

Sonning Common Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting of the PLANNING COMMITTEE held in the Village Hall on Monday 24 November 2014 at 1930 hours.

Present: Ms Noble (chairman), Mrs Lewis, Mr Rawlins, Mr Greenwood, Mr Reynolds, Mr Kedge (ex-officio), Mr Stoves (ex-officio), Mrs Varnes (Deputy Parish Clerk).

P15/100 Apologies for absence: none.

P15/101 Declarations of interest: none.

P15/102 Public question time: 16 members of the public were present. Five residents spoke against the proposal; no one spoke for it.

P15/103 New application:

P14/S3230/O: Outline planning application for the construction of 30 dwellings, including means of access and layout, on land at Kennylands Road RG4 9JT.

During public question time neighbouring residents outlined their strenuous objections to the proposal. Mr Stan Rust, of 30 Kennylands Road, was concerned about the impact on the adjacent AONB and the village's landscape setting; Mrs Heather Rust (same address), about inadequate screening of the site; Mr Paul Mullin, of 42 Kennylands Road, about the proposal extending the built area of the village towards Reading and Kidmore End; Mr Simon Atkinson, of 40 Kennylands Road, about the undermining of the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for the village (which has not short-listed the site for development); and Mrs Heather Mullin, of 42 Kennylands Road, about the adverse impact on the privacy and security of existing residents as well as their enjoyment of their properties.

After much discussion members of the Planning Committee voted unanimously to recommend to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) that the application be rejected (see letter attached). Members outlined their following concerns:

- An application to develop the site had been lost, on appeal, in March 2012.
- The proposal would extend the built area of Sonning Common west towards Kidmore End and south towards Reading and set a precedent for further development in these areas.
- The proposed housing density was much higher than that of the surrounding area; the proposal was out of keeping with the area's character.
- It would have an adverse impact on the adjacent AONB and the village's landscape setting.
- An inadequate landscape buffer with the AONB was proposed.

- The site had not been short-listed for development within the emerging NDP for the village; this application was an attempt to undermine that democratic process.
- It would have an adverse impact on the privacy of existing residents.
- The proposal would generate more cars, cause additional traffic problems and impact adversely on local services.
- The application was contrary to all planning policies, including the Core Strategy (agreed in December 2012) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- The proposed housing lay-out was not inclusive - with affordable housing set aside in an enclave on-site - and the housing mix did not meet the identified local housing need.

It was agreed the Deputy Clerk would write to SODC on behalf of the Planning Committee to outline, in full, the reasons for the recommendation of rejection of the proposal.

The meeting closed at approximately 2010.

Chairman: Dated:

SONNING COMMON PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Office

VILLAGE HALL, WOOD LANE
SONNING COMMON, OXON, RG4 9SL

Clerk – Philip Collings

Tel 0118 972 3616

Email: clerk@sonningcommonparishcouncil.org.uk

Mr Peter Brampton
Planning Officer
South Oxfordshire District Council

Thursday 27 November 2014

Dear Mr Brampton

Re: P14/S3230/O: Outline planning application for the construction of 30 dwellings, including means of access and layout, on land at Kennylands Road, Sonning Common RG4 9JT.

At its meeting on Monday 24 November 2014 members of Sonning Common Parish Council's Planning Committee voted unanimously to recommend to SODC rejection of the above application. The meeting was attended by 16 local residents, a number of whom outlined their specific concerns over the proposal. Refusal of the application is recommended on the following grounds.

1. Extension of the built-up area (contrary to policies CSR1, H4 CSC1, G4, H6)

The proposal would constitute an extension of the built-up area on the edge of the settlement. It is not therefore in-fill within the meaning of CSR1 and is explicitly only for consideration as a potential allocation site via the local neighbourhood development plan or SODC's Site Allocations DPD.

The Core Strategy, under policy CSC1 and table 18.1, makes it clear that delivery of housing allocations in Sonning Common is not required prior to 2017; the local neighbourhood development plan is on target to deliver that need. This site was rejected, on appeal, by a planning inspector in March 2012.

As part of the preparation for the Sonning Common Neighbourhood Development Plan (SCNDP), residents have strongly indicated concerns that development of this site would create a precedent and trend towards conurbation with Emmer Green and Reading to the south of the site and with Kidmore End to the west.

2. Village setting and proximity to the AONB (contrary to policies CSEN1, C4 and C2)

The site lies immediately adjacent to the AONB, as protected by CSEN1. Policy C4 seeks to protect the landscape setting of settlements from damaging development, particularly the effect on the village setting from the AONB. Policy C2 does not permit any development that harms the beauty of the AONB.

Via NDP-related consultation, residents rated the scenic beauty of the AONB land extremely highly and indicated the importance of this site to the landscape setting of the village.

Despite there being fewer houses with slightly lower ridge heights and a broader landscape buffer than previously proposed, the new dwellings would still be clearly visible from the AONB, as shown in the applicant's photo montage. A zoom-in of that proposed photo-montage is attached to amply demonstrate that point.

3. Contrary to planning policies (Core Strategy, NPPF and the emerging SCNDP)

Sonning Common has been developing an NDP for the last three years, in consultation with residents and SODC, and it is now nearing completion. This site, referred to as SON 5, has not been short-listed for development because it is on the edge of the settlement, outside the existing built area of the village and borders high-quality AONB. The topography of the site and the dry AONB valley outside make it abnormally difficult to screen this narrow site effectively.

Residents have been widely consulted as part of the NDP-preparation process and do not support the development of this site as a priority choice. Allocation sites should only be developed as part of a coherent strategy. This proposal is also in contravention of the Localism Act 2012, the NPPF, the Core Strategy and it undermines the voices of local people.

4. Appearance and landscaping (contrary to policies CS1, CSEN1, CSR1)

The proposed landscaping is inadequate to screen the proposed development from the AONB. There is neither suitable depth nor height in the proposed planting zone for this purpose. This will be particularly obvious during the winter months as all the existing and proposed planting on the boundary adjacent to the AONB is deciduous. There is a need for deeper planting zone away from the existing hedgerow and trees. The proposal is not for sustainable development and also does not mention sustainable maintenance provision for the buffer.

In the three years since the appeal the applicants have failed to maintain the hedgerow to the AONB and have not cut the stems of ivy invading the crowns of trees there. Contractors were hired to plant some Holm Oak saplings and these have subsequently died; this underlines the challenge of improving the landscape screening.

5. Layout, scale and density (contrary to policies CSQ3, CSQ4, C6, CSG1, CSB1, CSH3 and CSH2).

The proposed development does not respect the rural character of the site and its countryside setting. It does not integrate well with existing surrounding properties nor is the proposed layout intermixed in terms of market and affordable housing. Ridge heights vary from between 5m and 8.2m but given the narrow nature of the site, rising up significantly towards Kennylands Road, and poor hedgerow quality, these properties would still be clearly visible from the AONB.

The proposed dwellings do not stand off suitably from existing housing and do not make effective use of rear gardens as separation zones.

The application does not allow appropriate stand-off from the old and important hedgerow and the lively wildlife habitat that it represents along the AONB (C6).

The affordable housing is grouped together in the centre of the site and not mixed in with market properties in clear breach of policy CSH3. The density of surrounding housing is approximately 15 homes per hectare. The proposed density of this site with 30 houses on 1.9 hectares - with allowances for landscape buffers, public open spaces and wildlife corridors - would have an unacceptable and adverse effect on the character of the area.

6. Housing needs (contrary to policies CSH3 and CSH4)

The proposed housing does not meet the requirements for housing mix. The development proposes 25 three to four-bedroom houses and five two-bedroom houses, in conflict with SODC's policy requiring 50 per cent of new housing to be one or two bedroom.

The SCNDP working party has strong evidence to support the need for one, two and three-bedroom homes in the village. With this proposed housing mix there would be 100 bedrooms within 30 new homes, contrary to the SODC policy which indicates 75 bedrooms as the appropriate number.

7. Noise, privacy and loss of amenity (contrary to policies EP2 and D4)

Existing Kennylands Road residents are very concerned about loss of privacy, particularly outdoors where the proposed new dwellings are close to their rear boundaries. A 3m hedge buffer zone here will be woefully inadequate.

The relationship of putting housing close to the 20m tall Scots Pines in the Orchard area does not appear to have been suitably thought through from a safety perspective? The additional noise from approximately 50 cars using the new single access road would also cause great disturbance and loss of amenity to surrounding residents.

8. Play areas and open space (contrary to policies R2 and R6)

No play area is specified in the scheme and there would seem to be inadequate open space on-site. The small open space is seemingly also part of the landscape buffer – it cannot be both!

9. Subsidence (D1 and EP8)

This site has a significant and deep chalk pit just outside its SW corner and has suffered incidences of subsidence. There have been suggestions that there may be significant tunnels from the old pit, or equally it may be simply that the subsidence has been caused by natural sinkholes – which are a known risk in chalk landscape. There needs to be suitable evidence that these issues have been properly assessed.

In summary, Sonning Common Parish Council's planning committee considers this proposal to be wholly inappropriate, contrary to numerous planning policies and is causing great local concern among residents. The committee urges you, in the strongest possible terms, to refuse this application.

Yours sincerely



Ros Varnes
Deputy Clerk, Sonning Common Parish Council (on behalf of the planning committee)