



## Appeal Decision

Inquiry Held on 20-22 and 27 October 2020

Site visit made on 28 October 2020

**by John Woolcock BNatRes(Hons) MURP DipLaw MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

**Decision date: 7 December 2020**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Z2830/W/20/3251622**

**Land South of Grange Park, Quinton Road, Northampton NN4 5DF**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Manor Oak Homes against the decision of South Northamptonshire District Council (SNDC).
  - The application No:S/2019/0856/MAO, dated 12 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 19 February 2020.
  - The development proposed is up to 330 dwellings, land for community uses, open space, drainage, footpath improvements and vehicular access with all matters reserved other than access. [This description was amended]
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary matters

2. SNDC considered a revised scheme from that originally submitted with the application. This reduced the number of dwellings to 300 and added land for a new school. The revised proposal is described as: "Outline application for up to 300 dwellings and land for a new school (up to two forms-of-entry) along with open space, drainage, footpath improvements, new off-site footpath links, vehicular access and all matters reserved other than access." It is the scheme shown on the drawings in the List of Plans attached to this decision that I have used in my consideration of the appeal.
3. The appeal application is in outline but with access to be determined as part of the application. Drawing No.TA111 rev C shows the Proposed Site Access: Right Turn Lane Design. Matters included in the Parameters Plan 41208 011D are intended to be the subject of a planning condition were the appeal to succeed. I have had regard to Drawing No.41208 019 rev R entitled Illustrative Masterplan with 2FE School, along with any details shown on other drawings, as illustrative material not forming part of the application.
4. The appeal site is an agricultural field located to the south of Grange Park, which is a residential area at the southern extent of the Northampton urban area. The northern and north-western boundaries of the site adjoin the southern boundary of the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA) defined in the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) 2014 (JCS) in recognition of the importance of ensuring that Northampton's housing needs are provided in a sustainable way. To the south-west the site

adjoins the M1 motorway. The eastern site boundary is marked by a bridleway and belt of mature trees, beyond which is open countryside. The bridleway leads to Foxfield's Country Park, which contains sports pitches, a pavilion and extensive natural and landscaped areas with circular walks. Quinton Road defines the southern boundary of the site with agricultural fields on the opposite side of the road.<sup>1</sup> Grange Park comprises about 1,000 dwellings, a local shopping centre, along with community facilities and several large distribution warehouses. The appeal site is separated from dwellings in the southern part of Grange Park by Alamein Wood, which is the subject of a Tree Preservation Order.

5. Pedestrian access to the appeal site from Grange Park exists via the bridleway/footpath to Foxfield's Country Park and by means of unmade pathways, parts of which are informal, through Alamein Wood. Vehicular access to the site can only be obtained from Quinton Road. Vehicles from the appeal site destined for Grange Park or other parts of the NRDA would need to travel either east along Quinton Road to join Wootton Road, or head west along Quinton Road before turning right onto the A508 and via the roundabouts at Junction 15 of the M1 to join the A45 or to enter Grange Park.
6. SNDC refused the application, against officer recommendation for approval, on three grounds. The first reason for refusal states that the proposal would represent unsustainable development because of heavy reliance upon private car travel and would not provide a satisfactory means of access for pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, shorten journeys, facilitate access to jobs and services, reduce the need to travel or encourage the use of public transport or other alternative modes of transport, reduce congestion on the local highway network, reduce carbon emissions or address social exclusion for those without a car. The second reason for refusal concerns the location of the site outside the village confines of Grange Park, in the open countryside, where large scale development on unallocated sites generally is not considered appropriate. SNDC's third reason for refusal was that due to the site's proximity to the M1 motorway the proposal would place future residents and children attending the proposed primary school at risk of exposure to high levels of air and noise pollution. SNDC withdrew the third reason for refusal on 11 June 2020. However, interested persons continue to support the rejection of the proposed development on these grounds.
7. The Statement of Common Ground (SoCG1) by the appellant and SNDC agreed that the impacts of the proposed development on local infrastructure could be mitigated via improvement works and/or financial contributions secured by planning obligations. But whether the proposal constitutes NRDA-related housing development is in dispute. It is agreed that the most recent housing land availability study published in respect of SNDC, excluding the NRDA, shows an 8.26-year supply, and the supply in respect of the NRDA shows a 2.75-year supply. The appellant agreed a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG2) with Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) in respect of the transport assessment, travel plan and proposed bus provision.
8. Covenants with SNDC for 35% of the total number of dwellings to be affordable housing, open space and its future maintenance, including a noise attenuation fence, along with financial contributions towards recreation, are included in a planning obligation by deed of agreement dated 5 November 2020 (the

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<sup>1</sup> This part of Quinton Road is also known as Courteenhall Road and Washbrook Lane.

Agreement). Other contributions are included towards community facilities, primary healthcare and refuse/recycling bins. The Agreement also includes covenants with NCC for education and the primary school site, libraries, provision of bus service/bus stops and maintenance of a bridleway. A unilateral undertaking (UU), dated 2 November 2020, would provide for a new footpath link and upgrading of an existing pedestrian route through Alamein Wood, with associated lighting and provision for future ongoing management and maintenance. It also includes financial contributions towards parking spaces and signage in the village of Quinton. The obligations in the Agreement and UU are made subject to compliance with the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (CIL) 2010 (as amended). The Inquiry was closed in writing on 9 November 2020.

### **Main issues**

9. The main issues in this appeal are the effects of the proposed development on the need to travel and whether the proposal would offer a genuine choice of transport modes. A key consideration is whether the proposal would meet the vision, objectives and policies of the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

### **Reasons**

#### *Need to travel*

10. The UU provides for a planning application to be made for the creation of a new section of footpath and the upgrading of an existing pedestrian route through Alamein Wood. This footpath link would comprise a 3 m wide footpath with associated lighting completed, as permitted, prior to the first occupation of any dwelling erected on the appeal site, and thereafter always made available for public use. A suggested planning condition provides that no development shall commence until details of a footpath link have been submitted to and approved by SNDC and the approved works have been implemented in full.<sup>2</sup>
11. The pedestrian link through the woods would mean that the nearest entrance of the appeal site would be about 1.3 km - 1.4 km from the local centre at Grange Park, which includes a convenience store with some local employment establishments. Doctors/Dentists surgeries and a pharmacy, a public house, restaurant and coffee shop are some 1.4 km from the appeal site. A community centre and pre-school/nursery are about 1.2 km walking distance away. Employment sites near to Junction 15 are about 1.4 km walk from the entrance of the appeal site. Dwellings located towards the southern part of the appeal site could be up to an additional 450 m walking distance from these local facilities. The scheme includes provision for an on-site primary school and there are local recreation facilities adjacent to the site in Foxfield's Country Park. However, the nearest secondary school, Caroline Chisholm School, is located at Wootton.
12. The appellant argues that, except for Caroline Chisholm School, these local destinations fall within the preferred maximum acceptable walking distance of 2,000 m cited in the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation's (CIHT) 2000 publication *Guidelines for Providing Journeys on Foot*. However, this distance applies to "Commuting/School Sight-seeing", whereas CIHT's preferred maximum for "Town centres" is 800 m and for "Elsewhere" 1,200 m.

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<sup>2</sup> The suggested condition is in alternative forms, with either just a direct 80 m link through the woods or the direct link along with a spur through the eastern part of the woods.

I do not consider that the 2,000 m maximum is an appropriate standard to apply for an acceptable walking distance from the appeal site to local facilities in Grange Park. CIHT's more up to date 2015 publication entitled *Planning for Walking* does not repeat reference to the maximum acceptable walking distance of 2,000 m. It states that walking neighbourhoods are typically characterised as having a range of facilities within 10 minutes' walking distance (around 800 metres). This is reflected in the recent National Design Guide (NDG), which defines "Walkable: Local facilities are within walking distance, generally considered to be no more than a 10 minute walk (800m radius)." With the exception of the on-site primary school and parts of Foxfield's Country Park, all the local facilities and services in Grange Park would be significantly beyond what is considered in the NDG to be within walking distance for residents of the appeal scheme.

13. The local facilities and services in Grange Park and employment establishments in the local area would be in reasonable cycling distance for those who are able, and prefer to, cycle. However, cycling is not an option for many people or for some trips. Electric cycles may in the future encourage more cycling, longer trips and the transport of heavier loads, but for many people cycling would be weather dependent. There would need to be a transformation in current attitudes towards cycling to achieve a modal shift here that would have a significant impact on the use of cars.
14. Local residents are concerned about the safety of those using an 80 m long path through the woods during the hours of darkness. This concern is not without some foundation as the Crime Prevention Design Advisor commented that lighting remote footpaths that are not well overlooked by passing vehicles or adjacent development encourages their use and potentially puts people in harm's way. *Planning for Walking* states that the propensity to walk or cycle is not only influenced by distance but also the quality of the experience. It adds that people may be willing to walk or cycle further where their surroundings are more attractive, safe and stimulating, with relevant considerations including the adequacy of surveillance, sight lines and appropriate lighting. The NDG states that prioritising pedestrians/cyclists means creating routes that are designed so that people want to use them. Even with appropriate lighting some people may choose not to use the path through the woods because of security concerns. When this occurred, it would be likely to generate more trips by private cars.
15. Turning to public transport, the appellant records that the northern entrance of the appeal site is approximately 620 m from the nearest bus stop in Wake Way, Grange Park. SNDC points out that dwellings within the appeal site would be likely to be between 850 m to more than 1 km from this bus stop. Whichever is correct, it is evident that the bus stop for the half-hourly 11/11A Stagecoach bus service would be far more than the 400 m from dwellings, which is traditionally regarded by the CIHT as a cut-off point for walking to bus stops in residential areas. The distance, along with the passage through the wood, for some people, would detract from the appeal of catching the 11/11A service. This again would be likely to result in use of cars if other existing or planned bus services could not meet peoples' specific requirements for travel.
16. The 33/33A bus service operated by Z and S Transport passes along Quinton Road with a broadly two-hour service between Northampton / Milton Keynes. The Agreement would provide a bus stop on this route close to the proposed vehicular access to the appeal site. However, the limited frequency of the

service could make it difficult for many commuters to use. I consider that the 33/33A service would be unlikely to have much of an impact on modal shift for the occupiers of the proposed development. Furthermore, this is a subsidised service and no evidence was adduced to indicate that funding would be available to continue the service in the longer term.

17. The Agreement provides for a bus service to operate within the proposed development. This specifies provision for a scheduled morning and evening peak time service, one return service on Saturday, a scheduled service for pupils of Caroline Chisholm School, a daily off peak service to Northampton, along with access to a demand responsive Community Bus Service for pre-booked journeys (On Demand Bus Service). SNDC acknowledges that such a community bus service would have a role to play, but I share the reservations of local objectors and SNDC about capacity and frequency constraints on such a service limiting how much impact it would be likely to have on modal shift. The Agreement states that the approved Bus Service Scheme for the first five years shall include details of capacity, subject to the cost not exceeding the Bus Service Contribution of £359,600. Residents would be entitled to free travel on the Bus Service for twelve months. The On Demand Bus Service for five years following the expiration of the Bus Service would be secured by a contribution of £110,000. Given these financial limits it seems to me that the capacity of service would depend upon what would be financially viable for the operator.
18. In commenting on the planning application the principal bus operator in the area, Stagecoach Midlands, stated that many properties would be beyond 1 km from the bus stop in Grange Park, where the ideal standard is 400 m, and therefore anticipated that the site would not be attractive to anyone using public transport. Stagecoach also commented on the considerable traffic congestion in the area that severely impacts the reliable operation of its bus services and does not encourage modal shift. When later asked by the appellant about options available with Stagecoach to serve the development with an hourly bus service, with funding from the developer for five years, Stagecoach indicated that it typically takes 10 years for new developments to support a commercial bus service, but notes that this is dependent on the number of houses and whether the site contained other facilities such as retail outlets. Stagecoach queried whether the proposed 300 units would generate the 200 fare-paying passengers per day it considered necessary to make the service commercially viable.
19. The service proposed by the appellant would operate on a different model to Stagecoach, but it seems to me that whatever commercial model was used its success in the long term would be dependent upon the housing development being of sufficient size to generate enough passengers for a viable operation. It would be unlikely that many Grange Park residents would use buses that served the appeal site because of the existing half-hourly 11/11A service, the possible deterrent effect of the footpath link through the woods, along with possibly longer journey times via the circuitous routes into Northampton from this part of Quinton Road. Doubts about the long-term viability of a bus service to serve the appeal site weigh significantly against the sustainability credentials of the proposed development.
20. For journeys that could not be made by walking, cycling or public transport the use of private cars would involve using rural roads to reach the urban area. SNDC reported a distance of 3.7 km from the centre of the appeal site to the



local centre at Grange Park by travelling west along Quinton Road. The route to the east via Wootton Road would be longer and more circuitous. This is a site where connectivity by walking, cycling and public transport would need to be easy to avoid an unacceptable level of dependency upon cars. The proposed Travel Plan would encourage sustainable transport modes, but I consider that it would be very difficult to entice people out of their cars where the appeal site is so detached from the urban area.

21. NCC submitted SoCG2, which was the subject of some clarifications suggested by the appellant.<sup>3</sup> In summary, this indicated that NCC agreed with the appellant that the site represents a sustainable location for development in respect of connectivity and access to sustainable modes of transport. However, neither SoCG2 nor ID10 set out in any detail the basis for this conclusion having regard to the most recent guidance about Movement in the NDG. I have taken the views of NCC into account, but do not consider them to be determinative about sustainability considerations here.
22. The appellant's comparisons with the permitted development at Wootton Fields Phase 3 are not very helpful in determining the current appeal. It was apparent from my site visit how beneficial it is for that 110 dwelling scheme to have direct road access into the NRDA in terms of minimising the length of journeys that could not be undertaken by walking, cycling or public transport and so were made by car. That contrasts starkly with the circuitous vehicular routes into the NRDA from the appeal site.
23. The NDG introduces 10 characteristics to illustrate the Government's priorities for well-designed places, which include: "Movement - accessible and easy to move around". The NDG states that a well-designed movement network provides a genuine choice of sustainable transport modes and limits the impact of cars by prioritising and encouraging walking, cycling and public transport. The proposed development would conflict with the NDG, which seeks to reduce reliance upon the private car and to move away from car use for short journeys.
24. Connectivity for the appeal scheme would fall far short of the aims of Strategic Policy 3 of the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan 2012, which seeks to ensure that all developments are well connected by public transport and walking, cycling and motor vehicle routes to allow ease of movement between the development and existing built up areas and provide access to employment and key services.
25. Taking all the above into account, my rounded judgement is that the appeal scheme would have poor connectivity with the Northampton urban area. I consider that the appellant has understated the likely impact of the proposal on the need to travel by car, and underestimated the resultant harm given the distance these vehicles would be likely to travel, and the type of roads used. The scheme would be harmful because it would increase car dependency, with implications for greenhouse gas emissions, congestion on local roads, and social exclusion. This is a consideration that weighs heavily against the proposed development.

#### *Planning policy*

26. I am required to decide this appeal having regard to the development plan, and to make my determination in accordance with it, unless material considerations

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<sup>3</sup> ID10.

indicate otherwise. The development plan for the area includes the JCS and the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029 (LPP2). The LPP2 was adopted on 22 July 2020 and replaced the remaining saved policies of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan 1997.

27. JCS Policy S4 provides for about 28,470 net additional dwellings within the NRDA in the period 2011 to 2029. It provides that Northampton's housing needs will be met primarily within the existing urban area and at the sustainable urban extensions (SUE) within the NRDA boundary. It adds that additional development to meet Northampton's needs will be supported only if it meets the vision, objectives and policies of the JCS. Policy S4 also states that the NRDA boundary will be reviewed as part of any review of the housing requirement for West Northamptonshire or any of its constituent administrative areas. Policy S1 concerns the distribution of development. Policy S1 A) provides for its concentration primarily in and adjoining the principal urban area of Northampton. SNDC argues that the appeal scheme is located outside the NRDA but acknowledges that the appeal scheme would contribute to meeting some of Northampton's housing needs. Nevertheless, Policy S1 is a general and overarching policy with which compliance is determined by how the proposal squares with Policy S4. This must be so as housing that was not additional NRDA development pursuant to Policy S4 would be within a rural area where Policy S1 D) limits new development.
28. LPP2 Policy SS1 directs new development towards the most sustainable locations in accordance with the District's settlement hierarchy, but adds that NRDA-related housing development beyond settlement confines would be supported where it complies with Policy S4 of the JCS and directly adjoins the NRDA. Policy LH1 provides exceptions for development outside settlement confines. Such development is considered to be in the open countryside and will not be acceptable unless it is, among other things, NRDA-related housing development compliant with Policy S4 of the JCS and directly adjoins the NRDA.
29. Part of the northern boundary of the appeal site adjoins the NRDA and JCS Policy S4 is a key consideration in determining this appeal. The following therefore considers the proposed development with regard to the vision, objectives and policies of the JCS, and whether it would comply with the development plan as a whole, before assessing whether there are any material considerations which would indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan.

#### *JCS Vision*

30. The JCS Vision provides that communities will be sustainable with strong social cohesion, with services, facilities and infrastructure supporting communities and their residents. It adds that Northampton will be the focus and heart for its well integrated neighbourhood communities. The proposed development because of poor connectivity would not provide a well integrated neighbourhood community. I do not consider that the proposal would accord with the Vision set out in the JCS.

#### *JCS Objectives*

31. The JCS sets out 16 spatial objectives. Some of these are more relevant than others in determining compliance with Policy S4. However, I have considered all the objectives to come to an overall view as to whether the JCS Objectives would be met.

32. Objective 1 concerning climate change would not be met because the scheme would result in a need for residents to travel considerable distances by car to access services and facilities, which would be at odds with the objective to promote the use of sustainable travel modes.
33. The scheme would make necessary provision for infrastructure and so would satisfy Objective 2.
34. Objective 3 deals with connections and seeks to reduce the need to travel, shorten travel distances and make sustainable travel a priority by maximising the use of alternative travel modes, and in so doing reduce carbon emissions and address social exclusion for those who do not have access to a private car. The appellant argues that 'maximising' here should be considered on a site by site basis, and not judged against some theoretical ideal. SNDC accepts that nothing more could be reasonably proposed to improve the sustainability credentials of the appeal scheme. But that by itself does not mean that the scheme would meet Objective 3.
35. Whether a scheme maximises the use of alternative travel modes for the purposes of Objective 3 should be assessed in the wider context of the JCS's Spatial Portrait. This notes that West Northamptonshire is one of generally high car ownership and residents appear to use the private car as the preferred mode of travel. This is reinforced by a poor public transport network in terms of destination choice and frequency, with over-reliance on the private car leading to increased congestion on many of the area's roads.<sup>4</sup> It adds that it is important for economic prosperity and quality of life that people can easily reach facilities such as education, employment, healthcare facilities, shops and leisure attractions. Furthermore, the JCS states that traffic congestion must be addressed and new developments must be well connected to towns and services by a choice of transport options, giving priority to public transport, walking and cycling.<sup>5</sup> This is the context here for making a judgement about whether the proposed development meets Objective 3.
36. The appeal scheme would not reduce the need to travel or shorten travel distances. Notwithstanding the measures proposed to maximise walking, cycling and the use of public transport, I do not consider that these would be sufficient to address social exclusion for future residents who did not have access to a private car. I do not consider that the proposal would meet the aims of Objective 3.
37. The poor connectivity I have identified would bring the proposal into conflict with Objective 4, which seeks to ensure new development in urban areas effectively supports and links new and existing communities physically and socially to achieve, among other things, social cohesion.
38. An additional 300 dwellings would add to the local economy, some of which would be likely to support Northampton Town Centre, but in terms of Objective 5 this would be of marginal significance.
39. Objectives 6 and 7 concern Daventry, Towcester and Brackley town centres and so are not relevant.
40. Objectives 8 and 9 concern economic advantage and specialist business development. Construction employment and the contribution residents would make to the economy and jobs would assist to some extent in achieving these

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<sup>4</sup> JCS paragraph 4.29.

<sup>5</sup> JCS paragraphs 4.47 and 4.48.



- objectives. But in the context of West Northamptonshire's economy this would be of marginal significance.
41. Provisions for a primary school would satisfy Objective 10 insofar as a proposal for 300 dwellings would be required to support development of learning infrastructure.
  42. The scheme could provide a range of housing, but I do not consider that it would meet the needs of residents because of its poor connectivity, and so find that Objective 11 concerning housing would not be met.
  43. Objective 12 seeks to protect and support rural communities. The appellant argues that the proposed primary school could be used by children from surrounding rural catchments, and that residents of Quinton and Hackleton would qualify for the affordable housing. I am not convinced that such tenuous links would meet the aims of Objective 12 and consider that the appeal scheme would have a neutral effect in terms of supporting rural communities.
  44. The appellant's argument that the scheme would be capable of providing accessible housing for rural-based workers has some traction with Objective 13 concerning rural diversification and employment opportunities.
  45. Notwithstanding that Objective 14 refers to SUEs, I consider that the appeal scheme would, subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, satisfy the underlying aims of Objective 14 concerning green infrastructure and biodiversity.
  46. Insofar as the matters to be considered at outline planning stage are concerned the scheme for the site itself would reasonably meet the aims of Objectives 15 and 16 concerning high quality design and heritage. However, its connectivity would not accord with design guidance about Movement in the NDG.
  47. The scheme would reasonably meet some Objectives and would have a neutral or marginal effect on others. But I do not consider that it would meet Objectives 1, 3, 4 or 11. Taking all the above into account I do not consider that, overall, the proposal would meet the Objectives of the JCS.

#### *JCS Policies*

48. JCS Policies S10 and C2 are most relevant in assessing whether the development meets the policies of the JCS. How the proposal squares with Policy S1, concerning the distribution of development, and Policy R1 for rural areas, depends on whether or not the proposal is compliant with Policy S4. Therefore, Policies S1 and R1 cannot be taken into account in determining whether the development meets the policies of the JCS for the purposes of assessing compliance with Policy S4.
49. Policy S10 sets out sustainable development principles. Policy S10 e) provides that development will be located where services and facilities can be easily accessed by walking, cycling or public transport. For the reason set out above walking and public transport would not provide easy access to services and facilities. Some cyclists would find access to local facilities easy, but for others the distance might be problematic, particularly those transporting heavy or bulky items. But this would not be sufficient to bring the proposal into conflict with Policy S10 e) because it is worded so that compliance would be achieved if any one of these modes provided easy accessibility to services and facilities.
50. The combination of no direct vehicular access between Grange Park and the proposed development, along with the limitations set out above for pedestrian

access and public transport, would pose significant constraints on achieving the JCS's modal shift ambitions. Nevertheless, I do not consider that this would be sufficient to render the proposal contrary to JCS Policy C2, which aims to achieve the modal shift targets by maximising travel choice from non-car modes.

### *Planning policy*

51. Notwithstanding my findings about JCS Policies S10 and C2, the proposal would not meet the Vision and Objectives of the JCS. It would not benefit from the support given in JCS Policy S4 for additional development outside the NRDA boundary. I consider that the specific wording of JCS Policy S4; "...will be supported only if it meets ..." means that 'supported' here conveys more than encouragement, in the sense that the additional development would be given help or countenance if the Vision, Objectives and Policies of the JCS were met, implying a likelihood of approval in those circumstances. Development that does not meet the Vision, Objectives and Policies of the JCS would not benefit from this support, and so would not be compliant with JCS Policy S4. Given that the proposal would not meet the Vision and Objectives of the JCS, I find that it would not be compliant with Policy S4. The proposed development would be at odds with JCS Policy S1 D) as it would not be limited development in the rural area. There would also be conflict with the spatial strategy for rural areas set out in JCS Policy R1. This policy requires residential development in rural areas, with some exceptions that do not apply here, to be within the existing confines of villages.
52. LPP2 does not define 'NRDA-related housing development' for the purposes of applying Policies SS1 and LH1. However, it seems to me that compliance with JCS Policy S4 would be an important consideration, if not determinative, in deciding what was, and what was not, NRDA-related housing development. I find that the poor overall connectivity of the appeal site with the NRDA, along with non-compliance with JCS Policy S4, means that the proposal would not be NRDA-related housing development. Notwithstanding that the site directly adjoins the NRDA, I find that the proposal would not be supported by LPP2 Policy SS1. In applying LPP2 Policy LH1 the appeal site lies outside the settlement confines and in the open countryside, albeit directly adjoining the NRDA. The proposal would be contrary to LPP2 Policy LH1 because the appeal scheme would not be NRDA-related housing development and would not be compliant with JCS Policy S4.
53. I find that the proposal would not be compliant with JCS Policy S4 and would be contrary to JCS Policy S1 D). It would also conflict with JCS Policy R1. The proposal would not gain support from LPP2 Policy SS1 and would conflict with LPP2 Policy LH1. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole.
54. The provision of up to 300 dwellings would gain some support from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) by boosting the supply of homes. However, the proposal would not limit the need to travel or offer a genuine choice of transport modes. The development would be unlikely to function well over its lifetime because of its poor connectivity. I do not consider that the proposal would accord with the NPPF taken as a whole.

### *Other matters*

55. There is local concern that the occupiers of the proposed development would

be likely to experience unacceptable levels of noise and air pollution from the M1 motorway. Traffic noise would be likely to be audible and at times intrusive for residents of the proposed development. However, an appropriate noise bund and barrier, along with building construction that included necessary noise mitigation and ventilation measures, would avoid significant adverse impacts on the health and quality of life for future residents and children attending the primary school. The technical evidence submitted indicates that emissions from vehicles would be unlikely to exceed relevant air pollution standards at the nearest residential dwellings and the school. Subject to the imposition of appropriate planning conditions, I find no conflict with JCS Policy BN9 regarding likely exposure to pollution that would jeopardise the achievement of healthy communities. On the same basis, the proposal would reasonably accord with the Noise Policy Statement for England and the guidance about noise in the Planning Practice Guidance.

56. The local facilities at Grange Park were planned to meet the needs of the occupiers of 1,000 dwellings. Residents consider that local services and facilities would be unable to meet the additional demand from residents of the appeal scheme. There is particular concern about the capacity of the car park at the local centre. I do not believe that this is a consideration that weighs much against the proposal because occupiers of the proposed development accessing services and facilities by car would not necessarily travel to Grange Park. The circuitous route between the appeal site and Grange Park might mean that residents would choose to travel to other local centres, such as Wootton, or to larger centres further afield.
57. Local residents commented on the existing traffic congestion in the area and raised concerns about highway safety. However, given the proposed planning conditions and obligations there is no technical evidence to indicate that the scheme would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or any residual cumulative impacts on the road network that would be severe enough to bring the proposal into conflict with the NPPF. There is no objection from the Highway Authority and no grounds to find against the proposal for highway safety reasons.
58. Developing an open field in the countryside for up to 300 dwellings and a school would have an adverse effect on the landscape character of the area. The proposed bund and landscaping could help to soften the impact on the visual amenity of the area, but such development would inevitably extend urban development into the countryside and harm wider views. This would be particularly so from the public bridleway along the eastern boundary of the appeal site. I consider that the proposed development would result in an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area of moderate significance.
59. I have taken into account all the other matters raised in the evidence, including the appeal decisions cited by the parties. However, these do not assist much in determining the appeal before me because they were decided on the circumstances that applied in those cases. None of those decisions is directly comparable to the situation that applies to the appeal site and its relationship with Grange Park. Neither these, nor any of the other matters raised, are sufficient to outweigh my conclusions on the main issues, which have led to my decision on this appeal.

### *Planning balance*

60. The contribution to the housing supply and provision of affordable units would be beneficial, particularly as the appellant has suggested a shortened implementation period. This attracts significant weight in favour of the proposal. The obligations proposed would in large part be necessary mitigation, but the use of facilities by nearby residents would benefit the locality more generally. The provision of land for a 2FE primary school, public open space, landscaping and biodiversity gain, along with additional bus services and a contribution towards healthcare would attract some weight as benefits of the scheme in this regard. The development of up to 300 dwellings would benefit the local economy and provide a new homes bonus and CIL receipts. Against these benefits must be weighed the harm from a large residential development with a high dependency on the use of cars involving considerable travel distances on rural roads to reach services and facilities in Grange Park and the wider Northampton area. This would add to local traffic congestion and emission of greenhouse gases. The poor connectivity could also result in social isolation. Cumulatively, these are considerations that weigh heavily against the proposal. I concur with the appellant that the localised landscape and visual harm should be given moderate negative weight.
61. Given my finding that the proposal would not be NRDA-related development, the appellant acknowledges that the site lies within an area where there is a five-year housing land supply. In the flat balance that applies here I do not consider that the benefits of the scheme would outweigh the harm I have identified. The planning balance falls against the proposal.

### **Conclusions**

62. The proposal would not be NRDA-related housing development and would conflict with the development plan. The planning balance falls against the proposed development and there are no material considerations that indicate that the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*John Woolcock*  
Inspector

## APPEARANCES

### FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

Hugh Flanagan  
of counsel

Instructed by South Northamptonshire District  
Council

He called

Andrew Murphy BA(Hons) MSc  
MRTPI

Director Stansgate Planning Consultants Ltd

### FOR THE APPELLANT:

Paul G Tucker QC  
Stephanie Hall of counsel

Instructed by Armstrong Rigg Planning

They called

Geoff Armstrong BA(Hons) MRTPI

Director Armstrong Rigg Planning

### INTERESTED PERSONS:

Cllr Julie Bainbridge	Representing Grange Park Parish Council
Cllr Andrew Millerchip	Representing Grange Park Parish Council
Cllr Julia Javes	Representing Quinton Parish Council
Cllr Michael Clarke	County Councillor
Cllr Andrew Grant	District Councillor
Cllr Robert Atkinson	District Councillor

In addition, officers from SNDC and NCC, local councillors and residents, along with representatives for the appellant, participated in the without-prejudice discussion at the Inquiry about suggested planning conditions and obligations

### DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED AT THE INQUIRY (ID)

ID	1	Opening submissions on behalf of the appellant
ID	2	Opening submissions on behalf of South Northamptonshire Council
ID	3	Note from Grange Park Parish Council
ID	4.1	Note from Wilson Horne Kings Chambers concerning the terms of a section 106 agreement dated 8 May 1998 and lease dated 17 August 1998 for land to the north of the appeal site
	4.2	Addendum dated 21 October 2020
ID	5	Extract from Northamptonshire Transportation Plan Fit for Purpose March 2012
ID	6	Email from appellant to Stagecoach and reply dated 8 April 2020 concerning options available with Stagecoach to serve development at land south of Grange Park with a bus service.
ID	7	Email from appellant to Ability and response concerning booking arrangements



ID	8	Email dated 6 October 2020 from NCC to Cllr Clarke concerning school funding
ID	9	Statement by Grange Park Parish Council
ID	10	Email from appellant to NCC and reply dated 22 October 2020 concerning proposed changes to the text of SoCG2
ID	11	Email dated 22 October 2020 from Cllr Javes concerning Z & S Transport service 33/33A
ID	12.1	Statement by Quinton Parish Council
	12.2	Email dated 18 October 2020 concerning proposals for section 106 agreement
ID	13	Statement by Cllr Michael Clarke
ID	14	Statement by Cllr Andrew Grant
ID	15	Statement by Cllr Robert Atkinson
ID	16	Statement by Cllr Andrew Millerchip
ID	17	Input to site visit planning by Grange Park Parish Council
ID	18	Agreed Suggested Planning Conditions
ID	19	Email from Quinton Parish Council dated 27 October 2020 re Proposals for Section 106 Agreement
ID	20	Drawing No.6473/ASP01 rev C Foxfield's Country Park / Alamein Woods Footpath Repairs and Works (subject to '106' works agreement)
ID	21	Planning agreement dated 2 November 2020
ID	22	Unilateral undertaking dated 5 November 2020
ID	23	Closing submissions on behalf of South Northamptonshire Council <i>Bloor Homes v SSHCLG</i> [2017] PTSR 1283 <i>Monkhill v SSHCLG</i> [2020] PTSR 416
ID	24	Closing submissions on behalf of the appellant

#### LIST OF PLANS

Location Plan 41208/016A  
Parameters Plan 41208 011D  
Proposed Site Access: Right Turn Lane Design TA111 rev C  
Illustrative Masterplan with 2FE School 41208 019 rev R

#### CORE DOCUMENT LIST

1. Full copy of the Joint Core Strategy
2. Full copy of the Local Plan Part 2
3. Full copy of the Inspector's report on the LPP2
4. West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (WNJCS) Review of Policies in accordance with Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) December 2019.
5. All extant development plan policies stated in the reasons for refusal (extract)
6. Replaced policies of the Local Plan 1997 stated in the reasons for refusal (extract)

7. Seven consultation responses made by Hayley Usher (Development Management Engineer) on behalf of Northamptonshire County Council (or Northamptonshire Highways/Local Highway Authority whilst the planning application was being determined NCC comments are dated 24 May 2019 2 May 2019 10 June 2019 29 May 2019 29 July 2019 16 September 2019 10 October 2019
8. Extract from 'Providing for Journeys on Foot' (CIHT 2000) P48 and 49
9. Extract from 'Planning for Walking' (CIHT, April 2015) P29 to 31
10. Extract from National Design Guide (October 2019) P18 to 20
11. Appeal reference 2224285 Land East of Poundfield Road Potterspury dated 26 Jun 2015 With Site Context Plan (23055/L1)
12. Appeal Reference 3011449 relating to Land off Welford Road, Northampton 'The Boughton Appeal', decision dated 24 November 2015 with location plan (scale 1:2500)
13. Appeal reference 3178842, relating to land off Holly Lodge Drive, Northampton 'The Holly Lodge Drive Appeal', decision dated 6 March 2017 Relevant plans are the Development Framework Plan (GLA0200/DF) and Location Plan (GLA0200/SB)
14. Appeal Reference 3206246 relating to Land south of Kislingbury Road, Rothersthorpe 'The Rothersthorpe Appeal', decision dated 17 May 2019 with location plan (scale 1:2500)
15. S/2017/1985/MAO relating to Land at Wootton Fields Northampton decision dated 23 March 2018 relevant plans are the location plan 17703/1014 and Proposed Illustrative Masterplan 17703-1015B
16. Planning Statement of Common Ground (SoCG1)
17. Highways Statement of Common Ground (SoCG2)
18. Full list of draft conditions
19. Appellant appeal statement of case
20. Council appeal statement of case
21. Relevant documents submitted with the appeal
  - The plans listed in the Planning SoCG1 at 4.2
  - The TA (March 2019)
  - The TA Addendum (August 2019)
  - Design and Access Statement (April 2019)
  - Design and Access Statement Addendum (August 2019)
22. SNDC Housing Land Availability Study 2020 (referred to in SNDC's proof at 7.3)
23. The latest housing land supply report for the NRDA - April 2019
24. Third party comments at the appeal stage (including all those from Grange Park PC and Quinton PC)
25. Draft 106
26. SNDC Corporate Plan 2020
27. SNDC Developer Contributions SPD
28. Extract from Northamptonshire Transportation Plan