

Matthew Chadwick, Senior Planning Officer
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House, Bodicote
Banbury
Oxon
OX15 4AA

7 September 2020

Dear Mr Chadwick

Ref : 20/01122/F and 20/01747/F Change of use of Land to 18 Traveller Pitches with associated operational development

CPRE Oxfordshire object to planning applications 20/01122/F and 20/01747/F for the change of use of land at Widnell Lane, Piddington, to provision of 18 traveller site pitches. Although these are two separate applications, as they are on adjoining sites, we believe that consideration of them together better reflects their impact. We support the objection raised by Piddington Parish Council.

Cherwell District Council sets out the criteria for determining the suitability of sites for location of travelling sites in their current local plan (Policy BSC 6). The applications meet the geographical criteria of being within 3km of a category A village (Arncott), but as stated by Piddington Parish Council, Arncott is not the most sustainable category A village. Neither health and education provision (criteria a and b within policy BSC 6) is available at Arncott with the nearest full time GP surgery and secondary school located over 5 miles away in Bicester.

With regards to other criteria, there is a question mark over the degree of flood risk (criteria c). Whilst the developers have claimed that the area is an area of low flood risk, this is challenged by the Parish Council as the site is within 1km of the River Ray floodplain and the proposals from the developers in relation to pitches and circulation areas could exacerbate any flood risk further.

There is the potential of noise from the nearby Piddington Training Area (criteria e) which will impact on the provision of a satisfactory living environment (criteria g) along with the relative remoteness of the proposed traveller site pitches, which are some distance from the village. There is also a question mark over the grading of the land (criteria h) and the Council should satisfy itself that it is not at least of grade 3 (good quality) since the National Planning Policy Framework advises against development on this level of grade of land.

Questions have also been raised regarding the adequacy of the current number of traveller sites within Cherwell District Council (criteria j) with the developers claiming that this application is meeting an unmet need. However Cherwell's Planning Policy team have concluded that there is "sufficient supply of gypsy and traveller pitches based on the most up to date evidence".

Cherwell District
CPRE Oxfordshire
c/o 20 Blythe Place
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 2GH

Telephone 07527 068114
E Mail ndolden@btinternet.com
campaign@cpreoxon.org.uk

www.cpreoxon.org.uk

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and enhance a beautiful, thriving
countryside for everyone to value and
enjoy

The Planning Policy For Traveller Sites (PPTS) states that new traveller sites should not be sited in open countryside. The proposed sites are 1km outside of the nearest settlement in open fields. Additionally it states that planning authorities should ensure that the scale of traveller's sites should not dominate the nearest settled community. Given that the proposed application could increase the population of Piddington by over 20%, it is difficult to argue that this would not be the case if these applications are approved.

The CPRE recognise that 6 pitches have already been approved on appeal but it is the scale of the increase which is of concern. This is reflected in the many letters of objections from village residents.

The Cherwell District Council's local plan policy in relation to villages (C254) states that "unanticipated development within the built up limits of a village is of an appropriate scale for that village" and does not exacerbate travel in private vehicles. These applications, if approved, will inevitably lead to an increase in traffic use with safety and environmental impacts for Piddington residents.

Villages play an important part in preserving the countryside and this is recognised in Cherwell District's Policy on Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement (ESD 13). Developments should respect local landscape character and avoid undue visual intrusion into the open countryside and be consistent with local character. The proposed sites are a prominent residential landmark in open landscape but visible from Widnell Lane and are at odds with the rural character of the area.

There is not enough information included in the planning applications on their impact on the biodiversity of the site (criteria f Policy BSC6). It is a requirement of the Cherwell District Plan (ESD10) that all applications should demonstrate a biodiversity gain and this appears to be absent from the applications. Some of the surveys in relation to the original site have not been updated and it cannot be confirmed that protected species have not moved on to the sites. The proposed sites are close to the river Ray catchment area which is area rich in wildlife and itself susceptible to pollution.

The siting of 18 pitches in Piddington will have a marked impact on the local settlement affecting open countryside. Since it fails to meet the majority of criteria in Policy BSC6 we object to these applications. We believe that there are likely to better options available within Cherwell and it is our view that the Council should take the opportunity presented within the reprise of the Local Plan to identify more appropriate traveller sites to meet the likely future need.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Dolden



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Cherwell District, CPRE

Copies to: Sir David Gilmour, Chairman Cherwell District CPRE
Helen Marshall, CPRE Director