

Objection to Planning Application 20/03467/F, Poplars field in Deddington, from Blue Cedar Homes

I write as Chairman of the Friends of Castle Grounds to express the reasons why I and five members of my committee, all Deddington residents, object to the plan put forward to build seven retirement homes on the Poplars field along the Clifton Road.

Deddington has the rare good fortune to have on its eastern perimeter an exceptionally well-preserved thousand year old Scheduled Monument. Through its current preservation care, undertaken jointly by English Heritage, Historic England and Deddington Parish Council, it is still in remarkably good condition – authentically beside the village but not of it since the 1070s.

Deddington Castle is an undisturbed Norman motte and bailey castle site inside extensive and still well-defined ramparts, still with open land around all but one corner and still with good views from its high points. In October 2020, Historic England – which assesses these earthworks as ‘some of the most impressive in England’ – wrote in a letter requested by Blue Cedar Homes:

*The effect [of the Blue Cedar Homes application] will be to bring the built-up area of the village closer to the castle than is currently the case. This is important, as the isolation of the castle from the village is a key element of its significance.*

The Blue Cedar application quotes the above opinion and then disregards it; in fact, the whole application is a masterly example of a wealth of good information gathered and false conclusions drawn. The houses planned would of course be visible from the ramparts as well as from the castle mound. They would also curtail the view from the Clifton road, though we consider that to be of secondary importance.

In the eyes of the Friends of Castle Grounds charity, it is the authenticity of this irreplaceable setting, this ring of green open space from its viewpoints, which is under threat from every planning application north or east of the castle – as well as a main reason why earlier proposals have been refused. Part of the danger of this Blue Cedar venture is that it would become a ‘useful precedent’, opening the way for further development towards Clifton, unbalancing the village and potentially encroaching on the extended castle site from the east.

This is a case when robust defence of the Castle’s setting is urgently required by our Parish Council and Cherwell District Council. The skyline views are under

threat to the south and west as well, a hitherto unforeseen danger listed in a recent planning refusal by a Cherwell Planning Officer.

Deddington is classified as a category A village, and there is appropriate and welcome development going ahead on several sites to meet its target number for 2030. Villages need newcomers of all ages/income brackets to keep them alive. It is newcomers who will take over care for the village and preservation of the Castle in the future. But now in the 2020s it is our turn to defend it. No trace remains of the ballroom built inside the outer bailey, but a housing development is there for eternity. There would be true shame in doing nothing during our tenure, in conniving with opportunistic or inappropriate development applications which infringe the protective green space around the castle and irrevocably harm its setting after it has come intact through nigh on a thousand years.