

11th April 2023

Dear Planning Inspectorate

REF: APP/D0121/W/23/3315584, Land to the South of Warren Lane North of Weston Road Long Ashton.

I write on behalf on Long Ashton Parish Council to object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal to build 35 new dwellings on the above site. We have made our opposition clear at every stage and are disappointed that the applicant is taking this to appeal. There is no local support for this scheme.

In respect of this application, we wish to make the following points.

No attempt to identify more suitable sites.

The applicant has made no attempt to identify other more suitable sites within the village boundary. We support the development of affordable housing within Long Ashton itself and would have been happy to work with the applicant to identify more appropriate locations. The applicant has not, to our knowledge, made any attempt to do this.

Affordable housing

We are not opposed to the development of affordable housing; our Neighbourhood Plan sets out our support for it (section 2.6). For example, we recently supported an application to convert office accommodation within the village into 18 residential units. This would provide apartments, which although we accept are not social housing, would still increase the number of affordable dwellings in the village. As noted above we would have been willing to work with the applicant to find a more appropriate site.

We would like to note that the housing need survey undertaken by the applicant was widely considered by the community to contain both spurious and leading questions. Many people, including myself, did not return it as we felt it was clearly an exercise to justify their already held views, not an objective exercise in assessing housing need. We would recommend that the results of this survey, if used by the applicant, be treated with a high degree of scepticism and not as prima facie evidence of local housing need.

Assessment of green belt land

Although we are not planning experts, we note the provisions within National Planning Policy Framework that allows for 'limited affordable housing for local community needs' in the green belt. In respect of this we would note:

1. An exercise was undertaken last year by the Parish Council to assess the relative value of the green belt that surrounds the village. The green belt was divided into notional sections and each area assessed in terms of its importance to the local community. The land proposed for development by the applicant was considered, with a handful of others, as the most valuable green belt we have.

2. Although the Parish Council is opposed to greenbelt development, the implication of point 1 above that there are more appropriate sites within the local greenbelt for the provision of affordable housing. There are local brownfield sites within the green belt that are much more suitable, and we would consider supporting development on these sites if proposals were brought forward.
3. We also note that the rural exception provision refers to 'limited' development. We do not consider this proposal to be limited and question the need for such a large scheme.

There are of course other points we could make, most notably our concerns about building upon a scheduled monument site but feel these are best made by others. We would also like to reserve the right for a representative of the parish Council to speak at the inquiry itself and would be grateful if you could let us know how this should be facilitated.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Ashley Cartman
For and on behalf of Long Ashton Parish Council