

# CAVERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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## **Response to Planning Application reference: 24/00245/OUT**

Caversfield Parish Council met on Wednesday 21 February and considered planning application 24/00245/OUT at South Lodge, Fringford Road, OX27 8TH for “Outline application for demolition of existing structures and erection of up to 99 dwellings, access, open space and associated works with all matters reserved except for access”.

The developers made a presentation to the Parish Council meeting on 15 November 2023. The Councillors made no comment on the proposals at that stage, but the villagers in attendance were vocal in their dislike of the proposals.

No other formal consultation had been undertaken with the villagers.

The Parish Council wishes to object to the proposal on the following grounds.

At the date of the meeting, the adopted Local Plan categorises Caversfield as a ‘Category C’ village with the only type of development agreed as infilling and conversions (Policy Villages 1: Village Categorisation). The emerging Local Plan (in CP35) categorises Caversfield as a settlement in ‘Open Countryside’ and states that “development will not be appropriate unless specifically supported by other local or national planning policies”.

The Council does not believe that any local or national planning policies support this proposal.

The proposal is outside the built environment of the village envelope and it would set a precedent for the village to create a ‘ribbon development’ all the way up the west side of Fringford Road towards Fringford which would not be in keeping with the village.

The Eco Town and the NW Bicester development must be kept totally separate from Caversfield. The land between the houses on the west side of Fringford Road and the B4100 must be reserved as a buffer between the conurbation NW Bicester development and the rural village of Caversfield to reduce the possibility of coalescence.

It must be noted that Caversfield has never been included in the NW Bicester development and this should not be considered appropriate now.

The applicant has compared their development to the brownfield regeneration of the Garden Quarter. However, there should be no comparison between the conversion of the former military DLO site, which in the main reused existing buildings, with the use of a greenfield site for new development.

It was very disappointing to read of the applicant's dismissal of many of the Planning Inspector's comments from the previous hearing, which, the Council felt, showed a blatant disregard of the Inspector's report and wealth of knowledge.

It is understood that CDC does have a five year Housing Land Supply and the current Local Plan is in force.

### **Climate Emergency**

Having declared a Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Crisis, Councils have a duty to consider the impact of this proposal on the environment. While the developers mention 'net gain', it is the Council's concern that there is no net gain – it would be of huge detrimental loss. This loss would be in terms of the ability of the land to absorb a great deal of water, the wildlife habitats of flora, vertebrates and invertebrates (including many insects, newts, deer, bats, buzzards) together with the carbon required to build the houses.

The majority of the village has limited street lighting and concerns were raised about the light pollution which a development of this scale would have.

### **Flooding**

The field for the proposed development has been recorded as flooding and the Gate House has flooded in the past. The field to the south of Aunt Em's Lane floods regularly, particularly close to the junction of Fringford Road, and Aunt Em's Lane has been prone to flooding.

The proposed attenuation pond has been situated in the wrong place. The lowest part of the land is at the back of the current houses. The attenuation pond would not help with the capture of run-off water from the development, and if it did overflow, would be likely to flood Fringford Road – where the current drains would not be able to cope.

### **Sports Facilities / Green Space / Outdoor provision**

While the equestrian facility has not been functioning for some time, the loss of a potential facility which could give much needed sport, exercise and wellbeing to a wide community would be detrimental to the area.

The Parish Council believes that the green space provision in the proposal is minimal and would not be sufficient for the development. Caversfield's provision for green space is extremely limited as the only green areas are privately owned (by the MoD and other developers). Whilst it looks as though the village has a great deal of open land, none of it, apart from one small area in Old School Close (already registered as a Village Green) is officially accessible.

The MoD Park at the centre of the village is mentioned by the applicant as a 'local facility' but the MoD has the right to limit use to just the Service Personnel and therefore this should not be considered as part of the accessible village facilities.

### **Parish Church and surrounding area**

Adjoining the proposed development is Caversfield's Parish Church - St Laurence, which is Grade II\* listed and has a number of Commonwealth War Graves in the cemetery which ties the military past with the Church. The setting of the open countryside around the Church is of great historical importance, as is the historical linking of the Church with Home Farm, the conservation area on Skimmingdish Lane and the connection with the military, both past and present.

### **Affordable Homes**

Regarding affordable homes, the Council recognises that affordable homes are of paramount importance to the area; while the current legal limit is 35%, if the application were to be permitted, the Council would request that this limit is raised to 50% in order to support the local residents.

### **Water**

The water pressure for Caversfield is already limited and the general infrastructure for water services, both fresh and sewerage is currently at its limit.

There is no mains drainage on Fringford Road to the south of Skimmingdish Lane

### **Highways and transport**

The Council's concerns about the effect of traffic on the area has not changed since the previous application. Neither Fringford Road nor Aunt Em's Lane is suitable for additional traffic.

The development will have an impact on the wider network of village roads. The results of OCC's proposals to change the Banbury Road roundabout into a 'controlled crossroads' and the changes to access into Fringford Road from the south together with the impact of 99 additional houses with all the associated traffic movements which this number of houses would incur, are unknown at present.

It has not been possible for the Transport Assessment to take into account the roundabout changes and therefore the assessment is flawed.

It was noted that the surveys were taken during the school summer holidays at the beginning of September and do not give an accurate picture of the traffic use of the area.

The Transport Assessment appears rather over-ambitious in its estimation of walking times and distances to areas outside the village. It is inevitable that the majority of the journeys will be made by private car as the pavements are not suitable.

While the Transport Assessment refers to two buses and the X5 is a recognised route from Oxford to Bedford and beyond, the 500 route on the B4100 is subsidised and is not guaranteed to continue beyond the OCC funding agreement; it should therefore not be included in the assessment. Furthermore, the 500 service does not operate on a Sunday. Access to the 500 route would also require the residents to use Aunt Em's Lane, which is not suitable for a pavement, to access the bus stops on Banbury Road.

### **Health and Social Care**

No recognition has been given to the provision of medical services. The GP surgeries are struggling and there are very few NHS dentists in the area.

The Bure Park surgery has been included in the list of GP provision, however, this has not been operating as a GP Practice since 2016.

### **Amelioration**

As a currently-classed Category C village, the village has very few facilities, but if the Council were minded to approve the application, the Parish Council would require financial assistance with the purchase of land to provide allotments and open space amenities.

The Parish Council would also require assistance with traffic calming which would inevitably be required.