

Mr & Mrs D&G McInerney  
1 Hyde Grove  
Bloxham  
OX15 4HZ

8<sup>th</sup> October 2019

**Re: Objection against 19/01705/OUT**

Dear Ms Taylor,

We are writing to object to the planning application for up to 95 dwellings on South Newington Road, Bloxham.

On a personal note: living on Hyde Grove that is adjacent to the north of the plan, the site is clearly visible from 3 aspects of our property. Given the elevated position of the northern-most area of the site, it will make it all the more prominent when dwellings are built. The elevation of the proposed site also means Hyde Grove is already a 'sound trap' where noise from the site is amplified and can be clearly heard in our houses. Our personal concern is that noise pollution from the build alone will be particularly intruding. And air pollution drifting over the few metres from the site will also be coating our property and car with dust and dirt. But those are just our own immediate, personal (read: selfish) concerns that would affect us the most directly from the moment the heavy plant arrives. But there are far bigger issues at stake.

Most objections raised against this application have very similar comments and sentiments. In particular, they reference the Bloxham Neighbourhood Development Plan and the Cherwell Local Plan. We understand that some policies can be interpreted differently, misinterpreted or even disregarded completely by applicants. And we understand that those deciding on the outcome of this application must be subjective. However, at what point are we basing decisions on defending agreed and published policies versus deciding to forgo those and allow development simply for the sake of making money? When is a line drawn when we can stand by the policies and not be afraid to say that holding onto as much as possible of our green space - and the rural aesthetics - of our village is a good thing? We would argue that there is not one reason for this application to be approved, aside from making money at the sacrifice of - and detriment to - the entire village and its residents.

In particular, the application contravenes many parts of the local and national planning policies:

**BNDP BL1/BL2 - acceptable development**

These items clearly state where development has been already been considered and deemed acceptable. In particular, another area of the village is highlighted for a large number of dwellings such as the number proposed. The application has disregarded this completely: proposing a completely different site, beyond the existing "*built up limit*" and not being "*conversion, infill or small in scale*".

### **BNDP BL7 "Development should not increase flood risk"**

The site is widely known as a flood risk area, and this has been acknowledged as part of the application. In other objections, photographic examples of significant flooding have been provided (on portal from Mr & Mrs C&P Millward, 16th September). Areas are regularly flooded and there is often standing water in various places on the site.

Two objections from the Environment Agency, 3rd October, have been made against this application, relating to flooding and lack of proper assessment and proposal of mitigation. Not only will the flooding risk need to be mitigated for the proposed dwellings, but the displacement of the water and handling of wastewater and sewage would also need to be carefully and properly considered. Detailed comments on the portal - raised by and evidenced by Mr D Pennah, 29th September - go into the finer points of the problems here.

### **BNDP BL9 c) "additional traffic... mitigated... not adversely affect"**

#### **NPPF para 84 "does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads"**

#### **NPPF 108(c) "impacts from the development on the transport network"**

There can be no mitigation for the additional traffic in the village. Per OCC, the existing roundabout on South Newington Road cannot be improved upon to increase capacity. So, no mitigation can be achieved. Therefore, any additional traffic would adversely affect the roads immediately near the site as well as to the village as a whole. Bloxham already suffers queues and very heavy traffic at peak times. These are predominantly caused by bottlenecks from parked cars in the village centre (from residents using the shops) and on Upper Tadmarton Road where school and commuter traffic combine. Nothing in the application acknowledges or addresses these issues.

The placement of the access to the site, on the A361, again contravenes these policies. It is possibly the worst place in the village to put a T-junction, given the speed of approaching traffic and poor visibility upon approach (in both directions). Traffic could be adversely affected due to vehicles queueing to enter - as well as 'dashing out' of - the junction with traffic that is already widely known to often be in excess of the speed limit.

### **CLP part 1: Policy Villages 2 - homes quota already met/planned**

The policy specifies that 750 new homes will be delivered in "*Category A villages*" (Bloxham is cat-a). Plans are already in place for those 750 - therefore additional houses are not required and would be in excess of quota. These CLP fulfils requirements for new houses, as outlined by the government. Given that existing recent developments are not all sold and that there are tens of houses up for sale in Bloxham (some in recent new developments), it is clear that this proposed site is over-development and not required.

### **BNDP BL11 "respect the local character"**

#### **BL12 (b) "demonstrate that it does not result in harm to the rural or heritage character"**

#### **ESD13 "cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside"**

The application does not respect the local character: it does not "*make a positive contribution to the character of Bloxham and its rural feel*". The entrance to the village from the Cotswolds via A361 is currently green and rural with welcoming views where you make a natural transition as you come over the old railway bridge. The site would mean the first experience and view of the village would be "new build" houses with none of the existing old village architecture or charm.

The proposed site definitely does not "*Preserve existing areas of open space and take every available opportunity to create new open space*" - it seeks to enclose the existing, open recreation ground and removes that open space.

A "*visual intrusion into the open countryside*" would be felt by residents all along the border of the rec and next field (proposed site) - including Colesbourne Road, Orchard Grove and Hyde Grove.

**BL9 (d) "ensure that a sufficient supply of local primary school places"**

**NPPF 94 "sufficient choice of school places is available"**

**NPPF para 122 (c) "the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services"**

It is widely commented and known that Bloxham Primary School is at capacity and cannot accommodate additional placements or be improved upon. A similar situation for the secondary school. This proposed site would then contravene these policies. Newer developments in the village have been in different catchment areas and/or have had to send children to neighbouring town and village schools. Approving this application will essentially ensure that any children will need to be driven to placements outside of Bloxham, adding to traffic and A361 concerns already raised above as well as pollution.

**NPPF para 122 (c) "the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services"**

The infrastructure of the village is already beyond sustainable, with schools, shops, doctors, dentists all unable to provide anywhere near adequate parking or access via car. This means, at multiple times throughout the day, bottlenecks and queuing traffic are commonplace; as well as obstructive parking and forcing pedestrians into dangerous situations to simply walk past or to the village facilities.

Waiting times to see doctors are longer and longer, and the dentist can no longer accept new patients.

With Bloxham being a 'satellite' village, this means our surrounding neighbours are also struggling to utilise the Bloxham facilities. Adding more dwellings without first improving this scenario is beyond unreasonable, bordering on folly.

**BL11 (i) "take opportunities to protect and wherever possible enhance biodiversity and habitats"**

**ESD10 "development which would result in damage to or loss of biodiversity"**

**NPPF para 174 "to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity"**

The proposed site contravenes all these policies. Although the plan would be seen to leave a 'green space' this is not a 'fixed requirement' and is subject to change upon further submissions (as is often seen).

The Slade Nature Reserve (a Cherwell District Wildlife site) runs along the old railway line. Although, on a map, this looks to be a 'sliver' of wooded wet land, it would be naive to think it is contained within this 'drawn' area. Wildlife, naturally, moves in and out of this area. Any new dwellings would of course severely impact this. The excavation and building alone will irreversibly damage the habitat of the wildlife. Therefore, it is not possible for it to "*promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species.*"

Given that the Slade is already a 'wetland' area, with the brook running through it, any displaced or diverted water as a result of the site being on a flood zone would likely cause further damage to the area, habitats and wildlife.

More unnecessary building will have a negative impact of on the environment as a whole, that is unacceptable. Aside from the damage to the Slade and immediate

wildlife and surroundings, the general pollution and carbon footprint of such a large-scale village development will be huge. Not to mention the additional traffic it would bring through the village for commuting to Banbury or to deliver children to other schools because there is no room for them in Bloxham. At a time when climate change is - quite rightly - being forced to the top of agendas, and when protests and demonstrations are dominating news, perhaps this is the most important reason to prevent any such development going ahead.

It is for all these reasons that we object to the application.

We are not against change, evolution or development. Change is good. But change for changes' sake (i.e. just money) is foolish for everyone except those getting paid. Sensible, planned-for and well-managed change is what is required.

We would very much like to think that CDC will reject this application - as it has others in similar circumstances. Pessimism (and history) might lead us to think that a further appeal and legal challenge would then ensue. Surely it is time to rigorously defend these policies that so many hours and so much effort has gone into. We would argue money might be better invested in defending against the legal challenges from the developments that would have such detrimental effects on areas... stopping them *before* they can be built... because, once built, it then becomes a very different problem that cannot be 'rejected'. Problems that affect the greater Cherwell communities as a whole. Problems that require far more budget and finance to deal with: the additional impact on infrastructure from the hundreds (or thousands) of additional residents and vehicles on our Cherwell doorsteps.

Yours sincerely,

Mr & Mrs D&G McInerney