

Brown Not Green Chesham Ltd

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"Protecting the Green Belt around Chesham"



STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION OF OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION REF - PL/26/05402/OA

22 July 2026

Brown Not Green Chesham Ltd (BNG) is aware that an outline planning application has been submitted by Toscaig Ltd (LPA Ref PL/26/05402/OA) for up to 170 new homes (Use Class C3), including 50% affordable housing, with mixed-use commercial development (Use Classes E, F1, F2 and C3), together with vehicular access from Lycrome Road, plus play facilities, highway works, new walking and cycling routes connecting to Brushwood Junior School/Chesham on an area of good quality agricultural land within an area designated as Green Belt at Lye Green NE of Chesham.

BNG represents over 1,800 local people seeking to protect the Green Belt around Chesham, and accordingly hereby submits the following comments for the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to consider when determining this planning application.

BNG feels that consent should be refused because an outline application for such a major development at such a sensitive location is inappropriate as there would be too many "reserved matters" that are fundamental to the principle of development at the subject land and which must be considered collectively with the principle of development.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the application site *was once* proposed in the former draft Local Plan for housing allocation and for modification of the Green Belt boundary by the previous Chiltern & South Bucks District Council, *that* Plan was never adopted and was abandoned in October 2019 nearly 7 years ago and these proposals have all subsequently

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now been discarded by Buckinghamshire Council and have not been carried forwards in the new Local Plan.

The emerging new Local Plan for Buckinghamshire has recently been published for Regulation 19 public consultation and this new Plan is now anticipated to be submitted for adoption in December 2026 and as such this draft new Local Plan and the Evidence Base supporting it is a material planning consideration of some weight. As such the following must be considered when determining this application:

- 1 The subject application site is not allocated for any specific development in the draft Local Plan and this means that the application site remains subject to Green Belt designation and development restraint policy.
- 2 The emerging Local Plan now asserts that it aims to help promote town centre regeneration and delivery of housing upon brownfield sites, and specifically asserts that the *“Local Plan supports higher density uplift within town centres within Buckinghamshire”* (see para 6.4 on page 10 therein)
- 3 Likewise the recently adopted Chesham Neighbourhood Plan for Chesham also discourages development upon Green Belt surrounding the town and rather promotes regeneration of Chesham.
- 4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires development to be met outside of the Green Belt unless there are ‘*exceptional circumstances*’. Likewise that development proposals upon Green Belt should only be approved in *“very special circumstances”*.
- 5 The latest emerging Bucks Local Plan concludes *“there are sufficient sites to meet our housing requirement outside of the Green Belt¹ and, therefore, whilst we² have been required to undertake a Green Belt Assessment and identify ‘grey belt’ areas, no housing allocations on greenfield land have been made within the Green Belt”*. (see para 6.5 on p.10 of Draft Local Plan) It is impossible to see how *“exceptional*

¹ BNG underlining’s for emphasis.

² Buckinghamshire Council

circumstances” or “*very special circumstances*” can be justified by the developer in light of the fact that the Council’s most up to date assessment in its Evidence Base is that it has sufficient sites outside of the Green Belt to meet its housing needs.

- 6 The application is accompanied by a Green Belt Visual Impact Assessment which draws heavily on the *previous* Council’s consideration of the subject site for removal from Green Belt. BNG fundamentally disagree with these professional submissions which were never subjected to public examination and indeed BNG have their own professional visual impact assessment that draws a somewhat different conclusion about this site’s performance in terms of Green Belt.
- 7 Whilst several areas of land around Chesham were at first provisionally identified as “Grey Belt”, in the earlier Regulation 18 Local Plan preparation process, these have now all been abandoned by Buckinghamshire Council as the subject land was patently not “*Previously Developed Land*” nor “*brownfield*” land.
- 8 Similarly, the subject land was demonstrably not failing in the three stated purposes of Green Belt designation in the NPPF necessary for land to be considered as “Grey Belt” . The three relevant purposes are;

Purpose A- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

Purpose B- to prevent neighbouring towns³ merging into one another;

Purpose D- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns.

BNG contend that the land is clearly not failing in purposes A & D. The existing Green Belt boundary has effectively checked the outward sprawl of Chesham for decades and has prevented the neighbouring settlement of Lye Green from becoming absorbed into Chesham thereby preserving this settlement’s identity. Purpose D is somewhat more subjective but BNG argue that the prevailing Green Belt boundary around Chesham has preserved the setting and special character of town. Clearly Buckinghamshire Council must now agree as they have recently removed any “provisional grey belt” designation from the subject land and as such

³ Note the previous iteration of the NPPF under which the emerging Local Plan is believed to be based, referred to neighbouring settlements merging into one another.

the subject land remains designated as Green Belt where development is explicitly regarded as “*inappropriate*”.

- 9 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) being the main component of national policy, paragraph 145 therein states that, “*Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified through the preparation or updating of plans.”*
- 10 The NPPF expressly asserts that “*Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate...*” and paragraph 153 of NPPF further states that, “*When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.*”
- 11 Accordingly the subject land remains designated as Green Belt where all development other than land uses identified within NPPF paragraph 154, basically summarised as buildings for agriculture and forestry, provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, replacement of an existing building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces and “*limited infilling*” and other forms of development provided they preserve the openness of the land and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within Green Belt.
- 12 In addition to both National and Local Planning Policy being inconsistent with the Applicant’s proposals to change the use of the subject land for significant housing provision and other commercial uses, there will very likely be considerable local opposition as evidenced by the many hundreds of letters of objections and written representations made by BNG members in response to other earlier nearby Green Belt proposals around Lye Green.
- 13 These objections have included numerous “*material planning considerations*” which BNG submit are directly applicable to the subject land as reasons for refusal of planning permission, namely;
 - i concerns about inappropriate development in the Green Belt,

- ii the intensification of use of the land in a predominantly rural setting. This application represent *major development* not just for housing but a wide range of mixed commercial uses as well. These various uses have a collective potential for significant adverse impact upon local households from increased traffic, noise, hours of operation of the commercial mixed uses which collectively represents a significant intensification of land use at a very sensitive location. It is unclear due to the outline nature what specific uses will apply and what type, scale and frequency of commercial vehicles might be needed to service the mixed commercial uses. Such an application for major development cannot properly be assessed in outline and a fully detailed application is necessary. In the absence of which this outline application should therefore be refused.
- iii The proposed development represents outwards sprawl of Chesham and the consequent loss of Lye Green as a settlement with its own identity and community independent of the larger town.
- iv Consequential increased traffic generation including the number of slowing and turning vehicles accessing the site in an already narrow but busy stretch of Lycrome Road,
- v General adverse effects upon highway safety/visibility - Lycrome Road is the principle proposed access point and the developer expects this to provide the sole access point for up to 170 new homes plus the access for some commercial vehicles serving the proposed mixed Use Classes E, F1, F2 and C3 upon this development. Given the range of proposed uses is so wide it is impossible to assess the scale of the impact from such wide and diverse range of mixed uses.
- vi The proposed new access is wholly inappropriate and insufficient for such a major development proposal. Whilst some highway improvements are proposed by the applicant, they are confined to mere slight improvements in junction visibility and the provision of a short stretch of pathway beside the new access junction, yet the nearby junction with Nashleigh Hill (A416) is already frequently congested with traffic sometimes with traffic backing up to the proposed new development access junction. In the other direction just a short distance away,

Lycrome Road become a single carriageway where vehicles already have to stop to give way to opposing traffic near the Black Cat pub as demonstrated by the “road narrows” highway signage and the fact the carriageway has no central white line. The additional traffic generated by the proposed development will have significant injurious effects upon an already congested road and those existing residences along that road and it is wholly inappropriate for a development of 170 homes to have just one access point onto such an already congested and constrained road. Again as the subject application has only been made in outline with the type of housing and mixed commercial use requirements unclear, it is impossible at this time to assess the suitability of the proposed sole access without a fully detailed application.

- vii Parking provision for the proposed new homes and the mixed commercial uses remains unclear with the inherent risk that vehicles will consequently be parked in or along the proposed estate roadway or worse, possibly along Lycrome Road, both of which will then be injurious to amenity as well as problematic for any emergency vehicles or regular refuse collection. This must not be left as a “*reserved matter*” as it is fundamental to whether the principle of this proposed development is appropriate or not.
- viii The proposed development will result in loss of biodiversity and have environmental impact upon local flora & fauna. The applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment but how can this be accurately assessed when so much detail is missing or not specified in the application? Self evidently the proposed development will also result in permanent loss of good quality agricultural land and represent a further loss to local and national food supply.
- ix The need for affordable housing is for it to be built in a more sustainable location (not 2km+ distant from the town centre) and at the top of a steep hill where walking and cycling is impractical and achievable only for the most fit and able bodied. The applicant’s own Travel Plan document acknowledges that “*Dedicated cycle (links) in the immediate vicinity and indeed the wider built area of Chesham is limited...*”

- x Whilst the applicant highlights “*Local bus services operate along Lycrome Road and the A416,*” however, these are infrequent and the applicant fails to mention that at best this service is represented by one bus per hour along Lycrome Road.
- xi Surface water run-off from any such proposed development raises the consequential impact on the aged local drainage infrastructure and risk of further surface water flooding (commonly associated along Lycrome Road & Lye Green Road),
- xii Increased ground water abstraction and consequential impact on the globally rare local chalk streams notably the River Chess after which the town is named.
- xiii The site forms part of a Water Source Protection Zone that the Environment Agency and Defra have established where any development might cause water run off or discharge into the ground water and thereby might cause contamination of the aquifer feeding the local chalk stream. Please also note Gees Spring is located in the SW wooded corner of the site known as Lycrome Wood.
- xiv The development will result in injurious impact upon local wildlife and their habitats – at least one badger sett is believed to be located within the application site with other endangered birds regularly seen nesting on site or in its hedgerows.

Although not a material planning consideration, BNG have been concerned about the landowner’s compliance with the *Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022* and the historic secrecy surrounding the ownership of the subject land. The latest enquiries with Land Registry records suggest further recent efforts have been made to conceal the ultimate beneficial ownership of the subject land, the reasons for which are unclear.

That issue aside, given the volume of enquiries about the proposed development being received by BNG since Capreon started direct mailing leaflets to local residents before their exhibition last year and given the numerous posts appearing on social media by members of the public already expressing concerns about these development proposals, it is fair to say

that BNG also have many further reservations about the proposed development but feel the issues highlighted so far herein are sufficient to warrant refusal of planning consent.

Whilst it is appreciated the current application is for outline consent only, at this time it is unclear how the developer proposes to address the SANG issue too (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) to protect sensitive natural areas like Special Protection Areas (SPAs) nearby. Whilst the LPA may regard this as an issue to be determined under “*reserved matters*”, BNG contend that this is a fundamental issue pertaining to the principle of development at this sensitive location and should be considered thoroughly when assessing the application.

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On behalf of **Brown Not Green Chesham Ltd**
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