

## **Farriers Close/Rectory Lane Application - 22/00998/F**

The Parish Council yet again strongly objects to this application, which represents inappropriate infill and is unacceptable in planning terms as evidenced by the three previous planning application refusals and three dismissed appeals for almost identical proposals.

Little has changed in principle since these rejections other than an increase in the traffic and a worsening of the chronic parking problems in Rectory Lane.

The Parish Council urges CDC to continue to protect this small but significant green space for the benefit of residents, wildlife and for the local environment.

### **Fringford**

The application cites the Cherwell District Council Local Plan and the fact that the village is in Category A Service Village. Whilst this is the case the Local Plan states that Fringford is one of the smallest in this category in terms of size, (20<sup>th</sup> out of 23 in size) and in facilities and service provision and that not all villages will accommodate growth. Furthermore, since this categorisation took place the village has lost its regular bus service making it a far less sustainable location than it was. Every single new house in Fringford will add to the challenge of climate change as residents travel by car to access essential services, contrary to CDC Policy ESD1. The application claims there is a bus stop within a short walk on the nearby A4421 road. There is not and never has been such a bus stop!

The application also implies that it is a minor development in the form of infill between neighbouring plots. This is not the case; the site is on a corner of two roads.

### **The Proposed Site**

The original planning permission, only granted on appeal, for the four dwellings on Farriers Close included a condition relating to the retention of the copse that is now proposed to be eliminated for the purpose of this proposed new development.

This copse was to be “replanted, fenced off and at all times thereafter maintained as a woodland area.” The stated reason from Cherwell District Council for this was “in the interests of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure the creation of a pleasant environment for the development.” The site referred to as a copse was indicated on the approved plans as being “retained and made available as public open space”. The applicant clearly accepted this condition that it now seeks to ignore.

Earlier appeal dismissal findings focused on the significantly harmful effect that the proposed development would have on the character and appearance of the area and quoted Policies C14 and C33 and the need to retain any undeveloped gap which is important in preserving a feature of recognised amenity value.

Previous Planning Officer reports have stated that..

“By virtue of its scale and siting on a parcel of land designed as amenity land and which adds significant local value, the proposed new dwelling would result in an incongruous and wholly inappropriate development that would cause significant and demonstrable harm to the existing loose-knit character of the area and would therefore also result in unacceptable infilling in housing supply terms.”

...Nothing in this new application has changed in this respect

The appeal dismissal in 2011 also concluded that the copse creates a break in development and as such is an integral part of the its established character and appearance. It stated that the loss of trees and introduction of a dwelling on an elevated site would alter the character and appearance and the street scene to a significantly harmful degree particularly when viewed from Rectory Lane.

### **The Immediate Vicinity of the Site**

The copse is significantly elevated from the level of Rectory Lane. As such the proposed dwelling will have an overbearing impact on the area and particularly on Pringle Cottage on the opposite side of this narrow Lane.

The copse and its trees also provide a visual screen between the older, traditional dwellings of Rectory Lane and the modern, suburban style, executive homes of Farriers Close. It also provides the only open space along the lane of closely built dwellings. Its loss would be detrimental to the rural setting and street scene.

Given the facts above the proposed development is not remotely sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting,

### **Trees and Wildlife**

A key benefit of the copse at present is the presence of a number of mature trees that enhance the visual environment amongst the hard-built landscape. These trees have become an important part of the character of the area. Many of the trees are protected and protected for good reason. The Parish Council is unconvinced that the proposals in the arboriculture report accompanying the application would effectively protect the trees in the immediate, medium or long term. It is proposed that one protected tree is removed. It is entirely likely that construction on a site of this size and nature would lead to damage to the remaining trees.

The copse and its trees have become home over the years to numerous types of wildlife ranging from many species of birds through to rabbits and muntjac deer. The destruction of this small area of natural habitat does not accord with modern development thinking.

### **Rectory Lane and Road Safety**

The site is situated on a narrow winding lane which serves over 30 mostly large dwellings many of which have two or more cars.

Alternative safe parking space along the lane is not available. Since previous applications the volume of traffic using Rectory Lane has increased. The progressive increase in home shopping deliveries has also created more movements by drivers unfamiliar with the lane and often uncaring in the way it is used.

The access proposed is on the apex of a blind bend and as such effective vision splays would be difficult to achieve. The elevated nature of the site would also make access challenging and whilst the site appears to have turning space this is often not used and residents reverse in and out of drives, particularly when homes have visitors using up the drive space.

The proposed development will further compromise the safety of pedestrians using this narrow lane which does not have a footway on this bend. Many walkers both locals and visitors use the lane as it is part of the Historic Fringford Trail and it joins several ancient public footpaths.

### **Pringle Cottage**

Pringle Cottage is situated directly opposite the proposed dwelling across the narrow lane. The elevated nature of the copse site would mean that the proposed house would have an imposing, overbearing and overshadowing effect on the cottage.

### **Conclusion**

This current application is fundamentally similar to those that have gone before that have all been rejected on multiple grounds. The only real difference is that in order to get around the Tree Protection Orders the access has been moved from Farriers Close on to Rectory Lane, to a much more dangerous location and so exposing the entrance of the proposed dwelling to much higher passing traffic volumes.

The key issue though is the assumption that the condition allocating the copse as public amenity space can simply be ignored and all the benefits it provides to the village scene and environment are lost. The Parish Council would urge you to refuse permission for this application on this key area and the other grounds cited above.