

**Re: SADM submission July 2015 by Hertsmere Borough Council
In support of the designation as 'Local Green Space' (SADM36) of
The Paddock (BH007), Elstree Road, Bushey Heath, Herts.**

Writing on behalf of the Bushey Heath Residents' Association (BHRA)

1) Hertsmere Borough Council's determinations under SADM

Hertsmere Borough Council (HBC) has undertaken a significant review of the land in the Borough and allocated appropriate land for development which far exceeds government requirements. It has included the guidelines of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in its Core Strategy which was adopted in January 2013 and undertook public consultation regarding its draft of the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan (SADM) approved and published in July 2015.

The only apparent contentious issue surrounds one piece of land within the Borough, where the landowner is claiming the land does not fulfil the criteria for designations as 'Local Green Space' because they wish to sell for great financial gain, despite the clear and significant research and evaluations undertaken by the Council in their deliberations concerning the assessment of all open land/green spaces within the Borough. The potential financial gains by selling the land are inconsequential to the debate, moreover, the landowner is purportedly acting as 'caretaker' over an estate, which includes this land, on behalf of the people of Bushey, who in the main oppose its development and support it being designated 'Local Green Space'.

The December 2012 'Green Spaces and Amenity Land Report' proposed the following policy regarding 'Local Green Space';

'Proposals that would result in the loss of green spaces which are valuable to the local community as identified on the Proposals Map and/or would have a negative impact on the visual amenity, historic significance, recreational value, tranquillity or biodiversity of these spaces will be refused.'

Thus designating any plot of land, including The Paddock, as 'Local Green Space' is aimed at ensuring this land remains green and is not lost forever to be used for building development, especially where the local authority can identify alternative suitable land for development in a Borough, which the HBC has achieved.

The Paddock was identified as 'semi-natural green space' was allocated weightings against set criteria - and was deemed to have fulfilled the requirements for the proposed designation.

The full Council voted in favour of the adoption of the proposals under the SADM document in its entirety.

2) National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) criteria for 'Local Green Space'

The NPPF (page 18) clearly sets out the criteria required for designation as 'Local Green Space'.

'77. The Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space. The designation should only be used:

** where green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;*

** where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds particular significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field) tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and*

** where the green area concerned is local in character and not an extensive tract of land.'*

For the following reasons, The Paddock is deemed to fulfil this criteria;

- Situated on the corner of Elstree Road (a through road East West through the Borough) and Caldecote Gardens on a hill with views to the north
- surrounded by small family dwellings, mainly single storey bungalows
- historically important as apparently last piece of the 'heath' in Bushey Heath
- originally purchased to enhance the Reveley Lodge Estate to preserve views and ensure it remained green
- close to listed buildings and others of local significance, including Otway Tower, Rosary Priory and Reveley Lodge itself.
- for long term residents in the vicinity known for ponies grazing and adding to the 'village feel' and charm of Bushey
- a site with significant trees (with many TPO's in place) including an ancient Oak and known as a corridor for wildlife; bats, foxes etc.

3) Local residents' opinions and sentiments and background

The BHRA was formed in 2011, now has over 200 members and has collected over 3000 signatures in petitions to 'Save Our Green Space', to keep The Paddock green. The BHRA has campaigned against building development on this 0.58 hectare plot of, never built on, green land which forms part of the Reveley Lodge Estate and sits across the Elstree Road, facing the Lodge. The estate was bequeathed to the people of Bushey, by Mrs Eila Chewett in 2003, to be cared for and managed by the Bushey Museum who subsequently set up the separate Bushey Museum Property Trust (BMPT).

The Trust wish to sell the land for development and thus object to the land being designated 'Local Green Space' as they claim that it is their only available saleable asset (despite having 8 cottages) - to preserve the Lodge and its gardens, after funds bequeathed to support the house were depleted. Since 2009 when The Paddock was first considered for sale, no other significant fundraising activities appear to have been investigated and there has been resistance to seeking outside local expertise and help.

The people of Bushey wish to preserve both The Paddock and Reveley Lodge and so strongly support The Paddock becoming a 'Local Green Space' and believe that the financial woes of the BMPT should not be a significant factor in opposing this.

In fact at the Full Council Meeting on 08 July 2015 to discuss the adoption of SADM - a representative for the BMPT objected to The Paddock being included within the Policy on the grounds of the financial problems of Reveley Lodge. However Councillors replied that *'we cannot discuss the financial difficulties or otherwise of any organisation because that has no link and forms no part of any designation of green space'*.

There have been 2 planning applications, both refused by Council:

- The first refusal upheld by an independent Inspector,
- The second refused by unanimous vote of the Council Planning Committee, less than a week after the Council voted through the SADM proposals.

The Borough's Conservation Officer wrote, concerning The Paddock in respect of the planning application 14/1331/FUL (for 38 flats);

'The site is a surviving open space in an area that had become increasingly developed from the C19th to the Mid C20th. ... Sloping steeply from the road, it affords long distance views across to open countryside to the North through asps in the hedge and also presumably more extensively when there are not leafs on the trees.

The site itself is currently a welcome sylvan break in the built environment which adds to the character of the area.

It is understood from the Heritage Statement that a former owner of Reveley Lodge held on to the site specifically to keep it undeveloped.

There would be some harm to the setting of the former Caldecote Towers and the nearby 'buildings of local importance' and therefore the character of the area as a whole by the loss of this green space. I don't believe the harm caused could be justified by the need to maintain Reveley Lodge because there is no assessment provided of the level of repair/maintenance required or financial information regarding the potential generation of income from the sale of the land'.

Keeping this plot of land green is supported by a large number of local people:

- There have been 2 separate petitions to 'Save Our Green Space': the first, in June 2011, was signed by 1598 people.
- The second, in May 2015, was signed by 1400 people (20% of the electorate) and supported by the newly elected MP for Hertsmere, Mr Oliver Dowden, who accepted the petition to be passed to the Council.
- Mr Oliver Dowden also attended the latest Planning Committee debate regarding the recent failed planning application for 38 flats with 80 mainly underground parking spaces, 14/1331/FUL, which took place on July 16th 2015.

In addition, the Hertsmere Local Plan, in Policy D21, states that

'Development proposals must:

(ii) retain, enhance or create spaces, views, landmarks or other townscape and landscape features which make a material contribution to the character of the area'

Thus, existing spaces should not be approved for development where they contribute to the character of the area or, in other words, should be retained as open space.

Anecdotally, it is claimed this land is a part of the original heath in Bushey. It was purchased to preserve the view over Hertfordshire as it sits on a hill and is alongside a major East-West roadway through the Borough; it also used to have ponies grazing until about 2001, adding to the more rural atmosphere.

Mrs Chewett, the previous landowner, had specifically requested it be used for grazing, particularly as the land and horses had featured in paintings by local artists. The Paddock is also said to be important from a biodiversity point of view, with bats known to frequent the ancient Oak tree (which is subject to a TPO as are several other trees on the land – in fact TPO's cover trees on approx. 2/3 of the plot).

The Inspector who upheld the refusal of the first application, TP/11/2/159 - for a large scale exclusive private care home – stated *"....the open nature of the site does contribute to the streetscene, adding to the spacious, suburban character of the area."* Also, *'the loss of open space would be harmful to the character and appearance of this part of Bushey Heath.'*

The NPPF confirms that *'Local communities ...should be able to identify for special protection green areas of particular importance to them. By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development...'*

The Borough Council has already identified sufficient land to more than cater for the required development of dwellings for the next 5-7 years. Local people in Bushey are very aware that by being on the borders of Greater London makes the area very attractive to developers aiming not at the local population but the ripple effect of people moving out – the so called 'urban sprawl' - to a more 'rural' area. The Paddock is significant with regard the preservation of the 'village feel' of Bushey.

4) Conclusion and recommendation

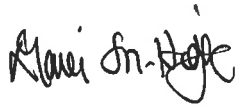
Designating The Paddock as 'Local Green Space' is very much in keeping with the Borough's Core Strategy and the NPPF, has already been the subject of extensive public consultation and planning applications have been defeated as being inappropriate use of an important piece of green space in Bushey Heath.

We, The Bushey Heath Residents Association (BHRA), representing over 200 local Residents, fully support the adoption of SADM in its entirety – including The Paddock – and urge you to put aside any objections to this, and confirm the whole of SADM to The Secretary of State.

We also request representation or to be called as witnesses at the Public Examination.

Thank you,

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Sin-Hidge'.

Elaine Sin-Hidge
For and on behalf the BHRA