Rebecca Luxton 31 West Hawthorn Road

The Planning Inspectorate Ambrosden

Room Temple Quay House Oxfordshire

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Bristol

BS1 6PN

14th September 2023

Dear Rebecca Luxton

RE: Your Ref: APP/C3105/W/23/3327213.
Address: Land East of Ploughley Road, Ambrosden.OX25 2AD.
Cherwell Appeal ref 23/00091/REF.Cherwell Planning 22/02866/OUT- Outline planning for 120 dwellings

We are against the appeal proposals. We would like to make these extra objections to our original comments submitted on Cherwell Planning Portal:

. **Adverse visual impact.** This development would be in a prominent position on rising land and would greatly diminish the visual impact on the approach to the village. The agricultural green fields form a visual indicator that Ambrosden is a rural village and any development on this land would be detrimental to the character of the village. On the other approaches to the village (East, West and South), the original vistas have all been destroyed by new developments and Ambrosden is in danger of losing its individuality. We need to preserve the approach from the North to indicate that Ambrosden is a separate village. As housing is planned for Wretchwick Green, less than 1 mile away from the site (just across the A41), any development on the North side of Ambrosden would lead to possible urbanisation and Ambrosden would become part of Bicester. The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 aims to avoid the coalescence of towns and villages and protect the character of rural villages and has a collective commitment to localism. These points relate to CLP 2011-2031 policies ESD13, ESD15 and PV2. The existing hedgerows are mainly deciduous in nature, so in winter there would be severe adverse visual impact from the bridleway and the footpath along the Ploughley Road, so people’s enjoyment of the beautiful countryside views would be greatly decreased.

**. Ambrosden does not need any more houses** . A further 120 houses would be surplus to requirements in Ambrosden. The emerging Cherwell Local Plan for 2020-2040 assesses that Ambrosden should provide 204 houses in this timeframe. At 1.4.2022 the report (See screen shot below) indicates that 117 houses had already been approved so there was a balance of 87 houses needed to reach the 2040 target. In November 2022, 5 dwellings were approved behind Home Farm Close and in February 2023, 75 dwellings were approved in principle adjoining Allectus Avenue. This only leaves a balance of 7 houses needed to fulfil the Cherwell Plan to 2040 (in 17 years time!). This could easily be achieved with small in-filling projects and a planning application was entered in June 2023 for a further 9 houses in the village which would complete Ambrosden’s planning obligations to Cherwell. 

**Ambrosden has already had a disproportionate amount of new homes approved**. Here is a list of planning approvals since 2014 (source: Cherwell District Council Housing Land Supply Statement February 2023- Appendix 2):

Springfield Farm – **89** houses – completed Sep 2016

Ambrosden Court – **44** houses – completed Sep 2017

Church Leys, Blackthorn Road – **85** houses – completed March 2021

North of Merton Road – **84** houses – in progress at September 2023

Home Farm Close – approx. **10** houses – in progress at September 2023

Land east of Allectus Avenue – **75** dwellings- approved in principle- subject to certain conditions

The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Housing Trajectory suggested that there should be 750 new homes planned on sites of 10 houses or more for Category A villages between 2014 and 2031. Ambrosden has now had 312 homes approved for planning in this time period plus a further 75 approved in principle bring the total to 387. As you can see, this is more than 50% of the target amount and this is an inappropriate proportion for Ambrosden. Planning should be aimed at other Category A villages to have their fair share now. There are 24 Category A villages in Cherwell, so there should be plenty of opportunities for developers in other villages.

. **It is against National Policy**. The developers intend **to concrete over the countryside** using a **greenfield site** rather than a brownfield site. On 23rd July 2023 (before this appeal was made) The Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said “*We need to keep going because we want more people to realise the dream of owning their own home.
“We won’t do that by concreting over the countryside – our plan is to build the right homes where there is the most need and where there is local support, in the heart of Britain’s great cities.*

 *“Our reforms today will help make that a reality, by regenerating disused brownfield land, streamlining planning process and helping homeowners to renovate and extend their houses outwards and upwards.”*

**.Highway safety and traffic congestion**. This development would increase traffic through the village as it is used as a ‘rat-run’ through to Islip and the A34/A40 to avoid traffic in Bicester and Oxford at peak times. Outside the Post Office in Merton Road, there is always traffic congestion, and although the Parish Council have considered many possibilities, there are no cost effective ways to improve the situation. At school start and finish times the roads around the school are severely congested and crossing East Hawthorn Road is very difficult. The proposed junction from the development is also a cause for concern as, assuming two vehicles per house, there would be 240 extra vehicles to accommodate on already busy roads. The parish council has speed signs in place to indicate the significant amount of vehicles that are speeding, the deterrents in place do not appear to have stopped people speeding on the approaches to the village.

**.Infrastructure inadequate for growing population.**

The growth in population is shown by the following Census data:
Apr 2001 – 1786 people
Mar 2011 – 2174 people- 22% increase on 2001
Mar 2021 – 2736 people- 53% increase on 2001

Plus 84 dwellings – land north of Merton Road at say 3 people per house= 252 people bringing the estimated total to around 3000 people- a 68% increase on 2001 . The infrastructure has not improved to accommodate the increase in population and the school is now oversubscribed. This will also affect children from the Five Acres School catchment area including Arncott, Blackthorn, Piddington and Merton and the children of MOD employees. Already some children may have to be allocated to other primary schools which will erode and create barriers in the village community.

.**Lack of amenities**. The village amenities have decreased in recent years, indicating that new inhabitants must be travelling elsewhere, commuting and adding to road congestion. In the village now, there is: 1 post office (but parking and traffic is atrocious and opening hours have been reduced), 1 out of village shop, 1 church (but the other church has closed), 1 village hall, 1 pub for regulars only (offers no food and does not allow children), 1 pre-school provision (but the other pre-school has closed), the hairdressers has recently closed, no doctors (closed in 2020 and the nearest local surgeries and dentists are full).The appeal documents also mention the Garrison gym- the gym equipment has been removed so the facility is not in use.

. **Nature and wildlife.** The land is home to many species of wildlife including dragonflies, harvest mice, dormice, field voles, newts, frogs, toads, hedgehogs, squirrels, badgers, foxes, deer, bats, goldfinches, field fares, barn owls, green woodpeckers, great spotted woodpeckers, skylarks, magpies, crows, kestrels, red kites, buzzards. There has been an increase in wildlife here because their original habitats have been disturbed due to developments at Graven Hill. Given the other planning applications in the village, the wildlife would run out of habitat options and we will lose an important characteristic from our countryside. The development could also involve damage/removal of long existing trees and hedgerows to the detriment of the natural environment. Even if the developers make ecological promises, the development would still destroy much of the natural ecosystem that has taken centuries to create.

**.Disturbance and Loss of Privacy**. We are alarmed and angry about the ‘new pedestrian access to West Hawthorn Road’. The bridleway, hedgerow, and part of West Hawthorn Road, Oak Lane, Ash Lane and East Hawthorn Road are not in public ownership and are privately owned and maintained by Ambrosden Residents Company Limited funded by management fees charged to estate inhabitants. This planning application would burden us with extra pedestrians passing near to our houses, and increased noise and disturbance and increased lighting pollution. Why should we have to suffer long-term consequences when the profit-making developers would just leave and move on to their next project? Local Councils have stated that they will not adopt the routes on Ambrosden Residents Estate as they don’t meet the council criteria. Therefore the developers should not be encouraging extra people to use the footpaths (apart from the bridleway) on the Ambrosden Residents Company Limited estate. The neighbouring properties were not consulted and we do not agree with the proposed access. The developers intend to break through the boundary onto privately owned land over which the bridleway travels, damaging hedgerow and land that they do not own in order to create unwanted changes to the bridleway. As shown by the many objections on the Cherwell Planning Portal, the villagers are enraged by this planning application. We feel that the developers have ignored our feelings and this could cause long lasting animosity. The plans show 2 storey houses on land that is higher than neighbouring properties so there are also potential problems with overlooking and loss of privacy.

**. Incorrect appeal form.** The red line on the appellants plan is incorrectly placed as it takes in land owned and maintained by Ambrosden Residents Company Limited and the Ministry of Defence therefore the appellant is incorrect in saying on the appeal form that “nobody, except the appellant, was the owner of any part of the land to which the appeal relates”. The public right of way information in the appeal documents is inaccurate. It does not end ‘opposite the Garrison Gym’. The appeal form says that this is not an agricultural holding but this is agricultural land.

**In summary**, the planning application goes against The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 which says:
**B.87 Cherwell's countryside, landscape and green spaces are important natural resources. They form the setting of our towns and villages, contribute to their identity and the well-being of Cherwell's communities, and provide recreation opportunities. The countryside’s intrinsic character and beauty is important to the quality of life in Cherwell and remains an economically important agricultural resource.**

Yours sincerely

Julian and Theresa Honour