

GREENSTEAD GREEN AND HALSTEAD RURAL PARISH COUNCIL

To all members of the Council

You are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of Greenstead Green and Halstead Rural Parish Council for the purpose of transacting the following business.

Amanda Degnan Clerk to the Council

Agenda for the Ordinary Parish Meeting of

Greenstead Green and Halstead Rural Parish Council

To be held on Wednesday 19th October 2022 at 7.15pm in

Greenstead Green Village Hall.

81/22 Apologies for absence. Cllr. Butler.

82/22 Co-option of new Parish Councillor

83/22 Declarations of interest. To declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

84/22 Item 1: To approve the minutes of the July ordinary meeting. Item 2: Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meetings.

85/22 Public comment. The maximum time allowed for the public to participate, as stated in the Greenstead Green and Halstead Rural Parish Council Standing Orders, is 15 minutes in total with each person being invited to speak for a maximum of 3 minutes. At the close of this item the public will no longer be permitted to address the council unless the Chairman deems it appropriate and adjourns the meeting.

86/22 County Councillor's report.

87/22 District Councillor's report.

88/22 Finance: Item 1: To agree the accounts for payment. Item 2: To approve the yearly payment of £59.99 for Office 365 due 1st November.

89/22 Planning and Braintree District Council Planning applications.
Applications can be viewed online at: www.braintree.gov.uk

Item 1: Planning Applications. APPLICATION NO :22/02415/HH DESCRIPTION
Single-storey side and first-floor rear extension, and erection of three-bay detached garage. LOCATION: The Cottage, Oak Road, Halstead

Item 2: Planning enforcement: Greenstead Hall – new entrance opening on the Halstead Road. Reported by Clerk and Cllr. Mason. No information yet from Planning Enforcement

Silver Birch – Burtons Green – New menage and building works reported by Clerk to Planning Enforcement. Planning Enforcement have visited, and the owners intend to put in for planning permission.

Item 3: Update on Bournebridge Planning Appeal – ref APP/Z1510/W/22/3299178. See Appendix A for Parish Council statement

90/22 Item 70/22 deferred from July 2022 meeting: Playing Field. Item 1: To consider items raised from the RoSPA report. Item 2: To consider installation of small new gate and fence for Playing Field. Item 3: Update on new information signs. Cllr. Mason.

91/22 Highways: Item 1: Parish Councillors reports. Item 2: To consider applying for 'Quiet Lane' status for Russell Road, White Ash Green. Update. Item 3: Flooding in Crocklands and broken pavement- continuing issues.

92/22 Item 73/22 deferred from July 2022 meeting Item 1: To consider quote from local tree nursery to purchase trees to replace the dead tree in the Playing Field and the one at Plaistow Green. Item 2: To consider applying to County Cllr. Siddall's Locality Grant for funding for said trees.

93/22 Item 75/22 deferred from July 2022 meeting: To consider approaching Oswicks for an updated revaluation of the village hall.

94/22 To consider purchasing a picture frame for the parish map which will be placed in the village hall.

95/22 To discuss the replacement of the Chairman in May 2023.

96/22 To receive reports from outside bodies, training courses, Village Representatives, Parish Council Committees and Advisory Groups.

97/22 To note any items of correspondence.

98/22 Future agenda items. Planning Meetings, £600 District Councillor grant for electric in Playing Field, email addresses, meeting dates 2023.

Next meeting Parish Council Meeting 16th November 2022. 7.15pm Village Hall.

Amanda Degnan

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Appendix A

Planning Appeal Ref: APP/Z1510/W/22/3299178

Land off Bournebridge Hill, Halstead

Statement by Greenstead Green and Halstead Rural Parish Council – 11th October 2022

Greenstead Green and Halstead Rural PC has consistently objected to this proposed development since it was originally submitted to BDC more than three years ago. We support Braintree District Council's decision to refuse planning permission. The Parish Council wishes to make the following representation.

Background

The entire appeal site lies within the parish of Greenstead Green and Halstead Rural. The parish is largely rural in nature with a number of small villages and hamlets, interspersed by gently undulating countryside. The parish wraps around the town of Halstead on three sides – on the north, south and west. The district council has been unable to identify a robust and sustained five-year housing land supply for some time. Consequently, we have seen a number of speculative residential planning applications being proposed within our parish over the past few years.

Immediately adjoining the appeal site to the north is the Oakwood Hill and St Andrew's Gate developments by Bloor Homes and David Wilson Homes, respectively. The land now occupied by these developments, comprising around 292 dwellings in total, was within our parish before recent boundary changes incorporated it into Halstead. The southern edge of these two developments provides a defensible and well-defined boundary between countryside and town.

The appeal site effectively seeks to extend the southernmost urban edge of Halstead deeper into the countryside. The landscape character, in the opinion of the parish council, begins to change albeit, subtly, as the topography of the land falls away to the south

In the view of the parish council, there will be significant adverse landscape and visual impacts arising from the proposed development from the south side of the Bourne Brook Valley. The development would extend the peripheral southern extension of Halstead in the form of a large housing estate. It would thereby exacerbate and extend development in a suburban style, out of keeping with a landscape character which is highly sensitive to change. This is judged to be a significant adverse impact.

Public Consultation

The Appellant's Statement of Community Involvement, dated March 2019, makes a reference a closed meeting with representatives of the parish council on 10th December 2018. Since

that initial meeting, the Appellant has made no attempt to engage with the parish council, either to explain the changes to the scheme since the application was submitted to BDC in March 2019 or to offer any mitigation or community benefits via section 106 monies.

Section 4 of the Statement of Community Involvement states that the Appellant has encouraged suggestions to how the local community could benefit from the proposed development. It goes onto say that significant community benefits will be provided. Unfortunately, the draft section 106 agreement makes no reference to any benefits for the local community in the parish where the development is proposed.

The Appellant states in the Statement that the scope of community consultation has met with and gone beyond the recommendations of local and national planning policies and legislation. However, this is contrary to BDC's Statement of Community Involvement, dated 2021. Paragraph 8.10 of the SCI states that the level of engagement needs to be proportionate to the nature and scale of a proposed development. The more complex or contentious the proposal, the broader the range of consultation methods should be, to allow as many people as possible to engage with the process.

This is a contentious application, even more so with the adoption in July this year of Part Two of the Braintree Local Plan. The proposed development at Bournebridge Hill has attracted sustained opposition from this parish council, as well as members of the local community, yet the Appellant has conspicuously failed to proactively engage. In that aspect, it has not adhered to the Council's own Statement of Community Involvement. There is no evidence that it has met with and gone beyond national and local policies.

The Principle of Development

The site has never been allocated for development. BDC could have allocated the site for residential use during the preparation of the draft plan but chose not to do so. As a result, the parish council strongly believes that policy LLP1 (Development Boundaries) should be given exceptional weight in determining this application which lies outside the development boundary of Halstead.

This policy states that *"Development outside development boundaries will be confined to uses appropriate to the countryside whilst also protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside."*

Paragraph 3.15 of the Local Plan is of particular relevance when determining whether a development is sustainable. *"Outside of the development boundaries, it is considered that new development would not normally be able to meet the 2012 NPPF core planning principles and that the test of sustainable development would be unable to be met. Areas outside of a development boundary are considered 'Countryside'."*

The proposed development is contrary to this LLP1.

Sustainability

One measure to judge whether a site is sustainable is to look at the proposed layout of the site and determine whether pedestrians will be able to make sensible and logical decisions to walk or cycle instead of using cars to access services.

Policy LPP42 (Sustainable Transport) is very relevant.

“Development proposals should provide appropriate provision for all the following transport modes: Pedestrians (including disabled persons and those with impaired mobility), through safe, accessible, direct and convenient design and layout of routes within the new development and wider pedestrian network.”

The southern part of the proposed development will be nearly 2.4km from the only secondary school in Halstead. The Appellant has failed to demonstrate how secondary school children will be expected to walk to school each day, bearing in mind the topography of the site.

The proposed location of this development which is some distance outside the urban area of Halstead will instead lead to a greater proportion of trips by car, many having to negotiate an already congested town.

The Partial Construction of the Halstead Bypass

The benefits of the first section of the delivery of the Halstead bypass should only be given little weight in the planning balance. What is being delivered is a 600m length of road built to a standard width of 7.3m that would constitute the first stage of a relief road plus some land for a roundabout. The remainder of the bypass may never be constructed; indeed, there is very little certainty that it will be. The proposed development will deliver only a fraction (7.5%) of the 8km corridor shown in Part 1 of the local plan. With public finances under severe pressure, the reality is that the remaining 7.4km could only be funded on the back of future unallocated housing development. Until the completion of the rest of the bypass to Colchester Road, we will have significantly more vehicles travelling through Halstead and adding to the congestion at the pinchpoint at the junction of Head Street, Hedingham Road and Colchester Road which is already at full capacity already.

Landscape and Visual Impact

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment makes reference to the Braintree Landscape Character Assessment (LCA). The application site falls within the Gosfield Wooded Farmland character area (F1). The parish council agrees with the LCA's assessment. It states: the characteristic features are that the landform gently undulates, that it has an open character with widespread arable agriculture. The key characteristics are that it has relatively high sensitivity to change and potential new development. It goes on to say that new development should be small-scale.

The LCA immediately to the south of the application site is the Colne River Valley (A4a). This comprises shallow river valleys with relatively steep valley sides. The land use up the valley sides is mainly large arable fields. Generally, there are open views across fields framed by small patches of woodland and hedges with trees. The key planning issues within this LCA are that potential residential expansion of settlements into the surrounding valley sides would be conspicuous on the skyline. Views to the valley sides from adjacent LCAs are sensitive to

potential new development. The skyline of the valley slopes is visually sensitive to potential new development which may be visible within open and framed views across and along the valley.

The Appellant's LVIA shows that there are medium and long-distance views of the appeal site from the valley floor at Bournebrook Bridge (photograph 7.3) and from the southern valley sides (photographs 10.2 and 10.3). Appendix E of the LVIA refers to Braintree District Fringes Evaluation of Landscape Analysis Study of Habitats, dated June 2015. The appeal site lies in parcel 5c, in the upper valley slopes of Bourne Brook. However, very little reference is made to views from parcel 5b, immediately to the south which comprises the steeper slopes of the northern bank of Bourne Brook. This has a medium to low capacity to accommodate development. The Study states that "there are numerous listed buildings set within farmsteads in the gently undulating ground in parcels 5a and 5b which reduces the capacity of the landscape to absorb new built development."

Landscape Value

There is clear evidence in the LCA and in the June 2015 Fringes Evaluation Study that the landscape south of Halstead within the Bourne Brook valley is not ordinary countryside of no value but is high sensitivity and is locally valued. The appeal site displays many of the characteristics of the F1 Gosfield Wooded Farmland Character Area. It is arable farmland on the gently undulating valley side. It is highly visible from Russell's Road (photo viewpoint 6.1) and from Bournebridge Hill looking north (photo viewpoint 7.1). We believe that it contributes positively to the setting of Halstead within the Colne Valley, notwithstanding that the new Oakwood Hill development may have some limited adverse impact.

The development would result in a loss of open landscape character. It would also result in a restriction of views perceived by neighbouring residents, people using Bournebridge Hill, be they recreational cyclists or commuters travelling by car and walkers on the public rights of way. All would experience some negative effects from the loss of longer views and a change in landscape character. Panoramic cross-valley views would be restricted and there would be loss of outward views from Bournebridge Hill and from the valley floor at Bournebrook Bridge. The buildings would break the skyline in views from the valley floor. The development would appear urban and intrusive, and the proposed new landscaping would take time to establish. It would only partially mitigate the effects in the longer term by softening rather than screening the edge of the development.

The LCA preferences 'small-scale development within the Gosfield Wooded Farmland LCA. This proposal cannot be described as small scale. Paragraph 127 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. As demonstrated above, the LCA provides an assessment of the particular qualities of this part of the countryside within this part of the Colne Valley. It sets out the landscape setting where development may be considered and provides detailed guidelines and practical advice about

the effect of development upon the setting. The need to protect and enhance 'valued' landscapes, referred to in paragraph 170 of the NPPF, is not limited to landscapes that have either a statutory designation or a local designation in the development plan.

This assessment means that the proposal is contrary to Policy LPP66 of the Local Plan.

"Proposals for new development should be informed by, and be sympathetic to, the character of the landscape as identified in the District Council's Landscape Character Assessments. Proposals which may impact on the landscape such as settlement edge, countryside or large schemes will be required to include an assessment of their impact on the landscape and should not be detrimental to the distinctive landscape features of the area such as trees, hedges, woodlands, grasslands, ponds, and rivers. Development which would not successfully integrate into the local landscape will not be permitted."

It is the parish council's opinion that this proposal will adversely impact on the landscape at this settlement edge. It will be detrimental to the distinctive landscape features of the area.

Summary

The parish council considers that, notwithstanding the absence of a five-year housing land supply, there are strong reasons why the appeal should be dismissed. These are:

1. Contrary to principles of sustainability, referred to Policy LPP1 and in the NPPF; and
2. Significant adverse impact on the landscape character of the Bournebridge Valley, contrary to policy