

13 February 2024

Public Inquiry – Land South of Burford Road Minster Lovell

Statement on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Minster Lovell

My name is Victoria McCormick, I'm a resident on the newbuild Dovecote Park estate bolted on to the edge of Minster Lovell village. I've been asked to give a 'lived experience' overview of existing issues which would be exacerbated by the proposed estate and, of course, suffered by residents of the proposed new build. In my experience as a resident, the benefits put forward in the planning application bid and have been vastly overstated and the negatives glossed over or ignored.

Dovecote Park already feels isolated from the main village (any further development would feel even more so) and the severely limited amenities in Minster Lovell, combined with the distance to reach them, means that our family, like other residents on Dovecote Park, drive into Witney for almost everything.

For example shops. Useful convenience amenities are limited to the Post Office and the Spar - insufficient to support the size of the village, let alone any further expansion. No pharmacy, vets, café, take-way etc. And given the prices in the Spar (significantly over inflated compared to a supermarket) we drive to Witney. And on the odd occasion we might go to the Spar – but by car, it's too long to walk there and back. And if we are making these decisions then residents on the proposed new build are going to be even more likely to drive too. We need housing (including affordable housing and Housing Association homes) within access of *actual* amenities – like a supermarket, medical facilities, leisure centre, not in an isolated position bolted on to a small village.

Similarly the local school clearly cannot support the current needs, let alone further development. None of the children living on our street go to school in Minster Lovell. We applied for but were unable to get places for our three children when we moved to Dovecote Park and therefore we undertake two return car journeys a day into Witney, same as our neighbours, just for school runs. The situation will only worsen should another estate be built and the predicted car journeys should not be based on flawed assumptions that children will be walking to the village school.

Which brings me on to transport.

Car travel is *absolutely essential* for Dovecote Park residents given the lack of employment opportunities, shops, schools, doctors, sports facilities etc in Minster Lovell. Our household is not unusual in undertaking at least 5 return journeys a day. I believe that the planning application suggested that the proposed development was within easy cycling/walking distance to education, health and leisure facilities but in the real world I don't know of any neighbours who would risk their children cycling into Witney to school or sports clubs let alone cycling to the doctors or minor injuries hospital! Even when cycling is allowed on the Dovecote Park estate, people are too busy to take time to cycle so far and, more to the point, the roads in and around Minster Lovell are far too dangerous.

Just a few weeks ago when I was driving my daughter to football training we came across a road traffic accident on the Burford Road just metres from the Dovecote estate and stopped to call an ambulance. And less than two weeks before that saw the results of another car accident on the same stretch. If you walk along the narrow pavement on the Burford or Brize Norton Roads you inadvertently flinch as traffic hurtles past – the only reason that the accident stats aren't even higher than they are is because residents use common sense and don't cycle along such dangerous roads.

The complete lack of bus services to Dovecote Park further isolates our new build estate and means residents are dependent on cars. For example, the decision to cut the public service route which used to take children to our catchment secondary school means that even more parents are now driving their children (adding to the severe traffic congestion at the junction of the A40 and A361) rather than them having to leave home just after 7 in the morning to walk 20 minutes to get the remaining, much earlier, buses.

One only needs to look at the number of cars and vans parked on the pavements all over Dovecote Park to see that the number of vehicles is more than anticipated for this development, and consequently that the usage is also more. The same seems highly likely for the proposed development. Combined with the fact that the local school is full, there are no substantial amenities in the village, the roads are too dangerous to cycle on, the bus services aren't adequate etc etc means that vehicle usage will be *considerably* higher than the planning application's estimate.

Moving on to the provision of basic services.

In my experience of living on Dovecote Park, Thames Water are unable to provide a reliable supply of water – never before have I felt the need to have a 'dooms day prepper' stash of bottled water in the garage for the next water cut!

I'm sure drainage will be covered in much more extensive detail by other speakers but there is a well-known and long ongoing issue with drainage in Minster Lovell which extends to the Dovecote Park estate where some neighbours were unable to use their toilets for days over New Year. As per the supply of clean water, residents are appalled that more housing has been proposed when the most essential services cannot even be reliably provided to the existing housing.

Continuing on the subject of water, the public open spaces on Dovecote Park are absolutely sodden for extensive periods after rainfall and residents are concerned that the development is contributing to flooding on the outskirts of the village and that even more housing will make this situation much worse.

And to what benefit? The fact that the last houses on the Dovecote estate couldn't be sold and were instead purchased by the MOD, that neighbours in Housing Association homes have said Dovecote Park is just too isolated to be a suitable location, that the housing is just not affordable for most people from this area (attracting instead buyers from cities such as London and abroad) all demonstrates that this is not the right location to meet a local demand for housing.