

*Larkrise
Woodway Road
Sibford Ferris
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 5RF*

FAO – Mr Campbell
Cherwell District Council
Planning & Development
Bodicote House, Banbury

2 July 2022

Submitted on the CDC on-line portal.

Your ref: **Planning Application – 22/01773/F**

Dear Sirs,

Re: Erection of 6 one storey age restricted dwellings (55 years) for older people with access, landscaping and associated infrastructure re-submission of 21/04271/F - Land South of Faraday House Woodway Road Sibford Ferris – Blue Cedar Homes Limited.

We write as local residents to strongly object to the above planning application.

Summary of Objection

In summary, we firmly believe that 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. Its layout, form, design and location are unsuitable for older people, and would produce an incongruous and cramped form of development. A form of development which fails to respond to the local character, landscape and surrounding context, and one which 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;
- Policies ESD13 and ESD15 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011- 2031 Part 1;
- Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Design Guide.

Background

The village is under threat from further development following the granting, in November 2019, of planning permission on appeal for 25 houses on Hook Norton Road, 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 attempting to remedy this situation through the review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2040, but it would be too late if further unsympathetic and inappropriate development is approved now. The appeal at Hook Norton Road should not

be regarded as *carte blanche* for developers to do what they please, damaging the rural nature, character and attractive qualities of this 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;
3. Generate extra traffic on unsuitable roads;
4. Adverse infrastructure impact;
5. Harmful to the landscape; and
6. 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, therefore this proposal is not necessary.

Since 2014, a total of 1,062 dwellings have been identified as meeting the Local Plan, Policy Villages 2 requirement of 750 dwellings. The Policy Villages 2 requirement has therefore already been exceeded by 312 dwellings. Of these 1,062 dwellings, 749 have already been built or are now under construction, in addition to which, there is currently 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. Thus, helping to avoid commuting, with associated congestion, pollution, climate change and harm to 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 such as Sibford Ferris.

This is a poorly conceived 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, its geography, topography nor the location of its sparse facilities.

Sibford Ferris only has a small shop. The few public amenities there are, lie in Sibford Gower and Burdrop, which can only be accessed by narrow roads with poor, incomplete footpaths, with 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 or persons with physical disabilities, without a car.

The frequency of the bus service has more than halved in recent years. Furthermore, it is reliant on subsidy from Warwickshire County Council. This offers a very limited service to Stratford and Banbury at inconvenient times, and has no direct services to either Hook Norton nor 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

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 situation was accepted as an issue by the Inspector on the Hook Norton Road appeal. This observation is underlined by the fact of the double garages and two parking spaces planned for each bungalow in the proposed development.

This would lead to yet further extra traffic using an access opposite the main entrance to Sibford Friends School, which is already extremely 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. Adverse infrastructure Impact

At the present time it is unknown what impact that the 25 new homes in the Hook Norton Road Development will have on infrastructure but there are significant concerns, over and above the traffic issues referred to previously, regarding a number of additional aspects, including: -

- Sewerage System capacity;
- Water pressure;
- Broadband availability;
- Access to appointments at the local Doctors Surgery, both practically and physically. Burdrop Surgery is on a very small site, with very limited parking, located on an extremely narrow village lane. Parking is already a major issue at peak surgery times. There is absolutely no capacity on the current site for the Surgery, nor its associated parking, to be physically expanded. The proposed development on top of the 25 additional dwellings to be built on Hook Norton Road will place a huge additional burden on the already existing pressures;
- Access to local Primary School. Whilst it is understood that the proposed development is aimed at the over 55s who are unlikely to have primary school aged children, one of the declared aims of the proposal is to enable more senior members of the community to vacate their home to make way for families with young children, this has the potential to put increased pressure on Sibford Gower Endowed Primary School with potential impacts on access for children in the broader catchment area.

All of which will be further adversely affected by the proposed additional housing.

5. Landscape Impact

The proposal would lead to a compact, built development on greenfield, agricultural land beyond the physical extents of Faraday House, the final dwelling on Woodway Road, 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.

6. Design

The design of the proposed development, 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."

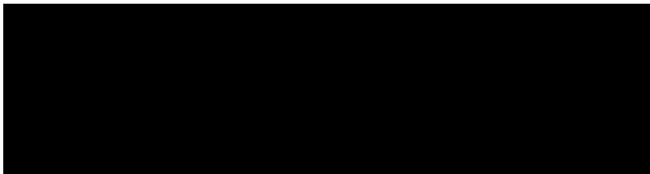
The proposal is clearly **not** well-designed, does not respond to existing local character and surrounding context and should be refused.

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 a minimum of 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 nor meet these particular needs.

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

Finally, with regard to the comment that Blue Cedar make suggesting persons over fifty-five years of age should vacate their homes for younger families. This is both patronising and highly offensive for people who have lived in their home for decades and worked hard to pay for those homes. Such a statement has no place in a planning process.

Yours sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area of the letter.

Peter Barden & Geraldine Frost