

Presentation to Uplands Planning Committee, 6th Dec 2017: Mrs Sue Haywood, Responsible Planning in Burford

My name is Sue Haywood, presenting concerns that have been expressed about this proposal by the Burford community and its visitors.

We believe that this proposal would do irreversible harm in two ways:

- Firstly – harm to the AONB, and thus to the community's long-term sustainability and income, and
- Secondly – harm to the quality of life and access to services for residents, including those in the new major development on Shilton Road

The officer's report itself acknowledges there will be some harm to the AONB, and to the landscape and historic environment, and to some residential amenity. We contend that the scale and probability of this harm is underestimated:

For example: the CBA report, to which great weight is attached by the officer, is still under consultation and is not yet proven as sound. Further, as the proposed access road onto Witney Street was not considered by the consultants, the full harm to the landscape has not been evaluated.

(A photo, matching that in our submission, and which shows this access road are on your desks for your convenience)

There is potential for further harm arising from this access road. To quote Mr Shaw from a similar case in your committee meeting last month, its presence does not "**sterilise the development**". It provides both the opportunity and precedent for further housing down the beautiful Windrush valley.

Regarding the second item - harm to residents' quality of life and access to services:

One of the best examples of this is from the OCC's school's team. They state that this proposal, considered cumulatively with that at Shilton Road, would, and I quote, "be detrimental to community cohesion and hence social sustainability". They also specifically reject as inappropriate the mitigation measure proposed by your officer.

It is still uncertain too if practical solutions are possible for further infrastructure concerns, such as surface and waste water drainage.

Beyond these issues, there is serious concern about traffic and pedestrian safety - you have seen on your site visit the constraints of our historic streets and country lanes.

And CPRE suggests that the proposal will be detrimental to Burford's income from tourism, resulting in economic harm. Objections received by your officer from Burford's visitors endorse this view.

Unlike these clearly defined harms, our opinion is that **no exceptional circumstances**, nor planning balance proving public interest, have been sufficiently provided to justify the proposal under the NPPF; a view endorsed by the Cotswolds Conservation Board's own objection.

We believe a precautionary approach that rejects the proposal is justifiable, given the emerging evidence about the 5 year supply and future housing targets, the availability of alternative sites, the proven evidence of harm, as well as the harms yet to be evaluated. There is also the very real threat of future incursion in a prominent location in the AONB.

Thank you for your consideration of our evidence.



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BURFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Uplands Planning Committee – 06/12/2017

Land East of Burford

Good afternoon, Councillors. John White, Mayor of Burford. I propose to concentrate on just two aspects – the impact on the AONB, including the need for need, and landscape and heritage issues.

First the AONB. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF requires great weight to be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs which have the highest status of protection. Does the proposed development conserve the landscape and scenic beauty? I submit that the answer is a firm “no”. Even your officers had to accept, in Paragraph 5.22 of their report, that the development, and I quote, “would undoubtedly represent significant change to the landscape and the change would be readily perceptible from a number of public viewpoints” You cannot square that change with conservation – common sense would not permit it.

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF states that major developments in AONBs should only be permitted in exceptional circumstances. There is no dispute that the Applicant's proposal is for a major development. Your Officers contend that there are exceptional circumstances relying principally on need.

Your Officers ~~refer, in Paragraph 3.2 of their report, to a recent Court of Appeal decision involving Wealden District Council and~~ correctly stress that need has to exist in both the District and in Burford. We have seen no figures for the District so I cannot argue the toss on those. But we do have figures for Burford. The latest information, from an email from WODC Housing Operations dated the 27th of last month, is that the total number of households in urgent or significant need is exactly seven!

That figure, I suggest, does not demonstrate anything like the degree of need necessary to justify exceptional circumstances. But if you disagree with me on that, I would ask you to take into account the planning permission granted on appeal for a development in Shilton Road, Burford strongly supported by my Council because it is outside the AONB. That permission is for 259 dwellings, including 45 affordable. There is no need for another 70 houses in Burford.

I now turn to the landscape and heritage issues. This site is within the Burford Conservation Area and the Upper Windrush Valley Character Area. ~~You have had the benefit of a site visit so I do not need to stress the glorious views from most points of the compass.~~ It is no surprise that WODC's own visual impact consultants came to the conclusion, in Paragraph 4.2.26 of their report, that, and I quote, " the site is considered to be of medium-high landscape sensitivity and high

visual sensitivity". Then there is the further issue of the proposed access road from Witney Street to the site described in Paragraph 5.25 of your Officers' report as, and again I quote, "an urbanising feature stretching out beyond the established edge of the settlement". For "an urbanising feature" read "an ugly slashing scar across a virgin field visible for miles around".

Again I emphasise that common sense would preserve the landscape and heritage values, as required by the NPPF, rather than interfere with them.

My final point is this. The Town Council is not a lone voice crying in the wilderness. There are over seven hundred objections lodged against this application with just three in support. On behalf of those objectors and the ancient Town of Burford, I respectfully urge you to refuse this application.

Land east of Barns Lane, Burford

17/00642/OUT

Outline planning application for up to 70 dwellings (Use Class C3), creation of new vehicular access off Witney Street and revised vehicular access off Barns Lane, and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. All matters reserved except for access

Chair, Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to address you this afternoon.

I would firstly like to thank your officer's for bringing this proposal to committee with a recommendation for approval, following its robust consideration through the application process. I am however mindful that this application is subject to a substantial level of objections and public concern.

This site is however one which this Council, and members of this committee at Full Council, have included as an allocated site within the emerging Local Plan, and this has been retained following the Examination this summer.

As members will be aware, in light of the Council's recently commissioned independent Landscape and Heritage Advice which supported the retention of the allocation, the application has been amended to propose up to 70 dwellings on the site, in accordance with the recommendations of this report and the proposed revised allocation.

There are no substantive or technical objections to this application from statutory consultees.

Your officers, both in relation to the Local Plan and the application before you now, have clearly set out the exceptional circumstances and benefits of public interest which are required to justify the proposed development within the AONB.

The Council has concluded that there is a need for market and affordable housing with limited scope for meeting this need outside of the AONB. The application would deliver up to 70 new homes, with 50% of these to comprise affordable housing to meet local identified needs in the sub-area.

As set out in your officer's report, the Council are currently unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the housing shortfall does remain a material consideration to be weighed in the planning balance.

Careful consideration has to be given to the nature of the site and the relationship the site has to its immediate surrounding, particularly in relation to the conservation area and the AONB. The outline proposals have been carefully constructed and follow a landscape-led approach and the detailed design will be the subject of scrutiny at reserved matters stage.

We note that insufficient capacity is currently forecast at Burford Primary School. A financial contribution will be provided to cover the costs of transporting primary age children to the nearest school, and it is noted that capacity is anticipated at a number of alternative local schools and therefore education needs can be appropriately met.

Whilst we are aware of the concerns raised by some local residents regarding **drainage and flooding considerations and the proposed access arrangement**, it is important to note that there are no objections from statutory consultees, the Environment Agency and Thames Water, on these matters. There is also no objection from OCC as highways authority.

In summary, your officers have concluded that there is no identified harm that would justify the refusal of planning permission. Indeed, there are **no** identified environmental, technical or other reasons why planning permission should not be granted in this case.

The proposal accords with the Council's emerging Local Plan and the applicants do not consider that there reason as to why planning permission should not be granted.

Thank you.

Witney Road (North) Address to Uplands – December 6th 2017

If you grant this application then, it together with the other housing developments already permitted will increase the number of houses in Long Hanborough by around 45%, rising to 55% should a current appeal be upheld, with the prospect of another 900 homes by the station giving a potential cumulative growth of 130% plus.

Currently there are 44 affordable homes in Long Hanborough, with a list of 138 people who are qualified to receive an affordable home and 129 either in construction or feature as part of a reserved matters application.

You are all well aware of the issues in Long Hanborough - today I would like to put them in context with OCC's response to this application.

Time and again the public has raised the issue of traffic congestion on the A4095 at peak times.

The applicants have compared results from snapshot traffic surveys undertaken between 2014 and 2017, all at different times of the year. Based on limited data, ignoring factors such as seasonality and road network performance, they conclude that traffic has decreased over the last few years. This is not our experience.

OCC estimate that 269 working age adults and 99 children will live on this development yet the applicant's modelling studies predict that the additional peak hour traffic will, on average, amount to one car every three minutes – the duration of this talk. Is this believable?

The applicant uses these findings to conclude that the impact of this development will be negligible.

OCC Traffic have signed off on this, withdrawing their objection despite maintaining significant reservations.

The OCC consultee comments also include educational issues. A new pre-school is in the early stages of construction and OCC suggest it should be extended. The Manor School will also need to be doubled in size but no firm plans are in place. Over 200 homes are already being built in the village yet the future size and feasibility of the school's expansion has still to be determined. When the children leave the Manor School many move on to the Batholomew School in Eynsham but even here OCC say that this will be over capacity in 2018.

Temporary classrooms? Our children deserve better.

A similar situation arises with the surgery. A new one is to be built, will it be large enough to cope with a 60%+ growth plus new housing in surrounding villages?

Finally I leave it to you to decide if the indicative plan comfortably integrates with the village, the conservation area and the AONB.

We fear that the village is growing in a piecemeal manner, too much and too fast. We recognise the need for more homes but present and future residents need to build lives around adequate infrastructure and services.

I request you refuse this application but, if minded to approve, apply a condition that no development begins until planning permission is granted for the expansion of the three schools and the adequacy of the health centre established.

Hanborough Parish Council's spoken comments on

Application No. 17/01082/OUT

This application relates to the northern half of a split proposal to build up to 339 dwellings beside the A4095 at the western edge of Long Hanborough. All of the reasons Uplands Planning Committee gave for refusing permission for the southern half still apply. For instance, OCC's Senior Estates Surveyor says that the options for our primary school's expansion are still not well understood; it is unclear what supporting infrastructure would be provided for the 50 or so children expected to live in 161 to 170 new dwellings.

Some of the reasons for refusal have grown stronger, as a result of the cumulative effect of one development after another. Traffic congestion is of paramount concern. Writing about Hanborough's Witney Road junction with Church Road, a Senior Highways Engineer recommends on behalf of OCC that relatively large developments should henceforward be prevented in the vicinity of the mini roundabout pinch point.

The Applicant pleads that current traffic volumes have fallen slightly and so adding between 6 and 7% more might not be as bad as the Engineer predicts. However, the alleged fall is more than counterbalanced by flaws in the modelling presented by the Applicant. On 26th May 2017, the Engineer reported that his own on-site observations of peak period traffic flow lead him to conclude that, *"the outputs of the model ... are not a reasonable reflection of real life conditions."*

In a *Further Appraisal of Journey Times*, the Applicant attempts to divert attention from the severe impact of the proposed development, by blaming "street activity" rather than traffic volume for delays. We should apparently get rid of safety measures, like our raised crossing for schoolchildren and shoppers, to allow traffic generated by new developments to flow! OCC's Engineer disagrees, yet his opposition has faltered; he now isolates north field traffic from its cumulative impact with that of the south field, whilst on the contrary insisting that his comments *"must be read in conjunction"* with his original response.

In April 2017's Planning Statement, the Applicant blithely admits to relying upon less weight being afforded to WODC's protective policies, due to uncertainty about housing supply. Hence, an overstretched school, inadequate roads and a spoilt environment count for little, even though these things would be unsustainable.

CPRE object to the proposed development on the grounds of its proximity to the AONB and the adjacent conservation area. The Applicant implies that harm to these heritage assets is a price worth paying in order to boost Blenheim Palace's maintenance funds. Historic England says such enabling development is undesirable because, *"it only applies when the development contravenes planning policy, so it results in a permanent public disbenefit."*

HPC respectfully requests that members refuse this application.

NEC on behalf of Hanborough Parish Council, December 2017.

Address to Committee on land north of Witney road, Long Hanborough

I am John Ashton, can I thank you chair and members for allowing me time to speak to you today.

This is a fantastic scheme which will deliver a great sense of place which will relate in a positive way to the village of Long Hanborough, the new development opposite and to the south of Witney Road and the Countryside adjoining.

In my view it will be a lovely place to live and will be truly award winning in its design and layout.

Affordable Housing

Your Housing officer says *138 households are on the waiting list for housing in Long Hanborough,* and that if the development delivers 50 % affordable housing *'the application is supportable.'* The scheme provides for 50% affordable housing.

Landscaping/Open Space & Biodiversity Enhancements

It will be a truly green development. A total of 5.5 ha (53.9%) of the site will be used as open space including substantial tree planting.

Conservation and Heritage

The Conservation Area is located to the north of the site.. Your Council's architect comments that:

'The development is now pulled well back from the boundary of the conservation area adjacent to Millwood End – and I think that views of the new development from within the conservation area will be minimal.'

On archaeology the 'Grampian' style condition recommended in the report will ensure its appropriate treatment, in precisely the same manner as elsewhere on development sites in the district, including the land opposite and to the south of Witney Road. Heritage therefore has no significant harmful impact.

Education

The County Council expect the first phase of expansion of the school to take place in two years time. Demand for the extra school places will also grow gradually as the children do not appear overnight. The county officers state that the current position is very normal and that expansion will occur in time for the pupils arising from the proposed development.

Traffic

Oxfordshire County Council consider that the scheme is acceptable in terms of highway safety and visibility, and are now satisfied that the development would not have an unacceptable effect in terms of traffic generation.

Inspector's Decision on land opposite and to the south of Witney Road

The Inspector stated that *'because of the nature of the site and its surroundings, and the ability to mitigate impact through attention to detailed design and landscaping,'* there would not be a significantly harmful impact. *'What impact would arise would be localised, with scope for considerable mitigation through the exercise of control at the reserved matters stage to ensure an harmonious integration of development.'*

Development on this site forms a logical compliment to that development in rounding off the western edge of Long Hanborough and has the same scope for mitigation. I urge you to approve this scheme for up to 170 dwellings including much needed affordable housing.

**22 SHIPTON ROAD,
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Dear Sir,

4th December 2017

UPLANDS PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE – 6th DECEMBER 2017
PLANNING REF: 16/01364/OUT LAND EAST OF WOODSTOCK

At the hearing in the summer, the Inspector was asked to consider site allocations for the Local Plan. He was concerned that WODC was looking at three sites in Woodstock with potential impact on the heritage of both the ancient market town and on the World Heritage Site.

West Oxon DC was “told” in no uncertain terms to get a heritage impact assessment before he – the Inspector – was prepared to consider the suitability of the sites.

That assessment has now been done by Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) and is the subject of a consultation that does not finish until 20th December.

WTC has appointed its own heritage consultant and it is on the agenda for the next Town Council meeting (12th December) to request him to analysis the CBA report to assist the Town Council with its comments as part of that consultation.

The officer report to the Uplands Committee on 6th December refers to comments made in the CBA report but fails to draw the attention of the committee to the summary conclusion on the Woodstock sites.

10.3 Blenheim Palace WHS and Registered Park and Garden

1. 10.3.1 The three Woodstock allocation sites could all affect the setting of the Blenheim Palace WHS and Registered Park and Garden to differing degrees (see Sections 7.3, 8.3 and 9.3). Together they pose a more significant issue in terms of their potential in-combination impact on the wider rural setting of the WHS (see Section 7.3 for a discussion as to how the setting of the WHS contributes to its OUV).
2. 10.3.2 The development of the entire area of all three sites would constitute a significant change to the rural landscape setting of the WHS. The partial built development of the Sites, as advocated in this document, would still result in a change in the rural setting but to a less significant degree. It is unclear however where the tipping point would occur i.e. at what point combinations of development would begin to significantly erode the rural character of the WHS’s setting and hence adversely affect its OUV.
3. 10.3.3 The current WHS Management Plan and Setting Study provides some background information but was not designed to assess the capacity of the setting of the WHS to accommodate change, rather they highlight issues that needed to be considered.
4. 10.3.4 In terms of the allocations sites that pose the greatest in-combination risks, it is our view that the Land East of Woodstock and Parcel A of the Land North of Banbury Road (without alteration or mitigation) are the least best performing allocation sites in relation to the Blenheim Palace WHS. It should be noted however that the “Land East of Woodstock” site would perform better if the area to the south and closest to the WHS was not subject to built development (as per recommendation).
5. The Land north of Hill Rise is the next best performing, with Parcels B and C of the Land north of Banbury Road the best performing in relation to the WHS.

To summarise – West Oxon’s own commissioned report recognises that development of the Land East of Woodstock **does** have a “risk” to the WHS.

The officer report suggests that the committee members should recall advice from ICOMOS as presented to the February committee meeting – “Members will recall the advice of Historic England and ICOMOS which was taken into account in assessing the level of harm”

To aid members’ recall, I have highlighted the passages that I feel committee members should note, and to look at in the context of the proposal by Cherwell District Council for an additional 400 houses **connected** to the site under proposal.

62. 5.65 ICOMOS have provided comments on the current application which place their consideration in the context of the previous application and recognise that the scale of development has been reduced and certain elements have been omitted, e.g. the sports facilities. **Their preference is that the site should remain undeveloped**, however their concluding remarks are as follows: “We do not believe that the OUV of the Blenheim Palace WHS would be significantly compromised by the proposed development. Our principal concern remains the further erosion of the surviving open setting of the WHS south east of Woodstock.... While it can be argued that the current application follows the **precedent of suburban housing outside the park wall established from the 1950s, these developments were largely built before the inscription of Blenheim as a WHS in 1987. We have explained as clearly as possible why we consider that the application site should remain undeveloped** but we recognise that the balance of judgement in determining the application rests with the local planning authority. The concerns raised by the present application would be greatly increased by any future attempt to resurrect larger-scale development proposals of the kind for which consent was refused in September 2015 and which we strongly opposed. Any decision to approve the current application should be taken not as a precedent but as allowing the existing settlement to be satisfactorily terminated against an historic boundary. Beyond this, a halt should be called to all further development before progressive salami-slicing of the remaining open land results over time in its entire loss”. Officers concur that approval of the current scheme should not be seen as a precedent for allowing further development to the east.

It is clear that ICOMOS are NOT happy with development of this site and their underlying view concurs with that of the CBA report.

To summarise - ICOMOS says that “*we consider that the application site should remain undeveloped*”.

This might not be what the District Council wants – it might be inconvenient in terms of finding sites for the housing numbers that the Growth Board have set. But, the Council has an opportunity to protect the WHS and while it is at it, to minimise the effect on the historic town of Woodstock.

The arguments against this site are strong – Uplands *resolved* in favour of approval in February because of an estimated need which skewed the five-year housing supply and the committee felt it had to give approval in spite of the fact that it had yet to be approved by the Local Plan Inspector.

Over the past year Woodstock Town Council has commissioned a number of different planning consultants, all of whom have believed that the Planning Authority would have had a strong case for refusal at any appeal.

However, the Committee decision at the time was to accept the proposal based on the figures in front of it figures which are now shown to be exaggerated.

A recent press release issued by the District Council leader confirmed that the Government consultation report on house building suggests a housing target of 3,415 homes per year as opposed to 5,000 as required by the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA).

To summarise- New Government figures for housing need in West Oxfordshire suggest a target lower than originally indicated.

The Town Council always believed the SHMA numbers were too high, but we don't need to revisit that – it should be enough to recognise that the figures have now been re-evaluated and downwards – by Government statistics. WODC could and should tread cautiously at this stage.

It means that the original presumption that the 5-year supply was not met no longer counts, and the committee currently has a legitimate case to defer the agreement pending the Inspector's decision.

The correct processes have to be followed and the electorate needs to know that West Oxfordshire District Council is acting in an appropriate fashion. Woodstock Town Council has been put to considerable expense on behalf of its residents to question the process and the committee on 6th December has an opportunity to look at this closely and not to make an irreversible judgement.

To summarise - The consideration of this proposal is premature, and undermines the democratic process. To press ahead at this point would be questionably illegal, but certainly undesirable. Bearing in mind the immense public interest, as seen from responses to the application previously, it would have been reasonable and good practice not to rush this week's Agenda for the site.

The committee has an opportunity to defer this matter until the consultation on the CBA report has been completed and submitted to the Inspector. WTC and others believe that WODC should wait for the Inspector decision on the suitability of this site.

We ask the committee to question what happens if the Inspector rules out this site in entirety or even partially? Will members feel that they have acted correctly when they had a very good get out of jail card?

To summarise - Woodstock Town Council therefore asks for your support in deferring this matter until after the Local Plan process has completed and the Inspector has been able to arrive at a balanced judgement, taking full account of the heritage impacts and the need for development across the District.

Please support us, and defer a final decision until such time as all material considerations have been considered.

Trish Redpath
Mayor of Woodstock