

## HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 26 February 2025, 2:00pm.

**Present:** Cllr P Boothman (Chair)

Cllr R Baxendale

Cllr B Gilmour

Cllr D Keane

Cllr A Skinner

Cllr R Southworth

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllrs Guinea and Rodgers.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

### 4. PLANNING MATTERS

**4.1. Outline planning permission with all matters reserved for the construction of up to 120 homes (Use Class C3) with associated public open space, landscaping, lpay areas, surface water attenuation, roads, car parking, pedestrian and cycle routes, utility infrastructure and associated works.** Land between Houghton Grange and The How Houghton Road Houghton Ref: 23/00627/OUT

**RESOLVED:** Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend that these applications be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

Please see the response submitted on behalf of the Parish Council by Richard Buxton Solicitors.

A review of the Landscape Visual Assessment by Peter Radmall Associates is attached and forms a material part of this comment. We would like to particularly point out

1. The amended proposal fails to grasp that this development is attached to Houghton Grange Phase 1 - an extension of Houghton & Wyton, a village rather than the Town of St.Ives itself. And if approved without further amendments will result in planning harm by linking the two distinctly different settlements. The proposed development is still located too close to the main road, harming the entrance/exit to the village and green gateway to the town. By infilling the land between the entrance road and A1123 the proposal does not correspond with the Local Plan policy illustration of what is considered acceptable, all of which increases the actual and perceived sense of coalescence. Homes England appear to reach the same conclusion when stating and admitting that when viewed from the A1123 the development 'would cause a pronounced change to the composition of the view'(section 9.1.3.2 Year 15 Visual Effects) and in the Revised Landscape and Visual Appraisal, that 'it would appear integrated into the settlement edge of St Ives.' in other words it would be seen as part of the town (9.1.3.1 Year 15 effects to Published Landscape Character Areas). This concurs with Peter Radmall, our own Landscape Assessor's view that it "would increase the actual and perceived coalescence between Houghton & Wyton and St Ives". This is not an outcome which either the Local Plan Policy SI 1 or HWNP 3 Anti-Coalescence Policy can support, and would result in planning harm. The proposal squeezes the gap by two thirds alongside the road, and at its narrowest point by 69%, that is even before the reducing effects of the proposed

new play area and associated pathways are taken into account which all has the effect of urbanising the area and joining the settlements (see below).

2. To this latter point, Homes England describe what is left of the gap as a natural green wedge. However they have failed to appreciate that the effectiveness and naturalness of it would be squeezed and reduced further by a built and equipped play area proposed to the east and positioned outside of the developed footprint i.e. within the gap/green wedge. Plus by adding numerous built pathways connecting and crossing the meadow to the town, together with the management of the area it will have a huge urbanising effect on what is supposed to be a natural countryside buffer. This is critical if any gap is to help distinguish between and reinforce the separate identities of the village and town. The Anti-coalescence policies in the relevant Neighbourhood (HWNP 3) and Local Plans (SI 1) form a vital part of the planning policy for this area and once again, do not support this approach and the planning harm that would result.
3. The proposed density of housing, in what is repeatedly acknowledged within Local Plan SI, to be a sensitive area is incongruous with both Houghton Grange phase 1, as well as the rest of the village. In fact the density would be considered quite high were it to form the edge of a town let alone the edge of a village. Continuing to maintain a total build of 120 homes would result in parts of the site having a built density of 33 dwellings per hectare (dph) which is far too intensive for the location. It would represent more than twice the density of the Houghton Grange Phase 1 site (16 dph) immediately next door and currently forming the edge of the village. In fact the proposal would result in an even higher density than for the Spires site (26 dph) on the edge of St.Ives. Replicating the Spires development for Houghton Grange Phase 2 would only enhance the perception of coalescence as it will look, feel and actually become viewed as an extension of the Spires and therefore the town itself.

In our opinion, continuing to push for the +10% tolerance of the entire St.Ives west housing allocation to be built in this one remaining parcel of land between village and town shows a disregard for the guiding planning policies, the sensitivity of the location, the environment, the views of local people as well as design guidance. Even in the recent Local Plan Land Availability Assessment, a maximum housing density of 25 dph was used to help determine the housing potential of new sites on the edge of existing settlements.

4. Finally, it is felt that the tone of the application takes no account of local considerations from this parish and neighbouring councils. We remain concerned that a single planning application should have taken over two years to get to this stage, to still be unresolved with so many questions surrounding it. To have been submitted with missing or out of date information supplied, with inadequate levels of engagement, requiring substantial amendments and resubmissions, having three separate consultations of varying sorts, resulting in nearly 270 documents and postings on line, and thousands of pounds of tax payers money being spent on professional help to support, hopefully to ensure planning policies are adhered to and a positive outcome for all achieved.

We sincerely hope that lessons can be learned from this for the future.

Proposed: Cllr Boothman, Seconded: Cllr Baxendale. All in favour

#### **4.2. Houghton Grange phase 1 & 2**

The Council discussed the timeline of the current application (Houghton Grange phase 2) from 2023 and the way it has been handled by HDC Planning.

An email from the Strategic Sports Development Officer at HDC has asked for input into the HDC S106 request for funding towards formal outdoor sports provision. The Parish Council has spoken to Planning Officers about our S106 funding priorities in early 2024 and heard nothing more since. While it welcomes this chance to have an input the Parish Council has many priorities beyond sport provision and will discuss this at the next Parish Council meeting.

**4.3. Other Planning Matters**

Active Travel in Huntingdonshire Survey.

This survey is available for comment on the HDC website until 16 March. This will be discussed at the next Parish Council meeting. Concern was expressed about the number of consultations on similar subjects recently and the amount of money spent on this. It was noted that these may also be affected by the renewal of the Local Plan. Cllr Boothman is to meet with Crest Nicholson about potential development at RAF Wyton.

There has been no further consultation from Bellway about potential development in Wyton on the Hill.

**5. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Wed 5 March at 7pm

Signature ..... Date.....