

## **SDNP/20/03676/FUL**

Erection of 14 no. dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping.  
Land at Limbourne Lane and The Fleet, Fittleworth

### **Fittleworth Parish Council Comments:**

#### **HOLDING OBJECTION**

The Parish Council are excited by the prospect of development envisaged by the Fittleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan (FNPD) being brought forward; but this must be delivered in accordance with that Plan, and in line with the wishes and aspirations of the Village as a whole.

The FDNP allocated land for a greater amount of development than originally envisaged by the SDNPA Local Plan, because the Village wanted to take the opportunity that such development brings to improve Fittleworth, as well as helping to provide much needed affordable housing. This means development that positively contributes to the enhancement and protection of our village's special character; helping to resolve issues around traffic speeds so that people feel safe when walking and cycling around the Village; protecting the biodiversity of our special natural habitats; and seeking to minimise the effects of flooding during periods of heavy rainfall.

We welcome the way that the developer of this site has engaged with the Village and we are keen to continue that positive dialogue to ensure that this development is something we can all be proud of.

Having looked at the application materials in detail, and following a virtual village meeting to discuss the application, we feel that there are a number of additional points that need to be addressed before the Parish Council feel able to support this application. These are summarised below:

#### **Surface Water Drainage and Flooding**

It is acknowledged that the site lies within Flood Zone 1 where there is a low risk of flooding from 'main' rivers or the sea. However, as the Drainage Strategy points out, this site suffers from an exceptionally high water table which combined with its low lying nature and underlying geology, means that the site is often subjected to standing water.

In addition, the Fleet Stream flows through the site, apparently connecting to the existing pond in the north-western part of the site. Although mention is made of the Stream within the Drainage Strategy, it only features as a possible resource to drain the development site and no mention is made at all of the fact that the upstream part of this water course is draining a large area to the north of the site.

Although the proposed SUDS measures are welcomed, they do not adequately address the need to ensure that sufficient on-site attenuation is provided not just to meet the requirements of the site itself, but water entering the site from the stream. With reference to the Drainage Strategy, we would query why the lining of the pond would have the effect

– as seems to be suggested – of assisting with attenuation, since it seems to us that retaining a body of water within this feature would decrease the volume available to be filled during periods of heavy rainfall. Whilst we understand that lining of the pond brings biodiversity benefits, we feel that it is more important that this part of the site (including the adjacent landscaped area if necessary) should be used to maximise storm water attenuation, and that necessary biodiversity improvements can be accommodated elsewhere on the site.

In reaching this view, we note that the recent development of other low-lying sites along the route of the Fleet Stream means that flow rates through this important part of the village drainage system have increased to the level where bank erosion has started to occur. We therefore feel that it is vitally important that WSCC and CDC satisfy themselves that the current issues with surface water drainage through the Village will not be made worse through the development of this site. We would also appreciate confirmation as to whether the Environment Agency have been consulted under the current application.

If this matter is not addressed, the proposals must be considered to be contrary to Policy FITT8(iv) since the lack of sufficient attenuation will lead to greater likelihood of flooding down the Fleet Stream.

### **Highways**

Policy FITT8(vi) seeks to ensure that any development of this site is provided with a safe vehicle access and that safe pedestrian access to the bus stop and village facilities is provided. It is noted that the Local Highways Authority (WSCC) appear satisfied that the access itself is safe and that it is not necessary to lower the speed limit or introduce traffic calming measures to make this access safe.

However, the Parish Council is concerned that insufficient attention has been paid to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, including those that will need to cross from the existing pavement on the south side of the A283 (The Fleet) to access the relocated bus stop to the frontage of the development. It is not clear from the submitted details whether this bus stop seeks to replace both of those on the northern side of the Fleet, or only the one to the east of Limbourne Lane.

As set out within the accompanying report by Bellamy Roberts, the Parish Council wish to see the speed limit lowered to 30mph from the existing 30mph zone to east of Limbourne Lane and a defined crossing point at the key crossing desire line. Until such measures are incorporated into the proposals, the application will be contrary to Policy FITT8 and we will continue to object.

### **Design and Density**

Although the Parish Council has no in principle objection to the delivery of 14 units on this site (allocated for 'approximately 12 units' under Policy FITT8 of the FNDP), we are keen to ensure that the amount of development is driven by the need to ensure that there is adequate space within the development for all residents to have access to private outside

space (as required by FITT8(v)), and that sufficient space is made available to store water (as noted above) whilst making space for nature and biodiversity.

Whilst we recognise the importance of promoting sustainable travel choices, it is important to ensure that sufficient space is available for parking of cars on the site, without resulting in cramped car dominated streets or indeed leading to parking being displaced onto adjoining village roads.

In particular we are concerned that the 2 flats do not enjoy their own private amenity space and would wish to see this resolved. We are also concerned that the units identified as 'affordable' are somewhat cramped at the rear of the site, and would support these units being placed within more generous surroundings. This would also serve to relieve pressure on the occupants of the adjoining dwelling, Dunrovin, where the Parish Council are concerned that the current layout would impact on the privacy of both the occupants of this dwelling, and of the proposed development.

The Parish Council have made comments to the developer directly in relation to design and the current plans are considered to be an improvement on the earlier iteration. However, we still feel that there is much to do, and cannot support the current designs.

In our earlier comments we advised that the Parish would support both a more modern, highly sustainable approach to architecture (albeit using contextual materials) and a more traditional vernacular approach and the developer made it clear that his preference was for the latter. However, it is considered that there is need for further refinement to the designs so that they more readily speak to traditional forms and materials including through the use of traditional timber windows with timber cills, doors without side glazed panels and brick bonding and detailing (e.g. arches and quoins). Following consultation with the Village, we would be keen to see the introduction of Fittleworth Stone in order to more firmly root the development in place, and also the use of timber cladding to 'secondary' elements such as single storey outshots, porches and garages. Concern was also raised that the three dwellings to the Fleet frontage are quite similar in design and form.

We are not convinced by the introduction of green roofs which while we understand this to be a policy requirement looks contrived and tokenistic. We think there are more appropriate ways to deliver biodiversity uplift on this site.

### **Biodiversity**

We note the comments received from Natural England requiring an appropriate assessment to be carried out for this site. As set out within the FNDP, the Parish is home to important habitats, including those found at The Mens, and so we would support this request.