

HESLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Date: 16 July 2014

City of York Council
West Offices
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Dear Sir/Madam

Response to the City of York Local Plan: Further Sites.

INTRODUCTION

Heslington Parish Council (HPC) has again received representations from a large number of residents and our response to this consultation reflects their views.

CYC has invited comments solely on specific new proposals and on changes to previously proposed sites.

There are 4 sites which directly affect Heslington:

ST 15	Whinthorpe	301 ha.
SF 3	Whinthorpe safeguarded land	140 ha.
Site Ref 794	University expansion land	28 ha.
ST 4	Land on Hull Road.	

Everything in the HPCs original response to the Preferred Options still stands and none of HPCs objections have changed or been withdrawn as a result of this further consultation. This response is focused totally on these 4 sites.

1. ST 15 – Whinthorpe.

1.1 This site has been increased from 216 ha to 301 ha including 132 ha of Strategic Green space and also including privately owned farms where compulsory purchase powers may need to be used. In our opinion the proposal still fails the “soundness” tests, positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy, which the inspector will consider. CYC also have a duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities.

1.2 **Duty to cooperate.** It is clear from the responses to the earlier consultation and which must also apply to this consultation, that all of Selby District Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, North Yorkshire County Council were totally unaware of this major proposal and they quote concerns about – highway impact on the congested A64, visual intrusion, infrastructure problems, lack of information, scale of development. The original proposal and this variation appear to have been conjured up with no proper cooperation at all.

1.3 **Positively Prepared.** The adjustment to the developable area is an attempt to meet the concerns of many authorities including Natural England, English Heritage and Drainage Authorities. However the movement of the site by 400m away from the uniquely valuable SSSI of Tilmire Common will do little to protect the ground nesting birds from possibly 1100 cats or prevent the 17000 residents from ruining this valuable site simply by over-usage and dog walking via the existing rights of way. The effect to the hydrology of this great natural resource which supports many valuable plant species has not been researched or quantified. The proposed developable area has been moved back from the edge of the A64 but it is still close enough for dwellings to be at risk from air pollution and excessive noise levels. It will still be a very visible development in the open countryside which currently forms a valuable part of the setting of York within its Green Belt. **This setting will be ruined.**

- 1.4 Justified.** The comments in our earlier response still apply.
- 1.5 Effective.** The infrastructure required for Whinthorpe needs to be in place when the first homes are available. This includes primary schools and shops. No commercial business is going to open a shop until 1000 or so dwellings are available and a primary school will need similar numbers of dwellings. No indication has been given as to how this will be achieved in a sustainable manner and how a sufficient number of dwellings can be made available at an early stage of development. **This proposal is unsustainable and undeliverable.**
- 1.6 Traffic implications for Heslington Village.** The primary access proposed for Whinthorpe is onto the A64 which has historically suffered severe overloading particularly on summer weekends with traffic backing up well past any junction with this development. The need for a secondary access for emergency purposes is clear. However Halifax Estates, the major land owner, in their recent presentation to the HPC produced plans indicating a convoluted, complex and probably unworkable arrangement of new and existing roads, some public, some private, and some public roads to be made private, with access controlled by a fallible ANPR technology designed for car parks, not for roads. These new roads cut a swathe through the open countryside to the south of Heslington village and include roundabouts with no obvious purpose. More alarmingly they propose to allow buses [and emergency vehicles to which we do not object] to access York through Heslington along Common Lane and Main Street, which for much of the day is congested with private, commercial and farm traffic, and very many pedestrians, exacerbating an already dangerous situation, increasingly so because of the ever-expanding University. **These proposals are not acceptable and any secondary access to Whinthorpe must not come through Heslington nor must it devalue the green belt land within the ring road.**
- 1.7 Traffic implications for York.** The primary access from Whinthorpe will possibly add 5000 cars at peak hours to York's already overloaded access roads including Fulford Road and Hull Road. Both of these roads are already at 95% of capacity and suffer from air quality issues and the

Inevitable delays may result in Whinthorpe becoming simply a dormitory town for Leeds. **The addition of this extra traffic is unacceptable.**

1.8 HPC fully support the responses from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Natural England and York Ornithological Club in relation to the impact of Whinthorpe on the Tillmire SSSI.

2.0 SF 3 Whinthorpe safeguarded land

This site has now been further extended to 140 ha to accommodate possibly an additional 2100 dwellings on top of the 5580 dwellings on the initial Whinthorpe site. The total potential of 7900 dwellings plus schools, shops and business premises will be a devastating incursion into York's green belt and the setting of York. **This is unacceptable.**

3.0 Site Ref. 794 – University expansion.

HPC objects to this proposal for the following reasons:

3.1 This proposal covers 28 ha of good agricultural land currently classified as green belt and which forms a vital part of the attractive setting of the city of York and of Heslington village. Its current use as agricultural land complements the undoubted high environmental status of the university lake and the ground nesting habitat alongside the lake. This will be lost if the land is developed. The proposed development will compromise the setting of the village and views out of the village to the Yorkshire Wolds. The significance of both setting and views is fully recognised in Heslington Conservation Area No28 from CYC which states that "one of the main elements of the character and appearance of the area is - the charm of the rural setting of the south-west outer edge of Main Street."

The application proposal involves reserving a substantial chunk of Green Belt land which currently forms a valuable green wedge protecting the environment of York and Heslington inside the A64. This would radically change the rural character of this area. It is a disproportionately large-scale development in the wrong place.

3.2 Heslington still preserves its unique village character despite great pressures from the surrounding developments. During the current expansion of the

university a great deal of care was taken to preserve the character of Heslington and its setting in Green Belt. This was achieved in two ways. Firstly, by the creation of a buffer zone between the village and the campus. Secondly, and most importantly, by the creation of a barrier between the campus and the access to the village via Low Lane. This was achieved by careful landscaping of the lakes. No traffic, of any sort generated by the University can cut through the heart of the village. This has proved to be very successful. The Inspector in his report from the Public Inquiry for the current University expansion particularly comments that the lake and wetland area will provide a positive limit to built development to the south of the Heslington East site.

3.3 The siting of a new development to the south of Low Lane will severely compromise the village integrity and the objectives set out in the Heslington East development brief and landscape and master planning documents and particularly the inspector's report which were all designed to make sure that no university traffic goes through the village. It will certainly mean that the village will be used as a main thoroughfare for pedestrians and cyclists and vehicles between the new development and Heslington West.

3.4 If further land is required, it should be prioritized to be taken to the East of Campus East and Low Lane, up to the Grimston Bar roundabout. It should prevent access to Low Lane from the University.

3.5 If this allocation were to be approved then its use and access must be conditioned so that:

- 1 There should be no direct access from the site, when developed, into the village other than via Field Lane.**
- 2 The Local Plan should stipulate that the land can only be developed for the university's own academic purposes, and not be designated as general development land.**
- 3 All existing public routes and Rights of Way should be retained in any completed development.**

4.0 ST 4 Land on Hull Road.

The recommendation on plan of site 794 includes the suggestion that this site is considered to have potential for student housing. The University regularly promotes a collegiate philosophy for their students and has sufficient space on its Heslington East campus for much more student housing. This site should be providing good family accommodation and affordable housing. It should not be wasted on student housing.

Yours faithfully

Fiona Hill
Parish Clerk