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Swalcliffe OX15 5HA

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Mr. Wayne Campbell
Principal Planning Officer
Cherwell District Council
Bodicote House
Bodicote, OX

OBJECTION LETTER 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

Dear Mr Campbell,

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

Summary of Objection

I firmly believe that the proposal constitutes unnecessary, inappropriate and unsustainable development extending beyond the built- up limits of the Conservation village of Sibford Ferris and into the attractive open countryside. 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.

I note the contents of the developers statement explaining their rationale behind this application and whilst it explains a situation across the whole of the LPA in detail, it fails to identify any pertinent reasons as to why Sibford Ferris would be the location of choice for such a development. In fact it actively ignores the numerous reasons why the application is not suited for location at Sibford Ferris

I think one must consider the question of the definition of "Sustainability" in a planning context, and examine that closely in the context of this application. At first blush the NPPF defines sustainability as "**Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**". One is reminded that definition was founded on the Bruntland Report of 1987 and that report exceeds 52 pages. However it considers many factors contributing to sustainability that the developer seems to ignore in their report.

The developers statement fails to define or identify how the proposed development meets any current need at Sibford Ferris nor explains how locating six relatively low density bungalows at Sibford Ferris would not deprive the area of the potential for alternative (and most importantly) – better needed potential future development. Notwithstanding that point it fails to identify how the loss of good grade agricultural land would be justified at that location. It would appear that there are numerous alternative locations within the LPA boundary would be better suited.

The proposed development appears simply to be for single story buildings without any consideration for the long term mobility and healthcare needs that an aging person may face.

Sibford Ferris has a single shop, poor public transport access, difficult terrain for a person of limited mobility and an already over stretched doctors service. Access to hospitals involves a not inconsiderable journey that (in the absence of a good public transport system) would potentially rely upon the ambulance service – which stretches an already pressured resource even further.

Let us not forget the geographical and logistical difficulties that an aging person would face if located in such a development

Furthermore, the Local Plan for Housing has already been met and, as the new Local Plan is in discussion, there may not only be a recategorization of Sibford Ferris to a B or C village (where it should have been all along) as well as a revised significant decrease to both housing needs and Land Supply as just witnessed with the Vale & White Horse Council where drops of 32% or more have been approved recently.

Indeed, there are also the same reasons for refusal for this application as the Gade Homes Application. There are no public services in Sibford Ferris and certainly none for the elderly or the disabled. The buses run far less than before, the pavements that exist are treacherous, and the walk to the other two nearby villages impossible. The traffic situation is already at breaking point as the Planning Committee witnessed before the Planning Committee meeting which unanimously turned down Gade Homes. There is an even greater reason to unanimously turn down the Blue Cedar Homes application.

The safety and well-being of children is being compromised for greed and this will come back to haunt Cherwell District Council in time. It is inconceivable that the village of Sibford Ferris, which was the envy of the whole country as the prettiest village to live in, is now destined to have well over 30% new additional homes surround its borders. All of this on Grade 2 agricultural land at a time when climate change means we should be eating more local produce and not importing all our food at a huge cost. This application goes against common sense and all national government strategies.

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 this 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.

Yours sincerely,

Brenda Vandamme