

Planning Officer Richard Sewell
Wiltshire Council
Planning Section
Bourne Hill
Salisbury
SP1 3UZ

23rd October 2017

Planning application 17/08735/FUL

Dear Planning Officer,

I would like to register a strong objection to this proposal. Having read through all of the available documents it is apparent that the application was ill-conceived at the outset. The application documents contain a number of contradictions, errors and inaccuracies. The applicant's consultants have provided documents which are poorly executed having misinterpreted the Council's policies completely as well as being silent on a number of key issues.

There is also a distinct lack of information and detail associated with this application. For example the planning statement states that:

'The proposals will use a range of traditional natural finishing materials which are popular in the local area. As can be demonstrated in the DAS'

I can not see a DAS on the Council's website? Has this even been produced/ submitted?

In addition the Heritage Assessment states that:

'No fixed proposal or site plan has been produced, although it is understood that the construction of six to ten new units is being considered, along with access and landscaping. The design process will be informed in part through the results of this assessment.'

This directly contradicts that planning statement which states that as this is a full application detailed plans have been produced and submitted and the quantum, design and layout of the development is fixed. Given the sensitive location of the site being adjacent to listed buildings and within a conservation area this is an important consideration. It would appear from the statement above that the heritage statement was written well in advance of the scheme being designed since it clearly states that no fixed plan has been produced and it was not know if there would be 6 or even 10 dwellings!?

I have the following objections which I detail in turn in the following paragraphs:

Development outside the village envelope

The application site lies outside the built up area of the village and is defined as open countryside by the Wiltshire planning policy document. This is apparent and clear to see when looking at the site in plan form let alone visiting the site in person.

As set out by Mark Doodes Planning the relevant planning policies are CP1 and CP2 of the Wiltshire Plan.

These policies prioritise development in the main built up areas of the borough. There is an allowance within policy CP2 for small infill development in smaller villages.

It is not clear how Mark Doodles Planning have come to the conclusions in their report that the proposals comply with this policy. When visiting the site it is clear that it is open countryside. It is open green space on the edge of the village and in no way reads as part of the built up area. It is also a very large site capable of far more than a few dwellings as defined by the policy. Put simply, this can not be considered an infill development. Developing this site will clearly push the built up boundaries of the site further south and west. It will have a significant urbanising effect on this attractive part of the village and conservation area.

The site is not sustainable for the level of development proposed. The Planning Statement acknowledges that future residents will need to drive to Swindon for the majority of services.

Design and impact on the village character

The design of the scheme is extremely poor and will have a significant impact on the character of the village and the conservation area. It is not apparent as to how the final design was arrived at due to a lack of information with the application. In my view the design is poorly conceived with no architectural merit or consideration to the character and appearance of the village. There are no examples of houses or development like this anywhere in the village what so ever. The decision to locate the residential element to the far south of the site is truly bizarre since this exacerbates the impact of the scheme by projecting out further into the open countryside and elongating the southern boundary of the village. This is directly contrary to the local planning policy so it is unclear why the applicant has taken this approach.

The decision to place the open space and play space on the northern part of the site is equally bizarre. Although partially open the long access road, managed fields and play equipment and paraphernalia (potentially including additional parking) will have an urbanising effect on the village. The site is on the fringe of the village and at present has an attractive rural feel and provides a pleasant break from the urban edge of the village out into the open countryside. The managed open space and play equipment will change this character completely which will damage the character of the village and the conservation area. Presumably this field was included within the conservation because it was deemed worthy of conservation and preservation in the first place? Completely redeveloping this field (Even with part being open) will dramatically change the character of the area. Locating a playground immediately adjacent to a busy main road does not seem to be a sensible suggestion. Is there no a minimum distance for play grounds from main road in the interests of highway and children's safety?

The design of the housing element is laughable and there is no clear reason or justification set out in the application documents for the architectural style and type of development proposed. The Mark Doodles planning statement contains a number of generic and broad brush statements that could be applied to any site in the country. No specific assessment of the site and the village seems to have been undertaken which is required by the Wiltshire planning policy.

The site is in a very sensitive location. As noted it is currently open undeveloped land located outside the built up area of the village within open countryside, within a conservation area and adjacent to listed buildings. Despite the highly sensitive location the design of the housing element is anything but sensitive. The first view of the development will be a solid terrace which expands nearly the entire width of the site. This presents a hard solid edge to the development which when combined with the excessive height of the buildings increases the prominence of the buildings further. No account seems to have been paid to the sensitive

location of the site in this regard. The houses are excessively large, with huge double height roof voids which provide no useable floor space yet needlessly double the height of the buildings. The houses are enormous! with very large floor areas, not the sort of housing one would expect to see in a sensitive location. Clearly no attempt has been made to limit the scale and bulk of the buildings to the minimum that would be reasonably required for a modest 2,3 or 4 bed house. Adequate family housing could be provided with houses that have half the floor area of those that are proposed! By proposing such large houses with oversized floor areas and enormous double height roof voids, clearly no consideration was given to the character of the surrounding area or the sensitive location. In doing so the applicant has proposed a scheme with houses that are significantly larger and more bulky than they need to be. This further exacerbates the impact of the proposal on the character of the village. Any development of this site would erode the character of this part of the village yet the current scheme proposed excessively large buildings which would have an even greater impact.

Trees

It is my understanding that the trees on the site are protected by a preservation order. It is unacceptable to propose the removal of trees that are protected. What is the point in protecting trees if there are going to be allowed to be removed?

The Tree Officer's response also points to a lack of information with the application. Where are the tree documents to show that there will be no trees affected by the proposal? Clearly some trees will be affected since Mark Doodes Planning states that a number of trees are to be removed!

These trees are within the conservation area and form an important part of the character of the village. Their loss should not be accepted in any circumstances.

Parking

Although the planning document indicates that sufficient parking has been provided, there seems to be very limited parking for visitors? Where will visitors park if there is no where to park within the site? Where is the parking for the proposed play area?

Open space and Play ground

There is no assessment of need for the open space and play area that are proposed. These facilities already exist in the village (in a safer and better location) and one would question the need for additional facilities. In my view this is a clear attempt to 'bribe the planning officer and locals' by offering up potential 'incentives' which would not otherwise be available. Given that there is no need for these facilities they should not be considered as part of the proposal.

The application material is again silent and lacks detail with regards to the specifics of the open space and play equipment. It is not clear exactly what type and kind of play equipment is proposed? What age groups for example? The applicant does not state who will pay for the equipment, who will build it and when it will go in place. In addition who will be responsible for the on going cost and maintenance of the open space and play equipment? I would have thought that these important points of detail should be provided now. If no one is going to be willing to pay for it or take on the liability of future maintenance then what is the point of proposing it in the first place?

Similarly there is a very long access road to serve the housing that passes through the open space area. Who will be responsible for the future maintenance of this road? Will this be the

Council? If so is it suitable for the council's bin Lorries to travel down as it looks very narrow?

Impact on conservation area and listed church

It is not clear how the heritage statement can conclude that there is no impact on the conservation area or the listed church and buildings adjoining the site. It would appear from the following statement in the introduction of the heritage statement that the assessment was not based on a final design,

'No fixed proposal or site plan has been produced, although it is understood that the construction of six to ten new units is being considered, along with access and landscaping. The design process will be informed in part through the results of this assessment.'

How can the author of the document reach such a strong conclusion as there being no impact when they have clearly based their assessment and conclusions on a hypothetical scheme? The heritage assessment is therefore clearly flawed and can not be relied on as providing any accurate assessment of the impacts of the proposal.

The application site is within the conservation area and directly opposite and adjoining listed buildings. The site is currently open space and forms an attractive and open setting and aspect to the listed buildings and sensitive rural edge to the village and conservation area. The proposed development will significantly urbanise this part of the village introducing managed open space, play equipment, roads and car parking and enormous houses. The setting of both the conservation area and the listed building will change immeasurably and forever. The heritage of the village should be protected at all costs which is why these important buildings were listed and the area was designated as a conservation area in the first place.

Affordable Housing

It is not clear why Mark Doodes Planning consider that no affordable housing should be provided? Reading the Wiltshire planning documents affordable housing should be provided on sites which are capable of providing more than 3 or 4 units. This is a very large site and should be providing affordable housing in line with Council policy and meeting local needs.

Drainage

The application does not provide any details on flooding and drainage. This is currently a green field site and regularly has excess water and low level flooding since it is at a low point in the village and in an area where drainage is a problem.

How is it proposed to drain the site since there will be concrete and buildings where there is currently green space. Similarly how will sewage be dealt with? Surely all this information needs to be provided before any planning permission is granted this may affect the type of development or even if it is possible at all.

Summary

In summary this is a poorly conceived application, inadequate information has been provided, the application documents incorrectly interpret the Council's policies, contain a number of errors and contradictions and fail to address key issues.

I strongly object to the application and it should be refused for the following reasons:

- The development is in open countryside outside of the village boundary and therefore contrary to Wiltshire planning policy and should be refused in principal.
- The site is not in a sustainable area and the applicant himself accepts that the occupiers will regularly drive to Swindon and further afield.
- The design is poor and ill-conceived. It is in direct contrast to the character of the existing village. The proposed housing is monolithic and unnecessarily large and will dominate the local landscape. In addition the managed open space, driveway and parking area and the play equipment will have an urbanising effect on the area. This will significantly damage the character of the village and the local area.
- Due to the extremely poor design and mass of the buildings the proposal will damage the setting of the listed building and the conservation area both of which should be protected at all costs.
- Loss and damage to protected trees.
- Insufficient visitor parking proposed.
- No information on drainage and sewage provided.
- There is no need for the open space and play equipment and this is clearly an attempt to 'bribe' locals into supporting the scheme. No assessment of need has been undertaken or provided. No information on who will pay for it or be liable for future maintenance.
- No affordable housing provided.
- There is no DAS document provided by the applicant.
- Who will be liable for the long access road and is it does not look suitable for Council bin trucks.

I have only just been made aware of this application and it appears that the deadline for comments has passed however the website states that the deadline for a decision is not till February 2018. Please therefore take my comments into account with respect of this important and sensitive site. I have also sent these comments separately to the Parish Council who I believe will be making their own assessment and comments in due course.

Regards

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