

Mr and Mrs R England  
8 Hodgson Close  
Fritwell, Bicester  
OX27 7QB

5<sup>th</sup> November 2019

Planning case officer Mr James Kirkham  
Cherwell District Council  
Bodicote House  
Bodicote  
Banbury  
OX15 4AA

Dear Mr Kirkham

**Re: OBJECTION - PLANNING APPLICATION No. 19/00616/OUT**

Further to and in addition to our letter of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019 and in response to the Applicant's revised application for outline planning permission for up to 28 homes, we write to reconfirm our objection.

It is our firm opinion that development to this scale, of a greenfield site located outside the established settlement boundary of our small village with its very limited amenities, no public transport and poor road access, is wholly unsustainable.

Our key reasons for objection are:-

**1. Greenfield Site**

- The proposed site is greenfield and is located outside of the established settlement boundary of the village. Development of the site will adversely and dramatically alter the character of Fritwell, the Fritwell Conservation Area and result in the loss of trees and countryside.
  - We ask you to consider The Adopted Cherwell Local Plan, which states *"We will cherish, protect and enhance our distinctive natural and built environment and our rich historic heritage. Cherwell will maintain its rural character where its landscapes, its vast range of natural and built heritage and its market towns define its distinctiveness."* and *"the type of development for category A villages within the built-up limits of villages will be considered to be suitable for minor development in addition to infilling."*
  - This is clearly not a minor development, nor is it infilling. The MCNP states *"The adopted Local Plan para. C254 refers to the provision of "small-scale development" within village categories A & B "typically but not exclusively for less than 10 dwellings". Neighbourhood Plan Policies PD1 and PD2 refer to "minor development", which is understood to have the same meaning."*

**2. Lack of Integration**

- The proposed development does not lend itself to aesthetic nor practical integration within the existing settlement of the village and instead will form just a disparate group of houses, appended to the outside edge of the existing settlement.
  - The applicant proposes that the main link to the centre of the village will be the existing PRoW, but this is not a suitable route for this purpose. The path is narrow in places, is not paved and is particularly unsuitable for pushchairs or wheelchairs.
  - We consider that the development does not meet the objective of the Approved Local Cherwell

Plan policy SLE4 to *“encourage development in locations where future residents are provided with accessibility by active and public transport modes, whilst also seeking to ensure that there are no highway network safety or capacity implications.”*

### 3. Ongoing Residential Developments in Fritwell

- Development to this scale on a greenfield site in the village is wholly unnecessary and we believe can and should be avoided because:-
  - There are already two new major (for a village this size) infill residential developments in progress on brownfield sites, amounting to 15 new homes.
  - We understand that only 4 homes out of the 750 allocated for the Category A villages (Policy Villages 2) remain to be identified and that the Council can already demonstrate a greater than 5 year housing supply for the period 2019-2024, therefore there is no pressing need for additional land to be released.
  - We ask you to consider whether this application meets the MCNP Objectives:-
    - D1: to *“strongly encourage the use of brownfield sites”*
    - D2: to *“resist the loss over time of the all-important countryside between villages.”*
    - D3: to *“reinforce the sense of rurality that defines the neighbourhood, to protect against creeping urbanisation, and to maintain the character of the villages and the protection offered by their Conservation Areas.”*

### 4. Lack of Public Transport

- Fritwell is very poorly served by public transport and does not offer any genuine employment opportunities. There are no healthcare facilities within the village. Residents of the village have no choice but to rely heavily on the private car for even the most basic of needs, thus a development of this scale will significantly increase car journeys, the risk of road accidents, congestion and local air pollution as a consequence.
  - It should be noted that existing residents typically make more than simply two car journeys per day as there are no 24/7 services within the village or indeed within a safe walking or cycling distance from the village.
  - Again, we consider that the development does not meet the objective of the Approved Local Cherwell Plan policy SLE4 to *“encourage development in locations where future residents are provided with accessibility by active and public transport modes, whilst also seeking to ensure that there are no highway network safety or capacity implications.”*

### 5. Road Access

- The road network providing access to this site is not at all suited to the significant increase in vehicle movements that such a development will bring.
  - Vehicles going to and from the site will either travel through the centre of Ardley-with-Fewcott or the junction of Fewcott Road and East Street in the centre of Fritwell. Both routes are minor roads and in places are not wide enough to permit two vehicles to pass.
  - In regard to the former route, Ardley-with-Fewcott Parish Council have stated *“In summary we object to the proposed development on the principle of traffic generation with no mitigation.”*
  - In Fritwell, the primary school crossing is located in East Street and this road is particularly congested at school drop-off and collection times and even outside of these times, is not wide enough with on-street residential parking, to allow two vehicles to pass.
  - The Applicant and their agents have had to come up with a very complicated road layout plan for Fritwell Road in an attempt to make road access to the proposed development safe for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. These measures will cause a considerable loss of hedgerows and natural drainage ditches and will have a damaging effect on the character of the village entrance and we believe will not be effective as the site entrance is just after a blind bend in Fritwell Road with vehicles travelling from an unrestricted speed zone into the village.
    - In the words of Cherwell District Council, *“...alterations and additions to the existing*

*highway network and associated infrastructure should seek to prevent damage to the rural character of the roads affected” and we consider that the work needed to make the access safe will unacceptably alter the rural character of Fritwell Road.*

- Oxfordshire County Council Highways Department has asked Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan to consider that *“development outside the settlement area of Category A villages is unlikely to be sustainable because of poor access to public transport and the likelihood of poor accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.”* and we ask you to consider that this most definitely applies to Fritwell and the site in question. There are currently no formal cycling routes or facilities within Fritwell, and all cycle trips are required to be on-carriageway.

## 6. Local Amenities

- Fritwell has very limited amenities and it is clear from the discussions at recent Parish Council meetings that the proposed development will make no significant contribution to address this.
  - Fritwell has very little to offer in the way of local social activities and entertainment. There are no social amenities within Fritwell for teenagers and young adults, we have no public house and the village shop operates only limited opening hours.
  - Of particular concern is the proposal for social housing on the site. We believe it reasonable to assume that those in need of social housing may not have access to a private car and therefore will not be able to get to amenities from this development without public transport.
  - We ask you to consider whether this development meets the MCNP Objective:-
    - **H2:** *“To ensure that affordable housing is provided within any local developments that meets the needs in particular of the local community, especially young people and older residents.”*

## 7. Fritwell Primary School

- There is no evidence to suggest that a development of this scale, in addition to the new residential developments already in progress in the village, is needed in any way to protect the local primary school.
  - We fully support the school and have children who attend. The school is well funded and thriving and is not at risk of closure due to lack of attendance.
  - In any case, there is no guarantee that any new residents with children who move into the village will elect to use the primary school and when children reach secondary school age, they will have to travel outside of the village anyway.

## 8. Housing Quality

- The Applicant withdrew their previous detail planning application for this site before it went in front of the Planning Committee in 2016 and are now seeking outline planning permission. The MCNP objective H1 states:
  - **H1:** *“In the case of the three villages identified by CDC as Category A (Steeple Aston, Fritwell and Kirtlington), to ensure that any new housing required also identifies the mix of the proposed homes, the density of development sites, the form of development and the quality of design.”*
  - As the Applicant has not provided any binding detail about the build quality and type of materials that will be used in the proposed development, we cannot accurately assess whether or not this policy will be met.

The “made” Mid-Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan vision statement reads *“In 2031 our Neighbourhood will still comprise vibrant, individual villages connected by unspoiled countryside, and our community will feel that its wishes have been heard and its rural way of life maintained; small-scale affordable housing will have been sensitively added, heritage and conservation respected, and road traffic mitigated; public transport will be well-used; the major new community at Heyford Park will have been successfully integrated into the neighbourhood, and a combination of central and local amenities will better provide for our community’s needs.”*

We consider that this application is not in harmony with the objectives of the MCNP. We accept that new homes are needed in the wider local area and that where appropriate, Fritwell should be no exception where small-scale infill developments are concerned. As Fritwell is already the subject of new residential developments already in progress within the village making use of brownfield land, there is no demonstrable need for a housing development of the scale proposed by this application on a greenfield site.

We ask that you and the Planning Committee please take into consideration Planning Officer Matthew Parry's statements as noted in *Section 7.5 Page 162 - Public reports pack Thursday 27-Oct-2016 16.00 Planning Committee* against one of the Applicant's previous proposals to develop this same site: *"Fritwell is one of the smallest villages defined within Category A. It also features few services and facilities with just a single village shop, primary school and village hall. It offers no genuine employment opportunities and no health facilities. Since the time of the adoption of the CLP 2031 Part 1 it now features no public houses and is no longer served by bus [see note 1 below]. Unlike some other Category A settlements, it is also relatively remote from larger villages that can provide such services/facilities and is some distance from the higher order services provided at Banbury and Bicester.*

*In short, new residential development will be almost entirely dependent on daily use of the private car for travel outside the village. Having regard to the criteria set out in Policy Villages 2 that requires consideration of the site's location to services and facilities, the scheme does not score at all well relative to many other Category A settlements. Officers are therefore concerned that the village is not sufficiently environmentally sustainable to accommodate new housing of the scale proposed particularly bearing in mind recent planning permissions on sites within the village for over 20 new dwellings."*

[note 1] At the time of writing, there is now just one bus service (81) operating one 3-hour return journey per week to Bicester. This extremely limited bus service, whilst better than none, is completely impractical for those who would use public transport for regular commuting, shopping or leisure outside the village. The lack of a regular bus service to Fritwell already has a documented adverse impact on the quality of life for existing residents as can be evidenced from the data at:- <http://www.fritwell.org.uk/content/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/bus-survey-data-report-nov-2017.pdf>

The Applicant and their appointed agents have suggested often in their recent submissions that this greenfield site is "dilapidated" and we ask you to please disregard these comments. In our opinion, these comments are a shameful attempt to give the incorrect impression that the site is somehow out of character with the local area and should be developed as a result!

As residents of Fritwell who have lived here for 22 years we can assure you that this site is perfectly in keeping with the area and is not at all out of character or dilapidated. The land has historically been used as paddock land to graze horses and we very much welcome continued use of the site in this way.

Finally, it has been alleged that the Chair of Fritwell Parish Council has made comments indicating that residents of the village are broadly in support of the revised application, with the exception of *"a few individuals living immediately next to the site."* If this allegation is correct, we ask that you and the Planning Committee please disregard any such comments when making your decision. There has been no official poll of residents' views on this development by the Parish Council and there is no empirical evidence to support such a statement.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration when deciding upon this application.

Yours sincerely,

Robin H England  
Elizabeth England