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Wakes Colne Parish Council

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YOUR PARISH COUNCIL WORKING FOR YOUR PARISH

COMMENTS FROM WAKES COLNE PARISH COUNCIL ON COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL'S LOCAL PLAN CALL FOR SITES 2014

As far as Wakes Colne Parish Council (WCPC) is aware, there are 5 sites in Wakes Colne proposed for development by their landowners (1st submission), and, at this stage, we would like to make the following comments.

1. There is one site in *Inworth Lane*, without sight of the submission form this appears to be infill.
2. There is one site on *Inworth Lane/Middle Green* which may be large enough to have several dwellings. We have not had sight of the submission form.
3. *Virley Cottage*. This site may be large enough for several dwellings. We have not had sight of the submission form.
4. *The Mill*. This site may be large enough for several dwellings. We have not had sight of the submission form.
5. Land to the west of *Station Road /Bures Road, Wakes Colne* CO6 2DS, linked with a site to the west of the Village Hall on *Colchester Rd*. These large sites are the cause of great concern to WCPC and we wish to make preliminary comments at this stage.

The landowner has allowed us to view the submission form and attended a parish council meeting in November 2014 to explain the proposal. There are two sites involved in this submission: a) to the west of Station Road/ Bures Road which involves a proposal for up to 50 dwellings; (hatched red). b) linked as a proposed recreation area abutting Colchester Road. (hatched blue).

The parish council is alarmed at the proposals for these sites for the following reasons. Proposal 5a would more than double the number of dwellings in Station Rd and add to the total number of dwellings in Wakes Colne as a whole by approximately 20%. An increase of 50 dwellings would mean approximately 100 additional adult residents, with many families having 2.4 children many of whom would require local schooling. In addition, and most importantly, each household is likely to have on average two cars and residents will also be using Station Road as pedestrians. Over the

last 15 years and especially in recent years traffic in Station Rd/Bures Rd has become heavier and faster, more often than not with little or no regard for pedestrians. Station Road is narrow, deep cut, and progresses steeply uphill, with entrance and exit pinch points near the A1124 junction, and in the most part, is without a footway.

A proposal submitted by WCPC in 2013 for traffic calming and a footway in Station Road is currently under active consideration by Colchester Local Highways Panel (LHP) with a feasibility study being undertaken by Essex County Council Highways. Traffic calming and a footway has been and continues to be a matter of urgent necessity for public safety of the residents of this community and others passing through the village. Any further development of the proposed magnitude in the Station Road area, with construction traffic and an additional population would put an unsupportable burden on this road and its safety would be totally compromised.

With this in mind we would like to comment further on some sections of the site submission form. We sincerely hope that our constructive comments will be taken into consideration.

Comments match the numbering as on the submitted Call for Sites form for Station Road/Bures Road CO6 2DS.

4 Site Information

Site location: One parcel of land edged blue lies north of Colchester Road and to the west of the Village Hall, the second parcel of land edged red lies to the west of Bures Road (Station Road) and to the north of properties Kismet and Springfield and is opposite Wakes Colne and Chappel Station (CO6 2DS).

Grid reference E:589595 N:228890

Key Views to and from the site We disagree with the comment “Both sites are devoid of public views....”. The proposed site on Station Road/Bures Road is in clear view as it sits on the top of a steep hill. There is a clear view of the proposed site when approaching from the north; whilst travelling south, descending into the valley, the site and all its dwellings would clearly be seen. There would also be clear views of the proposed site from Lane Road which lies less than half a mile across open fields to the west. Furthermore, the site would be in plain view from the historic railway viaduct. The development of the Station Road/ Bures Road site, which is in the Green Belt, would completely change the scenic and rural character of the village

Details of how development on the site could be accessed by vehicles. The area hatched blue for proposed recreational development would, it is suggested by the landowner, be accessed via an existing single track currently serving the village hall . As far as the WCPC is aware there has not been any consultation with the village hall committee.

Immediately adjacent to this proposed recreational area is a very old, well established badger sett (running east to west and situated on the south side of the proposed area) which covers ground about 140m in length by 15m in depth. Some of the setts appear to go under the proposed site.

The area hatched red: The form states there will be “appropriately designed access points” on Bures Rd. At present there is only a farm vehicle access point to this field site, situated opposite Station Approach. The site lies to the west of Bures Rd which is a very narrow deep cut road without a footway, there are several blind bends which cannot be negotiated easily by two large passing vehicles (and has been the site of several road accidents). This proposed site has been discounted in the past because of the poor condition of the road and blind bends (see Relevant Planning History section). There is also a recognised pinch point approx. 25m from the junction of Station Road /Colchester Road A1124 at Chappel Corner where two small vehicles cannot easily pass at the same time. Should this development go ahead this would involve daily access and ongoing heavy construction traffic moving continuously along Station Road which is recognised as an inadequate road to negotiate for drivers and pedestrians, where as previously stated, two large moving vehicles cannot easily pass, and in the most part, is without a footway, making the walk for pedestrians (parents with children, local residents, walkers, commuters) extremely perilous.

Ecological features There was evidence of badgers being in residence on the east side of Bures road, opposite the proposed site, this was confirmed by the NE Essex Badger Group. It is suspected that badgers are in residence in the near vicinity.

Relevant Planning History The form states “None known”. However, approximately 10 years ago a development with fewer dwellings was proposed by the landowner to a Housing Association and to WCPC. This was rejected on the grounds of the road access being inadequate by ECC Highways. The form states appropriately designed “access points” will be made. In our view there are no suitable access points because of the narrow deep cut road with ditches and blind bends on a steep hill together with no suitable pedestrian access.

5 Proposed Future Uses & Capacity

Residential The total dwellings in Wakes Colne is approx 250 (this is in a radius of about 2miles) with the population being approx 413 people registered on the Electoral Roll.

There are currently approximately 45 dwellings in Station Rd with the number of residents being approximately 120 including children. This proposed site would double this small area and put untold pressure on an already inappropriate roadway. Station Road is deepcut and without a footway, the road is steep, uphill and narrow, and is already a matter of deep concern to the parish council because of speeding traffic and pedestrian safety. The parish council have submitted to LHP, a plan for traffic calming and provision of a footway in Station Road. This is currently the subject of a feasibility study. In June 2014 a traffic count was installed by ECC Highways. The volume in one week was over 15,000 vehicles. The average daily volume based on a 7 day period was over 2,000vehicles (this total does not include extra traffic using Station Road ie when East Anglian Railway Museum have open days,(locals recorded 820 extra traffic movements in one day) or when a local motocross is held, Station Road is the feeder road for both venues.) The traffic count shows an average of 23.7% of vehicles proceeding southbound (downhill)exceeded the 30mph speed limit and an average of 14.1% of vehicles proceeding

northbound(uphill) exceeded the 30mph. However pedestrians perceive that most approaching traffic regularly exceed the speed limit.

Community facilities The parish council considers that there is already adequate community and recreational facilities for the parish, some of which already put continuous strain on local finances. The village hall is used by both Wakes Colne and Chappel parishes. (there is already an adequate car park)

Sport /Leisure Wakes Colne parish has a thriving cricket club with a large ground and pavilion. The parish share access to a children's play area, (upkeep is contributed to by Wakes Colne parish) a millennium green and a football pitch in Chappel parish, these are easily accessible and they are used frequently by both parishes. At this time the Wakes Colne Parish Council do not envisage owning/upkeeping a tennis court or other recreational facilities. Earls Colne and Halstead have adequate recreational facilities to serve adjoining parishes.

Other WCPC perceives the proposed site development and provision of traffic calming and a footway in Station Rd should not be associated with, conditional or contingent upon the development of this site nor should it be, a matter of *quid pro quo*. In our view they are separate matters. Moreover the provision of a footpath that circumnavigates the rear of Station Rd and then exits at the village hall does nothing for the safety or access of residents living on Station Road, who would have to access it by walking up Station Road.

7 Market Interest

Enquiries received The form states "two parcels of land are promoted by the landowner in the knowledge that local facilities are needed including recreation space, residential development...."

What evidence does the landowner have to support this statement? The parish council question whether additional recreational facilities are needed (see Sport/Leisure above). With regard to residential need, in the autumn of 2014 WCPC, through its meetings, public notices and the village magazine circulated to all households, invited any resident to notify us of any housing association need. There was a nil response. We are not aware of any need for additional dwellings in the village.

8 Utilities Gas supply : There is no gas in the village.

Public Highway Station Road is the main highway access to the site proposed for development. As already stated, the parish council have made an application to the LHP for traffic calming and a footway in this already dangerous road. To date, ECC have undertaken a traffic count as part of a feasibility study and have drawn up three proposed options for further design work. The topographical layout of Station Rd and its access points is complex and provision of a footway would require dedication of 5m of residents' garden frontages on the east side of the road, 2m would be dedicated for a footway and retaining wall with a further 3m of licensed land(temporary) for construction purposes. Such a project is likely to prove costly and protracted. The possibility that it may well fail is ever present.

The broadband service is currently inadequate. Superfast broadband is being installed in parts of the village in 2015 as part of the Government/ECC initiative. It is hoped it will improve the service.

11 Viability

When visiting Chappel School (Wakes Colne children attend Chappel School) at Christmas 2014, we were informed that all places have been filled at the school. Local school provision would be unlikely to be able to cope with the educational demands of the families in up to 50 dwellings in the proposed Station Rd/ Bures Rd site. There would, moreover, be likely to be educational demand from families in dwellings in the four other proposed sites in Wakes Colne and at least three large proposed sites within Chappel parish.

13 Other Relevant Information

Wakes Colne Parish Council consider that the Station Road/Bures Road site proposal is not a "limited housing development"; it is excessive and disproportionate for Station Road (100%+) and the village of Wakes Colne as a whole (20%). There is no evidence of local need. Indeed, if other major developments in the area nearby (within 3.5mls) at Marks Tey, Great and Little Tey are undertaken to enable CBC to meet its housing targets, these will surely make it even less necessary for development in the green belt in a small village on the periphery of CBC.

We question whether, as asserted, Wakes Colne has a sufficiently wide range of facilities (one PO and shop, one PH in Chappel) and services to sustainably support a development of up to 50 dwellings. In particular, we are extremely concerned about the impact any development of the Station Road/Bures Road site would have on Station Road itself, traffic volume, speeding, pedestrian safety, the quality of village life and the whole rural character of the area.

In our view the site proposal would not, as stated, "provide opportunities for enhancing the existing edge to the settlement..." The proposed site is clearly visible from most points in the surrounding area and provision of up to 50 dwellings would be a blot on this rural landscape and do nothing to enhance its natural beauty. Nor could the admitted "impact of development" be mitigated by 'strategic landscaping'.

The statement "The community uses and recreational land proposed will meet a current shortfall/inadequacy in existing provision in the village" is unsubstantiated and in our opinion further provision and maintenance is unwarranted.

The relevant information goes on to state that "The proposals are intended to meet housing needs..." As stated in paragraph 7 Market Interests, no housing need has been identified in the parish. A development of up to 50 dwellings in Wakes Colne, and especially in this particular location, is both inappropriate and excessive. By comparison, we consider that building infill between houses, as for example in site 1, above, is infinitely more sustainable for a small community such as this village.

Wakes Colne Parish Council, February 2015

