20th March 2018

The Chairman

Fringford Parish Council

Dear Chairman

**Fringford Cottage - proposed development**

Thank you for hosting the meeting yesterday at the Parish Hall and for inviting me to speak. Clearly, there is very significant concern about the proposal which was reflected in the objections raised. I believe that all of these concerns can be addressed either through mitigation together with a deeper understanding of the detail of what we are proposing. I have no wish to diminish the value of Fringford, its amenity and community – after all we will own Fringford Cottage whatever the outcome of the application.

The Bicester area is in the middle of UK’s most important growth area that will link Oxford in the west to Cambridge in the east. Plans for the east west rail link from Bicester to Bletchley are now well advanced, a new road expressway is planned and HS2 is well underway. These development plans are supported by central Government and the NIC. Due to ever increasing demand for housing in the area, Cherwell is updating its housing delivery plan and has to find an additional 4,000 homes to take the strain from Oxford. The draft NPPF recognises the importance of smaller developments in meeting national demand. Therefore, the pressure for new development in the area will only increase over time and Fringford cannot expect to be immune from these pressures or set itself above them.

Under Cherwell’s adopted policy for category A villages, of which Fringford is one of twenty-three, the Category A villages are expected to shoulder a very limited number of new houses with 750 units in total allocated to them, equating to 32 units on average for each category A village. Fringford has approximately 600 residents in an estimated 200 separate dwellings. The 10 new houses that are proposed is an increase of only 5% or so over and above the current level of housing. This is very low impact development and well within established norms for villages the size of Fringford which would normally be expected to accommodate a 10-12% increase or 20-25 new houses.

We consulted with Cherwell Council regarding a smaller scale development in 2016 and were told that this did not comply with adopted local policies. The current outline application responds to that pre-application advice and falls within the adopted planning policy of Cherwell Council (Policy Villages 2) which encourages applications for a minimum of 10 new houses. Therefore, the application is at the minimum threshold allowable under the relevant policy.

Much of the development that has taken place in Fringford in the last 20-30 years is similar to that which is proposed. St Michael’s close, our immediate neighbour to the east behind Folly Fields, is a very good example. This development didn’t “destroy” the village as some fear our proposal will do On the contrary, it has added value to the village by bringing new residents who contribute to the community and village life and is now a well established and accepted part of the built environment.

Parts of Fringford have an important history. Any development in the village should be respectful of that and be of a high quality in any event. The proposed development will take place behind Fringford Cottage, which was built in the 1930’s and has no architectural merit or historic significance. We see this application as an opportunity to improve the fabric of the village through high quality sensitive development.

The proposed access via the existing western driveway will utilise a pre-existing entrance. The plan is simply to widen the entrance, not to destroy the stone wall that fronts Fringford Cottage. Consequently, there will be no impact on the village’s historic façade.

With regard to the driveway’s proximity to Bakery Cottage, we are intending to demolish the conservatory that currently forms part of Fringford Cottage so the driveway can be sited so that it won’t impact Bakery Cottage – a specific concern expressed at the meeting.

Traffic impact generally was raised by many as a concern at the meeting but, technical analysis and OCC’s traffic officer confirms that the traffic impact will be negligible given the very limited scale of the development. Issues around the village green and the primary school are of course important but they exist anyway and, if that problematic, should have been dealt with.

Landscape and visual amenity issues have been addressed as part of the application and a detailed scheme will need to be agreed as part of the detailed application process.

As mentioned at the meeting, the application is an outline application. It responds to national and local demand and if approved, all the specific details will have to be agreed with Cherwell Council and its consultees, of which the Parish Council is one. These include the housing mix and appearance, drainage strategy, landscaping and screening treatment and a construction and traffic management plan.

I and my advisers will continue to engage in dialogue with the Parish Council and the villagers as part of the application process.

Yours faithfully

Stuart Wright

CC: Sinead Turnbull, DLP Planning