

Closing Statement by Cllr Roger Hunneman (On behalf of Newbury Town Council, as a Rule 6 Party)

Madam, representatives of Greenham Parish Council and Newbury Town Council have made representations to the inquiry and have attended the enquiry throughout. Having listened to the evidence they remain opposed to the granting of permission to the Sandleford Park application.

Much of the evidence has been about the deleterious impact of the development on the unusually large number of ancient woodlands on the site and their interconnectivity. We note the provision of a minimum 15m width buffer zone which it was originally proposed would contain built features such as SUDS potentially affecting the hydrology of the Woodlands. Further evidence was presented showing damage to the interconnectivity of the woodlands by changes to the hedgerows. Our witness Cllr.Dr. Chris Foster presented evidence on these matters in his proofs. We wholeheartedly support the objections to these impacts and strongly feel that the case was made for significantly wider buffers which do not contain built features such as SUDs and conveyancing channels together with limiting and controlling the access of people to the buffers and woodlands. The point was made that SUDS, basins, conveyancing channels and other infrastructure should be placed in the developed area this which we completely agree with.

We note that in draft Condition 22f) in ID59 both the Council and the Appellant ask for assessment of impact of such structures in the buffer zones – but neither party seems to be suggesting increasing the buffer width more than 15m – we would hope for a minimum of 30m in line with the evidence presented by Cllr. Foster. In the inquiry the appellant's view was that these issues could be dealt with at the reserved matters stage and might result in an increase in density of the housing. They did not seem to consider the alternative, at that time, of a reduction in the number of dwellings. We feel that the issues of size and content of the buffer zones is a very important matter as these affect density, numbers and layout and so therefore they

should be an integral part of this application, rather than something to be dealt with in reserved matters.

Much time was spent in the inquiry in respect to the Landscape Value Impact Assessments. The evidence given by Mr Cooper for the appellants did little to allay our fears about the inadequacies of the buffer zones, the placement of SUDS and paths within them and the general impact of the development on the greater landscape.

We also note that the physical layout of the buildings in the development is regarded by the developer as a matter for reserved matters, in this matter we do not agree, as important issues such as orientation of the buildings to facilitate solar power generation and solar gain will significantly affect the layout and density of the development and should be part of this application. Our witness Cllr Adrian Abbs dealt with these matters in his proof. This is an important point as all three local Councils have declared a Climate Emergency and are actively developing policies to deal with it. We would expect that should the SoS be minded to give permission for this development that it would be exemplary in this regard. We note the content of draft condition 11) but feel that it does not go far enough, for example the appellants version only requiring a 19% reduction in Carbon emissions against the 2013 standard

My colleague Cllr Dr Tony Vickers addressed matters about active travel in his proof and presented information about improved routes and road layouts to facilitate this. He will be addressing these points in his closing statement.

Nothing we have heard in the inquiry has changed our view that the development of the totality of Sandleford Farm must be brought forward as a single planning application, as always intended in the SDP. We remain of the view that this is a perfectly adequate reason for refusal. As this is an application for Sandleford Park section only there is some doubt about the appropriation and application of the costs of mitigation should Sandleford West be given permission and of course what happens to Warren Road? We accept that this Sandleford Park application will include pedestrian access along the PROW via Warren Road to the Andover Road

but we, like many of the residents, remain opposed to the all vehicular use of Warren Road for access to the Sandleford Sites. This is because of its junction with the Andover Road being in such close proximity to sensitive receptors such as schools and community facilities, that the extra traffic would give rise to road safety issues, congestion and add to the general chaos at school times. Nothing we have heard during the course of the inquiry has addressed this problem – indeed it would appear that it is proposed Warren Road would be the principal access to Sandleford West – and possibly to Sandleford Park if changes to the width of the road are consented.

The vast changes proposed to the A339/Pinchington Lane/Newtown Road/Monks Lane replacing roundabouts with signalised junctions (with an 8-lane interconnection!) also remain a great concern because of the visual impact and the potential for adverse effects on local air quality from standing traffic – especially so as the WBC Highways Officer feels that traffic can be “held” there in order enable “platooning” within the A339 corridor that will enable the local highway network to operate more efficiently.

As stated in our Statement of Case, in detail in our Opening Statement, and at many points in the inquiry, West Berkshire Council has a robust 5-year housing land supply. Indeed, even during the course of this inquiry a planning application for the redevelopment of the Kennet Centre in central Newbury is being made – for a total of 402 dwellings on a brownfield highly sustainable site.

We remain of the opinion that, given the adequacy of the housing land supply, the emerging WBC Local Plan Review to 2037 together with the accepted deleterious impact on the locally valued landscape, the ancient woodlands and the lack of a single comprehensive planning application for the whole Sandleford site that this contentious application should be refused permission by the Secretary of State. Furthermore, we feel that this application is premature until such reviews are completed and the full impact of social changes post Covid are known. As we stated in our opening case *“At the very least this would enable a more acceptable, sustainable scheme with significantly less impact on the irreplaceable ancient woodland habitat to be developed”*.

Should the Secretary of State be minded to give permission for this development, bearing in mind that the current application is for up to 1080 dwellings, then it should be for a scheme containing fewer housing units to allow the removal of SUDS and conveyancing channels from the critical and sensitive buffer zones surrounding the Ancient Woodlands by placing them in the developed areas of the site. We feel that from the evidence presented in the inquiry that the width of the buffer zones should be increased to a minimum of 30 metres (this especially so immediately to the north of Crooks Copse as shading by trees will be an ongoing issue both for possible residents and solar panels) A reduction in the number of houses would also reduce the amount of extra traffic and hence the scale and cost of the necessary mitigation works needed to the highways network; It would also allow more room for the relocation of hedgerows affected by the proposed visibility splays for the Monks Lane accesses

Finally, we note that at schedule 3 of the Section 106 Unilateral Undertaking dated 25 May 2021, ID66, concerning the establishment of a Management Company to manage and maintain the Public Open Space. This arrangement requires the future residents of Sandleford Park to be liable for the future costs arising from large areas of public open space over which they have no ownership or control. It would be a far more sustainable and equitable solution to see the public open spaces adopted by the Planning Authority, who may then discuss devolution proposals with NTC and GPC. In our opinion this would be a much fairer outcome for the residents and better serve the longer-term maintenance of the Public Open Space by bodies who are democratically accountable.

Madam

I have endeavoured not to duplicate matters which my colleague Cllr Tony Vickers has raised in his closing statement, if I have done so, I apologise.