

Response to Planning Application 21/00922/OUT

Housing at land west of Foxden Way, Great Bourton.

I wish to object to the above application on the following grounds

- a. It is contrary to Local Planning Guidance.
- b. It would form an intrusion into Highly Valued Local Countryside.
- c. While cited as entry level housing it does not comply with Rural-Exception Site Guidance.
- d. The adjacent village does not have facilities to make this a sustainable development.
- e. The Transport Plan is based on a number of fallacious assumptions
- f. The proposed Drainage Plan is not fit for purpose

a. Contrary to Local Planning Guidance: This point has been eruditely made by other objectors and I will not take space by repeating policies here. Great Bourton was designated as a category B village and this is neither a conversion nor an infill. It is manifestly outside the built limit of the village, and it is highly inaccurate to suggest that the allotments mark the extent of Great Bourton's development; with their small wooden shed they are not part of the built environment, any more than the Bourtons Burial ground.

b. Intrusion into Highly Valued Countryside: this landscape does not fall into the highest categories of protected landscape, but as evidenced in the decisions in the case development at the adjacent site, Stonelea (18/01074/F) by CDC that it would constitute '*unjustified development beyond the built-up limits of Great Bourton and which would intrude into open countryside causing significant undue visual harm to the valued rural landscape.*' This was subsequently strengthened by the statement of the Planning inspector, Mr Evans at the Appeal against refusal.

The agricultural field in question in this proposal is beyond the limit of Stonelea's garden and only has a frontage onto Foxden Way, an undeveloped rural lane. The developer's Environmental report was at pains to belittle the biodiversity and value to wildlife of this, until recently, well-grazed paddock, but recent activity of constructing new field-entrance from the road, fencing off an access strip to adjacent fields, building a big bonfire with the ancient hedge grubbed up from the nextdoor bungalow development and huge pile of excavated soil and builders rubble from that development by the same company, has done nothing to improve its credentials.

c. Rural Exception site. Entry-level housing

Planning legislation does make provision for development for particularly desirable outcomes on land that would normally not fall within the bounds of permitted development, often for Affordable Housing. However, affordable housing built on Rural Exception sites would normally be planned in collaboration with the local parish council, after extensive investigation of local housing need, of suitability of site, and with future management in the hands of a housing association to regulate its occupancy in perpetuity. I see no evidence for this here.

It is regrettable that this is an OUTLINE application and that no details are available on the actual houses, and no commitment made as to how the housing units in the Illustrative Plans would be made 'affordable' or suitable for 'entry-level' buyers. One would question the quality of the build to be economically viable for the developer to construct a relatively small number of detached dwellings, two 2B 4P Dormer Bungalows, six 3B 6P Detached Houses, one 4B 7P Detached house, with associated garages. What would be the actual build mix of units? This planning authority has a worrying track record of 'regularising' changes to approved plans by permitting retrospective submissions. The 'Reserved Matters' applications subsequent to OUTLINE Approval are also subject to much less public scrutiny. The planners themselves have also been known to exert pressure, against developer's wishes, to make more intensive use of permitted land. More, smaller houses, more inhabitants, more water use, more traffic.....

Incidentally, whilst considering the illustrative Masterplan, the suggested footpath through the site, linking from South View; who would have long term responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of this, in perpetuity? Although proposed as an asset to allotment holders, giving on-foot access away from roads, I suspect that few tenants would view it as anything other than an additional threat to the security of their plots, crops, sheds and tools.

d. The adjacent village does not have facilities to make this a sustainable development

Affordable Housing needs to be the right sort of housing, built in the right place. Anyone looking for affordable housing is likely to have a limited income and will need places that allow them to optimise use of that income. They will want well-built energy-efficient buildings to minimise spend on energy bills. They will want easy access to the everyday facilities of shopping, health-care, education, work, leisure, and sport within walking distance or public transport provision to get them there. Bourtons fails. Someone who moved to the housing association housing on the Garners Field development in the misconception that there was bound to be a regular bus service to a village near Banbury really struggled to cope and has had to relocate. Comments in this application totally misrepresent the reality for residents. Each household needs access to at least one private vehicle, or the means to pay for taxis. Other objectors have explained the details of what few facilities are available locally, and the hilly terrain that exacerbates difficulty accessing them.

e. The Transport Plan

Reference: The Hub Transport Technical Note

This correctly states 2.3 that 'Foxden Way is a rural lane of varying width generally 4'5m in the vicinity of the site' understating that in many parts the road surface is considerably narrower than this, and has only been 'informally' widened by passing vehicles having to go off the edge of the road, additionally breaking away the edges of the tarmac. At 2.7 it is stated that 'these are lightly-trafficked rural lanes that essentially operate as 'quiet lanes', being safe for pedestrian use alongside vehicular traffic'. During 2020 lockdown, when schools were closed, many businesses closed, many people working from home or furloughed there has been a lessening of traffic, and as has been described by many objectors, this relatively level road has been heavily used for exercise, by residents of Great and Little Bourton, and from further afield, especially from the estates on the Southam Road. It is regularly part of the route of The Banbury Run, and a district cycle race and participants come and practice. However, traffic is now building again. We own a piece of land next to Foxden Way and when working there we are very conscious of just how many vehicle use the road. The traffic flow survey from 2019 cited at 2.8 in the Hub report was only set to monitor movements on School Lane and so was not representative of all traffic using Foxden Way and that used Crow Lane, which takes traffic from the Cropredy direction as well as Gt Bourton, and the roads in Little Bourton.

Accident data, source Crashmap- Personal Injury Accident (PIA) Data cited concentrates entirely on Gt Bourton. Also, while personal injury is obviously most traumatic, vehicular damage to property including residents' own vehicles is also very upsetting and expensive. Both my husband and I have each had our vehicles damaged while stationary by impact from vehicles being driven down Foxden Way, as have many others to our knowledge.

These 'quiet lanes' now take a huge variety of vehicles. The farm machinery can now be huge, diversification of use of farm building sometimes brings enormous delivery lorries which sometimes are too long to get round the tight, blind, bends. With many people shopping online and home delivery of the weekly shop and all the vans that generates there can be a build up of traffic queues and irritated drivers. Any additional residents' cars will just add to the risk of congestion.

The Transport Note surmised that cars would be driven to and from the proposed site via School Lane, Great Bourton. It seem much more likely that would only be if you were heading north on the A423, or Cropredy direction via Crow Lane. Anyone heading towards Banbury and beyond to the South, to the M40 Junction 11, or to the west, is much more likely to drive in the direction of their final destination and turn right onto Foxden Way ,heading for Little Bourton and its narrow roads and tight bends on Spring Lane, and then Chapel Lane, and its difficult junction with the A423, Southam Road.

The whole prediction of traffic flows from the proposed housing is constructed on figures from an inappropriate planning tool, for an 'edge of town' location, not an 'edge of village with almost no facilities' one, a data set that possibly doesn't exist. It seems quite unrealistic to project only 6 vehicle trips at peak times from the Foxden Way site, unless many more people continue to work from home, and lower paid jobs tend to be those that cannot be performed remotely. For most people a car is going to be the only reliable means of getting to work, come rain or shine.

Walking and cycling for most people are not a feasible way of getting to work, come rain, come shine, this locality is too hilly. The transport report suggested the bridle way to the Oxford canal and then the towpath as a useful route, ignoring the discontinuity of the bridleway across the busy Midland main line rail route.

This seems like a desk study to create a picture favourable to the development, lacking accuracy in local knowledge, and should therefore be disregarded.

F. The proposed Drainage Plan is not fit for purpose

Surface water drainage: It is proposed that rainwater would be drained on site through the various permeable surfaces into a water collecting feature in the southwestern corner of the site and thence gradually carried away by the existing roadside ditch system. This ditch is poorly maintained and not continuous as far as Mill Lane. Perhaps where the western ditch stops it is supposed to be piped under the road to the ditch on the eastern side of the road.

Whether that pipework is still extant after attack by all those heavy vehicles along the lane I do not know. What I do know is that after heavy rain water from the land on the west floods across the road creating a hazard, which is even worse when that water freezes into black ice

It could be argued that the proposed housing will not cause a much greater or faster run-off than present rainfall on the field, with the mitigation of permeable surfacing and the SUDS feature. However, if you add to that all the water use from all (9?) households, grey and foul output, to be processed in onsite digester plant but the resultant 'clean' water to also ultimately be discharged into the Suds and existing ditches you have a very different scenario. Totally unacceptable.

Tony Brummell in his drainage consultation document has said that water must be retained in onsite soakaways. This seems equally flawed, given the known impermeable nature of the local mudstone substrate.

If the Suds feature proposed were to have sufficient capacity it would constitute a deep water hazard for children and pets.

Conclusion

We have noted the comments in favour of this application, mostly from people far afield. We can agree that on the face of things it is a pleasantly laid out plan in a lovely landscape, but these commentators do not have the local knowledge that this is in a totally inappropriate location for all the reasons given above.

I strongly urge that this application to build houses on a green field outside the Southern edge of Great Bourton is refused.