



# Jefferies Land Conservation Trust

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20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Your Reference: S/COND/13/0195

Dear Nicola Smith

**Re: Commonhead Phase 1 Design Codes - Discharge of condition 5 from Outline Planning Permission S/10/0842**

The objects of the Jefferies Land Conservation Trust are to promote, for the benefit of the public, the conservation and improvement of the physical and natural environment of Jefferies Land including the Richard Jefferies Museum near Swindon and to advance the education of the public in the study of literary landscapes, with particular reference to the role played by Richard Jefferies, and environmentally sustainable lifestyles.

The Trust has not had the opportunity to discuss the two documents submitted by the developers. We meet on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. Should further comments be raised, in addition to those outlined below, we shall contact you immediately as, we understand, the application will be considered by the planning committee on 9<sup>th</sup> April.

Our main objections revolve around the conflicts with Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 policy DS3(i) and emerging policy NC2(d) and NC2(f) of the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 by virtue of the unacceptable height of many buildings, the contemporary rather than traditional design, the lack of variety and features where traditional design is planned, failure to separate new development traffic along the Boulevard from Dayhouse Lane, and a failure to adequately protect environmental assets and species – in particular Dayhouse Copse nature reserve.

We object strongly to the following “key design principles” set out in paragraph 1.1.8 that relate to the mixed use character area, primary school, local centre and hospital extension:



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- Increased scale; up to 3 storeys along the Boulevard and up to 4 storeys within the local centre.
- Simple and more contemporary identity.

and for the primary school design code at 1.1.9 “It will pick up on the general materials and architectural form of the mixed use character area.” [i.e. a contemporary design].

Contemporary architecture does not sit comfortably within the archaeological, visual, historic, literary and ecological landscape quality of the area let alone the so-called traditional design proposed for Coate Character sub-areas 1 and 2. In addition, 3-4 storey buildings (many with added roof features that further increase the height) and contemporary design will not protect, enhance and integrate with existing environmental assets. Moreover, the tallest buildings are proposed to be sited on the highest points in the development area where buildings need to be lower rather than taller than average. The Boulevard (with mixed development of 3-4 storeys) is set at 115 AOD, as is the local centre. The 4 storey building blocks for hospital expansion are set at 125 AOD whilst the business park is proposed for Green Hill at 127 AOD. The hospital has already blighted the views from Liddington Hill and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Coate Water Country Park and Site of Special Scientific Interest, Dayhouse Lane and copse and the Richard Jefferies Museum. Even 2 storey buildings would be very prominent at these elevations in the rolling landscape of the development area but, at least with time, tree planting could soften the look of buildings. The same is not true for 3-4 storey buildings that will tower over the tree-line and are totally unacceptable as part of the design code.

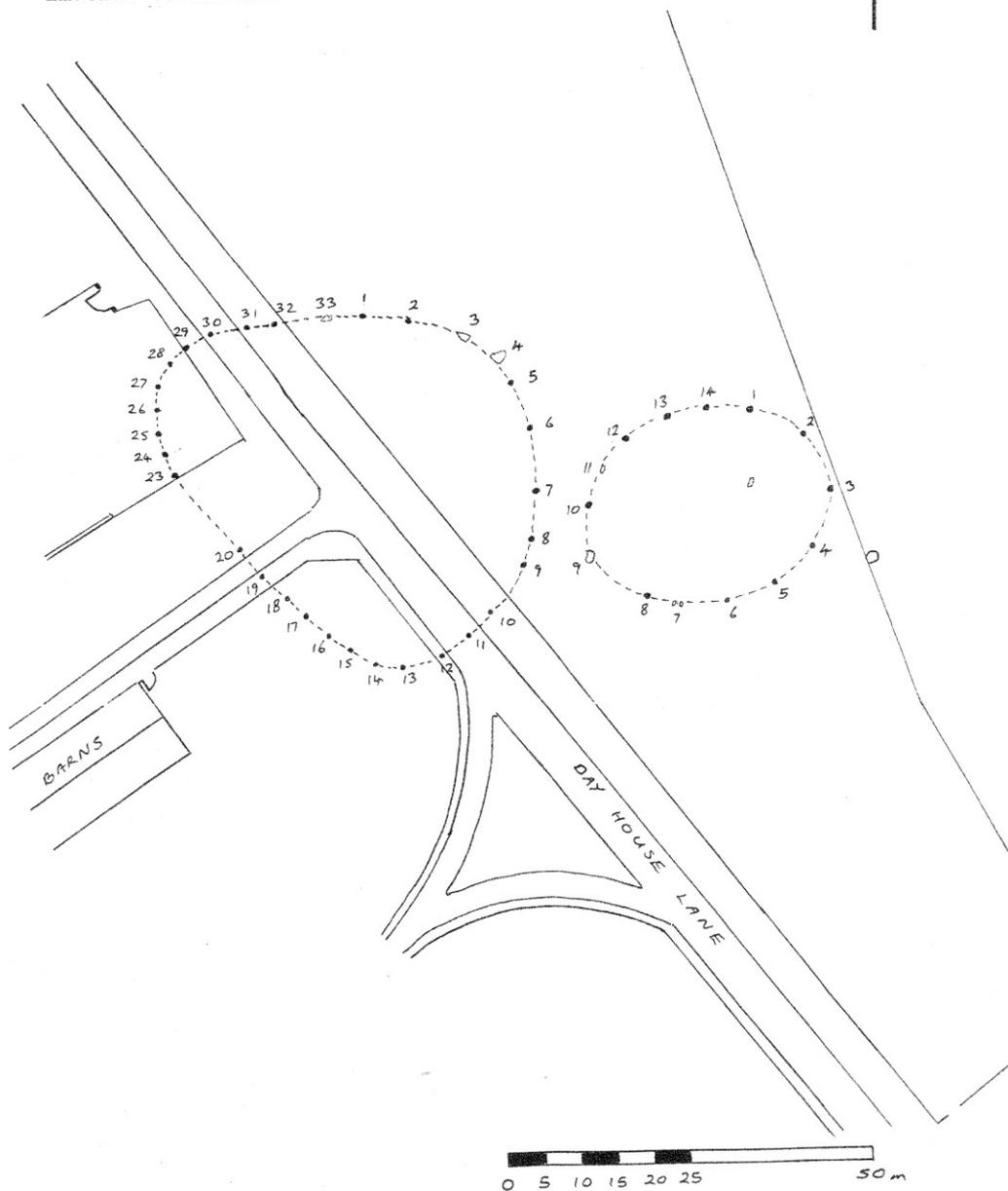
Whilst we would support the design code to erect traditional buildings, we would wish to see this design code employed throughout the development area. Moreover, we believe that where traditional design has been proposed, there is a very limited palette for the Coate Character Area. Essentially the traditional houses will either be red brick faced or rendered and painted with red roof tiles or black slates. There are few additional features apart from windows, doors and the odd porch or overhanging roof to break up the expanse of one colour and wall material. We would expect to see a far greater variety of traditional building materials used to reflect the existing settlement at Coate. This might include stone buildings with brick quoins and decorative bricks around windows. Thatched or brown roof tiles might be used. Features could be picked out in the proposed red brick and rendered buildings by using bricks or stones in contrasting colours such as used in the Victorian period. Added features would break up the sheer monotony and uniformity of large swathes of brick and render and be more in keeping with Coate Cottages, the Richard Jefferies Museum and farmhouse, Dayhouse Farm, and the cottages at Badbury Wick. Buildings planned in the vicinity of the Scheduled Ancient Monuments or near significant archaeological finds such as the Bronze-age barrows and Neolithic Stone Circle to the north, the Roman finds in the proposed school area and the Medieval settlement at Badbury Wick, should be even more sympathetic in design with regard to respecting the historic importance of



the sites. There is no allowance made in the design code that the layout and design might need to change dependent on undiscovered archaeological finds. It is presumed that these can be merely recorded and moved off-site. This might not prove to be the case. It is very important to note that recent research of the field with the Scheduled Stone Circle reveals a much larger circle than previous recording have shown. The diagram of the layout is copied below. Note that the stone circle comes right up to the boundary hedge where housing is planned. If the site was excavated properly as at Avebury, there is a prospect of overshadowing a historic Neolithic site with modern buildings – a most undesirable scenario.

**Coate Stone Circles  
Day House Lane, Swindon,  
Wiltshire**

SMR No. 54 18 SE 626  
O.S. Grid Reference:  
West Circle - SU 18157 82395  
East Circle - SU 18202 82393



We object to Dayhouse Lane being stopped up for motorised vehicles. The lane is part of the Richard Jefferies guided tour and is much used by visitors to the Richard Jefferies Museum, many of whom have travelled great distances to visit and explore Jefferies' Land. Richard Jefferies writing is linked mainly with Coate, Coate Water and the downs – not Swindon. It is already recognised that Dayhouse Lane is an important green corridor and that its function should not be compromised [NC2(f)]. Whilst it is important to prevent the lane being used as a highway for new development traffic, the solution can be found by grade-separating Dayhouse Lane and the Boulevard. Either a tunnel under or a bridge over Dayhouse Lane would secure the future of the lane as it is now. It could even be gated as it was in Jefferies' time whilst a maximum speed limit of 30mph could be imposed along its length to discourage rat-running but allow villagers access to Swindon. This, indeed, is the only acceptable solution to stop potential new development traffic from rat-running through the villages of Badbury, Liddington and the hamlet of Medbourne and we ask that the design is modified accordingly.

Dayhouse Copse Nature Reserve and protected species such as the badger and bat are particularly at risk. The copse has been spared from human and pet intrusion for hundreds of years. If the badgers do manage to survive, there will be complaints about badgers undermining buildings and digging up ground – what else can they do when their foraging area is severely compromised and reduced by buildings? The buffer proposed around the ancient copse is inadequate to serve purpose. However, the proposed water storage area should help, provided that it is designed to enable badgers to reach the water in safety (i.e. a shallow banked area) and where mosquitos might breed to feed bats! We suggest that a wider linear buffer is provided alongside the school area running towards The Oaks and Dayhouse Lane – that no trees are removed and that more tree-planting and cover is added along the hedgerows that run east-west from the Copse.

Finally, on a point of information. The main rising sewer mentioned in the design document running across the north of the site actually runs across the Richard Jefferies Museum back garden in an east-west direction. For some reason it does not run along the Marlborough Road! We are not confident that Thames Water knows where that sewer runs from Coate hamlet. Arkells have just submitted a planning application to build a ten unit B&B building at the Sun Inn over the top of the main sewer!

All in all, the design code set out by Redrow Homes and Persimmon Homes is extremely disappointing. Of all the areas around Swindon not on nationally protected land, Coate/Badbury Wick is the finest by virtue of its position over-shadowed by Liddington Hill and the Downs, next to Coate Water Country Park and SSSI, steeped in significant archaeological history, with an on-site nature reserve of local importance and, uniquely, a landscape that influenced the writing of Richard Jefferies. This is the reason why over 52,000 people signed a petition opposed to the development. This is all the more reason why the design code is unacceptable and why we should accept nothing more than excellence and a design fit for a



conservation area rather than the usual mass-build estates that blight Swindon already.

The developers need to radically review their design code. We ask that the Planning Committee reject the application and demand a far better design code using more traditional buildings throughout, with no buildings higher than 2 storeys and a more imaginative use of building materials, decoration and finishes.

We welcome the prospect of hedges around front gardens and trees in gardens and along the streets. There can't be too many trees planted apart from on the areas of archaeological importance!

Thank you.

Yours sincerely



Jean Saunders  
Honorary Secretary

