

**Grove House
High Street
Deddington
Oxfordshire
OX15 0SL**

27th January 2021

Director, Planning & Economy
Development Management
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
White Post Road
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA

Dear Sir,

Application ref. 20/03467/F - Erection of 7 dwellings on land adjoining Clifton Road, Deddington known as 'The Poplars'

I should like to make the below comments on the above application.

1. Impact on setting of Deddington Castle

(a) Relationship of The Poplars and the Norman castle

The Poplars is a greenfield site adjacent to the western bailey and perimeter moat of the Norman Deddington Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Deddington Castle has been described by Historic England as follows:

Deddington Castle "is a nationally important designated asset and is one of the best preserved earthworks relating to the period in Oxfordshire. Unlike other similar castles, it appears to have been located remotely from the original village of Deddington and this separation has been perpetuated over time. Whether deliberate or not, the setting of the asset remains open countryside on all sides except a small section of the circuit. The castle has illustrative value in demonstrating how the Normans dominated the surrounding landscape militarily and physically, and the existing open setting contributes to that significance."

The site is part of the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the open nature of The Poplars makes an important contribution to the significance of the SAM.

There is a high degree of intervisibility between the mound on which the Inner Bailey stands and the site, the south-east corner of which is only 150 metres away.

The proposed development would significantly erode the open quality of the space between the castle and the village. This would diminish the sense of isolation and the illustrative value identified by English Heritage.

(b) Tree-lined banked ramparts



The southern boundary of The Poplars is dominated by the prominent parallel tree-lined banked ramparts on the northern side of the western bailey of the Norman castle.

The path along the top of the banked ramparts would directly overlook the proposed development. Although the embankment is lined by tall veteran trees, there are moderately filtered views of the field in summer, and the field is clearly visible below in winter when there is little or no leaf cover.

Since the ramparts at this point are about 19½ feet high, the path would afford a prime view of the development below.

The banked ramparts are a prominent feature viewed from the B4031 Clifton Road on the northern side of The Poplars when approaching Deddington from Clifton (see photograph above), and from the footpath across the field opposite. The 180 degree panoramic view is highly valued by the community.

2. Impact on Deddington Conservation Area

(a) Important open green space

The Poplars is one of the important open spaces identified in the Conservation Area Appraisal in 2012.

14.5 Protection of important open spaces and views

There are a number of open spaces within the village that it is important to protect because they are integral to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The inclusion of these open spaces in the designation of the conservation area is specifically to ensure that these spaces are preserved.

(b) Setting of adjacent listed buildings

Castle End is a 16th century Grade II* listed building, now divided into two dwellings, the northern wing of the building being called Monks Court (now

Applewood). Castle End and Monks Court/Applewood are at the eastern end of Castle Street, close to the western boundary of The Poplars.

The Castle Barns, which directly adjoin the western boundary of the site, are curtilage listed to the Grade II* Castle End.
The Castle Barns comprise:

Four separate buildings all facing onto a central grassed courtyard. The barn and stable block were originally built for a Hall house dating from 1350. The great barn was built in the mid-17th century and has reputedly been built from ironstone taken from Deddington Castle. In parts the land adjoins the dry moat belonging to the castle. The stable block has an oak cruck beam constructed under Norfolk reed thatch.

The western bailey, and the eastern bailey, of the Castle remain entirely surrounded by open green space, except for a short interface in the north-west corner of the western bailey with the rear curtilages of Castle End and the Castle Barns.



Aerial view of The Poplars in autumn looking west towards the Castle Barns on its western boundary, with Castle End behind.

3. Impact on character and appearance of area

The proposed site is in a sensitive location outside the built limits of Deddington at a key entrance to the village. The scheme would involve development on open green space and the encroachment of the built area, leading to ribbon development along the south side of Clifton Road leading out of Deddington, inconsistent with the historic loose-knit pattern of development on this rural eastern approach to Deddington, which is

characterised by open fields and scattered buildings set back from the highway.

Saved Policy C33 states that the Council will seek to retain any undeveloped gap which is important in preserving the character of a loose-knit settlement structure or maintaining the setting of heritage assets or preserving a view of recognised historical value.

4. Similarities with St Thomas Street application (13/01941/OUT)

The current application has similarities with a 2013 application to build 7 houses on land between St Thomas Street and the western castle ramparts, which was further away from the SAM than the proposed development site on The Poplars.

The Council's decision to refuse the St Thomas Street application was appealed. The importance of conserving the open setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument was confirmed by the Planning Inspector when he subsequently dismissed the appeal.

5. Remainder of The Poplars

The proposed development comprises the western one-third of The Poplars, which field extends to c. 4 acres.

As regards the remainder of the field, a return to pasture "under a grazing regime" is proposed, and the developer's Planning Report says:

1.4 These proposals represent the only development aspirations that the applicant has for the site. There is no intention to provide any further development in subsequent phases. This is an important issue and clearly indicates that no further development proposals are being considered.

The application documents are completely silent about ongoing ownership, so there is no guarantee that the remaining two-thirds of this "important open green space" will be safe from future development.

While I fully understand the desire for retirement accommodation, this does not have to be at the expense of substantial harm to such an important designated heritage asset.

For the foregoing reasons I urge the Council to refuse the application.

Yours faithfully,

D. J. French