

ANNEX: Reference 25/03028/OUTS

EVIDENCE FROM Test Valley Borough Council commissioned ACADEMIC RESEARCH (BEYOND BRICKS AND MORTAR - [Beyond bricks and mortar: results and recommendations of the NxtGen Community Researcher Training Programme in Barton Stacey and Lockerley - ePrints Soton](#))

Braishfield Parish Council submits this Annex drawing on the University of Southampton's 'Beyond Bricks and Mortar' research, commissioned and funded by TVBC itself, as a material consideration of significant weight. The findings go directly to the sustainability of this proposal, its cumulative and social impacts, infrastructure capacity, place identity and community wellbeing. Officers and Members are therefore respectfully requested to have full regard to this evidence in applying the NPPF tilted balance and in assessing whether the adverse impacts of this development significantly and demonstrably outweigh any claimed benefits.

1. Introduction and Status of the Evidence

Material Consideration Statement

This Annex is submitted as a material consideration of significant weight for the purposes of section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

It draws on the peer-reviewed academic research report *Beyond Bricks and Mortar: Results and Recommendations of the NxtGen Community Researcher Training Programme in Barton Stacey and Lockerley* (University of Southampton, 2025), which was commissioned and funded by Test Valley Borough Council in partnership with the University of Southampton and Research England.

The research forms part of TVBC's own evidence base for sustainable rural development and the delivery of its Rural Offer. It was expressly designed to inform place-based planning, community-led decision-making and the assessment of cumulative, social and wellbeing impacts of rural development in Test Valley's rural settlements.

The study examined two small rural villages — Barton Stacey and Lockerley — comparable to Braishfield in scale, character and planning status, and subject to the same restrictive settlement-hierarchy policy framework under Policy COM2 of the adopted Test Valley Local Plan. Its findings are therefore directly applicable to the consideration of large, estate-style speculative development in a small rural settlement.

As such, the findings summarised and applied in this Annex go directly to matters that are material to the determination of this application, including:

- whether the proposal constitutes sustainable development in NPPF terms

- whether adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh any claimed benefits
- cumulative development impacts and village capacity
- infrastructure adequacy and social infrastructure provision
- social cohesion, community resilience and wellbeing
- place identity, heritage and local distinctiveness

Officers and Members are therefore respectfully requested to have full regard to this evidence when applying the tilted balance under NPPF paragraph 11(d) and when assessing whether the proposal accords with the development plan and the Framework taken as a whole.

This Annex is submitted in support of Braishfield Parish Council's objection to Application 25/03028/OUTS.

2. Development Is About More Than Housing Numbers

The research establishes that rural development cannot be reduced to housing delivery statistics. It finds:

"New development is rarely just about buildings. It is also about identity, belonging, memory, social relationships and how these are connected to the future of the village."

It further concludes:

"Successful rural development and the delivery of the TVBC Rural Offer must be rooted in the natural, social and cultural environments that make rural villages distinctive, and in understanding their particular needs."

This directly contradicts Bargate's implicit assumption that the delivery of 60 dwellings in any location, regardless of context, constitutes a planning benefit.

3. Social Fragmentation and Estate-Style Development

The research identifies a clear and evidenced causal link between estate-style "bolt-on" development and social fragmentation in small rural settlements:

"Bolt-on development in a relatively small geographical area risks social fragmentation... Further social risks arise where newcomers may not share place-based values."

The most striking qualitative finding from Barton Stacey was the emergence of a social divide between the historic village and a modern estate:

"There were striking findings with regard to the perceived difference between 'old' and 'new' Barton Stacey. The latter was described as 'where we get our cleaners from', while some people living there suggested that they were looked down on by people from 'old' Barton Stacey."

The report's explicit recommendation is:

"Prioritise infill rather than estate development in villages in order to promote social cohesion and avoid spatial and social divisions."

This application proposes exactly the type of single, standardised estate-style extension that the research identifies as socially harmful. It would introduce a distinct new enclave physically and socially separated from the historic village core, replicating the conditions that produced documented social division in Barton Stacey.

4. Cumulative Impact and Development Concentration

The research warns that the harms of bolt-on development are dramatically intensified when viewed at the appropriate geographical scale.

Within approximately a two-mile radius of Braishfield, the following major developments and estates have already been delivered or been permitted:

- Abbotswood, Romsey: approximately 800 dwellings
- Kings Chase, Ampfield: approximately 275 dwellings
- Permission granted for the Brentry site at Jermyns Lane (approximately 245 dwellings, and Ganger Farm Phase 2 / Kings Chase South (up to 309 dwellings)
This represents a concentration of over 1,600 estates and dwellings either already delivered or actively proposed on land immediately adjoining the rural setting of Braishfield.
- Further speculative residential planning applications are also emerging within the same small rural catchment area.

The research from the report states:

"This risk is dramatically heightened when viewed at the appropriate geographical scale."

While Abbotswood and Kings Chase (neighbouring sites) were accompanied by, or benefit from, some infrastructure investment and facilities, Braishfield absorbs the cumulative traffic, environmental and social impacts of all neighbouring developments without any equivalent infrastructure provision.

The application would compound an already disproportionate cumulative burden and push the area beyond any reasonable conception of sustainable capacity.

5. Infrastructure Deficits and Unsustainable Growth

The research found that even villages with materially better infrastructure than Braishfield reported persistent and significant deficits:

"Frustration about poor roads, footpaths, WiFi, mobile phone signal and drainage."

Specific issues recorded included:

"Poor roads and poor public transport."

"Access to important aspects of village life is limited by the present state of roads and footpaths which are often flooded."

"Parked cars or poor road surfaces inhibit safe access to village amenities."

The report's recommendations include:

"Address village infrastructure."

"Improve access to village amenities, including green and blue spaces."

Braishfield already experiences all of these identified deficiencies. The application proposes to add 60 dwellings without addressing any existing infrastructure shortcomings and without providing any commensurate new infrastructure.

This is precisely the unsustainable growth pattern that the research warns against.

6. Social Infrastructure and Community Resilience

The research establishes a strong link between social infrastructure, wellbeing and long-term community resilience:

"Development of social capital (connections and networks) is critical to social cohesion."

It found that:

"Opportunities to develop social networks have reduced since the COVID-19 pandemic; almost half the established clubs and groups in the village have ceased since then."

Without active investment in social infrastructure - community hubs, meeting spaces and facilities that support shared activity - additional housing exacerbates isolation and fragmentation.

The Bargate application provides no community facilities, no social infrastructure and no mechanism for supporting integration or community-building.

7. Place Identity, Heritage and Wellbeing

The research demonstrates that place identity is fundamental to wellbeing and social cohesion, not a peripheral aesthetic concern:

"Village stories create, and reflect, a sense of pride in place... actively contribute to a sense of personal and village identity. They inspire belonging and attachment to place."

It issues a clear warning:

"Building additional housing without consideration of the relationship between heritage and village identity risks reducing residents' place attachment,"

with knock-on effects for:

"Social fragmentation and anti-social behaviour."

Residents in the research villages expressed "profound concern over loss of village identity."

The report concludes:

"Natural and cultural heritage are vital to understanding place-based values, supporting wellbeing, community cohesion and resilience."

The Bargate application proposes a standardised estate form that does not respond to Braishfield's distinctive linear settlement pattern or its valued open texture. It therefore conflicts directly with the research findings and recommendations.

8. Absence of Community-Led Planning and Housing Need Evidence

The research and TVBC's Rural Offer emphasise community-led, evidence-based planning.

The report states:

"Residents want appropriate houses that serve community needs (affordable housing for people with connections to the village, including for families and people who wish to downsize), in places that protect what they value."

It recommends:

"Identify housing targets for villages and give them the opportunity to say where they would like to build, rather than top-down decision-making."

This application is entirely speculative. It is unsupported by:

- Any village-level housing needs assessment
- Any evidence of proper community consultation
- Any demonstration that the housing proposed serves identified local needs

It represents exactly the form of top-down, developer-led decision-making that the research and TVBC's own Rural Offer explicitly reject.

9. The Tilted Balance Does Not Override This Evidence

TVBC has publicly acknowledged that it cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. As a result, the policies in the adopted Local Plan most important for determining this application in respect of housing supply are out of date for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 11(d), and the presumption in favour of sustainable development ('the tilted balance') is engaged.

The research is directly relevant to the application of NPPF paragraph 11(d). It demonstrates that the adverse impacts of this development are:

- Significant
- Demonstrable
- Evidence-based
- Directly contrary to TVBC's own commissioned research and policy commitments

The report concludes:

"TVBC has commissioned robust academic research. It has developed a progressive Rural Offer. It has committed to community-led planning. Approving speculative applications that contradict this evidence base contradicts evidence-based, consensual participatory governance."

The tilted balance is not a blank cheque. It does not require the approval of development that is demonstrably unsustainable and harmful to communities.

9A. Legacy, Governance and the Duty to Demonstrate Best Practice Ahead of Unitarisation

Test Valley Borough Council is on the cusp of abolition as a result of Local Government Reorganisation and the creation of new unitary authorities. Decisions taken in this final period of its existence will form part of its enduring institutional legacy.

The *Beyond Bricks and Mortar* research was commissioned precisely to inform a new model of place-based, participatory and evidence-led rural governance. It was funded through Research England in partnership with TVBC and designed to support a transition away from top-down, speculative planning towards community-led sustainable development.

The report explicitly situates its findings within the context of democratic renewal and governance reform, stating that:

"Decision-making should be informed not just by use value but by the full range of ways in which people value their places and how they link to lived experience."

and that:

"Approving speculative applications that contradict this evidence base contradicts evidence-based, consensual participatory governance."

At a moment when local government structures are being fundamentally reshaped, TVBC has a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to demonstrate what best-practice rural planning looks like in the 21st century.

That means:

- Showcasing development that is genuinely sustainable in location and form
- Demonstrating fidelity to its own commissioned evidence base
- Upholding its Rural Offer commitments to community-led planning
- Rejecting speculative, developer-led applications that bypass local voice and place-based need

Approving this application would send precisely the wrong signal at precisely the wrong time. It would indicate that even where a council has invested public money in robust academic research, articulated progressive rural policy and committed to participatory governance, those commitments can still be overridden by speculative housing numbers.

Refusing this application, by contrast, would demonstrate institutional integrity and leadership. It would establish a benchmark for how the successor unitary authority should approach rural development: evidence-led, place-based and rooted in lived experience.

It would show that TVBC's final act in rural planning was not to entrench the mistakes of the past, but to model a better future.

10. Conclusion

The Beyond Bricks and Mortar research, commissioned and funded by TVBC itself, provides clear, peer-reviewed, place-based evidence that:

- Estate-style bolt-on development in Tier 3 villages causes social fragmentation
- Concentrated rural development creates disproportionate cumulative harm
- Infrastructure deficits are already constraining wellbeing and sustainability
- Place identity and heritage are central to community resilience
- Community-led planning is essential to sustainable rural growth

This application proposes exactly the form of development that the research identifies as harmful.

Approving it would require TVBC to disregard its own commissioned evidence, its own Rural Offer commitments and its stated commitment to evidence-based, participatory rural planning.

When assessed alongside the planning harms identified in the Parish Council's main objection and the Feria Urbanism Design Review, the adverse social, cumulative, infrastructure and wellbeing impacts identified in this Annex provide further and independent grounds on which the adverse impacts of this development significantly and demonstrably outweigh any claimed benefits for the purposes of NPPF paragraph 11(d).

For all of these reasons, the findings of the Beyond Bricks and Mortar research materially reinforce the Parish Council's objection and provide powerful additional grounds for refusal of Application 25/03028/OUTS.