

8 The Tynings
Minchinhampton
Stroud
GL6 9EJ

16 January 2021

Planning Services
Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill
Westward Road
Stroud
GLS 4UB
E-mail: planning@stroud.gov.uk
For the attention of Simon Penketh

LETTER OF COMMUNITY OBJECTION: DEVELOPMENT OF LAND ADJOINING HIGH DALE, THE KNAPP, BESBURY MINCHINHAMPTON: S.20/2667/FUL

This letter sets out our objection to the planning application above.

We have considered the planning statement and various reports submitted in support of the application in the context of national, local and neighbourhood policies and plans. We do not apologise for the length of this response, and we realise that some of our concerns will overlap with those of others, but we feel it important that we give as much detail for your consideration as we can.

THE APPLICATION

This appears to be a speculative application by a developer on behalf of absentee landlords. It seeks to make use of affordable housing as a means to gain approval on a site which would not otherwise meet criteria set out in national, local and neighbourhood policies and plans. It attempts to address previous shortcomings in earlier proposals and well founded objections to development of the site, but lacks fullness and ignores important and relevant policies.

The application appears to have been submitted at a time and in such a way as to reduce public comment i.e. Christmas and New Year and during an unsettling time due to the pandemic. We are grateful to Stroud District Council (SDC) for their prompt responses to our concerns on consultation deadlines and to addressing the need to display the site notices which appeared online on 5 January 2021 and around the site on 6 January 2021.

The application was submitted on 25 November 2020 in the midst of the public consultation exercise by RCA Regeneration on behalf of Piper Homes which is referred to in paragraph 1.4 of the planning statement. That consultation did not close until 16 December 2020. This clearly shows that the community was not engaged at an early stage so that their views could be taken into account in the Planning Statement. **That shortcoming should be addressed in consideration of Paragraph 128 of the NPPF.** It should be noted that conversations with members of the public suggest that a reasonable proportion of those who responded to that exercise think they have commented on the actual application and may not have sent comments to SDC.

The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) prepared by RCA Regeneration after the above consultation is dated 20 December 2020 and was received by SDC on 7 January 2021. It seems to be of limited use since it produces a few graphs and charts and then goes on to simply re-state what is already contained in the Planning Statement and other documents submitted in support of the application. It makes a number of suppositions about why there were only a limited number of

responses to the consultation and what responses might have been had a wider cross-section of residents been consulted.

THE SITE AND ITS PLANNING HISTORY

The planning statement on behalf Piper Homes seeks to downplay the context of the site referring to it as “an agricultural field” and later as “disused agricultural land”. It fails to note that it is a Greenfield site in the Cotswold Area of Outstanding National Beauty (AONB) outside the settlement boundary. Development on the site would be contrary to Policy HC1 of the SDLP.

Paragraphs 170 – 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) state that AONBs must be subject to “the highest status of protection” and goes on to say that “planning permission should be **refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that development is in the public interest**” . **The application does not appear to have identified any exceptional circumstances.**

Paragraph 1.2 of the planning statement notes that the planning history reveals one withdrawn application for planning permission and a planning enquiry where advice was given. That hardly represents a site which has been “extensively promoted over the last few years”. It was put forward as a potential site in the **SDC 2017 Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA), but was rejected with the comment:**

“The site is not suitable for development because of the likely high landscape impact. Development would adversely affect the setting and character of Minchinhampton Common to the west and would impinge on the skyline on the Wold edge which would be uncharacteristic of the main settlement form. There are therefore potential impacts preventing sustainable development in this location”.

The planning statement refers to the “new redevelopment on The Tynings” (S.11/2432/FUL). It fails to state that the redevelopment was carried out on sites of existing housing (40 properties) previously owned by SDC, and within the Settlement Boundary. It provided 66 new properties including a high level of social and affordable housing equivalent to the number of such units previously on the sites. The current planning application also fails to mention that the **Article 31 Statement in the Planning Permission for The Tynings** stated “It is considered that the sites will be adequately contained within clear boundaries and will form a distinct urban edge, separating the three sites from the rural landscape beyond” .

LANDSCAPE

The **SDC Land sensitivity report (2016)** stated that the site is in a parcel of land (M08) considered to be highly sensitive to housing development.

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states that, “great weight should be given to considering landscape and scenic beauty”.

The Stroud District Landscape Assessment (2000) (SDLA) defines the area as “Wold Tops” where the key characteristics for the surrounding landscape is identified as simplicity, with the impression of a plateau with lack of enclosure from trees, scrub or building and simple land textures.

We note that the planning statement sells the proposal as being “genuinely landscape led”, but goes on to say that “the western boundary of the site will be heavily screened by proposed tree and hedge planting”. This would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would fail to protect the “Wold Tops” character of the landscape as set out in the SDLA.

In dealing with an **Appeal APP/C1623/W/20/3247717 and 19** in respect of planning decisions at a similar Wold Top location at Hyde Garage, 0.7miles east of The Knapp, The Inspector determined that the proposed development would be “harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would fail to preserve the natural beauty of the AONB and, in this respect **is contrary to Policies**

CP14, E14 and ES7 of the adopted Stroud District Local Plan (November 2015) (SDLP) and Policies contained within Part 12 and paragraph 172 of the National Planning Policy Framework.”

As with that application, the site at The Knapp is in an elevated position within the AONB with large, wide-ranging views across open countryside. The proposed amount of development on an undeveloped Greenfield site is for 35 houses with 70 associated parking spaces. Landscaping including planting of trees and hedges would be untypical of the character and appearance of the Wold Tops, so this development must also be considered to be **contrary to Policies CP14 and ES7 of the adopted Stroud District Local Plan (November 2015) and Policies contained within Part 12 and paragraph 172 of the NPPF. It appears that elements of Policies MP Dev 1 & 4 and MP ENV 1 of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (2018) (NDP) would not be met.**

HIGHWAYS

When considering this application the issue of the effect on the highways is paramount. Minchinhampton is an old town with an equally old road network both in its centre and surrounding areas. It has considerable difficulty coping with current traffic levels, and parking in and around the town is a major problem. Any increase in daily traffic movements will have a significant impact on pedestrians, equestrian activity, grazing livestock, the environment and pollution.

The Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan 2015-2031 (LTP) Policy PD 4.5 states that Development will be resisted where safe and suitable access is not provided.

Neither the planning statement nor its associated transport statement show how safe and suitable access can be provided for the following reasons:

- The Knapp and The Tynings are both single lane width, 2-way carriageways without footways with relatively low existing traffic use. The proposed development would see a significant increase in traffic using the junction at The Knapp and Cirencester Road. Visibility at that junction with Cirencester Road has been assessed as being only around 55% of Gloucestershire County Council's (GCC) recommended distance. Only one significant accident is reported on the GCC database, but the reality is that many more incidents there go unreported, including a vehicle being written-off in 2018.
- The JNP Transport Statement (TS) submitted in support of the application seeks to deflect attention from the fact that the 70 vehicles for which parking provision has been made will have to use The Knapp as an entry and exit point. No mention is made of vehicles for people using the proposed allotments. Two parking spaces for visitors to 35 new dwellings and allotments hardly seems proportionate.
- The only provision made in the planning statement to address congestion and safety concerns at the junction of The Knapp and Cirencester Road is to increase the width of the The Knapp carriageway to provide a consistent width of 4.8m within the existing highway boundary. There is a clear lack of detail as to how this can be achieved and how any footways could be provided without affecting the character and landscape of the area. The increase in the volume of traffic using The Knapp and its junctions would pose a significantly increased risk to cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders using Public Rights of Way.
- No proposals have been made in respect of providing footways on The Knapp suitable for the use of those who have mobility issues or are visually impaired.
- A further assessment by Helix Transport Consultants Ltd in their submission to Stroud Planning Services (2015) relating to an earlier planning application suggested that widening the carriageway of The Knapp would be constrained because The National Trust had indicated that the verge was registered as common land. Gloucestershire County Council had disputed that claim, however, The Common Land database (Gov.UK) states that the objection was withdrawn. Helix stated that if the highway authority did not object to the verge being registered as common land (1995 Registration Act), then the verge could not be treated as part of the highway. We would strongly recommend that the Planning

Committee refer to the Helix letter of 28 April 2015 when considering this application as there have been no significant changes that would lessen the effect of additional traffic as a result of a new development.

- The TS attempts to use aged national and non-local data to support a low change in the volume of traffic which would use The Knapp. No account is taken of the increased pressure which will be placed on already narrow lanes by an increased volume of delivery and service vehicles. Damage to dry-stone walls in the area, especially where house numbers have grown, is increasing rapidly as a result of increased traffic volumes.
- There will also be many more vehicle movements along the Tynings. That in itself involves the use of its junction with The Knapp which has even worse visibility than the Cirencester Road junction. The carriageway on The Tynings immediately before the junction is only 3m wide, with little or no scope for widening. There would be an increased risk of collision at that junction. The bend at the eastern end of The Tynings is almost 90 degrees with no visibility to the right. The carriageway on The Tynings before that bend is only 2.7m wide. A further point where safety would be compromised.
- A Minchinhampton-specific Transport Study (Helix -2017) could have been used to inform the application, but the TS produced in support of the application errs in favour of national studies and data. The Helix – 2017 report was used to guide the drafting of the Minchinhampton Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).
- The site is adjacent to Minchinhampton Common. Common land, including The Knapp, The Tynings and Cirencester Road itself is grazed by livestock between May and November. There will be a considerably increased risk of collision between vehicles turning into The Knapp from Cirencester Road and livestock moving along The Knapp to or from the common areas of Minchinhampton and Besbury.

The application therefore fails to satisfy paragraphs 108b, 108c and 110a-c of the NPPF and CP14 of the SDLP. Elements of MP Traffic 1 & 2 of the NDP are not being met.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

The Helix 2017 traffic surveys were undertaken at peak times and assessed the geography of the roads. The Report:

- “concludes that the existing situation in the Parish discourages non-motorised trips” (NDP 6.14).

The NDP further states:

- “the environment for pedestrians was poor given the restricted visibility and narrow or non-existent footways at points where pedestrians need to walk along or cross the road” (para. 6.8).
- “the Parish is poorly served by public transport, increasing the reliance of residents on private vehicles” and “the need for quality non-car access opportunities designed to accommodate the mobility impaired and for children in push chairs can only increase” (NDP para.6.13).

The location of the proposed development in relation to local services and amenities is unlikely to make it conducive to walking and cycling because Cirencester Road is a barrier due to the high volume of traffic, the lack of a pedestrian crossing and often excessive speed. **There are no proposals in the planning statement which show how the developers intend to address Policy PD 2.5 of the Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan** in respect of safe routes which form a continuous accessible network accessing town centres, residential areas, employment areas and routes to school. Indeed, this proposed development can only increase the problem by increasing traffic.

Cycling is enjoyed by some as a pastime, but the absence of designated cycleways, the speed and volume of traffic and parked cars, along with limited lighting would discourage most from

commuting to work or to Stroud or Kemble stations by bicycle, especially during the winter months. Cycling to and from other centres in the area to make use of larger supermarkets, a greater variety of other shops and entertainment facilities is unlikely given the location of Minchinhampton and the nature of the surrounding roads (steep inclines and descents, where dedicated, seasoned cyclists struggle). Increased car journeys will therefore be generated.

Because of the above the application fails to satisfy elements of CP 8 and CP14 of the SDLP, and MP Transport 1 & 2 of the NDP.

HOUSING NEED

The application makes much of the proposal being for 100% affordable housing, and the increased amount of housing needed in Stroud as a result of the August 2020 'Changes to the current planning system' consultation paper. Responses to that consultation resulted in **the Government response dated 16 December 2020 (The Response)**. It states that, having considered the proposed changes to the standard method for assessing local housing need the government have concluded that they will continue to expect the use of 2014-based projections. This is due to the substantial change in the distribution of housing need that would arise as a result of the proposed change and the interests of stability for local planning and for local communities, the government will continue to expect the use of 2014-based projections. **Local housing figures therefore remain robust, so the argument set out in 2.1.7 of the planning statement is irrelevant.**

Consideration of future housing need projections should be made alongside future site reviews in an holistic way, ensuring that proposed sites can deliver the housing need and the needs of those living on the development, and that community infrastructures can cope with increased demand.

The Response also said, "we should be clear that meeting housing needs is never a reason to cause unacceptable harm....harm or homes is not a binary choice". They go on, "we can and must strive to build more homes, but to do so with sensitivity and care for the environment, heritage and the character of existing communities".

The Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) for Piper Homes and Hamelin Partnership of November 2020 comes with a caveat at paragraph 1.4 which says that no part of the report can be published without prior written approval. However, since it is in the public domain, we note that it claims to have been prepared specifically to determine the level of housing need in the Parish. But it goes on to say that certain statements are estimates, projections or other forward-looking statements and even though based on reasonable assumptions as of the date of the report, such forward-looking statements, by their nature involve risks and uncertainties. It comes with no guarantee or warrant of any projections in it. **It would therefore appear that the HNA is of little value.**

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

This proposal is classed as a major development, not a "Small scale development" as identified in the NDP as being required for affordable housing. The composition of the housing proposed does not properly address the NDP assessed need in Minchinhampton (based on an unbiased 2016 report by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council) which is assessed in as follows:

"new housing to meet local housing needs should comprise of small 1 and 2 bedroom properties for rent, shared ownership or open market sale and a small proportion of 3 and 4 bedroom homes to rent" (NDP 4.84) and

"The NDP considers that on average about 5 new affordable dwellings per year is an appropriate and sustainable rate of provision to reflect Consultation responses" (NDP 4.88).

The construction of 7 units of affordable accommodation in Minchinhampton (REF:S.18/1053/FUL) will start in 2021. Planning permission has been granted for a further 9 houses on Butt Street. We cannot determine whether this will be affordable housing but it does show that the construction of an additional 16 units of accommodation in the town is already online. In addition, planning

permission has been granted to build in excess of 100 houses at a site within a mile of Minchinhampton.

The RCA planning statement reports the number of people waiting for affordable housing in Stroud as being “astonishing”. It is therefore astonishing that the developer is not focussing efforts on larger sites where they could have a greater impact on those numbers. **This has to bring the credibility of the application into question.**

One of four policy proposals set out in the government consultation paper aimed at improving the effectiveness of the current system is to temporarily increase the small site threshold below which developers do not need to contribute to affordable housing to 40 or 50 units, to support SME builders as the economy recovers from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is not clear if this proposed policy change has been rolled back. Given the size of the proposed development this change in policy could be used by the developers to seek **to reduce the number of affordable dwellings or do away with any affordable dwellings completely.**

This is the link to the [December 2020 Government response to the consultation on Changes to the current planning system](#)

18 x 3 bedroom and 1 x 4 bedroom houses represent 54% of the housing proposed in the planning application – not a small proportion. That has to cast some doubt as to whether 100% of the houses will be completed as “affordable”. It is widely known that Section 106 planning agreements are regularly varied to reduce the number of affordable houses.

Because of the above the application fails to satisfy elements of CP8 of the SDLP and MP Dev 1, 3 & 4 of the NDP.

OTHER ISSUES

The NDP states that growth in Minchinhampton should be limited, a few small houses to ensure that the transport system, medical facilities and schools are not further overburdened. The one primary school in walking distance of the proposed development is at capacity as is the doctors’ surgery. Neither would be able to meet the additional demand arising from the proposed development. This site is not large enough to be able to provide both housing and the new facilities which would increase healthcare and education capacity. The proposal does not address these issues.

Conserving the natural landscape, green spaces and the atmosphere of the town is also noted in the NDP. The Minchinhampton Common SSSI is less than two minutes walk from the proposed development, and Rodborough Common SSSI is only a short drive. Any development would lead to an increased footfall at these sites and at the less-used Besbury Common.

The NDP does not consider the proposed site as suitable for development for many of the reasons set out in this letter. The SALA in 2017 identified two sites (MIN004 – Field 0013, Cirencester Road, and MIN005 – Land at Glebe Farm) which are considered as having development potential. It also considered that development was deliverable at MIN010 – Aston Down Business Park. The current review of the SDLP should confirm which of these sites would best deliver housing needs. In short, other sites are available and should be considered before considering a development that would have a very high impact on the area. **Development on the site would be contrary to ES7 of the SDLP.**

It is notable that, on 22 January 2020, RCA Regeneration on behalf of Piper Homes submitted a Representation to SDC in respect of the Local Plan Review. That representation sought to promote the site at The Knapp, failing to give other sites more than a cursory mention and failing to take account of the more widely available options which could deliver more with less impact, including much needed improvements to capacity for education and health provision We believe that it should also be the case that, in providing additional housing, the needs of an increasing population

in the area must be met. **The application does not, therefore, appear to conform to Paragraph 11b of the NPPF, ES6 and ES7 of the SDLP.**

The planning statement does not appear to have given any attention to a loss of light which might occur in respect of existing properties around the site due to their close proximity to the site boundary and the layout proposed. This will be particularly noticeable in the spring and summer months. On a day-to-day basis, we note a temporary reduction in the quality of light when delivery vans or waste disposal vehicles stop outside our house. Any loss as a result of houses and trees would be permanent.

At night there will be considerable light pollution, generated by both housing and street lighting, this will have a significant effect on views of the night sky from around the site and from points from the northern side of the Golden Valley looking south.

The light pollution will also significantly affect the nocturnal wildlife. Bats, foxes, owls, hedgehogs and badgers do use the site regularly, especially in the spring and summer when the grass is left to grow. Voles and mice nest on the site and form an important food supply. The habitat would undoubtedly be damaged and significant harm caused by the introduction of domestic pets. Swifts, swallows and martins, visit the site daily in the summer since it forms part of a corridor along the Wold top for low level feeding on the wing.

Rather than benefitting future generations any proposed development on this site would take away from them significant centuries-old views over areas of the traditional Cotswolds landscape. The site's development would set a precedent which could see the disappearance of the special character of the Wold edge landscape where development has not been seen for many years. If approved, further speculative applications for development to the east and west on the Wold edge to the north of Minchinhampton would undoubtedly follow. **Development on the site would be contrary to CP1 of the SDLP and MP Dev 1 of the NDP**

We strongly object to the application and urge the Planning Committee to refuse it.

Yours sincerely,

Sandra Tyler-Haywood & Ian Haywood

Land at The Knapp, Besbury, Minchinhampton Stroud District Council reference: S.20/2667/FUL	Contrary to policies or shortcomings		
	NPPF 2019	Stroud Local Plan 2015	Neighbourhood Development Plan 2018 – 2036
OBJECTION			
Lack of early community involvement	Para 128		
The site is outside the settlement boundary, within the Cotswolds AONB and would impinge on the skyline on the Wold edge. “There are therefore potential impacts preventing sustainable development” (SALA 2017). Unrestricted development outside the settlement limits could undermine the strategy of managing growth in the District.	Paras: 170-172	HC1	
Landscape: Land Sensitivity Report 2016 states that the site is “Highly sensitive to housing development”. The development harmful to the character and appearance of the area.	Paras: 115, 172	CP14, ES7	Chapter 3 MP Env1 & 4 MP Dev 1 & 4
Highways: serious safety issues which will be worsened by the introduction of around 70 additional cars to the area plus an increase in delivery and service vehicle use along and countless construction vehicles during the construction period. The Knapp junction with Cirencester Road has major visibility issues.	Paras: 108b, 108c, 110a-c	CP14	Chapter 6 MP Traffic 1 & 2 Annex 2
Sustainable Transport: Poor public transport. Cirencester Road forms barrier due to poor visibility, high volume of traffic and often excessive speed, lack of pedestrian crossing, and lack of footways on The Knapp or any proposals for improvement for the use of everyone, but notably the disabled and those with pushchairs. No safe, continuous route to local services, school and health centre and other amenities. Unlikely that walking & cycling will be encouraged. Increased car journeys will result.		CP8, CP14	MP Transport 1 & 2 Paras: 6.8, 6.13, 6.14
Affordable Housing: This is classed as a major development, not a “Small scale development” as identified in the NDP as being required for affordable housing. The composition of the housing proposed does not properly address the NDP assessed need (based on an unbiased 2016 report by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council). A small proportion of the need was for 3 and 4 bedroom homes, not the significant amount (over 50%) proposed. No proposals to address requirement for increase in capacity required for education and healthcare.		CP8	MP Dev 1,3 & 4 Paras: 4.84, 4.88
The NDP does not consider the proposed site as suitable for development due to the significant changes to the character of the landscape and damage the character and community of Minchinhampton. The proposal does not consider sustainable development since, rather than benefitting future generations, the proposal would significantly alter the traditional Cotswold landscape with the loss of centuries-old views.	Para 11b	CP1, ES6, ES7	Chapter 4 MP Dev 1

This is the link to the [December 2020 Government response to the consultation on Changes to the current planning system](#)