

Dear Mr Campbell

Re: 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

I strongly object to this development on the following grounds:

- It is unnecessary and unsuitable
- The application leans heavily on an incorrect village categorisation
- It is unsustainable and it will cause more traffic on unsuitable roads and negatively impact air quality.
- It appears to be part of a larger scheme to continue to sell and develop as much land as possible with the simple aim to make as much money as possible.
- The poor design of the Scheme

I detail my grounds for objection as follows

Unnecessary and unsuitable

There are already several new retirement developments within 6 miles of this site, such as those in Bloxham, Adderbury, and Chipping Norton, where the sites are well located near to good local amenities.

Placing retirement housing in Sibford Ferris will simply attract more retirees to the village which already has a much higher age demographic than the national average. Sibford Ferris needs to be attracting younger inhabitants and families, not more over 65's.

The Sibfords are an inherently unsuitable site for a retirement development because the topology of the villages and the local amenities mean that one needs to drive to get to wherever they are going. Steep hills and narrow roads without pavements, and amenities spread across two different villages make them more suitable for professional fell runners and mountain bikers, certainly not people who choose to buy a single storey building because they foresee struggling to get up the stairs.

Village categorisation

The application is repetitive with its' inaccurate view that the Sibfords are sustainable villages to develop in, and that they are awash with facilities which support its category A classification. I would point out the following:

It is widely acknowledged that the Sibfords were incorrectly categorised when the Cherwell plans were drawn up. It is plainly obvious to even the casual observer that the Sibfords are clearly not the same as other Category A villages such as Bloxham, Adderbury and Deddington.

The Sibfords have one public house, and one very small village shop which does not stock fresh meat or vegetables. The small doctors practice only has parking for 4 or 5 cars and is accessed by a single-track residential road. Other category A villages have petrol stations, hairdressers, fish and chip shops, multiple pubs, butchers, dentists, and grocery shops capable of servicing the average household 'weekly shop.' The Sibfords fall a long way short of this and so for planning purposes should not be considered as Category A. This has been highlighted by planners in the past, and more recently by the planning inspector during his review of the Hook Norton Road Development

- The CRAITLUS reports from 2009 states “Of 33 Villages only 4 show little capability to sustainably support additional housing. Shennington, Sibford Ferris/Sibford Gower and Charlton-on-Otmoor perform poorly due to their location on minor roads with long travel times and distances to access key facilities.
- The Planning Inspector at the appeal for the Hook Norton Rd Development stated “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, developers often try and make the case that more houses will help support local amenities. This has certainly not been the case in Hook Norton where housing growth has been significant, but the quantity of local amenities has declined. There were once 7 pubs and 6 shops, but today Hook Norton has just 2 pubs and 2 shops, so certainly does not support the developers claims.

Sustainability and Traffic

The Sibfords cannot sustain any more development without first undergoing significant improvement in its **infrastructure**, including roads, pedestrian facilities, public transport and utilities including water and sewage. The Gade Homes development of 25 additional houses on the Hook Norton road has not yet tested the already creaking utility infrastructure, where for example Severn Trent Water already have an **overloaded sewage station** that requires regular pump outs by tanker which have to be done by multiple tanker shutters because access is so poor.

The main point to note however on sustainability is **roads and transport**. Like many old, small, rural villages the Sibfords have narrow roads with little or no pavements and are **unsuitable for anything but low volumes of traffic**. In recent years 2 main factors have contributed to the increased volume of traffic in the Sibfords - The first is the Sibford Friends School (a private School) located in Sibford Ferris; here the school has moved from a high proportion of boarding pupils to a high proportion of day pupils where the daily drop-off and pick-up causes significant traffic spikes. The Second contributor to traffic volume is the large growth in new housing in the neighbouring village of Hook Norton, where many new residents now drive through the Sibfords on the way to Gaydon, either to access the M40 northbound junction, or to go to work at the Jaguar Land Rover or Aston Martin factories. The proposed development by Blue Cedar can only gain vehicular access to the highway through the yet to be developed Gade Home site, which connects to the Hook Norton Road almost directly opposite the main entrance to Sibford Friends School. This has the **potential to be an accident black spot** with **high volumes of traffic** from Hook Norton, combined with School traffic, traffic from the Gade Homes site, as well as the normal village traffic including agricultural vehicles. This all **on a road with no pavements or pedestrian refuges**.

Blue Cedar claim very low vehicle movements from their developments, however given many over 55's will still be working for another 10+ years the **actual vehicle movements** will be **no different to any other development**. Furthermore, vehicle movements would still be higher than claimed if the age requirement was moved to 65; many grandparents support their children by doing the school run so would be travelling at peak times, and in addition to this, the lack of amenities in the village will force the Blue Cedar **residents to use their cars for even the smallest errands**.

Development by Stealth

The Hook Norton Road development started out as an application for 9 houses, 6 of which were affordable homes. This ultimately turned into a development of 25, largely market rate homes. During the many public consultations and meetings carried out by Land and Partners (retained by the land owner) and Gade Homes (the developer) as part of the Hook Norton road development it was always stated that the Hook Norton Road development would not grow in size, that there were no plans to develop the fields north or south of the site and that they had no interest in buying these sites. Less than a year on from being granted permission at appeal, the same family are working with another developer to develop the adjoining land - the site of this application.

Land registry documents show that a covenant was placed on the sale of the Gade Homes site granting access not just to the land behind Faraday House, but also to the land south of the Gade Homes site towards Hook Norton. It is clear that the landowners (who are cousins to each other) fully intend to **develop the whole field** from Faraday House down to Shortlands. This **information** was clearly not made public and thus **not made available to the planning Inspector** when he heard the appeal for the Hook Norton road development. I believe Gade Homes misled the public over the access to the neighbouring fields and now another developer has picked up the baton to continue the development of what was once one single field.

While every planning application has to be judged on its own merits, one cannot ignore the links to the neighbouring development and the clear intent to continue to grow these sites. If this application for 6 houses is permitted, it will only grow as the developers put in amendments to increase the number of houses on the site. It will also just be phase 2 of a larger, multi-phase development, by one family to build over many acres of farmland on the edge of Sibford Ferris.

Scheme Design and Impact on the Landscape

The design of the scheme is not in-keeping with the rest of the village and the historic character of its surroundings. The large footprint of the properties gives the scheme a large visual mass and on a more human level there is very little individual outdoor space (garden) which in my experience is what people look for in a property when they retire to the country.

The communal driveway runs around the outside of the development which means that at night car headlights will shine directly into the windows of the neighbouring properties namely High Rock, Butwick House, Ferris House and Faraday House. Presumably as a retirement development there will be lighting for communal areas which is likely to have a huge impact on the nightscape given the edge of village location. We must protect our dark skies.

The site is easily viewable from both a conservation area and an area of outstanding natural beauty. The aforementioned visual mass of the proposed development would stand out starkly in the unspoilt, rural landscape of Woodway Road and beyond.

The applicant refers to this site as an opportunity for 'rounding off.' It should be noted that this field was once part of the larger field soon to be cut in half by the Gade Homes development and it is only because the landowners have chosen to break up the field to make housing development easier that we are left with this site. It remains good agricultural land which once it is lost it will be lost forever.

Summary

I urge you to refuse this application for an utterly **unsustainable** development which would be the straw that breaks the Sibford's back.

Not only does it go against the local Sibfords' Community plan, it goes against so much that Cherwell Council are trying to achieve in terms of environmental goals, pollution targets and CO2/Net Zero targets. There are better, more suitable and **more sustainable sites** to locate retirement housing, which will have a much lower impact on the environment.

Your sincerely

Andrew Evans