

**PART FIVE-A
SOUNDNESS OF
SITE ALLOCATIONS
WEEDON HILL**

SITE REVIEW

Aylesbury NESS003

PART FIVE-A SOUNDNESS OF SITE ALLOCATIONS WEEDON HILL

SUMMARY OF WEEDON PARISH COUNCIL'S OBJECTIONS

Our ref	Issue	Test relied upon	Objections and Modifications Sought
PART FIVE - SOUNDNESS – Northern Aylesbury Site allocations affecting Weedon Hill hamlet			
SWH1	Site Allocation Review – Weedon Hill NESS03 Aylesbury development extent surrounding Weedon Hill hamlet	Soundness – Positively Prepared / Justified	The published Concept Framework Plan extends the proposed development without having proper re-assessment. The previous iterations of the NESS Study assess a significantly different layout and extent for NESS003. Completely reassess NESS003 for the proposed masterplan or revise the masterplan again to properly reflect impact on Weedon Hill Hamlet and other nearby settlements.
SWH2	Site Allocation Review – Weedon Hill AYL06 Land N of Martin Dalby Way	Soundness – Justified / Positively Prepared	The published proposals, with no mapping detail, increase the density and number of homes on the same 79-hectare site from 1,891 in February 26 to 3,150 now – a 66% increase. Allocation AYL06 should be re-assessed, particularly in respect of its size, housing density, impact on landscape and neighbouring settlements and deliverability. Cumulative impact for the area, and Weedon Hill Hamlet particularly, must be given the highest priority.

Comments are made on:

Draft Local Plan Chapter 6 – Site Allocations – Strategic Sites Housing and Mixed Use

Draft Local Plan Chapter 6 – Site Allocations – NESS003 Aylesbury

SOUNDNESS

SW1H - Site Allocation Review – Weedon Hill

NESS003 Aylesbury development extent surrounding Weedon Hill hamlet

Weedon Parish Council objects strongly to the allocation of NESS003 in its present form and considers that the allocation has not been shown to meet the soundness tests of being positively prepared, justified or effective nor that it is consistent with national planning policy.

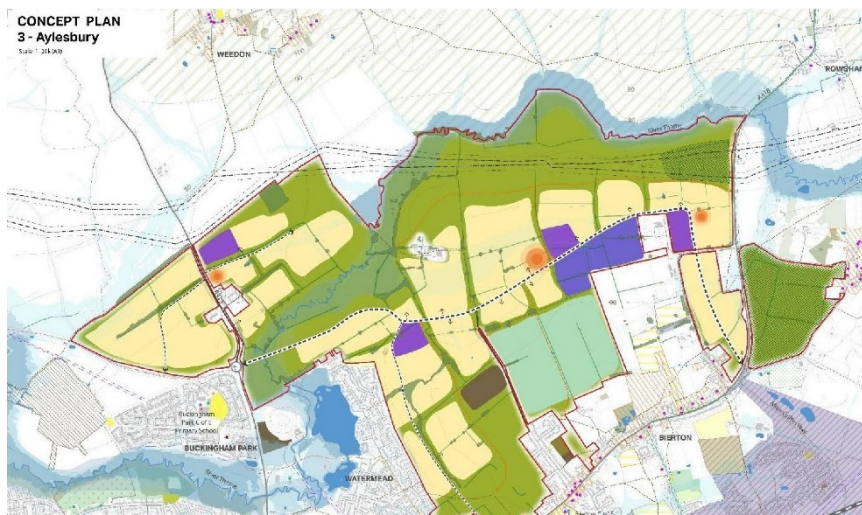
1. The fundamental concern is that the NESS003 allocation now proposed is materially different from the site and development framework assessed through the earlier stages of the NESS process.

The enlarged allocation extends substantially around the Weedon Hill Hamlet and onto land of different landscape character. Yet the evidence published with the Plan does not demonstrate that the enlarged site and revised Concept Framework Plan have been subjected to a corresponding full reassessment.

2. The extension of the NESS003 site masterplan now shown on page 115 of the Local Plan is a substantial and material change to the proposed allocation. It extends development to surround the Weedon Hill hamlet with apparently little or no meaningful buffer between the existing settlement and the proposed development.

This fundamentally changes the relationship between Weedon Hill and its surrounding rural landscape. Previous iterations of this NESS Study, specifically the NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma Report, assessed a materially different masterplan in extent and development framework.

The NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma (February 2026) was the one that was available for feedback in the Regulation 18 Consultation. Therefore, the enlarged site shown in the Plan has not previously been subject to public scrutiny in its present form.



Stage 4 Masterplan

3. On page 30 of the Stage 4 NESS report, the significant extension to the site boundary is described, without sufficient supporting evidence or reasoning, as follows.

"Expanded Site Boundary: The Stage 4 masterplan has been refined to incorporate an extended site boundary, broadening the development area to the north, north-west, east, and south. Consequently, the overall housing unit capacity has been increased to reflect this larger site area."

The evidence does not explain why these additional areas were selected, what constraints were identified, how the enlarged area performs against the Assessment Framework, or why the resulting increase in housing capacity is justified.

4. In fact, much of the description of the policy and background for the site on pages 108-113 of the main Local Plan appears to refer to the PREVIOUS site extent.

Figure 3.2 – Consolidated Opportunities Plan



5. Here are extracts from the section "Site Context and Key Characteristics" on the Local Plan page 111.

"6.7 The site lies to the north-east of Aylesbury, between the A413 and A418, and adjoins the Watermead development. It is near the settlements of Hulcott and Birtton. The site is agricultural in character, comprising large arable fields with a relatively open structure, interspersed with hedgerows, watercourses and Public Rights of Way."

Comments:

- The extended development to the west of the A413 is not mentioned.
- The site can no longer be described as "between the A413 and A418".
- There is no acknowledgement of the settlement at Weedon Hill. Weedon Hill would be completely surrounded by the new development.

"6.8 The River Thames forms a strong northern boundary and is a key environmental and landscape feature. Parts of the site are affected by fluvial and surface water flood risk, particularly within the river corridor and in lower-lying areas. These areas present both

constraints and opportunities for the incorporation of green and blue infrastructure within the development."

Comment:

- The River Thame is no longer the northern boundary of the extended concept site.

"6.9 The site sits within a low-lying clay vale landscape, characterised by open views and a gently undulating landform. It forms an important transition between the built-up area of Aylesbury and the surrounding rural landscape. The setting of nearby settlements, particularly Bierton, and the Bierton Conservation Area are sensitive considerations which will influence the form and disposition of development."

Comments:

- The concept site now extends beyond the "low-lying clay vale landscape" to higher land. This is a significant change in overall topography.
- Building is shown on the rise to the Weedon Hill ridge and beyond.
- Weedon Hill is not mentioned. This is a historic agricultural hamlet. Its setting should also be taken into account as a sensitive consideration.

6. All of these inconsistencies are material. The site description in the Plan appears in significant respects to describe the earlier NESS003 site rather than the materially enlarged allocation now proposed. The evidence therefore does not provide a sufficiently clear or reliable description of the site which the Plan is actually seeking to allocate.
7. The omission of Weedon Hill from the site context is particularly significant. The revised allocation would place development around the hamlet and substantially alter its relationship with the surrounding countryside. It is therefore not sufficient to assess only the relationship of the site with Bierton and Aylesbury; the setting, identity and separation of Weedon Hill must also be properly assessed.
8. The following declarations are made in Policy Points 4 and 5 of the NESS003 Policy (Local Plan page 108). There are several which do not appear to relate to the revised and extended masterplan.

"4. Development must adopt a landscape-led approach which:

- a) Responds positively to the site's edge of town and rural transition character.*
- b) Reflects the existing field pattern and mature landscape features; and*
- c) Integrates development into the surrounding townscape and countryside."*

"5. Development must establish a high quality, distinctive and functional place and must:

- a) Respond to local context, including topography, landscape, habitats and ecological features.*
- b) Retain and incorporate trees, hedgerows and existing green infrastructure as part of a connected network.*
- c) Avoid areas of highest flood risk, including Flood Zones 2, 3a and 3b, and areas at significant risk of surface water flooding.*
- d) Incorporate multifunctional sustainable drainage systems as part of the design and layout.*

WEEDON PARISH COUNCIL

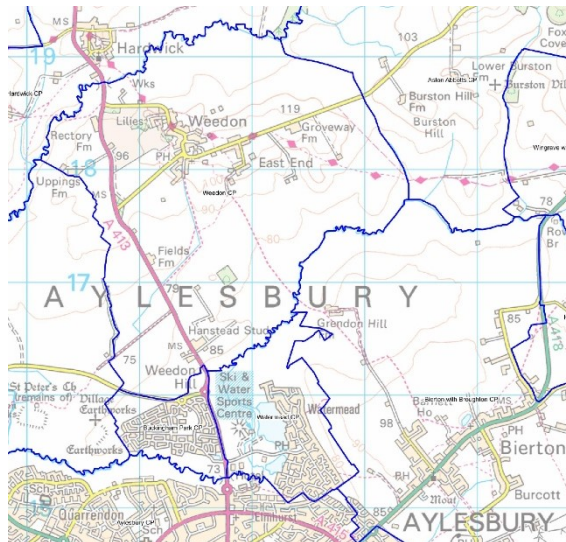
Representation under Regulation 19 to Draft Buckinghamshire Local Plan published 23-7-26

PART FIVE-A SITE ALLOCATION REVIEW WEEDON HILL - AYLESBURY NESS003

- e) Safeguard and enhance watercourses, including provision of appropriate buffers to the River Thames.*
- f) Take account of infrastructure constraints, including provision of appropriate easements and stand-off distances.*
- g) Maintain separation from nearby settlements, including Bierton to prevent coalescence and protect settlement character.*
- h) Conserve and enhance the setting of the Bierton Conservation Area; and*
- i) Be informed by up-to-date site-specific evidence, including flood risk and environmental assessments."*

The Parish Council considers that these requirements must be tested against the revised Concept Framework Plan, rather than assumed to have been satisfied by an earlier assessment.

We will review the evidence in relation to these policy points and the assessment framework in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Study, with particular reference to the additional section of the site extending around Weedon Hill and within Weedon Parish.



Differences between NESS003 Aylesbury Report Part 3 Pro Forma and current Report Stage 4

There are significant differences between the content for NESS003 in the Study Report Part 3 Pro Forma and the Study Report Stage 4.

The Assessment Framework was established in the Part 3 Pro Forma Report.

Seven “themes” were identified. A narrative described the character and constraints of each theme over pages 33 to 41.

The Stage 4 Report does not seem to take account of the changes in extent or layout of the concept plan, and certain key themes – **Place** and **Environment** – are not given a narrative at all despite the substantial extension of the site into areas not included in the earlier assessment.

The Stage 4 Report seems to take for granted that these themes had been already dealt with before and therefore needed no discussion.

As presented, the Stage 4 NESS report for Aylesbury appears to use the same assessment scores and descriptions from the Part 3 Pro Forma as for the materially different concept masterplan. The apparent reliance on the earlier scores is therefore not justified.

Unless Buckinghamshire Council can show that the revised site was reassessed, the original scores cannot safely be relied on as evidence supporting the allocation now proposed.

The Assessment Framework in NESS Study Stage 3 Pro Forma

23 criteria were developed from the summary themes and sub-headings, forming the Assessment Framework.

Each criterion was rated out of 5 for each NESS site and given a summary description as follows.

High scores indicated few constraints, and positive impacts.

Low scores indicated severe constraints and negative impacts.

<i>Criterion Score</i>	<i>Description of Score</i>
1	Low
2	Low/Medium
3	Medium
4	Medium/High
5	High

Below are the Assessment Framework summaries for NESS003 (page 43 of NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma) and the raw score Assessment Summary for all the NESS sites (page 243 of NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma).

Buckinghamshire New and Expanded Settlement Study Part 3 Pro Forms

Buckinghamshire Council

Table 3.1 – Assessment Framework

Theme	Criteria	Score	Theme	Criteria	Score
Place	Conserve and integrate with the historic environment	Medium	Movement	Access to existing or committed sustainable Public Transport links and services	High
	Integrate in a way that respects landscape and settlement character	Low/Medium		Access to existing or committed sustainable Rail transport links and services	Medium
	Preserve the rural and urban character	High		Access to existing or committed strategic active mode routes	High
	Enhance existing settlement hierarchy by regenerating or connecting with existing centres, or providing centres that complement existing network	High	People	Consider social infrastructure (integration with existing capacity and requirements)	High
Environment	Resilient to natural and man made risks	Medium		People	Address deprivation of existing communities
	Avoid and/or mitigate impacts to biodiversity designations and habitats	High	Economy		Proximity and sustainable connectivity to Key Employment areas
	Protect the quality of waterbodies	Medium		Proximity to and potential to support Key Economic Growth Sectors for Buckinghamshire	Medium/High
	Ensure agricultural productivity for food security	Low/Medium		Proximity to strategic road network, rail freight and airports to support the movement of goods	Medium
Infrastructure	Consider ground condition risks from potential land remediation and groundworks	Medium/High	Implementation	Consider complexity of Land Assembly/Consolidation.	Low
	Consider energy infrastructure (capacity and requirements)	High		Wider Deliverability Risks and Phasing Implications	Low/Medium
	Consider water supply and wastewater (capacity and requirements)	Medium			
	Consider digital connectivity (capacity and requirements)	Medium/High			
	Consider waste and minerals	High			

Assessment Summary

Each pro forma has concluded with a summary assessment against the Assessment Framework themes and criteria. These assessments range from low to high with five grades available. To compare the relative merits of each of the eighteen potential locations against each other, a numerical score has been assigned to these five grades of assessment, ranging from 1 to 5. The table below presents the summary results of the assessment. As can be seen, a wide range in thematic and criteria based scores are recorded across the eighteen locations with total assessment scores ranging from the lowest at 60 points to the highest at 92 points. The total available score is 115 points.

Theme	Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		Chesham	Burnham	Aylesbury	Cheddington	Haddenham	Quainton	Woodburn and Bourne End	Buckingham	Calvert	Princes Risborough	Stoke Mandeville	Windsor	Turweston	Chalfont St Peter	Beachampton	Oakley	Steeple Claydon	Wing
Place	Conserve historic environment	3	3	3	2	5	3	1	3	4	2	3	4	3	3	3	3	5	4
	Landscape and settlement character	1	1	2	2	1	3	3	5	3	1	4	3	5	1	3	3	2	1
	Preserve rural and urban character	4	4	5	3	2	4	5	3	5	4	5	4	3	2	1	2	4	5
	Enhance settlement hierarchy	5	5	5	4	5	1	5	5	3	4	5	4	5	4	3	3	3	3
Environment	Resilient to risks	5	5	3	4	5	2	5	4	3	4	5	4	4	5	3	4	4	4
	Impacts to biodiversity & habitats	4	3	5	3	4	4	5	5	3	5	5	4	3	3	4	5	5	5
	Protect waterbodies	5	5	3	3	5	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	4
	Agricultural productivity	2	3	2	4	1	3	3	2	5	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	4	4
Infrastructure	Ground condition risks	3	3	4	5	3	5	3	4	1	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
	Energy infrastructure	1	1	5	1	5	1	2	3	5	1	5	1	1	2	3	3	3	4
	Water and wastewater	5	3	3	4	5	3	5	3	3	3	3	4	5	5	5	5	3	5
	Digital connectivity	3	3	4	4	3	5	3	5	3	3	3	5	5	3	5	3	3	3
Movement	Waste and minerals	3	4	5	3	3	3	4	4	3	2	4	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
	Sustainable Public Transport	4	3	5	1	3	1	3	3	1	5	3	3	1	3	1	1	1	3
	Sustainable Rail transport	4	3	3	5	5	1	3	1	1	5	5	5	1	3	3	1	1	1
	Strategic active mode routes	3	3	5	1	3	1	3	5	1	5	5	3	1	1	1	1	1	1
People	Social infrastructure	4	4	5	3	3	2	4	5	1	4	2	4	3	3	2	1	3	3
	Address deprivation	3	2	5	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	4	3	3	1	4	2	1	1
Economy	Connectivity to Employment	2	2	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	1	3	3	2	2	1	2
	Support Growth Sectors	2	2	4	2	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	2	3	4	2	2	1	2
	Strategic connectivity for goods	1	1	3	1	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	1	1	3
Implementation	Land ownership / Assembly	3	1	1	2	4	3	3	4	3	1	5	2	3	3	4	5	5	4
	Wider Deliverability Risks and	4	1	2	1	5	2	4	3	1	1	4	3	2	4	3	2	2	4
Assessment Summary		74	65	86	61	80	61	81	82	60	71	92	75	70	71	65	62	64	73

NESS Stage 4 Report

We repeat that there is very little reassessment evidenced in the Stage 4 Report, despite the substantial increase and changes in the site's extent – to the west and north around Weedon Hill and further south along the edge of Watermead.

The critical themes of **Place** and **Environment** receive not even a discussion section in the Stage 4 Report, despite the extent of the site now including completely new areas not considered at all in the Part 3 Pro Formas.

We feel very strongly that the changed masterplan should be re-assessed fully.

Potential Reassessments of the scores for the 23 criteria

We have reproduced the detailed scores given in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS reports into a combined table for the Aylesbury NESS003 alone.

Against each criterion is our comment on whether we think the score could be reassessed. We then review each criterion for NESS003 with our evidence to justify a reassessment.

The Parish Council has not undertaken this exercise to substitute its own assessment for that of Buckinghamshire Council or AECOM but rather it has applied Buckinghamshire Council's own published Assessment Framework to the materially revised masterplan in order to test whether the original scores remain reasonable and sustainable.

The substantial difference that is made by reassessment with relatively minor – but, we believe, justified – changes in scores, even without adding weighting to the more critical criteria, points out the sensitivity of the methodology to changes in the underlying assumptions.

This reinforces the need for Buckinghamshire Council to undertake a formal reassessment of the current proposal.

* Scores and descriptions taken from NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma Report page 243 (Assessment Summary detailed scores for all NESS sites) and page 43 (Assessment Framework score descriptions for NESS003)

Combined Table of Scores and Descriptions in Part 3 Pro Forma Report				
AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call to Reassess
Theme	Criteria	Score	Low /Med /High	
Place	Conserve and integrate with historic environment	3	Medium	Reassess
	Integrate in a way that respects landscape and settlement character	2	Low/Medium	Reassess
	Preserve the rural and urban character	5	High	Reassess
	Enhance existing settlement hierarchy by regenerating or connecting with existing centres, or providing centres that complement existing network	5	High	Reassess
Environment	Resilient to natural and man made risks	3	Medium	
	Avoid and/or mitigate impacts to biodiversity designations and habitats	5	High	Reassess
	Protect the quality of waterbodies	3	Medium	Reassess
	Ensure agricultural productivity for food security	2	Low/Medium	
	Consider ground condition risks from potential land remediation and groundworks	4	Medium/High	Reassess
Infrastructure	Consider energy infrastructure (capacity and requirements)	5	High	Reassess
	Consider water supply and wastewater (capacity and requirements)	3	Medium	Reassess
	Consider digital connectivity (capacity and requirements)	4	Medium/High	
	Consider waste and minerals	5	High	
Movement	Access to existing or committed sustainable Public Transport links and services	5	High	Reassess
	Access to existing or committed sustainable Rail transport links and services	3	Medium	Reassess
	Access to existing or committed strategic active mode routes	5	High	Reassess
People	Consider social infrastructure (integration with existing capacity and requirements)	5	High	Reassess
	Address deprivation of existing communities	5	High	
Economy	Proximity and sustainable connectivity to Key Employment areas	4	Medium/High	Reassess
	Proximity to and potential to support Key Economic Growth Sectors for Bucks	4	Medium/High	Reassess
	Proximity to strategic road network, rail freight and airports to support the movement of goods	3	Medium	Reassess
Implementation	Consider complexity of Land Assembly / Consolidation	1	Low	Reassess
	Wider Deliverability Risks and Phasing Implications	2	Low/Medium	Reassess
TOTAL	<i>Total possible 115</i>	86		
		75%		

SITE REVIEW and POSSIBLE REASSESSMENT
AYLESBURY NEW AND EXPANDED SETTLEMENT NESS003

Assessment Framework – PLACE

The Assessment Framework for Place is found in Table A.1 on page 246 of the NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma.

Table A.1 – Place Assessment Criteria Guidelines

Place Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Conserve and integrate with the historic environment	Unconstrained / low location to result in harmful impacts on the historic environment and archaeology. High potential for integration of assets. Opportunity to conserve / reuse Listed Buildings at risk.	Medium potential location to result in harmful impacts on the historic environment and archaeology. Medium potential for integration of assets.	High potential for location to result in harmful impacts on the historic environment and archaeology. Low potential for integration of assets.
Integrate in a way that respects landscape and settlement character	Unconstrained / low potential location to result in harmful impact on existing valued character of settlement(s) and landscapes. Location over 2km to National Landscape and/or over 1km to AAL. LCA is moderate or poor.	Medium potential for location to result in harmful impacts on the existing character of valued settlement(s) and landscapes. Location within 0.5km of National Landscape and/or within 0.75km of AAL. LCA is strong to very good condition.	High potential for location to result in a harmful impact on valued character of settlement(s) and landscapes. Inability to tie-in with existing character. Location is within or adjacent to National Landscape and/or AAL. LCA is strong to moderate condition
Preserve the rural and urban character	Location avoids ribbon development, the coalescence of settlements and other unsustainable patterns of development. Low potential for merging of existing settlements.	Location avoids or can mitigate ribbon development, the coalescence of settlements and other unsustainable patterns of development. Medium potential for merging of existing settlements.	Location in this location could result in ribbon development, the coalescence of settlements and other unsustainable patterns of development. High potential for merging of existing settlements.
Enhance the existing settlement hierarchy by regenerating or connecting with existing centres, or providing new centres that contribute or complement existing network	Location potential to be within cycling and walking distance to an existing town centre (cycling 3.5km, walking 1.6km) and/or neighbourhood centre (cycling 1.5km, walking 800m), or where potential for typology with a critical mass, there is low potential to undermine the function of a nearby existing centre(s) within proximity.	Location potential to be within cycling and walking distance to an existing neighbourhood centre only (cycling 1.5km, walking 800m), or where potential for typology with a critical mass, there is medium potential to undermine the function of a nearby existing centre(s) within proximity.	Location not within cycling and walking distance to an existing neighbourhood centre (cycling 1.5km, walking 800m), or where potential for typology with a critical mass there is a high potential to undermine the function of a nearby existing centre(s) within proximity.

The criteria, their scores in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Report and their possible reassessment are examined here.

AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call for Reassessment	Reassessment with revised masterplan
Theme	Criteria	Score	Low/Med/High		
Place	Conserve and integrate with historic environment	3	Medium	Reassess	2 Low/Med
	Integrate in a way that respects landscape and settlement character	2	Low/Medium	Reassess	1 Low
	Preserve the rural and urban character	5	High	Reassess	2 Low/Med
	Enhance existing settlement hierarchy by regenerating or connecting with existing centres, or providing centres that complement existing network	5	High	Reassess	4 Med/High

Assessment Framework – PLACE
Criterion – Conserve and integrate with historic environment

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe there is a:

Medium to High potential for location to result in harmful impacts on the historic environment and archaeology. Low to medium potential for integration of assets.

*The score could be reassessed from 3 to 2, described as **Low/Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

The historic environment includes designated heritage assets as well as historic landscapes and settlements.

Weedon Hill

While there are no nationally designated assets except the Weedon Hill milepost on or in the vicinity of the site, we consider that the historic hamlet of Weedon Hill is worthy of consideration and preservation for its heritage. It would be completely subsumed by the NESS development, with minimal offset between it and the new buildings.

The Weedon Hill buildings may not be listed, or in a Conservation Area, but the majority have historical value, and are a good representation of a former agricultural way of life. At least two of the dwellings are still subject to an agricultural worker residency requirement.

Great care was taken recently in the re-development and conversion of the range of five 19th century barns/stables at Weedon Hill – now known as Pettifer Court. Their preservation has enhanced the distinct historic nature of the hamlet further. If this Local Plan goes ahead, the Parish Council considers that the revised allocation would seriously erode, and potentially destroy, this unique rural settlement.

The agricultural fields of the NESS site contain some historic ridge-and-furrow profiles. Even if not, much of the land to be lost is of good agricultural quality and has been farmed for many hundreds of years.

Bierton

Bierton village and its Conservation Area are mentioned specifically in the NESS Policies.

However, the addition of Weedon Hill to Bierton in the heritage assessment must reduce the probability of conserving and integrating the NESS with the historic environment.

Assessment Framework – PLACE

Criterion – Integrate in a way that respects landscape and settlement character

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe there is a:

High potential for location to result in a harmful impact on valued character of settlement(s). Inability to tie-in with existing character. Location is within or adjacent to National Landscape and/or AAL. LCA is strong to moderate condition.

*The score could be reassessed from 2 to 1, described as **Low**.*

Detailed Comments

1. The extension of the site to the north of the River Thame and west of the A413 to envelop the Weedon Hill hamlet is contrary to previous National Planning Inspectorate appeal judgements. The extended site projects strongly into the rural landscape on rising land.
2. The land to the west of the A413 is part of the currently locally designated Northern Vale Landscape Character Area, the Assessment for which confirms its **sensitivity as high** and the Landscape Guidelines are **firmly to conserve**.
3. The overall site is adjacent to the locally designated Area of Attractive Landscape that sweeps across Weedon village and down to Weedon Hill and the River Thame.
4. Travelling north from Aylesbury currently, the previously approved but undeveloped Park and Ride area just to the north of Martin Dalby Way and to the west of the A413 is low-lying. But northward views clearly show development ceasing after the “boundary” road Prince Rupert Drive/Martin Dalby Way and a transition into open countryside. The land also rises to a ridge at 86m where the Weedon Hill hamlet is situated – on both sides of the A413.

Therefore, development in this area would result in localised landscape and visual harm through the disruption and loss of an existing open and undeveloped parcel of land which contributes positively to Aylesbury’s rural northern edge.

5. This was confirmed in the 2015 Public Inquiry for Land North of Weedon Hill MDA (see below). The Inspector’s report concluded:

9.708 "Although the western parcel of the appeal site, in effect, lies adjacent to Buckingham Park and part of it has previously been committed for a park and ride facility, the site’s overwhelming affinity is with the open countryside embracing this part of the town. The proposed development would spill out beyond the generally effective containment and natural outline of Buckingham Park and climb, prominently, to an undefined ridgeline boundary which would require deep, uncharacteristic, buffer planting to form a delineating feature."

9.709 "The proposed development would be at odds with one of the key characteristics of the Northern Vale Landscape Character Area and it would be manifestly intrusive in visual terms with no apparent regard for its context in the landscape and its overall setting."

6. We consider that the concept plan for NESS003 does not accord with its own policy declarations (see above) in respect of “adopting a landscape-led approach”.

7. The descriptions of the site in the Policy statement say that it:

- "a) Responds positively to the site's edge of town and rural transition character.*
- b) Reflects the existing field pattern and mature landscape features; and*
- c) Integrates development into the surrounding townscape and countryside."*

We believe the extended site does none of these things and insufficient weight has been given to harmful effects on the valued character of this historic settlement and protected landscape.

Relevance of the judgement in the 2015 Public Inquiry for Land North of Weedon Hill MDA

The Parish Council recognises that the following 2015 appeal decisions cannot determine the outcome of the present Plan examination. However, they constitute highly relevant evidence concerning the landscape sensitivity and development constraints of land which is now included within NESS003.

a. For our conclusion that this NESS should be substantially reconsidered, we draw heavily on the result of a Public Inquiry covering four Aylesbury planning appeals, including for two development schemes on “Land North of Weedon Hill MDA”. The appeal was comprehensively dismissed by the Secretary of State in January 2015.

b. The appeal site was west and east of the A413 between the Martin Dalby Way roundabout to the south and “old” Weedon Hill to the north – land which is included the NESS003 concept plan.



c. The Secretary of State’s letter of 26th January 2015 outlining the Public Inquiry decision to dismiss the Appeals agreed in Paragraph 35 with the Appeal Inspector’s conclusions (Inspector’s Report paras 9.712 – 9.713) that:

"... the significant benefits of either scheme are far outweighed by the harm identified. Each scheme would be in conflict with AVDLP Policy GP.35 and would not be sustainable development in the terms of the policies of the Framework when read as a whole."

d. This led the Secretary of State to decide in Paragraph 36:

"... the Secretary of State considers that the significant impacts on the character of the landscape and the harm to its appearance outweigh any benefits as well as bringing it into conflict with the development plan."

e. The Inspector’s assessment was that, in the overall planning balance, even in the event that the Council did not have a five-year housing land supply, the landscape and visual harm would significantly outweigh the benefits of housing (including affordable).

The Inspector's conclusions concerning the visual prominence of development on the rising land, the loss of landscape containment and the conflict with the Northern Vale Landscape Character Area are directly relevant to the enlarged NESS003 proposal.

Buckinghamshire Council should explain what has materially changed since those decisions and provide evidence demonstrating why the landscape conclusions reached at that time should no longer apply to the enlarged allocation.

Current planning application PL/26/02770/OA

A current planning application is under consideration for the western part of the above appeal site. Weedon Parish Council and the residents of Weedon Hill have responded to the application with objections, citing the 2015 Appeal Judgement as an overriding reason for refusal.

PL/26/02770/OA | Outline application (with all matters other than access reserved for future determination) for up to 150 dwellings, including, public open space, landscaping, surface water drainage, and associated infrastructure, with means of access from the Prince Rupert Drive/A413 roundabout | Land North Of Prince Rupert Drive Aylesbury Buckinghamshire

We consider that the score for this criterion could be re-assessed to **1-Low**.

Assessment Framework – PLACE
Criterion – Preserve the rural and urban character

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe there is a:

Development in this location could result in ribbon development, the coalescence of settlements and other unsustainable patterns of development. Medium to high potential for merging of existing settlements.

*The score could be reassessed from 5 to **2**, described as **Low/Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

It is very difficult to believe that even the original NESS Stage 3 Pro Forma assessment of the site gave this criterion the highest score of 5, which would indicate that the “location avoids ribbon development, coalescence of settlements and other unsustainable patterns of development, and has low potential for merging of existing settlements.”

Of course, the assessment was made in respect of the original Stage 3 masterplan, without any development at Weedon Hill, but even for that, a 5 seems unduly high.

With the extension of the site to the north of the River Thame and west of the A413 to fully envelop the Weedon Hill hamlet, the allocation would result in coalescence – indeed, effective merging – of at least 4 separate settlements:-

- Loss of Weedon Hill as a separate settlement and coalescence with NESS003
- Coalescence with Watermead
- Coalescence with Bierton
- Coalescence with Buckingham Park

A score of 5 appears particularly difficult to reconcile with the revised Concept Framework Plan. The original score was assessed against a materially different site configuration. Once development is extended around Weedon Hill, the factual basis for concluding that there is a low potential for settlement merging has materially changed. This criterion therefore requires reassessment.

We consider that the score for this criterion could be re-assessed to **2-Low/Medium**.

Assessment Framework – PLACE

Criterion – Enhance existing settlement hierarchy by regenerating or connecting with existing centres, or providing centres that complement existing network

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe :

Location potential to be within cycling and walking distance to an existing neighbourhood centre only (cycling 1.5km, walking 800m), and where potential for typology with a critical mass, there is medium potential to undermine the function of a nearby existing centre(s) within proximity.

*The score could be reassessed from 5 to **4**, described as **Medium/High**.*

Overall Assessment Framework – PLACE

We believe that using the given framework of assessment:
The total assessment score could be reassessed from 15/20 to **9/20.**

Assessment Framework – ENVIRONMENT

The Assessment Framework for Environment is found in Table A.2 on page 247 of the NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma.

Table A.2 – Environment Assessment Criteria Guidelines

Environment Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Resilient to natural and man made risks	Location at low risk from natural and man made hazards. High potential for adaption / mitigation with layout and design of the typologies under consideration.	Location at medium risk from natural and man made hazards. Medium potential for adaption / mitigation with layout and design of typologies under consideration.	Location at high risk from natural and man made hazards. Low for adaption / mitigation with layout and design of typologies under consideration.
Avoid and/or mitigate impacts to biodiversity designations and habitats	Few or no internationally, national and local biodiversity designations. High potential for avoidance with layout and design of typologies under consideration, such as the ability to provide strategic green infrastructure that ensures potential demand on biodiversity area is reduced.	Few or no international, national and local biodiversity designations. Potential for avoidance and/or mitigation with layout and design of typologies under consideration.	High incidence of international, national and local biodiversity designations. No potential for avoidance and/or mitigation with layout and design of typologies under consideration.
Protect the quality of waterbodies	Location likely to have no measurable impact or unlikely to lead to impact on valued waterbodies.	Location could result in medium impact to valued waterbodies.	Location likely to lead to damage to severe impact to valued waterbodies.
Ensure agricultural productivity for food security	Location at low risk of minimising food productivity i.e. the area is located on Agricultural Land Grade 3b-5 and/or Agricultural Land Grade 1 to 3a can be avoided.	Location at medium risk of minimising food productivity i.e. the area is located on Agricultural Land Grade 3b-5 and Agricultural Land Grade 1 to 3a, and higher grade areas (Grade 1 to 3a) can only be partially avoided.	Location is located on Agricultural Land Grade 1 to 3a.
Consider ground condition risks from potential land remediation and groundworks	Location appears undeveloped land and/or unlikely to require remediation / ground works. Topography unchallenging	Location is likely previously developed with uses that may require remediation / ground works. Sections of site have challenging topography.	Location is previously developed with uses likely to require remediation / ground works. Location has challenging topography.

The criteria, their scores in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Report and their possible re-assessment are examined here.

AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call for Reassessment	Reassessment with revised masterplan
Theme	Criteria	Raw score	Low/Med/High		
Environment	Resilient to natural and man made risks	3	Medium	-	3 Medium
	Avoid and/or mitigate impacts to biodiversity designations and habitats	5	High	Reassess	3 Medium
	Protect the quality of waterbodies	3	Medium	Reassess	2 Low/Med
	Ensure agricultural productivity for food security	2	Low/Medium	-	2 Low/Med
	Consider ground condition risks from potential land remediation and groundworks	4	Medium/High	Reassess	3 Medium

We do not believe the criterion “**Resilient to natural and man-made risks**” needs to be re-assessed from 3-Medium.

Assessment Framework – ENVIRONMENT

Criterion – Avoid and/or mitigate impacts to biodiversity designations and habitats

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

“Few or no international, national and local biodiversity designations. Some potential for avoidance and/or mitigation with layout and design of typologies under consideration.”

*The score could be reassessed from 5 to **3**, described as **Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

1. We believe there are few or no international, national or local biodiversity designations, even incorporating the new land.
2. However, the Stage 3 Pro Forma NESS report narrative, even on the previous plan, state that the site:

"... is recognised to comprise a mix of arable land and grassland, bounded by generally intact hedgerows. Hedgerows along the western edge of the site, adjacent to Watermead, are of higher quality and include notable species such as black poplar. These hedgerows are likely to function as important commuting and foraging corridors for bats. The site also supports habitats suitable for ground-nesting birds."

"A watercourse runs along the eastern boundary of the site, increasing its ecological value and connectivity. There are records of reptiles clustered around Bierton in the vicinity, and the wider area contains numerous ponds with known great crested newt populations, indicating potential amphibian interest within and around the site."

"There is a small area of priority habitat and a small woodland parcel within the site. No other statutory environmental designations are present within the site itself."

The newly added land needs to be assessed, too, along with the cumulative effect of the enlarged development footprint on existing ecological elements.

3. Taking up old hedgerows and putting in new ones will take a long time to tilt the balance back to the natural green infrastructure and wildlife already established on the field margins, in the hedgerows and in the curtilage of the River Thames.
4. There is concern about old-established trees across the large natural greenfield area. As with hedgerows, it takes substantial time for new trees in new SANG areas to grow to a size of old ones that have been removed.
5. Biodiversity net gain should not be treated as removing the need to avoid significant harm to existing habitats or ecological networks. Good agricultural land with long-established wildlife corridors in a landscape character area cannot necessarily be replicated immediately through newly created habitat or planting.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **3-Medium**.

Assessment Framework – ENVIRONMENT
Criterion – Protect the quality of waterbodies

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location could result in severe to medium impact to valued waterbodies.

*The score could be reassessed from 3 to **2**, described as **Low/Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

With development now showing to the north of, and on higher land draining into, the River Thame and its floodplain, there is more risk of damage to this important local body of water.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **2-Low/Medium** from the current Medium.

We do not believe the criterion “**Ensure agricultural productivity for food security**” needs to be re-assessed from 2-Low/Medium.

Assessment Framework – ENVIRONMENT
Criterion – Consider ground condition risks from potential land remediation and groundworks

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

While the location is not previously developed with uses that may require remediation / ground works, sections of site have challenging topography.

*The score could be reassessed from 4 to **3**, described as **Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

Although most of the land is undeveloped, with significant building now being proposed on hillsides running up to the Weedon Hill ridge, the topography is more challenging.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion could be re-assessed to **3-Medium** from the current Medium/High.

Overall Assessment Framework – ENVIRONMENT

We believe that using the given framework of assessment:
*The total assessment score could be reassessed from 17/25 to **13/25**.*

Assessment Framework – INFRASTRUCTURE

The Assessment Framework for Infrastructure is found in Table A.3 on page 248 of the NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma.

Table A.3 – Infrastructure Assessment Criteria Guidelines

Infrastructure Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Consider energy infrastructure (capacity and requirements)	Location likely to have access to and sufficient existing strategic energy infrastructure. Location has strong potential to support renewables. Location may have significant utilities crossing it but they are not considered to pose a constraint to development (e.g. oil pipelines, HP gas mains, HV electricity cables).	Location has access to strategic energy infrastructure, however, in time will likely place a significant strain on this infrastructure. Location has medium potential to support renewables. Location has some significant utilities crossing it which pose a constraint to development (e.g. oil pipelines, HP gas mains, HV electricity cable).	Location requires new strategic energy infrastructure. Location has no potential to support renewables. Location has multiple significant utilities crossing it which pose a constraint to development (e.g. oil pipelines, HP gas mains, HV electricity cable).
Consider water and wastewater (capacity and requirements)	Location likely to have access to and sufficient existing strategic water infrastructure.	Location has access to strategic water infrastructure, however, in time will likely place a significant strain on this infrastructure.	Location requires new strategic water infrastructure.
Consider digital connectivity (capacity and requirements)	Location likely to have access to and sufficient existing gigabit capable and/or full fibre broadband connectivity, or potential typology provides the critical mass to finance new strategic infrastructure.	Location likely to have access to and sufficient existing superfast broadband connectivity. Potential typology unlikely to provide the critical mass to finance new strategic infrastructure.	Location requires new strategic broadband infrastructure, or critical mass of potential typology is insufficient to finance new strategic infrastructure. Will require significant upfront investment not commensurate with size of settlement.
Consider waste and minerals	Location likely to support or not adversely impact existing waste and mineral sites, and/or have a low adverse impact on the potential future extraction of minerals. Location is adjacent/very close to existing waste site(s).	Location may have some minor adverse impacts on existing waste and mineral sites, and/or have a medium adverse impact on the potential future extraction of minerals. Location is close to existing waste site(s).	Location likely to adversely impact existing waste and mineral sites, and/or have a high adverse impact on the potential future extraction of minerals. Location is not in close proximity of existing waste site(s).

The criteria, their scores in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Report and their possible re-assessment are examined here.

AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call for Reassessment	Reassessment with revised masterplan
Theme	Criteria	Raw score	Low/Med/High		
Infrastructure	Consider energy infrastructure (capacity and requirements)	5	High	Reassess	4 Med/High
	Consider water supply and wastewater (capacity and requirements)	3	Medium	Reassess	2 Low/Med
	Consider digital connectivity (capacity and requirements)	4	Medium/High	-	4 Med/High
	Consider waste and minerals	5	High	-	5 High

Assessment Framework – INFRASTRUCTURE
Criterion – Consider energy infrastructure

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location has access to strategic energy infrastructure, however, in time will likely place a strain on this infrastructure. Location has medium to strong potential to support renewables. Location has some significant utilities crossing it which pose a constraint to development (two gas pipelines).

*The score could be reassessed from 5 to 4, described as **Medium/High**.*

Detailed Comments

1. The location has medium to good access to strategic energy infrastructure, however, in time will likely place a significant strain on this infrastructure. A new primary electricity substation would be required.
2. The location has medium to strong potential to support renewables.
3. The location has two gas pipelines across part of the site which pose a constraint to development.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **4-Medium/High** from the current High.

Assessment Framework – INFRASTRUCTURE
Criterion – Consider water supply and waste water infrastructure

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location may not have enough access to strategic water infrastructure.

*The score could be reassessed from 3 to 2, described as **Low/Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

With the number of homes proposed, the NESS is likely to require new strategic water infrastructure.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **2-Low/Medium** from the current Medium.

We do not believe the criterion “**Consider digital connectivity**” needs to be re-assessed from 4-Medium/High.

We do not believe the criterion “**Consider waste and minerals**” needs to be re-assessed from 5-High.

Overall Assessment Framework – INFRASTRUCTURE

We believe that using the given framework of assessment:

The total assessment score could be reassessed from 17/20 to **15/20**.

Assessment Framework – MOVEMENT

The Assessment Framework for Movement is found in Table A.4 on page 249 of the NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma.

Table A.4 – Movement Assessment Criteria Guidelines

Movement Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Access to existing or committed sustainable Public Transport links and services	Very good bus access. There are existing bus stops in walking (800m) distance location with a high level of service (e.g. at least 20 to 30-minute frequencies and a mixture of destinations).	Good bus access. There are existing bus stops in walking (800m) distance location with a medium level of service (e.g. between every 45 minutes and 1-hour frequencies and more limited destinations).	Poor bus access. There are either no existing bus stops in walking (800m) distance to location; or bus stops which are served very infrequently (e.g. at best every 1-2 hours).
Access to existing or committed sustainable Rail transport links and services	Very good rail or bus rapid transit access. There are existing or proposed rail or bus rapid transit stations in walking (1600m) and cycling (2.5km) distance to location with a high level of service (e.g. at least 20-minute frequencies during peak periods and mixture of destinations).	Good rail or bus rapid transit access. There are existing or proposed rail or bus rapid transit stations in walking (1600m) and cycling (2.5km) distance to the location with a low level of service (e.g. less than 20-minute frequencies and a limited set of destinations).	Poor rail or bus rapid transit access. There are no existing or proposed rail or bus rapid transit stations in walking (1600m) and cycling (2.5km) distance to the location.
Access to existing or committed strategic active mode routes	The location is within walking (500m) and cycling (1km) distance to relevant strategic active transport networks, e.g. part of the National Cycle Route Network.	The location is within walking (800m) or cycling (1.5km) distance to relevant strategic active transport networks, e.g. part of the National Cycle Route Network.	The location is not within walking (800m) or cycling (1.5km) distance to relevant strategic active transport networks e.g. part of the National Cycle Route Network.

The criteria, their scores in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Report and their possible re-assessment are examined here.

AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call for Reassessment	Reassessment with revised masterplan
Theme	Criteria	Score	Low/Med/High		
Movement	Access to existing or committed sustainable Public Transport links and services	5	High	Reassess	3 Medium
	Access to existing or committed sustainable Rail transport links and services	3	Medium	-	3 Medium
	Access to existing or committed strategic active mode routes	5	High	Reassess	3 Medium

Assessment Framework – MOVEMENT

Criterion – Access to existing or committed sustainable Public Transport links and services

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location could potentially have good bus access, but only if there is a new onsite hub.

*The score could be reassessed from 5 to 3, described as **Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

1. The public transport assessments appear to be more aspirational than actually achievable. The assessment should distinguish between existing or committed sustainable transport provision and infrastructure or services which are merely proposed as part of the development. A proposed bus service cannot reasonably be treated as an existing sustainable transport connection unless there is sufficient evidence that it will be funded, secured and operational at the point when residents require it.
2. There are reasonable bus services along the A413 and the A418, but these would be at a significant distance from most residents. New timetabled bus services would need to be initiated that went to the different key housing developments.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **3-Medium** from the current High.

We do not believe the criterion “**Access to existing or committed sustainable Rail Transport links and services**” needs to be re-assessed from 3-Medium.

The railway stations are not close by and new bus services would be needed for residents to access them sustainably without a private car.

Assessment Framework – MOVEMENT

Criterion – Access to existing or committed strategic active mode routes

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

The location may be within walking (800m) or cycling (1.5km) distance to relevant strategic active transport networks, but these are not part of the National Cycle Route Network.

*The score could be reassessed from 5 to **3**, described as **Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

We are mystified by the rating given of very good access to strategic active transport networks. We cannot find any route that is part of the National Cycle Route Network in the Greater Aylesbury area.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **3-Medium** from the current High.

Overall Assessment Framework – MOVEMENT

We believe that using the given framework of assessment:

The total assessment score could be reassessed from 13/15 to **9/15.**

Assessment Framework – PEOPLE

The Assessment Framework for People is found in Table A.5 on page 249 of the NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma.

Table A.5 – People Assessment Criteria Guidelines

People Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Consider social infrastructure (integration with existing capacity and requirements)	Location within cycling (1.5 km) and walking (800m) distance or well-connected by public transport (20 mins) to wide range strategic social infrastructure (health, education, cultural and recreational)	Location within cycling (1.5 km) and walking (800m) distance or well-connected by public transport (20 mins) to some strategic social infrastructure (health, education, cultural and recreational)	Location is not located within proximity to existing strategic social infrastructure (health, education, cultural and recreational)
Address deprivation of existing communities	Location is located adjacent to 0-20% of the most deprived of LSOA and is of critical mass to improve domains of deprivation.	Location is located adjacent to 20-50% of the most deprived of LSOA and is of critical mass to improve domains of deprivation.	Location is located adjacent to 0-50% of the most deprived of LSOA and not of a critical mass to improve domains of deprivation. May likely place a strain on the limited resources.

The criteria, their scores in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Report and their possible re-assessment are examined here.

AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call for Reassessment	Reassessment with revised masterplan
Theme	Criteria	Score	Low/Med/High		
People	Consider social infrastructure (integration with existing capacity and requirements)	5	High	-	5 High
	Address deprivation of existing communities	5	High	Reassess	4 Medium/High

We do not believe the criterion “**Consider social infrastructure**” needs to be re-assessed from **5-High**. As the NESS is promised to have its own bespoke social infrastructure, residents would be well connected and close to these facilities.

Assessment Framework – PEOPLE
Criterion – Address deprivation of existing communities

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

The location would have a HIGH likelihood of addressing deprivation of existing communities **IF** enough social housing were available. However, this may not be the case.

*The score could be reassessed from 5 to **4**, described as **Medium/High**.*

Detailed Comments

The rate of building affordable housing, including social housing, is predicated at 25% of the homes. Whether this is enough to address deprivation of existing communities in full is in question.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **4-Medium/High** from the current High.

Overall Assessment Framework – PEOPLE

We believe that using the given framework of assessment:

*The total assessment score could be reassessed from 10/10 to **9/10**.*

Assessment Framework – ECONOMY

The Assessment Framework for Economy is found in Table A.6 on page 250 of the Study Part 3 Pro Forma.

Table A.6 – Economy Assessment Criteria Guidelines

Economy Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Proximity and sustainable connectivity to Key Employment areas	Location is in close proximity to existing employment sites. Location is within cycling (2.5km) and walking (1600m) distance to employment areas.	Location is accessible via public transport to employment areas (within 20 min).	Strategic housing and employment development not connected to employment areas
Proximity to and potential to support Key Economic Growth Sectors for Buckinghamshire	Location is in close proximity to identified spatial locations of Key Economic Growth Sectors. Location is within cycling (2.5km) and walking (1600m) distance to employment areas.	Location is accessible via public transport to Key Economic Growth Sectors locations (within 20 min).	Strategic housing and employment development not connected to Key Economic Growth Sectors locations
Proximity to strategic road network, rail freight and airports to support the movement of goods	Very good road connection. For the purpose of moving goods, the location is close (<2km) to key access junctions on the SRN and there would be limited reliance on using less suitable roads.	Good road connection. For the purpose of moving goods, the location is close (<2km) to the PRN (A Roads only). Projected levels of congestion may result in the need for major upgrades to the PRN / SRN.	Poor road connection. For the purpose of moving goods, the location is relatively remote (>2km) from the PRN (A Roads only) therefore placing pressure on less suitable local roads. Lack of infrastructure and projected levels of congestion will likely require major upgrades to the PRN / SRN and/or the delivery of new infrastructure.

The criteria, their scores in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Report and their possible re-assessment are examined here.

AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call for Reassessment	Reassessment with revised masterplan
Theme	Criteria	Score	Low/Med/High		
Economy	Proximity and sustainable connectivity to Key Employment areas	4	Medium/High	Reassess	3 Medium
	Proximity to and potential to support Key Economic Growth Sectors for Bucks	4	Medium/High	Reassess	3 Medium
	Proximity to strategic road network, rail freight and airports to support the movement of goods	3	Medium	Reassess	2 Low/Med

Assessment Framework – ECONOMY

Criterion – Proximity and sustainable connectivity to key employment areas

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location is accessible via public transport to employment areas (within 20 min).

*The score could be reassessed from 4 to 3, described as **Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

There are employment areas in Aylesbury. However, the NESS003 would not be in “close proximity” to many of them (as required by the “High” rating), although accessible by public transport.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion could be re-assessed to **3-Medium** from the current Medium/High.

Assessment Framework – ECONOMY

Criterion – Proximity and sustainable connectivity to key economic growth sectors

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location is accessible via public transport to Key Economic Growth Sectors locations (within 20 min).

*The score could be reassessed from 4 to 3, described as **Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

As above, there are key growth sectors in Aylesbury. However, the NESS003 would not be in “close proximity” to many of them, although accessible by public transport.

We therefore consider that the score for this criterion could be re-assessed to **3-Medium** from the current Medium/High.

Assessment Framework – ECONOMY

Criterion – Proximity to strategic road networks, rail freight and airports to support the movement of goods

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe there is:

Moderate road connection. For the purpose of moving goods, the location is close (<2km) to the PRN (A Roads only). Projected levels of congestion may result in the need for major upgrades to the PRN / SRN.

*The score could be reassessed from 3 to 2, described as **Low/Medium**.*

Detailed Comments

The strategic road network is not in close proximity. The primary road network is within 2km, but the A413 and the A418 do not have spare capacity. **The proposed Eastern link road to be built within the development is absolutely essential to road traffic access.**

We consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **2-Low/Medium** from the current Medium.

Overall Assessment Framework – ECONOMY

We believe that using the given framework of assessment:

The total assessment score could be reassessed from 11/15 to 8/15.

Assessment Framework – IMPLEMENTATION

This is an absolutely critical theme leading to the soundness of NESS03, which should be afforded much more weight than it is with the simple scoring out of 5 for each of two criteria – the same as every other criterion.

The Local Plan relies heavily on the NESS allocations, which are very large and intended to contribute materially to the Plan’s housing supply. If this site cannot be pulled together, properly serviced and delivered in time, the housing supply attributed to it cannot safely be relied upon to demonstrate that the Plan is effective.

It is therefore concerning to the Parish Council that Buckinghamshire Council’s own assessment highlights fragmentation of land ownership, potential ransom strips, important infrastructure requirements, phasing constraints and competition with other strategic site.

The Assessment Framework for Implementation is found in Table A.7 on page 250 of the NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma.

Table A.7 – Implementation Assessment Criteria Guidelines

Implementation Criteria	High	Medium	Low
Consider complexity of Land Assembly/Consolidation.	Location has limited landownership fragmentation. Key landowners in public sector ownership Site included notable HELAA sites deemed as suitable	Location has some landownership fragmentation. Mix of landowners with some complexities envisaged Site does not include HELAA sites deemed as suitable	Location has landownership fragmentation. Mix of landowners with high complexities envisaged Potential Ransom Strips Site does not include HELAA sites deemed as suitable
Wider Deliverability Risks and Phasing Implications	Location has active promotion Location does not compete or have interdependencies with other Strategic sites or investment projects	Location is close to and has potential to compete with other Strategic sites. Some reliance on significant infrastructure investment to unlock site	Location will compete with other Strategic sites. Heavy reliance on significant infrastructure investment to unlock site

The criteria, their scores in the Part 3 Pro Forma NESS Report and their possible re-assessment are examined here.

AYLESBURY NESS003		Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*		WPC Call for Reassessment	Reassessment with revised masterplan
Theme	Criteria	Score	Low/Med/High		
Implementation	Consider complexity of Land Assembly /Consolidation	1	Low	-	
	Wider Deliverability Risks and Phasing Implications	2	Low/Medium	Reassess	1 Low

Assessment Framework – IMPLEMENTATION
Criterion – Consider complexity of Land Assembly/Consolidation

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location has landownership fragmentation. Mix of landowners with high complexities envisaged. Potential Ransom Strips. Site does not include HELAA sites deemed as suitable.

*Ideally, the score could be reassessed from 1 to lower than 1, which we would describe as **Very Low**.*

Detailed Comments

The site as now extended is huge. Deliverability was assessed at Low (score 1) on the previous smaller site. Deliverability risks are multiplied with more landowners.

Using the current scoring, presumably the score for this criterion cannot be lower than **1-Low**.

Assessment Framework – IMPLEMENTATION
Criterion – Wider deliverability risks and phasing implications

Using the terminology in the Assessment Framework, we believe:

Location may compete with other Strategic sites. Heavy reliance on significant infrastructure investment to unlock site.

*The score could be reassessed from 2 to **1**, described as **Low**.*

Detailed Comments

The narrative in the Stage 4 Report is realistic. It points out the following:

- This NESS may not be able to commence until the expansion of Aylesbury already under development to the south is complete.
- The delivery of significant additional housing over the medium/long term may slow build-out rates with the market less able to absorb new development.
- The provision of the “missing link” northern bypass would be a significant cost

We also believe that the road through the new development would be absolutely essential for the site to deliver on most of its promise.

We consider that the score for this criterion should be re-assessed to **1-Low** from the current Low/Medium.

Overall Assessment Framework – IMPLEMENTATION

We believe that using the given framework of assessment:

The total assessment score could be reassessed from 3/10 to **2/10**.

OVERALL POSSIBLE RE-ASSESSMENT
NESS003 AYLESBURY NEW AND EXPANDED SETTLEMENT

The total reduction in score resulting from the Parish Council's indicative reassessment reduces the overall score from 86/115 (75%) to 65/115 (57%), a materially different outcome for the provided extended masterplan in Stage 4.

We draw particular attention to the absolutely key themes of **PLACE**, **ENVIRONMENT** and **IMPLEMENTATION**. These are highlighted below and in this exercise are all presenting as **Low** and **Very Low**.

AYLESBURY NESS003		<i>Per NESS Study Part 3 Pro Forma*</i>	<i>Possible Reassessment with revised masterplan</i>	<i>Possible Reassessment percentage and description</i>
Theme	Criteria	Theme score	<i>Possible New Theme score</i>	
Place	4 criteria – total out of 20	15 – 75%	9	40% LOW
Environment	5 criteria – total out of 25	17 – 68%	13	52% LOW
Infrastructure	4 criteria – total out of 20	17 – 85%	15	75%
Movement	3 criteria – total out of 15	13 – 87%	9	60%
People	2 criteria – total out of 10	10 – 100%	9	90%
Economy	3 criteria – total out of 15	11 – 73%	8	53%
Implementation	2 criteria – total out of 10	3 – 30%	2	20% VERY LOW
TOTAL	Out of 115	86	65	
		75%	57%	

Weedon Parish Council seeks the following modifications

The Parish Council considers that the original 75% score cannot reasonably be relied upon as evidence of suitability of the materially enlarged NESS003 allocation and it should be fully re-assessed for its current proposed site.

That reassessment must specifically consider and show the effects of the enlarged allocation on Weedon Hill, including settlement character, landscape, heritage, biodiversity, drainage, infrastructure, movement and deliverability.

Buckinghamshire Council must explain how the 2015 appeal decisions have been taken into account and demonstrate why the conclusions about landscape sensitivity no longer apply.

Buckinghamshire Council must show that the larger allocation at NESS003 complies with policy requirements relating to landscape-led development, settlement separation and up to date site specific evidence, taking proper account of the most important criteria such as place, environment and implementation.

If this reassessment shows that the allocation is not justified, the site should be reviewed in totality and deleted or reduced substantially in size.

In particular, development which materially surrounds the Weedon Hill hamlet should be removed from the allocation in order to preserve the identity and rural setting of the hamlet.

Evidence relied upon:

- Buckinghamshire New and Expanded Settlement Study Part 3 Site Pro Forms and Assessment February 2026. Prepared by AECOM for Buckinghamshire Council
- Buckinghamshire New and Expanded Settlement Study Part 3 Concept Framework Plans Updates (Stage 4) July 2026. Prepared by AECOM for Buckinghamshire Council
- Appeal Judgements 26 January 2015

Refs: (A) APP/J0405/A/12/2181033 (B) APP/J0405/A/12/2189277 **(C) APP/J0405/A/12/2189387 (D) APP/J0405/A/13/2197073**

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 – SECTION 78 PLANNING APPEALS AT (A) FLEET MARSTON FARM, FLEET MARSTON, AYLESBURY; (B) LAND SOUTH EAST OF AYLESBURY (HAMPDEN FIELDS); and **(C) & (D) LAND NORTH OF WEEDON HILL MDA, AYLESBURY**