

Daventry District Local Plan

Chapter 4: Housing

RESTRICTED INFILL VILLAGES

POLICY HS34

PLANNING PERMISSION WILL NORMALLY BE GRANTED FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RESTRICTED INFILL VILLAGES PROVIDED IT IS WITHIN THE EXISTING CONFINES OF THE VILLAGE.

OBJECTIONS

869 Mr D Williams
872 & 906 Consortium of Land Owners

General Note: Objections 397, 884, 915, 924, 977, 984, 1035, 1305, 2074, 2175 and 2248 are not included in the above list as they are dealt with in the report of Mr M Griffin.

8.6 SUMMARY OF OBJECTIONS

8.6.1 The policy would prevent the development of small sites on the edge of existing villages to the north of Northampton which could assist in meeting the requirement of Policy RES 1 of the approved structure plan for 1,000 new dwellings related to the growth of the town.

8.6.2 Instead, the local plan should adopt a less restrictive approach to development in the villages specified in Policy HS32, but at the same time identify the acceptable development limits to those villages.

8.7 THE ISSUE

8.7.1 Whether the limitation of development in Restricted Infill Villages to that within the existing confines of the settlement is justified, and whether village development limits need to be defined on the Proposals Map.

8.8 ASSESSMENT

8.8.1 I have already concluded in sections 4 - 7 on the first issue in relation to each of Policies HS2 - HS5 that it is significantly preferable for land for new housing related to the growth of Northampton to be allocated adjoining or as close as possible to the Borough. There is little or no justification, therefore, in my view, for making Policy HS34 of the draft local plan less restrictive specifically in order to accommodate even some of this growth within, or adjoining, Restricted Infill Villages.

8.8.2 Some new housing will, however, be permissible in such villages in accordance with structure plan Policy RES 6, in most cases provided that it is small scale and within the existing confines of the settlement. In the interests of the protection of the surrounding countryside, I agree that it is highly desirable that such development should be restricted to sites within the existing built-up area of the settlement.

8.8.3 I appreciate that problems of definition of the existing confines of particular villages might arise from time to time at the development control stage. Nevertheless, in order to avoid having to spend substantially more time in the preparation of this local plan, I consider that the Council were justified in deciding not to identify either existing or proposed development limits for the 53 villages concerned. Consequently, I consider that the means of defining the existing confines of a village set out in paragraph 4.103 of the draft plan will be adequate.

8.8.4 In relation specifically to land off Chater Street, Moulton, referred to in objection 869, I deal with the merits of this site in detail under objection 870 in section 9. However, in respect of the sites at Chapel Brampton, Church Brampton, Little Brington, Great Brington, East Haddon and Long Buckby referred to in duplicate objections 874 and 906, since these are no more than examples of sites that might be considered for housing development related to villages, rather than specific suggested modifications to the plan, I do not consider that it is necessary to assess them in detail.

8.9 CONCLUSION

8.9.1 There is no convincing reason to adopt a less restrictive approach to new housing development beyond the existing confines of the designated Restricted Infill Villages, especially in view of structure plan Policy RES 6; and insufficient justification to require that the local plan Proposals Map identify the confines of such villages.

8.10 RECOMMENDATION

8.10.1 That no modification be made either to Policy HS34 or to the Proposals Map.

SECTION 9

Chapter 4: Housing

NON-ALLOCATION OF SITES FOR HOUSING RELATED TO THE GROWTH OF NORTHAMPTON

OBJECTIONS

| | | |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|
| 254 & 255 | Hallam Land Management Ltd | - Land at Sandy Hill and Park View West, Moulton |
| 660 & 661 (1) | Mr O Yau | - Land west of the proposed Whitehills allocation |
| 679 (2) | Cllr Mrs AM Campling | - ditto - |
| 870 | Mr D Williams | - Land off Chater Street, Moulton |

General Note: Objections 133, 418, 1240 and 1243 to the non-allocation of sites near to Northampton are dealt with in the report of Mr M Griffin. All other objections to the non-allocation of sites for housing are also dealt with in his report.

Notes: (1) Objections 660 & 661 which are to the proposed Round Spinney and Park View allocations, respectively, suggest that, instead, the proposed Whitehills allocation should be enlarged so as to be able to accommodate up to 1,000 new dwellings. I have, therefore, dealt with these objections as being partly to the non-allocation of land for up to 1,000 dwellings at Whitehills.

(2) Objection 679 to the proposed Whitehills allocation is on the grounds that the site should be enlarged so as to be able to accommodate up to 820 dwellings. I have, therefore, dealt with this objection in a similar manner to objections 660 & 661.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

9.1.1 In assessing all the above sites I have taken into account not only the views of those promoting them and the specific responses of the Council, but also the conclusions which I have already reached earlier in my report which are relevant to these sites, including that the Round Spinney and Park View allocations should be deleted. I have also borne in mind the conclusion reached by Mr Griffin in respect of Policy HS1 that insufficient land has been allocated in the draft plan for new housing development up to 2006. At the same time I have had particular regard to national advice in relation to the desirability of locating housing development close to larger urban areas and, wherever possible, so as to provide a choice of means of travel to other facilities.

9.1.2 However, as I am not here dealing with objections to allocations proposed in the draft plan, I am not able to cover all the possible objections that might be raised. I have, therefore, identified the main issues which I consider are relevant to the possible development of the sites.

9.1.3 It is appropriate for me to come to firm conclusions about whether particular sites are unsuitable for allocation. However, as indicated in the joint letter which accompanies this report, it is not possible for me to be able to recommend that particular sites suggested in objections should definitely be allocated in the plan, since I have insufficient information about them. It will be necessary, therefore, for the Council to consider further the merits of an enlarged Whitehills allocation, together with the sites which Mr Griffin commends for further consideration.

9.1.4 If, at that stage, sufficient land to meet the requirement of structure plan Policy RES 1 has still not been allocated, it will then be necessary for the Council to make a search for other sites. Bearing in mind the overriding importance of the structure plan requirement, it may indeed be necessary to consider again the sites which, in this report, I have concluded should not be allocated, perhaps by identifying those measures that would, on balance, make at least some of them acceptable.

9.2 OBJECTION 254: LAND AT SANDY HILL, MOULTON

Introduction

9.2.1 This site, of which some 15ha is suggested for housing, is located to the north-east of the centre of Moulton village. In addition to land for about 370 dwellings, a 2ha site would be donated for a new primary school, and land would also be provided for open space and landscaping. Objection 255, with which I deal separately, proposes that adjoining land to the south-east of this, called Park View West, should be allocated for some 80 dwellings, either independently of, or in conjunction with, this site.

9.2.2 Vehicular access would be obtained to the site primarily from the existing A43 beyond the northern end of Park View, but this would probably not be possible until the proposed Moulton Bypass had been opened. If the adjoining Park View West site were developed, there could also be a secondary access to the combined sites through that land. There would be only a footpath link to The Grove and Chater Street close to the village centre from the Sandy Hill site.

The Main Issues

9.2.3 Whether the vehicular traffic which would be generated by the suggested allocation would result in an unacceptable highway safety or environmental impact on Moulton village centre.

9.2.4 Whether the proposal would be likely to be provided with an adequate bus service.

9.2.5 Whether it would result in the unacceptable loss of good quality farmland.

9.2.6 Whether the proposed community benefits would make the proposal acceptable.

First Issue: Traffic Implications

9.2.7 There is no technical evidence before me about the likely destinations of traffic which would be generated by the proposed housing. It seems probable, however, that much of it would be bound for employment and other urban facilities in Northampton. In the interests of the safe and free movement of traffic on the A43 trunk road, I consider that it would not be acceptable to permit a direct access from this road. I agree, therefore, that it would be necessary to prohibit the occupation of any dwelling on this site until the proposed Moulton Bypass were open. Access to this bypass by traffic which would be generated by the proposal would be via the present trunk road and the proposed Park View roundabout. The proposed bypass would provide the main access route, via the Round Spinney roundabout, to both the Moulton Park industrial estate and the town centre.

9.2.8 Nevertheless, there would probably be a significant amount of traffic generated by the proposed housing which would pass through or visit this Moulton village centre, especially as this would be the nearest concentration of shops and other community facilities. Bearing in mind the narrowness of many of the streets in this village centre, which is a Conservation Area, and that it has already been necessary to install fairly comprehensive traffic calming measures, I consider that such traffic would materially erode both the highway safety and environmental benefits of these measures. Notwithstanding, therefore, the apparent lack of objection by the local highway authority to this proposed housing site, I consider that it is undesirable that even part of the traffic which it would generate should be attracted into this village centre.

9.2.9 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that there would be a harmful traffic and environmental impact on Moulton village centre.

Second Issue: Provision of a Bus Service

9.2.10 In accordance with the advice in paragraph 3.2 of PPG 13, I consider it important that this substantial sized housing proposal should be capable of being provided with a convenient bus service to both local facilities and to the town centre. At present there is a bus service which passes through Moulton village centre and which then extends as far as the present Park View roundabout. There is also the long distance Kettering service which passes the site along the A43.

9.2.11 Following the opening of the proposed Moulton Bypass, however, since this long distance route would probably use the new road, I do not consider that it would be likely to provide a convenient service for the occupiers of the proposed housing. In addition, if the local service were to be extended onto the site itself, it would need to follow a somewhat tortuous route beyond the present Park View roundabout. I consider, therefore, that even if a secondary access were provided for buses through the Park View West site, there must be substantial doubt as to whether an operator would be prepared to extend the present local service in this way.

9.2.12 I appreciate that, provided a public footpath were constructed along the track from the south-east corner of the site to Overstone Lane, a substantial proportion of the occupiers of the suggested dwellings would have reasonable access to the local bus service along that road. However, as it would be a substantial distance from the northern part of the site to the southern end of this footpath, I do not consider that the whole of the proposed housing could be satisfactorily served in this manner.

9.2.13 I also recognise that, since a largely free market applies in the provision of bus services, there is always the possibility that an operator might provide a service on an otherwise seemingly uneconomic route. Nevertheless, there must be substantial doubt that a regular and convenient service would be provided to serve all the suggested housing.

9.2.14 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that there must be substantial doubt that the suggested housing would be provided with an adequate bus service.

Third Issue: Effect on Agricultural Interests

9.2.15 From the detailed evidence presented at the Inquiry it is apparent that about one-third of this site is grade 2 agricultural land, another third or so is grade 3A, and the remainder is grade 3B or not in agricultural use. Clearly, therefore, its development would involve the loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land which, as paragraph 2.6 of PPG 7 points out, is a national resource for the future. Policy GEN 4 criterion G of the structure plan requires that full regard is paid to the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land from development which is irreversible.

9.2.16 However, bearing in mind that much of the farmland on the outskirts of Northampton within the District is grade 3A or better, I do not consider that the loss of some 13ha of grade 2 land, and a similar amount of grade 3A land, would be unacceptable. Notwithstanding, therefore, the likely objection of MAFF to the allocation of this land in the light of their previous comments, partly because they consider that it contains some grade 1 land, in my opinion the proposal would not result in an unacceptable loss of good quality farmland.

Fourth Issue: Community Benefits

9.2.17 Paragraph B7 of Annex B to Circular 16/91 makes clear that unacceptable development should never be permitted because of unrelated benefits. There is no evidence before me from the local education authority that the primary school site offered as part of the suggested development is needed in order to enable the proposed development to go ahead. On the other hand, however, the governors of Moulton primary school consider that their school would not be able to accommodate the children who would live in the dwellings on the proposed Round Spinney allocation. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that their views would be similar about the Sandy Hill site.

9.2.18 However, since no dwellings on the Sandy Hill site could be occupied before the proposed Moulton Bypass is open, it would be some years before there was any demand for school places generated by the proposed development. The present lack of capacity in the local primary school is thus not conclusive in relation to whether a new school would be needed to serve the suggested housing.

9.2.19 I have considered that the proposed housing would be accompanied by the provision of open space and landscaping, including a new woodland and a riverside walk. However, since neither the offered school site nor these other measures would overcome the harm which would be caused in the village

centre by traffic which would be generated by the proposed dwellings, they could not make the proposal acceptable, even though they might be otherwise beneficial.

9.2.20 I also appreciate that this site, when combined with Park View West, was the Council's next most favoured option after the four sites allocated in the draft plan under Policies HS2 - HS5. I also recognise that its development would not result in an increase in the degree of coalescence of Northampton with Moulton. However, because of the problems that would be caused in Moulton village centre, I conclude that it should not be included in the plan, even as an alternative to either the Round Spinney or Park View allocations.

RECOMMENDATION

9.2.21 That no modification be made to the plan in respect of the allocation for housing of land at Sandy Hill, Moulton.

9.3 OBJECTION 255: LAND AT PARK VIEW WEST, MOULTON

Introduction

9.3.1 This site of about 4ha is to the rear of ribbon development on the north side of Overstone Lane and of that on the east side of Park View. Along the northern boundary of the site there are various business premises in the buildings of the former Sandy Hill Farm. The site would be capable of accommodating some 80 dwellings and would have its access through existing frontage development along Park View, though it could also be linked with the Sandy Hill site if that site were also developed. For the purposes of this assessment I assume that, although the provision of an access would involve the demolition of existing buildings, this would be feasible.

The Main Issues

9.3.2 Whether the vehicular traffic which would be generated by the suggested allocation would result in an unacceptable highway safety or environmental impact on Moulton village centre.

9.3.3 Whether the proposal would be likely to be provided with an adequate bus service.

9.3.4 Whether it would result in the unacceptable loss of good quality farmland.

9.3.5 Whether it would be seriously out-of-keeping with the character of adjoining residential development.

First Issue: Traffic Implications

9.3.6 There is no technical evidence before me about the likely destinations of traffic which would be generated by the proposed housing. It seems probable, however, that much of it would be bound for employment and other urban facilities in Northampton and would thus use the A43 for this purpose. However, although a route through the centre of Moulton village would be somewhat circuitous for such Borough-bound traffic, there would probably be a significant amount of traffic generated by the proposed housing which would pass through or visit this village centre, especially as this would be the nearest concentration of shops and other community facilities.

9.3.7 Bearing in mind the narrowness of many of the streets in this village centre, which is a Conservation Area, and that it has already been necessary to install fairly comprehensive traffic calming measures, I consider that such traffic would materially erode both the highway safety and environmental benefits of these measures. Notwithstanding, therefore, the apparent lack of objection by the local highway authority to this proposed housing site, I consider that it is undesirable that the traffic from it should be attracted into this village centre.

9.3.8 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that there would be a harmful highway safety and environmental impact on Moulton village centre.

Second Issue: Provision of a Bus Service

9.3.9 In accordance with the advice in paragraph 3.2 of PPG 13, I consider it important that even this medium-sized site should be capable of being provided with a convenient bus service to both local facilities and to the town centre. At present there is a bus service which passes through Moulton village centre and which then extends as far as the existing Park View roundabout. There is also the long distance Kettering service along the A43 which passes close to the site.

9.2.10 Following the opening of the proposed Moulton Bypass, although this long distance route would probably use the new road, it would probably still provide a fairly convenient service for the occupiers of the suggested housing, since it would not be too far for them to walk to the proposed Park View roundabout on the bypass. At the same time, I consider that the occupiers of the suggested dwellings would have reasonable access to the local service along Overstone Lane.

9.3.11 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that the proposed housing would probably be provided with an adequate bus service.

Third Issue: Effect on Agricultural Interests

9.3.12 The site is partly grade 2 and partly grade 3A agricultural land. Clearly, therefore, its development would involve the loss of some of the best and most versatile agricultural land which, as paragraph 2.6 of PPG 7 points out, is a national resource for the future. Policy GEN 4 criterion G of the structure plan requires that full regard is paid to the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land from development which is irreversible.

9.3.13 However, bearing in mind that much of the farmland on the outskirts of Northampton within the District is grade 3A or better, and especially since this site is not part of an adjoining agricultural holding, I do not consider that its loss to farming would be unacceptable. Notwithstanding, therefore, the likely future objection of MAFF to the allocation of this land, I do not consider that the proposal would result in an unacceptable loss of good quality farmland.

Fourth Issue: Character of Adjoining Residential Development

9.3.14 Policy RES 3 of the approved structure plan, as altered, states that generally residential development will take place at as high a density as is compatible with the characteristics of the development, the site and

its surroundings. Paragraph 19 of PPG 3 advises that, where new housing is acceptable in villages, the character of the particular settlement should always be respected, in terms of densities as well as scale and environmental quality.

9.3.15 The proposed housing would be developed at a density of 20dph. Whilst this is not high in absolute terms, nevertheless, it would be substantially higher than that of most of the adjoining housing, which is characterised by long gardens in a fragmented pattern of development. At the density proposed it is likely that the housing would need to be in the form of an estate. For these reasons I consider that it would be seriously out-of-keeping with the low density, mainly frontage development on this part of the edge of the built-up area of Moulton. The existence of business uses in the former farm buildings to the north of the site, which themselves form a largely isolated cluster of development in open countryside, does not justify the proposed consolidation of the existing pattern of fragmented development some 800m from the village centre.

9.3.16 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that the proposed density of development would be unacceptably high compared with that of adjoining residential development. As such, it would be seriously out-of-keeping with the character of this part of the periphery of Moulton.

Conclusion

9.3.17 Even when considered on its own I consider that the traffic which would be generated by the proposed development of this site would have a demonstrably harmful effect on the centre of Moulton village. As I have already recommended that the proposed Park View allocation should be deleted from the plan, it follows in my view that this site does not provide any justification for the allocation of the site the subject of this objection.

9.3.18 I appreciate that small sites within the existing confines of the Restricted Infill Village of Moulton will normally be granted planning permission, though I have already indicated in section 8 that even if they are within the existing confines of the village, if they are more than small scale, they would probably have a harmful effect on this village centre. Because the western boundary of the objection site faces open countryside, I consider that it is arguable that it is not within the existing confines of the village. In any case, though, as it could accommodate the same number of dwellings as the proposed Park View allocation, I consider that it would be too large to be acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION

9.3.19 That no modification be made to the plan in respect of the allocation for housing of land at Park View West, Moulton.

9.4 OBJECTION 870: LAND OFF CHATER STREET, MOULTON

Introduction

9.4.1 This site, which is near the centre of Moulton village though beyond the present built-up area, would be capable of accommodating 7 or 8 dwellings, with an access from Chater Street through an existing housing estate. For the purpose of this assessment I assume that such an access would be feasible.

The Main Issue

9.4.2 Whether the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the rural surroundings of Moulton village.

Assessment

9.4.3 The development of this site would clearly involve the extension into open countryside of the built-up area of Moulton. Although the site is small and close to the centre of this village, I consider, therefore, that it would have a harmful effect on the open countryside surrounding this settlement. I have already concluded in section 8 that there is no convincing reason for adopting a less restrictive approach to new housing beyond the existing confines of the designated Restricted Infill Villages.

9.4.4 From the evidence before me there are no special circumstances in relation to this site which would justify a departure from the provisions of Policy RES 6 of the approved structure plan. I do not consider that the very small contribution that it could make to meeting the requirements of Policy RES 1 of that plan for 1,000 dwellings related to the growth of Northampton constitutes the necessary justification for such a departure.

Conclusion

9.4.5 I conclude, therefore, on this objection that, since the proposed development would have an unacceptable effect on the rural surroundings of Moulton, the allocation of this site for housing would not be justified.

RECOMMENDATION

9.4.6 That no modification be made to the plan in respect of the allocation for housing of land off Chater Street, Moulton.

9.5 OBJECTIONS 660, 661 AND 679: LAND WEST OF THE PROPOSED WHITEHILLS HOUSING ALLOCATION

Introduction

9.5.1 In the second pre-deposit version of the draft local plan it was proposed that a site for up to 1,000 new dwellings should be allocated on land at Whitehills bounded by the District boundary in the south and south-east, the A508 in the east, Brampton Lane in the north, and the A50 in the west. Because of the amount of grade 2 agricultural land mainly on the western part of this site, MAFF indicated that they would object to the proposed allocation if it were included in the deposited plan. As a result, the Council identified other sites which might be included in the plan instead, and consulted MAFF again.

9.5.2 In response MAFF stated in May 1993 that, on the basis of land quality and other site factors relevant to the long term agricultural interest, they would be opposed to the development of the whole Whitehills site unless there were sound reasons why this site should be developed in preference to the Boughton Green Road, Park View and Round Spinney sites. They also indicated that, although not a determining factor affecting their views on the proposals in the long term agricultural interest, since it was understood that part of the site was tenanted, it may not be possible for the enterprise to be re-established on the same scale elsewhere.

9.5.3 I have already concluded in sections 6 and 7 that because of the effect on the centre of Moulton, and for other site-specific reasons, both the proposed Round Spinney and Park View allocations should be deleted from the plan. I have also concluded earlier in this section that, for similar reasons neither the suggested Sandy Hill site, nor the suggested Park View West site, should be added to the plan. On the other hand, however, in section 5 I have concluded that the proposed Boughton Green Road allocation should remain in the plan.

9.5.4 In assessing the merits of the suggested enlargement of the proposed Whitehills allocation I have, therefore, had particular regard to whether an enlarged Whitehills allocation would possess significant planning advantages that would justify its re-consideration by the Council after their rejection of the land west of the present Whitehills allocation but which they included in the pre-deposit consultation versions of the plan.

9.5.5 I have already concluded in section 3 that the objections to the proposed Whitehills allocation in the draft plan are of insufficient weight to justify its deletion. That allocation should, therefore, remain in the plan irrespective of whether the Council propose the inclusion of the adjoining land as a modification to the plan.

The Main Issues

9.5.6 Whether an enlarged allocation would result in an unacceptable loss of good quality agricultural land, or demonstrable harm to the viability of an agricultural holding.

9.5.7 Whether it would result in unacceptable congestion or danger on roads in the locality, and whether it would be likely to be provided with an adequate public transport service.

9.5.8 Whether it would result in an unacceptable loss of open countryside, or in the coalescence of Northampton with nearby villages.

9.5.9 Whether it could be satisfactorily provided with local community facilities.

First Issue: Effect on Agricultural Interests

9.5.10 The suggested Whitehills extension amounts to some 28 ha. Of this, about 22ha is grade 2 agricultural land and a further 5ha or so is grade 3A land. The proposed Round Spinney and Park View allocations, together, contain some 14ha of grade 2 land and 16ha of grade 3A land according to MAFF. I appreciate that the Council contend that, in total, only about 5ha of grade 2 land and 14ha of grade 3A land would be developed on these two sites. However, since the development of these sites would, effectively, take the whole of the allocations out of agriculture, I consider that the MAFF figures provide a more meaningful basis for comparison. MAFF do not object to either the proposed Round Spinney or Park View allocations, though they did indicate that they would object to the allocation of land to the west of the present Whitehills allocation at the pre-deposit stage if this land were to be included in the deposited plan.

9.5.11 Paragraph 2.6 of PPG 7 makes clear that, together with grade 1 land, grades 2 and 3A land represents the best and most versatile agricultural land, which is a national resource for the future. That paragraph also states that considerable weight should be given to protecting such land against development, because of its special importance. It continues that where, within these grades, there is a choice between sites of different quality, development should be directed towards land of the lowest possible classification. Policy GEN 4 criterion G of the structure plan requires that full regard is paid to the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land from development which is irreversible.

9.5.12 Clearly, the development of the suggested Whitehills extension would involve the loss of good quality agricultural land. However, bearing in mind that the suggested extension would require only some 8ha more grade 2 land, but some 11ha less grade 3A land, than the proposed Round Spinney and Park View allocations combined, and which I have already recommended should be deleted, I do not consider that the loss west of Whitehills would be too serious.

9.5.13 In relation to the second part of this issue, the development of the suggested Whitehills extension would clearly displace the tenanted West View Farm and shop. This farm is some 27ha in total and is worked in association with a further 22ha or so at Mears Ashby, about 8kms away. Based on the evidence before me in relation to objection 548, it would seem that the holding at Mears Ashby would not be viable on its own. That land

would, therefore, need to be combined with another holding if it were to be able to remain part of a viable unit.

9.5.14 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that the suggested enlargement of the proposed Whitehills allocation would result in some loss of good quality farmland, and would clearly endanger the viability of an existing agricultural holding. This harm to agricultural interests needs, therefore, to be taken into account when balancing the disadvantages of the suggested enlargement against any advantages that it may possess.

Second Issue: Transport Implications

9.5.15 I have already concluded in relation to criterion A in Policy HS2 that it would be acceptable for up to 150 dwellings to be occupied on the proposed Whitehills allocation provided that improvements were first made to part of Brampton Lane and also to the junction of Holly Lodge Drive with the A508. I have also already concluded that it would be acceptable for the remaining 370 proposed dwellings to be occupied once the whole length of Brampton Lane from the A508 to the A50 had been improved and stage 1 of the proposed NNWBP were open.

9.5.16 There is no technical evidence before me about the likely destinations of traffic that would be generated by the suggested enlarged allocation, though it seems reasonable to assume that they would be similar to those of traffic which would be generated by the presently proposed allocation. There is also no technical evidence before me as to whether traffic from the suggested extension could be satisfactorily accommodated by the combined measures of the improvement of Brampton Lane and the A508/Holly Lodge Drive junction, and the construction of stage 1 of the proposed by-pass. Bearing in mind, however, that much of the traffic from the suggested extension would probably be bound for the town centre, I consider that it would be prudent, in order that such traffic could avoid the busy Kingsthorpe district centre, to specify that it would be necessary for the proposed TCLR to be open before more than 520 dwellings could be occupied on an enlarged Whitehills allocation.

9.5.17 I have considered whether it would also be prudent to specify that stages 2 and 3 of the proposed bypass were open before any dwelling on the suggested extension could be occupied. However, bearing in mind the likely substantial relief of congestion in Kingsthorpe centre that would be afforded by stage 1 of the NNWBP together with the TCLR, and the reasonable likelihood of a convenient bus service being provided to serve an enlarged allocation, I do not consider that it would be essential for stages 2 and 3 to be open.

9.5.18 Turning to the second part of this issue, in the interests of the safe and free flow of traffic on the A50 it would be necessary for the suggested extension to have an access either from Brampton Lane or from the proposed Boughton Crossing roundabout, as well as an internal link to the allocation proposed in the draft plan. This would allow buses to serve the enlarged allocation as part of a loop from the A50 to the A508, and vice

versa. Given the concentration of up to 1,000 new dwellings only just beyond the Borough boundary, it seems likely that a reasonably frequent bus service to/from the Kingsthorpe district centre and the town centre would be commercially viable. Indeed, I consider that one of the main points in favour of an enlarged Whitehills allocation would be that it would be likely to be provided with a substantially better bus service than would either the proposed Round Spinney or Park View allocations, and also that the level of service could well be sufficiently attractive to reduce significantly the number of journeys that would otherwise be made by car.

9.5.19 There is a disused railway line, within the plan area, a short distance to the west of the A50. This line connects Boughton Crossing with the town centre. There are no proposals in the draft local plan relating to this former railway, though according to paragraph 13.27 of the 1996/97 TPP, the draft Northampton local plan identifies that part of this route within the Borough as a possible public transport corridor. That draft plan also indicates that this corridor should be protected from development that would prejudice its re-use for public transport.

9.5.20 In the light of the advice in PPG 13 I consider that, as suggested in relation to objections 660 and 661, it would be highly desirable for a joint District, Borough, and County Council study to be undertaken of the feasibility of the provision of a rail shuttle service between Boughton Crossing and the town centre along this route. However, since the suggested Whitehills extension would, in any case, be likely to be well served by buses, I do not consider that it would be essential to await the results of such a study before determining whether this land should be allocated for housing in the local plan. It may be necessary, however, for the detailed design of the Boughton Crossing roundabout on the proposed bypass to avoid prejudicing the provision of such a rail service.

9.5.21 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that, provided phased improvements were made to Brampton Lane for the whole of its length from the A508 to the A50; that the A508/Holly Lodge Drive junction were first improved; and that stage 1 of the proposed NNWP together with the proposed TCLR were open, an enlarged Whitehills allocation would not result in unacceptable congestion or danger on roads in the locality. Equally important, I also conclude that an enlarged allocation would be likely to be well served by public transport, and that this is an important factor in favour of the development of this land.

Third Issue: Impact on the Landscape

9.5.22 As the site of the suggested extension falls generally towards its north-west corner I consider that housing development on it would be no more conspicuous in the landscape than that proposed on the more elevated Whitehills allocation included in the draft plan. Since I have already concluded in section 4 on the fifth issue in relation to Policy HS2 that the proposed allocation would be well related to the present pattern of development in the area, it follows that the suggested extension would also be acceptable in this respect.

9.5.23 I have also already concluded on the second issue in respect of Policy HS2 that the proposed allocation would not result in an unacceptable increase in the degree of coalescence of Northampton with Boughton. In relation, therefore, to this village, the suggested extension would also be acceptable. As regards Church Brampton and Chapel Brampton, the suggested extension would clearly bring urban development nearer to these two villages. However, even taking account of the existence of the buildings on the former Boughton Cold Store site, since there would still be about a 1km wide belt of open countryside between the suggested housing and these villages, I do not consider that their separate identity would be lost.

9.5.24 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that an enlarged Whitehills allocation would not result in an unacceptable loss of open countryside, nor in the coalescence of Northampton with nearby villages.

Fourth Issue: Provision of Community Facilities

9.5.25 If an enlarged Whitehills allocation were for 850 dwellings or more, it would probably be able to support its own primary school. Not only would such a school be convenient for children who lived locally, but also it might well assist in reducing the number of children needing to be taken to school by car, thereby limiting greenhouse gas emissions. I appreciate that the principle of parental choice might result in some children from an enlarged Whitehills allocation attending school elsewhere, and in some children from the surrounding area attending any new school opened on the site. Nevertheless, the provision of a new school to serve an enlarged development would probably have a net benefit in terms of the number and length of car journeys that would be generated.

9.5.26 It is less clear which other local facilities could be supported even if 1,000 new dwellings were built on an enlarged allocation. However, it seems reasonable that this number of dwellings would be more likely to be able to justify the provision of facilities such as local shops, a post office, a public house, or a community hall, than would a development of only about half this size. Moreover, for those facilities which could not be provided on the site, the suggested Whitehills extension would be only some 2kms from the nearest district centre at Kingsthorpe, whereas the proposed allocations at Round Spinney and Park View, Moulton would be some 3kms from their nearest district centre at Weston Favell.

9.5.27 I conclude, therefore, on this issue that an enlarged Whitehills allocation could be satisfactorily provided with local community facilities, and would probably be able to support its own facilities more easily than would smaller sites.

Conclusion

9.5.28 From my consideration of the main issues relating to the suggested enlargement of the Whitehills allocation I conclude that there are no

overriding reasons why it should not be extended to accommodate up to 1,000 dwellings. Moreover, compared with the proposed Round Spinney and Park View allocations, the enlargement of the Whitehills site would have significant planning advantages in terms of transport, both as regards the provision of public transport and the avoidance of additional traffic in Moulton village centre. In addition, the concentration of up to 1,000 new dwellings on one site would probably have advantages for the provision of community facilities compared with a spread of smaller sites.

9.5.29 I consider that, together, these transport and service provision advantages would outweigh the disadvantages of the loss of the extra amount of grade 2 agricultural land and the displacement of the agricultural holding at West View Farm.

9.5.30 Further, in accordance with Mr Griffin's recommendation in respect of Policy HS1 of the draft local plan, I consider that, even if the proposed Whitehills allocation is enlarged so as to be able to accommodate 1,000 new dwellings, a 10% contingency allowance should still be provided. Accordingly, I consider that the proposed Boughton Green Road allocation should be retained in the plan for this purpose.

9.5.31 Should the Council decide to enlarge the existing proposed Whitehills allocation, it will be necessary for criterion A in Policy HS2 to be further changed from my recommended modification in section 4 in order to permit more than 520 dwellings to be occupied once the proposed TCLR is open. It may also be necessary to alter criterion B, as recommended for modification, in order to permit one of the two accesses to the enlarged allocation to be taken from the proposed Boughton Crossing bypass roundabout.

RECOMMENDATION

9.5.32 That the allocation of land for housing north of the Whitehills area of Northampton, proposed under Policy HS2 of the deposited draft plan, be seriously considered for enlargement so as to enable it to accommodate up to 1,000 dwellings and, as a result, serve as the principle means of making provision in the District up to 2006 for new housing related to the growth of Northampton.