



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

APPEAL BY ARCHSTONE AMBROSDEN LTD, BELLWAY HOMES LTD & ROSEMARY MAY

LAND EAST OF PLOUGHLEY ROAD, AMBROSDEN, OX25 2AD

LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY REF NO: 22/02866/OUT

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REF NO: APP/C3105/W/23/3327213

**SUMMARY PROOF Tom Webster BA (HONS) DIP TP MRTPI ON BEHALF OF Cherwell
District Council The Local Planning Authority**

October 2023

- 1.1 My name is Tom Webster. I am a qualified town planner, working as a Principal Planner on behalf of Cherwell District Council, in their South Area Major Projects Team. I am familiar with the appeal site and the surrounding area.
- 1.2 I have made my own assessment of the planning merits of the proposed development, and, in my professional judgement, I agree with the Council's two reasons for refusal.
- 1.3 My evidence assesses the planning considerations relevant to this appeal, which I consider to be:
 - 1) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
 - 2) The Council's five-year housing land supply position;
 - 3) The provision of infrastructure contributions required as a result of development and whether they are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, directly related to the development and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.
 - 4) The overall planning balance.
- 1.4 In providing the overall planning assessment, I have considered the evidence of the Council's landscape expert witness, Nicola Brown, and Jon Goodall, the Council's expert Five Year Housing Land Supply witness.
- 1.5 My view is that building housing on this site, particularly on this scale (which is a significant portion of the landscape in-between Ambrosden and the A41, where there are large-scale site allocations, Bicester 2 and Bicester 12) would reduce the effectiveness of the appeal site's role as an attractive landscape in an important position and remove its permanence.
- 1.6 It would result in the urbanisation of open countryside and irrevocably alter the rural character of the area and the approach to the village. I agree with the previous case officer, and the Council's landscape consultant, Nicola Brown, that it would be an incongruous addition. By contrast to the NPPF and the Local Plan policies, instead of protecting and recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, it would significantly harm it.
- 1.7 The incongruous nature of this proposal would be potentially compounded by the Appellants request to amend the description of development (and the access parameter plan and the indicative Framework plan), to remove the proposed connection to West Hawthorn Road. In doing this, it would make the scheme far less accessible and appear even more as an isolated housing estate in front of the existing village. Although the footpath would not make the proposal acceptable, it is an important part of the proposal.
- 1.8 It is also noteworthy that this appeal proposal, for 120 houses, is significantly bigger than any scheme approved in Ambrosden since the Cherwell Local Plan 2015 (CLP 2015) was adopted. In fact, paragraph xviii, on page 13 of the CLP 2015, clarifies

that development sites with 100 houses or more are considered to be strategic sites. Therefore, at 120 houses, this appeal scheme is considered to be of a strategic site scale, which, according to the CLP 2015 policies, are directed to Bicester and Banbury, and would be expected to come through the plan led process.

- 1.9 Moreover, the number of Policy Village 2 houses that have been delivered at Category A villages through the plan period to date, particularly in Ambrosden (216, potentially rising to 291), means that the weight that I give to the benefits of the new housing, proposed under Policy Villages 2, is reduced.
- 1.10 Having regard to the Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply, I agree with Jon Goodall that there is no justification for approving the appeal proposal in order to ensure that Cherwell District Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply is met. The relevant figures provided in Jon Goodall's Proof of Evidence confirm that Cherwell District Council has a Five-Year Land Supply of 5.37 years (slightly lower than the published position of 5.4 years) and is not, therefore, reliant on this scheme to be granted planning permission.
- 1.11 Overall, the site is not considered to be suitable for new housing development and the proposal would be contrary to national and local planning policy. This level of conflict weighs heavily in the determination of the case and it significantly and demonstrably outweighs the benefits of the scheme, all of which would be expected of a policy compliant scheme.
- 1.12 Whilst the absence of a signed s106 agreement is another shortcoming of the appeal proposal, both parties are working together to ensure that an agreed s.106 agreement will be presented to the Inspector before the Inquiry opens.
- 1.13 My submission ends with a declaration that the evidence I have presented reflects my genuine professional opinion.