

Hook Norton Parish Council

Foxglove Cottage
Kings Road
BLOXHAM
OX15 4QE

[e-mail: rosemary.watts@hnpc.org.uk](mailto:rosemary.watts@hnpc.org.uk)

Mr Wayne Campbell (by email)
Cherwell District Council
Planning Department
Bodicote House
Bodicote
OX15 4AA

23rd March 2021

Dear Mr Campbell

OBJECTION TO Planning Application 21/00500/OUT: 43 New Homes on Land North of Railway House, Station Road, Hook Norton.

I am writing on behalf of Hook Norton Parish Council, which wishes to object to this application on the following grounds.

The previous application (14/01738/OUT) was strongly opposed by Hook Norton Parish Council (HNPC), many other statutory consultees and local residents who wrote separately to Cherwell District Council.

The revised application is from a company called Greystoke Land Ltd which specialises in planning appeals and has gone back over the reasons why the original application was rejected, using independent experts to challenge or amend the application to address the concerns raised. However, Hook Norton Parish Council does not think that the evidence provided is strong enough to overturn rejections and it stands by its original decision.

After all the planning appeals, Greystoke Land Ltd are clearly submitting this as a speculative and opportunistic application. Residential development has previously been refused on the site and the reasons for refusal remain. In particular:

- The site is in open countryside and beyond the existing built-up limits to the village
- There is a significant change in levels from Station Road to the site, meaning visually intrusive engineering works would be required to access the site, which would be out of keeping with the local character
- Creation of the access would require a significant loss of established field boundary vegetation with significant harm to biodiversity, character and visual amenity
- The rising landform, including Council Hill, to the north of the site, is an important element of the local landscape and setting of Hook Norton. The local landscape character and visual amenity would be harmed by residential development of the site
- Public Right of Way 253/21/10 is immediately adjacent to the site and is a very well used route. There are open and close views of the site from this path and development of the site would have a severe and harmful visual impact

Social infrastructure needs

The revised application does not meet the required 35% threshold for social housing in a rural setting, at 34.8%.

The Hook Norton Neighbourhood Plan (HNNP) requires any development to protect and enhance the local landscape (policy HN-CC1), and this includes making a positive contribution to the locally distinctive character and context of the village. *This application does not address the fundamental landscape and visual objections to development of the site, such as the relationship with local landscape and Council Hill, the open views from the PROW immediately north of the development and open views from Station Road. The suggested boundary planting will not be of sufficient height or depth.*

Since the traditional pattern of growth is fundamental to the character of Hook Norton and the application does not accord with that traditional pattern of growth, it is also contrary to HN-CC1 of HNNP. *The applicants D&A statement references that there will be loss of openness which is contrary to the character of the village.*

The application is contrary to Policy HN-CC2 of HNNP which requires any proposal to demonstrate that it is of high-quality design. The application fails to provide sufficient information to allow a proper assessment of design. The original objection from the Parish Council highlighted concerns that the application did not adhere to Policy HN-CC2 of the HNNP, which requires any proposal to demonstrate that it is of high-quality design. It is not acceptable for an outline application to lack parameters and design guidance to ensure high quality at any subsequent Reserved Matters. There is no reference in the revised application to the standard of design of the houses; the only change appears to be in a reduction to the numbers of houses; the Council cannot be assured that the development will adhere to and maintain the current character of the village.

Type of development proposed

The HNNP provides for sustainable housing growth in policy HN-H1. This allows proposals for up to 20 dwellings; justified by objectively assessed local housing need. This revised application seeks to justify the proposal for 43 dwellings by reference to the CDC 5-year land supply. However, if this argument is pursued without any reference to a spatial situation, development of any size may be proposed in a village, resulting in villages becoming more like towns and their defining village characteristics being lost. This is contrary to the NPPF which stresses the interrelationship of the 3 elements of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social. *The spatial policies of the Cherwell Local Plan are not rendered out of date because of a drop in 5 YHLS – they remain fundamental to the plan led approach as set out in the NPPF. This application is contrary to policy HN-H1.*

HNNP notes (in HN-CC3) that the traditional pattern of growth which characterises Hook Norton should be small scale and of gradual change. This policy requires that “this must be reflected in the extent and amount of any development in Hook Norton”. *The Parish Council objected to a previous proposal for 48 houses on this site as it does not comply with HN-CC3. It objects to this proposal for 43 houses because this is also contrary to HN-CC3. It does not accord with the settlement pattern.*

There has been much in the press over whether Neighbour Plans are valid when considering new housing developments and last year, neighbourhood plans appeared to be back on track when the then housing minister Gavin Barwell announced that they would still hold weight, as long as planning authorities could prove a three-year housing land supply.

The Council’s current position on housing land supply is published in the 2020 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which involved a comprehensive review of land supply.

The AMR includes consideration of the effect of COVID and notes (para 5.65): ‘MHCLG housing supply indicators data for England (30 September 2020) report a fall on housing starts and completions reflecting the coronavirus lockdown’.

The Cherwell AMR notes that “a number of large sites are expected to move forward” and crucially for Cherwell in regard to the required Housing Land Supply, (as per AMS paras. 5.74 & 5.75), “whilst the Council presently cannot demonstrate a five-year supply, its position exceeds the current three-year housing land supply requirement as set out in the Written Ministerial Statement therefore paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is not engaged for reasons of housing land supply.

Furthermore, HNNP describes Hook Norton in a group of 6 villages required to provide housing of 252 up to the year 2031; all of which have had recent approvals for up to 528 dwellings which exceed this.

Following the developments in Hook Norton at Bourne Lane, Scholars Gate and The Grange (Stanton Engineering site), the village of Hook Norton has increased in size well above the level anticipated by local planning policy. The physical and social infrastructure, however, has not matched this increase. Further development is unsustainable, particularly when considered cumulatively with the already consented and implemented developments. Local opinion regarding the extent, location and size of future residential development has been very clearly expressed and evidenced during consultations associated with the preparation of a HNNP. The application is contrary to the findings on which the HNNP policies are based.

Transport and PROW

The original planning application assessed existing traffic conditions, but it did not allow in its traffic counts and projections for the effect on traffic of the 107 dwellings which have recently been built at Bourne Lane and The Grange, along with a further 54 at Scholars Gate. *All the very recent development which has taken place have cumulatively impacted traffic and parking levels whilst the village road network has remained unchanged. A village does not and should not have urban style roads: the narrowness and bends are part of the rural character.*

The Transport Statement submitted with the application includes an independent report which argues that traffic volumes going into the village will be minimal as most facilities are in walking distance. However, the traffic count on which the Statement is based was carried out at the end of July 2020 when the roads were quieter as residents were staying indoors more because of COVID-19 and also during school holidays. *HNNP would argue that the results from the survey are not an adequate basis from which to draw conclusions. In addition, it is clear that the site is not well located in relation to local services and the Transport Statement fails to acknowledge the trips made by car to access local amenities.*

Regarding the “S106 offer” to improve the bus stop, the Parish Council can confirm that this merely demonstrates the lack of consultation with the community – which is not only good practice but also strongly encouraged in planning policy. The Hollybush Road bus stop is being provided with a shelter by the Parish Council, with work currently ongoing. Residents of the proposed estate will need to travel directly through the village if they wish to travel in any direction other than directly eastwards such as Banbury direction, thus greatly increasing traffic through the village centre.

Hook Norton is in an isolated position and the roads serving the village are minor roads, often cut off for periods during the winter. Increased traffic would also directly impact the surrounding villages which must be passed to reach Hook Norton. Public transport does

not serve the working population well and cycle commuting is impractical. The road into the village is a constant series of blind bends and barely wide enough for two cars to pass. The pavements from the site into the village are very narrow and non-existent in places and you are required to step onto the road to allow on-coming people to pass. You also have to keep crossing the road due to the foot path changing sides and, as this is the nature of the village, it cannot be changed so, any increased walking and traffic would only endanger life more.

Provision of a Transport Plan cannot make up for the poor sustainability rating of Hook Norton (as found in CDC's Local Plan evidence base document CRAITLUS) – no Travel Plan can overcome the fact that the location and size of the proposal is inappropriate. The HNNP takes account of CRAITLUS and provides in HN-H1 for measured growth. This application is contrary to the HNNP.

The application makes no enhancement to the PROW network as sought in policy HN-COM2 – it only detracts from the existing PROW which is immediately adjacent to the site.

Site location

Under policy HN-H2 of the HNNP, any applications for housing development will be assessed for suitability of location according to a set of criteria. The application fails to meet the following criteria because:

The application does not comply with policies in the plan, as set out in this submission:

- *The application is on a greenfield site.*
- *Access to the site will be via a significant slope given the lay of the land.*

Plans in the Transport Statement show that the creation of the visibility splays would significantly impact the existing vegetation. Furthermore, if the visibility splay to the west is to be achieved, it appears to be reliant on works to third party property and trees – for which there appears to be no agreement.

The Topography Survey clearly shows the significant level difference and also notes that it was “unable to survey” some of the area of the proposed access.

No consideration is given to how the proposed access will be created with reference to the differing levels of site and Station Road – no sections are provided and no drawings provided of the engineering work needed to create the access – yet access is not a reserved matter, it is to be determined by this application.

The swept path plans show that vehicles need to cross the Station Road carriageway. This is clearly a safety concern.

The Parish Council is also concerned that no account appears to have been taken of the proximity of the proposed site access to the existing access to The Grange.

In addition, unobstructed visibility is required between 0.6 and 2m. Sag and summit curves may affect visibility requirements. All junctions require adequate visibility in accordance with the requirements detailed in the design. Unfortunately, the slope into the development will prohibit required level of visibility along with the closeness to the junction of The Grange.

Utilities

The current electricity infrastructure is recognised as marginal for existing needs and would need expansion to cope with an increased population. The water supply struggles to meet current demand, water pressure is low, and the sewage treatment facilities are inadequate. Feedback from residents to the Bourne Lane, The Grange and more recently

Scholars Gate developments confirms this is the case. This situation has worsened because of the new developments at Bourne Lane and Scholars Gate.

Education

Chipping Norton school, the nearest secondary school and the one in catchment for Hook Norton, is eight km away, is accessible only by subsidised school bus and private car and is fully subscribed.

Communications

Mobile telephone service is poor with no single provider allowing full coverage over the village. The existing mobile masts are often at full capacity resulting in dropped calls. 3G coverage is patchy at best and often unavailable. This is barely adequate to support existing needs let alone encourage additional home working.

Case of need

There is clearly no case of need for a new housing development and the application does not evidence any benefits that will be derived, given that:

1. Hook Norton has already had substantial recent housing developments in the village which fulfil and exceed (by over 200%) the need for housing as identified by Cherwell District Council including social housing needs.
2. there are no economic advantages to be derived from this development; from this perspective it would be better redirected into a town where retail is weak now especially because of COVID-19 and unused retail space could be converted into social housing and flats to help stimulate growth through encouraging restaurants and bars.
3. the village is now not in a sustainable position to support this as local amenities are fully utilised from the recent three housing developments bringing further 107 homes into the village.
4. the location and size of the site is not in line with the HNNP; the access road is very close to other junctions and given the ground level of the development would require engineering works which are insufficiently considered and would inevitably be harmful.
5. It would not help reduce traffic or air traffic pollution and the Transport Statement is based on traffic data which is at best questionable and which underestimates the number of people that will drive to use the facilities in the village.
6. the Hook Norton Low Carbon Society have been considering environmental requirements for the village and are proposing creating a wildlife belt; this development would cut right through this.

Society is in a very different place now because of COVID-19 and environmental issues, so these should be on the forefront of any decision relating to housing developments. There is no evidence to sense check that these have been taken into consideration.

In a recent letter to householders the Leader of the Council, Barry Wood, referenced the four strategic priorities for Cherwell District Council in 2021/22 including:

- Housing that meets your needs including promoting innovative housing schemes and delivering local plans
- Leading on environmental sustainability including protecting our natural environment and improving air quality
- Enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres such as securing infrastructure to support growth in the district
- Healthy resilient and engaged communities supporting community and cultural development and create a more inclusive 'including everyone' community.

Clearly this development cuts across these priorities as it does not meet local needs, is not innovative, is not in line with local plans, offers no environmental benefits, will worsen air quality and noise, will not help stimulate growth in local town centres and is not aligned with the views nor supported by the local community.

Conclusion

Hook Norton Parish Council (HNPC) strongly objects to the proposed development. It is an entirely speculative proposal with inadequate supporting documentation. The site has in principle objections due to landscape, visual and access matters. The proposal conflicts with the HNNP.

There is clearly no case of need or perceived benefits to be derived from sighting these houses in Hook Norton, it does not accord with Cherwell Five Year Land for Housing Supply and is not in line with Cherwell District Councils Strategic Priorities.

Hook Norton is a village which has already undergone significant expansion and the HNNP has been prepared to manage future growth. Such an approach accords with the Government's localism agenda and the NPPF core planning principle requiring planning to be plan-led and empowering local people.

For this and all the reasons stated above, Hook Norton Parish Council would urge that this application be refused.

Hook Norton Parish Council requests that this application be determined by planning committee and wishes to attend to confirm its strong objections.

Councillors would be happy to discuss any aspect of the above further if you wish.

Yours sincerely

R Watts

Rosemary Watts

Clerk to Hook Norton Parish Council

cc. HNPC; Victoria Prentis MP; County Cllr George Reynolds; District Cllr Hugo Brown