

Planning Application: 22/03049/OUT

Location: Land West of Oxford Close and North of Corner Farm, Station Road, Kirtlington

Description: Provision of eight dwellings with access, parking and amenity space.

Comments from Kirtlington Parish Council

Kirtlington Parish Council has voted unanimously to object to the above planning application and its detailed response to Cherwell District Council is set out below.

Summary of objections**Absence of perceived benefit to the village**

1. The proposed development makes no provision for affordable housing for local people as the proposed number of dwellings falls below the threshold.
2. All recent additions to village housing stock have provided no affordable housing.
3. The application includes no financial contribution to support local amenities, e.g., bus.

Breach of the village settlement boundary

4. The proposed development site is located outside the village settlement area designated for Kirtlington in the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan (MCNP) for 2018-2031.
5. The historic route of the Woodstock Way (now Footpath 270/10/30) strongly defines the western edge of the village's linear settlement pattern. The site is outside that boundary. It is not infill. (See attached photograph, Kirtlington village boundary)
6. The site comprises greenfield land in agricultural use outside the village boundary.

Lack of connectivity to the village

7. The proposed site is stated to be 'village edge' in the application, but both the site and its road access are outside the clearly-defined existing western edge of the village and protrude into open countryside.
8. The proposed development turns it back on Kirtlington with the houses facing away westward, establishing a separate enclave from the village.

Road safety and car parking provision

9. The access location for the site is a road safety risk. The access is on a corner at the blind brow of a hill. Sight lines are severely compromised as traffic approaching from the south can neither see nor be seen. (See attached photograph, Kirtlington blind bend).
10. There are deficiencies in the plans regarding the mix of houses and number of car parking spaces per plot, with too little parking for the size and number of houses outlined.

Footpaths

11. There is no existing pedestrian footway to the entrance to the site and no indication in the application of obtaining permission to build one.
12. It is not clear whether the proposal seeks to relocate the existing Woodstock Way Public Right of Way (PRoW) that currently delineates the edge of the village settlement.
13. The Woodstock Way footpath may be flooded by run off and soakaways from the development. (It is 1.5 metres lower than the proposed housing level and the water table was measured at 1.9 metres below ground levels in July 2022 during a drought).

Sustainability

14. Kirtlington no longer has a shop or post office and there is a likelihood that the 250 bus service which connects the village to Oxford will terminate in December 2022 or March 2023. Increasing the current house supply in a rural village with no connectivity would increase motor car usage which opposes the global need for less emissions.

Informative

The Council is mindful that the forthcoming review of the CDC Local Plan may affect whether Kirtlington retains its current Category A status as a sustainable location for further development in view of the loss of the shop, the post office closing and the existing 250 bus service ceasing in December 2022 or March 2023. The Council is also conscious that any breach of the established settlement boundary in this location is likely to attract the return of the previous inappropriate applications for very large-scale plans from national developers. The Council has noted all the responses to this application from parishioners, showing a clear majority objecting (30 object, 4 support).

Supplementary detail to the Parish Council's Response

These further details refer to the same numbering as in the summary above.

Absence of perceived benefit to the village

Item 1: The Parish Council objects in principle to the planning application as it offers no benefit to the village and the negatives stated in previous applications for this site remain. The Council must also be cognisant of the clear majority of responses to CDC from the village to object. The lack of affordable housing provision in this application is also unacceptable, and as stated in **Item 2** above, none of the recent planning applications granted within the village have included any social housing, as they have all been below the required threshold for provision of affordable housing. The five dwellings at Woodbank were all 5-bed detached houses, and the five dwellings permitted at Akeman Spinney were 2 x 3-bed, 1 x 4-bed and 2 x 5-bed. Kirtlington has a low percentage of smaller dwellings, particularly those of two bedrooms.

Breach of the village settlement boundary

Item 4: The Parish Council considers the proposals to be contrary to Policy PD1, Item (c) of the MCNP, in that the development would not conserve or enhance the landscape. It notes that the proposed site might be considered under Policy PD1, Item (a) of the MCNP as "*immediately adjacent to the settlement area*" However, the proposed development would be separated from existing houses by the Public Right of Way (PRoW) and would form an unnatural protrusion of development into open countryside.

A key concern of the Parish Council is that approval of this limited development may set a precedent and open the door for a subsequently larger development, potentially opening up the western flank of the village, not only on the remainder of this applicant's land (Corner Farm), but also across the land to its north (which was the subject of an application (ref: 16/02295/OUT) and appeal (ref: 17/00033/REFAPP) for 10 dwellings at Ryefurlong).

Item 5: It is stated within the application Design and Access Statement that the proposed development "*reflects the existing linear development grain adjacent and elsewhere within the village*" (paragraph 5.18). Whilst the proposals are a single north-south aligned line of development, the Parish Council considers that the applicant has failed to recognise the key defining feature of the village's linear settlement pattern, its historic road pattern, and the strong village edge that is created by the former Woodstock Way. See attached comparison (Kirtlington village boundary) of an historic map of Kirtlington and the current village form, showing the importance of the former Woodstock Way to the settlement pattern.

Item 6: The application states within the Planning Statement accompanying the application that "*the scheme would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land*". The Parish Council has been unable to find any reference within the application documents of the Agricultural Land Classification for the site. Reference to MAGIC suggests it is Grade 3, but unfortunately provides no differentiation between Grade 3a (BMV) and Grade 3b. The site may be Grade 3a, and thus Best Most Versatile agricultural land, whose loss would be contrary to national policy.

Road safety and parking provision

Item 9: The Parish Council notes the objection received from OCC Highways (dated 1st November 2022), particularly where “*the proposed access is positioned on a corner that features a prominent crest, limiting visibility*” which acknowledges how dangerous this sharp corner on a fast approach to the village really is. For pedestrians, the proposals do show a planned pedestrian link from the site to the existing footway network (TPA drawing 2207-015 PL01A), but the requirement for over 50m length of new footpath demonstrates that the site is not readily accessible or connected to the rest of the village.

Item 10: Notwithstanding the fact that this is an outline application, there is a failure to comply with MCNP’s requirements on the housing mix. There are also discrepancies in the car parking provision, as the proposed housing mix varies throughout the application documents. The Transport Statement states there will be a total of 15 parking spaces (11 on plot and 4 being unallocated spaces. Based upon the housing mix in Table 4.1 of the Transport Statement (3no x 2-bed, 2no x 3-bed and 3no 4-5-bed), there should be 24 on-plot spaces with 2 visitor spaces.

Footpaths

Item 13: The PRoW footpath would be between rear fences of the proposed houses (fences to be 1.8m high) and those on Oxford Close. This would result in poor visual amenity for footpath users as they would be hemmed in between fences. The application’s drainage strategy suggests private soakaways will be maximum 0.9m deep, and the infiltration testing suggests soakaways will be feasible for this site. However, the fact that groundwater was encountered in Trial Pit TP1 at a depth of 1.9m (and there is a natural pond in the garden of Willow Tree Barn), could render soakaways inappropriate in the southern part of the site.

Additional Points L&V impacts

The proposed development would be visually prominent in views from Lince Lane at this important gateway approach into the village from the south. Current views of the settlement edge reinforce the perception of the village being within its rural setting and this relationship between the village and its setting would be lost.

The Council is aware that the MCNP identifies a need across the plan period (2018-2031) to deliver approximately 17 additional dwellings within Kirtlington. Five have been built at Akeman Spinney already (ref: 17/02158/F granted 19th December 2017) thus reducing Kirtlington’s contribution to a reasonable quantum of growth to 12 units. However the recent closure of the village shop and post office along with the possible demise of the 250 bus which connects Kirtlington to Oxford puts into question the sustainability of additional housing in the village.

Notwithstanding the Council’s in-principle objection to the proposed development, if the application were approved, amendments would be requested to the submitted layout.