



West Chiltington Pre-Submission Neighbourhood Plan

Representations on behalf of Croudace Portland

June 2017

West Chiltington Neighbourhood Plan

Pre-Submission Consultation

on Behalf of
Croudace Portland Ltd

June 2017

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(APP/Z3825/W/16/3146083)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 DMH Stallard act on behalf of Croudace Portland in respect of the land east of Hatches House, the extent of which is shown at Appendix A.
- 1.2 The land east of Hatches House has been assessed through the Neighbourhood Plan process (Site 1 of the Site Assessment Report 2017).
- 1.3 The land east of Hatches House (as defined) extends to approximately 0.48ha on the north-east of West Chiltington. It adjoins the settlement boundary on its west and south boundaries. It comprises land previously associated with Hatches House, which is now under different ownership. The site benefits from significant boundary screening which restricts long distance views. A public right of way (PRoW) runs through the east of the site.
- 1.4 In 2015 a planning application (DC/15/2758) for residential development of the site for 3 houses was submitted to Horsham District Council (HDC) and was subsequently refused.
- 1.5 An appeal was submitted (APP/Z3825/W/16/3146083), and was dismissed; however, the Inspector's report concludes that "*there is an argument that the appeal scheme could be allowed because of the absence of harm to the area other than that which inevitably occurs when development takes place...*", it was dismissed on the grounds that HDC had a 5 year housing land supply (HLS) and that the site was in conflict with Policy 4 of the HDPF as it is outside the defined settlement boundary. The appeal decision is at Appendix B.
- 1.6 These submissions are made in response to the West Chiltington Neighbourhood Plan (WCNDP) Pre Submission Version.

2. WCNDP Submissions

Introduction

- 2.1 The Localism Act 2011 allows local communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans for their areas; such plans define the framework for development within these communities. The Act requires that these plans are in accordance with strategic policies for development, which in this instance are the NPPF and the Horsham Development Planning Framework (HDPF). Once approved, the WCNDP would sit alongside the NPPF and HDPF and form part of the Development Plan.
- 2.2 The NPPF and the NPPG provides guidance for the preparation of Neighbourhood Plans. It also provides guidance for how the basic conditions should be met.
- 2.3 It is acknowledged that neighbourhood plan forums have limited resources, however, the NPPG highlights that there is a wealth of evidence prepared by the local planning authority (LPA) which can be shared and used as evidence. Additionally, whilst there is no prescribed list of documents which must be prepared, neighbourhood plans must be based on proportionate and robust evidence to support the policies and approaches taken. *Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 41-040-20160211*
- 2.4 Of particular importance, neighbourhood plans, where they contain policies relevant to housing supply, must be based on the latest and up to date assessment of housing needs. *Paragraph: 040 Reference ID: 41-040-20160211.*
- 2.5 Policies within neighbourhood plans should be clear and unambiguous, it must be concise and precise and be supported by appropriate evidence. *Paragraph: 041 Reference ID: 41-041-20140306*
- 2.6 Neighbourhood plans are able to allocate sites for housing. Policy 15 of the HDPF requires that 1500 homes be delivered within the plan period (2011-2031) to be allocated via neighbourhood plans. Such neighbourhood plans must meet 'basic conditions'. Neighbourhood plans should support strategic development needs and plan positively for local development, not promoting less housing than contained within the strategic development plan or undermine its strategic strategy.
- 2.7 The WCNDP must meet the basic conditions, set out in paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. These basic conditions (in summary) are:
- has regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State

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- the making of the order (or neighbourhood plan) contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
 - it is in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the development plan.
 - the making of the neighbourhood plan does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations.

The West Chiltington Neighbourhood Plan

General Comments and Introductory Chapters

- 2.8 It would be helpful for the WCNDP to be tabulated so that all paragraphs are numbered to allow for easy reference.
- 2.9 The WCNDP is published for consultation in the absence of 'Map C – Sunken Roads'. Comments cannot therefore be properly made in respect of policies relating to 'sunken roads' and should be allowed at a subsequent stage.
- 2.10 The WCNDP plan period does not reflect that of the HDPF. It should be amended to accord with the HDPF plan period (ie. up to 2031).
- 2.11 As set out in paragraphs 2.3-2.7 above, neighbourhood plans are required to meet certain criteria, in particular they must be in accordance with the NPPF, however, they must also be in accordance with the HDPF, which is the strategic development plan for the district. The WCNDP and Section 2.1.1 in particular, refers to compliance with the NPPF but fails to refer to compliance with the HDPF. In order to meet the basic conditions, the WCNDP must accord with the HDPF and the strategic principles of the plan.
- 2.12 The HDPF, at Policy 15, requires that neighbourhood plans deliver 1500 homes in the period 2011-2031. The WCNDP must be drafted with this in mind. Furthermore, Policy 3 of the HDPF states that West Chiltington Village and Common is a 3rd tier settlement (out of 5 tiers); 3rd tier settlements, or 'medium villages' are described as being of a moderate level of services and facilities. As such, it would be expected that the WCNDP provides for housing to meet the strategic objectives of Policy 15 as well as identified local housing needs.
- 2.13 We submit that in its present form, the WCNDP fails to adhere to the strategic objectives of the HDPF. It would be appropriate to expect that a 3rd tier settlement allocate housing to assist in meeting the 1500 dwellings set out in Policy 15 of the HDPF. Whilst the WCNDP allocates 2 sites, the delivery of the 'Moto Di Marino' garage is questionable (see later submission), additionally as this site is allocated for sheltered housing, it does not contribute towards the housing target set out in the HDPF.

2.14 HDC's strategic housing needs assessment is available for all parish councils and neighbourhood planning groups through its website. However, we are also aware that HDC has advised neighbourhood groups to prepare individual housing needs assessments to determine the appropriate level of housing provision within their areas. Whilst it is acknowledged that the WCNDP evidence base includes a Housing Needs Survey (2014) by AiRS, this is out of date (by virtue of preceding the NPPF and HDPF) but importantly only deals with the matter of affordable housing. Therefore there is no local assessment of full housing needs and therefore the plan does not meet basic conditions as set out clearly within the NPPG.

Chapter 2 – Policy Context

2.15 Section 2.1.1 refers to national guidance and sets out the NPPF requirements relating to neighbourhood plans. The WCNDP references paragraphs of the NPPF relevant to neighbourhood plans, however, it almost entirely focuses on paragraphs within Section 8 of the NPPF, "Promoting Healthy Communities". It fails to set out the policy framework contained within other sections of the NPPF, for example Section 6, "Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes".

2.16 Reference to the HDPF is given no attention within the WCNDP. It states that the WCNDP needs to 'generally conform' to the policies contained within the HDPF, including the Local Plan 2007 which is now superseded. The WCNDP must adhere to the strategic policies of the HDPF. The NPPG explains the meaning of 'general conformity', it states that:

- the neighbourhood plan policy should support and uphold the general principle that the strategic policy is concerned with;
- the neighbourhood plan should identify conflict between the draft neighbourhood plan policy or development proposal and the strategic policy;
- does the draft neighbourhood plan policy provide an additional level of detail and/or a distinct local approach to that set out in the strategic policy without undermining that policy; and
- the rationale for the approach taken in the draft neighbourhood plan or Order and the evidence to justify that approach should be clearly identified.

2.17 The failure of the WCNDP to deliver a proportionate level of housing to assist in meeting the 1500 dwellings set out in Policy 15 of the HDPF, is not justified or set out in evidence. It could not be said to be in general conformity with Policy 15 or Policy 3 of the HDPF. The parish council should prepare a local assessment of housing need and review the identified sites for inclusion within the neighbourhood plan to assist in meeting the districts

housing needs. Until such an assessment has been carried out, as directed by HDC, the WCNDP cannot meet the required tests.

Chapter 3 – About West Chiltington Parish

- 2.18 The first paragraph, on page 15 of the WCNDP, refers to areas of flooding within the village(s), referencing that many roads are liable to flooding at times of heavy rain and snow. There is no evidence to validate this claim. The EA's flood risk map is referred to and forms part of the evidence base Evidence Base 12), however this only identifies a small area at risk of flooding in the rural area to the north. Reference to the flooding of roads should be removed.
- 2.19 Section 3.5 identifies historic housing delivery within the parish, however, this refers to housing delivered in the period from 1920 – 1994, and identifies that 16 houses were subsequently delivered in 2014. This appears to identify a significant shortfall in housing delivery in the Parish and there has been no justification for a failure to deliver additional housing, against the 1500 set out in Policy 15 of the HDPF. Whilst this section does set out the historic growth of the villages, it should not be provided as justification of a failure to provide for future housing needs.
- 2.20 Section 3.5 also refers to the Local Housing Need Assessment, prepared by AiRS in 2014. However, this refers to affordable housing needs only (i.e not market housing needs), it also predates the NPPF, NPPG and the HDPF. The Report does not accord with the guidance set out in paragraphs 14 – 31 of the NPPG, is not an assessment of full local housing needs, nor does it reflect the plan period of the HDPF. It should not be used as evidence of full housing needs.
- 2.21 The HDC SHELAA 2016 is referred to in Section 3.5. It suggests that only 1 of 12 sites was considered suitable for housing, this is not a true reflection of the assessment. The SHELAA 2016 included an assessment of land east of Hatches House (SA500); it was only disregarded on the basis that it was questionable whether the site could deliver 6 houses, the threshold for SHELAA assessment. The appeal decision in respect of the site concludes that there would be no harm arising from the development of the site for 3 houses, bar the inevitable development of a greenfield site. The Parish Council's own assessment of the site is generally positive (Site Assessment Report 2017).

Chapter 4 – Vision and Core Objectives

- 2.22 Section 4.2 sets out core objectives, one of which is to meet identified local housing needs. However, the WCNDP cannot have met basic conditions or its own core objectives, as it is not based on any evidence of local housing needs. HDC have requested that all neighbourhood plan forums undertake a parish based housing needs assessment to inform neighbourhood plan

housing targets. Furthermore, the HDPF requires neighbourhood plans to cumulatively deliver 1500 units in the plan period. The WCNDP only seeks to provide for 15 homes against this requirement, of which 14 are affordable. This is wholly inadequate in respect of Policy 15 of the HDPF and more critically is not based on any evidence of local housing needs.

Chapter 5 – Neighbourhood Plan Policies

- 2.23 Section 5a sets out the principles of sustainable development. It states that the WCNDP supports the principles of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF. However, it fails to refer to the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out at paragraph 14 of the NPPF and Policy 1 of the HDPF; it fails therefore to meet the basic conditions. Furthermore, the final paragraph of section 5a states that policies within the WCNDP are assessed against the principle set out in the NPPF, it fails to make any reference to the HDPF. In order for the plan to meet the basic conditions, it must adhere to the strategic policies of the HDPF.

Policy H1: Housing

- 2.24 Policy H1 of the WCNDP does not meet the basic conditions required. As set out in previous paragraphs, the WCNDP fails to provide for a reasonable level of housing to assist in meeting the requirements of Policy 15 of the HDPF. West Chiltington is a 3rd tier settlement, out of 5 tiers, it is reasonable to assume that the villages would accommodate some of the district's housing need, particularly those of West Chiltington Parish. The village has a wide range of public facilities, including a primary school and shops in both West Chiltington and West Chiltington Common and development could come forwards within sustainable locations to assist in meeting housing needs. Policy H1 does not provide for this.
- 2.25 Policy H1 is not based on evidence. There has been no assessment of local housing needs which justifies the level of housing proposed. Policy H1 refers to the AiRS Housing Needs Survey, however, this a survey of local affordable housing needs, it does not make any assessment of the true need for housing within the villages. The NPPG sets out clear guidance for the preparation of housing needs assessments and the AiRS report fails to meet any of the guidance.
- 2.26 Policy H1 seems to allocate 2 sites for housing. The Steele Close site already benefits from planning permission. This permission was granted on the basis of a 'rural exception' policy as it provides for 14 affordable housing units. The second allocation at 'Moto di Marino' garage is for sheltered housing, sheltered housing does not contribute towards objectively assessment housing needs (OAHN) and therefore does not contribute towards Policy 15 of the HDPF. Policy H1 therefore only provides for 1 market dwelling in the plan period.

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- 2.27 It should also be highlighted that the ‘Moto di Marino’ garage allocation (also referred to as the Haglands Lane garage site) is made on the basis that the site could come forwards in the future. However, the evidence base (Site Assessment Report 2017) identifies that the site is not available for development, although the land owner has suggested that it ‘could’ be in the future. It is important that employment sites are retained within rural settlements to support rural economies and as the availability of the site is unknown, it should not be allocated for sheltered housing development. It should also be noted that the evidence (Site Assessment Report 2017) identifies that the site could be developed for 8 flats, but the final allocation is for 16, there is no evidence that the site could accommodate this level of development.

Policy H5: Affordable Housing

- 2.28 Policy H5 (Affordable Housing) should be deleted. Policy H5 is onerous and does not give certainty. It requires that affordable housing is provided in accordance with HDC’s Housing Strategy 2013 – 2015. This is out of date and would conflict with the strategic policies of the HDPF. An affordable housing policy is not necessary and is unjustified, as proposals would be required to meet the affordable housing provisions set out in Policy 16 of the HPDF. Policy H5 does not meet the basic conditions.

Policy H8: Attention to Detail

- 2.29 Policy H8 is considered overly restrictive, onerous and unnecessary, it does not meet the basic conditions. It is appropriate to seek that new development reflects the Village Design Statement, however the details of criteria 1 – 6 are onerous and should be dealt with on a site by site basis. For example, criteria (1) requires that lighting complies with dark sky status, there is no justification of evidence to require such restriction, furthermore, this is already dealt with in Policy EH9 of the WCNDP.

Policy EH3: Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services

- 2.30 Policy EH3 seeks to restrict development within, or immediately adjacent, to the ‘Biodiversity Corridors’ identified on Map E. However, there is no evidence for the identification of these corridors as having habitats or species worthy of protection. In the absence of evidence to justify Policy EH3, it does not meet the basic conditions.
- 2.31 Furthermore, Policy EH5 could, subject to amendments, satisfactorily seek the protection of green infrastructure and ecology.

Policy EH4: Surface Water Management

- 2.32 Policy EH4 is supported, if ‘areas at risk from flooding’ is meant to be those areas highlighted on the EA flood risk map. It should not be taken to mean,

roads liable to flooding at times of heavy rain or snow, as set out on page 15 of the WCNDP.

Policy EH5: Protection of trees and hedgerows

- 2.33 Policy EH5 seems to duplicate EH3 in that it seeks the protection of trees and hedgerows. As set out above, there is no justification for the protection of identified 'green infrastructure' or 'ecosystems' as identified on Map E. The protection of hedgerows and trees could be sought, however, this is already a requirement of development through Policy 33 of the HDPF. Policy EH5, as worded, is overly restrictive, requiring that the loss of trees and hedgerows will only be permitted where the benefits of development outweighs the loss.
- 2.34 To meet the basic conditions, Policy EH5 should be reworded to require the presumption in favour of retention of important features such as trees and hedgerows. Where the loss of such features is unavoidable, mitigation should be sought. This would accord with the HDPF.

Policy EH11: Sunken Lanes and Stream Lane

- 2.35 Policy EH11 refers to the loss of sunken lanes and Stream Lane, as shown on Map C. It is not possible to comment on Policy EH11 as Map C is not available as part of the pre-submission WCNDP. Croudace Portland reserve the right to make submissions on this policy at a later date, once Map C has been published.

Policy EH13: Significant Views

- 2.36 Policy EH13 can be supported insofar as it seeks to protect significant views, as shown on Map F. However, the policy as currently worded also seeks the protection of 'open field aspects', this part of the policy should be deleted as it is not specific and would appear to restrict the development of any green field.
- 2.37 Development of land east of Hatches House would not have an impact on significant views, as shown on Map F. Furthermore, the appeal decision highlights that it could be delivered without significant harm to the local landscape, other than that which is inevitable when developing a green field. Development in this location could be delivered in accordance with local housing needs and Policy 15 of the HDPF whilst also protecting significant views.

Policy GA1: Promoting sustainable movement

- 2.38 The general principles of Policy GA1 are supported, development should be in locations that promote non-car modes of transport, such as those in sustainable locations. The land east of Hatches House is in such a location,

close to public transport links, the post office and primary school. It performs well in the Parish Council's site assessment and the Inspector in relation to the planning appeal also notes the sustainability attributes of the site.

- 2.39 However, the first bullet point of Policy GA1 seeks to burden development with financial contributions towards walking or cycling routes. This would not be compliant with the CIL Regulations as such contributions can only be necessary where they are necessary to make the development acceptable.

The Evidence Base

Site Assessment Report 2017

- 2.40 The Site Assessment Report seeks to make further assessment of those sites promoted through the neighbourhood plan process. It supports the HDC SHELAAs and informs the allocation of land within the WCNDP.

Site 1: The land east of Hatches House

- 2.41 The site assessment should be updated to reflect the findings of the Inspector in relation to the recent appeal (Appendix B).
- 2.42 The description of the site is given as having a 'rural aspect'. However, the appeal decision relating to the development of the site for 3 dwellings states (paragraph 14) that the site is well contained by boundary hedgerows and would therefore be visually well contained. It is noted that the development of the site would not extend the settlement boundary further north or east than nearby development, nor would it be dissimilar to the existing housing to the west.
- 2.43 Reference to the 'rural aspect' of the plot should be removed. There is no evidence to justify reference to a rural aspect and the appeal decision relating to the site would suggest otherwise. Whilst it is accepted that development would have some impact on the visual character of the site, this is true of any greenfield site.
- 2.44 The site is identified as providing some opportunity for small dwellings and affordable housing. However, this would conflict with other policies within the WCNDP which seek to protect the character of the area. The appeal decision relating to the site, notes that the scheme for 3 dwellings would reflect the form and character of the area.
- 2.45 Parking is referred to as a constraint of development, however, this is not based on sound evidence. The planning application and appeal relating to the site was not objected to on these grounds and sufficient parking was provided within the site, therefore ensuring that there was no burden on the road for parking.

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- 2.46 It is noted that an access point would increase visibility into the site, but that this would not be significant, this is referred to in the Inspectors Report relating to the appeal, where it is concluded that this impact is not significant.

Table 1: Overview assessment

- 2.47 Site 1 – the land at east of Hatches House, performs well in the site assessment. It is one of only 3 available sites and is sustainably located, 1 of the other available sites is allocated and has planning permission (Steele Close), the other (Johnsons Farm) is within the separation zone, where the WCNDP restricts development to prevent coalescence.
- 2.48 The site is referred to as being poorly located in relation to community facilities, whilst being very well located to schools and village shops. It is considered that being poorly located in relation to any secondary community facilities should not be viewed negatively (as these are generally not provided for in tier 3 settlements).

The Summary

- 2.49 The summary to the Site Assessment Report 2017 is unjustified and seeks to support a lower allocation of housing. Site 1 performs well within the assessment and is one of only 3 available sites. The conclusion refers to Site 12 as a ‘possible site’ but excludes it on the basis of needing to meet local needs. Local needs are not defined, however, the need to deliver local housing needs is a priority set out in the NPPF and is supported by Policy 15 of the HDPF. Furthermore, in the absence of any evidence on local housing needs, the summary cannot be sound.
- 2.50 As the site could assist in meeting local housing needs, on an otherwise unconstrained site (as set out in the recent appeal decision), it should be allocated for housing in accordance with other policies within the WCNDP.

Appendix A

Appendix B



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 June 2016

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 12 September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/Z3825/W/16/3146083

Land adjacent to Hatches House, East Street, West Chiltington, West Sussex

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Croudace Portland against the decision of Horsham District Council.
- The application, Ref. DC/15/2758, dated 8 December 2015, was refused by notice dated 4 February 2016.
- The development proposed is the erection of 3 detached dwellings.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are: (i) whether the proposal would be in harmful conflict with the Council's strategy for housing development in the District, and (ii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the rural edge of West Chiltington.

Reasons

3. On the first issue, the Council considers that because it can demonstrate a 5 year housing supply and the site is in a countryside location outside the built up area boundary of West Chiltington, the proposal would be contrary to its strategy of a hierarchical approach of concentrating development within the main settlements of the District. In this context the development would conflict with Policies 1, 2, 3 & 4 of the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 ('the HDPF').
4. In brief summary, Policy 1 is a strategic policy to secure sustainable development to reflect Government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 ('the NPPF'); Policy 2 indicates the spatial basis for development in the period to 2031; Policy 3 identifies West Chiltington as a 'medium village' in its settlement hierarchy, and Policy 4 explains that the expansion of settlements will be supported where a proposal meets a number of provisos.
5. The disagreement between the appellant and the Council essentially relates to the interpretation of HDPF Policy 4, with the Council of the view that the appeal scheme is precluded through the site being both outside the settlement

boundary for West Chiltington and not allocated in a Neighbourhood Plan or the HDPF. The appellant's assertion is that with the Neighbourhood Plan at an early stage the appeal site qualifies as a windfall site under category 5 of HDPF Policy 15. The latter is a strategic policy relating to the scale and distribution of the 16,000 homes envisaged for the District within the plan period of 2011-2015.

6. In making this assertion the appellant attributes substantial weight to the Inspector's comments in Appeal Ref. APP/Z3825/W/15/3022944. I note that although the Inspector in this case correctly concluded that point 1 of Policy 4 precludes windfall sites on unallocated sites outside the settlement boundaries of built up areas, he then considered this not to be 'sensible' and suggested an altered wording of the policy to allow its interpretation to support the principle of windfall sites under Policy 15.
7. However, I take the opposite view and consider that it would not be 'sensible' if land not previously developed but outside and adjoining a built up area boundary were to be regarded as a windfall site. Such an interpretation would effectively allow any owner of such land to claim 'windfall status', subject only to compliance with the criteria relating to such matters as landscape impact and accessibility to services in the other relevant policies.
8. Having regard to the large amount of land around the periphery of the various towns and villages listed in Policy 3, this would be likely to create a plethora of suggestions of sites 'unexpectedly becoming available'. This would allow development that, if permitted, would undermine the basis on which the HDPF envisages housing delivery in the District consistent with Policies 1,2, 3 & 4 taken together and in accordance with the NPPF.
9. The latter's glossary defines windfall sites as '*sites which have not been specifically identified as available in the Local Plan process. They normally comprise previously-developed sites that have unexpectedly become available*'. Whilst this does not rule out land adjoining the outside boundaries of built up areas I consider it reasonable, for the reason stated in paragraph 8 above, to give substantial weight to the 'previously developed' element in such circumstances.
10. I accept that the definition of windfall sites in the HDPF glossary has given some encouragement to the appeal scheme and this suggests that a fuller definition, either closer to that in the NPPF or with a reference to the location of windfall sites normally being within built up area boundaries, would have been less ambiguous. However, I accept the Council's view that the existing definition has to be read in the context of its housing strategy, namely any sites outside the built up area boundaries coming forward only through allocations.
11. I can find no fault with this approach, which in any event through the wording of Policy 4, including criterion 1 requiring an allocation for housing in the HDPF or a Neighbourhood Plan, has been adjudged 'sound' by the Local Plan Inquiry Inspector. The appeal scheme is in clear conflict with Policy 4 and because a departure from it would be contrary to sound planning and undermine the adopted housing strategy I consider that this conflict would also be harmful.
12. Turning to the second issue, the Council considers there would be a conflict with Policies 25, 26 and 33 of the HDPF. Policy 25 is a strategic policy to safeguard the natural environment and landscape character; Policy 26 protects the

countryside, and Policy 33 sets out development principles in order to conserve and enhance the natural and built environment.

13. I have given careful consideration to the Council's assessment that the development would have a harmful effect on this part of the village. However, it is inevitable that a housing proposal of three dwellings will fundamentally change the character and appearance of the site itself, as by definition development alters open countryside to a built form. There is therefore inescapably an adverse impact on the landscape and countryside.
14. That said, in this case I consider that the site's location is well related to the existing village and its services and that the form of development would be in keeping with the character and appearance of West Chiltington. The proposal would not extend the settlement boundary further north or east than existing nearby development. The scheme would not be dissimilar to the existing housing to the west and would be visually contained by boundaries that are well defined by mature vegetation. Although the access road would increase its visibility from the public realm this would not be significant given the proposed layout and with the existing tree frontage to East Street that for the most part would be retained. On this issue I do not therefore conclude that any conflict with Policies HDPF 25, 26 and 33 would in itself necessarily preclude the development of the site in the form indicated in the appeal scheme.
15. As the evidence pulls in different directions I must consider the planning balance in this case. Firstly, my favourable comments for the development in terms of detail must be set against the substantive objection in terms of the principle of the site coming forward outside the scope of provisions of the HDPF and in a way that would undermine its housing delivery strategy and set an unfortunate precedent. This factor merits considerable weight.
16. Secondly, it is for the emerging Neighbourhood Plan to evaluate the loss of countryside and any impact of development on the rural landscape against the benefit of additional housing. I have limited information on the Plan in this appeal other than the fact that it is at an early stage and that the appellant has referred to the sites at Steele Close and Hatches Estate, each provisionally allocated for 15 dwellings.
17. Thus whilst ostensibly there is an argument that the appeal scheme could be allowed because of the absence of harm to the area other than that which inevitably occurs when development takes place, I consider that there would have been no opportunity within the Neighbourhood Plan process for a comparative assessment of the net effect of larger or smaller sites or their particular locations as regards proposed housing and its environmental implications. In short, a permission on the basis of this appeal would be clearly inappropriate in terms of both strategy and local reasons relating to the village.
18. I have considered all the other matters raised for the appellant but have found nothing to alter my conclusion that on balance the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR