

CHARFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

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DOE Appeal Ref APP/P0119/A/08/2074054/NWF - Application Number PT07/1462/F

Having objected strongly to the original Planning Application, Charfield Parish Council requests that the above planning appeal is dismissed.

The original application was dismissed on seven grounds, the appellants have sought to demonstrate that these grounds are not valid, the Parish Council responds to these suggestions as follows.

Reason 1.

Attention is drawn to the scale of the density proposed.

The appeal makes reference to the architecture and materials used. This matter is not the issue and this point should be ignored - it is the overall size and number of dwellings that is of concern.

It is suggested that the proposal is no larger in height than any typical village dwelling. The number of three storey buildings in Charfield can be virtually counted on one hand, and these are spread throughout the village in inconspicuous locations. If the Inspector visits the site, please have a look round the rest of the village and see how many can be found, and how easily.

Reference is made to a development in Filton. To compare the two is chalk and cheese. The Filton development is within a heavily urbanised area, of mixed residential and commercial usage, adjoining direct & good public transport links, reducing the likelihood of flat residents needing cars. Charfield is a rural settlement with very limited public transport, meaning that whilst the development may accord with certain standards on car parking, the reality is that, if the suggestion in appeal section 1.11 is correct it is unlikely that there would be many children occupants, then the majority of the two bedroom flats would be occupied by two adults with probably two cars. As such with say for example two bedroom flats having two cars and one bedroom flats having one, this gives a potential number of private cars for flat residents, excluding visitors, of twenty five cars. This leaves a deficit of eight spaces, plus any visitors, these cars will inevitably be parked on the very busy junction of Wotton Road & Little Bristol Lane.

Charfield Parish Council wishes to draw to the Inspector's attention that Little Bristol Lane is a well used road, and having concerns about the proximity of the development to the junction of the very busy Wotton Road, with a semi-blind spot turning right into Little Bristol Lane, the council commissioned a traffic survey to establish just how busy the road is. This is attached. The parking of approx eight cars along this section of road will undoubtedly create a traffic hazard and be the likely cause of accidents.

The Parish Council is thus of the view that this development is too dense.

Reason 2.

Attention is drawn to the harmful impact on the street scene.

The proposal is for the three storey part to be on the highest section of the land, which will dominate all that surrounds it. Furthermore the part of the development adjoining Wotton Rd will be virtually sat on the pavement.

The proposal is totally contrary to what is around it. On the same side of the railway, set back from the road is the Memorial Hall, a single storey building and set lower, next to this is the playing field and on the other side of Wotton Road is a field. On the other side of the railway, thus less significant, there is a development of two storey detached houses and MJ Fews Garage, both set well below the level of and/or back from the road.

The development will also impact on the historic Charfield Station buildings which are Grade 2 listed and designed by none other than Brunel himself.

The Parish Council is of the view that this development is far too high and overbearing.

Reason 3

Concern has been raised over noise levels.

The Inspector's site visit should hopefully demonstrate that the combination of the proximity of the railway line and the main road means that this site is totally unsuitable for a residential development. If you are to allow this appeal you must do so only if you feel that it is a location you yourself could genuinely live in.

Whilst numerous properties in the village do back onto the railway line, they are without exception either further away and/or where the railway is set into a cutting, and not adjoining the busy road.

Reference is made to the noise report to the council's Environmental Health Officer being satisfactory. The Parish Councillor at the Development Control meeting clearly remembers that this was not the case; it was acknowledged that at least one of the units did not meet the required standard. Your further investigation of this point is clearly necessary.

Notwithstanding the above, it is apparent that any flats meeting the required noise levels can only do so with the benefit of special acoustic double or even triple glazing. Does this mean the occupants cannot open their windows in summer without resorting to the wearing of ear defenders?

The Parish Council is of the view that development of this site for residential purposes is unsuitable.

Reason 4.

The proposal was found to have unacceptable amenity space.

On the basis above that occupants are unable to open their windows due to the noise, and there is no space for communal gardens as the development is too dense, they must obtain their fresh air and exercise by use of the existing facilities of the recreational field, sports pitches and children's play area.

Reference is made to the preparation of a s106 agreement in this respect and enhancing the existing facilities of the recreational field, sports pitches and children's play area.

Would you please note on record that neither the Charfield Memorial Hall and Playing Fields Committee (a registered charity), nor Charfield Parish Council who are the custodian trustees have received ANY approach from the appellant at ANY stage querying in what ways the existing amenity areas could be improved, nor with any indications as to cost. We are staggered to learn that an agreement could be put in place without detailed discussion with at least one of these bodies.

Reference has also been made to the upgrading of bus stops near the Railway Tavern. This cannot be done. On the northbound side the Parish Council could not even site a waste bin here because of a covenant on the land. On the

south side a bus shelter would block the pavement as there is a building adjacent to the footpath allowing no room for a shelter.

Amenity space also includes the provision of schooling. The original application stated there was a surplus of primary school places in the village school. Would you please note this was a totally misleading statement as the application number for the September intake for Charfield School was 40 against an admission number of 30, with a result that additional funding had to be sought from the LEA in order for them to allow a breach. The appellants consider it is unlikely there would be many children occupants, how can they ensure this would be the case?

The Parish Council is of the view that any benefit to the village must be established and clearly defined, and development should not put a strain on existing facilities within the village.

Reason 5

Lack of affordable housing.

The original application was vague in the extreme.

Affordable Housing – Supporting Section 1.5 part 2 of the application stated ‘whole development will be for affordable housing’, yet later on (5.7) it is stated that there will be just four units for affordable housing.

Clearly this issue needs to be resolved

The Parish Council supports the principle of affordable and social housing in the village but not in this prominent location. Furthermore councillors are aware more of a requirement for 3 bedroom family houses rather than 1 or 2 bedroom flats to relocate existing growing families from flats in existing areas such as Charfield Green, which can be found a short distance along Little Bristol Lane.

Reason 6

Lack of Open Space.

This already appears to have been covered under reason 4.

Reason 7

Highway Network.

Any s106 agreement dealing with moneys received from this development must clearly be put to improve roads in the local vicinity, rather than the far end of the authority.

The final issue of concern which the Parish Council have is that of land ownership

Parts of the site area are outside the ownership of the developer. Highway land along both Wotton Road and Little Bristol Lane is included, how do the Council propose to deal with this, by way of a Highway Order, which surely should be done before permission is granted?

We are also concerned that you note and understand the original objection from Network Rail regarding the inclusion of a strip of land along the top of the embankment in their ownership; they are also concerned about the erection of a retaining wall just below the top of the embankment that could be prejudicial to the safety of the railway. If Network Rail are concerned about the stability of the land, and locals have said it is made up ground, should the alarm bells not be ringing to carry out more detailed site investigations before proceeding any further. The Parish Councillor attending the Development Control Meeting was most surprised and concerned to find that the case officer who for some reason seemed to be recommending acceptance of the application did not seem to be aware of this objection, despite the fact

that it had been posted on the online case file for several days. Presumably because of this it somehow became ignored when the specific reasons for refusal were being determined by the case officer?

This application and appeal have received a great deal of objection from within the village. We would be obliged if the Parish Council could be advised of the total number of objections for our records, as well as sending us a formal acknowledgment of this objection. Would you also please keep us informed as to any further developments.

In conclusion, Charfield Parish Council strongly requests that the appeal be dismissed.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs S Bailey
Clerk to Charfield Parish Council