

**West Northamptonshire Development
Corporation**

DAVENTRY HOUSING APPEALS

**Proof of Evidence of
David Robert Bird BSc CEng MICE
on Accessibility Issues**

Summary Proof
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1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 1.1 This is the summary proof of evidence of David Robert Bird on accessibility issues.
- 1.2 In my evidence I have considered the accessibility and linkages for each of the appeal sites. I have also undertaken a comparative analysis to determine the relative merits of the sites.
- 1.3 The four criteria I have used are grounded in the policy documents I identified in Section 3 of my proof. They identify what I consider to be the key factors in determining a site's suitability as a sustainable urban extension from an accessibility perspective.
- 1.4 Of particular importance are linkages to the town centre. It is vital that sustainable urban extensions relate well to the town centre and enhance it rather than detract from it. For this to happen it is important that people find it safe, convenient and enjoyable to walk, cycle or use public transport to access the town centre otherwise they will use the private car or travel elsewhere.
- 1.5 The four criteria I have used to assess the sites are:
- Criterion 1 - The proximity of the site to the existing urban area;
 - Criterion 2 - The way the proposed development would integrate with the urban area (this will include access to locations other than the town centre);
 - Criterion 3 - The length, quality and legibility of links to the town centre;
 - Criterion 4 - The propensity of the site to be served by walking, cycling and public transport.
- 1.6 On **Criterion 1 (Proximity)**, it is clear that parts of the Monksmoor and Church Fields sites abut the existing urban area. This provides the opportunity to provide contiguous pedestrian and cycle routes that link to the urban fabric. From the south west corners of both sites pedestrian and cyclists can join existing routes that are within the existing town. These routes are lit throughout and generally overlooked, and therefore provide a good level of security. Furthermore there is the perception that these proposed sites will form part of the existing town.

- 1.7 In contrast, Danetree is divorced from the urban area since it is located to the east of Borough Hill. At no point does any of the site abut the existing built up area. This means that the routes from the site to the town need to pass along areas with no frontage development and that are, in effect, country routes connecting from the development areas to the existing town.
- 1.8 On **Criterion 2 (Integration)**, my analysis has looked at a number of facilities that residents of the proposed development will need to access. Of these I consider that the most important are education, employment and transport interchange.
- 1.9 For education, in overall terms and taking account of parental, choice Church Fields is located closer to secondary and tertiary education opportunities followed by Monksmoor and then Danetree. However, if one looks only at the proximity of the closest secondary school, then Danetree is on a par with Church Fields. Due to its size Monksmoor is more likely to use existing facilities or the new school to be provided on Church Fields.
- 1.10 For employment, Monksmoor is the best located in terms of distance to the main employment areas of Drayton Fields/Heartlands; Royal Oak and the town centre. Church Fields has good links to the town centre and is reasonably well related to the employment area in the north west especially if routes through Monksmoor are used. Danetree is the furthest from the town centre and from the major employment areas to the north west of the town although it is better related to the High March area. Whilst Danetree does provide significant employment on site, I do not consider this outweighs its remoteness from existing employment opportunities. This is due to the modest number of people that will live and work within the site.
- 1.11 For transport interchange, I consider access to Long Buckby station to be important since this allows residents to access job and other opportunities in locations such as Rugby, Birmingham, Coventry and Northampton without using the private car. Church Fields is the best located site to access the station, followed by Monksmoor, especially if routes through Church Fields can be used. Danetree is generally further from the station, especially the central and southern areas.

- 1.12 On **Criterion 3 (Links to the Town Centre)**, the Monksmoor and Church Fields sites have significantly better links than Danetree. This is not only in terms of the length of the routes but also the quality. It is important that links are within the urban area, overlooked, lit and safe and pleasant to use.
- 1.13 Of all the criteria I have considered perhaps the most important is the relationship between the sites and the town centre. It is vital for the future prosperity of Daventry that development of major residential sites adds to rather than detracts from the role of the town centre. This will be achieved by having strong, credible, identifiable links that people will want to use as pedestrians and cyclists. The fact that sections of both Church Fields and Monksmoor abut the urban area and provide opportunities for contiguous urban links distinguishes them from the Danetree site which, due to its very location, is divorced from the urban area.
- 1.14 On **Criterion 4 (Walking, Cycling and Public Transport Use)**, the propensity to walk and cycle to the town centre and other destinations will be strongly influenced by the length and quality of the routes. Therefore, the significantly better linkages from Monksmoor and Church Fields compared with Danetree will inevitably lead to a greater propensity to use these sustainable modes to and from these two sites. On public transport I will comment further in due course.

Conclusion

- 1.15 I therefore conclude, from the analysis I have summarised in this proof of evidence, that the Church Fields site is the most accessible of the three sites and provides the best linkages to the town centre and elsewhere. Monksmoor is the second best but still provides good quality, contiguous routes to the town centre and is the best located for employment opportunities. Danetree is divorced from the existing urban area and provides poor quality pedestrian and cycle routes to the urban area and, in particular, to the town centre.
- 1.16 The above analysis is reflected in the Putative Reason for Refusal (a) contained within the most recent WNDP Committee Report on the Danetree scheme which states that by virtue of its location, connectivity and physical relationship with the existing town (town centre) the Danetree proposals do not accord with local, regional and national policy and would not deliver acceptable sustainable development.