

**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**

As local residents we object strongly to the above planning application.

Summary of Objection

We object because 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 which borders on an AONB.

In its layout, form, design and location the proposed development is unsuitable and would produce an incongruous and cramped site, 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.

Moreover, evidence from Land Registry documents suggests that the proposed development may be part of a longer term plan for much larger adjoining developments which would extend yet further beyond the built up limits and be yet more strongly open to all the same objections.

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

A major development is already taking place following the granting of planning permission on appeal for 25 houses at Hook Norton Road in November 2019, when the Inspector overturned the District 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 current review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2040 but it would be too late if further unsympathetic and inappropriate development is approved meanwhile. The appeal at Hook Norton Road should not set a precedent for further development proposals, 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 and contrary to broader Government commitments on reducing emissions
3. Generate extra traffic on unsuitable roads
4. Harmful to the landscape
5. Of poor layout and design contrary to the NPPF and National Design Guide.

1. Contrary to Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031

According to CDC's figures, the Local Plan stated "total" new housing for rural villages in Cherwell has 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 "total" of 750 dwellings. The Policy Villages 2 "total" has therefore already been exceeded by 312 dwellings. Some 749 have been built or are under construction and there is also 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.

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. Moreover the currently currently completed or proposed developments in these areas fall well short of the "totals" stated in the current Local Plan.

The District Council has declared a Climate Change Emergency, but none of these environmental objectives will be achieved by repeating the same approach as hitherto in rural communities such as Sibford Ferris.

This is a unnecessary scheme on an 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 is physically separated from Sibford Gower and Burdrop. 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 unsuitable 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

The Cherwell Rural Area Integrated Transport and Land Use Study (CRAITLUS) commissioned by CDC in 2009 concluded that 4 villages "showed little capacity to sustainably support additional housing due to their location on minor roads with long travel times and distances to access key facilities".

Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower were two of the four villages so identified in this 2009 Report. There has been no significant upgrading of the road infrastructure in and around them since that time.

In this Application, 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 proposed for each bungalow in the application. This would lead to extra traffic using an access opposite the main entrance to Sibford 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.

Overall, the prosed development, would result in an increase in private vehicular usage, lead to extra traffic and environmental harm. The site is not an appropriate location for the development proposed.

4. Landscape Impact

The proposal would lead to a dense, built development on greenfield, agricultural land beyond the physical limits of Faraday House and the building line of the Hook Norton Road development 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. In addition, despite being described as for older people, the proposal is to all intents and purposes open market housing, constrained only by the requirement for the occupiers to be 55 years of age, which is not particularly demanding.

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 special consideration.

Conclusion

For all of these reasons we urge the Council to refuse this application.

Karen and Rod Pullen