

**Objection to the Garden Village at Handforth Planning Application**  
**Elected Councillors for Bramhall South and Woodford, Stockport Metropolitan**  
**Borough Council.**

**Cllr. Brian Bagnall, Cllr. Mike Hurleston and Cllr. John McGahan**

**Re: Planning Application Ref: 19/0623M, Outline Planning, Land East of the A34 and South of A555, Handforth, Cheshire. Hybrid planning application proposing a new mixed use settlement for the Garden Village at Handforth.**

We write to object to the above planning application, 19/0623M Outline Planning, Garden Village at Handforth, as Councillors for the ward of Bramhall South and Woodford which adjoins the application site to the North East and lies within Stockport Metropolitan Borough. In drafting this objection, we have considered the application, the previous site-specific SPD adopted in December 2018 and we have also attended the Handforth Garden Village Exhibition public engagement event at Handforth Youth Centre on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

We believe that this application and proposed development in the Green Belt will have an adverse impact on the residents of Stockport, especially our local residents in Woodford and Bramhall as well as Cheadle Hulme and Heald Green. In particular, we are concerned about traffic generation, highways capacity, suitable mitigation, vehicular access to the site and air quality. We also raise infrastructure concerns – there remains an under provision of school places and potential for generating additional pressure on services in Stockport. This application also represents a huge and permanent loss of quality Green Belt with real amenity value to our residents in an area already under considerable development pressure.

**Green Belt**

We are concerned about the permanent loss of Green Belt and openness caused by this application. There is potential for this development to lead to the merging of distinct local communities and create a continuous sprawl across Cheadle Hulme, Bramhall, Woodford and Handforth. Our residents would suffer a permanent loss of amenity and character of the local area, particularly the rural areas of Woodford. Blossoms Lane has a quiet lane designation to protect and maintain its rural character, allow shared use by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and motorists and to contain rising motorised traffic. This has not been acknowledged by the application so far and the development will be to the direct detriment of this protected rural area.

Since our response to the SPD, the second draft of GMSF has been published which suggests Green Belt allocations in Stockport very close to Garden Village, demonstrating how far our remaining green belt is under threat.

**Highways and Connectivity/ Traffic and Transport**

Primary access to the application site is to/from the A34 at the Coppice Way roundabout and the Handforth Dean Retail Park “dumbbell’ junction. The A34 is already a highly

congested route and SEMMMS (South East Manchester Multi-Modal Study) data projects this route will get significantly busier with worsened conditions. This is a key corridor and we do not agree the junction and highways improvements proposed will sufficiently address capacity issues and congestion generated by the Garden Village. This route will be sensitive to any level of increased flow given current and projected conditions and we strongly disagree with the application statement and Chapter 13, Transport, of the Environmental Statement which suggest only minor impact on traffic flows.

SEMMMS was developed to address long standing problems with the road network in this area including severe congestion, capacity issues and start-stop traffic on the A34. The intention was to take traffic out of the communities, especially within Stockport and leave traffic relief and additional capacity in place, freeing up time and space in the network for local communities and removing the harmful impacts of congestion. It was not designed so development by neighbouring authorities could refill the road network and take it back to capacity and breaking point. As local Councillors and residents, we use these roads daily and do not recognise the picture drawn by the application that this level of development will not materially impact the A34, traffic flow, congestion, delays and severance. We receive regular representation from residents in Stockport frustrated with the severe traffic problems here. In view of the level of development in the wider local area and the contemporaneous huge retail development in the area (thousands of retail car parking spaces within just a few miles of the application site), we believe that the traffic and highways impacts have been very considerably underestimated.

Traffic movements out of the Garden Village will be predominantly north-south along the A34 and 1500 dwellings plus employment uses will add very significant additional traffic to the detriment of our residents, causing delays, congestion and increased journey times.

We also raise concerns at the air quality impacts of the additional traffic flows generated by the Garden Village. There are already nearby sites with air quality issues and exceedances of emissions which will be worsened by the traffic and congestion from the proposed Garden Village. Gatley Junction is one of the worst sites for air pollution in Greater Manchester and the addition of significant additional traffic from the new Village settlement will add to this, particularly given many of the traffic movements likely to be generated will be into Manchester or to access the M60. Whilst improvements to the Stanley Green roundabout move traffic along more quickly this simply results in quicker arrival at Gatley Junction, longer queues and more congestion at this already challenging junction.

Traffic generation is likely to be exacerbated by the lack of secondary school provision on-site or close by. The planning statement cites LPS policy CO 1 to promote sustainable travel and transport and to reduce the need to travel, but does not address necessary school journeys of the projected 220 secondary age children. With no secondary provision on site, no provision within walking distance and the site bounded by major arterial routes it seems likely that there will be an increased need to travel and most school journeys will be by car. There is no mention of school transport, school bus routes or sustainable travel to mitigate these additional journeys which will predominantly be made via the A34.

The reliance at this stage on a potential Rapid Bus Transit service as a key highways and transport mitigation measure to address the additional flows is flawed. This proposal is still

at a relatively early stage with no confirmation that this will be built, no timescales and no final agreement or sign off yet from the relevant authorities. The vast majority of commuter journeys in the area are made by car and we question whether it is realistic to suggest enough people will make the change to public transport.

Given our view that the impact of the additional traffic is likely to be higher than currently suggested, we also suggest that the cost of appropriate mitigation works will be significantly higher than has so far been identified.

We also note that the mitigation measures to alleviate the impact of additional traffic flows onto the A34 and the local highways network are subject to further consultation with SMBC and are therefore not finalised as the most suitable or achievable outcome.

Secondary access to the east is proposed at Dairy House Lane which outturns on to Hall Moss Lane in Stockport. We do not believe that this is a suitable location for bus movements due to the width and layout of the road and the potential adverse impacts on other road users as well as residents at this location. We oppose access via the Dairy House Lane/ Hall Moss Lane/ Grove Lane as unsuitable. We again note appropriate mitigation measures for buses here have not been finalised or signed off by SMBC and it is therefore difficult to assess or agree the final outcome. We would also strongly encourage additional bus services to the Airport to be routed straight onto the A555 within the Cheshire East boundary.

### Housing Numbers

The application, Part 1, is outline for “around” 1500 new homes. We previously raised, during the SPD consultation, concerns about how far there may be potential for this number of dwellings to change. In particular, at two areas to the North of the site – land currently occupied by the MoD and land currently occupied by Total Fitness. We remain concerned about plans for these sites if the current occupiers withdrew and whether the current housing numbers given could potentially rise significantly. This would fundamentally alter the infrastructure requirements of the settlement as a whole and would impact further on the neighbouring areas in terms of road, transport, health and social care provision, education provision and policing.

### Infrastructure and educational provision

The application aims for a sustainable community which is able to provide for day to day needs and facilities on site. Despite the main policy requirements for the Garden Village (LPS, pages 294-296) clearly stating “Proposals should consider the potential to include a secondary school on site”, no such provision appears to have been made or considered. We are concerned that educational facilities are underprovided for on-site and in particular remain concerned that the secondary school provision is inadequate for a settlement of this size, which also has adjacent land safeguarded for possible future development.

The mitigation appears to be a contribution to off-site secondary school places at Wilmslow High which we don't believe will fully accommodate the number of secondary age children likely to become resident in this new settlement. We note the objection placed by Cheshire East Children's Services which states “the proposed development would have a detrimental impact upon local education provision as a direct cause from the

development” and agree with this statement. We are not however convinced that the suggested mitigation will fully resolve the issue and believe that off-site provision will only add to the severe traffic congestion problems in the area. The site is bounded by major roads which is unlikely to make school travel by sustainable modes a possibility and again no proposals for school travel are put forward. We again highlight that the secondary school provision in the vicinity of the application site – both in Cheshire East and Stockport Borough – was oversubscribed in 2018.

The application makes no provision for secondary school places within the statutory walking distance (3 miles) or even within 5 miles of parts of the Garden Village which was not at capacity or oversubscribed in 2018.

Our concerns are compounded by the safeguarded land site adjacent to the application site which has the potential to deliver a high quantum of further housing in the future and therefore a significant additional secondary age population who will need accommodating.

We have a real and justifiable concerns remaining about the adequacy of the secondary education provision suggested by this application for the future residents of the Garden Village and the impact for current residents of the surrounding areas, including our residents in Stockport Borough. The application site is on the border of the SMBC local authority area and we believe that residents are likely to seek school places with the SMBC area at schools which currently do not have capacity to accept additional pupils and we are not aware of any proposals for mitigating any increased pressure put on Stockport’s school places as a result of this development.

### Conclusion

Stockport Conservative Councillors have taken an active role in engaging with the Garden Village development proposals and have raised concerns and objections throughout. This application sites thousands of new homes and residents on our border in an area already subject to huge residential and retail development. We are concerned about the scale and size of the development and the impact it will have on our residents, Stockport and our services and highways. The application has done little to address the concerns we have raised throughout.

The application represents a permanent loss of valued Greenbelt and potential merging of settlements to which we are opposed.

As outlined, we believe the size of this development will have very considerable impact on the highways network to the direct detriment of Stockport and our residents. We do not believe that other development in the area has been adequately taken into account in the highways and transport elements of this application. The highly congested A34’s current problems and capacity issues make it highly sensitive to any level of additional demand. Adding direct access for a small town sized development could test this important arterial route to breaking point. In our experience, the application severely underestimates the traffic impact, detriment and loss of amenity for existing residents and road users. New stop start traffic from 1500 homes adds to air quality problems in the area and are a matter of public health. Highways mitigation proposals are underprovided for, nullify recent improvements in the area delivered by SEMMMS and simply have the effect of pushing the problems created by this development a little further up the road into Stockport.

While we appreciate the need for new housing, the loss of green space and the joining of communities will have an adverse effect on residents. New development must be in an appropriate place with appropriate infrastructure and take into account the needs and amenity of the current residents already living in the surrounding area. We believe that the size of this development and the lack of on-site educational provision (particularly given the potential for future expansion of the site and adjacent packages of land) could have a detrimental impact for current residents in the area due to the additional pressures and demand placed on educational services and facilities. We remain concerned that the location at Stockport's borders makes it more likely that additional demands will be placed on Stockport's services and health and education infrastructure and this adversely affects our own residents.

Yours faithfully,

Cllr Brian Bagnall

Cllr. Mike Hurleston

Cllr. John McGahan,

Stockport Conservative Group, Councillors for Bramhall South and Woodford.