**14/02004/Hybrid**

**Land south of Perdiswell Farm, Shipton Farm, Shipton on Cherwell**

**Up to 1500 dwellings, including affordable housing and up to a 150 unit care village with associated publicly accessible ancillary facilities**

There a number of significant heritage designations within and immediately adjacent to the proposed development site. In general terms the proposed development has inadequately addressed these constraints.

The proposed development lies in both Cherwell District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council boundaries. The comments have addressed the site as a whole, identifying which specific issues are relevant to the two different authorities.

**Archaeology**

Scheduled Monument

* Cherwell District

The Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Blenheim Villa and associated field system lies entirely within Cherwell District Council boundary. The villa was first discovered by aerial photography and is now identified by a low mound within the field. There has been very limited excavation (in 1985), which revealed that the villa was well –preserved. The outline of the SAM boundary appears to be relatively arbitary and further investigative work is required to determine the precise extent of the archaeological remains. The development needs to be designed in order to preserve the archaeological remains in-situ and to avoid future damage to them. This can only be achieved following detailed archaeological investigative work. Careful consideration will also need to be given to retaining a setting to the scheduled ancient monument, but this can only be done once the precise extent has been established.

Ridgeway

* Boundary between Cherwell and West Oxfordshire

The ancient routeway of the ‘Ridgeway’ appears to survive through the site. This is identified on the Historic Environment Record as ‘Witney Branch Ridgeway’ and is identified as early medieval to medieval in date. The original source for this appears to have been B Grundy *Saxon Oxfordhsire. Charters and Ancient Highways,* 1933; so the date of the feature may be earlier than this. The routeway is aligned along the boundary between Cherwell and West Oxfordshire administrations and also runs alongside Blenheim Villa, Scheduled Ancient Monument.

 The alignment is shown on historic OS maps as being a defined earthwork to the north of the proposed development site. It has not been verified on site whether this still survives. The route incorporates part of the road and passes immediately alongside the standing building of the Pest House (see below). It is noted that the outline proposal is for this route to maintained as part of the current proposed development, but this is by coincidence and is not identified as a fundamental constraint. Detailed consideration will need to be given to how the routeway can be retained and positively addressed within the development layout. It is important that the precise alignment is followed and that any remaining features along this route (including earthworks and / or hedgerows) are retained in-situ and that the route is clearly demarked from the surrounding landscape and topography.

**Landscapes**

Blenheim Park World Heritage Site / Registered Parkland

* West Oxfordshire District Council / Cherwell District Council (edge of parkland)
* Proposed development in Cherwell District Council area will impact on setting of part of Blenheim Park.

The World Heritage site of Blenheim Palace and Park is located immediately to the west of the site. The principle building of the Palace site is not impacted, but part of the parkland (which is also a Registered Park) is in very close proximity.

English Heritage’s guidance ‘*The Setting of Heritage Assets’* outlines that setting is about far more than just visual impact, but is about the wider experience and appreciation of heritage assets. The proposed development has a significant impact on the setting of Blenheim parkland and one of the key approaches to the site. The proposed development would have a detrimental impact on the experience of visiting the site as well as its wider appreciation. In addition the development would have a functional as well as visual impact on the inter relationship between the settlement of Woodstock and Blenheim Palace. The site has been identified as being of international significance (reflected in its World Heritage status) and extra special care needs to be taken of its wider setting, this is not reflected in the current proposal.

**Historic townscape and buildings**

Woodstock Conservation Area

* West Oxfordshire District Council

The Woodstock Conservation Area is located entirely within West Oxfordshire District Council boundary, There is no up to date conservation area appraisal. The development is situated at some distance from the Woodstock Conservation Area and does not impact upon its immediate setting, but the approach and wider setting of the village would be significantly impacted.

Pest House

A small building is shown on historic maps from at least 1750 on the border between Cherwell District and West Oxfordshire District. On historic OS maps from 1880s onwards it is identified as a ‘Pest House’ (colloquial term for hospital for infectious diseases). The building is still in existence today. It is constructed in local vernacular style and materials and appears from the exterior to be little altered.

The category of Pest House is not used in English Heritage’s *‘Designation listing selection guide: Health and Welfare Buildings’.* The section on Specialist Hospitals states ‘*Such was largely a nineteenth-century phenomenon to care for cases excluded from most general voluntary hospitals. There were almost as many hospitals as there were parts of the body. Early examples are often in converted houses, but most date from at least the late nineteenth century’* similarly the section on Isolation Hospitals concentrates on later 19th century examples. It is unclear how rare this form of structure was nor how many such buildings remain. Further documentary work and a more detailed site visit may be needed to determine the significance of the former Pest House.

At the very least the former Pest House is an undesignated heritage asset and the setting of this asset should be considered in the detailed design of the site. It is understood that the building and surrounding land and track are to remain in existing ownership and will not form part of the boundary of the proposed development. Nevertheless the building will be surrounded on all sides and consideration needs to be given to the setting of the asset.

In close proximity to the former Pest House, at a short distance to the east an Isolation Hospital for Woodstock Rural District Council )is shown on the historic OS map of 1913-1923. This is shown to be contemporary with the Pest House at that date. The building has not survived as a structure, but there may potentially be archaeological remains which may be of interest.

**Site layout**

There are some concerns with the proposed whole site layout. The site is divided into two by the presence of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, this also forms the dividing line between the two different administrative authorities of West Oxfordshire and Cherwell.

The portion of development within West Oxfordshire District Council and to the west of the Ridgeway is in a sustainable location in close proximity to the existing town of Woodstock, which has the potential to integrate with the existing settlement. The portion which falls within Cherwell District Council boundary appears to be an ad-hoc add on which is separated by green space and does not link to the existing settlement. There is no sense of organic development of the town with the section lying within Cherwell and this area would be effectively isolated from the town of Woodstock, but not linked to any existing development within Cherwell District.