

Stewart Roussel
Bramley House
Stewarts Court
Hook Norton RD
Sibford Ferris
OX15 5QX

**OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION – 21/04271/F
Land South of Faraday House , Woodway Road Sibford Ferris – Blue Cedar
Homes Limited**

Dear Mr Campbell,

I write as a local resident to strongly object to the above planning application because:

- Housing Targets in Rural Villages have been met;
- It is unsustainable;
- It will generate an unsafe number of additional traffic on unsuitable roads;
- It will be harmful to the landscape; and
- Of poor layout and design contrary to the NPPF and National Design Guide.

This development is unnecessary, inappropriate and unsustainable.

In summary, the proposals are contrary to Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, Policy villages 2 and Policies ESD13 and ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 part 1 and Government guidance contained within the National Policy Framework and the National Design Guide.

Housing Targets in Cat A rural villages have already been exceeded

No new permissions in rural areas are needed as the targets have already been exceeded, therefore the application is Contrary to Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031.

Since 2014 a total of 1062 dwellings have been identified to meet the Policy Villages 2 requirement for 750. Any further permissions granted will be a material exceedance of this target.

Permissions granted are more than adequate to meet growth plans

There are 8293 permissions granted for homes which haven't been built yet around Bicester, Banbury and Upper Heyford. This highlights the contentious issue of land banking, which the MP for Wantage and Didcot called out in a Parliamentary debate this month asking why when there are over a million approved planning permissions in the country, do local councils still recommend for approval proposed developments on prime agricultural land in rural areas"

Why are developers allowed to put land forward for development in rural areas where targets have already been exceeded and the homes have already been built?

This is an opportunity for the Cherwell District Council to live up to its “doughnut” policy of developing Banbury, Bicester and Upper Heyford and avoiding developments in the most unsustainable rural villages.

This and other proposals that are threatened to follow – clearly undermine the Local Plan housing strategy of directing most growth to Banbury and Bicester, where there is access to shops, services, jobs and other facilities and opportunities to travel other than by the car. This strategy helps avoid commuting, congestion, pollution, climate change and harming the environment.

The District Council has declared a Climate Change Emergency, but none of these environmental objectives will be achieved by allowing the proposed development of retirement homes, with 2 car spaces per home (because retirees will need to drive everywhere from Sibford Ferris). This is a poorly conceived scheme on an unsuitable site in an unsustainable location and should be refused.

Developer Creep

This is clearly a phase 2 style extension of the Hook Norton Rd site, with a phase 3 development site also put forward as part of the Local Plan review.

- Why was this not declared up front to the Cherwell District Council? How would have the case office have responded to a request for the total number of houses associated with the three phase approach, which is clearly the intention of the land owners since the outset? How many more low income homes would have been required if the development had been presented as one large development? Why are developers allowed to avoid the risk of refusal, simply by presenting Phase 2 separately from phase 1 and then phase 3 separately from Phase 2? What does the CDC allow itself to be opened up to such an abuse of the planning system?
- The Gade Homes development on the Hook Norton rd. site, started with an approval for 8 homes and is now 25 homes with 9 affordable /rental properties. Considering that Blue Cedar homes have access approved, what is to stop them securing planning and then returning with an application for a larger number of homes?

Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop are wrongly categorised as a Category A Village which leaves them vulnerable to speculative and unsustainable development.

Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris are treated as one Category A village in the Local Plan. This is not a true reflection of the community, geography, topography and location of its sparse facilities. Sibford Ferris only has a small shop. The few public amenities there are lie in Sibford Gower and Burdrop, only accessed by narrow roads with poor, incomplete footpaths, limited lighting and congestion caused by parked cars. The two villages are separated by a deep valley (Sib Brook) and have poor accessibility for anyone, let alone older persons, without a car.

The bus service has more than halved in recent years. It is reliant on a subsidy from Warwickshire County Council, has a very limited service to Stratford and Banbury at inconvenient times and has no direct services to Hook Norton or Chipping Norton. The proposed development is unsustainable for older persons. Government advice on the location of housing for older people states that factors to consider include the proximity to good public transport, local amenities, health services and town centres. None of these apply in this instance.

Class A categorization is already under review with both communities and our local MP Victoria Prentis, is supportive of the re-categorization and is seeking a review on this as soon as possible.

Even the planning inspector commenting on the appeal case of the Hook Norton Rd Development was sympathetic to the declassification of the Sibfords and stated that *“Given the spread of services across each settlement, it is unlikely that the development of any site around the Sibfords would readily enable access by sustainable transport modes. This is an argument against the inclusion of the Sibfords as Category A Village, but is not a matter before me in this appeal”*

Finally, on this point the **CRAITLUS Report of August 2009** “Of 33 stated that out of all the villages “only 4 show little capability to sustainably support additional housing. Shennington, Sibford Ferris/Sibford Gower and Charlton-on-Otmoor, all perform poorly due to their location on minor roads with long travel times and distances to access key facilities.

The local road infrastructure is insufficient to cope with more traffic

Retired occupants of the proposed development, being older, less mobile and less likely to walk or cycle, will be highly reliant on the use of private cars. It is underlined by the double garages and two parking spaces for each proposed bungalow. This would lead to extra traffic using an access opposite the main entrance to Sibford Friends School, which is already busy at peak times, due to a lack of pavements and narrow roads, where in places it is difficult for two vehicles to safely pass each other. Therefore, the site is not an appropriate location for the development proposed, would result in an increase in private vehicular usage, lead to extra traffic and environmental harm.

Unsafe Stie Construction Traffic

In the deed of transfer between the land owners and Gade Homes (Land Registry Ref title number ON 196300) clause 15 ensures that the owners of the proposed Blue Cedar Homes site are guaranteed access across the Gade Homes development site at any time during the development of after the road is adopted.

This will mean that there could be:

- Two lots of site traffic entering the site opposite the main entrance to Sibford Friends School (further supporting the fact that this is one large development, simply presented to CDC under two separate applications)

- The potential for site traffic to be moving through the Gade homes development site after the homes have been completed and families are living in them (Surely there are safety concerns associated with this)

Land Owners are trying to legally prevent any objections to future developments in the adjoining fields to the Hook Norton Rd Development

Furthermore, it appears that under clause 16, Gade Homes are legally bound NOT TO OBJECT to the proposed development.

How does the Cherwell District Council feel about the tactics by the land owners to try and legally prevent objection to further development in the adjoining fields? Is this even legal?

Landscape Impact

- The proposed development will adversely affect the local character of the village and the outlook over the ANOB.
- Looking across the valley from The Colony the second site will be more visible than the Gade Homes site as it extends further West.

Landscape Impact

The proposal would lead to compact, built development on greenfield, agricultural land beyond the physical extents of Faraday House and the building line of the Hook Norton Road development to the south into the attractive countryside surrounding the village. This would have an adverse visual impact on the landscape, resulting from the extension of the village and encroachment of built development all the way up to Woodway Road, which has an unspoilt, rural character. The development would be clearly visible at short and more distant range from highways and public rights of way extending out into the countryside and the Cotswolds AONB. This would harm the rural character and appearance of this attractive landscape to the west of the village.

Design

There are two factual inaccuracies in the applicants Design and Access statement. On P6 they claim that Sibford Ferris is the largest of three Villages i.e. Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and Burdrop. This is not the case any anyone familiar with the villages would clearly know that Sibford Gower is the largest of the three villages.

Secondly the applicant claims that there is no previous planning history on the site. That is also incorrect as on 20th April 1990, Chief Planning officer FK Hollinshead rejected an application for development on this land under case ref LB/MB CHN.269/90

The design itself appears ill-conceived and overdeveloped which may be driven by a need from the developer for a speedy process to meet timescales that will enable them to develop the infrastructure at the same time as the Gade Homes development.

The design, incorporating large bungalows with a variety of roof pitches, timber boarding and other uncharacteristic features, is contrived and takes no design cues from the established and historic character of its surroundings. The bungalows are sited close together, have very small private amenity spaces and would appear cramped and out of character with their immediate surroundings and the quality of development in the village, which is designated as a Conservation Area. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF states: *'Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.'*

The proposal is clearly not well-designed, does not respond to existing local character and surrounding context and should be refused. In addition, despite being described as for older people, the proposal is to all intents and purposes open market housing, fettered only by the not particularly demanding requirement for the occupiers to be 55 years of age. Whilst it is true that an ageing population has particular housing needs, comprising various forms reflecting the correlation between increasing age and dependency, 'retirement bungalows' in this location with a negative effect on the character and appearance of the area do not warrant any particular pre-eminence.

The Application goes against The Sibfords Community Plan

In the Sibford's Community Plan (2012), 64% of people said they would be willing to envisage up to 10 new houses, 31% up to 20 and only 3% over 20 houses. All of these needs have been exceeded by the Hook Norton Rd site and there is no further local requirement.

This is further supported by the strength of negative feeling collected by Blue Cedar homes in their public consultation and reported in their own planning application.

Over and above this a recent local petition sent to the MP Victoria Prentis, was supported by 165 local residents opposed to any further development in the Sibfords.

Why then, given this strength of negative public sentiment would the Cherwell District Council validate the Blue Cedar Homes application on the same day it received the application (Dec 23rd 2021) and try to push through the application as a delegated function, only allowing the public until January 25th to object to the development. Why would the Cherwell District Council not even communicate the application to the local Sibford Ferris Parish Council until Monday 6th January a full 14 days after the application was validated? Why didn't the Cherwell District Council e-mail the Sibford Ferris Parish council on the Friday 24th December to notify them that the application had been validated? . A formal complaint has already been served in relation to this matter and as at 14th January. A contentious application of this nature with such negative public sentiment, must go to full committee meeting.

We call on the Cherwell District Council to immediately change the way that this application has been handled and to move it to an independent review by the full committee.

This development is unnecessary, inappropriate and unsustainable.

In summary, the proposals are contrary to Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996, Policy villages 2 and Policies ESD13 and ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 part 1 and Government guidance contained within the National Policy Framework and the National Design Guide.

We urge you to:

- Move this proposal from a delegated decision to a full committee meeting immediately
- Recommend to the full committee that the application is refused for all the reasons stated above

Yours sincerely,
Stewart Roussel