Dear Sir

Planning Application 14/12118/OUT - Proposed Development at Rowden Park, Chippenham

Please note our objections to the above planning application.

We live at Showell, Chippenham which is in the parish of Lacock which is in Corsham area, not Chippenham. This is a Chippenham expansion, the development is for 1000 new houses and will back directly onto our boundary. The development comes far further south than originally envisaged and curls around the back of the Showell nurseries. Wiltshire Council’s original draft Core Strategy called for 800 houses on this site extending to the northern boundary of the field north of the nurseries within the Chippenham boundary.

Core policy 10 mentions that site allocations should ‘Have an acceptable landscape impact upon the countryside and the settings to Chippenham and surrounding settlements, improve biodiversity and access and enjoyment to the countryside’. This would have a massive impact on our rural setting. Showell is a small community. With the proposed development we would be on the edge of a housing estate. We are currently surrounded by open countryside and the Avon Valley. Various wildlife, deer, barn owls, green woodpeckers, greater spotted woodpeckers and bats are regular visitors all of which would disappear if we are part of a large housing estate. We bought our house to be part of a rural community not a large housing estate. It would be an unsightly gateway to Chippenham that would destroy the rural setting of the town as well as the unique rural setting of the village of Lacock.

A planning application (application number N.95.0273.F) that was submitted by the previous owners of our property to build a two-storey extension in March 1995. The application was declined by the district council for the following reason:

‘The proposed extension by reason of its height, mass, bulk, design and appearance would appear as a substantial and conspicuous new building in the countryside and would adversely affect the rural scene. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy H12 of the North Wiltshire Local Plan’. It also mentions that the extension, by reason of its modern design and appearance would be particularly conspicuous in the landscape and consequently, would adversely affect the rural scene.’

The rural scene in this area has not changed since 1995 therefore, how can these proposals be acceptable when a relatively small extension (compared to a large housing estate) is declined?

Core Policy 51 seeks to protect, conserve and enhance Wiltshire’s distinctive landscape character. The Visual Impact to the community would be a massive change ie houses rather than open countryside.

The proposed Riverside Park would be swapping real countryside for very artificial countryside. The designation of the conservation area was about protecting the character of
the green finger of countryside running in towards the heart of the town. The overall result
will be that the entire landscape to the south of the town will be swamped by buildings and
semi-designed managed green space. Nothing natural will be left, rendering the point of the
Conservation Area designation meaningless. What is the value of the riverside park
compared to proper remote rural countryside?

The impact of Lackham House and the setting of this Grade II listed mansion have been
totally ignored. It has an important setting, with set piece landscape views running up to
Chippenham. This landscape will be filled with housing or artificial countryside. The
relationship between Lackham House and Park, the green finger of land that runs into the
Conservation areas of Rowden and Chippenham will be lost. The character of the area will
be lost forever.

Policy CH1 mentions that the allocated area of land is greenfield and approximately half of it
is classified as Grade 1 Agricultural land i.e EXCELLENT. How can this be acceptable to
build on prime agricultural land an in light of the recent EU referendum result surely this land
will be even more important if we are to be self-sufficient. Once this land is built on the
grade 1 agricultural land will be gone forever which seems to be very short sighted. It will
destroy prime agricultural land, currently used for dairy and arable farming.

Brownfield land is available in Chippenham and should be considered for development
first. The site where Chippenham Police station was located has become available, together
with Chippenham College and Allington School.

The proposal does not comply with the recently agreed Core Strategy for Chippenham that
says new jobs must come before new housing, so as to avoid further out commuting from
Chippenham. There is no mention of employment land development in the Rowden Park
development.

Access to the proposed Rowden Park development appears to be reliant upon the proposal for
the land opposite (Showell Farm) to be developed and thereby giving access across this land
and onto the A350. If both applications are successful this will create yet another pinch point
on this arterial route to the South West of England. However, if the land (Showell Farm) is
not developed, Rowden Park will create massive traffic issues along Patterdown and the
B4258 to the Lackham roundabout.

No consideration whatsoever has been made from our local requests for a cycle lane/footpath
south along the B4528 to the Lackham roundabout to link Showell and Lackham college to
the north. The new development will, allegedly, contain a primary school and preschool,
retail shops; a dentists, doctor’s surgery, vets and community building, none of which will be
accessible to Showell residents travelling by foot or cycle track. Crest Homes made similar
promises to provide a community centre and amenities when planning to build Cepen Park
North. This did not happen. What trust can we put in them now?

Flooding is also a concern for us. We frequently walk along the countryside at the back of
our property and is often very ‘boggy’. Will we be at risk of flooding once this land is built
on and will not be naturally soaked up by the land?

There are over 100 documents, many relate to policy documents that are linked to the current
application. Most are extremely lengthy and cross refer to policy documents that are equally
lengthy and also cross refer to other policy documents! It is not a reasonable to expect a ‘lay
person’ to digest these documents without a knowledge of planning legislation.

Chippenham seems to have been left behind as far as development is concerned.
Development is needed in Chippenham yes, but a plan needs to be well thought out and not
just bulldozed through as the developers are taking the opportunity to get anything they
propose to be accepted without any thought for the residents of Chippenham nor the
surrounding area.

We object to the proposed development of 1000 houses at Rowden Park,
Chippenham. However, if the proposal could be reduced to the original 800 houses (as per
the original Wiltshire Core Strategy) or fewer to be within the parish boundary of
Chippenham and not to expand into the Parish of Lacock, Corsham this would have less of an
impact on the countryside and our homes in Showell.

Yours faithfully

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