

Great Chesterford Parish Council

Comments on Planning Application UTT/20/2724/OP

Great Chesterford Parish Council (“GCPC”) STRONGLY OBJECTS to this speculative Outline Application, which seeks permission to erect up to 134 dwellings on a site adjacent to London Road with all matters reserved except for access.

A Preliminary

1. These comments are to be read subject to the following over-riding considerations:

- (a) The site subject to this Application lies within the Parish of Little Chesterford; GCPC understands from UDC that arrangements to change the present boundary between Great Chesterford and Little Chesterford will be brought forward in mid 2021 when a Community Governance Review will initiate alteration of the respective boundary lines, following which the site will be transferred to the Parish of Great Chesterford. Pending such change in its favour, GCPC reserves all rights regarding the Application and its position in relation to it.
- (b) GCPC previously objected to Application UTT/19/057/OP relating to development of 76 dwellings in London Road (“London Road West development”), and urges that the implications of this now consented development are considered and fully taken into account in assessment of the current Application. This is of particular importance given that the only access road available to both sites is the B1383.
- (c) All comments below are to be read subject to the provisions of the current draft Neighbourhood Plan for the Parishes of Great Chesterford and Little Chesterford, 2019 - 2033 (published November 2020), now out for consultation. The draft states, regarding potential for possible development of the site, “Not selected: growth not proportional. Requires major reductions in scale and significant provision of community amenities and protection/enhancement of community, landscape and historic features”.
- (d) There has been wholly inadequate consultation with the local community ahead of submission of the Application; at the very least, all households should have received a flier providing details of what is proposed, with full opportunity for everyone to submit comment to the developer before the matter is considered by UDC.

B Five key facts, and corrections required to the Application

2. **Location.** The site is within the A1 Cam River Valley category of UDC's Landscape Character Assessment, having been identified following the 2015 Call for Sites by UDC as having "a relatively high sensitivity to change"; in the event, the site was not selected for possible inclusion in the now withdrawn draft 2019 Local Plan because it "would diminish the sense of place and distinctiveness" of Great Chesterford. The land to the north east of the site lies within flood zones 2 and 3.

3. **B1383.** The only pedestrian and vehicular access to Great Chesterford is via the B1383, an increasingly busy road that services M11 traffic when the motorway is blocked: GCPC understands that in the past Highways England and/or Essex Highways have previously raised objection to installation of traffic calming measures on the approach to Great Chesterford on account of the requirement that the road must not be impeded in view of its function as an alternative route.

4. **Site link to Village.** The Applicant's claim (p 37, Design and Access Statement) that a link to the centre of Great Chesterford across the River Cam "is not required to facilitate the development, which benefits from other linkages to the Village that could be enhanced" is incorrect: there are currently no such "other linkages" except the B1383. The Applicant further misleadingly asserts (paragraph 2.2.1, *ibid*) that there is "an opportunity to create a direct pedestrian link from the site to the centre of Great Chesterford along the Granta Corridor subject to agreement with Great Chesterford Parish Council"; GCPC is incapable of providing any assistance or assurance regarding provision of any corridor, and it is unaware of any opportunity to create such a link, or even whether landowners concerned would consent to its establishment.

5. **Church Street and Carmen Street access.** The only access from the B1383 to facilities available within Great Chesterford is via Church Street and Carmen Street, the former being the most likely entry point due its its closer proximity to the site. As is evident from the measurements shown in Attachment 1, both roads are very narrow in places (so necessitating single file traffic), without adequate pavements (in some places non-existent), and wholly incapable of any widening or expansion. The claim that Church Street is only "very lightly trafficked" (para 2.10, Traffic Survey), so leading to the assertion that an additional 134 houses will only have "negligible impact" on local traffic (para 7.8, *ibid*), is not supported by any validated assessment of actual traffic levels utilising this route, and takes no account whatever that Church Street in particular:

- provides the most direct connection between the B1383 and the B184, with the result that it provides a rat-run between the two;

- is the route of the twice hourly No 7 bus service, which can only navigate the road with care and which, on occasion, is blocked altogether by parked or delivery vehicles;

- is particularly congested when parents are dropping off/collecting children from the school; and

- is used for parking of hearses and cars outside the Church (which has no dedicated off-street parking area).

6. Great Chesterford expansion 2015 - 2020. Since 2011, 156 additional dwellings have been built in Great Chesterford, representing an increase in housing stock of 24.9% in the past 8 years; the addition of 76 dwellings on the London Road West development and 134 now proposed will result in a further 17% increase. There has been no commensurate increase within the Village of additional facilities (single shop, two pubs, two surgeries etc) to service such growth, and the school is currently bursting to capacity (and children from the Village are being turned away by the nearest secondary school). Great Chesterford faces the risk of being overwhelmed as a result of unsustainable development.

C Summary of GPCP's objections to the Application

7. It is in the context of these principal considerations that GPCP has the following objections to the proposed development of up to 134 dwellings in London Road:

8. Adverse environmental, flood risk and landscape impact. This site was dismissed as unsuitable from the original Call for Sites in 2015 due to the detrimental loss of agricultural land and diminished sense of place. The site was considered unsuitable for development as it would not contribute to sustainable patterns of development in the locality. GPCP agrees with the assessment made at the time by UDC as the Local Planning Authority, and does not consider that the basis of this conclusion has changed. The draft Neighbourhood Plan similarly rejects the site for substantial development. Such development will be highly visible from the B184 and, in particular, the public footpath between Great and Little Chesterford that runs along the River valley. There will be an inevitable detrimental effect on wildlife, and evidence of features of archaeological interest exists on part of the site.

9. Excessive loss of open space between Great Chesterford and Little Chesterford. Residents of both Great Chesterford and Little Chesterford, when consulted in connection with preparation of the draft Neighbourhood Plan, have overwhelmingly signalled that they wish the two Parishes to remain separate and distinct; the degree of suggested coalescence between the two Villages is excessive, and contrary to the NPPF. The extent of the site and wooded buffer area that is proposed will in any event not be contiguous

with the boundary of the London Road West development, with the result that the claimed establishment of a coherent “gateway” for Great Chesterford is not achievable.

10. Increased use of local rat-runs to enable access from the site to B184. The most direct route to Saffron Walden etc from London Road is via the B1383 to the B184; this will be achieved either via Church Street/South Street/High Street in Great Chesterford, or through Little Chesterford or Littlebury. All these villages currently suffer from transient through-traffic, and yet more will merely increase local congestion within the narrow streets in these residential areas.

11. Absence of public transport serving London Road site. There is no viable public transport from either London Road site; many incoming residents will be local commuters unable to use the Railway Station at Great Chesterford, resorting to use of the car instead. In view of the distance of the site from facilities in Great Chesterford, the assumption made in the Traffic Survey that most residents will walk to them is simply wishful thinking; as likely as not, most primary school children will be transported by car, thereby adding to the already unacceptable level of congestion in roads around the school, in particular in Church Street, School Street and South Street. Secondary school children bussed from the London Road sites will have to be collected/delivered back, and the suggestion made in relation to the London Road West development that pick-up should be from the bus shelter in Ickleton Road (opposite Plextek) will necessitate a walk along a busy, largely unlit, road with no dedicated crossing points.

12. B1383 unsafe for additional pedestrian and cycle users. GCPC has repeatedly drawn attention to the significant adverse traffic implications resulting from the London Road West development, both in its response to the planning Application and, most recently, in its letter dated 23rd March 2020 to UDC regarding Section 106 issues. The need for traffic calming measures to be introduced (immediate extension of the existing 30mph speed restriction at present located at the Ash Green entrance, change in position of the existing position of the active speed sign, introduction of a roundabout at the exit from the development onto the B1383 and, not least, provision of a pelican crossing in the proximity of Station Road) is clear - all being measures already necessary to accommodate increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic likely to be generated by the now approved 76 dwellings. The addition of a further 134 dwellings with the same access to the B1383 will materially exacerbate the impact of both developments for an already important arterial road which, in the absence of a coherent suite of such measures is unsafe, which is unacceptable as contrary to Policies S7 and H1. The sweeping assertion in the Traffic Survey that, since facilities within Great Chesterford are “within walking distance” (para 2.10) the development

will have only “negligible impact” on local roads (para 7.8), is simply not realistic. The combination of both developments will result in car-based schemes because residents will in reality not be able to travel in safety by foot or cycle to facilities in the Village.

13. Roads within Great Chesterford incapable of providing safe access.

The evidence regarding both Church Street and Carmen Street - the *only* direct points of access from the B1383 to facilities within the Village - clearly demonstrates that neither route is capable of providing improved safe access to pedestrians, either by road or pavement widening. On-street car parking further exacerbates traffic movements within the Village, particularly in Church Street and surrounding roads at school delivery/collection times. The NPPF requires that permission for developments should be refused if “an unacceptable impact on highway safety” is likely to result, with priority being given to consideration of pedestrian and cycle movements, and this is clearly the situation in this instance.

14. 134 dwellings will result in unsustainable development. The significant increase of additional housing within the Village in the past 8 years - 156 new dwellings, amounting to nearly 25% growth - demonstrates that Great Chesterford has not been backward in embracing development; whilst such increase has so far been successfully absorbed, there is only so much capacity to embrace further expansion. The addition of a further 210 dwellings on London Road will significantly contribute to already insufficient local school places, road congestion and the like, and collectively indicate that the suggested development is unsustainable.

15. Premature and opportunistic Application. The Applicant seeks to justify submission of the Application now on the ground that UDC currently has less than a 5 year land supply, with the result that development of the site will contribute up to 134 additional dwellings to satisfy need etc. It is clear from the documentation provided in support of the Application that problems associated with development of the site - all readily identifiable - have simply been brushed aside as insignificant, or ignored altogether.

16. Mitigation measures incapable of remedying detriments. The proposals if implemented are unsustainable in size and scope. No Section 106 contributions will be capable of mitigating the substantial and perpetual damage that a development of such magnitude will have on the local infrastructure and facilities. There are significant limitations on the nature and extent of road safety measures that can be introduced on the B1383, the roads within Great Chesterford are incapable of widening, and the school site cannot be expanded. The Applicant should not be permitted to substitute minimum mitigation via Section 106 proposals at the expense of providing safe, alternative, access to the Village which cannot be assured.

D Conclusion

17. GCPC submits that the proposed development will be unsustainable if permitted to proceed, and the Application should be rejected notwithstanding UDC's absence of a 5 year land supply.

18th November, 2020

Road/pavement widths - Church Street and Carmen Street,
Great Chesterford
(Direction of travel: from B1383 towards centre of Village)
All measurements in metres

* = pavement obstructed in places (telegraph poles, street signage etc).

** = regular car parking (eg frontage houses without garages, school delivery/collection, etc).

*** = road narrowing measures on account of overbearing properties, including bollards in pavement on both sides of road.

Church Street

<u>Place of measurement</u> (House name)	<u>Pavement (L)</u>	<u>Road</u>	<u>Pavement (R)</u>
B1383 mouth	1.5*	6.2	1.3
Chesters/Church wall	0.5*	5.0	0.5
The Close/ Church gate	1.3*	4.6	0.5
The Elm Tree/Church wall	1.15*	4.5	0.5
The White Cottage/Church wall	0.55	4.2***	0.7*
Copperfields/The Old Vicarage	0.7*	3.4***	0.15*
Pye Cottage/Ticefell	1.1*	4.8/3.7**	0.65
Church Street/High Trees	1.3	5.0/3.9**	1.1

NB School Street: No pavements for most of length between Church Street, the School and shop.

Carmen Street

B1383 mouth	1.7	6.7	nil
Recreation Ground exit	1.0	6.4	nil

Walcot/Field gate	nil	5.5	nil
Charlwood House/Field wall	nil	5.0	nil
The Old Manse/Field wall	nil	5.0	nil
Weavers Cottage/Fairview	nil	5.0/2.9**	1.4
Philip Cottage/Bartle House	nil	4.8/3.5**	1.3
Bartle House/Alley Cottage	nil	4.5/2.9**	1.6
Clematis Cottage/ Lavender Cottage	0.65	5.1/3.1**	0.85
Delles Cottage/Crocus Cottage	1.5	5.0/3.6**	2.3
The Delles/Little Mead	0.65*	4.8	0.9
The Delles/Barcroft	nil	5.6/3.4**	1.5
The Delles/Wearns Folly	nil	5.0/3.2**	1.05
Chesterleigh House/ The Fruin	0.8*	5.7	1.2