Local Plan Modifications

Strategic Planning and The Economy

Cherwell District Council

Bodicote House, Bodicote

OX15 4AA

2 October 2014

Dear Sirs;

The Upper Heyford Parish includes the Heyford Park development area. The Upper Heyford Parish Council submits these comments as the representatives of the Upper Heyford Parishioners.

Upper Heyford recognizes that there is pressure for more house building in Oxfordshire and the Cherwell District. Although we have major reservations about the accuracy of the figures projected in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA); we accept that there is going to be more housing in our area, and agree that the former air base at Upper Heyford (Heyford Park) is a suitable site for some housing, incorporating a balance of first time buyers and older peoples homes and one and two bedroom homes for local people's needs.

The Parish Council accepts the conclusion of the revised Local Plan that Heyford Park has the potential for up to 1,600 additional homes. However, the draft Local Plan should be revised to reflect the following:

* The Plan should make it clear that any substantive increase beyond 1,600 homes is not sustainable and will not be entertained.
* The Plan should minimize, or eliminate the need to build on the green field sites adjacent to Heyford Park. Further expansion of housing to the brownfield industrial areas north of Camp Road should be pursued. There are large brownfield areas at the site that contribute little to the heritage dimension. With due regard to maintaining the cold war ambience of the site, much of the area to the south of the main runway can be returned to productive use.
* To preserve the rural heritage of our Parish, a distinct buffer between the large development at Heyford Park and the rural village of Upper Heyford must be included. Developments to the western boundary of Heyford Park should be screened by tree and hedge lines, should not extend to the edge of the boundary at the Kirtlington Road (Portway), and should not have entrances from the western boundary. With the increase in numbers at Heyford Park it has again been suggested that a cemetery needs to be provided. The land up to Portway could be considered for use in this way.
* Upper Heyford Village is also a popular spot for dog walkers and ramblers with the canal at the foot of the Village and narrow, car lined, streets leading down to the canal. We have grave concerns about the added traffic to the canal when further housing is built. Alternative green spaces for Heyford Park residents must be included in the plan. The return of a portion of the site to “country park” status, and the inclusion of adequate dog walking areas are needed.
* Considerable detailed investigation is still needed to determine whether the infrastructure can be put in place to support a community with over 2,700 homes. Medical facilities, school provision, community retail premises and leisure facilities all need to be planned. Of overriding concern though, is the massive increase in traffic anticipated on our rural road network. The main issues are:
* Additional development would result in the roads being over capacity through commercial and domestic use of cars, vans and HGV’s
* Insufficient parking capacity at Heyford and Bicester stations to accommodate growth.
* Currently the potential for additional railway support is limited. The rail service from Heyford does not have capacity, nor is the service regular enough. It was mentioned by Dorchester that it is unlikely this can be changed. As a result it is likely that there will be an increased vehicle use to get to Bicester station and it is questionable as to whether this station can absorb this additional use.
* The potential increase in vehicle use also requires more lateral thinking. It certainly requires consideration to the development of safe walking and cycling routes. Whilst it is unlikely people could cycle to Bicester via this, there is still a recreational need, especially with school children. There would certainly need to be adequate signage and speeding prohibition measures.
* There is insufficient scope for providing targeted measures to improve capacity at certain congested areas, for example Middleton Stoney and A34.
* There appears to be no ‘rural road’ protocol to ensure that the additional road use will not impact on the special qualities of the landscape (inclusive of protected landscape). It would seem impossible to meet this protocol with an increase in development.
* Adequate measures have not been considered in terms of traffic diversion and the impact that this has on nearby village roads which are used as a ‘rat run’ into Oxford/ Banbury. Specific roads at risk are A4260 (Somerton – Upper Heyford – Deddington); B4030 road through to Heyford station and the Cotswolds; the Kirtlington and Bletchingdon route to Oxford; Ardley – Bucknell route to Bicester
* The environmental impact in relation to carbon emissions has been given little consideration and vision. This is not withstanding the light and noise pollution which would be intolerable with a growth in this development.
* We would oppose over development for commercial use as the roads are not suitable for HGV use.
* A growing development is likely to recruit out of area as it is probable that the local community could not meet the employment needs. The transport in relation to this is additional to commercial use and domestic use.

In conclusion, the Upper Heyford Parish Council supports the need for additional housing at Heyford Park. However, the number should be restricted to the minimum necessary. Appropriate infrastructure developments must be put in place concurrently with housing developments. Greenfield land should be preserved, and the rural character of the Upper Heyford Village should be protected.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs. Josephine Allen

Acting Chair

Upper Heyford Parish Council