

**B&NES Local Plan Options Consultation
Representation on behalf of Burnett & Corston Protection Alliance
(BCPA) and the Marksbury Residents Group (MRG)
Date: 8 April 2024**

Chapter 5 – South of Burnett, Next to A39 (potential site)

The BCPA and the MRG have made this representation to assist the Authority in its consideration of whether land south of Burnett on the A39 should be explored as a long-term option for strategic development.

The BCPA and the MRG considers that there are a range of constraints, sensitivities and issues that clearly point to the Site being unsuitable for strategic development. Strategic development at this location would be inconsistent with the Council's Corporate Strategy, Spatial Priorities, and declared Climate and Ecological Emergencies, along with national planning policy. In summary:

- It is clear that the strategic development options being introduced at this stage of the Local Plan's preparation have a combined capacity significantly in excess of the likely residual housing requirement once brownfield and non-strategic housing opportunities are factored in, meaning that there is currently no clear evidence that the Site will be required to meet development needs over the Local Plan period. Green Belt options that perform badly against the Authority's Spatial Priorities, such as the Site, can be readily discarded in these circumstances.
- The Site has a significant Green Belt function in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and it serves to protect against the unsustainable growth and coalescence of surrounding small settlements so that they retain their defining organic character.
- The location of the Site is shown to have the lowest sustainable transport connectivity score and development in this location is likely to be heavily car-dependent, leading to unsustainable travel patterns and adding to local congestion at peak times. With reference to NPPF principles, Green Belt sites with poor public transport connectivity should be the last resort for meeting development needs, meaning that exceptional circumstances are unlikely to be fully evidenced and justified for the future release of this Site.
- There are significant heritage sensitivities associated with the Site. The harm to the defining landscape characteristics of the setting of the WHS, important facets of its Outstanding Universal Value, and the immediate setting of Stantonbury Camp will be significant and represent clear 'red lights' to major development.

- The Site is prominent in the local landscape and it reinforces the prevailing very rural and tranquil character of the area. Strategic development would be conspicuous in the countryside and damaging to the setting of nearby Corston and potentially other nearby settlements.
- The area is characterised as open, gently rolling landscape with a lack of extensive tree cover. Large areas of woodland planting, in an attempt to mitigate the urbanising effect of strategic development, would in themselves be incongruent and damaging to the prevailing character of the landscape.
- It is highly unlikely that development could successfully evoke the organic and well-integrated characteristics of the smaller historic settlements found in this area and it would represent a highly damaging intrusion into a peaceful countryside area.
- The Site provides rich and diverse habitats including parts that are managed specifically for nature recovery under the Countryside Stewardship scheme and which support Red List species.
- Strategic Development would involve the loss of productive agricultural land including land that is being successfully and sustainably managed as a family-run enterprise.
- The Site's relative remoteness in open countryside will present physical and financial challenges in terms of providing the necessary infrastructure to create sustainable strategic development.
- The Site's identification as a possible location for strategic development is in complete contradiction to the Authority's proposed approach for the Rural Areas.

For the above reasons, the BCPA and the MRG consider that the land South of Burnett does not warrant exploration as a potential long-term option for strategic development.

If the Authority is minded to explore this option further, the issues raised and concerns expressed in this representation demand thorough examination.

Due to the significant and wide-ranging impacts that would arise from strategic development at the Site, the BCPA and the MRG will expect the Authority to conduct comprehensive consultation with the affected local residents, landowners, community stakeholder groups and other interest groups if it decides to explore this option.

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