

## **Deepings First: Neighbourhood Plan Group. Response to Savill's Objection**

### **Objection submitted on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council Property Team (LCC PT)**

#### **Response summary**

Para 1.2 makes the nature of the LCC Objection clear. It states that "*Lincolnshire County owns land around the county which has been used either by the Council or rented out for farming. The Council is considering the sale of these pockets of land to raise income and, in some cases, encourage residential development to help meet the need for more housing. The ownership includes the following site: 11.6ha of land at Millfield Road*".

The basis of the Objection relates to three specific new policies contained within the Deepings *draft* Neighbourhood Plan (DNP) (issued September 2019) that would have a potential impact on the future saleability of the land to the west of Millfield Road for use as residential development. This land is known locally and referred to here as Mill Field. The policies are:

- i) **Policy DNP2** (*Providing guidelines for additional residential development*) seeks to establish a 'Development Boundary' in order to contain future development within the Deepings.
- ii) **Policy DNP11** (*Developing and enhancing the local green infrastructure*) seeks to protect Millfield Road as a 'Green Lane'.
- iii) **Policy DNP13** (*Designating and protecting Local Green Spaces*) in which Mill Field is designated with other pieces of socially important land as Local Green Space (LGS).

The LCC Objection challenges the three Deepings Neighbourhood Plan policies above and seeks to remove or make amendments to them so that LCC can pursue its intention to sell the land for development.

The various DNP consultation activities undertaken during the Neighbourhood Planning period, along with data from Savill's/LCC own Statement of Community Involvement\* (survey undertaken in May 2018), provides strong evidence to show that this western side of the Deepings is valued by the community as natural open space and is considered to contribute greatly to the health and well-being of residents. The need for access to safe natural environments has been particularly evident during the recent coronavirus outbreak.

\*Paras 5.1.7 / 5.1.11 / 5.1.14 identify a strong theme arising from the LCC public survey relating to retention of the site as green/open space for community, recreation and leisure use – pointing to a lack of public open space in the Deepings.

In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, which is designed to empower local communities to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood, the people of the Deepings have expressed a clear wish to retain the Mill Field in its current form as natural open space – to continue to enjoy the country walk along Millfield Road, to carry on using the area as a whole, and to appreciate the open view across the field to the trees lining the by-pass. Additionally, to continue to enjoy walking, dog walking, and jogging along the Public Right of Way that passes through the Mill Field. The Mill Field was considered by the community and the Neighbourhood Planning Team to meet the criteria for designation as LGS and it has therefore been included in Deepings *draft* Neighbourhood Plan.

Throughout the consultations, the people of the Deepings have generally embraced the prospect of additional homes for the area (subject to a matched increase in the level of local services and amenities) and the DNP accepts its allocation of housing in full – a mix of sizes and styles to suit all needs - to be delivered within the assigned sustainable sites shown in policy DNP1. Mill Field is not currently allocated in the SKDC Local Plan and if it were to be granted planning permission for development then this would risk undermining the established process for site allocations.

There is no shortage of other suitable land as there is also plenty of additional land available for sustainable development to the north-east of the Deepings for future allocations (the evidence here is the SKDC Sites and Settlements Consultation July 2016 - <http://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=24348&p=0>). Whilst these future sites (mainly to the east of Linchfield Road) remain to be evaluated in the context of ongoing plan making, there is plainly no absolute need for a future housing site allocations exercise to rely partly or solely on Mill Field. Mill Field is therefore not required as a site to ever meet housing demand now or in the future.

There is however, a recognised shortage of natural green space for community benefit.

The SKDC Local Plan has reached its final stage and Mill Field is not judged by the examining Inspector to be included a designated development site at this time. Any speculative outline planning application (S18/2146) relating to Mill Field is recognised by Savill's as non-policy compliant (para 3.1.22 Community Involvement Report November 2018).

The DNP development group has found the Savill's/LCC Objection to be helpful in highlighting a number of issues for discussion. These discussions have now taken place and have resulted in proposed amendments to the content of the final Deepings Neighbourhood Plan, namely:

- i) Removal of the designation of a 'Development Boundary' around the Deepings.
- ii) Providing a more adequate justification for including Millfield Road as a protected Green Lane in the final DNP

- iii) Applying the LGS criteria more rigorously and thereby reducing the total number of designated LGSs across the Deepings from 17 to 8 in the final DNP
- iv) Providing a more detailed justification for including Mill Field as a LGS in the final DNP
- v) Reviewing all policies to ensure all policy tests and the required Basic Conditions for NPs have been met.

These revisions are now in the submission draft of the Deepings Neighbourhood Plan (June 2020).

Additional points

### **Section 1 Introduction**

The Objection was received within the consultation period and is therefore a valid consideration requiring a response.

We accept that in its draft form (as at September 2019), some areas of justification were not adequate and may not have met Basic Conditions or be in accordance with planning policy. These aspects have been addressed in the final version.

### **Section 2 Site**

Para 1.2 of the Savill's/LCC report (referred to above) describes Mill Field as a 'pocket of land'. Additionally, Section 2 is descriptive and we agree with the description of the site:

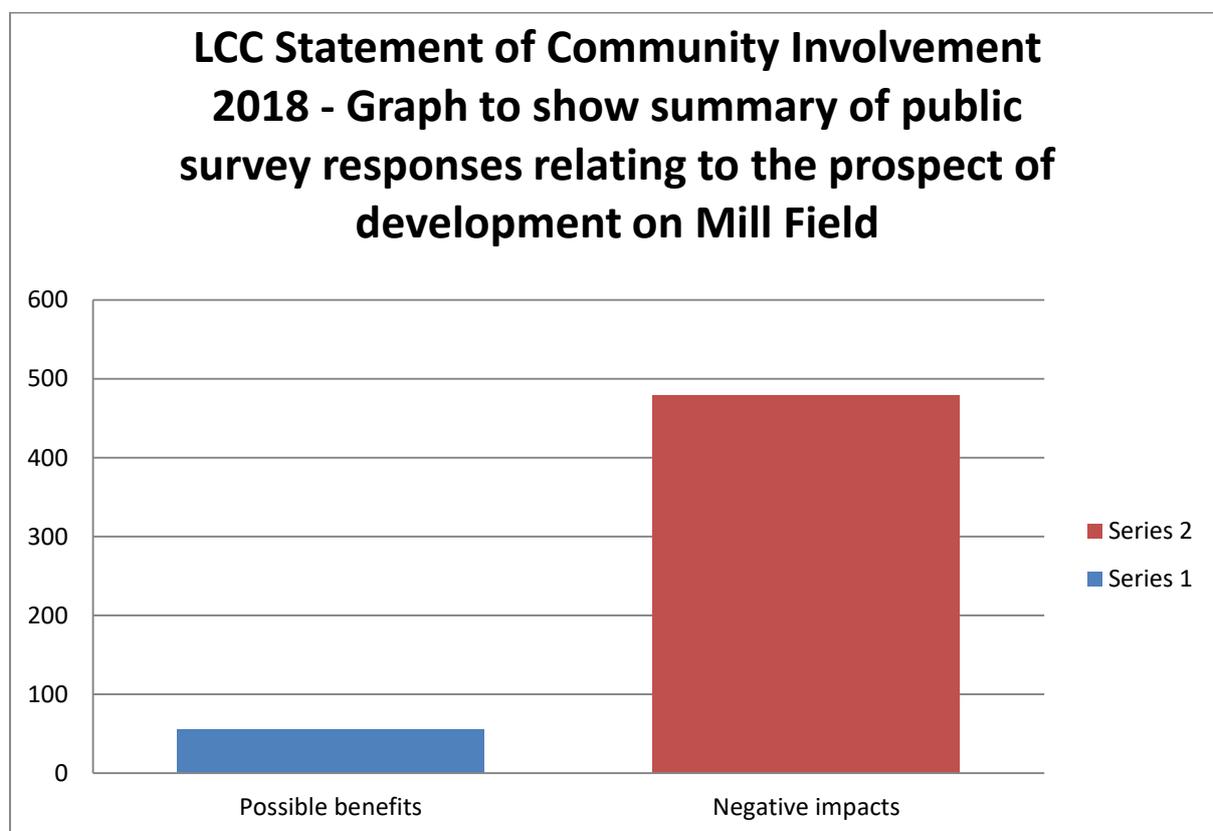
*Para 2.3 "The site is located to the west of Market Deeping and is enclosed by the A15 which extends along the entire western boundary. It is bordered by extensive mature trees and hedging along its eastern, southern and western boundaries. The northern boundary of the site has limited containment, with two agricultural fields beyond. An earth bund runs the length of the eastern (should say western) boundary separating the site from the A15. The two fields are separated by one another by a brook that connects to a ditch which runs the length of the western (should say eastern) boundary between the site and Millfield Road."*

Savill's/LCC report also describe the site in para 6.4.1 of their Statement of Community Involvement (2018) as

*"The site is open greenfield land but is on the edge of the built up area of Market Deeping. The site is well related to existing development which currently exists along the eastern edge of the site. The site is well contained with boundary hedgerows which limit views into the site from Millfield Road to the east and the A15 bypass to the west."*

We find these three descriptions by Savill's/LCC very helpful in our justification for designating Mill Field as a LGS i.e. the area is presented as a contained piece of land and not described as, nor does it sound like, an extensive tract of land. It can also be noted that the land known as Mill Field is of modest proportions when seen alongside the overall size of the Deepings area.

Para 2.5 States that the site is not subject to any statutory designations. Through consultation by both the DNP group and by Savill's/LCC, the people of the Deepings consistently consider that Mill Field needs protection, hence inclusion as LGS in policy DNP13. Refer to graph below for visual representation of the data collected by LCC in 2018.



### **Section 3 *Policy Context***

This whole section is largely a presentation of policy extracts to serve as a reminder of the context for local planning, for neighbourhood planning and for designating LGS. As such, these are simply statements of fact that we are already aware of.

Para 3.15-3.17 Anticipates the inclusion of Mill Field as a site for housing allocation. However, it is now known that the site is not included in the new SKDC Local Plan.

Para 3.28 concludes the section by stating:

*“It is clear, from the above, that the approach towards the designation of LGS is one which requires compelling evidence to clearly demonstrate that it meets the requirements of national planning policy in full.”*

We agree with this and have now provided compelling evidence for LGS in the final DNP submission document.

#### **Section 4 Relating to DNP2**

*Development Boundary* - The comments are welcomed and, after consideration, the proposal for a Development Boundary is removed from the Submission NP.

#### **Section 5 Relating to DNP11**

*Green Lanes* - Further evidence and justification for protection of the two Green Lanes is now provided in the Submission NP.

#### **Section 6 Relating to DNP13**

*Local Green Spaces* - Further evidence and justification for protection of the eight Local Green Spaces and additional justification for Mill Field is now provided in the Submission NP.

#### **Conclusion**

The Objection has been considered for its purpose in preventing LGS designation of the piece of land known locally as Mill Field. The application of Policy Tests and Basic Conditions applicable to the Neighbourhood Plan have been examined and we conclude that:

- i. The proposed Development Boundary has been removed from the Submission NP
- ii. A more rigorous justification for designating Millfield Road as a Green Lane has been provided
- iii. A more rigorous justification for designating Mill Field as LGS has been provided

**Appendices** to the Savill’s/LCC Objection include copied materials from other areas:

- Cheltenham Local Plan (April 2019) *population c115,000*

- Tatenhill Neighbourhood Plan (December 2015) *population <1,000*
- Oakley & Deane Neighbourhood Plan (December 2015) *population <1,000*

The purpose of these additional documents is unclear from the Savill’s LCC report as they are not referred to as examples within the Objection and give no assistance towards providing a clearer definition of LGS. The three Plan areas are not obviously comparable to the size and circumstances of the Deepings. However, the most useful information that can be extracted is:

- The need for a more comprehensive assessment of LGS to show a robust justification of the sites allocated (Cheltenham).
- Better quality/more detailed maps needed to identify LGS designations and better adherence to LGS policy definition. (Tatenhill)
- The need for greater clarity with LGS designation and to show clearer boundaries for each proposed site. (Oakly & Deane)

**Notes from other Neighbourhood Plan Examiners Reports relating to LGS with interesting comments highlighted.**

**Extract: Cheltenham LP Examiners Report**

29. The Council’s LGS Study Report, refers to the “threat of development” as an example of the factors to be considered by communities when assessing possible LGS sites, whereas **the primary reason for designation should be that the site is of such demonstrable significance to the local community that it should be protected.** The use made of Natural England’s Accessible Natural Greenspace

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**Extract: Plumpton, East Sussex (January 2018) (population <2,000) NP Examiner’s Report**

169. Whilst the largest Local Green Space, “*Fields on Little Inholmes Farm,*” covers some 6.8 hectares, but find that, in relation to Plumpton Green as a whole, this does not appear as an extensive tract of land. **I also note that its larger size, in relation to the other areas of Local Green Space in the Neighbourhood Area, is simply reflective of its nature and importance to the local community as a connected series of fields separated by hedgerows and shaws close to the centre of the village.**

170. Taking all of the above and the fact that **the Neighbourhood Plan has emerged through robust consultation into account,** I find that the inclusion of the five areas of Local Green Space in the Neighbourhood Plan meets

the basic conditions.

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**Extract: Repton (July 2019) (population <3,000) NP Examiners Report**

50. Paragraph 6.2.1 of the Plan records the fact that there is considerable local support for policies to protect existing local open spaces within the settlements, and it goes on to list nine areas to be preserved as Local Green Spaces, a term which derives from NPPF paragraph 77.

52. Savills say there is no need for the policy because SDDC are presently consulting on a Green Space plan of their own; this seems to me an inadequate basis for objection. The inclusion of the northern part of site 2 (Mathews Farm) is the subject of objection on behalf of its owners, who say that it is a private paddock without public access, and that the Parish Council have failed to provide evidence to show that it is “demonstrably special”, in the terms set out in the NPPF. Similar criticisms are made in relation to site 8 (The Orchard, Main Street, Milton).

53. There is some comment in background document CEF5, but little overall to explain in detail how each of the identified sites “performs” against the NPPF criteria. The Plan would have been more robust had this not been the case, but I do not see that there is a strong argument (on the basis of my visit to the area or the grounds of objection) for treating these two parcels of land any differently from the other seven identified for protection in the policy.

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**Extract: Winslow (May 2014) (population 4,400) NP Examiners Report**

**Green Space Policies Policy 19:**

Local Green Spaces Policy 19 designates six Local Green Spaces. These have been found to be special to the local community and the supporting text provides further information pertaining to each designation. Policy 19 has regard to national policy, which allows neighbourhood plans to identify for protection those green areas that are of particular importance to them. National policy states that the designation should be used where the green area is in reasonably close proximity to the community, is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land, and is demonstrably special to the local community. The six Local Green Spaces meet these criteria. (no sizes given in the NP)  
Policy 19 meets the Basic Conditions.

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**Extract: Torquay (July 2018) (population c65,000) NP Examiners Report**

281 Part of Policy TE4 seeks to designate 100 areas of Local Green Space. Whilst this might seem like a lot of areas, I note earlier in this Report that the Neighbourhood Area covers a

wide and varied geographical area and that it is home to a lot of people. Further, there is no restriction on the number of areas of Local Green Space that a Neighbourhood Plan can designate.

282 With the exception of two sites, it has been demonstrated that each of the areas designated meet the requirements of the Framework, as set out above.

283 Whilst Torbay Development Agency objected to the designation of all areas of Local Green Space, no substantive evidence was provided in respect of the contention that all of the designations are not consistent with the local planning of sustainable development. I note earlier in this Report that Torbay Council supports and welcomes the housing land allocations in the Neighbourhood Plan, as they support the growth strategy for Torbay.

289 As above, the Local Green Space designation is very important. Given this, rather than append the list of areas of Local Green Space, I recommend that it be included, along with an indicative plan, within the Neighbourhood Plan itself. Given the number of deletions recommended in this Report, I note that the Local Green Space Policy will become one of, if not the, most important land use planning Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan and it is therefore important that it is clearly presented.

Deepings First: Neighbourhood Planning Group

May 2020