2 Hill House

Southside

Steeple Aston,

OX25 4SD

10 September 2018

Mr Jim Newton

Assistant Director of Planning Policy and Development

Cherwell District Council

Bodicote House

Bodicote

Banbury

OX15 4AA

Dear Mr Newton,

**Comments on Planning Application 18/1482/F Rectory Homes Ltd**

**Erection of 6 Two Storey Residential Dwellings, Steeple Aston by Rectory Homes Ltd**

Thank you for your letter of 29th August 2018 asking for comment on the above planning application. Our concerns are as follows:

1. **Affordability**
2. The Housing Needs Assessment of the *Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan, Oxfordshire* (2016), states that “the District Council’s approach to providing development in the rural areas seeks, among other objectives*,* to provide new housing for people to meet, in particular, the needs of newly forming households and provide affordable housing in what are generally areas of higher housing cost; also to deliver housing at villages where local shops, services and job opportunities are available and accessible or where access to nearby towns would be sustainable in transport terms”.
3. The property firm Savills estimates that ‘affordable’ properties in the south-east of England should cost no more than £250,000. At the Parish Council meeting withRectory Homes Ltd in June this year the applicant was very clear that it could not provide homes at anything like this cost in Steeple Aston. Whilst Rectory Homes could not provide a calculated cost of the proposed residential dwellings they did suggest that the cheapest would be in excess of £450,000. Rectory Homes was also unable to confirm that they could provide more than two single-storey buildings or other types of dwelling for older people or people with disabilities.
4. The *Cherwell Local Plan* states that affordable housing is in particularly short supply in rural areas, most notably social housing, and that affordability pressures are high in places like Mid-Cherwell (which includes Steeple Aston). Again, the proposed new dwellings will not meet these needs of Steeple Aston or other parts of Mid-Cherwell.

**2. Road Safety**

There are two major concerns about road safety between the entrance to Steeple Aston from the west and Water Lane (and beyond).

1. There is currently no pavement for pedestrians along this stretch of the road and insufficient room to provide a pavement. Pedestrians currently have to squeeze up against the hedge of the Red Lion pub car park to avoid traffic from behind, or on-coming. This is particularly dangerous for pedestrians with push-chairs, disability scooters or people walking dogs. It is also very dangerous in the dark. It should be noted that this is the main route for the S4 Banbury to Oxford bus (a full-size single decker vehicle) as well as large delivery vehicles to the local shop and residences in Steeple Aston. There is frequently little space at all for pedestrians.

Rectory Homes have acknowledged this problem and have proposed a ‘shared space’ scheme as an alternative. This would consists of painting in different colours separate sections of the narrow road *beyond*(but not before) the Red Lion car park (travelling eastwards). The proposed width of the space for pedestrians is inadequate, especially for pedestrians with children, push chairs and dogs. This proposal does not inspire confidence for the safety of pedestrians given the inconclusive evidence of the effects of shared-spaces elsewhere.

1. The excessive speed of traffic on entering Steeple Aston from the west, and coming up the hill from the east adjacent to the Red Lion pub has been an issue for some time. Rectory Homes have acknowledged that their traffic survey on 8th-14th December 2017 was invalid given that the survey took place when there was heavy snow on the road.

It is hard to see what traffic calming measures (such as chicanes or speed bumps) could be introduced on this section of the road given the need to have width access for the S4 buses and other heavy duty vehicles. Villagers have been told that a reduction of the speed limit in Steeple Aston to 20 MPH is unlikely to receive the support of the Highways Agency (one cannot understand why this is the case).

Proposals to develop the land along ‘Sixty Foot’ (as it is known by Steeple Aston villagers) have not been successful in the past in terms of finding solutions to the issues of affordability of housing and road safety. The Rectory Homes proposals meet neither of these concerns. It is hard to see where a solution to either of these problems might be found.

Yours sincerely,

Philip and Beverley Davies