

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

UPLANDS AREA PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

Date: 28th May 2025

Report of Additional Representations



**WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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23/03071/FUL	Land South of Forest Road, Charlbury
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Report of Additional Representations

Application Number	23/03071/FUL
Site Address	Land South of Forest Road Charlbury Oxfordshire
Date	22 nd May 2025
Officer	Mike Cassidy
Officer Recommendations	Approve subject to Legal Agreement
Parish	Charlbury
Grid Reference	435053 E 219433 N
Committee Date	28th May 2025

Application Details:

Planning application for the erection of thirty seven dwellings including access road, landscaping, and associated earthworks.

Applicant Details:

Harper Crewe (Charlbury) Ltd
C/o Agent – Savills

Additional Consultation Responses Received

Since the Committee report was published, the following additional ‘Consultation’ responses have been received:

I CONSULTATIONS

Cotswolds National
Landscape Board

The Board considers that the proposed development would constitute ‘major development’ in the context of paragraph 190 of the National Planning Policy Framework (‘NPPF’). By extension, based on the definition of major development contained in footnote 67 of the NPPF, we consider that the development merits this status by virtue of its nature, scale and setting, and its potential to have a significant adverse impact on the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Paragraph 190 of the NPPF states that planning permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest.

We consider that those exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated, and the proposal as submitted does not accord with Policies OS2, EH1 and BCI of the Local Plan and Policies CE1, CE13, CE14 and CE15 of the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030.

We acknowledge that the Council cannot currently be able to demonstrate a five-year land supply. However, we consider that the application of policies in the NPPF, in particular paragraphs 189 and 190, provide a strong reason for refusing the proposed development. As such, we recommend that the 'tilted balance' in favour of granting planning permission is not engaged and the application should be determined on an unweighted planning balance with strong reasons for refusal already present as outlined in Annex 1, which can be viewed on the website.

Biodiversity Officer

No objection subject to conditions relating to ecology, biodiversity, boundary treatment, landscaping, lighting, and Construction Environmental Management Plan as suggested being attached to any permission granted.

Thames Valley Police -
Designing Out Crime Officer

No objection subject to conditions relating to Secured by Design accreditation, defensible space and planting and lighting as suggested being attached to any permission granted.

NHS Buckinghamshire,
Oxfordshire, and Berkshire
West Integrated Care Board

No objection subject to a s106 legal agreement being entered into securing a of contribution (£33,529) towards the creation of additional clinical capacity at Charlbury MC or an identified primary care estates project in the local area to serve the development.

WODC Conservation And
Design Officer

The Evenlode valley is a crucial feature of the Charlbury Conservation Area, both in terms of its strong riparian character, and also in the way it has largely contained the built development of the settlement to its eastern side. The current site sits on the western side of the valley, on rising ground.

Because of this topography, the site is prominent in views from the settlement - particularly from Dyers Hill and Grammar School

Hill - and also in views towards the settlement – particular from the main western approach, along Forest Road. And whilst vegetation masks the site to a degree in some views, we would not wish to rely on green screening in perpetuity – particularly in these days of climate change.

Although there is existing, somewhat workaday, development adjacent to the north-eastern edge of the site (and also the Grade II listed railway station), the character of the site itself remains essentially pastoral, with some trees. Until recently there was, in fact, fairly copious vegetation with mature trees on the lip of the valley, under which the site nestled to a degree, although this has largely gone, arguably increasing the prominence of the site against the skyline.

In summary, it seems that almost any development on the site is likely to make a considerable impact upon the setting of the conservation area, particularly if it occupies the land rising to the south-west.

Turning to the current proposal, 37 dwellings are proposed, mostly flanking a road running along the mid-height contour, although with a spur running to the higher ground to the south-west -and pretty much following the constraints imposed by the shape of the site. There are garages to the market houses, with parking spaces generally set beside and between the other properties. The general layout appears fairly workable and is roughly similar to that approved under 15/03099/FUL. But it does nonetheless push dwellings up to the most prominent highest ground.

There is a range of house designs, which are now considered to be acceptable in design and appearance. The layout of the revised scheme is broadly similar, but the primary road is now curved, with radial positioning of the buildings. This gives a more natural fit for the contours and could create a little more interest. The houses now have simpler massing and simpler elevational treatments - and they are now more securely rooted in the typical neo-vernacular.

My main criticism with this scheme remains that the single storey buildings should be on the higher ground to the west – with the taller buildings tucked down at the east side, nearer to existing development. I would have advised that there should be no development at all on the higher ground, but we previously supported this – whatever the status of the previous consent.

Anyway, as it stands, I would judge that there is indeed harm to the setting of the conservation area – because the Evenlode valley has previously pretty much formed a limit to built development, with a rural feel on the west side. However, as there is already *some* development adjacent to the site, around the railway, I would judge the harm to be somewhat less than substantial.

But admittedly, the principle of development here has already been conceded, and there is a considerable amount of non-market housing here to weigh in the balance.

WODC Environmental Health
Air Quality

No objection to the proposal. The inclusion of photovoltaics, cycle storage and electric vehicle charging (including e-bikes & scooters) in each property and proposals to improve the pedestrian footpath from the site to Charlbury itself are welcomed and should be conditioned in any permission granted.

WODC Environmental Health
Noise and Amenity

No objection subject to a noise condition as suggested being attached to any permission granted.

WODC Sports and Leisure

No objection subject to a s106 legal agreement being entered into securing contributions toward outdoor pitch provision (£73,194.14), artificial pitch provision (£2,626), sport hall/ studio provision (£17,116), swimming pool provision (£20,648) and tennis court provision (£1,318) within the catchment area.

WODC Planning Policy
Manager

No objection to the proposal.

Additional Representation Responses Received

Since the Committee report was published, an additional 18 objections have been received. These objections raise no new matters to those already set out in the 'Representations' section of the report.