



Simon Arundel

16 Vatch View

Stroud

GL51 JW

01453 766825

simonarundel@hotmail.com

8th July 2014

Case Officer: Leanne Palmer

The Planning Inspectorate

Room 3/26 Hawk Wing

Temple Quay House

2 The Square

Temple Quay

Bristol BS1 6PN

Dear Ms Palmer

**Planning Appeal APP/C1625/A/14/2218743 - Land at Rodborough Field, Arundel Drive, Rodborough, Stroud**

We write in connection with the above titled planning appeal against the refusal of outline planning permission with all matters reserved except construction of bridge for the erection of up to one hundred dwellings, public open space and associated infrastructure at Rodborough Field, Rodborough.

We submitted our views on the application (S.13/1183/OUT) to the Stroud District Council on 31st July 2013. However, we have revised our submission - see attached - and would be grateful if the inspector would take account of this submission instead of our letter referred to above.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

*Simon Arundel* Chairman, CPRE, Stroud District.

CPRE exists to promote the beauty, tranquility and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

Reg Charity No.248577

## **Appeal Statement**

### **Land at Rodborough Field, Stroud, Gloucestershire**

Planning Inspectorate reference: 2218743

Local Planning Authority reference: S.13/1183/OUT

#### **Introduction**

This statement has been prepared by CPRE to follow up its objections to the proposed development submitted at the planning application stage.

The statement has taken account of the following documents:

- The National Planning Policy Framework
- National Planning Practice Guidance
- The adopted Stroud District Local Plan (2005)
- The Inspector's report on the adopted Local Plan (2004)
- The emerging Stroud District Local Plan (2014)
- The Cotswolds Conservation Board Management Plan 2013-2018
- Position Statement on Development in the setting of the Cotswolds AONB
- The Inspector's initial conclusions on Part 1 of the Local Plan Examination
- The documents submitted with the planning application, in particular the Planning Statement (PS) and Design and Access Statement (DAS)
- The Council's reasons for refusal
- The appellant's Statement of Case
- The Council's Statement of Case

For the reasons set out below, CPRE has concluded that the adverse effects of the proposed development outweigh the benefits and that as a result the appeal should be dismissed.

#### **The Site**

Rodborough Field is a species rich hay meadow just to the south of the River Frome, in the parish of Rodborough. Immediately to the north are the river (with woodland on either side), the route of the Stroudwater Navigation (currently being restored) and Dr Newton's Way. The centre of Stroud lies beyond that, with its Industrial Heritage Conservation Area.

To the south is an area of housing. More species rich meadows immediately to the east mark the beginning of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. To the west is a narrow strip of scrubland, with a footpath leading past commercial premises. In other words, this site is in a complex area: it is on the edge of the town, of the river and canal corridor, of the AONB and of Stroud's Industrial Heritage Conservation Area. This is one of Stroud's critically important edge sites.

Representatives of CPRE inspected the site on 13 June 2014. A public right of way (footpath only) runs close to and inside the western boundary of the site. This appears to be well used. A notice in the north-western corner discourages access to other parts of the field, although it was clear on the day of the site visit that informal paths had been made through the uncut hay.

### **Stroud in Context**

Stroud is the largest town in the District, and is its main centre for employment, services and facilities. In principle, therefore, in the interests of promoting sustainable development, it might be appropriate to allocate an amount of development to Stroud commensurate with its size and function. However, in our opinion two very important factors militate against this.

First, the topography and existing settlement pattern of the Stroud valleys makes it difficult to accommodate much additional housing close to Stroud town centre and the services and facilities it provides. The more opportunities that are identified and taken up, the harder it becomes to identify any further opportunities. Although sustainability is given now much more emphasis in planning, it is clear from the planning history of the site that it has for many years been identified as a potential opportunity for development, but that there are strong reasons why this has not taken place, reasons which in our view are even stronger now than ever. These relate to landscape and nature conservation, and are discussed below.

Secondly, the broader strategic context must be taken into account. For about 40 years, a large proportion of development in Stroud District has taken place on the southern edge of Gloucester, first at Quedgeley, and then Kingsway (both areas now incorporated in the City) and more recently at Hunt's Grove. This reflects not only the lack of opportunities in Stroud (and also in Cam/Dursley, similarly constrained by topography) but also the relative strength of Gloucester's economy, making it wholly appropriate to focus a significant proportion of the development in Stroud District in closer proximity to a greater range of employment and higher order services than Stroud itself provides. Hunt's Grove will continue to make a substantial contribution to meeting housing requirements in the present Plan period 2006-2031.

The most telling single indicator of the relative weakness of the Stroud economy is the disappearance of its Travel to Work Area (TTWA), areas which are defined by ONS on the

basis of the origin and destination data from the Censuses. The Stroud TTWA (1991) covered most of the District except the fringes of Gloucester; in 2001, most of its territory had been absorbed by the Gloucester and Bristol TTWAs, and the remainder by the Swindon TTWA.

This in our opinion reduces the need to identify sites close to Stroud town centre as part of a consideration of the overall most sustainable distribution of development. In addition, there are quite specific factors which continue to weigh heavily against the development of this particular site. These are set out below, starting in the next section with the Local Plan Inspector's report of 2004.

## **Background**

CPRE notes that the site was promoted as an omission site (reference OS020) in the adopted Local Plan. The site is very thoroughly discussed in section 5.88 of the Inspector's report (2004). We would encourage the present Inspector to read this section in its entirety.

At the outset (paragraph 5.88.1) the Inspector notes that *"the site comprises a priority habitat in the Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan and is designated as a Key Wildlife Site"*.

He acknowledges the merits of its location at paragraph 5.88.3: *"The site is very close to the town centre and therefore has good access to shopping, employment opportunities and a range of facilities. Similarly, the site lies in a location that minimises the need to travel by private car"*.

We consider paragraph 5.88.7 worth quoting in full: *"The Council's Landscape and Visual Assessment of the site acknowledges that the site has a fairly enclosed character due to the woodland to the north and rising ground to the south, however, the glimpsed views through and over the trees add interest and variety. The assessment also concludes that the site is a very attractive area of countryside forming a link to the open AONB countryside to the east. The site forms a valuable green wedge bringing the countryside almost into the heart of the town and alongside the Stroud Industrial Heritage Conservation Area. Although on the edge of the town, I agree that the site has a rural character and it clearly contributes to the setting of this part of Stroud. The release of the land for housing would erode this attractive swathe of countryside extending development out along the valley and river corridor. On balance, I concur with the Council that the proposed development would harm the landscape and visual character of the site and would be likely to harm people's appreciation of it"*.

Paragraph 5.88.9 continues: *"the Objector describes the site as being made up of overgrown grassland, save for the footpaths, and is not in any apparent agricultural or semi-agricultural use. However, I note that the site has been traditionally managed as hay meadow and it is identified in the Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan and is designated as a Key Wildlife*

*Site. It is likely that the release of the land for housing would damage existing botanical and wildlife interests”.*

As noted above, the site continues to be managed as a hay meadow; and the reasons for refusal refer to the site’s status as a Key Wildlife Site.

The Inspector concluded (at paragraph 5.88.12):

*“On balance, although the site has some merit in that it is very close to the town centre and accessible, this does not outweigh the harm to the landscape and nature conservation interests that would arise from the proposed development. The allocation should not be pursued in the Plan”.*

CPRE concludes that nothing has materially changed in a way which lends support to the site being now developed for housing. On the contrary, the nature conservation and landscape value of the site have since become more fully appreciated, making the site even less appropriate, in our opinion, for housing development than at the time of the then Inspector’s report.

### **The Development Plan**

In this case, the development plan consists solely of the Stroud District Local Plan (adopted 2005), following the revocation of the draft Regional Strategy for the South West, its predecessor RPG10 and the remaining policies of the Gloucestershire Structure Plan, in May 2013.

No part of the development plan was adopted after 2004 in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act of that year. Paragraph 215 of the NPPF, rather than paragraph 214, therefore applies. Paragraph 215 states that *“due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework...”*.

The emerging development plan consists of the Stroud District Local Plan, which has a base date of 2006 and is intended, subject to any review in the meantime, to run to 2031.

In particular, we note and support the Council’s view that new Policy ES6 effectively replaces adopted policies NE1 to NE7 (Statement of Case, paragraph 4.2) and that (SoC, section 5) in relation to NPPF paragraph 215, policies NE3 to NE7, and Policy ES6 are consistent with the Framework.

Part 1 of the Local Plan Examination took place between 1 and 3 April 2014. CPRE has carefully examined the Inspector’s interim report issued on 2 June. We note that he has set out three options for the future, one of which includes a reappraisal of total housing provision for the Plan period to be carried out within six months. If the Council adheres to

this, the results of the reappraisal might just be available by the time the Inquiry is intended to finish.

We address below the issue of whether this site is appropriate to help meet housing requirements even if the eventual outcome of the Examination is that total housing provision should be increased.

### **Localism**

The Foreword to the NPPF finishes by referring to the aim of *“allowing people and communities back into planning”*. Neighbourhood Plans are the main formal vehicle for achieving this; but they are not however necessarily appropriate in all circumstances, because of the character of an area or a lack of resources to carry out the onerous task of preparing such a plan.

The proposed development is in our opinion inimical to the spirit of localism, and contrary to the content of the Foreword. Turning to the first two principles of paragraph 17, the first states that planning should *“be genuinely plan led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings...”* and the second that it should *“not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives”*. The proposed development is in our opinion contrary to both principles.

### **The Reasons for Refusal**

CPRE notes that the Council’s seven reasons for refusal are almost exclusively concerned with ecology and nature conservation. The Council itself acknowledges this in its Statement of Case.

However, CPRE considers that landscape impact is also an important issue which should be taken fully into consideration, especially considering the weight which the previous Local Plan Inspector attached to this issue in section 5.88 of his report.

This statement also addresses more general planning issues which are not referred to in the reasons for refusal.

### **The Appellant’s Planning Statement**

CPRE has examined the appellant’s Planning Statement. Most of the specific issues it raises are dealt with elsewhere. The general points here are as follows.

The PS is already out of date in some respects, although we would expect the proofs of evidence to take account of information which has become available since the PS was issued.

Secondly, it is worth noting that although the PS refers to the 2004 Local Plan Inspector's report, it quotes only the parts (eg paragraph 5.88.3) which support the proposed development. As already made clear from what we consider to be a balanced range of quotations above, the Inspector did not find in favour of this site, for reasons which our opinion are as valid as they were then.

In the PS's conclusions, paragraph 7.3, while acknowledging that the site is subject to adopted Local Plan Policy NE3, claims that *"the benefits of providing housing in a highly sustainable location outweigh the nature conservation interest or scientific interest of the site"* citing the policy itself as a justification. This is directly contrary to the 2004 Local Plan Inspector's conclusion in section 5.88.

In paragraph 7.7, the PS refers to the LVIA which concludes that *"landscape matters do not represent an in principle constraint to development of the application site"*. Again, this is directly contrary to the 2004 Local Plan Inspector's conclusion in section 5.88.

### **Statements of Case**

CPRE has examined the Statements of Case of both principal parties. That of the Council has already been referred to. Comment on them is made where appropriate.

### **Statement of Common Ground**

Officers at Stroud DC advise that a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been drafted, but that it is unlikely to be signed by both principal parties before the deadline for representations by interested parties of 9 July. CPRE therefore wishes to examine the SoCG when it is available, and to comment on it.

In particular, paragraph 2.2 of the Council's Statement of Case refers to the SoCG and the extent to which the proposed development does comply with some policies. CPRE wishes to address this matter.

### **The Main Issues**

Having set the context for the appeal, CPRE considers the main issues to be:

- The impact of the proposed development on ecology and nature conservation
- The impact of the proposed development on the landscape
- Whether the proposed development constitutes sustainable development

- The relevance of the issue of the five year supply of land for housing in this particular case, and
- The balance to be struck between these considerations

These are dealt with in turn below.

### **Ecology and Nature Conservation**

It is understood that Stroud DC intends to employ an independent consultant to address the reasons for refusal at the inquiry due to begin on 25 November 2014.

It is sufficient therefore to note that CPRE has examined carefully the reasons for refusal, and supports them. In particular, however, we are entirely unconvinced by the adequacy of the mitigation measures proposed and believe that the site's nature conservation assets derive principally from their location and are therefore irreplaceable.

The CPRE notes that the appeal site and the area immediately to the north along the River Frome are both key wildlife sites. The site itself is part of Rodborough Fields Key Wildlife Site, an area of unimproved, species-rich, neutral grassland. This kind of habitat develops slowly over many years and recreating it is, at best, problematic. The second Key Wildlife Site is the neighbouring Frome Banks to the north, where both the river and the woodland on its banks form a wildlife corridor, which is a significant habitat in its own right. The applicant proposes biodiversity offsetting to replace the habitats lost or damaged due to the proposed development.

The CPRE is extremely concerned that the applicant is proposing biodiversity offsetting when DEFRA and Natural England are still running pilot schemes on offsetting, in association with a number of local authorities. Given that there is no proof that offsetting would work with these habitats and in this situation, we believe that the risk of relying on that approach in such a sensitive location is simply too great. The proposed bridge over the River Frome will damage the river's function as a wildlife corridor: and that function cannot, because of its specific location, be offset elsewhere. If the bridge is constructed, the corridor will be permanently damaged, by:

1. Construction activities – time limited, but disruptive enough to have long term effects on habitats and wildlife;
2. Damage to the woodland, its understory and the river banks – permanent;
3. Increased noise and light – permanent.

### **Landscape Impact**

We have already referred to, and quoted, the 2004 Local Plan Inspector's views on this issue.

*Tranquillity*



Tranquillity is often referred to as a key attribute of landscape, but it is not easy to reduce it to a standard list of determinants. Research by the Countryside Agency and the CPRE discovered that people associate tranquillity with access to nature and natural features. Peace, calm and an absence of noise are important, but these are not absolutes: the key thing is *relatively* peaceful surroundings. Later research by Natural England confirms the importance of relative peace and quiet, often with water and/or woodland, in enhancing people's enjoyment of landscapes. The conclusions of this research were that '*calmness comes from stillness and the smaller-scale sensory things, and experiences like birdsong. Phase II makes the point more strongly that such spaces are important to provide contrast to busy urban or suburban experiences.*'

What this means for Rodborough Field is that its present condition of open grassland, secluded and well hidden from view, with the river and woodland close by, is vitally important. Dr Newton's Way – and indeed the centre of Stroud - may be close by, but for local people, Rodborough Field provides an oasis of relative tranquillity.

#### *The Setting of the Cotswolds AONB*

The western edge of Rodborough Field is the eastern boundary of the Cotswolds AONB, a statutorily protected landscape. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated because their landscapes are nationally significant. The Cotswolds Conservation Board is responsible for ensuring that the national significance is retained. The Board has two statutory purposes: to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB and to increase understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities.

The Cotswold AONB Management Plan for 2013-2018 contains an objective and two policies that are especially relevant to decisions relating to Rodborough Field.

*Objective CEO1: By 2018 it can be demonstrated that organisations and individuals responsible for land management and development management have conserved and enhanced the special qualities of the Cotswold landscape.*

*Policy LP1: The key characteristics, principal elements and special qualities (including tranquillity), which form the natural beauty of the Cotswolds landscape are conserved and where possible enhanced.*

*Policy LP2: Development proposals and changes in land use and management, both within and outside the AONB, take account of guidance and advice published by the Board.*

The AONB boundary wraps around Stroud and so the above objective and policies are relevant whenever changes are proposed for sites in the town. They are particularly important when proposed sites – such as this –are actually on the boundary of the AONB. The national importance of the Cotswolds landscapes means that neither new development nor changes to land use should be approved unless they contribute to AONB purposes.

Further detail about the AONB Board's position can be found in their Position Statement on development in the setting of the AONB. This says that:

*The Board will expect local authorities to be mindful of both the possible positive and negative impacts of a development within the setting of the AONB on the natural beauty and special qualities of the AONB when determining planning applications, and seek the views of the Board when significant impacts are anticipated.*

The statement goes on to list impacts that could adversely affect the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty and opportunities for enjoyment:

- *Blocking or interference of views out of the AONB particularly from public viewpoints*
- *Blocking or interference of views of the AONB from public viewpoints outside the AONB*
- *Loss of tranquillity through the introduction of lighting, noise, or traffic movement*
- *Introduction of abrupt change of landscape character*
- *Loss of biodiversity, particularly if of species of importance in the AONB*
- *Loss of features of historic interest, particularly if these are contiguous with the AONB*
- *Reduction in public access*
- *Increase in air or water pollution*

The CPRE maintains that there is a high risk that all these impacts will occur if the appeal site is developed.

#### *Landscape Character*

Stroud DC's Landscape Character Assessment, adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, includes Rodborough Field in the Secluded Valleys Landscape Type. The field displays many of the key characteristics of this type:

- It has an enclosed, secluded character
- It has steep sides, near the bottom of a narrow, concave valley
- It sits within a complex of interlocking valleys
- It is one of a series of small fields, typical of steeper valley sides
- It is permanent grassland
- It is close to a fast flowing stream (the River Frome)
- It is adjacent to a large settlement (Stroud) at the junction of the R Frome and Slad Brook

Three of the Key Priorities for action for this landscape type are relevant to Rodborough Field:

- Ensure that careful and stringent planning controls on the siting and design of new development are provided to maintain the character of this landscape type and to protect the AONB landscape
- Encourage the continued protection of important wildlife habitats
- Protect remnant pastures and small woodlands both on the valley sides and valley floors within more urban pressured areas.

In the CPRE's view it would not be possible to develop this site and respect the above priorities.

### **Sustainability**

The NPPF provides no concise definition of sustainable development; instead, it refers at paragraph 6 to paragraphs 8 to 219 (virtually the whole document) as “[constituting] *the Government’s view of what sustainable development means in practice for the planning system*”.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF identifies three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

It has already been acknowledged that there are few if any other opportunities to provide housing as close to the town centre as the site of the proposed development. From the public right of way in the north-west corner of the site, it is a short walk to the Subscription Rooms (representing the very centre of the town), and also from the proposed new bridge to the Waitrose store.

However, in terms of paragraph 7, the proposal would in our opinion bring no economic benefits other than jobs in the construction stage. Social benefits do not consist of providing housing for its own sake; local needs are an important consideration. Stroud DC has not considered it necessary to allocate the site to help meet housing requirements in the Plan period to 2031. Although it is possible, if not likely, that housing provision will be increased as a result of what the Local Plan Inspector has now asked the Council to do, we consider that despite its location close to the town centre this should not be among any additional sites allocated to help increase housing supply.

Finally, the proposed development would not assist in achieving any of the environmental objectives summarised in the third bullet point of paragraph 7, and indeed for landscape and nature conservation reasons would be inimical to them.

### **Housing Land Supply**

CPRE's understanding of the recent and current position can be summarised as follows.

The last assessment carried out by the Council itself was published in August 2012. It concluded that there was a 6.53 year supply of land for housing in the District, based on a deliverable supply of 2,541 dwellings and a five year requirement of 1,945 dwellings, made up of 370 dwellings per year plus 5%. This is the document addressed in the appellant's Planning Statement of August 2013.

An appeal decision (2165671) on a site at Box Road, Cam issued in January 2013 questioned the SDC assessment, and concluded (among other things) that as a result of what the Inspector regarded as a persistent under-delivery of housing in the period 2006-11, a 20% buffer should apply, and that even if a 5% buffer were used, the years supply figure was only 4.21. The appellant's Planning Statement makes reference to this appeal in support of the case for development at Rodborough Field.

More recently, however, an independent review carried out on behalf of the Council by Evans Jones LLP (October 2013, and therefore postdating the appellant's Planning Statement) concluded that there was a 5.55 year supply, based on a deliverable supply of 2,215 dwellings and a five year requirement of 2,001 dwellings, including a 5% buffer which the consultants considered justified.

The Evans Jones review used as its yardstick for calculating the five years supply a total housing provision of 9,500 dwellings in the period 2006 to 2031. Until the emerging Local Plan is adopted, CPRE considers this to be the most appropriate yardstick, despite the recent reliance of appellants in other parts of the County on the former RSS figures.

CPRE considers these now to be wholly out of date, for the following reasons. The draft RSS never reached adoption. Moreover, its housing provision figures were founded, as the EiP Panel Report (December 2007) repeatedly makes clear, on the 2003 based household projections, now eleven years old. There have been three further sets of household projections since then. Although these figures were the last to have been tested at examination, the EiP concluded seven years ago (in July 2007), and the value of such scrutiny will have been very substantially diminished by the passage of time and the availability of new data.

More recently still, the Inspector's Initial Conclusions on stage 1 of the Examination (SD/21), issued on 2 June 2014, state as follows:

*"There is some dispute about whether a 5-year supply can currently be demonstrated, but when the SDLP is adopted, sufficient sites will undoubtedly be identified to rectify any shortfall"* (paragraph 42)[CPRE emphasis], and

*"Much depends on the period assessed and the rate against which delivery is compared, but the latest evidence does not suggest that there has been a persistent record of under-*

*delivery which might justify a 20% boost in housing supply. Consequently, based on the currently proposed housing provision level, there is a case for accepting a 5% uplift in the first 5-years supply rather than the 20% figure that some parties seek” (paragraph 43).*

None of the proposed allocations in the new Local Plan are included in the current assessment of supply, and indeed CPRE acknowledges that it would be inappropriate to include them at this stage. Moreover, not all of the capacity of the proposed allocations, even when the Plan is adopted, will immediately count towards the five year supply. However, a significant start on those sites can reasonably be anticipated in the following five years, and so we fully support the Inspector’s view at paragraph 42, quoted above, from his Initial Conclusions.

CPRE considers it possible, indeed likely, that some increase in total housing provision in the Local Plan will result from the additional work which the Inspector has asked the Council to carry out. Nevertheless, it also seems likely that the increase in supply resulting from the confirmation of the proposed allocations will be more than enough to maintain the five years supply.

CPRE finds it surprising, in the light of the Local Plan Inspector’s remarks quoted above, that the Council (SoC, paragraph 2.5) is not arguing that there is a five year supply of land for housing. Nevertheless, even if it is concluded that a five year supply cannot be demonstrated, the Council also states at paragraph 2.9 that the settlement boundaries of the adopted Local Plan are not in principle out of date; earlier, paragraph 2.4 refers to the continuing general relevance of Policy HN10. Paragraph 49 of the NPPF does not open the door for the development of any site, and in particular sites outside settlement boundaries. Rather, this leads back to paragraph 47 and footnote 11, which requires a sufficient supply of available, suitable and achievable sites. We consider, for reasons relating to landscape and nature conservation, that the site of the proposed development is not suitable. This makes it inappropriate for development, even if it can be regarded as available and achievable.

Our interpretation of paragraph 49 of the NPPF and its relationship with paragraph 14 is as follows: that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is strengthened if paragraph 49 applies. We consider however that for the reasons set out in this section it does not apply. The more general application of paragraph 14 is addressed below under the heading The Planning Balance.

We consider that even if it is concluded that there is less than a five year supply of land for housing, this does not outweigh the adverse impacts of the proposed development.

At the same time, we also understand that a fresh assessment of housing land supply may be carried out by the Council between now and the beginning of the Inquiry. There may

thus be changes on both the demand and the supply side of the housing equation. CPRE therefore wishes to reserve the right to comment in detail on this issue, in the light of any fresh information and also the proofs of evidence of the two principal parties which are expected to be exchanged on 28 October.

### **The Planning Balance**

Consideration of the planning balance involves the three main issues discussed above, in the light of what we consider to be a crucial part of the Council's Statement of Case, paragraph 5.2.4, which for ease of reference is quoted in full below:

*“Contrary to that of the Appellant, it will be the LPA’s position that the policies listed in the SoCG and the Appellant’s Statement of Case do not engage paragraph 49 of the Framework (unlike Policy HN10). The policies that are pivotal, i.e. those that are alleged to be breached in the reasons for refusal, are concerned with ecology. They are plainly not ‘relevant policies for the supply of housing and neither are any of the other listed policies. They neither encourage nor restrict housing in specific circumstances, nor control its amount or location. It will be the LPA’s case that paragraph 49 of the Framework should not be interpreted so that it captures any policy that might in specific circumstances act as a barrier towards new housing or that in general terms acts as a constraint that needs to be addressed. If that is the intention of the Framework it could and should say so in specific terms but it does not. Were it to do so, there would be surprising and unfortunate consequences which run contrary to the objectives of achieving sustainable development. The LPA’s evidence will provide specific illustrations”.*

The balance in this case can be fairly easily defined. The Council has confined its reasons for refusal to ecological considerations, which it considers sufficient to warrant the dismissal of the appeal. We agree with this. However, these reasons are in our opinion powerfully reinforced by reasons relating to landscape, addressed in detail in this statement. Furthermore, from the point of view of all the dimensions of sustainability the undoubted locational advantages of the site are in our opinion considerably outweighed by the adverse impacts of the proposed development in other respects.

Thus the adverse impacts of the proposed development substantially outweigh any benefits.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

CPRE concludes that there have been no significant material changes in circumstances which diminish the force of the 2004 Local Plan Inspector's conclusions.

In respect of the main issues, CPRE finds the following:

- That the impact of the proposed development in terms of nature conservation and landscape would be seriously adverse

- That notwithstanding the undoubtedly sustainable location of the site, these serious adverse effects are more than enough to outweigh the benefits, and that as a result, the presumption in favour of development does not apply
- That on the basis of the Evans Jones report, there is currently a five year supply of land for housing in the District; furthermore, we share the current Local Plan Inspector's confidence that a five year supply will be achieved once the proposed allocations are confirmed.

We note the Council's overall stance at paragraph 5.4.5 of its SoC, that the proposed development is *"not supported by the Framework as a whole"*. We entirely agree with this.

In conclusion, for all the above reasons, the Inspector is respectfully requested to dismiss the appeal.