Minutes 16th June 2026 – Appendix B

Bentworth Parish Council objects to this application and agrees with and supports all the following comments from Beech Parish Council.

Planning Application EHDC-26-0488-FUL: Land North of Lower Park Farm, Abbey Road

Beech Parish Council Comments

Beech Parish Council objects to this planning application because the proposed development is in a completely unsuitable location, just beyond the border of Beech parish.

The proposed development is on the same site as, and is very similar in nature to, Planning Application 58352, an application for 8 traveller pitches which was refused in 2019 – a decision upheld by the Planning Inspectorate on appeal (ref. APP/M1710/W/20/3249161) in 2022.

In 2022, after visiting the site and a two day hearing, the Inspector concluded that the cumulative harms, principally the *"very serious detriment to the character and appearance of the locality"*, clearly outweighed the potential benefits of the proposal. He also stated that *"this site is fundamentally unsuited to the use proposed". T*hese conclusions clearly remain valid for the current planning application.

The following aspects have not changed since the Inspector's 2022 decision:

- A need for Gypsy & Traveller sites in the district;
- The absence in the district of a 5 year supply of deliverable land for Gypsy & Traveller accommodation;
- The Gypsy & Traveller status and the diverse geographical origins of the proposed occupants of the site;
- The amount of development located around the site;
- Highways and site access arrangements;
- Local public transport; and
- Accessibility to local services.

So none of these factors should be cause to overturn the Inspector's decision in 2022.

The applicant contends that the landscape-related harms that swayed the inspector in 2022 can be eliminated by reducing the number of pitches from 8 to 6, and by planting wider green landscaping at the northern and western boundaries of the site. We disagree, for the following reasons:

1. The proposed site plan shows that the 6 pitches plus access road will take up virtually the same area on the site as the 8 pitches in 2022. The westernmost pitch area is large enough to be subdivided into three pitches, each the same size as the 5 other pitches. In other words, the proposed spacing of the 6 dayrooms will easily permit an increase to 8 pitches, the same as the proposal rejected in 2022.

2. In 2022 the Inspector stated *"When the activity associated with the 8 pitches, and the domestic paraphernalia to be expected, is added, then it is clear to me that the character of the area would be changed from an open rural field to an intensely developed tract of land akin to a small urban area in its own right. Given the sensitivity of the landscape here this leads to my judgement that the magnitude of the effect would be major and adverse."* With virtually the same area to be developed, and the room to expand the number of pitches, this conclusion still stands for this new application.

3. In 2022 the Inspector rejected landscaping as a mitigation, as the necessary deciduous plants would not be effective when the leaves have fallen. He also said *"…whatever mitigation was carried out it would still be likely that the activity on the site, the comings and goings of vehicles, and the inevitable noise and lights (even if only related to buildings, caravans and vehicles) associated with 8 families living here would be a significant detractor from the character of the area."* The same would be true with 6 pitches in this new application. The Inspector also dismissed landscaping to effectively mitigate the prominent view of the site from Jennie Green Lane, and from Abbey Road and Wivelrod Road.

4. The Inspector noted the impossibility of mitigating the views into the site at its entrance from Wivelrod Road. The Inspector also observed leisure cyclists on Abbey Road and Wivelrod Road, and stated *"The experience of cycling on these lanes would be harmed by the clear presence of the proposal."* The same applies to the regular recreational walkers. These observations still apply to this new application.

5. The Inspector noted that the proposals were in conflict with policies of the Local Plan by not *"protecting local distinctiveness, sense of place and tranquillity"* and by being *"unsympathetic to its setting in terms of scale, massing and density".* Those Local Plan policies are still in place and the same conflict remains.

6. The site is in peaceful, elevated, open countryside, about 200 metres from the grounds of Alton Abbey (in Beech parish), and about 300 metres from the Abbey buildings. In a change since the 2022 appeal decision, the Abbey buildings are now Grade II listed by Historic England (list entry nos. 1494035 and 1494210). The proposed development would now, additionally, be detrimental to the setting of the Grade II listed Alton Abbey.

Finally we note that, following submission of the planning application dated 6 May 2026, on-site construction activities were commenced on the evening of Friday 22 May. This blatant breach of planning regulations, presumably with a view to compromising the planning decision process, is deplorable and we trust that this aggravating act will be fully taken into account by EHDC. Given that the reasons for the appeal refusal in 2022 apply equally to this new application, it must be necessary to refuse this application and then follow up with enforced restoration of the site to its condition prior to 22 May.