3/14, but not included in the DPD documents:</p> <p>The site is on a ridge and there are good views southwards.</p> <p>A gully runs along the base of the site so development would have implications on flooding and run-off.</p> <p>There are no footpaths and the road is narrow. Unsustainable site.</p> <p>This site sits on an exposed ridge and is a significant view and important open slope. Development of the site would close a significant gap between existing housing, worsening the ribbon development to the detriment of the character of the village. Lower down the slope, immediately below the site, is a gully made up of a Sand/Gravel- Drift geology, which will add to the downhill flooding. There are no footpaths that allow for walkers to get to public transport or local schools and shop, which would mean additional vehicular traffic.</p> <p>Environment</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>Traffic/Access</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>
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	<p>Flood Risk</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 & 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 above these ponds will only add to the problem.</p>
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B) Considerations			
Criteria		Yes / No / Unknown	Comments
Flood risk	Groundwater flood risk	N	The residential areas of Southend and the southern gateway of Cold Ash are downhill from this site, both have suffered significant flooding in recent years.
	Surface water flood risk	N	
	Critical Drainage Area	N	
Highways / Transport	Access issues	U	The site sits at a bend in the road (The Ridge) and has limited visibility to the right (east) for traffic entering the village. There are no footpaths along The Ridge therefore dependency on cars would increase from its already high level (10.5k vehicle movements per week)(along with greenhouse gas emissions) and increase the traffic-safety risk to pedestrians.
	Highway network suitability	Y	The Ridge is a minor, inter-village, road with no provision for pedestrians (no footpaths). Traffic volumes are considerable, entering the village at speed round tight bends in the road.
	Public Transport network	N	No bus stop within safe walking distance, no footpaths allowing safe access to public transport.
	Footways/Pavements	N	No footpaths available along The Ridge, road width means that the provision of pavements would be unlikely.
Landscape	Other		St Gabriels Farmstead is in the fringes of the North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site sits atop the Cold Ash ridgeline to the south, which is a significant feature of the landscape of the escarpment above the Kennet Valley. Building on this site will impact on the views from across the entire valley.
Green Infrastructure	Open Space / Playing field / Amenity Space nearby	N	Nearest open spaces and sports facilities are approx. 1.3 Km away, no safe pedestrian access.
	Rights of Way affected	U	Site abuts a public footpath to the south

	Play areas nearby	N	The nearest play area is 1.3km away, will mean additional car journeys along The Ridge, increasing the already high level of car dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.
Relationship to surrounding area	Relationship to settlement	N	Ribbon development with no footpaths makes it difficult to connect the site to the local community, St Gabriels Farm is at the extreme eastern end of the village, this site would fill the last open gap along The Ridge.
	Incompatible adjacent land uses	N	This is a greenfield site of great natural beauty in the immediate fringes of the North Wessex AONB.

Site Selection - Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment

Objective	Criteria	Effect	Justification	Comment
2	Support active lifestyles?	-	There are a number of rural pathways near the site, but access is limited by the lack of safe roadside footpaths.	Due to the site being at the top of a ridge, it is unlikely that residents will walk to the shops 1.5km away at the bottom of the hill. The site will increase car dependency and greenhouse gas emissions.
	Increase opportunities for access to sports facilities?	0	The open space at the Cold Ash Recreation ground is 1.3km away.	
	Protect/enhance the green infrastructure?	-	Adding housing destroys valued views across the Kennet valley, closes a natural gap between existing houses and means building on a ridgeline.	Building on a ridge and closing natural gaps between houses is against NPPF guidelines
4	Increase travel choices?	-	Hilly district inhibits walking and cycling. The site is on the edge of Cold Ash. No footpaths to enable pedestrian access to bus service There are few services close to the site.	Likely to increase car dependency due to lack of footpaths and distance to local Village Post office (1.4km).
	Reduce accidents?	--	The lack of ability to introduce adequate footpaths will mean there will be additional car journeys on the very narrow road.	Negative impact on road safety.
5	Conserve biodiversity?	0	Reduces greenfield areas in and around the village	
	Conserve character of the landscape?	-	Views from the south side of the Kennet Valley will be lost. Building along the ridgeline will irrevocably change the nature of this end of the village.	
6	Conserve character of the built environment?	0	Significant risk to the eclectic character of the built environment along The Ridge.	
10	Reduce contribution to greenhouse gases?	-	There will be an increased dependency upon the car and therefore increased greenhouse gas pollution in the village.	
	Site at risk from flooding?	0	Surface water runoff from this site will contribute to flood risk downhill at Southend and Cold Ash Hill.	SuD's will be required. But SuD's implementation cannot be legally enforced.

Summary

Add:

There are significant sustainability impacts from this site. The site is located at the extreme eastern end of a village setting with poor access to local services and facilities within the village, this will have a negative impact on sustainability. There will be a high degree of car dependency for travel to employment and wider higher level services and facilities, which will have a negative impact on sustainability, in terms of an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Development of the site has the potential to change the character of the built environment and impact negatively on environmental sustainability. Due to the lack of pavements along The Ridge there is potential for a negative impact on all elements of sustainability due to road safety concerns, consideration of appropriate mitigation measures to reduce this impact would be expensive necessitating some 1.3km of footpaths and traffic calming measure to be built. The high character of the landscape (AONB) would suffer significant negative environmental impact.

Site Selection - Site Commentary

Justification:

Add: not considered developable due to the damage caused to notable views of the Cold Ash Ridge from the south. NPPF guidelines specify that natural gaps should not be filled and ridgelines not be built upon (see Appendix 12 of NPPF).

The existing road, The Ridge, suffers from excessive traffic volumes and speed on what is a rural road. There are no pavements or footpaths to connect the site to the rest of the village, thereby adding to the already considerable vehicle traffic (10.5k vehicle movements per week) accessing the limited facilities and services of the village and nearby Thatcham and Bucklebury.

Discussion:

Site Description:

St Gabriels Farm is located at the extreme eastern edge of Cold Ash, adjacent to and in the fringe of the North Wessex AONB. The site sits atop a much-valued ridgeline and would blight the views of considerable natural beauty across the Kennet Valley. The site sits outside the village settlement boundary and is poorly related to the village because of the lack of pavements along The Ridge. There are no local services or facilities close to the site so increased car movements are inevitable.

Highways /Transport:

Traffic is likely to increase and add to the over all volume of vehicles in and through the village and congestion (and therefore greenhouse gas pollution) at the crossroads in the centre of the village during peak travel periods. The Ridge currently carries 10.5 vehicle movements per week on what is a minor – C class – road.

The bus service through the village is poor (5 buses per day / every 2 hours), and access along the road, to the nearest bus stop, is not safe due to lack of footpaths.

Education:

Local primary school provision is at capacity. This site will add to the overburdening of the local schools. It is not possible to walk safely to the village Primary schools. Bus transport to most of local Secondary Schools do not pick up children along The Ridge, exposing children to the dangers of a road with no footpaths.

Environment:

Development of this site would lead to the loss of the visual gateway at the eastern gateway of Cold Ash Village. The landscape is of a high character and represents a front-line buffer zone in the fringe of the North Wessex AONB on the north side of The Ridge. Building on the ridgeline will negatively impact the rural nature of The Ridge area of Cold Ash Parish, the village will lose one of its most valued areas of natural beauty and significant views across the Kennet Valley. Building on this site would be contrary to the recommendations of the NPPF (Section 12).

Traffic/Access:

The sight lines for the site are limited to the east, as traffic enters the village through a series of tight bends (from Bucklebury direction). The lack of footpaths along The Ridge will mean an increased dependency on the already high volume of car journeys needed to access schools and other local facilities. Greenhouse gas emissions will increase in the village in peak hours with the build up of traffic at the crossroads of The Ridge and Hermitage Road.

Flood Risk

There is little local flooding risk but this site sits at the top of the slope that feeds ground / surface water to downhill sites such as Cold Ash Hill and Southend and thereby North Thatcham.

Parish Council:

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

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A gully runs along the base of the site so development would have implications on flooding and run-off.

There are no footpaths and the road is narrow. Unsustainable site.

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Environment

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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

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Flood Risk

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SA/SEA:

There are significant sustainability impacts from this site. The site is located at the extreme eastern end of a village setting with poor access to local services and facilities within the village, this will have a negative impact on sustainability. There will be a high degree of car dependency for travel to employment and wider higher level services and facilities, which will have a negative impact on sustainability, in terms of an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. Development of the site has the potential to change the character of the built environment and impact negatively on environmental sustainability. Due to the lack of pavements along The Ridge there is potential for a negative impact on all elements of sustainability due to road safety concerns, consideration of appropriate mitigation measures to reduce this impact would be expensive necessitating some 1.4km of footpaths and traffic calming measure to be built. The high character of the landscape (AONB) would suffer significant negative environmental impact.