

Cookham Parish Council's Response to The Draft Local Borough Plan

As Agreed at the Planning Committee Meeting on 10th January 2017.

Designation of Poundfield as a Local Green Space

The Parish Council endorses the designation of Poundfield as shown on the Policies Map as a Local Green Space. Many Residents supported this designation by way of petition and the subsequent resolution of the Borough Councillors on 23rd February 2016.

Green Belt Policy

The Parish Council wishes to make the following statement and requests the highlighted changes to the draft Green Belt policy:

Development in the Green Belt

1. The Metropolitan Green Belt is defined on the Policies Map and the open and rural character of the Green Belt will generally be maintained and supported to safeguard the Borough from inappropriate development.
2. Boundaries of existing settlements washed over by the Green Belt, (as defined on the Policies Map) will be maintained in order to identify limits to any infilling. The Council will determine whether any local exceptional circumstances exist to warrant any changes to those boundaries

Cookham Parish Council recognises the need for some new housing within the Parish, although it has been unable to quantify that need. No specific evidence of housing need in Cookham has been presented in the draft Borough Local Plan or Supporting Documents. However, the Parish Council supports development on the brownfield site known as the 'Old Gasholder site', subject to the considerations set out below.

The Cookham Village Design Statement (VDS) was adopted as supplementary planning guidance in 2013. It was created following extensive local consultation, and subject to detailed scrutiny over an extended period by Borough officers, before it was adopted. It sets out key local guidance for design (relevant for section 6.2.5 of the draft Borough local plan), protection and enhancement of green spaces (relevant for section 14.4.5 of the draft Borough local plan), and other important local issues.

The Parish Council expects that the VDS will continue to be used as a supplementary planning document unchanged, without any direct conflict with the new Borough local plan. It is essential that the Parish Council is advised of any policies in the emerging Borough local plan which may directly contradict or overrule any VDS guidance in the determination of any planning application or the pursuit of any planning enforcement.

The Parish Council attaches high importance to its Green Belt land. The conclusion of the VDS was that “Cookham is defined by its green spaces” (VDS section 4) and the Parish Council has acted to protect its Green Belt from development which impinges on openness wherever possible. In particular, as noted in the VDS (VDS section G4.4), the Parish Council is concerned to preserve the attractive appearance of the Green Belt and to ensure that the green gap between Maidenhead and Cookham is not compromised.

The Parish Council holds Planning Committee meetings every three weeks and Full Council meetings every month. As part of this, and the case work undertaken by individual Councillors, the Parish Council frequently engages with Residents on issues affecting the Green Belt. It is clear to the Parish Council that Residents value the Green Belt highly and do not wish to see it developed.

The Parish Council is also concerned to ensure that infrastructure is available to support any new housing, This has regularly been raised as a major concern by Residents. Infrastructure capacity and suitable upgrading for Cookham to cope with new housing must be considered thoroughly before any development is permitted.

Residential

3. New residential development in the Green Belt will only be permitted where:
 - a. the development proposal would ~~constitute limited infilling~~ be entirely contained within the boundary of a settlement ~~or constitutes limited infilling within the boundaries of a village~~ as defined on the Policies Map ~~and would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and the character of the settlement;~~ or
 - b. the proposals ~~are~~ for a new dwelling or dwellings associated with agriculture or forestry ~~will normally be acceptable where and for which all the following criteria are met:-~~
 - i. there is both an essential and permanent need for the new dwelling based on the functional requirements of the enterprise it is intended to serve;
 - ii. the new dwelling is suitably located for the purpose for which it is intended;
 - iii. there is no other suitable accommodation available in nearby settlements, no ~~available~~ existing dwelling on the holding ~~not used for agricultural or forestry workers~~ and no suitable existing building on the holding ~~available~~ for conversion to residential use that would meet the demonstrated need; ~~and~~
 - iv. ~~it can be clearly shown that residential accommodation is required to establish an agricultural or forestry business in the green belt.~~

~~For any agricultural or forestry residential development~~ a satisfactory mechanism will be ~~required to be~~ put in place to secure the long term control ~~by the business~~ of the dwelling ~~by the business~~ and of any other dwelling that meets the need of the business. Occupancy of the dwelling in question (and of any other dwelling that meets the need of the business) will be restricted to persons solely; ~~or mainly~~ ~~or last~~ working in

agriculture or in forestry or those who have been so working and occupying such dwelling for more than five years and then ceased full time working. In all cases the history of the present or previous enterprises enterprise will be scrutinised and where fragmentation has occurred to sever land from agricultural dwellings or from buildings that could have been converted to residential use a new dwelling will not normally be permitted.

Any proposals for a new dwelling deemed disproportionate in scale to the enterprise it is intended to serve or inappropriately sited or designed in terms of impact, including the treatment of land around it, will not be acceptable. Consideration will be given to the removal of permitted development rights for the extension of any dwelling so approved where it is felt that extension could risk rendering the dwelling disproportionate to the holding and ~~so unlikely to remain available~~ unsuitable for future occupation by an agricultural worker. Where there ~~would be no other~~ is inadequate justification for ~~such permanent~~ accommodation, consideration will be given ~~only~~ to the grant of planning permission for the siting of a mobile home or other suitable form of temporary accommodation for a maximum of three years. If at the end of this period viability cannot be demonstrated and all other requirements met the temporary accommodation would be expected to be removed and the site restored. ~~unless~~ If there is clear evidence that a permanent need ~~will be~~ might be established within a an additional limited period to be agreed with the local authority further temporary permission for a maximum period of three years may be considered; or

- c. the development proposal relates to the rebuilding or one-for-one replacement of an existing habitable dwelling of permanent construction where the residential use is not seasonal or occasional and which has not been abandoned and which will not have a materially greater impact than the original building; or
- d. the development proposal relates to affordable housing on rural exception sites through a community led proposal identified in a made Neighbourhood Plan.

Non-residential

4. Development proposals for the reuse or replacement of non residential buildings in the Green Belt will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:-
 - a. an existing lawful building remains that is substantially complete;
 - b. the building is of permanent and substantial construction and its form is in keeping with its surroundings and would not require extensive reconstruction or a material change in size or scale;
 - c. the proposed use would not have a materially greater impact than the present or last approved lawful use on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land in it;
 - d. the reuse of a building for business ~~and- or~~ industrial uses should be appropriate in size and viability to agricultural units or buildings on the farm. Appropriateness should be tested against the context of the locality as justified in a farm management plan.

5. In the Green Belt proposals for new buildings or structures associated with outdoor sport, outdoor recreation or cemeteries will normally be acceptable provided that:
 - a. the scale of the building is no more than is genuinely required for the proper functioning of the enterprise ~~or the use of~~ in relation to the land to which it is associated and
 - b. the building is unobtrusively located and designed so as not to introduce a prominent urban element into a countryside location, including the impact of any new or improved access and car parking areas and
 - c. there is no detrimental effect on landscape quality, residential amenity or highway safety.
6. A robust business case will be required for the approval of any new agricultural building in the Green Belt. Any permanent or temporary agricultural building or mobile shelter for the use of livestock or poultry must be sited sufficiently far from existing dwellings to ensure that noise, smell and pest nuisance are avoided. Permitted development rights will normally be removed from new agricultural buildings and conditions attached to permissions to ensure removal of the building if the permitted use is terminated. In all cases the history of the present and previous enterprises will be scrutinised and where fragmentation has occurred to sever land from otherwise suitable buildings, or change of use of otherwise suitable buildings has occurred, the new building will not be permitted. Unless overriding operational reasons can be demonstrated any new agricultural buildings should be sited adjacent to existing ranges of buildings and in such a way as to reduce their adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt to a minimum.

As regards the ex Gasholder site :

The Parish Council requests that any development proposals must:

- a. fully resolve the constraints on sewerage capacity in the vicinity declared by Thames Water; and
- b. provide buildings of a height, bulk and density, open green spaces, highway access and parking provision which are appropriate to and compatible with the surrounding existing developments.

As regards the Strande Lane and Lower Mount Farm sites :

The Parish Council requests that these two sites are not allocated for development because :

- a. flood risks on the Strande Lane site cannot adequately be mitigated by any proposed developments; and
- b. the contribution to the setting, amenity and visual impact of the Green Belt of the Lower Mount Farm site is greater than has been asserted; and
- c. in the undesirable event that either site remains allocated, then the following should apply :
 - i. additional dwellings on the Strande Lane site must be similar in nature to the existing dwellings on the adjacent Strande Park;
 - ii. development proposals on the Strande Lane site must fully resolve all and any limitations arising from the risk of flooding;

- iii. development proposals on the Lower Mount Farm site must provide buildings of a height, bulk and density, open green spaces, highway access and parking provision which are appropriate to and compatible with the surrounding existing developments on Whyteladyes Lane, Southwood Road and Southwood Gardens; and
- iv. development proposals on the Lower Mount Farm site must include adequate provision, on site or in easy walking distance, to satisfy the occupants' education, health and community needs.

As regards the Spencers Farm site:

The Parish Council requests that this site is not allocated for development because:

- a. the contribution to the setting, amenity and visual impact of the Green Belt of the Spencers Farm site is greater than has been asserted: and
- b. flood risks at the Spencers Farm site cannot adequately be mitigated by any proposed development: and
- c. in the undesirable event that the site remains allocated, then the following should apply:
 - i. development proposals on the Spencers Farm site must provide buildings of a height, bulk and density, open green spaces, highway access and parking provision which are appropriate to and compatible with the surrounding existing developments on other sites: and
 - ii. development proposals on the Spencers Farm site must include adequate provision, on site or in easy walking distance, to satisfy the occupants' education, health and community needs