

INQUIRY CLOSING STATEMENT

ON BEHALF OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF MINSTER LOVELL.

And would help to
The relationship of the site to the village.

Sir, you will be aware of how unpopular this development is locally from the very large number of personal letters of objection that accompanied the original planning application.

That feeling has not changed.

Policy OS2

There was some discussion at the Inquiry in relation to the interpretation in planning terms of the word "limited" in relation to development. In population term based on 2.4 persons per house on average, Dovecote and the new site provide an increase of just over 50% in the population of the village over a very short period. Policy OS2 sets out that the "The Villages (referring to the likes of Minster Lovell) are suitable for limited development which respects the village character and local distinctiveness and would help to maintain the vitality of these communities". The Appellants can not possibly meet that criteria for " limited" with this development of 134 houses compounding on the 124 house already given consent very recently. The population of the new development could alone represent 26% of the original population of the Village at 1200 or half the total potential increase of 50%. To call the effect of this development LIMITED is directly misleading. The discussion at the Inquiry was a play on words. The effect on the ground for our village is dramatic.

Policy T1 (2031 Plan)

This Policy is promoted for this site.

It calls for minimized use of private cars and the promotion of opportunities to walk and cycle.

We have heard no convincing evidence from the Appellants that residents from the proposed estate will be any more likely to walk/cycle than the current Dovecote Park residents - who rely heavily on the use of cars.

.Distance to the Village Facilities.

The site is isolated from facilities. It takes 23 minutes to walk from the SPAR shop to the centre of the site. The Appellant's Planner estimated 10 minutes. (We do not accept this). Although technically it can be agreed the distance from the site to the Spar and other shops is walkable, in reality it is a very long way for a busy working families, parents loaded with groceries and with children, or the elderly, - and as is the current reality at Dovecote - the journey will almost certainly be taken by car.

Regardless of the technicalities of planning policy, cars will be used to get to work, for the school run and for shopping. There will be the choice of where to shop, Witney or Carterton, or the Village , where the parking is very restricted.

Lack of Facilities in the Village.

We see the Travel Plan CI 2.3.5 states that “the need to travel by car is reduced by the facilities available within close proximity of the site on foot or by cycling”. **The facilities are not in close proximity.**

We have not heard any evidence that the facilities at present in the Village are of the type or are sufficient to support such a large increase in population, or to significantly reduce the need for residents from the new site to drive to Witney or Carterton multiple times a day.

Useful amenities in Minster Lovell are limited to the SPAR and the Post Office. The furniture shop, the kitchen showroom, and the used car dealership are not convenience amenities. There are no doctors, vets, pharmacy, take-away, café's or other social meeting places. Residents of the proposed site will need to travel to Witney or Carterton for all these things

Hence the Travel Plan does not ring true in real life, particularly with the uncertainty of weather and now days, even security.

Minster Lovell Primary

School is full from November 2024.

In real life this is going to mean additional travel by car to Witney, Carterton or Burford at peak travel times adding significantly to the existing traffic congestion. This will also make the travel to school a much heavier commitment.

Buses

All buses – including the School Bus – at present start from the White Hart. It is a kilometer from the site. To many the most convenient route will be along the proposed walkway/cycle track on the south side of the Burford Road. During the commuting hours there is very heavy traffic on this road, and we would expect parents to be nervous of this route.

Experience from Dovecote Park residents clearly demonstrates that cars will be used instead of buses, and no evidence has been produced to convince us that residents on the new estate will be any less reliant on them because of the distances involved.

Cycling

In the real world, apart from enthusiasts, comparatively few people bicycle to work or shop on main roads because of the speed and density of traffic at commuting times.

The Appellants have not put forward any convincing evidence that the residents of the proposed site will be any different to the current village residents, particularly on Dovecote, who do not.

Brize Norton Road is not suitable for cyclists because of its width and heavy traffic.

Burford Road is the same, even after the building of the cycle path, the passing traffic will be dangerously close. Most parents would stop their children from bicycling on either of these routes.

The Bicycling route to Witney, some three miles away, has certain sections off “road”, but these are not secure or lit, and few would use them in the evening because of other activities there. The traffic is heavy on the unprotected sections, and it is wildly optimistic to think in the winter, in rain or at night that people would bicycle to Witney.

Further the routes to Carterton and Burford (where the catchment Secondary School is located) are national speed limit country roads, and (to Burford) the route is on the A40. This road is heavily used and has no pavements or cycle lanes and therefore is almost never used by cyclists – and certainly not children. In the real world the evidence given by the Appellants on these issues simply does not stand up.

Street Lights and Light Pollution

The Burford Road would be very likely to have to have street lights and a restricted speed limit where the Burford Road passes approximately 250 new houses on the two estates. These lights will be seen on the skyline from many directions in the Cotswold AONB, and the Windrush Valley and in addition to the internal estate street lights will contribute greatly to the light pollution. This will damage a prominent skyline as seen from the north and the Cotswold AONB.

No street lights are mentioned in the Appellant's Lighting Impact Assessment.

Site Drainage

The percolation test was taken in 2022 in September, just at the end of a long drought. We believe there is a considerable depth of clay over a large area of the site and the problem is much more serious than the response received so far from the Appellant..

~~Almost~~ - You will have seen the flooding on the site on your visit – and you will have heard the forecast today - and we are not convinced that the appropriate weight has been given in the evidence on this issue and that further examination should be instructed.

Foul Drainage and Water Supply

Foul drainage is dismissed as being the responsibility of Thames Water. Their record so far has been very poor, with continuing problems and we are fearful that the additional capacity needed if the development goes ahead will involve considerable disruption in the village, as the drains run parallel to the Brize Norton Road on their way to Brize Norton – where the real blockage appears to be.

There have been consistent problems in the Village both with foul drainage and with domestic water. There is little faith locally that Thames Water have the capacity or the will to deal with the problem. Until these extensive problems are rectified by them, further development can only make the existing situation worse, to the huge detriment of a very *of large number of* the residents of Minster Lovell and Brize Norton.

Although we hope our suggested condition is imposed, this only goes a little way to controlling the problem.

Five Year Land Supply

Lastly the famous Five Year Land Supply. It seems to us a very spurious argument. Whether a site is brought forward is in our experience is based entirely whether the developer or owner believes he will be able to sell the houses. If he does not - he will not spend money and promote his site.

We have had an exceptionally flat market for over a year and there is no surprise that sites are not coming forward. An artificial figure is set down and if the LPA cannot prove it has that, it becomes almost a free house for consents. As we cannot establish whether or not we do have a Five Year Land Supply at WODC at present, it appears that our village may be suffering this explosion of population as a direct result.

Last of all, If this development goes ahead it will create a satellite residential estate with no services conveniently available, and as a result will be dominated by car movements – directly conflicting the evidence given by the Appellants. It will again greatly enlarge Minster Lovell - with no obvious benefit and against the wishes of those that live there.

It very clearly cannot be described as a “limited” development in the terms of OS2.

As we have said before we feel this is the wrong site, at the wrong time and damages the landscape of the area and the historic village.
