

Tom and Zoe Wesson  
Lavender Cottage  
Sibford Gower OX15 5RT

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2022

Dear Mr Campbell,

**Re: Objection to planning application 21/04271/F  
Erection of 6 one storey age restricted dwellings (55 years) for older people with  
access, landscaping and associated infrastructure - Land South of Faraday House  
Woodway Road Sibford Ferris – Blue Cedar Homes Limited**

We are dismayed and horrified that yet again we are writing to Cherwell District Council about another inappropriate planning application which we, as a local residents, strongly **object** to.

There seems to be no thought or cohesion in the planning department at the district council about applications in Sibford Gower and Sibford Ferris. Not only are they small villages, situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty, they are in a location which is not suitable for mass development.

We have lived in Sibford Gower for five years and have discovered that the village has been totally forgotten by the council. The roads are literally littered with pot holes, are dangerous to drive on and are never repaired. The roads are not gritted and lethal in the winter, there is a practically non-existent bus service and I have never seen a policeman or seen any council member clean the streets – I would love to know what our council tax pays for!

The thought that you are currently considering two planning applications one in Sibford Gower and one in Sibford Ferris means that you haven't visited the village, haven't driven on the roads (all the roads out of the village onto the B4035 are blind turnings and I was nearly hit by a car pulling out from Sibford Ferris the other day) and are unaware that the infrastructure cannot cope with increased traffic.

I would be grateful if you could please visit the village and speak with the community about all the planning applications in the village, your logical thoughts behind accepting them and I would like you to drive around the lanes especially on the road to Hook Norton from Sibford Gower, which is dangerous.

**Summary of Objection**

In summary, we firmly believe that the proposal constitutes unnecessary, inappropriate and unsustainable development extending beyond the built-up limits of the village into the attractive open countryside surrounding Sibford Ferris. Its layout, form, design and location for older people is unsuitable and would produce an incongruous and cramped

form of development, which fails to respond to local character, landscape and surrounding context and should be refused as harming the visual and rural amenities of the area. The proposal is therefore 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 Planning Policy Framework and the National Design Guide.

## **Background**

The village is under threat from development following the granting of planning permission on appeal for 25 houses at Hook Norton Road in November 2019, when the Inspector regrettably overturned the Council's refusal. This appeal decision overlooked the relative isolation, aged infrastructure, limited capacity, lack of facilities and poor accessibility of Sibford Ferris. The Parish Council is trying to remedy this through the review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2040 but it would be too late if further unsympathetic and inappropriate development is approved. The appeal at Hook Norton Road should not be *carte blanche* for developers to do what they please, damaging the rural nature, character and attractive qualities of our historic village and its beautiful surroundings on the edge of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The reasons for our objection are because the proposal will be:

1. Contrary to the Local Plan;
2. Unsustainable;
3. Generate extra traffic on unsuitable roads;
4. Harmful to the landscape; and
5. Of poor layout and design contrary to the NPPF and National Design Guide.

### **1. Contrary to Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031**

The Local Plan housing quotas for rural villages in Cherwell have already been met so this proposal is not necessary.

Since 2014 a total of 1,062 dwellings have been identified for meeting the Local Plan, Policy Villages 2 requirement of 750 dwellings. The Policy Villages 2 requirement has therefore already been exceeded by 312 dwellings, 749 have been built or are under construction and there is an appeal for 43 homes at Station Road, Hook Norton, which could lead to substantially more. This is with 9 years to go to the end of the Plan period. At close on 50% more than the 750 dwellings requirement, this proposal would add to a material exceedance of the policy figures.

This – and other proposals that are threatened to follow - would further 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 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 repeating the same mistakes and approving more and more homes in attractive but inherently unsustainable villages like Sibford Ferris.

This is a poorly conceived scheme on a unsuitable site in an unsustainable location and

should be refused.

## **2. 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 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.

## **3. Extra Traffic on Unsuitable Roads**

In this location, occupants of the proposed dwellings, being older, less mobile and less likely to walk or cycle, will be highly reliant on the use of private cars. This was accepted by the Inspector on the Hook Norton Road appeal. It is underlined by the double garages and two parking spaces for each 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.

## **4. 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.

## 5. Design

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.

For all of these reasons we urge the Council to refuse this application. We would be grateful if you could please confirm receipt of this letter and we look forward to hearing when you will be visiting the village to discuss all the proposed applications with reassurances that you are logically looking at the application.

Yours sincerely,

Tom and Zoe Wesson