

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of Staploe Parish Council Held in the Main Hall at Colmworth Village Hall at 7.45pm on Thursday 8th July 2021

Present: Cllr. J. Ibbett (Chair), Cllr. V. Zwetsloot, Cllr. D. Smith, Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. E. Meola, Cllr. J. Thomson, Lucy Crawford (Clerk), Borough Cllr. T. Wootton, and four members of the public.

Apologies for absence

Cllr. R. Squire

2021/075. Declarations of interest

Cllr. J. Ibbett declared an interest in Yew Tree Cottage's planning application appeal as she owns the neighbouring land and in the planning application at Lower Honeydon Farm as her husband does some contracting for the landowner.

Cllr. V. Zwetsloot declared an interest in the 2021/081. Definitive Map Modification Order Application as she is a member of the British Horse Society.

2021/076. Approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th June

Having been previously circulated the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. J. Thomson.

2021/077. Public Open Forum

- Presentation on Local Plan and Dennybrook from the Clerk

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!AtWwPVNA2SDt22dLm-wxcdS8KW5p?e=hZOuQJ>

- Representations and questions from members of the public

Five households submitted formal representations to the Parish Council in advance of the meeting and these are attached in Appendix A along with a summary of the comments submitted to our website.

Borough Cllr. T. Wootton opened the discussions by explaining that he would not get involved in the discussions on Dennybrook because his family have a small amount of land which (debatably) may be part of the land submitted for Dennybrook. However, he pointed out that the Mayor is directly elected and therefore the Borough Councillors have very little opportunity to vote or influence the outcome of the Local Plan process. He advised the Parish Council to seek the best professional advice they can afford for our response to the Borough Council and to be prepared to repeat the process again next year. He suggested that government inspectors may consider our objections even if the Borough Council do not.

Borough Cllr. T. Wootton is very much against the northern route for the East West rail. He suggested that making the process difficult may mean that government priorities may move elsewhere or make it more likely that they choose a cheaper, more southerly route. He

recommended that we watch the BFARe website for guidance. The northern route comes very close to his house and through his farm. Cllr. E. Meola pointed out that the Mayor says he didn't choose the route. Borough Cllr. T. Wootton explained that the Mayor made a manifesto promise for the rail line to go through Bedford and as the Mayor also chose the technical consultants to advise on the routes Mr Wootton felt there may have been some bias in favour of the Mayor's preferred route.

Cllr. J. Thomson asked why Thurleigh airfield had not been resubmitted. Borough Cllr. T. Wootton explained that he thought it was because they wanted to focus on industrial / business development rather than homes.

Borough Cllr. T. Wootton said he felt that there are other brownfield sites which can be developed such as Twinwoods and other parts of the Stewartby brickworks before greenfield sites are considered.

Tom said he had been told that Bedford Borough Council owns some land at Little Barford which may be a factor in the proposals there.

He did not feel that the Call for Sites was wise as it put the planning department under enormous pressure when it was already struggling to manage its workload.

A resident from Honeydon asked what lessons could be learned from Yarlswood. When she lived in Thurleigh the residents were told by Bedford Borough Council they could not challenge the development of the site but they later discovered that they could. Borough Cllr. T. Wootton said that opinions change with the officers involved so it is always worth challenging. He recommended that the Parish Council speak to Councillor Moon who is an expert at planning and a professional lawyer and he stands in for Borough Cllr. T. Wootton if there is any conflict of interest. He suggested we contact him and that we also seek professional advice.

A resident from Honeydon asked whether the housing minister would automatically have a say regarding a large new site such as Dennybrook. Borough Cllr. T. Wootton suggested that ministers normally follow the advice of their officers unless it is an extremely sensitive political matter.

Borough Cllr. T. Wootton assured those present that he is available to talk to residents and his mobile number is 07771 575 227. It is available on the parish website <https://staploe-pc.gov.uk/the-parish/>. He is also available on e-mail on Tom.Wootton@bedford.gov.uk and will reply personally to any e-mails which supply a residential address.

A resident asked how much money had been raised in the campaign to pay for planning advice. The Clerk said approximately £4.5K had been raised to date. There was some discussion regarding the necessity of finding an alternative planning consultant to Colmworth's (since they are keen to have independent advice) and regarding the possibility of working more closely with Wyboston. There was also some discussion that more funds are likely to be required when the plan is submitted to the planning inspectorate.

A resident from Honeydon asked whether the Parish Council would advise residents what best to say in their objection letters. The Clerk assured her that the Parish Council would be making their response public following advice from the consultant.

Cllr. V. Zwetsloot reported that she has been riding the tracks highlighted red in the definitive map modification order for 20 years and she supports the modification but has declared an interest so is unable to comment in the main meeting. The Clerk also stated that she has walked these sections for 20 years and has seen others do so.

The Open Forum closed at 9.34pm

2021/078. Ratify decisions made in previous online meetings

- **It was resolved to ratify the decisions made in the online meetings held between March 2020 and the end of June 2021.** These meetings were held online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Proposed by Cllr. G. Meola and seconded by Cllr. J. Thomson.

2021/079. Consider whether to continue to use zoom subscription

It was resolved to cancel the zoom pro subscription (£11.99 ex VAT per month) as Parish Council meetings are likely to be in person from now on. Shorter meetings of up to 40 minutes can be accommodated using the free version and we can sign back up again if needed. Proposed by Cllr. J. Thomson and seconded by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot.

2021/080. Consider how to respond to the following planning applications:

Application number	Type	Description	Location	Deadline	Link
21/01321/S73A	Retrospective planning permission	Erection of storage shed to front (development already carried out)	14, Duloe Lane, Duloe PE19 5HP	19/07/2021	21/01321/S73A

It was resolved not to object to this application. Proposed by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola.

Application number	Type	Description	Location	Deadline	Link
19/00308/S73A	Retrospective planning permission appeal	Erection of a new single storey recreational and storage building	Yew Tree Cottage, Honeydon, Bedford MK44 2LP	14/07/2021	Yew Tree

It was resolved to object as this is a large building, the Parish Council received several objections to the building in the past and there is a perceived risk that it could be used for residential purposes. Proposed by Cllr. E. Meola and seconded by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot.

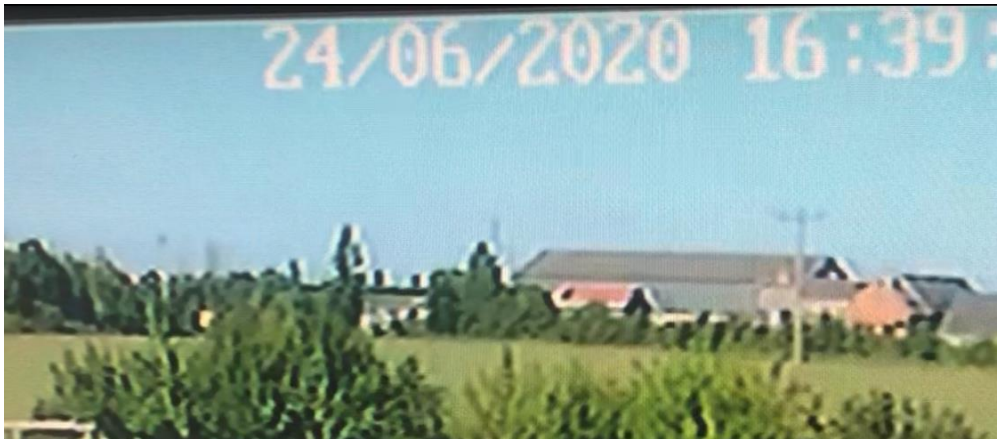
Application number	Type	Description	Location	Deadline	Link
21/01513/FUL	Full Planning Application	Change of Use Of An Agricultural Storage Barn to a Fencing Contractors Store (Use Class B8), and the Erection of Lean-to Canopy and External Racking	Lower Honeydon Farm Honeydon Bedford Bedfordshire MK44 2LR	25th June 2021 extended to 8 th July	21/01513/FUL

The Parish Council had received three objections from residents regarding the proposed change of use and **it was resolved to object for the following reasons:**

- **Traffic.** This will generate extra traffic and in particular extra HGV traffic on Lower Honeydon Road between the Junction with Bushmead Road and Lower Honeydon Farm and probably also on the road through Honeydon. This road is designated as unsuitable for HGV's. Fencing contractors often deliver on very large articulated lorries. Lower Honeydon Lane is very narrow and the edges are breaking up and the road is being undermined by the stream in places with the existing traffic. The height of the lorries may also damage the trees along the verges. There is also some concern that HGV's associated with the site may go west through the village and there is no way to stop this once permission has been granted. In the past a contractor was based at Lower Goodwick Farm in Begwary and there were frequent problems of dangerous driving and speeding on the unsuitable narrow roads in the hamlets despite the owner agreeing to ensure that drivers used other routes. Residents have reported many near misses with current utilities vans based at the farm and have similarly reported that existing businesses operating at the site come through the village even when not supposed to due to the Unsuitable for HGV signs.
- **Verges.** The verges at the farm entrance are unsuitable for HGV's and are often in a poor state where lorries turn in and out of the farm entrance. A resident reported being stuck on the road outside the farm earlier this year when a large lorry pulling in got stuck and blocked the road. They had to choose an alternative route.
- **Unsuitable application.** The Parish Council do not believe that this is a change of use application. Residents tell us that this building was erected in summer 2020 and there were lots of aggregate lorries coming through the village for the building's foundations. Once erected, the floor was powerfloated for several days as the hum could be heard throughout village. This is usually done to get a super flat floor which suggests it was purpose built as a

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distribution warehouse. The photo below shows that the building did not exist in June 2020 so we don't believe it is a change of use for an existing building.



- Flooding. Residents have suggested that a large pond has been filled in which could have implications for runoff and flooding given that Honeydon Brook floods.

Proposed by Cllr. E. Meola and seconded by Cllr. V. Zwetsloot.

2021/081. Definitive Map Modification Order Application

Consider whether the Parish Council have any evidence to support or oppose the application from the British Horse Society (BHS) to modify two bridleways in Staploe. See lines in red below which the BHS have proposed should become bridleways.



Richard Squire (the landowner) has written in support of this application. The Clerk has received two messages in support of the modification; one from a rider who has been riding these tracks for 30 years and has seen the highlighted tracks used by walkers and riders over that period and one from a walker who has also walked these sections of the tracks and seen others do so for 30 years or more.

(See also the messages from Cllr. V. Zwetsloot and the Clerk given in the Open Forum).

It was resolved to support the modification order. Councillors voted unanimously in favour.

2021/082. Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040

- **It was resolved to seek quotes from other planning consultants** in addition to Troy Planning who are advising Colmworth. The Clerk has asked two others in the Bedford area. She is waiting for a quote from one and the other has said they can't help as they would be conflicted (they are advising a landowner who has submitted land). Cllr. J. Thomson offered to help with this.
- **It was resolved to see whether we can work more closely with Wyboston Parish Council regarding fund raising.** Cllr. J. Ibbett will pursue this.
- **It was resolved that Cllr. G. Meola would ask Bedford Borough Council what their policies are regarding developing a large new settlement.** I.e. What are the steps in the process and when would the infrastructure and services be developed?
- **It was resolved to gather traffic data for Honeydon from the mobile speed device as a benchmark.** The Clerk will ask Mark Crawford
- **Cllr. J. Thomson to find out about emergency services response times in our area**

- Cllr. J. Thomson presented a list of the general headings under which objections might be considered which can be summarised as follows (these are just headings for discussion – further detail will be added as we compile our final response):
 - Historical buildings (Honeydon Chapel, Chestnuts, Dairy Farm Cottage, Colmworth Church etc)
 - Local environment (rural community, countryside views, beauty of the landscape)
 - Wildlife and biodiversity (protected species such as Bath Aspargus, Small Eggar Moths and other wildlife and biodiversity – badgers, bee orchids etc).
 - Pollution (air, water, soil and light)
 - Personal – mental health, privacy, peace and quiet, rural lifestyle for children, ability to keep livestock / pets – reason for moving / living here
 - Loss of identity – according to the vision document the hamlets of Honeydon and Begwary will be engulfed by the development
 - Utilities (no mains sewer or gas, long way from a telephone exchange, the mains water pipe in Bushmead Road leaks frequently)
 - Wider environment. Impact on climate change of extra houses.
 - Flooding – Honeydon and St Neots. Watercourses and land are upstream of St Neots
 - Public Transport – no seats on trains to London from St Neots and no parking available. Many residents will want to go to London not east – west. No buses.
 - Highways – single track roads, unsuitable for HGV's
 - St. Neots. Pressure on services (eg. doctors, dentists) and traffic pinch points in St Neots (eg. town bridge).
 - Emergency services – eg. we are long way from Bedford for Bedford police.
 - Housing need. Whose housing needs would Dennybrook be serving? Bedford, Luton, Cambridge, London?
 - Jobs. Are there sufficient jobs in the area to support the new residents?

Proposed Mitigation. We have been advised that even if our main aim is to campaign against the development we should propose mitigations now in the event that it does go ahead.

- Existing Honeydon and Begwary residents to be connected to mains sewer
- Consider renewable energy sources i.e bore holes or solar panels on all new properties reducing the carbon footprint and make these available to the existing residents
- Plant trees to offset environmental impacts and improve air quality
- Protection of privacy for existing residents

- Buffering around Honeydon village i.e planting / screening. Eg. use country parks / biodiversity areas to buffer the existing communities in Honeydon, Wyboston, Begwary and Colmworth. (Currently Honeydon is engulfed by housing in the vision document).
- Flood management to protect Honeydon and St Neots
- Parking. Provide sufficient parking for 2.5 cars per household and electric plug in points in the new development
- Provision of safe off road cycle, footpath and bridle paths. These should be accessible to existing residents of the parish and should lead to St Neots town and both rail stations.
- Public transport. Improve bus service and provide access for existing residents of the parish. Ensure timetables coordinate with train services at St Neots and Tempsford stations – and start early enough for commuters.
- Improve local roads eg. Manor Farm Lane collapsing into the brook, Lower Honeydon Lane edges need improving and strengthening but desire to retain the rural single track lanes and deter additional traffic.
- Types of homes eg. bungalows to be incorporated
- Considerate construction. Eg. working hours and days (ie not at weekends)
- Highways - establish access routes in and out the development that don't have an impact on local communities before building starts
- Other amenities and services eg. nurseries, pub, library, doctors, dentists, shops, recreation and sports facilities
- Emergency services hub
- Other objections suggested:
 - L. Crawford – the Issues and Options paper was flawed as it suggested our parish was an urban area. The results may have preferred urban growth but development in Dennybrook is not urban or edge of urban – it is greenfield, rural land. Therefore it does not meet Bedford Borough Council's selection criteria.
 - L. Crawford – Dennybrook would be on high grade agricultural land which is against government policy
 - G. Meola – it is misleading to consult us on 2.5K new homes at Wyboston in the Draft Local Plan consultation when the intention is ultimately to build 10,800 new homes. There is no mention of the latter in the consultation.
- Consider what next steps are required regarding fund raising for planning advice and whether other resources are needed. Consider whether the Parish Council should make a contribution and what the source of funds should be. **It was resolved to defer these items until the meeting on 15th July as 2000 leaflets are being delivered shortly and further funds may be donated.** Proposed by Cllr. D. Smith and seconded by Cllr. J. Ibbett.

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- Consider use of RADIUS funds (Residents Against Development In Upper Staploe) towards planning advice (£706.41 available). This money was raised to be used for planning advice to challenge the unauthorised traveller site in Upper Staploe in 2007. The site has since been largely returned to its former state. **It was resolved to use this money towards the Dennybrook campaign.** Unanimous.

The meeting closed at 10.15pm

Appendix A

Please note that there is a private Whatsapp group with 37 members and a Facebook group with 500+ members called "We chose rural life" who have all expressed their opposition to this development but many of whom have not written directly to the Parish Council about it. However, as these are private groups we cannot publish the contents here.

From the parish website:

CG

"If the Dennybrook plan goes ahead this will put an excessive traffic load on Bushmead Road which is already overloaded with heavy vehicles using this road from lorry parks in the area. Part of Bushmead Road is restricted to 20 mph but traffic rarely keeps to the speed limit. Normal traffic flows are very heavy at the best of times and the larger vehicles often find it difficult to negotiate the mini roundabout with the Great North Road often incurring bollard damage."

SR

"St Neots have not benefited from all the houses built in the area. The funds have been siphoned off to Huntingdon. We have problems with the traffic due to the bridges and the infrastructure is at capacity."

Why do we need more houses. The houses are needed nearer jobs at the Science Park?"

DT

*"Hello,
I have cycled this area frequently,
It helped me to get over a broken leg.
It's a beautiful area which needs preserving for future generations of people to enjoy.
Would it be worth getting in touch with countryfile, they are very keen on promoting the countryside.
Creating a town on this scale is ridiculous, it's an easy target because of the small population in this area.
I live on Bushmead rd, eaton socon, the cars are bad enough now what will the future hold."*

E-mails received:

Kate Abrahams

"Dear Parish Council members

Re: Dennybrook Garden Village Proposal

I am writing to strongly object to this proposal, for the following reasons:

This is a green-field site with an abundance of wildlife and there are plenty of brownfield sites which could be developed in the LP40 without destroying good arable land and the wildlife habitat in our parish.

The road infrastructure is totally inadequate. The site could add 20,000 vehicles to roads which are largely unclassified and many of which are single-track. The only road capable of handling traffic volume leads into a residential area and is already dangerous for horse-riders and cyclists.

The submission shows that the developers expect construction traffic on the site for over 25 years. In addition to possible railway construction chaos, this would be an unacceptable burden on small village communities.

There is poor road access between Denybrook and Bedford. St Neots would be a more attractive proposition for residents to shop and work in and this would further advance Bedford's economic decline."

Maggie and Keith Turner

"Dear Sirs

We wish to object to the proposed Dennybrook Village.

The Dennybrook Vision Document Is far from being visionary. This document is a rural nightmare which proposes creating Urban sprawl from beautiful North Bedfordshire landscape. Combined with the proposed Wyboston Garden Village this would not be a village but create a new town in Rural North Bedfordshire.

Honeydon is a small Hamlet on the Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire border. It comprises approximately 25 houses over half of which have been purchased by their current owners in the past 10 years. These are people who have chosen to live a rural life surrounded by farmland and nature. They are not people who choose to live in suburbia.

Honeydon floods regularly and this will be impacted by building houses and roads. Surface water will be unable to drain and will add to that which already finds its way into the brook and onto the road. This will increase the flood risk both in Honeydon (and further downstream in St Neots) and have impact on the state of our road. Our land, 6 acres of prime pasture, will be subject to flooding caused by development on arable fields adjacent to my boundary whose topography is at a higher level than mine

The roads in this area are narrow and in several places single track. They are not suitable for the increased volume of traffic caused by building this development. Neighbouring villages

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will also be impacted by the increased volume of traffic. Traffic making its way to the A1, Bedford or Cambridge will have to go either through St Neots or Chawston. Traffic travelling west will have to go through Bushmead and Thurleigh. These roads are already busy as the poor state of the roads in these villages shows.

There is no provision within the vision document for doctors, dentist, opticians, schools or shops so these facilities nearby will be overwhelmed.

We already know the strains that Hinchinbrooke hospital is under and as the

2 main doctors surgeries for this area are over the border in Cambridgeshire this is the hospital which will be impacted most.

There is no mains sewerage supply to Honeydon but again in the vision document there is no reference to a sewage treatment plant that would be needed to serve the development.

This project will have a detrimental effect on this area of North Bedfordshire. We will see increased pollution from light, noise and traffic.

Wildlife will suffer. The area is home to Barn owls, tawny owls and little owls. Skylarks grace our skies along with woodpeckers, Red Kites & buzzards.

Kingfishers are seen on the reeds in the brook and our garden has had visits from wading birds: avocets and curlews. The hedgerows and fields are home to badgers, foxes, deer and hedgehogs and the grass verges are designated nature reserves where we see Bath Asparagus growing wild - one of the few places in the country this plant grows.

We understand that there is a need for housing and that as a county we have an obligation to meet. However, there are places much better served to fulfil this obligation than a greenfield site that does not have immediate trunk road links, that does not have easy access to amenities and which is a haven for wildlife.

In addition to my objections I wish to raise the point that some of the land offered up for this development is owned by the family of the County Councillor representing this ward, Tom Wootton.

As there is so obviously a conflict of interest here, can we please ask how this ward will be represented in council with concern for this development?

Yours sincerely

Margaret & Keith Turner"

Ian Francis

"As residents of Honeydon, my family and I enjoy the country outlook that surrounds our property. We moved here from Eynesbury/St Neots in 2008 for this very reason whilst remaining in the vicinity of the pleasant market town, never once having considered Bedford being our 'home town' despite moving just across the county line into Bedfordshire.

We have, and continue, to raise our children in a way that appreciates the countryside around them. We embrace the countryside we live in as far as is possible whilst working full time. We enjoy watching the farming season, the local shoots, and having an array of wildlife on our doorstep. Of an evening we can stand in our garden watching the sun set over the fields, the resident barn owl hunting, numerous bats darting around, whilst listening the birds singing, cows mooing, sheep and goats bleating and an occasional walker, cyclist or horse rider passing by.

In our garden alone, over the years our children have been able to observe deer, badgers, foxes, rabbits, hares, hedgehogs, toads, frogs, grass snakes, moles, newts, various birds of prey, endless birdlife and more besides. We love walking locally and teaching our children about nature and agriculture. This has been the case for the last 13 years, but never more so than during the COVID pandemic. During these difficult times, it has also been very evident how much the people of St Neots embraced having easy access to open countryside. The number of walkers and Cyclist through Honeydon and seen on surrounding local lanes and footpaths increased dramatically, and I believe remains higher than ever.

Beyond our own lifestyle, I have massive concerns for the wider area, the environment, and the legacy our children and future generations will be left with. St Neots will no longer be a rural market town. I fully recognise the needs for growth and development. I recognise the benefits of new/improved transport infrastructure such as EWR and A421 upgrades. I recognise the need for additional housing. However in ALL cases the environment MUST be front and centre.

So, to the immediate matter in hand of Dennybrook, something my wife, our children and I oppose wholeheartedly.

Clarity, and public communication

I believe I represent a good portion of the population when I say I have very little experience of councils, local plans, and consultations. As such, I have had to invest MANY hours trawling the internet and reading plans, policies, proposals and so on, to the point that I'm overwhelmed, and struggle to identify the facts. How can the general public have an understanding and therefore an informed opinion without a single, clear source for unbiased information?

Just today 7/7/21, Lucy our PC clerk has sent me 2 links to site maps showing the call for sites results. Dennybrook proposal document does not show county or borough boundaries, and many documents fail to clearly show StNeots and proposed bordering developments... take p19 of this document as an example.

EWR & ox cam arc.

It is clear that the northern route has been favoured by BBC in light of the large scale housing development opportunities that it enables. The economics and environmental impact of the northern route without them do not make sense, however after EWR reviewed costings things changed, was this to favour the development?

Option for parkway stations for Thurleigh/Twinwoods, and Dennybrook/Tempsford means the focus is on the 20000-40000 homes these sites could offer not on the environment, or existing settlements.

BBC New settlement site selection

Brownfield first. Environment first.

Thurleigh Airfield (96% brownfield) was previously submitted, has this been reconsidered? The scale, existing industry/employment, proximity to existing settlements, opportunity for parkway station on EWR north of Bedford all positive points.

The mayor indicated that Twinwoods site has been de-favoured due to poor road access.

- o Milton Ernest and Bletsoe bypass was shown in the proposal document*
- o Alternative transport should be front and centre of any new development, therefore EWR, cycleways, and bus routes far more the focus than roads to support tens of thousands of additional cars.*
- o A6 in general has the potential to be upgraded particularly with Bedford western bypass now in place – surely a favourable option to and entirely greenfield site.*

What will become of the above sites if not selected? Unless they are to be permanently dismissed, they will surely be considered in the future. That being the case why not stick to national and local government policies of brownfield first?

A transport and highway assessment document referencing Dennybrook indicated the need for A6-A1 link road improvements across Colmworth, Bolnhurst etc. If such things are required, then A6 upgrades for settlements adjacent to the A6 are surely equally worthy of consideration.

Dennybrook vision document

- How has the site increase in scale so vastly between original proposal and becoming part of the preferred option list?*
- Absence of detail in terms of infrastructure*
- Borough and county boundary proximity high likely to cause infrastructure issues have had previous had problems with school places for example. What are the plans for cross boundary collaboration?*
- St Neots Town Council are opposed to the scheme. How will their concerns be mitigated?*

- *Honeydon doesn't exist in the form of an existing settlement – various documents/policies I have read enforce the importance of not only protecting the countryside, but the existence and character of existing settlements.*

Mitigation

- *There has been talk of mitigating the situation should the site be selected regardless. I believe it is too soon to discuss this.*
- *If we were to offer a mitigation of say 1000 house new settlement in a particular area of proposed Dennybrook, what preventative measures are there to prevent subsequent growth essentially allowing growth to the originally proposed size? ie is 'mitigation' simply a delay tactic to pacify those wholly opposed?*
- *If we get to the stage of mitigation too soon without considerably more details, I'm afraid it may become a free for all of 'not in my back garden' opinions. This will destroy the unity of parishes and indeed neighbours - both required to fight both Dennybrook and the wider development issue (Little Barford, Tempsford etc)*
- *Would homeowners be compensated for the destruction of their environment, with even the proposal of future development already having an impact on physical and mental health, and likely house prices too. How and when if so?"*

Paul Giles

"I am aware that it affects a lot of residents in the area and am against the development which is not in keeping with the rural nature of the hamlets which will be lost.

The effect on us at the Two Brewers, which is one of the two primary access routes, will be devastating, the junction is busy dangerous and noisy at present add to that vehicle's from a town of 10700 houses I doubt we would be able to access our property let alone have peaceful enjoyment of it.

How will denneybrook mitigate the traffic on local residents who wish to live a rural lifestyle , will there be dedicated roads into and out of the new town direct to the existing main roads which are being used to justify the building of this new town!

The honeydon Brook is also adjacent to our property which will take much of the water from the development, this Brook overflowed and flooded the garden early this year, as did some of of St Neots, how is this flooding going to be stopped once all the additional run off is added to the Brook?

Rural housing is as important as urban housing and considering planning regulations the likely addition of rural houses or hamlets is extremely unlikely therefore losing any to urban expansion is a loss to all those who wish to live a rural lifestyle.

Living with dread, fear and the sense of loss,

Paul Giles."

Tom and Gill Tagg

"I have yet to read BBC's documents for the new consultation, but my and Gill's views have not changed since the consultation in August last year. Then, I responded to BBC's consultation questions and also put those answers into a letter....

A copy of the letter is attached. Very many of the points remain valid and I send this for the Parish Councillors to read and consider in formulating their opinions and responses...

For the avoidance of doubt we are totally opposed to the creation of the Dennybrook Town that will destroy green countryside forever when the council have brownfield options sitting idle. With population growth and climate change we cannot afford to lose farmland that will provide food for the nation."

The letter reads as follows:

Bedford Borough Council Local Plan Review

I am writing to you on behalf of myself, my wife and daughter to seek your support in rectifying the many issues in Bedford Borough Council's (BBC) Local Plan Review and the removal of the proposal to build an urban development west of St. Neots.

I am a resident of Staploe and have lived in the village for the last 28 years. We moved to the village for its peaceful and tranquil rural setting in the open countryside of North East Bedfordshire and we still treasure these benefits.

Over the years we have twice fought off the threat of the A1 being upgraded and moved into our parish, but we are now faced with an even bigger threat. As part of the recently published BBC Local Plan Review one of the proposals (Brown) includes an urban development west of St. Neots. Based on BBC's calculations of housing need of up to 15,000 additional new homes by 2040 and assuming this is split equally between the three areas identified in the Brown proposal (urban development around Bedford, and urban extensions to Rushden and St. Neots), we are faced with an urban development of up to 5,000 homes in our parish. This would be larger than the combined St. Neots Loves Farm and Wintringham developments! You know how small the villages are in our parish, so you will understand that this proposal would destroy the parish.

I would like to highlight to you the following:

1. *The issues that we have with the BBC Local Plan Review.*
2. *The reasons why the "Brown" urban development in our parish should not go ahead.*
3. *Other appropriate areas for development.*

1. Issues with the BBC Local Plan Review.

I first object to the process that Bedford Borough Council (BBC) are using for this consultation:

- *The NPPF describes the Local Plan as being drawn up in consultation with the community. Due to COVID-19, BBC admit that they cannot hold ordinary drop in sessions around the borough, so the vast majority of the information is provided online. This discriminates against those who are unable to access or use online information and the consultation is therefore unfair and undemocratic.*
- *In the specific case of my parish, broadband is not even available to many residents, so they are unable to take part in the process. This is made worse by the Staploe Parish Council also operating entirely on line, including online consultation meetings.*
- *Parishioners are therefore excluded from the BBC and Parish consultation process.*
- *The process should be postponed until BBC can hold the appropriate drop in sessions and our Parish Council can hold proper consultation meetings. The January 2023 deadline for submission of the new Local Plan should be extended by the period of postponement.*

Secondly I object to the basis of the scope of the Local Plan review for the following reasons:

1. **Oxford Cambridge Arc.** *BBC Local Plan 2030 was adopted in January 2020 after independent examination. In approving the plan the examiners have stipulated that the next plan be accelerated from 5 to 3 years (submission by January 2023) for two reasons, including: To respond to long term growth requirements in relation to the Oxford Cambridge Arc, as Local Plan 2030 had been unable to do this due to the uncertainty about Arc-related development and infrastructure needs after 2030.*

The government has set out its ambitions for the Oxford Cambridge Arc, but the 2019 planned broad, joint public engagement exercise has not yet taken place. In addition the government have yet to clarify the route for the Oxford Cambridge Arc, the need for an expressway, East West Rail station locations and a spatial strategy for the Arc.

It is therefore clear that there is no further information on the Arc since the approval of Local Plan 2030, so it is not possible for BBC to meaningfully advance this Local Plan review and be held to the submission date of January 2023.

2. **East West Rail.** *While the corridor for the route has been announced, further consultation to determine the best alignment is due to take place in 2021, so where stations will be located is undecided. This is essential information for planning housing development.*
3. **Housing Need.**

A new Local Plan needs to be based on up-to-date, competent and reliable data. The Draft Housing Strategy 2021-26 shows that the following are not in place:

- *A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) was produced in 2016 and updated in 2018. The Council will need to update the SHMA to provide data on housing needs such that it can reliably inform future housing strategies, policies and for the Local Plan review.*

- *A new Local Housing Need Assessment (LHNA) will be required to provide the housing needs evidence base for the new Local Plan.*
- *BBC are using demographic information in its Housing Strategy based upon the census data collected in 2011. A new census will be undertaken in 2021 and it will be necessary to consider the updated information it provides and establish whether and how changes in demographics impact upon housing objectives and strategies as they are renewed and updated. BBC estimate that they will not consider these results until 2022/23!*

4. **Annual housing requirements.**

Explanation is provided for the range of annual housing requirements (800-1305 dwellings/year) used in the consultation. It makes no sense to use the out of date 2014 based population predictions that inflate the need to 1305 houses/year. The 2018 based population predictions should be used (800 houses/year). In addition, the government intends to review the standard methodology this year, so the process should be postponed until it is clear what housing need has to be planned for.

5. **Development Corporations.** *The Government has announced its intention to examine and develop the case for up to four new Development Corporations in the Arc to accelerate new housing and infrastructure development. One of these is for a new Development Corporation covering the Borough. What is known about these Development Corporations? Who will be their members, how will they be funded and what powers will they have? Will they be required to follow planning policy/rules and comply with the Local Plan, or will they have more extensive powers?*

6. **Summary.**

With outdated demographic and housing need information, lack of clarity on how to calculate housing need, unknown locations for the East West Rail stations and lack of government strategy and consultation on the Oxford Cambridge Arc, there are too many unknowns at this time for a meaningful review of the Local Plan. Rather than rush this through based on unreliable information to meet a deadline set by the examiners of Local Plan 2030, the Review and consultation should be postponed and an extension to the January 2023 submission date be sought, until reliable information and proper consultation can be held.

2. **Reasons why the “Brown” urban development in our parish should not go ahead.**

Development should be located close to good infrastructure, facilities, services and employment. This will encourage sustainable transport and healthy living.

The “Brown” proposal has been made in three distinct areas: 1. Bedford; 2. Adjacent to Rushden; 3. Adjacent to St Neots:

1. **Bedford.**

It makes sense as highlighted in the BBC “Pros-advantages”, to continue development around Bedford and Kempston to maximise the use of existing services, facilities,

employment and sustainable transport. It will also support the maintenance and development of the Town Centre as people will naturally gravitate there. Use of brownfield land is a positive proposal, that avoids destruction of green spaces and countryside.

2. Adjacent to Rushden.

I am unable to comment on this as I do not know the local area, other than it is so far from Bedford that people will naturally gravitate to Rushden and use their facilities and services. It is surprising that BBC do not know if Rushden would support this proposal!

3. Adjacent to St. Neots.

*This shows an area of urban development located to the west of St Neots. The area shown on the map appears to cover our parish of Staploe, Duloe and Honeydon. The area is open countryside with fertile arable farming, interspersed with small rural hamlets. It is **not** brownfield or under-utilised land as stated by BBC!*

I totally object in the strongest terms to this element of this proposal, for the following reasons;

- a. **Local Plan 2030, Policy 3S – Spatial Strategy.** *This strategic policy sets out the hierarchy for development, namely: Bedford; Wixams and Stewartby; key service centres; rural service centres. Any development in the countryside should be for local needs only and such development should “safeguard the intrinsic character of the countryside and the environment and biodiversity within it”. In Local Plan 2030, the parish of Staploe is not classed as a key service centre, nor a rural service centre, nor a Small Settlement. It does not have a Settlement Policy Area. **Staploe is therefore classed as Countryside.***

Policy 7S – Development in the countryside allows development only for rural needs and states that:

“All development in the countryside must: xi. Recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and xii. Not give rise to other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others;”

The proposal for a major urban development in this parish is in direct contravention of the Council’s own strategic policies 3S and 7S.

- b. *There is **no infrastructure, no services and no facilities** in the parish to support **any** new development. Reliance would have to be put on existing facilities in St. Neots, which are wholly insufficient to cater for the increased demand. Alternatively a new development would have to include completely new infrastructure, services and facilities.*
- i. **Roads.** *The roads are narrow, minor and rural. They are unsuitable even for the current low level of heavy goods vehicles (mostly farming related) and are dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians. They receive little, if any, investment for maintenance and upgrade to modern standards. There are no roads suitable for any developments in the area.*
- ii. **Public Transport.**

There is no public transport in the area, other than one bus each Thursday allowing a 2 hour visit to St. Neots on market day.

*iii. **Schools.** There are no schools in the area. Children are transported by bus or private transport to other Bedfordshire villages and towns, e.g. secondary schools at Mark Rutherford, Sandy and Sharnbrook, so children experience up to a 45 minute journey to school, twice a day. There is insufficient capacity in the existing*

Bedfordshire schools at all levels to support even limited development in the area. iv. Some children use schools in St. Neots. Given the significant developments already taking place in St. Neots, even where additional schools are being, and are planned to be, built, there will be no capacity for any additional children from any development in Bedfordshire.

*v. **Medical facilities.** There are no doctors surgeries or pharmacies in the area. The nearest in Eaton Socon is already totally overwhelmed with a 3 week wait for appointments, so many people travel to use acceptable facilities further afield (e.g. Great Staughton, Kimbolton).*

*vi. **Post Offices.** There are no post offices in the area. The nearest is in Eaton Socon.*

*vii. **Shops, pubs and other facilities.** There are no shops, pubs and other facilities in the area. The nearest are in Eaton Socon/St. Neots.*

*c. I have reviewed the BBC “Pros – advantages” and “Cons – disadvantages” for this proposal in relation to an urban development west of St. Neots and conclude that there are **NO advantages** with at least **18 major disadvantages**, as follows:*

Bedford Borough Council stated “Pros – advantages”:

- *The area is situated 13 miles from Bedford and will receive no support from services, facilities and businesses in Bedford town centre. **No advantage.** ○ This is not an urban area – it is totally rural and has no infrastructure to support development. Residents almost exclusively use private transport. There is therefore no potential for residents to make sustainable travel choices (walking, cycling and public transport). **No advantage.***
- *As there is effectively no public transport in the area, any development would require a significant investment for public transport to become viable. **No advantage.***
- ***The land in the area is not brownfield, nor is it underused.** It is fertile farming land that supports a broad environmental diversity including some of the rarest species in the UK. **No advantage.** ○ Growth in this area would require major investment in infrastructure and services.*

*far in excess of making use of, or expanding those in, or adjacent to, existing urban areas. **No advantage.***

- *There are very limited employment uses in the area and there would have to be significant investment in infrastructure, direct business creation and associated retail and leisure to create viable opportunities. **No advantage.***

Bedford Borough Council stated “Cons – disadvantages”:

- *Growth in the area would be adjacent to St. Neots and beside the A1. Any development in Bedfordshire close to the A1 would be blighted by the significant noise and air pollution that the traffic on the road causes, especially if capacity increases in the future. Fertile farming land would be lost and growth would impinge on existing villages. **Disadvantage.***
- *Very high density schemes would be totally out of character and would negatively affect local distinctiveness. They would create noise and air pollution in an area of peace and clean environment. **Disadvantage.***
- *Growth would totally overstretch existing services and facilities in adjacent St.*

*Neots and the existing local infrastructure would be totally overwhelmed. **Disadvantage.***

- *It is not known if St. Neots would support expansion in Bedford Borough adjacent to St. Neots. However given the following issues:*
 - *With the total lack of existing Bedfordshire infrastructure, services and facilities, reliance would have to be placed on St. Neots for these.*
 - *There are already serious bottlenecks to get into St Neots which would be significantly worsened by this proposed development.*
 - *Traffic into St. Neots would have to go through existing residential areas, creating congestion, pollution and traffic dangers within the town.*
 - *While Bedford would receive Infrastructure grants, Community Infrastructure Levy funds, s.106 payments, council tax income, Huntingdonshire would have to provide the amenities even though it is subject to its own pressures to produce more housing within its own area.*

*Given these issues, it is unlikely that St. Neots would support this proposal. In fact it is absolutely incredible that such a proposal is even be made without Bedford Borough Council apparently having the knowledge of St. Neots’ view on this! **Disadvantage.** o As noted under “Pros-advantages” above, there are no advantages to this proposal, so this rural location would not miss out on any perceived benefits associated with growth.*

- *There are no details provided in terms of site sizes, so it is not possible to comment on whether restricted site sizes can restrict scheme options and opportunities to mitigate risk for investors.*
- *Any development in this area will cause poor quality air issues. **Disadvantage.***

I have identified further local “Cons – disadvantages”:

- *A high pressure gas pipeline runs through the area that will sterilise a broad swath of land and limit development potential. **Disadvantage.***
- *The parish is crisscrossed by multiple lines of pylons carrying High Voltage power cables. The health issues of living close to these powerlines is well known, so large swathes of land will be sterilised and limit development potential. **Disadvantage.** o *Without significant investment in infrastructure, development in this area will encourage car use and create high levels of pollution. **Disadvantage.****
- *Development would require improved connections into existing urban areas in order to access facilities. These could be significant in having to cross the two physical barriers into St Neots – the A1 and the River Great Ouse. **Disadvantage.***
- *Development would lead to an adverse impact on local landscapes, loss of agricultural land and countryside. **Disadvantage.***
- *Strategic-scale growth would have a huge visual impact on local landscapes, ruining its intrinsic character, valued walks, byways and tranquil retreats. Many people from the parish and St. Neots use this area for healthy pursuits such as walking and cycling. **Disadvantage.***
- *It would take a long time to plan and build a new settlement in this area, leading to short to medium-term housing supply shortages. **Disadvantage.***
- *Significant new infrastructure, facilities and services would be required to accommodate growth. This would include roads, schools, medical facilities, and shops. **Disadvantage.** o *Development would lead to a loss of green environment and biodiversity. As examples, the area currently supports the following:*
 - *The extremely rare Bath Asparagus, found only in two locations in the UK - this parish and Bath.*
 - *Water voles, one of the 10 rarest mammals in the UK.*
 - *A large population of sky larks.*
 - *Barn owls and Little owls*
 - *Kingfishers*
 - *Large populations of buzzards and red tailed kites.*
 - *Roosting bats & Great crested newts.**

Development in this area would destroy many of the habitats enjoyed by these species.

Disadvantage.

- *Due to the prevailing South Westerly winds and open countryside, the area enjoys clean fresh air. Development would lead to pollution of this clean air. **Disadvantage.***

- *There are no opportunities for employment in the area. Residents of a new settlement would have to travel for employment, which without a major investment in public transport, would be by car, increasing car use. Should residents work in London or Cambridge, they would have to travel to either St Neots station or a new East-West rail station, wherever that may be situated. The station carpark at St Neots is already full at 9am and has no capacity for residents from a new development in Bedfordshire adjacent to St Neots. Travel to these stations would again be by car, again increasing car use and leading to bottlenecks in access to St Neots via the town river bridge. **Disadvantage.***
- ***Flood Risk.** There is a flood risk from Duloe Brook – particularly west of the A1 near the junction with the B645. **Disadvantage.***
- *There are 16 grade II listed buildings and 3 scheduled monuments in the parish and large scale development would damage the setting of these historic buildings which are valued by the local community and as a national historic asset. **Disadvantage.***

3. Other appropriate areas for development.

Development should be located close to good infrastructure, facilities, services and employment. This will encourage sustainable transport and healthy living.

None of the proposals are ideal but all contain some positive elements, which I expect can be combined to find a suitable solution. My view on each of the potential proposed locations, given the major unknowns listed section 1 above, is as follows:

Yellow:

This proposal has strong advantages in terms of

- *Existing and proposed road infrastructure improvements.*
- *Close to existing employment areas with good connections.*
- *Opportunity to extend Wixams with access to the new railway station.*
- *It would be relatively easy to improve connections into urban areas which would encourage sustainable transport.*

There would be opportunity to expand developments planned at Stewartby and to the south of Kempston.

- *The BMK Waterway Park closely follows this route. The BMK Waterway would provide bluegreen environmental benefits for developments in this area to compliment and add to the benefits of the Forest of Marston Vale. The Waterway would also bring business and tourism directly into the heart of Bedford Town Centre.*
- *The BMK Waterway would also provide a route (along the tow path) for pipework from the Rookery South Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) to feed district heating systems in*

developments along the route and into Wootton/Kempston. This would significantly improve the efficiency of the ERF and deliver cheap, green energy to housing developments.

*For the reasons stated under the Brown proposal I **would not support** incorporation of a western expansion to St. Neots as there are no advantages and many, many disadvantages.*

Pink:

This proposal has many of the advantages of the Yellow proposal as it largely follows a very similar route.

Until the location of the East West railway stations are decided it is unwise to plan for development. The proximity of St Neots station to the eastern developments in St. Neots (Loves Farm and Wintringham) has been a key enabler and success of those developments. This encourages walking and cycling and reduction in car use for those travelling to work by train. Development close to new East West rail stations could provide similar benefits.

If the new station is located near to Tempsford, then consideration of the land where Kier have just closed their Head Office at Tempsford should be made. The area could provide business and development opportunities.

Orange:

This proposal depends entirely on whether an additional East West Rail station will be built north of Bedford, and if so, it's location. If close to Bedford then it might combine well with the Brown proposal to expand around the Bedford area. Development close to the station would bring similar benefits to the successful eastern developments in St. Neots (Loves Farm and Wintringham) that are so close to St. Neots station. They encourage walking and cycling and reduction in car use for those travelling to work by train.

Grey:

While this proposal might appear to be the "fairest" in terms of distributing development proportionately across the Borough, it will limit opportunities for employment, sustainable travel and development of strategic infrastructure.

Red:

It is clear from this proposal that these opportunities have been considered previously and that the issues with previous proposals have yet to be resolved. I do not know what these were, but I expect that if these new settlements are located in the countryside then they will have many of the disadvantages that I have highlighted in the Brown proposal above for expansion west of St. Neots.

Without doubt there would be a destruction of the countryside in direct contravention of the Council's strategic policies 3S and 7S.

For information, we have all responded to the Council's online consultation – which is not an easy process, thereby discouraging consultation by those able to access and use the online process.

July 8th 2021 (Extra)

Clearly Bedford Borough Council has embarked on a consultation process for the Local Plan Review that is unfair and undemocratic and is founded on incorrect and insufficient information. Proceeding on this basis to the accelerated timetable set by the independent inspectors of Local Plan 2030 will be a complete waste of effort, time and Council and community resources. The review should be postponed and an extension sought to the submission date for the next Local Plan which will allow democratic consultation with the community and planning to be carried out using up to date and clear information.

We seek your support to achieve this.

In terms of our parish, we seek your support to avoid its total destruction by the Council's ill-founded and incorrect development proposals.

We look forward to your reply and the actions that you will be taking in support of this letter.