



Colmworth Parish Council Representations

**Bedford Local Plan 2040: Plan for Submission
(Regulation 19)**
(15th June – 29th July 2022)

July 2022

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These Representations are prepared and submitted on behalf of Colmworth Parish Council (CPC).

1. Housing Requirement

1.1. CPC considers **Policy DS3(S) Amount and timing of housing growth** to be unsound as it is unjustified and ineffective as set out below.

Oxford-Cambridge ‘Joint Declaration’

1.2. Policy DS3(S) states that the Local Plan will make provision for a ‘minimum of 27,100 dwellings’ between 2020 and 2040. This equates to an average of 1,355 dwellings over the plan period. This is an increase of 385 dwellings on average per annum (a 40% increase) compared with the adopted Local Plan 2030 which has a requirement of 14,550 dwellings between 2015-2030 (970 dwellings per annum average).

1.3. Whilst paragraph 4.7 of the Local Plan explains that the housing requirement is a result of the Council following Government policy and guidance on housing requirements namely the Standard Method, the Council first states in the Local Plan that the 40% increase in housing is a result of the ‘Oxford-Cambridge Joint Declaration’¹:

“...the Council will make provision for significantly more homes as described in the Arc joint declaration. It will do this as a result of government’s new standard method for calculating housing need, which it will deliver in full, and which results in an uplift of 40% when compared to the locally-calculated housing growth planned for in the Local Plan 2030, and by allocating sites that will continue to build out beyond the 2040 plan end date.”

1.4. However, there have been a number of rumours that the Arc may no longer be going ahead. This could also be evidenced by its absence in the Levelling Up and Regeneration White Paper² and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill³.

1.5. There are a number of local media and trade press stories on this including an article in the Cambridge Independent (27th April 2022)⁴ which states:

¹ The Oxford-Cambridge Arc – Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners (2019)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799993/OxCam_Arc_Ambition.pdf

² Levelling Up and Regeneration White Paper (February 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>

³ Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (11th May 2022) <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/58-03/0006/220006.pdf>

⁴ Oxford-Cambridge Arc confusion: Has the project really been ‘flushed down the toilet’? Cambridge Independent (27th April 2022) <https://www.cambridgeindependent.co.uk/news/oxford-cambridge-arc-confusion-has-the-project-really-been-9251669/>

“One of the partners in the Arc’s development, Robbie Owen, head of infrastructure planning and government affairs and Pinsent Masons, said his understanding was that the spatial framework would no longer be going ahead.”

“Cllr Herbert (Cambridge City Council) also said [East West Rail could be at risk](#), but said he hoped the different partners in the Arc discussions would continue to work together.”

1.6. For BBC to base its housing requirement figure on a Joint Declaration for a project that appears to be in serious doubt could result in a Local Plan with an increase of 40% housing without the accompanying strategic infrastructure required to support the housing.

Stepped Approach to Housing Requirements

1.7. CPC notes that there are, what appear to be, multiple miscalculations in Policy DS3(S):

- Under the column 2025/26-2029/30 it states that the total number of dwellings for this period is 4,850 and that the dwellings per annum equates to 1,050. However, 2025/26-2029/30 equates to 5 years. 4,850 divided by 5 = 970. Therefore, BBC appears to have overestimated the number of dwellings per annum for the period 2025/26-2029/30 by 80 dwellings per annum. 80 dwellings X 5 years (2025/26-2029/30) = 400 dwellings. **BBC, it appears, has overestimated the total number of dwellings in the policy by 400 dwellings.**
- The totals of the three columns in the ‘stepped housing requirement’ table does not equate to 27,100 dwellings. 4,850 dwellings + 4,850 dwellings + 17,000 dwellings = 26,700 dwellings. **Therefore, BBC has underestimated 400 dwellings somewhere in its calculations.**
- It is noted that **Policy DS5(S) Distribution of growth** states that 400 dwellings will “take place beyond the plan period”, however this does not assist in understanding the miscalculations in Policy DS3(S) as outlined above.

Policy DS3(S) Amount and timing of housing growth				
Provision of a minimum of 27,100 new dwellings will be stepped as follows:				
	2020/21 - 2024/25	2025/26 - 2029/30	2030/31 - 2039/40	Total
Dwellings (total)	4,850	4,850	17,000	27,100
Dwellings (per annum)	970	1,050	1,700	

Five-year land supply will be measured against the stepped requirement which is applicable at the time of the assessment. When undertaking the five-year supply calculation, should any shortfall arise it will be distributed across the remaining years of the plan period.

Figure 1.1: Policy DS3(S)

1.8. It is concerning that there is a shortfall of 400 dwellings in BBC's calculations set out in the Local Plan which is hopefully a 'typo' or that the intended approach has not been communicated clearly so that this can be easily corrected and robustly explained by BBC.

2. Distribution of Growth

2.1. CPC considers **Policy DS5(S) Distribution of growth** to be unsound as it is unjustified and ineffective as set out below.

Policy DS5(S) fails to set out full extent of growth

2.2. Paragraph 4.31 of the Local Plan states that Policy DS5(S) “...sets out where growth will be located”. However, the policy presents an incomplete picture of the quantum and location of growth that the Local Plan makes provision for between 2020-2040.

2.3. For example, the overall quantum of housing that the policy makes provision for is 13,550 dwellings. This is only 50% of the 27,100 dwellings that Policy DS3(S) sets as the housing requirement figure. This provides a lack of clarity about the location and quantum of all the growth that is being planned through this Local Plan. BBC should not assume that users of the Local Plan have up to date knowledge of the remaining allocations from the 2030 Local Plan and that the assumptions about the housing BBC considers will come forward during the 2040 plan period should be clearly set out in this policy.

No inclusion of small sites

2.4. The policy should clearly set out the number and location of ‘small site’ dwellings it has identified through the development plan and brownfield register in order to comply with paragraph 69 of the NPPF. This requirement of the NPPF is that the LPA must identify at least 10% of its housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare, unless it can show that there are strong reasons why this 10% target cannot be achieved.

No inclusion of windfall allowance:

2.5. BBC’s ‘Stepped Trajectory Topic Paper’ (April 2022), includes provision for a total windfall allowance of 2,630 from 2021-2040. This is an important component of BBC’s housing supply, yet it is not set out anywhere in policy within the Local Plan. CPC considers that the windfall allowance should be set out within Policy DS5(S) to ensure soundness.

Urban Area Supply is Inadequate

2.6. At the heart of the NPPF is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**⁵. Plans and decision should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF explains what this means for plan-making with making effective use of land in urban areas at the heart of mitigating climate change stating that (our emphasis added):

“all plans should promote a sustainable pattern of development that seeks to:

- *meet the development needs of their area;*
- *align growth and infrastructure;*
- *improve the environment;*

⁵ NPPF (2021) paragraph 11

- *mitigate climate change (including by making effective use of land in urban areas) and adapt to its effects*⁶

2.7. Section 11 of the NPPF is called ‘Making effective use of land’. There are a number of important requirements set out in this section of the NPPF for plan-makers including the following:

- *“Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or ‘brownfield land’”⁷*
- *“give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land”⁸*
- *“promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively (for example converting space above shops, and building on or above service yards, car parks, lock-ups and railway infrastructure)”⁹*
- *“Local planning authorities, and other plan-making bodies, should take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs, including suitable sites on brownfield registers or held in public ownership, using the full range of powers available to them. This should include identifying opportunities to facilitate land assembly, supported where necessary by compulsory purchase powers, where this can help to bring more land forward for meeting development needs and/or secure better development outcomes.”¹⁰*

2.8. Given that the NPPF places such great weight and emphasis on the need to make the most effective use of previously developed land and land within settlements it is surprising how little the Local Plan and its evidence have to say about how the Council intends to comply with the NPPF as part of its plan-making.

2.9. BBC’s Development Strategy Topic Paper explains that one of the five ‘components of growth’ it has tested is ‘within the urban area (sites within the urban area boundary)’. BBC explains that the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) concluded that the ‘within the urban area’ component performed the best of all of the potential components:

“In relation to the broad components of growth, the sustainability appraisal found that the first component - within the urban area component performed best. It was likely to have a more positive effect than the other components, particularly in relation to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, promoting town

⁶ NPPF (2021) paragraph 11

⁷ NPPF (2021) paragraph 119

⁸ NPPF (2021) paragraph 120

⁹ NPPF (2021) paragraph 120

¹⁰ NPPF (2021) paragraph 121

sites and under what circumstances it would permit the release of employment sites for housing.

B019	Melbourne Street between Kingsway & A6	0.76	Active	Monitor and manage
AD16	Land west of Manton Lane, Bedford	4.94	Vacant	Monitor and manage
BX05	Land adjacent to St John's Station	1.59	Vacant	Monitor and manage
17	r/o Ampthill Road	2.27	Active	Monitor and manage
18	Elstow Road north	1.76	Active	Monitor and manage
20	Camfords site and area to north	26.59	Active / vacant / non B	Monitor and manage
24	College Street, Kempston	3.17	Active	Monitor and manage
B020	Kingsway (south side)	1.14	Active	Monitor and manage
B022	Ford End Road	1.31	Active	Monitor and manage
B023	Havelock Street	14.22	Active	Monitor and manage
B031	Elstow Road	1.44	Active	Monitor and manage
B042	Ampthill Road	1.28	Active	Monitor and manage
22	Fenlake Industrial Estate	1.97	Active	Monitor and manage
BX07	Kingsway (north side)	2.95	Active	Monitor and manage
BO18	Cardington Rd	0.38	Vacant	Monitor and manage

Figure 2.2: Employment Land Study (Page 40)

Sites Adjacent to the Urban Area

2.15. The Sustainability Appraisal states that it has decided that “in most instances” sites adjoining the edge of the urban area should not be part of the local plan. This is due to the gap between the town and surrounding villages being too narrow. Whilst this may indeed be the case, CPC considers that such an approach which rejects more growth at the edge of the town in favour of selecting a ‘new settlement’ strategy requires greater evidence and justification than what BBC has presented to support its preferred development strategy.

“The Council has decided that sites adjoining the edge of the urban area in most instances should not be part of the local plan strategy because, in many locations, the gap between the edge of the town and villages surrounding it is very narrow and the strategic expansion of the urban area in recent years has already reduced that separation”¹³

¹³ Sustainability Appraisal paragraph 9.9

3. New Settlement Selection

Please note that CPC's representations on this matter are in relation to CPC's support of the conclusions of BBC's new settlement selection however CPC's representations also address a number of inaccuracies within the Sustainability Appraisal that it wishes to see addressed.

3.1. CPC supports the Council's decision to not select the new settlement proposals known as 'Land west of Wyboston – Denybrook Garden Community'. BBC has rightly concluded in its Pre-Submission Local Plan that this site is not well located in relation to any of the East West Rail interchange options and that its development would result in the loss of high quality agricultural land.

Site No.	Address	Reasons why not allocated
1002	Colworth, Sharnbrook	The site performs less well than other sites in relation to air quality, carbon dioxide emissions and travel objectives. The location is not consistent with the Council's preferred strategy.
883	Twinwoods, Milton Ernest	The site performs less well than other sites in relation to air quality, carbon dioxide emissions and travel objectives. The location is not consistent with the Council's preferred strategy.
977	Wyboston	The site is less conveniently located to the planned East West Rail interchange and requires the loss of high quality agricultural land.

Figure 3.1: 'Reasons why not allocated' Sustainability Appraisal (April 2022), Page 108

3.2. BBC explains that it selected the Little Barford new settlement option as it considered that it performed best in relation to air quality, carbon dioxide emissions and travel objectives as it states in its Development Strategy Topic Paper:

*"The planning of a new settlement at Little Barford similarly presents an opportunity to maximise the benefits associated with such a well-connected location. A new rail station at the junction of the East West Rail and East Coast Main Line offers excellent sustainability credentials allowing the settlement to be planned in a way that makes walking and cycling to the station the mode of choice."*¹⁴

*"The Council prefers Little Barford because it is more conveniently located to the planned East West Rail interchange and avoids the loss of high quality agricultural land."*¹⁵

3.3. Given that BBC concluded that 'Denybrook' is not well located to the East West Rail interchange options and that it is not possible to integrate sustainable travel solutions into the Denybrook scheme, in terms of East West Rail, it considers that the assessment of the site **should be scored** in the Sustainability Appraisal against the following Sustainability Objectives as a '**Major Negative**' in the Sustainability Appraisal rather than its current score as a 'Negative':

Objective 1: 'Improve Air Quality

¹⁴ Development Strategy Topic Paper (May 2022), paragraph 5.17

¹⁵ Sustainability Appraisal (April 2022), paragraph 9.10

Objective 3: Reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and improve energy efficiency

Objective 15: Reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable modes of transport

3.4. CPC challenges the Sustainability Appraisal's assertion that the potential new East West Rail station will have 'beneficial effects' for 'Denybrook given its remoteness from all of the railway station options. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal states:

"The testing shows that the negative effects are less severe for both Little Barford and Wyboston in relation to air quality, carbon dioxide emissions and travel objectives than for Colworth and Twinwoods. This is because of the beneficial effects that derive from the provision of a railway station¹⁶.

3.5. CPC's Regulation 18 representations provide analysis and evidence which demonstrates the remoteness and lack of connectivity between 'Denybrook' and the East West Rail station options, as well as the lack of achievable connectivity to any major roads and the promoted scheme's reliance on using unsuitable country roads for all of its access points. We include a summary of these below for consideration at the Regulation 19 stage of the plan-making process as well given that we consider that these provide evidence that justifies a 'Major Negative' score against Objectives 1, 3 and 15 in the Sustainability Appraisal and provides evidence that further supports BBC's decision to reject the 'Denybrook' scheme.

3.6. As CPC set out in its extensive representations to the Regulation 18 consultation it considers the 'Denybrook' site location to be unsustainable and located a very considerable distance from any existing infrastructure. The amount of infrastructure required to make such a location a sustainable and resilient location to deliver a new settlement is unrealistic.

Distance to Potential New Stations

3.7. The site promoter's very rough drawing of a dotted line for a cycle link which would link the southern end of the site with one of the railway station options is void of any technical assessment whether such an idea is feasible, and it is therefore a theoretical idea and should not be relied upon. We have undertaken mapping analysis of the distance and cycle times between Denybrook and the potential stations below.

¹⁶ Sustainability Appraisal (April 2022), Paragraph 8.26

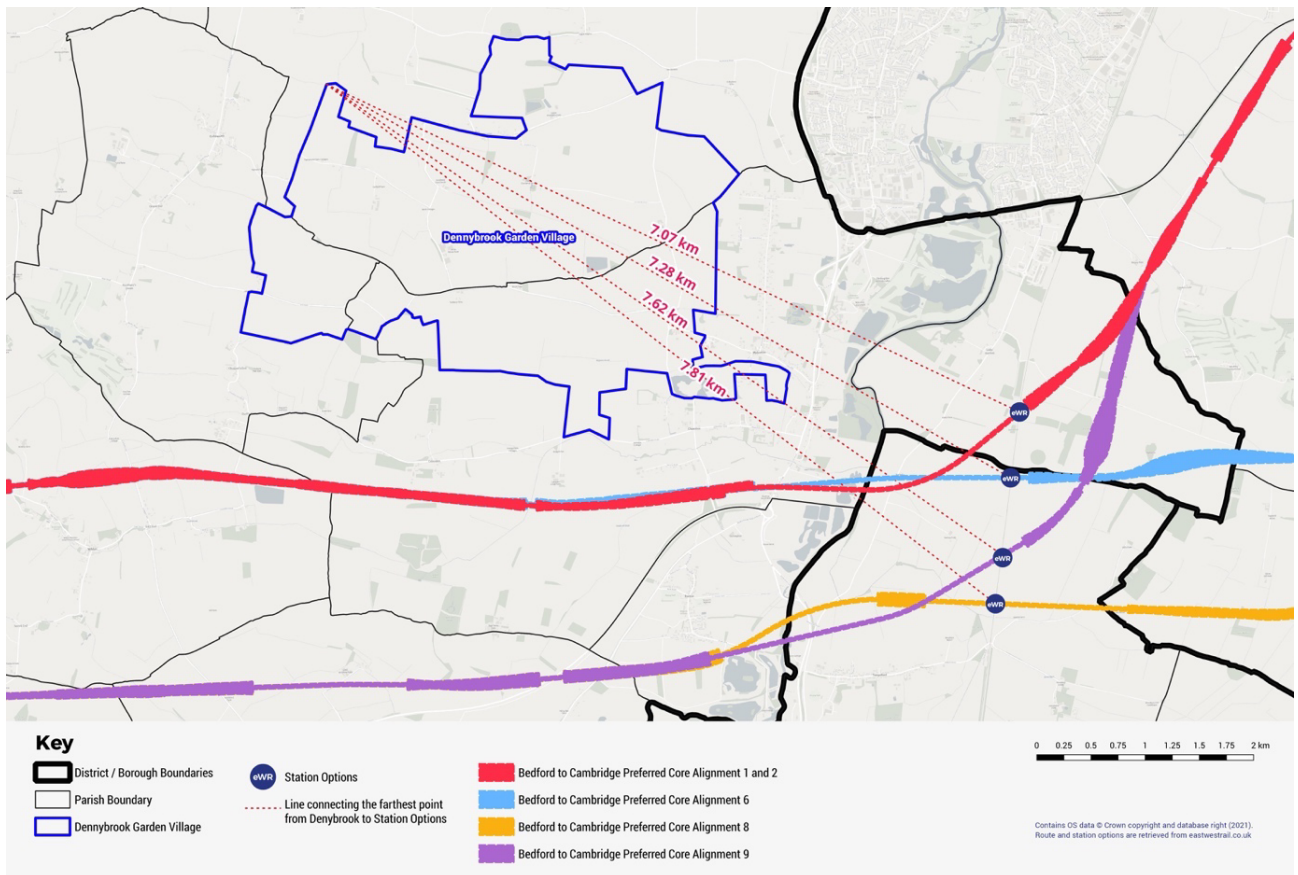


Figure 3.2: Distance between Dennybrook and potential new railway stations

3.8. As one can see the distances based on our calculations are as follows:

- Dennybrook – Option 1: 7.07 km (4.4 miles)
- Dennybrook – Option 2: 7.28 km (4.5 miles)
- Dennybrook – Option 3: 7.62 km (4.7 miles)
- Dennybrook – Option 4: 7.81 km (4.8 miles)

3.9. These distances are clearly the ‘best case scenario’ even though they are calculated from the furthest distance of the site. This is because the distances are calculated ‘as the crow flies’ whereas the road or cycle network to access these stations would be considerably further.

Cycling Distances and Times

3.10. Without any detailed proposals for road and cycling infrastructure from the site promoters we have made some technical assumptions in order to arrive at a more accurate idea of the likely distance and cycling times to the potential new railway stations. To do this we have used the shortest route from the centre of the site along a network composed of the existing network and a straight line extension to the proposed

station where no other access route was built. We used Google Maps API to determine the shortest route distances combined with a GIS calculator to determine the length and time for cycling speeds of 13.8km/h.

- Denybrook – Option 1: 9.87 km (6.13 miles) 43 minutes
- Denybrook – Option 2: 8.86 km (5.50 miles) 39 minutes
- Denybrook – Option 3: 8.69 km (5.40 miles) 38 minutes
- Denybrook – Option 4: 8.63 km (5.36 miles) 38 minutes

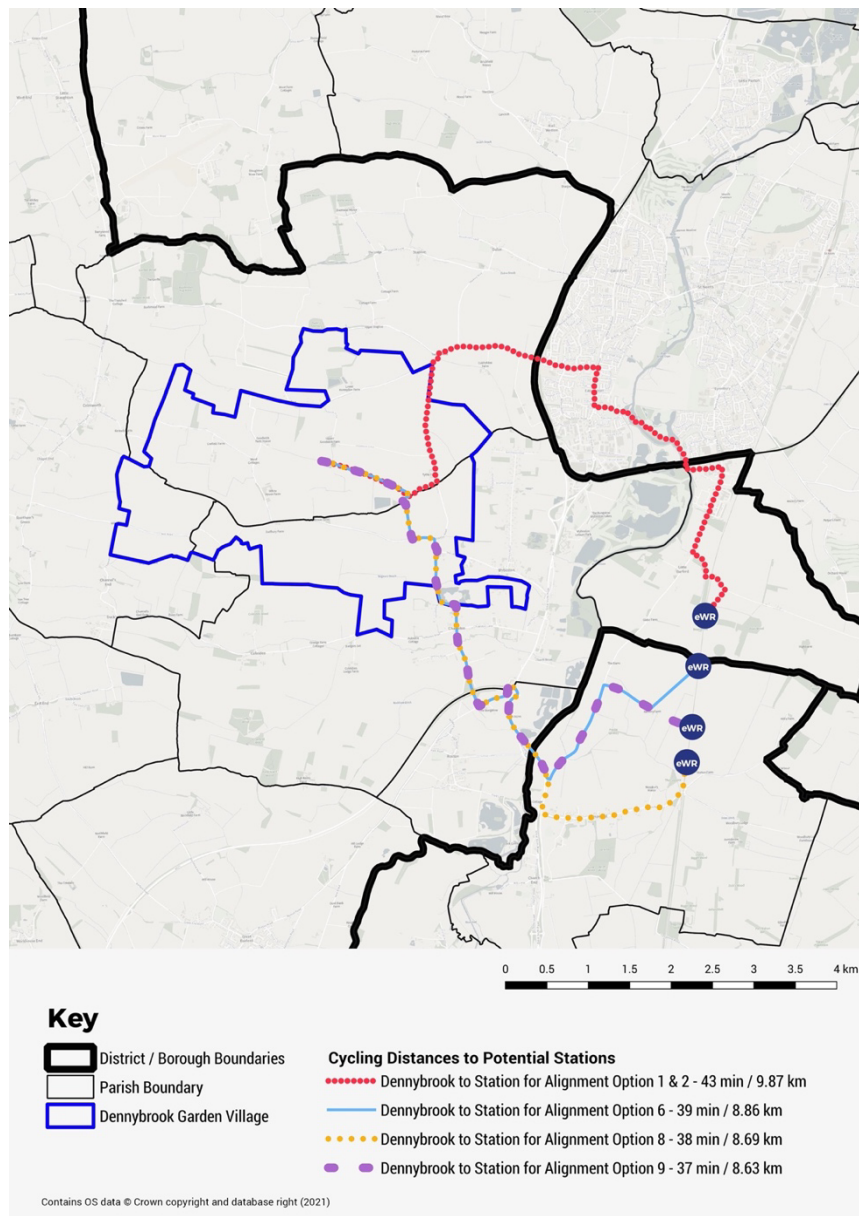


Figure 3.3: Cycling Distance and Time Estimates from Denybrook site to potential new railway stations

3.11 Any suggestion that the Denybrook site can be considered as ‘integrated’ with the potential new railway station is clearly unfounded by the distance between locations of the site and the potential station locations. There is no clear proposed road link that could link the site to any of the potential railways station options so it is not possible to justify

public transportation linking with a railway station. Cycling will clearly not be possible as a legitimate option for residents as clearly the distance of approximately 5 miles is not something an ordinary person could endure for regular or even occasional use of a railway station.

3.12 Clearly CPC is supportive of walking and cycling as the most sustainable forms of travel and that any new settlement proposals in the borough would need to deliver walking and cycling infrastructure to the public transport network, however such plans need to be realistic and these are not.

The Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

3.13 CPC supports the Sustainability Appraisal's assessment of the 'Denybrook' site's potential effects on the 'loss of high quality agricultural land' (SA Objective 9). The SA gives the site a score of 'Major Negative' and it is the only new settlement option to be scored this way and justifiably so.

"Wyboston is the only new settlement to show a major negative effect in relation to the loss of high quality agricultural land."¹⁷

3.14 This assessment alone should be reason enough to reject 'Denybrook' to ensure the protection of this finite resource of the best and most versatile agricultural land to help ensure food security locally and nationally. Clearly, this is a resource that cannot be replaced once developed.

3.15 The NPPF states (our emphasis):

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland"

3.16 A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment¹⁸ sets out the government's 25-year plan to improve the health of the environment by using natural resources more sustainably and efficiently. It plans to:

- protect the best agricultural land
- put a value on soils as part of our natural capital
- manage soils in a sustainable way by 2030
- restore and protect peatland

¹⁷ Sustainability Appraisal (April 2022), paragraph 8.26

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/25-year-environment-plan>

3.17 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that following about assessing agricultural land to enable informed choices about its future”

“How can planning take account of the quality of agricultural land?

The [Agricultural Land Classification](#) assesses the quality of farmland to enable informed choices to be made about its future use within the planning system.

There are five grades of agricultural land, with Grade 3 subdivided into 3a and 3b. The best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. Planning policies and decisions should take account of the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.

In the circumstances set out in Schedule 4 paragraph (y) of the Development Management Procedure Order 2015, Natural England is a statutory consultee: a local planning authority must consult Natural England before granting planning permission for large-scale non-agricultural development on best and most versatile land that is not in accord with the development plan. Natural England has published [guidance](#) on development on agricultural land.”¹⁹

3.18 The PPG explains why planning decisions should take account of the value of soils and agricultural land classification (ALC) to enable informed choices on the future use of agricultural land within the planning system²⁰.

3.19 The Denybrook site is comprised mostly of Grade 2 Agricultural Land and some Grade 1 as evidenced by the map prepared below which means that if developed the borough would lose some of its best agricultural land and would be lost to future generations at a time when climate change is having immediate impacts.

3.20 Of all the promoted new settlements Denybrook has the best agricultural land and it should clearly be protected. Whereas Twinwoods has a considerable amount of previously developed land as does Little Barford. The whole of the Colworth site is comprised of Grade 3 and further assessment would be needed to determine if this is 3a or 3b.

3.21 We also note that most of the Denybrook site promoter’s off-site transport improvements are proposed in the area to the southeast of their site on land that is Grade 1 Agricultural Land which would also be lost as a result of their proposals.

¹⁹ Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 8-001-20190721

²⁰ Paragraph: 002 Reference ID: 8-002-20190721

3.22 One of BBC’s Local Plan Themes is Theme 1: Greener with one of its stated objectives being to protect and enhance natural resources which includes soil (our emphasis):

*“Protect and enhance our natural resources including air, **soil**, minerals and water to minimise the impacts of flooding, climate change and pollution”.*

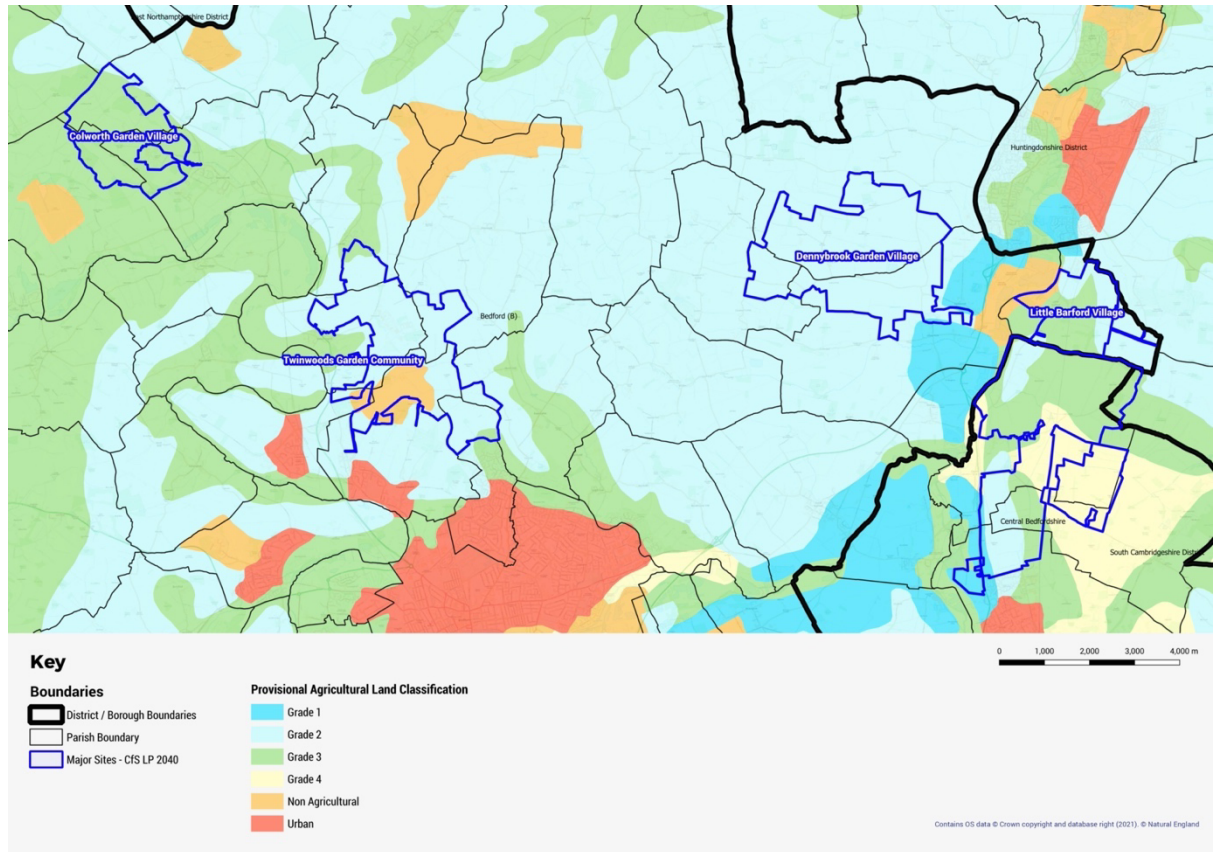


Figure 3.4: Provisional Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) - provided by Natural England (May 2020) under Open Government Licence v3

Heritage

3.23 CPC notes BBC’s Heritage Assessment of ‘Denybrook’ in the Council’s Sustainability Appraisal which concludes based on BBC’s Heritage Team that the scheme would likely result in harm to approximately 21 Grade II listed buildings. CPC supports the Council’s conclusion in the Sustainability Appraisal that *“the scheme is likely to have a high cumulative impact on designated heritage assets”*²¹.

3.24 On this basis CPC considers that the Sustainability Appraisal should score ‘Objective 4 – conserve, sustain and enhance the historic environment’ as a ‘Major Negative’ rather than its current rating as ‘Negative’.

3.25 CPC is concerned that the Council appears to be relying on the site promoter’s evidence in relation to heritage rather than preparing its own Heritage Impact Assessment evidence base.

3.11. Historic England has prepared a number of Advice Notes with its guidance on how authorities should approach heritage in the Local Plan and in their selection of potential sites including the potential impacts on heritage that might result from the

²¹ Sustainability Appraisal, Additional Site Assessments including New Settlements

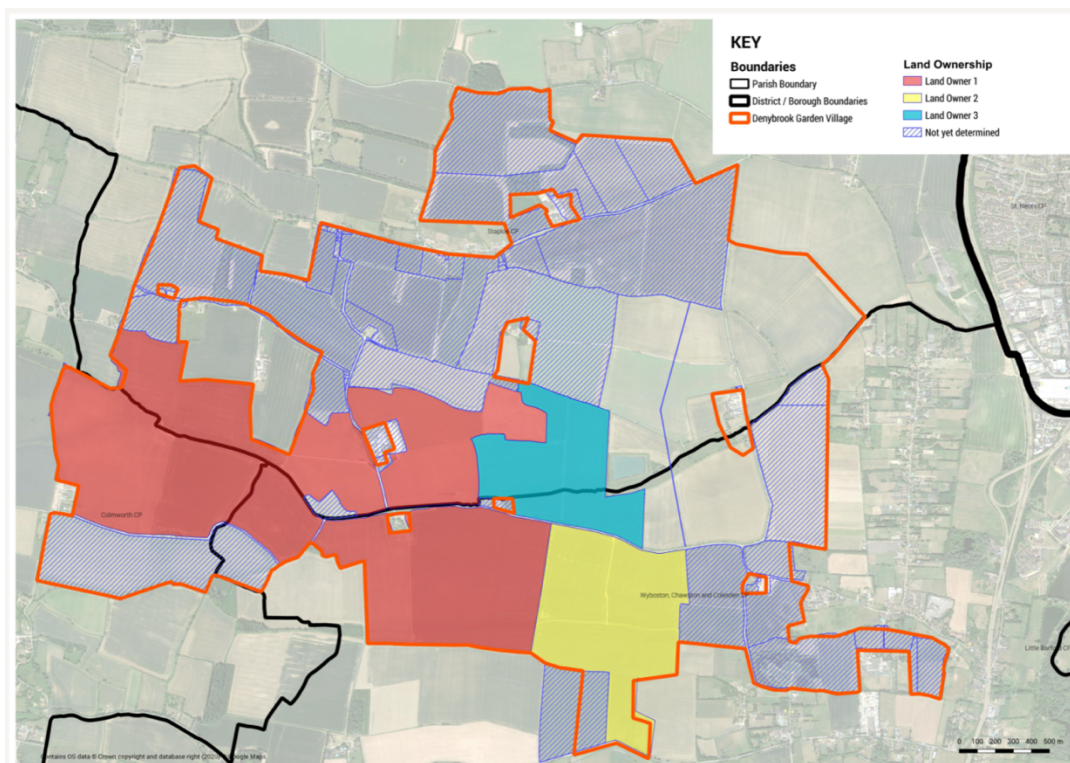
proposals. There are two of these Advice Notes we would like to bring to the attention of BBC:

- The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans (Historic England Advice Note 3) October 2015²².
- Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (Historic England Advice Note 12) October 2019²³

Land Ownership

3.12 The land promoted for development at Denybrook is owned by multiple landowners and by our estimate approximately 56 land parcels. This highlights the complexity of the land assembly and delivery issues that the scheme would likely face if it were to be selected. Please note the landownership map is based on an initial assessment of HM Land Registry information and would need to be confirmed by BBC and the landowners as to its accuracy.

3.13 Land assembly and multiple landowners does not appear to have been assessed by BBC in its considerations of the potential new settlements. CPC considers that the extent of multiple landownerships at ‘Denybrook’ is another reason for rejecting the site as it will lead to complications in the land assembly, masterplanning and delivery process ultimately leading to a fragmented, piecemeal scheme.



²² <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/historic-environment-and-site-allocations-in-local-plans/>

²³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/statements-heritage-significance-advice-note-12/heag279-statements-heritage-significance/>

Figure 3.5: Landownership parcels Dennybrook area. Source of parcel data: HM Land Registry and Ordnance Survey; Reference used for Dennybrook Garden Village Boundary: drawing "Figure 1: Designated Heritage Assets", Drawing No. CSA/5041/103, drawn for Taylor Wimpey.