

17 January 2018

Ms R Howell  
Planning Inspectorate  
3N Kite  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

Dear Ms Howell,

**Appeal Reference: APP/Y0435/W/17/3183583**

**The Old Rectory, Sherington, MK16 9NF**

**Erection of 7 Almshouses**

We are writing on behalf of Sherington Parish Council to register their objections to the appeal made by Mr Hine in relation to the proposed construction of 7 Almshouses at the Old Rectory, Sherington. The appeal application was refused by Milton Keynes Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017 for the following reasons:

*“(1) The proposed development of 7 dwellings, with associated parking, access and other works would cause substantial harm to the setting of the Grade II Listed Building, The Old Rectory and less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. In line with paragraphs 133 of 134 of Section 12 of the NPPF, where development proposals are required to demonstrate sufficient public benefits to outweigh any harm caused. The proposed development does not deliver sufficient public benefits that outweigh the harm caused and as such would fail to comply with saved policy HE5 of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011 and Section 12 of the NPPF.*

*(2) The proposed development fails to provide sufficient on-site parking to meet the requirements of saved policy T15 of the Milton Keynes Local Plan and the Parking Standards SPD. Given the site's location, in a rural village and Zone 4 of the Parking Standards SPD, a reduction below the required standards is expected to result in on street parking to the detriment of highway safety and convenience.*

*(3) The proposed access serving the site is unacceptable by reasons of visibility, width of access road, junction layout, lack of on-site vehicle turning facilities and gate position. The development if permitted would likely lead to a danger to highway safety and convenience contrary to saved policy D1 (vi) of the Milton Keynes Local Plan 2001-2011."*

The Parish Council support these reasons for refusal. The appeal site lies within the Sherington Conservation Area and is in the grounds of the Old Rectory, one of the principal Listed Buildings within the village. The appeal site is within the boundaries of the Old Rectory, and whilst the appellants argue that the site is a separate entity, it remains part of the enclosed grounds of the Old Rectory and forms an important part of the setting of the house.

It is recognised that the appeal site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Sherington. Policy NP1 of the Sherington Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted into the development plan in October 2017, specifies that:

*"The Neighbourhood Plan defines the Sherington village development boundary, as shown on the proposals map, to shape the physical growth of the village over the plan period. There is a presumption in favour of sustainable development within the settlement boundary, provided that development complies with the provisions of the Sherington Neighbourhood Plan and the Milton Keynes Development Plan."*

Policy NP7 and Policy NP8 of the Neighbourhood Plan make allocations for new housing, accommodating 36 units on land adjacent to the High Street and 9 units on land at Water Lane. These allocations, totalling 45 new dwellings, exceed the housing allocation to be met in Sherington within the Milton Keynes Core Strategy. As a Selected Village within the settlement hierarchy, Sherington was set an allocation of between 20 and 40 dwellings. Through extensive consultation and feedback from the community on progressive drafts of the Neighbourhood Plan, it was agreed that the upper figure in the Core Strategy should be exceeded, to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan was robust. In doing so, we were also mindful of the requirement that housing growth should be limited and small scale within the village.

The appeal site was not put forward as a potential site allocation within the Neighbourhood Plan process, despite a well-advertised call for sites what considered several potential locations around the village. The High Street site was selected, as outline planning permission for this development had been allowed, primarily due to 5-year housing land supply issues at that time. The Water Lane site was a brownfield location that would benefit from redevelopment.

It is disappointing to see that the Appellants did not put the appeal site forward through the site allocation process, they have also made no reference to the Neighbourhood Plan within the application documents or the Statement of Case. As the Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the development plan for Milton Keynes, this is a significant omission.

It was clear when drafting the Neighbourhood Plan, that the community held strong views about the amount of housing that should be delivered within Sherington. As highlighted at paragraph 2.5 of the Neighbourhood Plan, 43% of respondents to the Parish survey indicated that they would support 'no more than 20 homes' and 30% of respondents indicated that the limit 'should be no more than 30 homes'. The figure for 'no more than 40 homes' dropped significantly to 14% and 'no more than 50 homes' was just 10%.

The largest housing allocation of 36 houses resulted from a planning appeal; determined before the Neighbourhood Plan was adopted. Mindful of the communities wishes, when making further allocations, the Neighbourhood Plan sought to limit additional housing over and above this figure, whilst still exceeding the amount allocated to Sherington by the Core Strategy.

The appeal application seeks an additional 7 houses, which represents an increase of 15% over and above the housing allocations recently adopted. The scale of development is comparable to the housing allocation made at Water Lane, (9 dwellings), and is beyond the scope of an infill development. This appeal site is not an infill of a plot within an existing built up frontage, it is not the redevelopment of existing buildings or other brownfield land and it is not limited to one or two dwellings. This is a large scheme in the context of development in Sherington.

If the appeal proposal is found to be infill development, then the second element of Policy NP1 of the Neighbourhood Plan would apply. This expects windfall infill development to fulfil the aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan by:

*"Preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of Listed Buildings and other heritage assets;*

*Ensuring the rural character of the village is maintained and its important green spaces are not eroded;*

*Positioning development to maintain important views within the village and respect the wider landscape setting of Sherington."*

The appeal application proposals do not conform with this policy. The scheme as proposed would not preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of an important Listed Building.

In addition, the appeal site makes an important contribution to the rural character of the village, being one of the largest areas of undeveloped garden land in the heart of the village. As highlighted in the introduction to the Neighbourhood Plan, the open structure of the village has been recognised by successive Parish Council's in numerous village appraisals. The 1972 village appraisal highlighted that:

*"In spite of infilling and growth over the years Sherington still retains much of the open structure and basic shape laid down in about 1300. The surrounding countryside flows into the heart of the village at numerous points and these also afford good views outward over the pleasant landscape."*

The extent of the green area in this part of Sherington can be seen in the aerial photo below, which highlights the amount of green and open spaces in this part of Sherington, a defining characteristic of this part of the Conservation Area.



A view of the Old Rectory looking to the north can be seen below. This photograph has been sourced from MK Heritage. The appeal site can be seen in the background at the top of the photograph, highlighting that this area of land was at one-point part of the tended gardens for the Old Rectory and included several trees where the proposed housing development is now proposed.



Policy NP6 of the Neighbourhood Plan, Design and Energy Efficiency requires development proposals to demonstrate that (amongst other considerations):

*“Respects and protects village assets, conservation area, the setting of Listed Buildings and their curtilages.*

*Delivers high quality development of architectural merit, distinctive and, where appropriate, individual character.*

*Responds to the heritage and the distinctive features of the area and the Parish in which it is situated.*

*Ensures that safe, accessible and well-connected routes to the centre of the village are provided.*

*Preserves the open and green character of the village and recognises the transition to the countryside.”*

As we have highlighted above, the Parish Council do not believe that this development respects or protects village assets and will destroy an important area of green space within the heart of the village, causing harm to the Conservation Area and harming the curtilage and setting of this important Listed Building.

The design of the buildings, pseudo mock-Victoriana, appear contrived and do not reflect the character of other cottage properties in the village. In particular, the row of chimneys along the front elevation are awkward and ungainly, not in keeping with the Old Rectory or the surroundings.

The development has a sustained highways objection, including safety grounds and proposes to create an access onto School Lane, close to the main drop off and collection point for the school. This part of the village can be congested at school times and the addition of a new access with sub-standard visibility splays should be avoided.

The proposed site layout plan also shows footpath links leading from the development across private land to the village shop. This land is not within the control of the Parish Council and there is no guarantee that all the landowners will agree to the footpath access in the manner shown. The Parish Council have not agreed to the provision of this footpath, but have indicated that they would consider proposals in the context of a planning application. In this case, that planning application was objected to.

Furthermore, whilst it has been suggested by the appellants that a footpath from School Lane through the development to the shop would be a public benefit, this appears to conflict with the access arrangement shown onto School Lane includes gates. No unilateral undertaking has been submitted to secure public access through the development and there is uncertainty whether this will actually be achieved.

We are also concerned that the development has been described as 'Almshouses', specifically for people of retirement age, but no mechanism has been put forward to define who can rent the houses, the selection criteria and a commitment to ensure that the properties remain truly affordable. We would have expected a unilateral undertaking to define these issues.

On a detailed point regarding the house layouts, we note that there is no provision within the properties to insert a lift to access the first floor, limiting the lifetime adaptability of houses targeted towards the elderly. No provision has been made for a communal area within the development to allow residents to socialise and share facilities. This is an oversight in a scheme aimed at retirement age residents.

The parking provision on the site is inadequate, with just 6 spaces for 7no 2-bedroom properties. Milton Keynes parking standards require a provision of 2 spaces per unit plus visitor spaces, resulting in a requirement of 19 spaces. The appellants have sought to justify their significantly reduced provision by focusing on the reduced car ownership amongst the intended elderly residents of the houses and the good connections offered by the footpath to the village amenities. Without a mechanism to control occupancy and an agreement to provide the footpath links across third party land, we question the weight that can be afforded to the appellants case.

The parking provision shown on site also makes no allowance for visiting family members, carers and support staff, delivery drivers, and refuse vehicles. Accommodating these extra vehicles would require the hard-surfacing areas to be extended, to include the additional parking, turning and vehicle movements. In summary, we do not believe that the submitted layout makes adequate provision for parking and safe access to the proposed dwellings. There is likely to be a far greater proliferation of vehicles across the site, with the consequential added impacts on the character of the Conservation Area and setting of the Old Rectory.

For these reasons the Parish Council object to this proposal. We trust that these comments can be considered when determining this appeal. Should you have any questions please do contact us and we will be happy to assist,

Yours sincerely,



**Chris Akrill** BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI  
Director

01234 924921  
07807 147256  
[ca@townplanning.services](mailto:ca@townplanning.services)

cc Sherington Parish Council