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15th November 2021

Dear Sir and/or Madam,

Ref: West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan Spatial Options Consultation, Page 33, Land to the South of Market Harborough, Proposed development of 2,000+ dwellings between East Farndon & Market Harborough

East Farndon Parish Council (EFPC) and all parish residents are completely against the development named above. We are writing to formally object to this proposal in the strongest possible manner.

There are many reasons for this objection, but the major ones are set out below,

Community - if this development goes ahead, the rural village environment of East Farndon would be destroyed and effectively engulfed by the town of Market Harborough. Historically, residents have strongly expressed a desire to remain a separate settlement, voting against joining Harborough Urban District in 1949, and again strongly expressing a view to remain separate in the village survey carried out in 2001. Our October 2021 residents survey and recent village meetings have yet again shown a unanimous decision to remain as a separate rural community.

Services - East Farndon has only rural village services and is a large distance from any major town in West Northamptonshire. As the land borders Market Harborough, Harborough District Council (HDC) would have to make a major investment in additional local services to support the proposed development site, including roads, schools, health centres, flood control infrastructure, etc.

Environment - a development of this scale, in effect a new town, will have massive impacts on transport, landscape and heritage, with hugely valuable green space and historic features lost for ever.

Traffic - already a major problem in the village, with many following the route of Main Street to link up with the A14 and onwards to the M1 and M6 via Great Oxendon or Clipston. The new development will make this problem unmanageable as East Farndon is a long, linear village and therefore traffic relief options are almost non-existent.

Amenity - the sites proposed span very attractive hillsides and open fields, this currently being an extremely popular walking area. The green space, open country air and rural views are invaluable for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of residents of Market Harborough, East Farndon and the surrounding area.

Climate Change - retaining the proposed sites as green space is vital in terms of contributing to the reduction of the impacts of climate change on West Northamptonshire. This is highlighted as a key strategy for WNC.

Flooding - East Farndon resident, Mike Lee, has a detailed knowledge of the geology and geography of the areas being proposed for development. He has warned that any further substantial building of properties, roads, and hard surfaces, within the southern area surrounding Market Harborough, will have a potentially catastrophic flooding impact within the town itself. The catchment area's covering of post glacial drift clays inhibits its drainage, and it must be recognised that the lower Jurassic strata have a finite capacity to absorb intense rainfall, beyond which direct run-off takes place. This is exacerbated by the loss of absorbent green space and increased rates of rainfall run-off due to the hilly nature of the sites, and the finite capacity of the Welland watercourse through Harborough to accommodate such volumes. This is potentially made far worse by the climatic changes already in process.

Heritage - the sites proposed for development impact areas of historic importance, including a substantial World War 2 air crash site and a wide expanse of ridge and furrow field landscape, which we consider to be a non-designated heritage asset. These sites will be damaged, and in all probability, lost for ever. The details of these can be studied further in the history section of the East Farndon Village website at eastfarndon.org.

Historical Importance - East Farndon appears in the Domesday Book of 1086, called Ferendone at that time. If this development goes ahead, as stated above, East Farndon would be engulfed by Market Harborough and effectively cease being a village. If WNC allow this development to proceed, it will be responsible for allowing this historic village to disappear.

EFPC has met formally with senior planning leaders from West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and the Brixworth Ward Councillors (of which East Farndon is part). On 27th October 2021, EFPC received a formal letter of clarification from Richard Wood, Interim Head of Planning and Climate Change Policy at WNC. An extract from this letter states,

“West Northamptonshire Council are not proposing the allocation of land to the south of Market Harborough as part of the development strategy for West Northamptonshire.

The only circumstance in which this position could change would be if Harborough District Council (HDC) were to approach us to request assistance in meeting the housing needs of their area.

In order to do this HDC, having considered all the reasonable options available, would have to demonstrate that they couldn't meet their needs within their boundary. Under provisions known as the 'duty to cooperate' we would be obliged to consider such a request but would not be obliged to accept.

HDC are in the early stages of updating their Local Plan and have not established whether there would be a need for land in this area to come forward to help meet their needs.

As such we have not received any request from HDC to consider the allocation of land to meet any of their needs in West Northamptonshire. However, given that the Strategic Plan covers a period up to 2050 it was considered appropriate to acknowledge the potential for such circumstance to arise in the future.”

This letter from WNC has helped to clarify the situation, but it does not go far enough to guarantee that the proposed housing development will **not** go ahead.

EFPC do not understand why WNC would allow the village of East Farndon to be consumed by the town of Market Harborough. The adoption of these development plans would spell the end for one of the attractive rural villages that Northamptonshire is supposedly proud of.

We are also very disappointed and concerned that WNC did not consult with us, or notify us in advance, that such a major development on the land south of Market Harborough would be considered in this strategic plan. We instead, had to rely on publication of general documents, that as good as buried the build proposal. Also, consultation event locations have not been held anywhere close to East Farndon. Unfortunately, this appears to local residents as a somewhat clumsy attempt by WNC to obscure its intentions, and circumvent the role of the Parish Council in significant strategic planning matters.

It is understood that the border between West Northamptonshire and Market Harborough has been moved in the past to accommodate more housing in the Harborough district. There is growing concern that this could happen again. It is obvious that HDC could only invest in the local services required to support such a development by receiving council tax from the newly built dwellings.

In addition to the above, EFPC has looked at the WNC and broader UK planning policies associated with rural development. We would point to the following policy extracts as even more evidence that this proposed development is ill-conceived and should be scrapped. EFPC holds the view that this proposed development is in contravention of multiple WNC planning policies.

Policy BN5 – The Historic Environment states: Designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings will be conserved and enhanced in recognition of their contribution to West Northamptonshire’s sense of place.

Policy S1 – The Distribution of Development states: New development in the rural areas will be limited with the emphasis being on maintaining the distinctive character and vitality of rural communities, and respecting the quality of tranquillity.

EFPC requests that WNC formally remove this option as an offer to HDC to potentially develop housing on the WNC land south of Market Harborough, with immediate effect.

EFPC will also write to HDC to formally request that they decline this offer from WNC to potentially develop housing on the WNC land south of Market Harborough, and to exclude it completely as an option in their upcoming HDC strategic plan.

EFPC and the residents of East Farndon Parish will continue to do everything in their power to prevent this housing development from going ahead.

We look forward to a prompt and positive response to our objection and request for action.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Burton
Clerk, East Farndon Parish Council

Mervyn Curtis
Chair, East Farndon Parish Council