

## **Ickleford Parish Council representation to NHDC Planning Committee, 15/03/18**

### **Land east of Bedford Road and west of Ramerick Manor, Bedford Road, Ickleford**

Ickleford Parish Council, along with our neighbouring Parish Councils in Stondon and Henlow, oppose this application. We agree with the NHDC Planning Advisors that permission should be refused because the development is of a poor design and does not improve the character and quality of the area and the way it functions. It is an overdevelopment, it provides insufficient parking spaces, and will adversely affect the historical environment of the Grade II\*-listed Old Ramerick Manor and its associated non-designated heritage assets.

We believe that these are sufficient reasons for the committee to refuse planning permission, but we would like to mention other relevant factors which further undermine the application.

We would like to draw your attention to the recent case of *Steer vs the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Ors (2017)* on the setting of heritage assets. This case refers to the setting of the historical asset as being just as important as the bricks and mortar of the building itself. Old Ramerick Manor was the hub of the farming community for centuries, and to remove the farmland adjacent to it and thus reduce the historical site to a manor house set behind a modern housing estate undermines its historical importance.

The site is not within a settlement boundary.

We have serious concerns about road safety at the entrance/ exit point from the site on to the A600. The road access is in a 'dip', with limited visibility in both directions. Although the submitted plans propose a reduced speed limit, with the absence of effective enforcement vehicles will be travelling quickly over the brow of the hills either side of the site. Compare this situation with the recent road safety improvements needed for the North Herts Crematorium a little further south on the A600. We think it is negligent for the applicants not to have proactively proposed something similar here.

We believe that the impact on key local services has not been adequately factored in by the developers. For example, an S106 obligation of £146,000 is proposed to support GP services via expansion of the Lower Stondon Surgery. However, the lead GP at that practice has objected to this site in his submission to the NHDC Local Plan. Even if physical expansion of the surgery were feasible and acceptable to the practice, the proposed funds would be insufficient to achieve it.

Para 111 of the NPPF requires preference to be given to development on brownfield land, and para 112 requires planning authorities to consider the benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. This site is high-quality Grade 2 land, and therefore we believe that development of this site underplays the impact on loss of farm land.

It is unacceptable for developers to suggest that simple proximity to a bus route conforms to NPPF requirements on sustainable transport. The 2011 census shows that only 1.9% of north Herts residents use the bus to get to work – a figure likely to be lower still in rural parts of the District such as ours. Our bus services are irregular, infrequent, do not cover early mornings or late evenings, and they do not directly serve either Hitchin or Arlesey train stations. Most residents of this putative development will rely on private vehicles, adding to the already congested roads, and contravening NPPF para 34.

NPPF para 32 requires cumulative traffic impacts of developments to be considered. This is particularly important in this location due to the number of new developments in adjacent Lower

Stondon and Henlow. A total of 1,724 new homes could be built in those two villages over the coming years. Due to the paucity of sustainable transport options, a conservative estimate of 2,750 additional vehicles can be expected on the nearby roads.

Moreover, the increased traffic is associated with impacts on pollution and air quality. The NPPF (paras 120 and 124) also requires the cumulative effects of developments on these two factors to be considered.

In summary, Mr Chairman, we believe this proposal to be an over-development of very poor standard. It attempts to urbanise a rural location, and does so with scant regard to a range of impacts. The plans contravene a raft of NPPF criteria and would adversely impact residents present and future. We hope the committee will agree with us and the NHDC Planning Advisors, and refuse planning permission.