

Dear Katie

**Land West of Braishfield Road, Braishfield**

**Application Reference 25/03028/OUTS**

The parish council will not take up your time responding to individual consultation responses or submissions unless they raise matters upon which we have specific additional information. We do however feel obliged to comment in more general terms on the letter of 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026 you have received from Master Land and Planning (MLP) on behalf of Bargate Homes.

**Principle of Development in a Rural Location**

In their letter MLP says that the parish council acknowledges that that this is a ‘relatively small development’. That is not correct. We stated that it is relatively small for a development being proposed in outline rather than as a full application. Relative to the size of Braishfield this is a major application which would significantly change the character of the village.

Our point regarding the outline application is that Bargate had a realistic option to submit a full application which would have enabled Test Valley and consultees to have assessed the design, layout and impact of development as a single, holistic process. They have instead tried to avoid that scrutiny. This suggests a defensiveness and lack of confidence in their understanding of the site or its context which is amply demonstrated by the illustrative layout submitted (on which we comment below).

MLP repeat part of the consultation response from the local highway authority (LHA). The LHA does observe that the application would offer scope for some localised improvements (road crossings etc) but its overall of assessment of the site is:

*The Highway Authority accepts that opportunities for significant off-site active travel infrastructure improvements are limited and that the development should be assessed on the basis of whether it would materially worsen conditions for non-motorised users.*

We read this as an oblique acknowledgement that this is not a sustainable location because opportunities for access by walking, cycling and public transport are inherently constrained. The best the LHA can say is that it does not make things worse than they already are. That is not sufficient to meet the policy tests in the local plan or NPPF, and we would take issue even with that assessment. If more residents are introduced to an already inaccessible location than that is undoubtedly a materially worse situation than at present.

The applicant is wrong to suggest that the output from the Connectivity Tool is ‘incorrect’ or should not be presented as relevant evidence. The government invites decision makers to consider the Connectivity Tool as a material consideration in assessing the suitability of a site for development. In her Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament the Secretary of State for Transport said:

*This landmark platform will serve as the new national metric of connectivity, transforming how we plan for new development and the transport infrastructure needed to support it, ensuring new homes and services can be easily accessed by sustainable modes of transport, helping kickstart economic growth, and delivering the government's house building targets.<sup>1</sup>*

Although the site covers more than one output square (each of which covers 1 hectare) the applicant acknowledges that the lowest score for the most developed part of the site is correctly identified as 30 out of 100 (the higher score for less developed parts is 34). Guidance attached to the Connectivity Tool acknowledges that contextual information is important but MLP offer no evidence to suggest that it under-estimates any factors in Braishfield.

A score of 30 indicates that future residents will struggle to reach employment and local services by walking, cycling and public transport. They will be reliant on private cars, contrary to national policy objectives. That is entirely consistent with the experience of village residents such as the absence of any bus service serving the village at weekends.

The score by comparison only with other sites in Test Valley may be relevant during plan making (to compare and evaluate alternatives) but it is not relevant to a speculative planning application where the applicant has already chosen the location.

In our view the only question about the Connectivity Tool is whether Test Valley intend to make use of it to assess the sustainability credentials of the site in the way clearly supported by national policy.

### **Impact on Local Character**

We are well aware that this is an outline application and that layout does not form part of the matters to be determined at this stage. We note that MLP says in their letter that:

*The illustrative material shows only one treatment of the potential development. It is not for determination.*

However, the applicant has submitted a parameter plan which is itself derived from this illustrative material. If this is approved at outline, reserved matters applications must be in conformity with that plan. It is disingenuous to suggest that the applicant intends that the principles of the layout would remain entirely flexible or open to negotiation. If Test Valley approves the application as submitted will mean giving a 'green light' to the layout Bargate has presented with the application.

That is why the well informed and fully evidenced critique of this layout we have provided is so important. We have demonstrated that it has a suburban form which would have a significantly harmful effect on the character of Braishfield. It is not derived from a proper

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<sup>1</sup> Rt. Hon. Heidi Alexander MP WMS 11 December 2025

understanding of the way the village has evolved. The fact that the applicant chooses to dispute whether Braishfield can be characterised as linear and hamlet-based settlement when this is clearly an accurate characterisation of the village and the content of the Village Design Statement simply reinforces our concern. If you or MLP is any doubt about that description then we would refer to the Test Valley Landscape Character Assessment 2018 which describes Braishfield and neighbouring villages in the LCT4 Character Area as follows:

*The three settlements of Michelmersh, Ampfield and Braishfield dominate this landscape and have a distinctive settlement pattern. These settlements have evolved around converging roads giving them a star-like form, with Test Valley Landscape Character Assessment 2004 (updated 2018) LCT4: 19 development scattered along the roads in a linear fashion. Due to the linear development of these settlements open fields still exist near the centres providing the settlements with a rural quality. Farmsteads can also be found on the edge of these settlements.*

What is most notable is that MLP offers no detailed defence of their scheme or rebuttal of the analysis made by Feria Urbanism on our behalf. If they are so confident that the scheme would represent good place-making then we would have expected some attempt to do so.

The applicant has not made contact with us to discuss our well founded concerns about the proposed scale and form of development. Granting outline consent will mean they have no incentive to do so. If Bargate are serious about responding to our concerns we would welcome a discussion now, before any decisions are made.

In summary, contrary to MLP's assertions the application is contrary to relevant local plan policy, is poorly connected and would have a harmful impact on the character of the village. For those reasons it should be refused.

Yours etc.