

Reasons for refusal of application 20/07932/OUT

Worton Parish Council is opposed to the above outline planning application for 'up to 26 dwellings and associated infrastructure with all matters reserved for future consideration except for access' at Sandlease Farm for the main reasons stated below:

1. Application unchanged from previously refused application

This application is almost identical to a previous application for this site (17/01905/OUT) which was rejected in July 2017 by Wiltshire Council because it conflicted with the Wiltshire Core Strategy, did not provide sustainable housing, would have a detrimental effect on the landscape and environment of Worton and was proposed for an agricultural site outside the village boundaries. The applicants have not addressed any of these issues and therefore the application should again be rejected. The justification that there is a temporary shortage of housing supply only applies if the proposed development is sustainable which, given the limited infrastructure of the village, and the scale and location of the site, was, and still is, clearly not the case.

The whole of the site is outside the settlement boundary and is contrary to Policy 2 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy.

2. Road safety aspects especially this of the proposed access

The proposed access is considered to be unsuitable due to its proximity to a sharp bend and the speed and volume of traffic entering the village from Market Lavington.

In 2008, an access into Sandlease Farm at the same location was closed down by Wiltshire Council Highways when the Sandlease Court development was permitted 'in the interests of Highway Safety'; yet the Parish Council fails to understand how in 2017 an access for 26 houses was deemed to be safe.

In August 2016 in response to an initial draft from the applicants, Wiltshire Council Development stated that the 'proximity of the access to the existing Sandlease Court access is not considered acceptable'. However, neither the applicant nor Highways addressed this concern in 2017 and it has still not been addressed.

In April 2017 a Traffic Speed Survey was carried out by Wiltshire Council from outside 7 High St, only a few yards from the proposed access. The survey was carried out between 31/03/2017 and 10/04/2017. A total of 33599 vehicles were checked. The 85th percentile was 36.5mph (not under 30mph which had been assumed) and 200 cars per day were exceeding 40mph. The average speed was 31.8mph (not 25mph as stated in paragraph 2.31 of the Transport Statement produced by Trace Design for the applicant).

Unfortunately this data was not available in time to be considered by Highways in 2017, but the Parish Council expects it to be taken into account by Highways as the appropriate speed measure in 2020. The Parish Council has also requested that a further Traffic Speed Survey is carried out by Wiltshire Council at the same point and we are waiting for this to be done.

In summary, the April 2017 metro count showed that only 35% of vehicles were at 30mph or less when they went past the proposed access point.

The Highways officer stated in April 2017 that the visibility splay east of the point of access should be maintained 'free of obstruction thereafter' and assumed that this would not be a problem because the land that visibility is across is owned by highways and they would cut the grass. The visibility splay shown on the planning application shows 60m to the east. According to the Manual of Streets this is the minimum distance for vehicles up to 37mph (the metro count shows 36.5mph so at its very limit). More importantly, the visibility splay on the drawing is on or along the exact boundary of the adjacent property which in reality consists of a hedge and a tree in the corner. This vegetation reduces the 60m visibility splay and there is no indication that the developers have arrangements in place to keep it cut, presumably relying on the existing householder. The visibility splay to the west along the High Street is 43m, this assumes a 30mph speed, but the view is often blocked by parked cars.

The access drawing does not show the Sight Stopping Distance for vehicles coming from the south around the bend taking into account the junction with Worton Road right on the apex of the bend. The concern is that drivers coming from the south, would be busy checking their speed at the bend, having just come from a 50mph limit into a 30mph limit only yards before and looking ahead to ensure that the junction ahead was clear before they started to look further round the bend. This potentially could considerably reduce the SSD left before the vehicle arrives at the proposed access.

In the meantime, the volume and speed of through traffic remains the biggest concern for residents and, unless the proposal is rejected, it will only worsen the current situation.

Worton Parish Council request that Wiltshire Council Highways visit the site to view the proposed access in person to see the potential dangers for themselves.

The Transport Statement provided by the applicant states at paragraph 2.13 that "Worton

High Street has good pedestrian facilities with footpaths on either side of the main road." This statement is not entirely accurate as the pavements are not continuous along both sides of the High Street and the road must be crossed on at least 2 occasions to get from the new development to the other end of the village.

Paragraph 2.14 states that "Worton does not offer designated cycle lanes, however the village is surrounded by quiet country roads and lanes which are considered suitable for cycling." Again this statement is inaccurate. The roads are not quiet and are not suitable for cycling. For example Worton Road opposite the proposed development is busy due to it being the main route to the town of Devizes.

3. Loss of amenity and visual impact

Worton Parish Council believe that the proposed development would fail to comply with the objectives and criteria of the Core Policies 51 and 57 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The development will not conserve or enhance the existing landscape character or protect existing views, into, within and out of the site. This development

will have a harmful impact upon local landscape character and the visual amenity of adjoining residents and users of local public rights of way.

4. Sustainability of the proposal and environmental impact

In Wiltshire Council's Core Strategy, one of the key principles underpinning the strategy key to help build more resilient communities, is the provision for the most sustainable pattern of development that minimises the need to travel and maximises the potential to use sustainable transport.

This development does not do this. There are very few amenities in the village and little employment. Consequently, out commuting will increase; this will be mostly by private vehicles as there is a limited bus service serving Worton. This will have a detrimental effect on the environment.

It is felt that the development is at the wrong end of the village in terms of existing facilities.

5. Scale of proposal

The proposed development of "up to 26 dwellings" is way above the size that the village would be willing to accept. A survey carried out in 2017 by Alpha Research on behalf of Worton Parish Council and Worton Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group showed that about two thirds of residents opted for between 5 and 20 new homes for the village by 2026. However, it was much preferred to have small clusters of houses (ideally less than 5) in any new developments, rather than more than 10 in a single development.

Further comments from the Parish Council are:

Worton Parish Council convened a public meeting in October 2020 to ascertain the views of the village in relation to this application. The Parish Council has subsequently collated and analysed all of the views expressed to it by members of the Parish. Of those who expressed a view, either in support of or in opposition to this application, 97% were opposed to the application.

Reasons for opposition include: concerns over road safety; concerns over the visual impact of the proposal and loss of amenity; sustainability and environmental concerns; the size of the proposed development; the fact that this proposal is outside the settlement boundary and may set a precedent for further development; and concerns over the timing of this application including a lack regard for of community spirit and the additional mental strain that this is placing on parishioners during the current pandemic

The current application also makes claims that the applicant has engaged extensively with the Parish Council and the community, and infers that Worton's Neighbourhood Plan Working Group may have been supportive of this application. These claims do not reflect the view of the Parish Council and may be misleading.

Open Space

The proposal includes a significant amount of Open Space, including a circular walk, improved footpath access to the Sandleaze playing field, seating areas, a fitness Trim Trail, wildlife area, tree planting for screening and a buffer zone between the

new development and existing houses plus other landscaping. It is assumed that the Parish Council would be expected to adopt this land rather than Wiltshire Council. Without further detail and discussion the Parish Council are not prepared to undertake any such transfer due to the unknown potential financial liability and impact on the precept.