

Jim Caffrey, Planning Officer
Planning, 4th Floor
Borough Hall
Cauldwell street
Bedford
MK42 9AP

10th March 2014

Dear Jim Caffrey

**Re: Planning Application: 12/00206/MAO
The Bury Cemetery Road Kempston Bedfordshire MK43 8RD**

I refer to your letter to us dated 24th February 2014 regarding the above application.

CPRE Bedfordshire strongly objects to this application for the following reasons which are in addition to those made in our letter to you dated 20 March 2012 when this application was first made over 2 years ago:

- **The demolition of the Bury House is in conflict with the Allocations and Designations Plan adopted by the Council only a matter of months ago (July 2013)**

The "Land West of Kempston Development Brief" adopted by the Council in January 2003 and carried forward, clearly identifies the Bury House and the wall as a "landmark" building - see page 21 of the document and Appendix I to this letter.

The document states on page 21 para 6.4.16:

**"The development provides a number of opportunities to establish landmarks which will help to orientate people moving within the site and also along the western bypass. These include:
Kempston Bury - a prominent building in the landscape which will be incorporated into the development."**

It is quite clear throughout the document in which The Bury House, buildings and wall are referred to several times, that they are talking about that building with it's historic relevance to the people of the immediate and surrounding area and not the very poor piece of pastiche design proposed by the applicant.

On page 23 of the Development Brief concerning the Landscape Masterplan and Strategy - para 6.6.2 bullet point 5 **".... A view of The Bury House and listed wall will be established through the creation of the northern park."**

The applicant's Planning Statement conveniently overlooks the map from the Development Brief indicating The Bury as a "Landmark Building".

25 years of standing up for Bedfordshire's countryside 1987-2012

CPRE Bedfordshire is the Bedfordshire Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England which exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England.
We advocate positive solutions for the long term future of the countryside.

That the Bury House and the listed wall have together been a key feature of the development and design criteria for the Land West of Kempston development since at least 2003, has been quite clear to the applicant.

We therefore ask the question, particularly since it has been the intention to propose the demolition of The Bury House since October 2011 (see the Statement of Community Involvement):

Why did the applicant make no effort to propose changes to the Allocations and Designations Plan at the time of the Inspectors review in line with several other developers seeking amendments?

It is quite unacceptable to propose major changes at this stage - 11 years after the original development brief was adopted!

- **The application is in contravention of “West of Kempston Design Guide and Code - SPD” which, we have been advised by officers, was adopted by the Mayor in January 2010 and forms part of the Core Strategy**

Page 7 of the document states under para 1.32

“The following objectives will guide the delivery of locally distinctive development at West of Kempston.

Objective1” (5th bullet point):

“..... respect the historic Bury House, cottages and wall”

Local residents who have recently purchased houses on the development expecting it to conform to the development and design guides referred to above, no doubt revealed when they did their legal “searches” of the area and promoted by David Wilson homes et al, will be shocked by this proposal.

They will ask why it is that instead of the historic Bury House and the listed wall they were told would be retained on the site, they will instead be looking at a massive block of apartments and other houses providing not a shred of the local history or sense of place referred to in the design guide and development brief. Neither will it provide the sort of open view foreseen in the design/development documents from the northern park across to the proposed “Community Forest/Agricultural” land on the other side of the western bypass. The block of flats and houses are of such density that all views will be obscured.

They will quite rightly say that they have been seriously misled.

- **The applicant provides no assurance of the future maintenance of the listed wall**
We are unable to find anything within the application that provides for the future maintenance of the listed wall - this is clearly a very important matter.
- **Historic relevance of the Bury House**
The applicant makes much of the fact that English Heritage did not wish to “list” the Bury House but this is immaterial. The Development Brief and design guide do not say that the house should be conserved for its heritage value but for its historical status as a landmark building. This creates a sense of place for the new development. It recognised the importance to people, particularly in new developments of this scale, to maintain buildings that help to place the development in context with the surroundings.
- **The application does not conform to the NPPF**

The NPPF demands sustainable development - see para 7 bullet point 2 an Environmental Role “..contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment”

Para 12 “.... Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved and proposed developments that conflict should be refused.....”

Core Principles para 17 bullet point 10 “ conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations;”

Requiring Good Design para 58 bullet points 2 and 4 - “Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments ----- establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive places to live, work and visit.”

“..... respond to local character and history, reflecting the identity of local surroundings and materials.....”

- **The application does not conform to Local Policies BE13** - demolition consent should be refused where impact is unacceptable, **BE21** -Council should seek to preserve and enhance the setting of listed building (in this case the wall), **BE37** - development not in-keeping with the setting and cramped and overcrowded.
- **The applicant’s “Statement of Community Involvement” should be disregarded by officers when assessing this application - it is unsatisfactory**

According to the applicant, approaches were made to Kempston Town and Kempston Rural Parish Council in October 2011 - over 3 years ago!

As far as we can determine, these discussions were minimal to say the least involving very few councillors and no efforts at all were made to involve local residents.

Since then many more people have moved into the new houses on the West of Kempston development. It is these people who will be most effected by this development and no effort at all has been made to engage with these residents.

The NPPF puts great emphasis on effective pre-application consultation and whilst it is not obligatory it is expected to be thorough and up-to-date!

General comments regarding this application

CPRE Bedfordshire has been very disturbed by the way in which the Council has handled this application.

Mysteriously, the application been held in abeyance for over 2 years - not the first time a planning application has been hanging around in the ether recently.

Around 2 years ago local residents exercised their democratic right and responded to this planning application about which they had concerns.

The Borough Council have since been working with the applicant on the revised application with residents not even receiving the common courtesy of a letter telling them what’s going on.

Then to “rub salt into the wound”, because, we are told, the developer wants a quick decision, residents and others are suddenly advised by letter dated 24th Feb

2014 of the revised application and given the minimum possible deadline to reply within 14days!!

In our view this is not acceptable behaviour - treating local residents with contempt - not worthy of proper treatment.

Local residents simply cannot understand what's going on - they rightly expected a fair process. The Council gives the impression of wanting to limit legitimate public involvement in the planning system.

Residents deserve far better from Bedford Borough Council who appear to be pandering to the requirements of the applicant alone.

It's simply not good enough for the Council to respond that they will take comments up till the date of the Planning Committee Meeting .

This is disingenuous - the whole point of the exercise is that resident's comments will be taken on board and carefully considered by the planning officer when he/she makes his/her report to the Committee.

This cannot be done if letters from residents are received a few days after the officer's report has been written or if letters are read out at the Committee Meeting .

CPRE was told when we checked with the responsible officer before she left the council last year that the application was held up because the "red line boundary" was incorrectly drawn by the applicant.

This being the case any blame relating to delays can be placed firmly at the door of the applicant.

We look forward to the Council's response on this issue.

Yours sincerely

Gerry Sansom
For CPRE Bedfordshire

Appendix 1

6.4.13 Figure D shows a legibility analysis of the development using all of these elements.

6.4.14 The most significant path will be the western bypass which forms the western and southern boundary of the site. Other main paths include the existing roads viz. Cemetery Road and Ridge Road. To a lesser extent, the highway network within the development and the Sustrans route will also act as paths in legibility terms.

6.4.15 There will be three main nodes located at the intersection of the western bypass and Cemetery Road, Ridge Road and the Woburn Road/A421. In the case of the Ridge Road node, this will also act as the main

focus for educational and community facilities within the development. On a smaller scale, the main routes within the site will create a series of linked nodes of differing character.

6.4.16 The development provides a number of opportunities to establish landmarks which will help to orientate people moving within the site and also along the western bypass. These include:

- Kempston Bury - a prominent building in the landscape which will be incorporated into the development.
- The local centre - the main focus of the development and the location of the main public buildings.

Fig D Legibility Analysis

