

SUPPORT FOR THE ASHTON KEYNES NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

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Introduction

The Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are to be congratulated on producing a Plan which accurately reflects the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and logically concludes that the sites most fit for development should be the two brownfield sites at Happy Lands and the Cotswold Community site. Production of this Plan must have been no mean feat since around a dozen separate pieces of supporting documentation and research have had to be assimilated into a conclusion and recommendation which will hold up to the toughest scrutiny.

Investigation into all of this background information, policy and guidance has saved the rest of us the time and trouble going through the same process in trying to decide, logically, on the most appropriate direction for the Neighbourhood Plan, so well done !

It is worthwhile, however, in support of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, and especially in view of an 11th hour attempt by developers to undermine and discredit the Plan's recommendations by proposing to develop the Mill Field (aka Dairy Farm & Bungalow, aka Taylor's Field), to revisit some of the salient arguments in favour of the Plan being submitted to Wiltshire Council in its present form, in toto, with no amendments from persuasive but profit-motivated developers.

Referencing just some of the supporting and overarching documentation,

Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report :

- The proposed Mill Field development does not match the Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report in the following areas :
 1. Objective HS6 - re flooding
 2. Objective IN2 - re road safety (B4096 4696 ?)
 3. Objective EN1 - re abolishing the biodiversity of 5 acres of open land within the Settlement Boundary
 4. Objective EN3 - re flooding
 5. Objectives HC1, HC2 - re preserving current character (of the village)

Spatial Planning - Wiltshire Core Strategy :

- All development within the community area must conserve the designated landscape of the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, and where possible enhance its locally distinctive characteristics [*Ashton Keynes includes part of the Cotswold AONB; the Mill Field proposal does not conserve the designated landscape – it removes it and replaces it with bradstone blocks and tarmac.*]

Ashton Keynes Conservation Area Statement 1998³⁴⁵

- Housing Development : “ proposals for housing development need to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of Conservation Areas. Where such considerations cannot be met, **proposals will not be permitted, whether or not the proposal falls within any of the housing or other policies for development**”. This seems quite unequivocal ! Proposals will not be permitted !
- Further, Ashton Keynes being in a Conservation Area, “the local planning authority is under a general duty to ensure that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area in accordance with section 72 of the Planning Act 1990.”
- Summarising ‘Future Change in the Village’, the Conservation Area Statement asserts that “. . . With space at a premium in Ashton Keynes, further development should only take place where there is a clear need and provided it maintains the appearance of the area, its open spaces and gardens. Where there is still much of the original village character, this should be retained and enhanced.” *[Quite clearly, the Mill Field development proposal is working from a set of fabricated needs in order to justify its development in that location. The housing need has already been questioned, and any thoughts that car parking in Mill Field will relieve parking and congestion in Gosditch is pie in the sky – history shows us that in 1982 a footpath was built across the backs of Dairy Farm bungalow, Pebble Lodge and Drummond House, intending to enable parents and children to enter the school through the back gate, thus avoiding using Gosditch. And was it used ? Not once. It was an expensive white elephant. You can no more change peoples’ behaviour by installing car parking in Mill Field and expecting them to walk the rest of the way than putting in a footpath over 30 years ago. They wouldn’t change their behaviour then; they won’t change behaviour now. They will still insist on using Gosditch ‘to be seen’.]*
- Section 2.4⁶ of the Conservation Area Statement identifies as noteworthy the Views to the South from the Thames Path, overlooking Mill Field, precisely the location of proposed development by the Owners and Partridge Homes. *[These Views would not only be lost but would be replaced by a bland beige sea of housing interspersed by ribbons of tarmac, street-lighting, a skyline of Sky satellite dishes and, to the South-East, car-parking and floodlighting.]*
- Under ‘Key Areas of Character’, the Conservation Area Statement goes on to point out that ‘Fore Street and Gosditch maintain a largely unspoilt contribution to character and should be a priority (for conservation of their setting). Indeed, the Plan on page 23 goes on to identify several ‘Specific Key Features’ which are contained within the area of the Mill Field considered for development.

³ <http://www.ashtonkeynesneighbourhood.com/index.php/documents/supporting-documents/conservation-area-statement-1998>

⁴ Note that this Conservation Area Statement also refers to Mill Field as “Taylor’s Field”

⁵ https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=domesday&rlz=1C1CHMO_en-gbGB495GB495&oq=domesday&aqs=chrome..69i57.1656j0i7&sourceid=chrome&es_sm=122&ie=UTF-8#q=domesday+mill+field+ashton+keynes

⁶ refer to Plan of Views, Paths and landmarks on page 20

- The Conservation Area Statement specifically addresses the issue of access off the B4696, as follows : “**Resist development and creation of accesses along the B4696 frontage . . .**”.⁷

Biodiversity

There seems to be no mention in the developers’ proposal for Mill Field of the impact on the newts and grass snakes of digging up the Mill Field and removing their habitat. It is incumbent upon them to make appropriate arrangements⁸⁹. A further factor is that adders have been seen when the field has been boggy during wet spells of weather. If the developers’ proposal wasn’t so out of sync with the Neighbourhood Plan, underpinning policies, guidelines and strategies already, let alone public opinion, they would be expected to assess¹⁰ the value of the Mill Field as a wildlife site.

In Conclusion,

Again, the Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are to be congratulated on producing a Plan which accurately reflects the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and logically concludes that the sites most fit for development should be the two brownfield sites at Happy Lands and the Cotswold Community site.

The 11th hour attempt by developers to undermine and discredit the Plan is at best naive and at worst contemptuous if they imagine it would carry any more weight than just that of the two village owners of the site at Mill Field. In other words, however it is wrapped up it represents just 2 villagers’ opinions which, at best, are subjective and at worst are profit-driven. The developers do not get a vote on the Ashton Keynes Neighbourhood Plan – the clue’s in the title.

I urge you, the steering group, to submit the Plan ‘as is’, in toto, to Wiltshire Council.

Dr Allan Martin

Gosditch, AK

⁷ page 51 of the Conservation Area Statement

⁸ <http://www.arc-trust.org/Resources/Arc%20Trust/Documents/guidance-on-building-development.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-biodiversity-duty-for-public-authorities/the-biodiversity-duty-for-public-authorities>

¹⁰ https://www.rspb.org.uk/Images/assesssitevalue_tcm9-285688.pdf