



133 Dukes Ride
Crowthorne
RG45 6DU
19 Nov 2021

BFC Planning

Dear Sir/Madam

Ref: 21/00986/FUL , 226 Homes at Beaufort Park

Crowthorne Village Action Group (CVAG) is a non-political association of residents who seek to protect the established character of Crowthorne Village and ensure that future developments are in keeping with their surroundings. We object to the above application for the following reasons.

Strategic gap

The proposed site is located within the strategic gap separating Bracknell from Crowthorne. These strategic gaps are recognised as important to prevent coalescence of Bracknell Town and the surrounding settlements.

This is detailed in Policy CS9 of the core strategy, 2008

Policy CS9 – Development on land outside of settlements

Para 124 The Council will protect land outside settlements for its own sake, particularly from development that would adversely affect the character, appearance or function of the land; and

- i. protect the defined gaps within or adjoining the Borough from development that would harm the physical and visual separation of settlements either within or adjoining the Borough; or
- ii. maintain the Green Belt boundary within Bracknell Forest and protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development.

And para 120 which states;

These predominantly undeveloped areas are often subject to development pressures which if left unrestrained could over time lead to the merging of settlements and the loss of individual identity. In order to protect their existing open and undeveloped character, it is important that gaps are identified to steer development away from those settlements where coalescence is a real threat.

It is noted that there is extant permission for 68 homes on the former site of Beaufort Park Office building, 17/01123/OUT. However, this was initially refused by BFC and only granted on appeal on the grounds that it is re use of a brownfield site and therefore there is presumption in favour of redevelopment. **It should not be seen as setting a precedent for additional development in the surrounding woodland.**

The document prepared by the planning department of Bracknell Forest Council to justify the refusal of 17/01123/OUT, sets out, in their own words, a strong case for the importance of the maintaining the strategic gap, referencing the relevant policies .

Selected excerpts follow;

Reason 01 – The site is located outside the defined settlement boundary and as such is directly contrary to Policy CS9 of the CSDPD, Policy EN8 and Policy H5 of the BFBLP. All of these policies restrict the development of residential dwellings in the countryside, seeking to protect the countryside for its own sake, unless specific criteria are met. The proposal does not comply with the stated criteria.

5.5 Policy CS9 Development on Land Outside Settlements provides that the Council will protect land outside settlements for its own sake, particularly from development that would adversely affect the character, appearance or function of the land and will

‘protect the defined gaps within or adjoining the Borough from development that would harm the physical and visual separation of settlements within or adjoining the Borough’.

5.6 Policy EN8 Development on land outside Settlements of the Bracknell Forest Local Plan also provides that the countryside will be protected for its own sake and that outside defined settlement boundaries, development will be permitted only where it would not adversely affect the character, appearance or function of the land. It identifies 5 categories of development that may be permitted within the countryside, which do not include new residential development nor the redevelopment of previously developed sites.

The whole document can be viewed at

https://planapp.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/online-applications/files/1393C22BE96DD0B8436E2D51F384BC8B/pdf/17_01123_OUT-INFORMAL_HEARING_APPEAL_STATEMENT_OF_BRACKNELL_FOREST_COUNCIL_LOWER_QUALITY_FILE_-3071573.pdf

Sustainability and Access

The location, set in isolated woodland, is not sustainable. There are no shops, schools, medical facilities or places of employment on site or within easy reach. Although classed as an extension of Great Hollands there is no direct vehicular access to Great Hollands. The applicant proposes two access routes, one directly on to Nine Mile Ride and one onto South Road. Both are problematical.

Nine Mile Ride is already extremely busy and can be expected to get more so with new developments at Bucklers Park and at Arborfield.

The traffic exiting on to South Road will either head north to West Road, and thence Old Wokingham Road or south to join Nine Mile Ride. Either way it will add to existing traffic from the golf course, the recreation ground, the crematorium and the 68 homes to be built on the site of the Beaufort Park Office all using what is a small road, privately owned by BFC.

The number of trips will be higher than average due to lack of on site facilities such as shops, schools, doctors etc.

Destruction of Habitat

The emerging draft local plan recognises the importance of the woodland around Beaufort Park as habitat for endangered species.

From:

BRA4 Land at Beaufort Park in strategic gap between Bracknell and Crowthorne Draft Habitats Regulations Assessment Pre- Submission BFLP

Page 21 4.8: Neither Nightjar nor woodlark (ground nesting, protected species of bird) has highly specialised prey requirements and as a result they include many common and widespread habitats in their foraging resource. In contrast, they do have highly specialised nesting requirements. Suitable habitat for nesting is therefore sparse and the loss of such habitat, even outside the SPA, could affect the overall SPA population. A review of the allocated sites in the BFLP indicates that only one of these comprise heathland, acid grassland and plantation woodland. This is BRA 4, land at Beaufort Park.

Page 21. 4.9: Out of all the sites allocated in the BFLP, site BRA 4 lies closest to the Thames Basin Heath SPA, with its south eastern corner just bordering on the 400 metre buffer zone. The site is predominately woodland with woodland plantations covering the southern half of the site. There are areas of acid grassland, acid heath and coniferous parkland/ scattered trees. The screening assessment in appendix 6 shows that BRA4 has been identified as potentially leading to the loss of functionally linked land as there is potential at this site for ground nesting birds to be present.

4.10: The screening of BFLP Appendix 7 has also shown that, unmitigated and depending on the location of development, the following policies have the potential to lead to the loss of functionally linked land as a result of residential and employment (Or other development, such as sports and community facilities).

Page 28. The supporting text in Policy LP5 Land at Beaufort Park, states that 'There is potential on this site for ground nesting birds to be present (the same as those found within the wider Thames Basin Heaths SPA)'. Therefore a detailed ecological impact assessment will be required to identify and assess potential impacts on the habitats and species present at the site.

CVAG cannot see how building 226 houses with the necessary loss of trees and the destruction of the woodland that is so necessary for the ground nesting birds, and their valued habitat, can possibly secure a sensitively designed layout on this site!

Climate Change

The proposed plan would require clearance of woodland, leading to a reduction in sequestration of CO₂, directly undermining the commitments made by our government at COP26

The planning committee should also note Policy EV4 of the Bracknell Town neighbourhood Plan;

Policy Intent

4 To further enrich the density and variety of the current tree landscape character of Bracknell Town and its tree canopy.

They note;

2 Planting all trees is a good antipollution measure. It also helps with flood prevention, provides shade in times of climate change, increases biodiversity and improves people's physical and mental wellbeing.

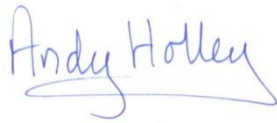
3 However, it is relevant at this point to include a caveat in this plan and to say that, since many of the trees we continue to fell are older specimens, we must also understand what proper compensation looks like, according to author and biologist Amy-Jane Beer who goes on to say that replacing a 150yr old beech or even a youthful 50 yr old pine with a single sapling, is an almost meaningless gesture. We should be planting, or encouraging the natural regeneration of dozens of replacements for every mature tree felled to achieve some kind of balance

Reference to emerging Draft local Plan

The applicant supports their case by referencing the identification of this site in the emerging draft local plan. The inclusion of this area as a potential site in the draft local plan is controversial and has been opposed by CVAG at every stage of consultation. The final decision on whether this site can be included in the local plan will only be made when the plan is reviewed by an external inspector. This should not be predetermined. For the planning officers or committee to give any weight to this section of the draft plan prior to external inspection would be an egregious distortion of the democratic process.

This application should be refused.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy Holley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underlining the name.

Andy Holley
Chair
Crowthorne Village Action Group

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