

Item 7a - 20/02218/FUL - Land opposite Hungerford Road, A338, East Grafton, Marlborough, Wiltshire, SN8 3DF

Statements of Objection

None received

Statements of Support

David Lemon (Applicant) – Support – Received on 06/07 at 16:11

Dear Councillors,

My name is David Lemon and I am bringing this site forward for the second time as a fantastic and great opportunity for Wiltshire to develop smaller and affordable homes for members of our Parish. A generation ago my father **gave** Lynden Close to the village of East Grafton, the aim was to allow the next generation of families to be able to afford to move home. This application has similar ambitions but also with the aim of some of the senior residents being able to downsize with the advantage of making other (family) houses available in the village.

The site is very well supported, locally and by administrative bodies. The AONB have strongly supported it adding that there is no impact on the aesthetic beauty of our landscape. The CPRE have no objections. Old villages need new life and proof of this is, that East Grafton lies within the catchment area of Great Bedwyn School. The school has an “Outstanding” Ofsted rating but currently only has 50% of its pupils from within its catchment area.

It runs against core policies 1,2 & 18, in the sense that it is too big a development to be considered “in fill” within a “small village”.

I ask you as a Committee, why has Councillor Wheeler called this application in? Surely the answer is to assess the merits of this unique site and the opportunity it presents to you as a council to fulfil the housing requirement in our parish in light of the change in circumstances in housing supply. Wiltshire’s own Residential Development Project Manager has moved to make an offer on the six affordable homes that Mr Guest says are already satisfied and there is zero demand for.

“..... I am pleased to confirm that Wiltshire Council would indeed be interested in the 6 affordable homes at this location.....I shall put together an offer on the proposed mix,“

This has been followed by a second email... ”I am now in a position to commence putting an offer together for the affordable homes on this development.”

Here is a site:

- wanted by locals, and the Parish Council
- hoped for by local tourism and businesses
- supported by the AONB and CPRE
- needed by our local schools
- sought after by Wiltshire’s own Housing Association

- in an exceptional time of housing shortage.

In his report Mr Guest states that being in an AONB with no exceptional circumstances that it should automatically be refused. Surely it is exceptional that the AONB fully support the development.

“It is disappointing that again the AONB appears to not have been consulted on this application for which we should have been as per the protocol agreed between Wiltshire Council and ourselves. The AONB unit in this instance supports the application.”

He also suggested at our last meeting that the site is outside the village, which everyone can see is totally inaccurate. Red is the proposed site, Blue is the outside of the village, however it does lie outside the conservation area.



There is a question over the size of the development, but as Wiltshire council want the 6 affordable houses, and this is not a Rural Exemption Site, so there must be a pay off in the commercial market. We need to build 9 houses, in the scale and size demanded by our residents, as per the Housing Needs survey, to achieve financial viability.

I have estimated figures based on build costs and sale prices and although I am (as the land owner) better off to build 4 Executive Houses, than 15 smaller homes, I am at least following my heart and the certainty that I am doing the right thing for the parish and the community which I value so greatly.

At our last council meeting an “open book” was suggested to show that we can justify this point and I have these figures available on a spreadsheet, but I am aware my 3 minutes is all but done.

If required, Councillor Wheeler should have these figures.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely,

David Lemon

Aaron Smith (Agent) – Support – Received on 06/07 at 16:11

This statement is made by Aaron Smith, agent for the Applicant.

This application is not identical to the earlier scheme. Additional evidence has been submitted. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The AONB Board expressly support this planning application. The design of the homes has been revised to improve their appearance and massing. The planning circumstances have significantly changed and I ask you to take this into account.

I wish to address each of the recommended reasons for refusal.

Reason 1

It is agreed with the Council that no five-year housing land supply can be demonstrated; however, the Officer Report downplays any consequential need to boost the delivery of much needed homes.

Unlike the Purton Road and Paddock Wood appeal sites, which are both isolated locations, here we have a suitable location within the built confines of an identified and sustainable village. This site is not isolated.

The scheme supports your plan-led system as East Grafton is identified as sustainable, whilst being of a suitable small-scale relative to this community and their needs. Growth for affordable and open market homes is much needed locally, with benefits to the economy and the ability of the wider community to sustain their facilities.

Reason 2

The AONB Board were disappointingly not consulted on the 2018 application and you were not able to take their views into account. They have now been consulted and do not consider the scheme to be ‘major development’ in the AONB, and that it is limited development which they expressly support.

The AONB Board ask you to take into account:

- the benefits of a range of housing;

- that the development would enhance the entrance into the village;
- the site sits naturally within the built-up confines of the village bordered by substantial development; and
- there would be no harm to the wider AONB landscape due to the location of the site within the built-up area.

The AONB Board have recommended enhancements to the design to which we have submitted revised plans.

Overall, the views of the AONB Board are important to this Committee as they demonstrate the Council would not be able to defend this reason at appeal.

Reason 3

As the Informative confirms, this matter can be overcome by completing a legal agreement to which there are no objections from the Applicant.

Reason 4

It is wrong to suggest that this development would in any way hinder the delivery of affordable housing in Wiltshire. The scheme does not escape its obligations and provides the required number of affordable homes AND a range of other smaller homes to meet the Grafton parish needs.

We have written confirmation from Wiltshire Council Housing Assets Team of their desire to not only deliver six affordable homes in Grafton, but also to acquire these homes under your Homes4Wiltshire programme. Our client looks forward to delivering these homes in partnership with Wiltshire Council.

In summary, there are clear grounds for this Committee to conclude that the circumstances have now changed in favour of the scheme since your decision last August. I ask you to approve this application and recognise the limited impacts of the scheme, as confirmed by the AONB board, and the significant benefits to this local community that will arise from this sustainable proposal.

Yours faithfully,

Aaron Smith BA(Hons) Dip TP MRT

Bill Clemence – Support – Received on 06/07 at 16:11

As a resident of East Grafton since 2001, Landlord of The Swan Inn, the only retail business in Grafton Parish, and Chairman of The Coronation Hall committee I would like to support this application for the following reasons:

1. The proposed site is a gaping hole within the village, it has no visual value and serves no purpose. It is without doubt that the village would be enhanced by an attractive development on this site.

2. Each successive past development of this type has breathed new life into our community. Many houses within our parish have had the same occupants for many decades. Developments like this bring the opportunity to attract new residents and help increase diversity with regards to the village's demographics. When I moved to East Grafton it appeared to me that the village was full of retired people. No surprise then that by the time I had children of school age that the village school had closed. Over the intervening years we have had many more families move into the village and there is a much better balance, though there is still room for continued demographic adjustment, not least because many families like mine are growing up but have no intention of moving. Surely this is a cycle can be beaten by growth; I am not sure that it is correct to say that "vilages that don't grow die" but certainly villages that don't grow certainly get very old, and that is not healthy for the spirit of the parish.
3. From a publican's perspective the plight of The British Pub is well documented and it's reasons are intricate and complex. During my thirteen years as the landlord of The Swan in Wilton I have seen many pubs around us close, and many others fall into decline. The same can be said of village shops and post offices. Businesses like ours are important. Very often we are the only significant employer in a community, and a focal point for communities to meet. Any projects that brings new/more residents and potential customers is a boost. Every little bit of extra trade could become more vital as time goes on.
4. Equally, the Village Hall has many hirers that offer classes/activities to the community, and with an increased audience some of these may become less marginal, and potentially attract others to start new classes/clubs, which not only enhances our community, but helps to secure the hall.

In short, I commend this application, and implore you to grant it permission. I cannot see that this application has any negatives. I know this community probably better than anyone, and I know that the majority of parish residents have no issue with it.

Yours faithfully

Bill Clemence

Parish Council Statements

Grafton Parish Council – Support – Received on 06/07 at 16:11

Grafton Parish Council is actively looking to support and encourage a flourishing community for its residents. This, as expected, is an ever evolving effort and our comments are based on this motivation.

In recent years the Parish Council has actively looked to cater for a broad cross section of needs to ensure that residents can feel part of a community. To summarise a selection of our activities, we have:

- rebuilt our village hall which is now a community asset that offers activities for all ages;
- taken on the responsibility for the playing fields and added to these facilities to provide children with a safe environment to play without the need to travel;
- set up a successful youth group to cater for teenagers;
- worked with the Swan Inn to provide food parcels, a community shop and support during the Covid-19 epidemic;
- supported the establishment of Sunflowers pre-school;
- actively run village fetes, Wilton windmill events and rounders competitions;
- supported a variety of other initiatives to cater for all ages.

This has helped us to grow into a vibrant community.

We realise that, to continue to thrive, we also need to see new people and ideas come into our community. This can only happen if there is the availability of housing, be that existing or new, and one of the challenges limiting the inflow of people is that residents rarely move out of the Parish. This will continue to be a challenge to our community.

To achieve the right influx of new residents it is our belief that this particular development has a place. We believe that there is the housing need and that we in turn have the capacity to cater for new residents. This application, in our view, has the potential to ensure that we can continue to grow in a managed way and we see it as following the previous examples of development that have contributed to our community. Historically the Parish has had developments of similar size take place every 15-20 years and these have successfully helped the community to grow and evolve.

The planned inclusion of properties of varying sizes will enhance the entrance to East Grafton village and convert an unused field into a Parish asset. There have been 3 well attended public meetings regarding this application. The positive feedback, together with the willingness of the applicant to take note of comments, was well received.

Grafton Parish Council supports this application, as long as the conditions we have mentioned in our planning support are actioned, in the interests of maintaining a thriving Parish with all the enhancements which new residents bring to an otherwise static but beautiful part of Wiltshire.

Prepared by Ann Dudney, lead on planning, on behalf of Grafton Parish Council