The Bourtons Parish Council

Great & Little Bourton, Banbury, Oxfordshire

Cherwell District Council

Planning Department

Bodicote House

Bodicote

Banbury OX15 4AA

November 11th 2016

Dear Ms Ford

Re: Planning application 16/01979/F

 Land to the west of Garners House, Main Street, Great Bourton

 Response from The Bourtons Parish Council

The Parish Council has been involved in the many steps leading up to this latest planning application, and had supported the previous application which resulted in Outline Planning Permission being granted for a development of 33 houses on the site. The Parish Council felt that the creation of 33 houses would bring benefits to the village which can best be summarised as:

* bringing “new blood” into the village to support our community and contribute to the many village institutions such as the pub, church, local clubs and societies as well as those facilities we share with our neighbour village, Cropredy, such as their shop, school and doctors’ surgery.

*In the light of many comments received by the Parish Council from residents regarding access to places at the primary school and doctors’ surgery, councillors have contacted the Head of Cropredy School who has confirmed that currently they have spare capacity, and indeed would be keen to have more local children from within their catchment area to reduce the numbers who are travelling from Banbury and other villages outside of the catchment.*

*Discussions with the Practice Manager at Cropredy Surgery have confirmed that they could accept any new residents from Great Bourton as a result of this development.*

* Providing new houses of an affordable nature and size will support children of village residents who would like to live in the village, and those residents who wish to downsize. This would apply to both some of the social housing and the suitable market housing. Thus we would welcome the requisite mix of house types and tenure options to meet local needs.
* The addition of a new play area at the top of the village will provide an opportunity to provide some play provision when the current Great Bourton playground lease expires in less than 10 years. This could also be used in a supervised way by users of any playgroup set up in the community hall.

*Again in response to comments received by the Parish Council, the lease of the current playground has been examined and there is a clause which prevents the lease being renewed when it expires.*

* The current traffic calming measures are seen as ineffective, and sometimes dangerous, can be re-examined and improvements made within the scope of this development.
* The creation of a bus layby to enable public transport running along the A423 Southam Road to be able to stop at Great Bourton.

*While it is accepted that following the withdrawal of bus subsidies by OCC there may be no current usage for this layby, it would be hoped that if some future bus service provision is arranged, then the layby would allow Great Bourton to have a stop. As suggested by the consultation response from OCC the s106 contribution allocated to improvement of bus services for Great Bourton may help to sustain an alternative community service. The Parish Council is working with other local Parish Councils to identify alternative public transport solutions.*

Following the withdrawal of the previous developer, and the appointment of Hayfield Homes [HH] the Parish Council has continued to work towards achieving a development that will be acceptable to the village and bring certain benefits. However, while the Parish Council was generally supportive of the first proposal made by HH, when this was discussed by them with the Planning Department, many changes were subsequently introduced, the most significant of which is the increase in the number of houses to 43.

The Parish Council felt that the mandate it held for the previous development of 33 houses did not enable it to comment effectively and reflect accurately the opinion of the residents, so has undertaken a further survey of village opinion.

*Again, as previously when surveys were conducted in 2012 and 2014, although survey forms were distributed to every household in Great and Little Bourton, the response rate has been disappointing. However, when the comments made are considered along with the feelings expressed at the presentation made by HH in the village hall there is little doubt that the majority of responders are against this new development, and it is incumbent upon the Parish Council to reflect these opinions.*

The Parish Council is unable to support this current application, as it stands, for the following reasons:

* The increase to 43 houses, which represents an increase of 30% is felt to make the development too large, dominant and imposing at the entrance to the village.
* With the introduction of an extended length of terraced houses located prominently at the entrance to the development, this creates the impression of an urban estate, which is out of place in a rural village such as Great Bourton. Many residents have expressed this view. The presence of “terraces” of houses in the centre of the village was created over time in an evolutionary way, and this is not represented well in this modern terrace.
* The site layout which features the affordable housing in a single area is felt to encourage “ghettoization” and could lead to problems in the future. The development should aim to be 'tenure blind'meaning *t*hat it should be difficult to see the difference between social affordable property and those sold at the prevailing market price.
* The introduction of parking courts is seen as a typical urban design feature and could encourage on-street parking which already blights our village in many areas, as well as potential anti-social issues. These should be avoided. In this, and all other areas of the development, the concept of security by design should be kept in mind.
* The presence of the terrace of houses facing Main Street is positioned extremely close to the existing boundary hedge (which must be retained) and will create a dominating presence, and make hedge maintenance by machine almost impossible.

Setting back these houses would also become more visually acceptable as all the other houses at this end of Main Streethave front gardens and drives.

* Anxiety was expressed by some respondents that the development would cause light pollution and loss of dark skies for the village. We are pleased to note that the Design and Access Statement, at 3.39 describes ‘*low level lighting bollards to provide subtle lighting to shared areas and open spaces, throughout the site to provide safety of access, aid security and surveillance, and to ensure control of light pollution levels’* and that the technical consultee from OCC imposes no requirement for street lighting on road safety grounds.
* Occurrences of flash flooding in Cropredy from run-off of surface water down the Bourton Hill has given rise to some opposition to the development for fear of aggravating that circumstance. We have been assured by HH that the underlying limestone brash in this part of the village will absorb any storm water that falls, but in view of the increased occurrence of summer storms, when the ground may be baked hard, we would be happier to see the previous swales for the temporary retention of water, albeit requiring more maintenance than mown grass, returned to the landscaping scheme, along with the permeable paving roadways.
* We feel that some of the concerns expressed by residents about the increased traffic flow and dangers at the Southam Road junction can be partly ameliorated by changes to the road layout.

*Firstly, an increase in the width of the splay at the entrance to the development would permit drivers to turn more easily and promptly into the entrance, away from following traffic.*

*Secondly, a left filter lane at the Main Rd/A423 junction would ease queuing to exit onto the A423 at peak times, and an extension of this using the wide grass verge on the corner could in the future permit a bus pick-up space.*

*Thirdly, the removal of the anomaly of the national speed limit portion of road by the extension of the 30MPH zone to the interchange with the 50MPH limit would in itself improve road safety in this area. We note with pleasure that an application has been made for this change, which the parish council has requested in the past.*

* Finally, we must refer to the potential for the new Community Hall which is included in the development at the express wish of the landowner.

*The Parish Council has always supported the provision of a new Community Hall as it feels that the current hall is restricted in many ways, including access difficulties, impossible parking arrangements, poor facility provision and does not provide the village with a 21st century hall that could have wider appeal and support new village initiatives.*

*The Parish Council has conducted research into Community Halls in other villages in Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire, some of which have been recently built or extensively renovated. Following a preliminary feasibility study, it believes that the Hall could be self financing and provide genuine benefits that villagers would come to appreciate in the future.*

*The level parking area would also allow the parish to benefit from provision such as the visiting play-bus.*

However, it accepts that the latest village survey does not support that view.

In conclusion the Parish Council cannot support this application in its current form. The Parish Council does believe that some new housing development would benefit the village and bring benefits to our local community but feels that substantial and significant changes to this application must be made in terms of number of houses, site layout, design and style if villagers are to feel that their views have been heard and reflected.

Yours faithfully

*SM Bowen*

Stephen M Bowen

**Clerk to the Council**

For and on behalf of

**The Bourtons Parish Council**