

PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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20 February 2017

Mr M Napper
Team Leader (Development Management)
Cotswold District Council
Trinity Road
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Dear Mr Napper,

16/05245/OUT - Outline application (with all matters reserved for subsequent consideration) for residential development (up to 375 dwellings), infrastructure, ancillary facilities, open space and landscaping, creation of new vehicular access and emergency vehicular access from Kingshill Lane

16/05246/OUT - Outline application (with all matters reserved for subsequent consideration) for residential development (up to 130 dwellings), infrastructure, ancillary facilities, open space and landscaping, and creation of new vehicle access from Kingshill Lane.

This letter represents the consultation response of **PRESTON PARISH COUNCIL** to these development proposals.

INTRODUCTION

These alternative planning proposals lie within Preston Parish and are therefore of interest to Preston Parish Council. Preston Parish Council wishes to register its **STRONG OBJECTION** to both proposals and represents the views of the Preston Community based on a meeting held on 3 February 2017.

There are significant issues of concern:

1. The developments are not sustainable under the provisions of the proposed spatial strategy of the emerging Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031;
2. The proposals do not pay due attention to the needs of the existing and future Preston residents for adequate community infrastructure;
3. The proposed cycle and footpath provision along Kingshill Lane is incomplete and therefore not fit for purpose and the junction at Kingshill Lane and A419 has not been properly considered;

4. The development of the site would result in the loss of a green buffer that prevents the coalescence of Cirencester and Preston with an irrevocable and harmful impact upon the character of the village, its conservation area and listed buildings;
5. Insufficient evidence has been provided in the application documents to ensure that impacts arising from the development will be adequately addressed.

Both proposals are outline applications overlapping on the same site and are considered equally in this response. Detailed and application-specific responses will be provided at the reserved matters stage, should permission be granted for the current proposals.

DEFERMENT OF DECISION UNTIL JUNE

The planning applications were submitted in middle December 2016. The likely Planning Committee date would be 8 March 2017. The Preston community was not able to discuss this application until early January 2017 due to the Christmas holidays. This resulted in a three-week delay before the applications could be properly considered.

The planning applications were discussed in a public meeting on 3 February where it was resolved to seek professional advice in preparing a response to the applications. Mike Napper has confirmed that he would accept late a response from Preston Parish Council.

Preston Parish met with Robert Hitchins (23 June 2016) who are therefore aware of the Parish's concerns. However, the planning application does not take sufficient account of the issues raised.

The Parish has been in regular contact with Gloucestershire Highways regarding safety issues on the A419 and Kingshill Lane. This evidence is composed of emails and meeting notes and requires consolidation in support of the Parish's representations on this proposal.

It is noted that Highways England has requested a 3-month deferment while critical concerns regarding the Transport Assessment methodology are resolved. Preston Parish Council consider that 3 months would be sufficient time for them to prepare their own evidence.

The Parish wishes to produce further evidence regarding the impact of proposed development upon the character of the village, the conservation area and listed buildings based on evidence gathered in the production of the parish design statement, *Design in Preston* which will be formally adopted shortly.

Preston Council requests that the planning decision be deferred for three months so that further evidence can be prepared.

RECOMMENDATION FOR REFUSAL

THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Preston Parish Councils considers that the developments are not sustainable under the provisions of the proposed spatial strategy of the emerging Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 and saved Policy 19 of the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan 2001-2011.

The Reg. 19 draft *Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031* has recently been put out for final consultation on focussed changes. The draft plan will shortly be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. The plan's policies therefore bear significant material weight. The draft local plan has identified the South Chesterton Strategic Site as the primary site for housing provision in the District over the plan period. The draft local plan does not allocate housing land in Preston in Policy DS1. Outside principle settlements (i.e. Preston), Policy DS3 ensures that only small-scale developments will be acceptable where it is proportionate in scale.

The applicant has sought to progress this (combined) site in the Local Plan process. However, the site was rejected in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (site C 80) as "not currently developable" because it is "Unsuitable at present due to its remoteness from the town centre. Site would bring coalescence between Preston to Cirencester."

Policy DS 3 contains a number of tests that must be satisfied for residential development outside the development boundaries of principle settlements. These proposals cannot demonstrate that they:

6. "demonstrably supports or enhanced the vitality of the local community" which will be elaborated below. The proposals do not make adequate provision for necessary community infrastructure.
7. "are of a proportionate scale". The proposals for 130 houses or 375 houses would add approximately 455-1,312 people (assuming 3.5 persons per household as an estimate for this outline proposal) to the local population of 252 which is an increase in 80 – 320%. In terms of the land area covered, the proposal is of similar size to the existing Preston Village. This proposal is clearly of disproportionate scale, thus failing this policy test.
8. It will be shown below that the site also fails to "compliment the form and development" of Preston and raises significant concerns regarding impact on the character of the village, its conservation area and listed buildings.

The Cotswold District Local Plan 2001-2011 saved Policy 19 resists new open market housing in rural areas outside the development boundary. This is the origin of the emerging local plan approach.

Policy 19 of the Local Plan resists new-build open market housing that would not meet the social or economic needs of those living in the rural area, or causes significant harm to existing patterns of development, including the key characteristics of open spaces in a settlement.

The proposal has not demonstrated that its future residents will be derived from any local social or economic need of those living in the rural areas. The proposal will build upon a critically important open space buffer that differentiates the urban envelope of Cirencester and Preston. Should this site be developed as proposed by either scheme, the green buffer between the settlements would be lost, contrary to this policy. The impact upon the character of Preston village will be discussed below.

Cotswold District is able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. There is therefore no compelling reason why the spatial provisions outlined above should be superseded by the provisions in the NPPF.

In the applicant's Planning Statement (16/05246/OUT) it is argued that the basis of the emerging local plan's approach to housing distribution is flawed and raises concerns that the South Chesterton development will be able to deliver housing at the projected rate to maintain a steady stream of permissions to meet the 5-year housing land supply.

These arguments are flawed. It is not for an individual planning application to comment on the strategic approach in an emerging local plan. These arguments should be reserved for the local plan where the applicant has unsuccessfully put forward this site for housing development. The rate of build-out for the South Chesterton site should, likewise, be a consideration for the emerging Local Plan and not for this proposal which should be considered on its own merits. Therefore, the references drawn in the planning statement linking the proposal site to the South Chesterton strategic allocation are spurious and should be disregarded in the decisions on the proposals.

The correct context in which to consider the proposals is emerging Local Plan Policies DS1, DS3 and Local Plan saved Policy 19. The local plan policies and material emerging local plan policies provide a suitable framework for decision-making (NPPF 11-14, 215-216). These policies indicate that in principle, the proposal fails relevant policy tests. Accordingly, it should be refused.

UNDER-PROVISION OF COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Preston Parish Councils considers that the proposals do not pay due regard to the needs of the existing and future Preston residents for adequate community infrastructure.

The emerging local plan notes in para 12.1.4 that community facilities may be required in new development and in 12.1.5 that S106 contributions may be required to this end. NPPF para. 70 encourages new developments to plan positively for community facilities. Policies INF1 and INF2 together seek to ensure that new development provides proportionate and necessary infrastructure to sustain and support strong, vibrant and healthy communities.

The proposals will result in a significant increase in the size of the Preston population (estimated to be between 455 – 1,312 people added to the existing population of 252).

Preston Council has a small village hall suitable for the current number of residents. Should the applications be submitted, it is likely that the new population's need will exceed the existing capacity. The proposal does not make any contribution to the civic life of Preston, though will put considerable strain upon it. As such, the proposals do not pay due regard to the needs of the existing and future population contrary to policies INF1, INF2 and NPPF para. 70.

TRANSPORT IMPACTS

Sustainable transport

Preston Parish Council considers that the proposed cycle and footpath provision along Kingshill Lane is incomplete and therefore not fit for purpose. There are also concerns

that the A419 and Kingshill Lane Junction is not safe for pedestrians and cyclists and that this will be made worse through the proposed development.

In a meeting between Robert Hitchens and Preston Parish Council on 23 June 2016, the applicants were made aware of the Parish's concerns regarding the impact of the development on the local road system and the route to schools along Kingshill Lane.

The Parish Council has been in discussion with Gloucestershire Highways over these concerns and has asked for a three-month deferment of this decision in order to consolidate and present this evidence.

- The junction of Kingshill Lane and the A419 is of particular concern to pedestrians and cyclists who find the current revised junction dangerous and frightening. The proposal assumes that all sustainable transport movements will utilise the footpath through this development and the neighbouring development. However, local knowledge indicates that a preferred route utilises the Kingshill Lane and A419 junction. The TA does not pay due regard to this and should be amended accordingly.

The Parish Design Statement illustrates that traffic on Kingshill Lane is a concern. The developments will increase traffic on Kingshill Lane though the extent of this cannot be fully understood until the TA is revised along the lines set out by Highways England. It is hoped that evidence that will be presented that will demonstrate that this road is currently congested during school drop-off times and local children and their parents are reluctant to walk or cycle to school for safety reasons. The Parish Council has made a clear request for the development to address this issue.

The Transport Assessment (TA) clarifies that pedestrian and cycle paths will be provided to the northern boundary of the site, parallel to Kingshill Lane, separated by planting. This is meant to address the concerns raised that there is no safe route to the schools. However, these proposals only partially meet the concerns raised. There is no provision to link the development from its northern boundary to the schools. S106 contributions will be required to ensure that a full link is put into place that meets the needs of the existing community and the new residents of the proposed development. A partial link is of limited use and cannot be considered fit for purpose.

Emerging Local Plan policy INF3 seeks to ensure that development actively supports travel choice through provision, enhancement and promotion of safe and recognisable connections to existing walking and cycling networks. As has been discussed, the proposal does not meet these tests.

Traffic impact upon Preston Village

The consultation responses from villagers illustrate their frustration that Preston is already used as a rat-run on route to Fairford. The main route through the village is narrow and not designed for heavy traffic. The TA does not consider the impact of the proposals on Preston Village and therefore does not provide sufficient information to determine the impacts.

Emerging Local Plan policy INF3 seeks to ensure that development actively supports travel choice through provision, enhancement and promotion of safe and recognisable connections to existing walking and cycling networks. As has been discussed, the proposal does not provide a complete link to enable residents from Preston Village and the proposed development to safely travel by foot or cycle the entire route to and from the schools that will serve this site.

NPPF para. 32 requires developments that will generate significant amounts of traffic to be supported by a TA which will ensure that opportunities for sustainable transport have been taken up and that safe access is provided for all people. The TA that has been submitted does not provide sufficient provision to meet these tests, nor sufficient information to determine the full transport impacts.

The proposal does not make proper provision for the needs of existing and future residents of Preston Parish and does not supply sufficient information to determine the extent and nature of its impacts contrary to NPPF para. 32, and emerging Local Plan Policy INF3.

HARM TO THE CHARACTER AND AMENITY OF PRESTON VILLAGE

Preston Parish Council considers that the development of the site would result in the loss of a green buffer that prevents the coalescence of Cirencester and Preston with an irrevocable and harmful impact upon the character of the village, its conservation area and listed buildings.

Green Buffer

In a meeting between Robert Hitchens and Preston Parish Council on 23 June 2016, the applicants were made aware of their concerns about the loss of the green buffer between the edge of Cirencester and Preston.

The Preston Parish Design Statement highlights the character of the village, its conservation area and listed buildings. In its Guidelines, the Design Statement seeks to retain existing green spaces to the east and west (covering the development site).

The Parish Council is anxious to retain a green buffer between Cirencester and the village thereby maintaining Preston's intrinsic rural village identity. The emerging local plan states in 7.1.1.1.3 (Policy S1) that a constraint to the development of Cirencester is "the close proximity of neighbouring settlements whose individual identities should be protected from the coalescence with the town's urban areas."

The response from the Local Plan Examination Coordinator highlights that the proposal is considered to be located in an unsuitable location because it would "*needlessly extend the built-up area towards Preston – a separate village with its own rural identity, a conservation area and a number of listed buildings*".

Preston's conservation area and listed building will be negatively affected by the proposed development. The Design Statement clearly demonstrates that Preston's character relies upon its identity as a separate village. If the proposed development were to proceed, this separation would be lost with irrevocable harm to the village as an entity, and arguably to the character of the conservation area and setting of the listed buildings.

Traffic in Preston village

The Cotswold District Council EIA scoping opinion required the applicant to provide a thorough assessment of the likely effects which the proposed development might have upon the historic environment.

Emerging local plan policy EN8 seeks to ensure that the setting of conservation areas will be preserved or enhanced, and NPPF para. 128 seeks to ensure that the full impact of development upon heritage assets is considered in development decisions.

The proposal is accompanied by a Built Heritage Statement which considers the development's impact upon the conservation area and listed buildings. However, this is based on the flawed transport assumptions which do not foresee traffic leaving the development to rat-run through the village en route to Fairford. The Heritage Statement is therefore equally flawed because it does not consider this potentially significant harmful impact. The proposals are inadequate in that they do not consider the impact of traffic on the historic character of Preston village contrary to emerging Local Plan Policy EN8 and NPPF para. 128.

INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION

Preston Parish Council considers that insufficient evidence has been provided in the application documents to ensure that impacts arising from the development will be adequately addressed.

It is noted that Thames Water has raised concerns regarding the existing waste water infrastructure and the existing water supply infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the development and has suggested Grampian conditions.

Highways England has raised a number of concerns about the methodology used in the Transport Assessment and has asked for modifications to the underlying assumptions. Preston has also raised concerns about inadequate consideration of traffic impacts on the junction of Kingston Lane and the A419 regarding the needs of sustainable transport users.

Concerns regarding the lack of consideration of community infrastructure has been raised above.

The Heritage Statement did not assess the impact of traffic arising from rat-running through the village on the conservation area and listed buildings.

These omissions demonstrate that the proposals have not been properly considered or assessed. These matters cannot be adequately dealt with in a reserved matters application and should be fully addressed in the outline application stage. The applications should be refused because insufficient information has been supplied in order to fully assess the impacts of the proposed developments.

CONCLUSION

Preston Council recommends that the proposals be **refused** for the following reasons:

- I. **The principle of the development has not been established due to the fact that it is outside the permitted development boundary as set out in Local Plan saved Policy 19 and emerging Local Plan policies DS1 and DS3. It is not required because a 5-year housing land supply has been demonstrated.**
- II. **The proposal does not provide sufficiently for the needs of the community contrary to NPPF para. 70 and emerging Local Plan Policies INF1 and INF2.**
- III. **The proposal does not make sufficient contributions to ensure adequate provision for pedestrians or cyclists and does not provide sufficient information to assess the full traffic impacts of the proposed development, contrary to NPPF 32 and emerging Local Plan Policy INF 3.**

- IV. The loss of the green buffer between Cirencester and Preston Village resulting from the proposed development will cause irrevocable harm to the character of Preston Village, its conservation area and listed buildings by causing coalescence between the two settlements of Cirencester and Preston contrary to NPPF para. 128, emerging Local Plan Policy S1 and EN8, and saved Policy 19 of the Cotswold Local Plan 2201-2011.**
- V. The impact of traffic through Preston Village will cause harm to its listed buildings and conservation area, contrary to emerging Local Plan Policy EN8 and NPPF para. 128.**
- VI. The planning application supporting documents are overall deficient and do not provide sufficient information to assess the full impacts of the proposals.**

CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD THE DEVELOPMENT BE PERMITTED

Should either or both proposals be permitted contrary to Preston Parish Council's recommendation for refusal, the following considerations should be secured through appropriate planning conditions and developer contributions:

- I. A proportionate contribution towards improved community facilities in agreement with Preston Parish Council in accordance with its policies and emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan.**
- II. A complete and safe pedestrian and cycle route for the full length from the development to the schools. This should accommodate the needs of existing Preston Village residents as well as the new residents from the proposed development.**
- III. Sustainable transport provisions at the junction of Kingshill Lane and the A419.**
- IV. Measures to prevent any rat-running from the development through Preston Village.**
- V. A significant and recognisable green buffer between the proposed development and the edge of Preston Village.**

Yours sincerely,

**Caroline Braidwood
CLERK TO THE COUNCIL**