

Tom MacLennan

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Monday, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2018

**RE: Proposed Housing Development North of School Lane, Alconbury**

Dear Mr Ward,

I am writing to you in the hope that you will consider the wishes of the residents of Alconbury and remove the field North of School Lane from the proposed **Local plan to 2036**, put forth by Huntingdonshire District Council in March 2018.



The field occupies a visually dominant position north of the village. It is, as easily observed in the image above, an example of ridge and furrow land management, dating back to pre-medieval times and is a registered national monument with Historic England (Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environment Record 10503). This registration has not been mentioned once in proposal documents related to this development and I would ask that you consider the loss of such environmental and historical land will impact the future. Once it is gone, it is irreparably lost.

A company named WYG Transport Planning Ltd have operated on behalf of the Church Commissioners in their determination to get permission to build up to 130 houses here. In relation to this pristine nature, WYG, in their Environmental study, have claimed that the lack of fertilisers and contamination is a bonus for house building. I would argue that it is this lack of contamination that makes the field so vital for local birdlife and biodiversity. We have red kites seen frequently above the field and it is an oasis for wildlife away from the intensively farmed areas around here.



Up until recently there was a herd of cows living in this field and they provided a comforting rural aspect to life. The field was scheduled to be given over to a flock of sheep last year, as part of a 5 year plan by the farmer. Since the advent of this proposed housing development the field has lain fallow, but was actively farmed recently. This is not a parcel of dormant and redundant land, but an active and vital part of Alconbury village.

This commercial decision by the Church Commissioners to proffer this field is extremely disappointing, negating their own requirement to consider the environment and needs of the local community. In the Call for Sites during August 2017, the Church Commissioners submitted a plethora of sites around Huntingdonshire in a scattergun approach. Many of these were included in the HELAA plan put forth for consultation in October and December. That this field, out of all of those submitted, has been included; especially considering the number of objections raised is perplexing.

Even if this development is limited to 95 houses, it still represents a significant increase in the size of the village and will increase pressure on services, already absorbing the development of Alconbury Weald and the thousands of properties being built there. The village was promised that development would be limited to infill and that the boundary was set only a few years ago, when the special dispensation for development of the Memorial Hall was allowed. The village kirtle was fixed and assurances were given that the Weald development would also mean that Alconbury would be allowed to remain as a small settlement, although it has now been allocated as a Local Service centre.

On page 58 of the Proposed Submission document, the Council's own Reasoning 4.102, relating to Local service centres, it states:

"It is therefore considered appropriate to limit development primarily to sites within 58 4 The Development Strategy Huntingdonshire Local Plan | Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036: Proposed Submission 2017 built-up areas, acknowledging the fact that opportunities for development within them will largely be limited to redevelopment opportunities, intensification of use and development of land which relates wholly to existing buildings rather than the surrounding countryside."

It seems clear that this development contravenes the Council's own reasoning, while the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure Strategy also states:

"Green Infrastructure is vital to quality of life for both existing and future residents of Cambridgeshire and is nationally acknowledged as an important element of well designed and inclusive places. This Strategy is designed to assist in shaping and co-ordinating the delivery of Green Infrastructure in the county, to provide social, environmental and economic benefits now and in the future. This Strategy will demonstrate how Green Infrastructure can be used to help to achieve four objectives:

- 1) To reverse the decline in biodiversity
- 2) To mitigate and adapt to climate change
- 3) To promote sustainable growth and economic development
- 4) To support healthy living and well-being.

In relation to these points:

1) Biodiversity will obviously be diminished. The field is incredibly rich in bird-life. Deer, rabbits, hare and red kites are frequently seen in the area and the lack of a Nature study before adding this field to the Local 2036 Plan is negligent.

2) Climate change is upon us and is likely to result in drier summer and wetter winter for the UK as a whole. One aspect of this will be increases in rate and frequency of rainfall. The field slows the flow of water into the Brook. Addition of concrete to this will exacerbate the flooding already experienced by the village. While the field itself might be in a safe zone, a cursory look will show the obvious threat to the remainder of the village, increasing the chances of being cut off as well as endangering the Conservation Zone houses in the heart of the village. Alconbury was cut off by flood water three times in the Easter period this year alone.



The flooding from the field, as commented on by the Environment Agency (diagram above), has not been taken into consideration and the cost of the measures necessary to ensure the Brook, School Lane and the Memorial Hall car park do not flood, as well as ensuring excess runoff does not block access to the village, will be significant. Flooding is a real risk for local residents and of great concern.

3) The psychological damage done to the community in replacing a green vista rising to the north with overbearing, however tastefully packaged, box houses development will do nothing to promote

the health and welfare of the village. It is my conjecture that biodiversity, health, well being and water management are considerations not covered adequately in the proposal. Therefore the submitted Plan will breach the Cambridgeshire Green Infrastructure strategy.

**Table 5.2 Daytime Noise Intrusion Levels  $L_{Aeq,16hr}$**

Ref	External $L_{Aeq,16hr}$ Daytime	Internal $L_{Aeq,16hr}$ Daytime (Windows Open)	Internal $L_{Aeq,16hr}$ Daytime (Windows Closed)	Target Criteria $L_{Aeq}$
R1	52.5	37.5	23.5	35
R2	53.1	38.1	24.1	35
R3	56.8	41.8	27.8	35
R4	57.0	42.0	28.0	35
R5	56.3	41.3	27.3	35
R6	47.0	32.0	18.0	35
R7	49.4	34.4	20.4	35

All values are sound pressure levels in dB re:  $2 \times 10^{-5}$  Pa

**Table 5.3 Night-time Noise Intrusion Levels  $L_{Aeq,8hr}$**

Ref	External $L_{Aeq,8hr}$ Night-time	Internal $L_{Aeq,8hr}$ Night-time (Windows Open)	Internal $L_{Aeq,8hr}$ Night-time (Windows Closed)	Target Criteria $L_{Aeq}$
R1	49.4	34.4	20.4	30
R2	49.1	34.1	20.1	30
R3	52.8	37.8	23.8	30
R4	53.0	38.0	24.0	30
R5	52.4	37.4	23.4	30
R6	43.7	28.7	14.7	30
R7	45.9	30.9	16.9	30

All values are sound pressure levels in dB re:  $2 \times 10^{-5}$  Pa

The noise levels as shown in the table above; prepared in a report by WYG themselves, indicate that people will only be able to sleep in the new homes with the windows closed. The development of the road itself is a separate issue, affecting many of the houses built here before its continued development and ongoing upgrade. To build new houses in this area seems foolish and also does not seem to take full account of the problem reflected noise from elevated housing will have across the existing village.

The A1M development will mean the transfer of traffic from the more distant A14 spur passing Huntingdon to much closer to the village. Expected traffic levels are to increase from 80,000 journeys a week to 130,000. I doubt this has been considered in this desk report by WYG.

In the documents submitted for your consideration relating to concerns about the development was the following passage:

The proposed development of AL1 North of School Lane generated substantial objections to the principle of its proposal for residential development. Main issues of concern were: lack of capacity on the local road network including the historic bridge in the village centre; increased parking congestion; the impact on the character of the village and lack of need for additional housing given the scale of development at nearby Alconbury Weald; impact on biodiversity and in principle protection of greenfield land; loss of land used for informal recreation; loss of views and privacy due to the sloping nature of the site; the lack of capacity within local services to accommodate the needs of additional residents; increased flood risk; and noise impacts due to proximity to the A1(M).

The strategy follows the requirements of the NPPF and legislation. The Council has identified land to meet our Objectively Assessed Need.

This site is included in the HSTS which forms part of the evidence base for the Local Plan. Allocation AL1 specifically sets out a number of requirements that would need to be addressed as part of any future application including a suitable means of access, a noise assessment and mitigation from the A1 and an ecological assessment and enhancement scheme. Site specific concerns will be considered in greater detail during the course of any future planning application

These are not insignificant issues. When they were presented to the Local planning representatives at a meeting of the Parish Council in January, they were agreed to be considerable, but not enough for the field to be removed from the Plan. It seemed that at this stage it was more important to get numbers of potential houses, no matter how unsuitable, and that there would be a time to raise these objections during the Planning phase. When it was pointed out by the leadership of the Council that such permission would not be granted under any circumstances, there was little response. I cannot believe that this is the best method to set a permission to build on land and it places an intolerable threat against a treasured local resource.

This field has been a part of Alconbury for many generations. When it snows, villagers play on this hill, it is an intrinsic and beloved part of the community and its loss will be incalculable.



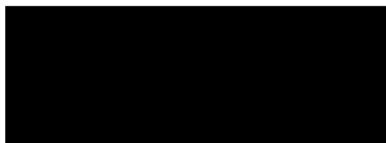
In conclusion I ask that you consider the community of people who will have to live here an enlarged, yet diminished village. It is not that new houses are not needed, that is obvious, but from

every perspective and metric this is not the correct field. There are sufficient brownfield sites, significant local developments in spatial areas and the Weald.

On my behalf and for the many concerned residents of Alconbury, I ask that you please remove this field from the Local Plan to 2036 for Huntingonshire.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Tom MacLennan.

Tom MacLennan