

Figure 2: Strategic Gaps

As you can clearly see in Figure 2 the proposed site falls in the strategic gap between Duloe and Eaton Socon. The reason for this policy is that the land to the west of the A1 is very different in character than the land to the east of the A1. The former is rural and sparsely populated agricultural land with small hamlets. The latter is urban and densely populated in Eaton Socon and St Neots. In our Neighbourhood Plan survey residents were very keen to maintain the rural character of their hamlets and not to coalesce with Eaton Socon.



The above photo of the strategic gap shows the difference in character between the green fields of Duloe in the foreground and the built up area of Eaton Socon and St Neots in the background clearly delineated with a sharp line of the A1. Hence the reason for the strategic gap.

This Neighbourhood Plan is up to date having only been made 6 weeks ago. It received 92% votes in favour and it should therefore carry very significant weight.

Our objections are as follows:

1. The site falls within one of the **strategic gaps** identified in Staploe Neighbourhood Plan. The development would contribute to the unacceptable physical and visual coalescence of the settlements and would undermine the separate character, appearance and identity of Duloe and Eaton Socon.
2. The site is on the outer fringe of Duloe and is **not well related to the built form** of Duloe or Eaton Socon. We would argue that the site is isolated in that it falls within the strategic gap which is currently undeveloped and therefore falls outside the hamlet.
3. There are **no services or facilities** within easy access of the site without a car (even with the provision of a footpath).

4. There is **no evidence of an identified community need** specific to Duloe and there is no community support for the proposal. There is no evidence of demand linked to this location. Bedford Borough's housing requirement for Staploe parish is zero and there was no demand for self build homes identified in the parish in the Neighbourhood Plan survey.
5. The proposed **footpath would not be lit** and the road is still subject to the **national speed limit** in places. Within the 30mph limit speed data reported in our May minutes showed that 37% of vehicles were breaking the speed limit and the top speed was 88mph. The road is narrow and cars frequently mount the verge to avoid oncoming traffic. We believe residents of the proposed development would be much more likely to use a private car to access services.
6. The proposed footpath leads to a bus stop which has very **infrequent services** between 9am and 4.18pm. Therefore residents would be much more likely to use a private car. Particularly in the dark or in poor weather.
7. The proposed footpath does not cover the **entire journey**. It stops at the A1. There is no pavement on the Eaton Socon side. The safety of the entire walking route should be assessed. It also does not extend into the hamlet of Duloe so it offers no benefit to existing residents of the hamlet.
8. We have concerns over whether a suitable tarmac footpath / pavement can be delivered without reducing the width of the carriageway.
9. The lack of a **5 year housing supply** should not outweigh the strategic gap policy in the neighbourhood plan. In a planning appeal at Brook Farm, Farnham (Waverley Borough Council) there was also a lack of a 5 year housing supply but the appeal was dismissed due to the harm to the strategic gap identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. I have attached the planning inspectors report.
10. The **planning appeals** cited by the applicant at Woodville, Wootton and Great Barford all relate to much larger developments in villages with services and facilities. They are, therefore, not comparable with Duloe which has no services or facilities.

Best wishes,

Lucy Crawford

Clerk to Staploe Parish Council