39 St Mary’s Mead

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 September 3, 2018

Mr James Kirkham

Planning Dept

Cherwell District Council

Bodicote House

Banbury,

OXON

Dear Mr Kirkham

Planning Application Ref: 18/01482/F

I am the joint owner, with my sister Caroline Jacobs, of the Lodge, South Side, Steeple Aston. Until this year, I and my family lived for 40 years in Steeple Aston. My parents lived in the Lodge, South Side, from 1980 – 2013.

As joint owner and a former Steeple Aston Parish councillor, I am writing in response to the second application from Rectory Homes to develop the site south of South Side opposite the Lodge. I strongly request that the Planning Authority take into account the following:

1.Planning decisions. In 2017, my sister and I submitted an outline planning application for one dwelling in the grounds of the Lodge. This received a negative response from the Planning Dept which we have accepted. However, I quote from the Highways Issues in your report: ‘There is likely to be an increase of pedestrian movements toward the village centre, as a product of this proposal. As the highway progresses towards the village centre, it gets more confined on a downward alignment and there is little or no reservation for pedestrians. Whilst it is appreciated that this proposal is for one unit only, because of the restrictions mentioned above, it is considered relevant to address this matter.’ If this was the Department’s objection to one proposed dwelling one year ago, how could the Department rationally approve 6 or possibly 10 dwellings which would have the same pedestrian issues multiplied many times?

2. The built up limits of Steeple Aston. The Department ‘s response to our proposal queried whether it would be within the built up limits of the village. We would like to point out that the proposed site, opposite the Lodge on the south of South SIde, extends some way beyond the western limits of the Lodge garden. To quote the Officer’s Report: ‘A new dwelling on the site to the west of the Lodge would become the last dwelling experienced along South Side when leaving the village and would therefore represent an extension of the built limits.’ On those grounds, by what logic would the proposed development, extending beyond that western limit, be acceptable?

3.Site access. The application (2.1.3) states that South Side is ‘generally straight in the vicinity of the site’ and that there is a ‘gentle bend.’ Having driven this stretch of road for 40 years, I know that the ‘pinch point’ east of that ‘gentle bend’ and outside the Red Lion has very limited visibility which has resulted in numerous near misses down the years. There is no room, for example, for a Stagecoach bus and a car to pass. One or other has to reverse westwards on a blind bend or eastwards towards the T junction of Water Lane. I strongly contest the visibility splays cited in 3.2.3, particularly as the height of the hedge in the Red Lion car park obscures the view for a motorist. Unfortunately, the Red Lion have always been unwilling to reduce the height of the hedge although this would be of considerable public benefit.

Secondly, there is no pavement. As a pedestrian, I have many times had to flatten myself against the hedge of the Red Lion car park or escape into the Red Lion car park to avoid oncoming traffic from the west. It is difficult to conceive that any pedestrian access to the site, especially for families with young children, could overcome this hazard which is well known locally. I understand that Rectory are looking into ‘an additional pedestrian access point to be provided at the eastern end of the site.’ This would be precisely at the pinch point described above. A site visit by Highways and the Planning Department should be carried out as a minimum and I trust that this will indeed happen.

The Glanville report states that a speed survey was conducted over 7 days and that limits were observed by 85%. We have to accept those figures but I do wonder at what time of day the surveys were carried out. The school ‘rush hours’ between 8.30- 9.0a.m. and 2.30 – 3.30 have been observed to produce speeds at which safe stopping distances, particularly on that bend, would seem impossible. Experience also tells us that there is also a natural tendency for cars to accelerate out of the village once past the Red Lion car park – precisely at the point of the proposed vehicular access to the site.

4. As a former Steeple Aston Parish councillor, I would like to record that I have no objection to more housing in the village. But that housing should reflect the real needs of the villagers i.e. affordable homes and accommodation for villagers to retire into. Not yet more ‘executive homes’ of which there is already an abundance in the village. Above all, any such housing should be on a site which is safe for its residents.

Yours sincerely

Clare McKinley