



GREAT DENHAM

Parish Council

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Dear Sirs

Bedford Borough Local Plan – Call for sites

In the “call for sites” to 2032 Bidwells have again submitted the land referred to as “excluded land” within Great Denham, land parcels 1 & 2 (133 & 134). The parish council objected to the use of this land for housing in the previous call for sites. Bidwells have now also included a further two sites within Great Denham 132 & 135. Furthermore you have published on your website page “Local Plan 2032” “Potential Development Sites” site 27 has been designated as a site within Biddenham but is in fact a site within Great Denham. (Please refer to Great Denham parish boundary map). **The Parish Council objects to all of the sites proposed in Great Denham, including site 27 currently identified as being in Biddenham.**

Great Denham

5 sites (27,132,133,134,135) housing

1. These sites have been submitted in response to the Council’s call for sites and cover a land area in the parish of 18.329ha. (45.266ac)
2. Sites 133/134 are within the urban area, their development would involve the loss of an area of Urban Open Space, designated because of its amenity value and provision of proposed playing fields and leisure centre planned as part of the Great Denham development. A substantial part of sites 133/134 were in flood zone 3 and the Environment Agency previously advised that in the absence of an up to date flood risk assessment they do not support the allocation of the sites. We are not aware of any recent risk assessment but note from the Environment Agency’s website that the two sites are now showing edging into flood zone 3 with a large area now designated as flood zone 2. Despite this, local knowledge and experience still shows that these areas are susceptible to severe flooding. Actual flooding has taken place in each of the last three years with adjacent land for some distance around being completely under water, including a children’s play area. On each of these occasions the balancing pond was full and local residents feared that it was about to be breached causing flooding on

Greenkeepers Road. Following the disastrous flooding in 2013 throughout the UK this has served to further heighten the concerns within the community.

3. Development would have a severe impact upon the country park design planned for and anticipated by residents of the area and the existing approved urban extension.
4. Full planning permission was granted for the Country Park in 2008 but the permission excluded the detail of the playing pitches. These details have now been submitted and have gained planning permission. The application included works to raise the land by almost 2 metres to make it useable as playing pitches.

The Biddenham Loop/ West of Kempston sec 106 agreement requires that the playing fields are implemented by the 500th occupation at Great Denham. The latest figures of occupation put forward by Electoral Services Bedford Borough shows that in July 2014 728 dwellings had been completed (not including the original first phase of 250). In addition, the Council have granted an application for a Country Park pavilion to include changing rooms, a café and rangers accommodation.

The pitches and pavilion are to be located on site 133. The pitches are already laid out and raised by the requisite 2 metres. The remainder of the Country Park falls within floodplain zone 3 and would be unsuitable for accommodating the pitches. The additional housing proposed would in turn generate a need for additional pitch provision which would undermine the concept of a Country Park open space even further. The dwellings being built within the strategic allocation site at Great Denham are the subject of a design guide and code which follows a Masterplan and fully considered contextual approach to creating character areas. Dwellings immediately to the west of the Country Park have been designed to positively respond to their juxtaposition with the open space. Building additional houses in front of these dwellings will undermine this design objective and erode the legibility of this development. In Bidwells' "further written representations" in November 2012 they stated that "the planned dwellings nearby are not occupied and any planned expansion of the development will be well publicised". A significant number of these dwellings are now occupied with others currently under construction, thus negating this assertion.

5. The sites are located adjacent to the strategic allocation site at Great Denham and would be unlikely to enhance delivery. Therefore we believe that they would not meet the Council's objectives for the provision of flexibility in the housing supply.
6. Currently the community is facing the loss of a significant number of facilities and amenities due to the likely outcomes of the developers proposed modifications to the s106 agreements. The sustainability of the community is already under great threat. These reduced amenities will not, in the community's view, be sufficient to serve the existing planned development of 1750 dwellings. The proposed addition of 482 dwellings in the sites identified by Bidwells would also further exacerbate the transport infrastructure situation which is already struggling to deal with the existing and proposed further development.
7. Site 135 – land West of Mercia Road - has identified a proposal for 67 dwellings. This was originally to be the site for a Middle School. The new primary school now built in Great Denham (Completed Sep 2012) is 45 pupils away from full capacity of 420. Site 135 is adjacent to the school site and has been identified by school governors as the only likely option for expansion. As there are already a further 800 homes planned in the community the school will need to increase capacity to accommodate these already planned dwellings. The school governors will be communicating with the Chief Education Officer to put forward a case for this expansion.

8. Site 132 – land East of Mercia Road – has identified a proposal for 60 dwellings. This site is encircled by existing housing and has become a valuable focal point for the community. This is where the community come together for the annual festival and other activities throughout the year. It has been adopted by the community as a de facto village green. The dwellings are tightly clustered in the surrounding area and the local neighbourhood plan – under preparation – calls for areas of open space where possible within housing clusters. We would therefore strongly advise that in the pursuit of sustainability this proposal be rejected. In the view of the community and the parish council this land should be designated as an open space under the policy AD40 Village Open Spaces and Views.

9. Site 27 of 2.9 ha. Land off Vicar's Close – has identified 50 units. This site is currently agricultural and provides an open space and boundary buffer between Biddenham and Great Denham, although the land being proposed sits wholly within the Great Denham parish. To allow planning on this site would further erode the spatial balance that currently exists between the growth area of Great Denham and the rural aspects and nature of the village of Biddenham.

At a public meeting held on 8th September consultation showed significant community displeasure, upset and distress at these Call for Sites proposals. The parish council is objecting to all of the above sites as both a parish council and the representative voice of the community.

Yours faithfully

Roz Buchanan
Clerk – Great Denham Parish Council