



**Bourne Rural**  
PLANNING CONSULTANCY LTD

**Planning Appraisal**

**for**

**Land to north of Keysoe Village Hall**

**Kimbolton Road**

**Keysoe**

**Bourne Rural Planning Consultancy Ltd**

**August 2020**

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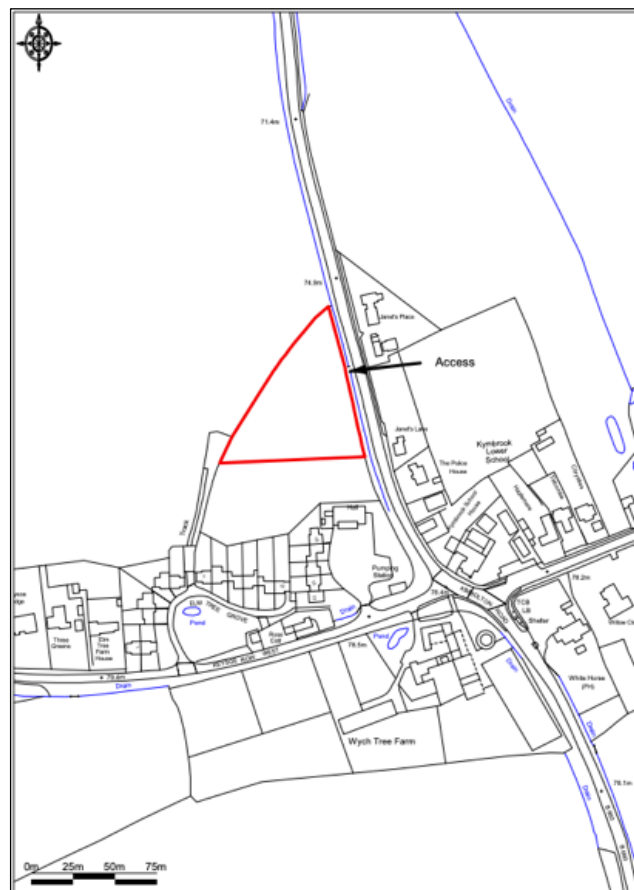
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**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Bedford Borough Council has commenced their “call for sites” as part of their next Local Plan review. In order to complete the “call for sites” form for the Land North of Keysoe Village Hall it was necessary to review previous planning history, current policies and the Council’s draft housing strategy. That research has been recorded and forms the basis of this site appraisal.

**2.0 Site Background**

2.1 The site is Land to the north of Keysoe Village Hall, Kimbolton Road, Keysoe shown edged red in the site plan below.



Land North of Keysoe Village Hall

Planning History

<b>Planning reference</b>	<b>Development</b>	<b>Decision</b>
05/00267/FUL	Erection of three dwelling houses	Withdrawn
04/01923/FUL	Erection of three dwelling houses	Withdrawn
99/00542/OUT	Residential development	<p>Refused</p> <p>Reasons for refusal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Development in open countryside</li> <li>2. Residential development in rural areas restrained</li> <li>3. Does not meet exceptions for residential development in open countryside</li> <li>4. Isolated dwellings detract from rural character and visual amenity</li> <li>5. Set a precedent</li> <li>6. Creation of access on B660 which should carry traffic both freely and safely</li> <li>7. Access point has restricted visibility</li> </ol>

2.2 In the last round of “call for sites” (2015 and 2017) this site was put forward. The relevant documentation “Site Selection Methodology “ identified the methodology that was used to select sites that progressed through the process. The methodology includes 4 steps:

1. Initial appraisal to identify which sites will be taken forward for further assessment. Sites which are not in locations identified in the spatial strategy, do not meet the site size criteria or which have overriding physical or environmental constraints were filtered out;
2. Assessing the suitability and availability of each potential site;
3. Assessing the deliverability of each site including viability considerations;
4. Assessing how each site will contribute to meeting the objectives of the plan.

2.3 The available evidence indicates that this site was filtered out at Step 1. Although it was of suitable size (i.e greater than 5 dwellings) and has no obvious environmental or physical constraints, it would appear to have failed the spatial strategy test.

2.4 The spatial strategy test required the site to be located within or adjacent to the urban area of Group 1 or 2 villages or in close proximity to the settlement boundary. The site failed this criteria as it is not a Group 1 or 2 village and there is no settlement boundary for the village.

2.5 As a consequence the site failed to progress through the call for sites route for the last Local Plan.

### **3.0 The Appraisal**

#### Current Planning Policy Framework – documents considered

- Local Plan 2030
- Allocations and Designations Local Plan 2013
- Local Plan 2002 – some saved policies
- Climate Change and Pollution SPD 2009

#### Additional documents considered

- Draft Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026
- Call for sites submissions – for Local Plan 2030
- Planning Policy Briefing Note – Local Plan 2030 Policies 5S, 6 and 7S
- Development Strategy and Site Selection Methodology

3.1 Within the settlement hierarchy, Keysoe does not have a settlement policy area boundary (SPA). The overall aim is to direct development within such areas. However,

within the preparation period of the existing Local Plan there was a change of approach to smaller settlements. The plan now identifies Small Settlements where development can be supported. Keysoe, including Brook End, is defined as a Small Settlement. However, proposals will only be supported where it contributes to the character of the settlement and is appropriate to the structure, form, character and size of the settlement as a whole. Importantly, there are a series of exclusions to this policy.

- 3.2 It is likely that this site would be caught by one of the exclusions, namely that the site is undeveloped land on the edge of the settlement where the land relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the built form of the settlement. Residential development of the site would, therefore, be contrary to this current policy.
- 3.3 Because of its location the site is likely to be considered countryside rather than within a small settlement. Some limited development is allowed, in such locations, by virtue of Policy 7S. The restrictions of this policy would not allow residential development of the site other than for affordable housing to meet local needs in the rural area. There is, in addition, a local exception which seeks to allow limited new development where there is clear evidence that it would meet a local need and would make a positive contribution to an area.
- 3.4 In this context, however, there is very little opportunity for development of this site. Residential development would need to respond to an identified community need. In addition there must be evidence of an identifiable community support as well as Parish Council support. Even with Parish Council support any proposal would have to be assessed against the impact on the countryside location.
- 3.5 In the current policy framework the development of this site for residential development would be very difficult. The Brook End Farm site is different because it is a farm yard with existing buildings and is in a more central location with adjacent development.
- 3.6 Given the difficulty in developing the site in the short term without an identifiable community need, it is worth putting the site forward again for “call for sites”.

- 3.7 The draft Housing Strategy indicates that there is a demand in the rural areas for self-build homes. The strongest demand is not in this village, although there is a demand. It is worth identifying the site for this purpose within the “call for sites” form.
- 3.8 Any site which is put forward through the “call for sites” process needs to identify how the proposal would respond to climate change. This is because the council has declared a climate emergency.
- 3.9 There is a policy in the Local Plan which needs to be specifically addressed when promoting a site through the “call for sites” process.

*Policy 52S – Climate change strategic approach*

*The Council will require the development and use of land buildings to address climate change, adapting to anticipated future changes and mitigating against further change by reducing gas emission.*

- 3.10 The site is not in sustainable location in which other reliable transport options are available. It would therefore be important to ensure any dwellings meet high sustainable standards. Such measures should include the intention to adopt the code for Sustainable Homes which set out a series of environmental standards that new houses have to meet. These include:

- Energy efficiency
- Waste
- Materials used in construction
- Water use

- 3.11 Other measures would include the electric charging points for each dwelling to encourage electric private vehicles.
- 3.12 In terms of ecology there could be a commitment to increase bio-diversity on the site and this would be evidenced using a bio-diversity accounting matrix. As well as seeking to achieve a target of 25% tree canopy cover through tree planting and the use of green walls and roofs.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

- 4.1 This remains a difficult site to develop given its location on the edge of the settlement unless an affordable housing scheme is proposed. Even then it would require significant work evidencing that there is a need for affordable local housing and would need to be supported by the local community and Parish Council.
- 4.2 In these circumstances it is worthwhile to put the site forward for the “call for sites’ process. It is acknowledged that this site did not progress through the previous filtering process with the existing Local Plan. It is probable that the same reasons could preclude this site again. However, the Council have very tough housing targets to meet and they may have to widen their approach to their settlement strategy. If the site is not put forward it cannot be considered.
- 4.3 To be successful any development would have to meet very high sustainable standards given that it is in a rural area with poor public transport links.