

Mr Andrew & Mrs Rachel Bowles
26 Heyford Road
Steeple Aston
Bicester
Oxfordshire
OX25 4ST


20 May 2020

Mr Bob Neville
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

Dear Mr Neville

Planning Application Number: 20/00964/OUT

We are writing in response to the Neighbour Notification of 29 April 2020, which relates to the above planning application. This application proposes erection of up to eight dwellings at The Beeches, Heyford Road, Steeple Aston, Bicester OX25 4SN, with all matters reserved except the means of access onto Heyford Road.

This application was previously lodged as 19/00457/OUT, and we objected to it then. The application was subsequently refused, but it has been submitted again now as essentially the same plan. No consideration has been given to our original objections, and so – understandably, I think – we write to object once more.

This development would be entirely inappropriate for a number of reasons, including the following:

- The application does not follow the existing pattern of housing in the village, and so is contrary to the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (which was recently approved by more than 90% of voters in the referendum). In fact, these plans would create a separate housing area attached to Steeple Aston, rather than adding to the existing community – quite the opposite of what has been supported by people here.
- The application would allow development of what is essentially garden or pasture land that is immediately adjacent to open countryside, so that the settled area of the village is markedly changed and becomes more intrusive on (and visible from) the surroundings. We understand that permission was given some years ago for the addition of the narrow-gauge railway in much of the area under consideration, but this is very different to allowing wholesale development of the land, with permission to build substantial (and tall) houses there. For the *Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* to claim, as it does repeatedly, that the development would have a negligible or no visual impact is absurd.

- The erection of eight houses in this space would require them to be crowded onto the land, especially as so many of the proposed houses are seemingly to be very large (3 x 'four-plus'-bedroom houses, 3 x three-bedroom houses and 2 x two-bedroom houses, in addition to the existing property already in place, and adequate space for a proper public road which would have to replace the current driveway). The production of large houses that are packed together, with little room for gardens, is surely a plan created to maximise the saleable value of the property, rather than a considered and appropriate plan for living in the countryside. In addition, houses with 'four-plus' bedrooms are certainly not what the area requires, and they will not help with housing pressures in the locality. The proposed houses do not at all constitute '*a range of types and sizes in a layout that accords with the principles set out in local design guidance*', as promised in point 7.02 (on page 30) of the Design & Access Statement supplied by the Malcolm Payne Group. In fact, as noted already, they directly contradict the principles of the Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan.
- This area is in established use by a variety of wildlife – for instance, deer and foxes routinely use clear trails that cross the property in question and continue across the adjacent open fields, to the woods and ponds towards Rousham, and to the River Cherwell. Badgers certainly live close by, and both they and their setts are protected in law – even from disturbance.
- We are concerned about the current driveway being redeveloped as a road to serve so many properties, both in terms of the safety of increasing the traffic so substantially in that location (at the top of a steep hill with blind corners), and because we expect that the character of the area would necessarily change – a number of large trees would surely be felled in order to clear this entrance, and so that part of Heyford Road would be changed in order to facilitate the development further away from the road.

This plan offers advantages only to the current land-owner (who, if this application is granted, would presumably sell up and move away), and it would leave the village poorer. We do not support the idea that home-owners can decide to redevelop their gardens into small housing estates, and a plan that was not good enough to be accepted the first time around should not be accepted now (in essentially the same form) just because it is repeatedly being submitted.

We ask that this application is refused once again.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours

(Mr) Andrew Bowles and
(Mrs) Rachael Bowles

[not wet-signed, as submitted electronically]