

# Huntingdonshire Local Plan Examination

on behalf of G.B. Sewell & Partners

Matter 6 . Proposed site allocations

Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area

HU10 . Hinchibrooke Country Park Extension

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Prepared by: Martin Page, Planning Consultant

For and on behalf of Brown & Co.

Brown & Co is a leading provider of agency, professional and consultancy services across the whole range of rural, commercial, residential, and agricultural markets.

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## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 Brown & Co Barfords represent G.B. Sewell & Partners who, as the landowners of a significant part of the allocation, object to Policy HU10 - Hinchingsbrooke Country Park Extension.

## 2.0 Background

2.1 G.B. Sewell & Partners are the landowners of a significant part of the proposed allocation area . refer to the attached plan Appendix A, which adjoins the objector's farmstead at Meadow Lake. The business is a mixed farming enterprise comprising a high quality pedigree herd of British Blonde cattle in addition to an extensive arable operation covering approximately 900 acres, 700 acres of which are under rotational cropping with a further 190 acres of grass. The majority of the grassland is situated around Meadow Lake.

2.2 The livestock operation is centred around the farmstead at Meadow Lake and this comprises a range of specialist buildings that have been the subject of significant investment over the past decade. Most recently, the farm has seen improvements to an existing cattle building and the erection of two new calf buildings which were required to house the growing herd of British Blonde cattle. There are approximately 100 head of cattle on the farm, including 56 cows, 9 bulls, 12 bulling heifers and 23 fattening cows. The grassland around Meadow Lake is therefore essential for the grazing of the cattle and also the making of hay and silage for fodder.

2.3 On the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2018 the Council granted planning permission for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling with farm office at Meadow Lake . **within the proposed Country Park Extension Area** (LPA Ref. 17/02000/FUL) and this reflects the Objector's serious intent to maintain and develop the farming operation at Meadow Lake.

2.4 This Statement is prepared on behalf of the Objector to respond to the following questions in relation to the proposed allocation:

*Q1) What is the background to the site allocation? How was it identified and which options were considered?*

*Q3) What is the basis for this and is it justified?*

*Q4) What is the current planning status of the site in terms of planning applications, planning permissions and completions/construction?*

*Q6) What are the potential adverse impacts of developing the site? How could they be mitigated?*

*Q10) Is the site realistically viable and deliverable?*

**3.0 Q1: What is the background to the site allocation? How was it identified and which options were considered?**

3.1 The extension to Hinchingsbrooke Country Park was put forward in the Local Plan 1995 and the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan 2011. Policy HW6 stated that the Council will work with adjoining landowners to pursue the extension and that the Council will obtain the land either through lease or purchase by 2026, when funds become available.

**4.0 Q3: What is the basis for this and is it justified?**

4.1 The allocation of 44 ha. aims to provide strategic green infrastructure alongside development that will increase the natural green space available to serve the significant population in and around the Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area. It states that the extension will specifically help to guard against adverse impacts on designated sites in the area that might come about as a result of planned development in the area. However, we are at a loss to understand how the extension will specifically help to guard against adverse impacts on designated sites in the area that might come about as a result of planned development in the area. What adverse impacts? on what sites? and what developments?

**5.0 Q4: What is the current planning status of the site in terms of planning applications, planning permissions and completions/construction?**

5.1 Despite being allocated for more than 22 years the extension has not been realised and to date there has been no dialogue between the Objectors and the Council about how the proposed allocation will come forward. Without the cooperation of landowners it is difficult to see how the extension can be delivered given there is no capital programme for acquiring the land at a cost of at least £0.5 million.

5.2 Neither the Policy nor the supporting text provides any certainty how and when the Country Park extension will be delivered. This simply refers to the Council looking to lease or purchase the land when funds are available.

**6.0 Q6: What are the potential adverse impacts of developing the site? How could they be mitigated?**

6.1 The allocation fails to take into consideration the severe adverse impact that the loss of the large area of grassland, which is an integral part of the Objectors livestock operation used for grazing and the making of hay and silage for fodder, would have on the farming enterprise.

Without the grassland the business could not feasibly continue. It is the Objector's intention to continue farming the land and they are not willing participants to the delivery of the Park extension.

6.2 The loss of the land to the proposed Country Park extension would, at the very least, force the Objector to seek additional grazing elsewhere, and/or buy fodder from off-farm, adding to the business costs.

6.3 The allocation causes uncertainty for the future of the farming business, as any further development at Meadow View Farm may be prevented due to the conflict with the Country Park extension policy.

6.4 Further essential investment in the farm will be stifled by the allocation and the uncertainty will prevent this established farming business from continuing to grow successfully, as it has done over the years

**7.0 Q10: Is the site realistically viable and deliverable?**

7.1 No. Given the Council's budgetary constraints we question the deliverability of the proposal and we do not consider the detrimental effect this extension would have upon the farming business has been taken into account when considering the proposed allocation. Disappointingly all previous objections have not been taken into consideration and it is felt the Council is unwilling to understand and appreciate the substantial negative impact this has on the Objector's farming enterprise at Meadow Lake.

7.2 As noted in paragraph 2.3 above, on the 11<sup>th</sup> June 2018 the Council granted planning permission for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling with farm office at Meadow Lake . **within the proposed Country Park Extension Area** (LPA Ref. 17/02000/FUL). It is highlighted that when reviewing the planning policy issues the case officer acknowledged '*Policy HW6 of the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan (the HWAAP) identifies the area as a potential extension to the Hinchingsbrooke Country Park. **There is no certainty as to whether the proposed extension to the Country Park will go ahead as envisaged in the HWAAP.** However, it is considered that the proposal does not conflict with Policy HW6 of the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan (the HWAAP)*'.

## 8.0 Conclusions

8.1 Paragraph 182 of the National Planning Policy framework sets out the tests for the soundness of the Local Plan and taking into consideration all of the points outlined above, the proposed allocation is not considered to be sound due to it not being:

- ~~Effective~~ as the allocation does not appear to be deliverable. The allocation has been an unrealistic aspiration of Huntingdonshire District Council for over twenty years and to date there have been no discussions in any shape or form with the landowners, who have no desire to be a part of this proposal. Without the cooperation of landowners it is difficult to see how the allocation can be delivered. Furthermore, we do not believe that this allocation is deliverable on a financial level due to the value of the land being in excess of £0.5 million and given that there are more pressing infrastructure delivery matters, which are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. With an exceptional identified funding gap that relates to the delivery of specific sites, we do not believe it is a realistic proposal. It therefore begs the question whether the Council have seriously considered the realistic delivery of this proposal;
- ~~Justified~~ as the proposal is not the most appropriate strategy and we do not consider the extension to the Country Park has been considered against reasonable alternatives for the local provision of green infrastructure. There is simply no justification for the Council to acquire productive agricultural land that forms a major part of an established farming enterprise and as such would be prejudicial to the business and its growth, provision of additional buildings and future investment. The allocation blights the farm and creates uncertainty for the landowners;
- ~~Positively prepared~~ in that the plan has not been prepared based on a strategy which seeks to meet objectively assessed development and infrastructure requirements. The proposal has not been objectively assessed as the Council have ignored all previous objections that have been made on behalf of G.B. Sewell & Partners and have therefore not taken into account the detrimental impact this would have on the farming enterprise. As stated there has been no discussions between the Council and the objector.

8.2 The proposed allocation HU10 should therefore be removed from the Local Plan.

**G.B. SEWELL & PARTNERS LAND OWNERSHIP**

