

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF
PERSIMMON HOMES LTD AND OUNDLE SCHOOL**

REGARDING

**GLAPTHORN ROAD PLAYING FIELD,
OUNDLE**

Background

- 1.1 This statement is issued by John Martin and Associates on behalf of Persimmon Homes (East Midlands) Ltd and Oundle School. It refers to an area of land off Glapthorn Road as shown at appendix 1 which is owned by Oundle School and on which Persimmon Homes have an option to develop.

- 1.2 It has been identified by East Northamptonshire Council as a sustainable site for residential development and allocation as such through the Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan. The site scores well as a development site via an independent report commissioned by East Northamptonshire Council and prepared by consultant's Roger Tym and Partners. The resulting report by East Northamptonshire Council titled 'Rural North, Oundle and Thrapston Plan: Developing Plan Policies Using Roger Tyms' Assessment', dated 11 February 2009, identifies that the site is well contained and well-related to the existing pattern of development and is considered suitable, available and achievable for housing. The report advises that development at the site at Glapthorn Road would round off the development at Creed Road.

- 1.3 The site is private playing fields associated with Oundle School. There is no public access across the site. The Council rates its quality as an amenity open space as average and well below the threshold of good quality amenity space.

Usage of the land

- 1.4 The availability of the land for residential purposes has been questioned by some who are led by a mis-conception that it is required for the sporting purposes of the School.
- 1.5 Oundle School's main sports are rugby and cricket, although the School also provides for a full range of sports. The School has 20 pitches in all (excluding the Glaphorn Road site), accommodating rugby, football hockey, and cricket in the summer months. There are two astroturf pitches used for hockey and occasionally football in winter, and for tennis in summer. There are presently 1,074 pupils at the School. The School also has an athletics track, swimming pool, squash and badminton courts, various sports halls and boat houses for rowing.
- 1.6 In addition the School provides green space in the town which accommodates Oundle Cricket club, Oundle Junior football club, Oundle Town Football Club and (via the Grocer's Company) Oundle Rugby Club. These green spaces are provided to the town at a peppercorn rent as a community goodwill arrangement.
- 1.7 The Glaphorn Road land presently provides for a football pitch and the land is known to the School as 'New Field'. However the land is poorly drained and often water-logged. As a consequence the pitch is only used as a last resort for football and occasionally in summer for rounders when the land is dry.
- 1.8 Mindful of the poor quality of the pitch at New Field, in 2004 as part of a new science development, the School took the opportunity to combine the 'SciTec' development (ENDC ref 04/00728/FUL) with an associated area of sloping playing field land. The 'SciTec' development sought the redevelopment of existing school buildings of the late 20th century through to 1998 into a modern purpose built teaching unit incorporating biology, chemistry, physics,

electronics and design technology also including an astronomical observatory, art department and 260 seat lecture theatre and the upgrading of sloping playing fields and landscaping of the site. The redevelopment of out-dated buildings and the enhancement of the playing field area was welcomed by the Council as a positive enhancement to the adjacent conservation area.

- 1.9 The levelled playing field area is now known by the School as Home Close and is to be used as a sports pitch to be brought into use next year. The land is presently under 'turf management' in readiness for its forthcoming use. The School Estates Bursar advises that goal posts are already budgeted for and will be on site late Summer next year. Home Close may be used for either rugby or football the School is yet to decide. If rugby is chosen then a pitch presently in use for rugby will be reallocated as football. The School has a number of choices given its extensive number of pitches.

PPG17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

- 1.10 PPG17 recognises the benefits of sport and recreation to the health and wellbeing of the individual identifying in the forward to the document:-

'health and well being - open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others.

- 1.11 This is a well adopted consideration of Oundle School, and as identified above the School provides a full range of sporting opportunities for its students who are very well provided for in both indoor and outdoor facilities which far exceed provision in state schools.

- 1.12 PPG17 at paragraph 13 also advises that where a sports provision is being lost any replacement facility should be at least as accessible to current and potential new users and at least equivalent in terms of size, usefulness, attractiveness and quality. It also advises that the aim should be to provide a qualitative improvement. Although New Field is surplus to requirements the school has taken the opportunity through additional development on the campus to include a new sports pitch by creating a levelled area alongside the new development. The new pitch will be better located in relation to school buildings and therefore have better accessibility for its existing and future users, it is of comparable size, and attractiveness and of a better quality and therefore usefulness than the existing pitch. The School has therefore achieved the PPG17 aim of achieving a qualitative improvement in its pitch facility.

- 1.13 At paragraph 3 the PPG advises that open spaces can perform more than one function including such as:-

1. Strategic function: separating urban areas or linking town to country.

1.14 As regards a strategic function the land at Glaphorn Road does not serve a purpose in providing a strategic gap between urban developments. Rather its development is considered helpful in linking urban areas.

2. Urban quality: helping to support regeneration and improving quality of life for communities by providing visually attractive green spaces close to where people live.

1.15 In respect of its quality as an open space, as identified above (paragraph 1.3) it is not recognised as having a high amenity function within the urban environment of Oundle.

3. Promoting health and well-being: providing opportunities to people of all ages for informal recreation.

1.16 The site can be seen to provide sport and recreation opportunities for the students of Oundle School. The site is not available to the public. In this regard, as alternative pitch facilities of a better quality and more accessibly located are being provided, health and wellbeing of existing and potential users continues to be addressed by the new facility.

4. Havens and habitats for flora and fauna: sites may also have potential to be corridors or stepping stones from one habitat to another and may contribute towards achieving objectives set out in local biodiversity action plans.

1.17 As a playing field site which is well maintained the site will offer little habitat diversity. This can be enhanced through an appropriately landscaped development retaining any on site features such as trees and hedgerows.

5. A community resource: as a place for congregating and for holding community events, religious festivals, fêtes and travelling fairs; and,

- 1.18 The site is not open of public use and is a private playing field for sole use by the School. There are extensive other sporting facilities at Oundle for public and club use.

6. A visual amenity: even without public access, people enjoy having open space near to them to provide an outlook, variety in the urban scene, or as a positive element in the landscape.

- 1.19 As in 1.15 above the site's quality as an urban open space is not considered an overwhelming consideration for its retention.

Conclusion

- 1.20 The New Field, Glaphorn Road pitch is used only rarely for football given its poor drainage and only as a last resort. It is used occasionally in summer for rounders. To all intents and purposes with a further 20 pitches available to the school the New Field is surplus to requirements, but because it is there it is used from time to time. The land is well maintained irrespective of its extent of use, as this is Oundle School's policy and courtesy to the town and its residents.
- 1.21 Even though the pitch is effectively surplus to the school's requirements and not well suited to pitch use the school is bringing in to use next year an additional pitch next to the new science development (SciTec) on land which has already been levelled and prepared (suitable drainage installed and turf appropriately managed for future use).
- 1.22 The site serves no other purpose either as visual amenity, a strategic gap or as a community resource. As identified at paragraph 10 of PPG17.

'Not all open space, sport and recreational land and buildings are of equal merit and some may be available for alternative uses.'

- 1.23 As regards the drainage of the site, which is identified as poor for pitch use, a development of the site will provide full consideration of drainage issues (as has taken place with the existing Creed Road/Hillfield Road development the present planning application for the extension of this residential estate). The opportunity therefore exists to improve local drainage conditions and appropriately deal with surface run-off which will be an integral part of any development scheme.