

The Leys
Adderbury
Oxon
OX17 3ES

31 January 2020

Dear Mr Neville

Ref: planning application 19/02691/F

I write on behalf of my mother, Mrs Beris Biggam, who is the sole occupant of The Leys house in Adderbury, and applicant of planning application 19/02691/F. In addition to the formal and technical response from her advisers, Framptons, she would be most grateful if you would take into account her personal comments when considering your decision following Adderbury Parish Council's objections to the proposed development of her land.

The Council's comments which are of most concern to my mother are around public access to the Leys' land and the preservation of its biodiversity.

1. Due to the presence of a Public Footpath which crosses the garden, in their objections, the Parish Council appear to take the view that the Leys' land is a public amenity rather than private land crossed by a Right of Way. This has largely arisen we feel, due to a local habit of circumventing the Right Of Way by illegally entering the Leys' land via Lucy Plackett playing fields. The Leys' land boundaries do not allow for direct access to the property or track from Lucy Plackett playing fields, and when my parents first purchased the property in the 1960s, a boundary hedge was planted to reinforce this point. Over time, however, there have been many incursions through this hedge, which people have created without permission in order to circumvent the Public Footpath. Having thus gained access through the hedge, people then walk down the full length of the track (effectively through our private land) to meet up with the Public Footpath.

As the track belongs to The Leys, with only Thames Water having been granted access, this practice has long been of concern to my parents as it has repeatedly compromised the privacy and integrity of the house and land. My mother would therefore welcome a satisfactory resolution to this issue which would be gained through the development proposals. As Framptons have indicated on her behalf, as a condition of development my mother would support the establishment of an official public footpath from Lucy Plackett playing fields alongside the full length of track, thus creating an enhanced amenity that could be legally used and properly maintained going forward.

Also in respect of illegal use of the land which the current layout permits, we wished to draw your attention to repeated incidents of vandalism and undesirable night-time 'activities' – including under-age drinking and drug-taking, which have resulted in littering and damage to property, not to mention security concerns for my mother. The enclosed nature and size of the land, and the current illegal direct access point from the Lucy Plackett playing fields means that this kind of undesirable activity can go unchallenged and will continue until the layout of the landscape can be altered to deter this kind of behaviour. My mother is sure

that the Parish Council would prefer to do everything possible to minimise the potential for these activities to take place in the village.

2. With regard to biodiversity, we feel that objections which portray the Leys' land as an 'ecological haven' are greatly overstated. Whilst we are most keen to demonstrate our support of wildlife and green infrastructure we must reinforce the point that, as well as being private and enclosed with little external visibility, rather than being a well-managed haven for wildlife, much of the land is merely overgrown and derelict (including a dilapidated tennis court), and does not positively contribute to the landscape of the village.

In its current state, the land is being overtaken by dominant plant species of little ecological value according to the ecology survey, and has zero aesthetic appeal. It is an area of land which can be enjoyed and utilised by nobody and is not a habitat for rare species. We feel that alternative uses of the land requiring no planning permission, e.g. grazing, would negatively alter the biodiversity of the land, and that rather than destroying a valuable habitat, bringing some managed and planned structure back to the landscape will actually enhance biodiversity as this enables a variety of habitats to be actively encouraged, thus creating a net gain in biodiversity.

In the general context of objections to the development we support the Parish Council's concerns to preserve the integrity of the village but feel that there must also be recognition of a situation where taking no action causes future environmental issues and an impoverishment of the village's landscape. Leaving the land undeveloped will inevitably result in the continued undesirable anti-social activities which will not benefit the village in any way.

We refer to the comments of a local resident, who writes:

"The character of the village wouldn't be changed as the site is 'out of the way'. Diversion of the footpath would be a good thing as, presently, the footpath is difficult and unpleasant to walk on. There has been a lot of building work on and around Tanners Lane for a couple of years now, utilising lots of traffic, with no ill effect. The only thing that would matter is the possibility of potholes in Tanners Lane, which would have to be rectified. I have rarely seen emergency vehicles on Tanners Lane - only on what may be considered as 'difficult' driveways. I think the impact on wildlife would be minimal. The area concerned is not visually pleasant, and so I believe any construction could only improve on this aspect."

Finally, my mother asked me to convey to you that we are very happy to explore improving public access, improving security of local residents, and finding as many ways as possible to create a more aesthetic, safer landscape with a rich biodiversity. Since owning the property my parents have added significantly to it through the planting of trees, which are now to be the subject of TPOs, something my mother fully supports. And having lived in Adderbury for more than 50 years, she is committed to ensuring the future enhancement of the village landscape and community and this has been at the forefront of her mind in submitting this planning application.

Kind regards

Nick Biggam