

Statement from Michael Nidd, Piccotts End resident : Representor Id: 405255)

Issue 10: Place Strategies Questions 10.1, 10.3, 10.4

1. I, Michael Nidd, am a Piccotts End resident, having lived in the hamlet for 36 years
2. This statement complements my original representations on the Core Strategy Pre-submission, which are still relevant except where updated by this statement and seeks to address the Inspector's relevant questions as set out in his guidance note.

10.1 Is the policy for growth and change justified?

No.

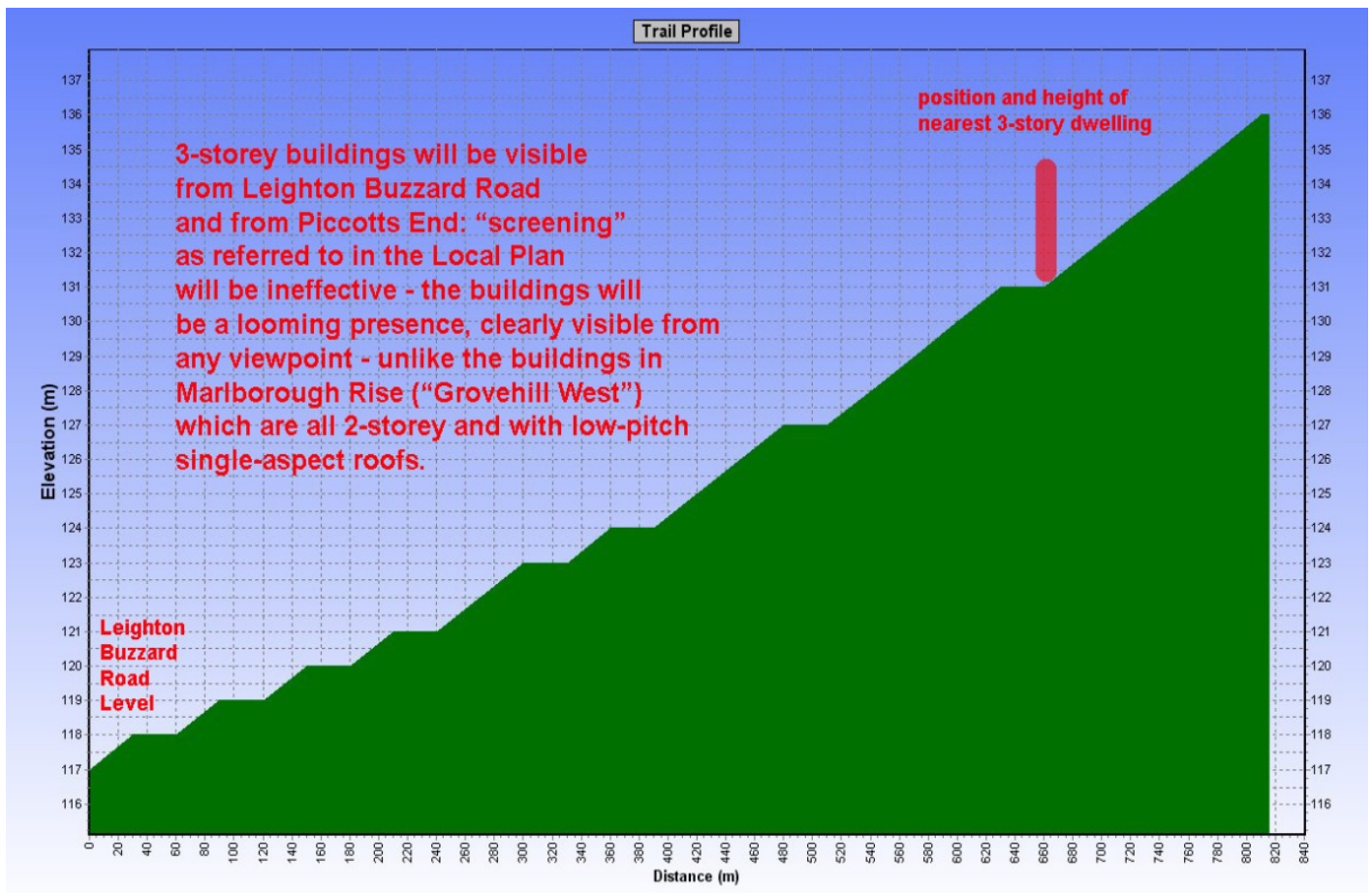
The numbers are derived from the East of England Regional Plan, which DCLG has declared to be redundant (overtaken by both "events" and the demise of the East of England Region itself). CPRE Hertfordshire will already have made representations on Housing, and Green Belt issues, with which I concur. Though there is a dearth of affordable housing in the Borough, there is a substantial over-supply of existing commercial space (hundreds of thousands of square feet, much of it modern), lying empty together with substantial undeveloped areas around the Maylands area which could be reclassified as alternative sites for housing development.

A key element of local infrastructure: water supply; is already under severe pressure with the local water sources (abstraction from the Gade and the Bulborne) effectively "over-licensed", resulting in extremely low river flows in the Gade which Dacorum Borough Council are nevertheless hoping to turn into a visitor attraction where it flows (or trickles) through Gadebridge Park.

10.3 Are the local allocations justified and are the principles for their development sound?

No.

LA1 is a site which, at one recent stage, Dacorum itself did not wish to see developed. Its Green Belt status, too, is to check the further growth of a large built-up area (Grovehill), to prevent the merging of neighbouring communities of very dissimilar visual characteristics and to preserve the special character of the Piccotts End conservation area. The suggestion that three-storey dwellings might be built on this rising slope is particularly unwelcome. The diagram below, showing a trail profile produced from the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 CD-ROM, represents a view up the slope of Marchmont Fields from the Leighton Buzzard Road. The undulations in the terrain are small, and totally ineffective in hiding the proposed three-storey dwellings referred to in the Core Strategy, as the diagram illustrates with the representation to scale of a 3-storey dwelling in the position proposed in the Core Strategy. The suggestion that such construction could somehow be "screened" by trees (which would not have grown to sufficient height in the lifetime of the Core Strategy, if ever) and which would in any event be leafless for half of each year, does not hold up.



It would detract substantially from the visual amenity, and to the quality of views across the Gade Valley. It is noteworthy that the roof structures of the existing houses in Grovehill, towards the top of the slope, are mono-pitch, low-rise so as to present the smallest possible intrusion into the views.

There is also an issue over road infrastructure, especially if a new junction with the "Link Road" was involved – traffic speeds on that key road would mandate the construction of a roundabout to make it safe, with further land-take and an added impediment to the already heavy rush-hour flows on that road.

LA2, referred to locally as "Cherry Bounce", is a steeply-sloping, small area which currently (just) achieves a separation between new-build in Highfield and the Old Town Conservation area. Development here would deny most of the principal objectives of a Green Belt: checking the further growth of a large built-up area, preventing the merging of neighbouring communities, preserving the special character of an area. It would also present problems over accelerated run-off through reduction in absorbent surfaces on this hillside.

LA3 represents a very large settlement which would also negate the Green Belt objectives of checking the further growth of a large built-up area, preventing the merging of neighbouring communities and preserving the special character of an area: in this case putting two more of Hertfordshire's "ends" in peril: the communities of Bourne End and Potten End, towards both the proposed development would sprawl. Its only merit would be relative proximity to the mail-line railway station, which is itself some distance away from the town centre.

All three are also in conflict with other elements of the Strategy: CS1, which requires no damage to be caused to the existing character of the settlement or the adjoining countryside, and requires compatibility with policies protecting the Green Belt; CS4, which requires the maintenance of the New Town's physical separation from a number of small villages and hamlets on its periphery, and the protection of the Gade and Bulborne valleys which provide a strong landscape setting for the town; CS10, which requires that development should respect defined countryside borders and the landscape character surrounding the town or village, and that it should protect and enhance significant

views into and out of towns and villages; and CS11, which requires that development should respect the typical density intended in an area and to enhance the spaces between buildings and general character.

It is sometimes suggested that, were tracts of Green Belt released, “compensatory areas” elsewhere could be released. This approach misses the fundamental reasons why Green Belts, the “jewel in the crown of land use planning”, according to the RTP, were created: it is neither valid nor acceptable.

Much is written and said about the need for **sustainable** development, with the sustainability criterion translating as not doing anything now which would prevent future generations from enjoying the same resource.. Nothing is less sustainable than the removal of land from the Green Belt.

10.4 What public consultation has been undertaken with regard to LA2? Have the requirements of the Council’s SCI been met?

I did not refer to this issue in my earlier objections; this representation is by way of a resident’s-eye response to the Inspector’s question. No special arrangements were made. The numerous responses from the local community have been largely “airbrushed away” from Dacorum’s summary of their consultation which was to all practical intents and purposes, confined to a WEB-based pro-forma. The SCI states that “Representations on the Preferred Options Report will be considered and the Council will need to explain how these have been dealt with, together with any changes to the policies.” Despite several members of the public having spoken against this Local Allocation at the Council’s meeting, their objections were ignored and no satisfactory explanation was given, apart from a statement amounting to “we need to make the housing numbers and we can’t do that without the Local Allocations”.

Summary

The draft Core Strategy is **unsound** in that its references to Local Allocations are neither “**sound**”, being inconsistent with the continuing protection of the Green Belt which is affirmed in the National Planning Policy Framework, and which has been a feature of many recent Ministerial statements, nor “**justified**” by exceptional circumstances, none of which have been adduced. The Strategy could be made “sound” by deleting all reference to Local Allocations, with appropriate changes being made to the text and to the housing trajectories. This would also eliminate significant internal inconsistencies (referred to above) between policies in the Core Strategy.