**Hook Norton Parish Council**

**Response to Appeal (140622/JE) against the objection re: Planning Application for the 43 dwellings on the land north of Railway House (21/00500/OUT)**

**Cherwell District Council Virtual Hearing on Friday 24th June 2022**

**Introduction**

Good morning, I would like to introduce myself: Caroline Gregory representing Hook Norton Parish Council.

On behalf of the Parish Council and the local residents of Hook Norton, I welcome this opportunity to come along and engage with you today on the matter of the ***appeal*** for the 43 dwellings on the land north of the Railway House in Hook Norton.

We have reviewed the new evidence lodged by Frampton’s and have concluded that it has not considered the wider context of the development and the impact it will have on the infrastructure and amenities of Hook Norton. Unlike other neighbouring villages, Hook Norton has had sustained and continuous housing developments over the past 10 years which has now reached a tipping point regarding safety and environmental sustainability.

I would like to draw the Inspectors attention to the following aspects that have not been fully addressed by Frampton statement of case:

The first is:

**Access**

At the planning application we referenced that access to the site is the only matter not to be reserved. Access to this site is challenging. There is a steep drop of about 2 metres from the road into the site. This was reinforced by the Highway Officer who has raised specific concerns in his response which have not been adequately addressed, namely:

* *Lack of proper survey base to the submitted access drawings*
* *Drawings do not clearly show the extent of trees and vegetation which would be affected by the engineering works necessary to create the access and the requisite visibility displays*
* *No mention made of how the old networking tunnel access is to be dealt with*
* *NO safety audit confirming that the gradient is acceptable for highway safety*
* *NO swept path analysis for a large refuse vehicle passing others;*
* *NO evidence that the width of the access road is sufficient for adequate passing of vehicles*
* *NO check of the Highway boundary to determine whether or not it coincides with the site boundary at the proposed access junction*

This has not been addressed by the Frampton case and still remains an outstanding issue.

The second is:

**Landscape**

CDC’s Landscape Officer objects in very strong terms to the proposal. He stresses that ‘*I judge the landscape on the northern edge of Hook Norton to be both distinctive and highly valued locally and therefore must be protected from this inappropriate development’*

Highly valued landscapes cannot be replaced - once changed it would be a change for ever.

The site is a part of a field - the remaining section of field would require a separate and adequate access and there has been no assessment undertaken on the impact of engineering works to create this access.

The site is completely open to view from the Public Right of Way which adjoins the northern and western edges of the site.

Framptons case states that this will addressed by the planting of a “buffer” however our stance remains that this is not a solution. The Landscape Officer details reasons why including:

* 25 years for establishment of the proposed planting
* uncertainties about its effectiveness
* unresolved matters of maintenance.

Furthermore it is hard to see whether there is space for this on the illustrative layout. Even if there was space, what would be the situation until any planting was visually effective (which the landscape expert at CDC says is 25 years – that’s a generation) – close boarded fencing is NOT acceptable to local character – but without that how would the development provide for secure gardens? Appears that this detail has not been recognised at all – it is an example of the importance of detail. Good design considers such matters.

There are also unresolved matters which have not been addressed including the impact of engineering works to create the access

The third is:

**History, Housing numbers and Timing**

The site has had a two previous applications for residential housing refused.

It was refused at a time when the Council could not demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply yet this in train with CDC producing a comprehensive housing plan which will shortly be consulted on. This proposes developments between Banbury and Kidlington where the road system and amenities can tolerate further growth NOT in the smaller villages which have already suffered an unprecedented and unexpected disproportionate level of new houses.

This would be yet another development in a village which has already had so much in recent years. It is notable that the Councils statement of case says that t*he Council is well on the way to delivering the total of 750 dwellings set out for such villages.*

So, the Council is well progressed in delivering on its housing numbers in villages and the Officer’s Report notes that an Inspector recently acknowledged it would be harmful to exceed that number, it is not necessary to approve this application to make up the numbers.

We are still unclear on the character of the house which the developers are saying will be addressed further down the line once application has been granted and yet Iwould consider this to important matter given the heritage of the village.

The revised application does not meet the required 35% threshold for social housing in a rural setting, at 34.8%. These are so needed for families to secure homes for future generations, securing strong communities. The associated benefit of this on health and wellbeing cannot be under estimated.

Our local MP is still opposed to this development and the unreasonable pressures it will put on the local area including schools (which are already oversubscribed), roads and infrastructure such as the sewerage works which cannot cope with current levels of usage; there is also low water pressure because of the excess usage and poor broadband coverage.

The fourth is

**Transport:**

The Transport Statement submitted with the application includes an independent report which argues that traffic volumes going into the village will be minimal as most facilities are in walking distance. However, the traffic count on which the Statement is based was carried out at the end of July 2020 when the roads were quieter as residents were staying indoors more because of COVID-19 and also during school holidays. HNPC would argue that the results from the survey are not an adequate basis from which to draw conclusions. The site is not well located in relation to local services and the Transport Statement fails to acknowledge the trips made by car needed to access local amenities.

Public transport does not serve the working population well and cycle commuting is impractical due to the narrow bends and high numbers of parked cars. The road into the village is a constant series of blind bends and barely wide enough for two cars to pass. The pavements from the site into the village are very narrow and non-existent in places. They are inadequate to allow a pushchair/buggy , wheelchair or mobility scooter access and you are required to step onto the road to allow on-coming people to pass so any increased walking and traffic would only endanger life more.

Provision of a Transport Plan cannot make up for the poor sustainability rating of Hook Norton and no Travel Plan can overcome the fact that the location and size of the proposal is inappropriate.

Hook Norton is a Category A village. Yet this is based on the Cherwell Rural Areas Integrated Transport and Land Use Study which is now over 12 years old. Change since then is all the development the village has had, with consequent additional cars in village – with on road parking increasingly problematic. The recent Fire engine struggling getting round Mobbs Lane has now led to introduction of cones – with likely yellow lines - an urbanising influence

Finally, I would like to raise concerns over the section 106. Although it is generous of the developers to offer funds for the Community Hall, Outdoors Spots Provision, refuse/cycling collection and improving the bus service, it is questionable whether this would have been areas chosen by the Parish Council or the local community, given the ethos and focus of the village on environmental sustainability matters; it would have been better suited towards creating a woodland area or decreasing further their environmental impact.

**To conclude**,

We are asking members today NOT to agree to the appeal against the planning application for the 43 dwellings because:

* there are still unresolved issues relating to safety of access to this site
* the issues raised which will have a significant and detrimental impact on the landscape have still not been properly thought through and not addressed
* this development is not required to ensure target 5 year housing supply is met
* there has already been substantial development in this village and the infrastructure is being stretched and exceeded
* without sufficient evidence and plans which meets all the requirements of statutory consultees, it is completely unknown whether this site is suitable for housing and all safety matters have been addressed

There are too many unknowns and too much uncertainty in this application for members to be able to approve without risk. We therefore urge you to again refuse this appeal.