

Chief Planning Officer
Cherwell District Council
Banbury Oxfordshire

28th April 2022

Proposed Application for Planning Permission for Development of approximately 60
of houses adjacent to Rattlecombe Road, Shenington ("the Application")
Planning Application - 22/00489/F

Dear Sir/Madam

I write on behalf of the Shenington with Alkerton Action Group, formed as a result of large scale opposition to the above and, in particular, to respond to the recently delivered communication from Elan Homes ("the Elan Proposal"), which I attach for ease of reference, and to the Application.

On Thursday 17th March 2022, following the Shenington with Alkerton Parish Council's clear objection, residents of Shenington with Alkerton ("the Village") met in the Village hall, to discuss the Elan development submitted for planning. A range of actions were agreed, including that representations should be made to you expressing the concerns of the overwhelming majority of the Village; no resident, to our knowledge, save for the applicants, has expressed support for the application. Accordingly, we would ask that you consider in detail the following issues prior to forming a view in relation to it. Please feel able to send copies of this letter or extracts from it to the relevant organisations referred to below.

1. Vista, Countryside and AONB

The proposed site for development borders and crosses the designated conservation area and as such would be detrimental to the view both from the conservation area and toward the conservation area. The site is less than 1KM from the AONB and is clearly visible from the AONB, including Shenlow Hill and the following point, GR357413 at 185M on the MacMillan and D'Arcy Dalton Ways at a distance of 1.9KM. The vista and character of this historic Ironstone village would be irreparably damaged by this development.

2. Contravention of Cherwell Local Plan 2030

Shenington, according to the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031, is a Category C village and development is limited to infilling and conversions. This proposed development is not infill or a conversion. This development is intended to develop open countryside into a housing estate. The proposed development is contrary to Policies H13, H18 and C13 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan which seek to guide residential development to within the existing built-up limits of the settlement. In this case the proposed development is outside the existing built-up limit of the settlement and is therefore classed as open countryside where its development would constitute an unjustified and undesirable intrusion into the countryside and would be contrary to the Policies intended to protect the character and appearance of the countryside. That notwithstanding this reason, the proposed

development by seeking to create, proportionately, a significant and single estate type development which would be in conflict with the historical settlement pattern of the village and is contrary to Policy C27 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan

3. Power

The Western Power website shows that the primary sub-station "Epwell" (no. 670090) provides power to a wide area including the Village, this area including such villages as Tysoe and Hook Norton where there has recently been considerable housing development. The website says that the substation firm capacity is 10.00 MVA while the peak demand is 16.13 MVA. The demand headroom is negative at - 6.13 MVA. There is thus insufficient capacity to serve any extra housing developments, a power deficit which will grow in any event as the usage of electric cars increases. Thus, the existing sub-station within the Village at the Level would not ameliorate the demand on the primary sub-station and is irrelevant.

4. Sewerage

The already significant inadequacies of the current Village sewerage system were reported when the last application was made in [2001]; nothing has changed since that time. The system already struggles with backflow now; as Thames Water will doubtless inform you, this causes sometimes significant problems, with monthly checks on the Sor Brook Valley being undertaken by them. Thus, it cannot support a 50-60% significant large uplift in usage.

The site of the proposed development is about 1.5 km from the edge of the River Thames catchment area. This means mains that water would have to be pumped up to Shenington by Thames Water from much further downstream. There are already times when the water pressure in the village falls significantly below expected levels. Increasing the housing stock by 50% would have a deleterious effect on the service.

5. Highways

The report, "Roads and traffic in Shenington and Alkerton", written by the Shenington with Alkerton Parish Council, dated December 2015, and sent to Oxfordshire County Council Highways department ("the Report"), provides much relevant information explaining why housing development in Shenington cannot be justified. The main road – the road which would afford access to and from the Elan Proposal - through the Village is already hazardous for walkers, pedestrians, cyclists and local horse riders because of its layout, high volumes of motor vehicle traffic and often excessive speed of traffic. The increase in traffic associated with 49 additional homes would cause a significant additional risk to the health and safety of all of those non-vehicular users.

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The road through the Village is narrow, winding, on 2 hills with overhanging trees, without a footway and with minimal lighting, there being no less than 100 m between street lights. The Report

identified four hazard points on the main road through the Village, characterised by poor visibility for both walkers and drivers approaching in opposite directions. There are additionally two particularly sharp and blind bends in Alkerton.

There are points where the carriageway width is as narrow as 4.2 m. The DfT Traffic Signs Manual says: "2.2.6. On rural roads below 5.5 m in width Drivers might also expect a road marked with a centre line to be wide enough for opposing lanes of traffic to pass. In these circumstances the centre line should be omitted ..." Thus, the main road in Shenington is insufficiently wide for two vehicles always to be able to pass irrespective of whether there are pedestrians walking on the road.

The D'Arcy Dalton Way and the MacMillan Way long-distance footpaths use the main road through Shenington. DfT Traffic Advisory Leaflet 1/04, "Village speed limits", recommends that a density of at least three houses per 100 m is necessary to give a visual signal to drivers that they are in a village. The average density through Shenington and Alkerton is about 4.5 per 100 m but the distance between each roadside building is as much as 100 m at the eastern entrance to Shenington. At this point, motorists might believe that they are in the open countryside and proceed with less care.

Oxfordshire County Council monitored traffic density and speed on several occasions about seven years ago. On weekdays, there was about 600 vehicles per day travelling in each direction to the east of Shenington – the side with 2 hills and greatest hazards - and about 300 per day to the west of the Village. At peak times, it reached 70 to 80 vehicles per hour in a single direction. Despite the 30 mph speed limit, the monitoring found that in , in east Shenington, they were about 36 mph westbound and 38 mph eastbound and in west Shenington, the 85th percentile speed was about 32 mph westbound and 30 mph eastbound, with some cars travelling at significantly greater speed. . For all the one-hour intervals monitored in the eastbound direction, no 85th percentile speeds were less than 40 mph. Since this time, traffic density has increased due to the significantly increased numbers of pupils at the Village school travelling from Banbury and other outlying villages.

6. The Curtilage of the Village and Archaeology

Any housing on the field identified in the Elan Proposal would be bordering the curtilage of the Shenington with Alkerton conservation area. The boundary to the conservation area runs along the top of the bank on the north side of Rattlecombe Road all the way from the entrance to Quarry Farm up to the boundary of The Leys bungalow. Thus, any access from Rattlecombe Road to the proposed development site would pass through the conservation area. There is an area of significant archaeological interest which surrounds the Village, as summarised by in the paragraph from the Historic Environment Record below:

"To the best of our knowledge there has never been any kind of archaeological survey on the site of the proposed development probably because it has remained undeveloped. This is an omission as the adjacent areas have considerable archaeological significance. Not only has there been the recent, much publicized find of a Roman villa at Broughton but there is much more local evidence. There is a probable Roman settlement or villa near Rough Hill Farm (HER no. 2618), a Bronze Age settlement just north-east of Shenington (HER no. 1936), a deserted medieval village near Sugarwell Farm (HER no. 983) and medieval croft boundaries near Rectory Farm (HER no. 28252). Furthermore, there have been numerous finds including Bronze Age and Mesolithic flints, a Neolithic axe, a Bronze Age arrowhead and a medieval arrowhead. [HER: Historic Environment Record]"

It is clear from even the ridge and furrow topography to the north-west of the village that this is an area with a rich historical landscape. A development such as the Elan Proposal is not consistent with such a landscape.

Yours faithfully

John Woodcock

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