



Mrs Becky Jones
Senior Planning Officer
Wiltshire Council
Development Services
Bourne Hill
Salisbury SP1 3UZ

9th September 2021

Dear Becky

**Downton Parish Council's comments on Planning Application PL/2021/06443
Land West of Breamore Road, Downton, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP5 3HW**

Downton Parish Council strongly objects to this planning application on a number of grounds. The Parish Council considers the application to be poor and to contain conflicting information. It is considered to be a speculative application on open countryside and is not considered to be a sustainable proposal. Furthermore, the Council considers that Downton should not have to countenance further development at this stage in the Plan period and before the new Local Plan is approved, in view of the recent additions to the village and the impact of these on the community. The grounds for the Council's objection will be addressed under the following headings:

- Site
- Design
- Contrary to Downton Neighbourhood Plan
- Contrary to Wiltshire Local Policy
- Public consultation failures
- Recent new build additions to Downton

National planning policy in England requires the planning system to be plan-led as set out in Clause 3 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Wiltshire Core Strategy 2006-26 allocated 190 houses for Downton, all of which have been delivered. The site for this planning application is not identified as a strategic site in the Core Strategy and it achieved the lowest score of all the preferred sites identified in the Downton Neighbourhood Plan, when assessed against others contained in the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SHLAA).

Site

Drainage – flooding

The Council fully endorses the comments of the Environment Agency and Wiltshire Council's drainage engineers. The District Landscape Character Plan identifies the site as being on the Avon River valley – which is composed of impermeable chalkland. We believe the mitigation proposals outlined in the application's Appendix B, which shows a swale to be created to the West of the site, to be inadequate. It is

clear that the amount of water that will be required to drain will need more acreage than exists in the site area. The proposal is not 'SUDS' compliant and ignores this mandatory element. The application itself identifies that the land under the site is non permeable which will, therefore, require drain off to be significantly off site onto land which is not part of the site and not identified in the application. The proposal to import large amounts of material to raise the land level will, inevitably, have the impact of causing the waste water to flow off of the site onto neighbouring land as far away as Mesh Pond and Wick Lane belonging to local residents who will be impacted and onto farmland currently in use as animal pasture as well as onto the land known as 'Flowerland' to the south of the site which has planning permission for a large mixed-use traveller site of static and travelling caravan pitches.. Such imported material will also potentially cause settlement problems. The proposals in the application indicate a complete lack of consideration for neighbouring land and residents and only addresses how the waste water will be moved off site. A lack of understanding of local conditions is demonstrated by the absence of adequate mitigation to counter the impact of flooding on this site which is known to exist even in a year when rainfall is average or below average (see photos attached). The land on the proposed site is wet currently even in August.

Lastly, and importantly, the requirement under recently introduced guidance, for development to create a Bio Diversity net gain is notable absent and will clearly require more land than is owned by this site. There is also no reference to the latest (May 2021) flood risk criteria (requiring plus 40% on the 100 year incidence due to climate change). There is also no reference to any potential presence of sphagnum moss on the site which is an important factor in peat bog land and is protected in the UK under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

If more housing is required at some stage in the future there are sites on the edge of Downton that do not have the same level of flooding potential.

Drainage – waste water and sewerage

The stated plan to allow waste water and treated sewerage to flow into wetland does not identify where that wetland will be. In addition, the proposal to allow semi treated waste water to flow into the existing ditch, does not take into account the current high levels that the identified ditch reaches at certain times of the year without added water. This planning application states that the new housing is not to be connected to the existing drainage system. Our understanding to date is that the local drainage system cannot accommodate additions to its infrastructure. The Parish Council considers the identified proposed treatment of sewage to be completely inadequate for a development of this size and the Parish Council has been unable to find a similar system used on such a large development and believe this method of sewage treatment is only suitable for developments of around 5 to 10 houses not 100.

Access

The planning application does not provide the essential infrastructure to provide safe pedestrian access and is therefore contrary to Core Policy 3 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy. The application's Appendix B shows proposed footpaths included in the site and demonstrates that no footpath is proposed along the A338 on the West side with only an entry footpath to the North East of the site which does not link to a currently safe pedestrian footpath of sufficient width. For pedestrians to cross the A338 at this point to reach a footpath on the opposite side of the A338 we believe will be unsafe as we do not have confidence that an island to be created in the

middle of the road provides sufficient safety on this busy road. The A338 would be further narrowed by such an island at a point where it is already so narrow and on a bend that the cottage opposite needs to use a mirror to exit from their property. The path opposite (referred to as the 'existing footway along the eastern side of Breamore Road opposite the site' in the Transport Assessment report) is insufficiently wide to accommodate current footpath recommendations being only 1.2 metres and is, at points, less than a metre wide. A wider footpath could only be provided on land currently in the ownership of the Trafalgar school so negating the emphasis placed in the document on the usefulness for pedestrians and cyclists of the proposed widening of part of the path to 2.5 metres which, in any case, would only reach 30 metres past the southernmost point to be accessed by crossing the road from the site. The remaining elements of the proposed pedestrian path will be only approximately 1 metre wide which is not wide enough for a combined cycleway and footpath and is significantly less than that required by the supplementary planning guidance passed by Wiltshire Council for any new development to provide pedestrian and cycle access of a required width. The suggestion in the application that a 2 metre wide footpath can be created on both sides of the A338 at the point of Rose Cottage and Batten Cottage (a listed thatched cottage) is patently false. The resulting width of the road would be only 5.5 metres with each lane only being 2.75 metres so further narrowing a currently dangerously narrow road which has already been subject to a fatal accident. Furthermore, the suggestion in the application that pedestrians can use Dennets Drove footpath (Footpath 60 in Downton's footpath classification) demonstrates a total lack of knowledge of local conditions in that the footpath is only passable for approximately four months of the year due to water levels.

The proposal does not, therefore, connect in any way to sustainable walking or cycling access. This will also mean that there is no use of safe access to public transport for pedestrians.

The A338 at the point of the proposed site is subject to only a 40mph speed limit (we note the proposal to request a reduction to a 30mph limit but this is not guaranteed) and is accessed from the South by a bend in the road meaning that visibility is limited again making vehicular access to and from the site potentially dangerous and, as already described, pedestrian access particularly dangerous especially for children accessing local school provision at either the primary or secondary schools. It will become almost inevitable that school children will be driven to school so increasing congestion in the village or for older children to take risks in attempting to cross from the proposed site to the secondary school. Any recognition of access to the preschool provided at Giant Steps adjacent to the secondary school is also absent. In our view, therefore, this application does not support an improvement in 'pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to the Downton Primary School and to Trafalgar Secondary School.' (policy T1 of the Downton NP) and therefore should not be supported.

Access for emergency vehicles is not adequately explained in the application as no second entrance is provided.

Traffic congestion

Despite the contention in the Transport Assessment document that 'The proximity of these services in relation to the site present numerous opportunities for non-car-

based travel to and from the proposed development, and would be expected to reduce the potential number of vehicle trips to and from the site', the reality has already been shown to be the case in relation to recent new build development in Downton, that traffic and congestion has increased. This is because employment opportunities for the type of demographic likely to be accommodated in these new dwellings requires travel outside of Downton either to the North or South (both directions already suffering from congestion at rush hours) or East through the village where traffic is already a problem. This latter route requires travel through the New Forest via two pinch points, one of which has been subject to five accidents just this year with three being of a serious nature and one way traffic points within the village and yet travel east to access Southampton is not even referenced in the Transport assessment. Although the proposed site is on the A338, no reference is made to potential residents' use of the B3080 and the impact on congestion on this narrow road through the village to access local services such as the GP surgery and the local chemist as well as access to the primary school. Whatever options are provided for school children to walk to school (and it can be seen above that these are disputed), it is clear that car transport is used when the weather is poor and parking at school drop off and pick up times is extremely problematic and stated by residents to be one of the main problems of living in Downton.

Local bus service provision

The service referenced in the application is that provided along the A338 which does not mention that there is very limited service along the B3080 to the East of the village or to the New Forest.

Design

We recognise that greater detail regarding design would be provided if this application were to reach a reserved matters planning application but the limited detail provided does not demonstrate any recognition of the Village Design Statement or the Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan. Although the proposed site is outside of the Conservation Area, the village has the potential to suffer from separation of its status as a single village with disjointed styles. The Parish Council fully supports the comments of the Conservation Officer and recognises the potential impact on a local heritage site (the pill box)

Contrary to Downton Neighbourhood Plan

This proposal is contrary to all of the following policies in the Downton Neighbourhood Plan (NP) which, although affected by the Government's changes to the application of NPs where there is not a five-year housing land supply, is an adopted document which must be taken into account and is currently under review for revision. The lack of a five-year housing supply in Wiltshire is also subject to change in the near future due to current outstanding plans coming to fruition.

LH1 The Neighbourhood Plan will facilitate the delivery of no more than 190 homes within the Plan period without further public consultation. Should there be a higher allocation for Downton. Subject to other policies in this Plan new residential development proposals will be supported to achieve the strategic housing requirement where they deliver infill development or small scale development of no more than 25 dwellings within and immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of Downton as established in the Core Strategy.

Residential development elsewhere in the Plan area will be resisted.

The application exceeds the required 190 houses (already achieved), is outside of the settlement boundary and exceeds the policy of small scale development by a factor of 300%

LH2 *The delivery of new homes within the Plan period will be monitored. In the event that the development of new homes through existing commitments will not achieve the strategic figure of 190 dwellings consideration will then be given for the development of the SHLAA sites shown in figure 10 and in the order identified in table (provided number to the table) of the Plan. Planning applications for SHLAA sites identified in table that come forward out of identified sequence order will be considered on their individual merits and given the position of housing land supply at that time*

The application site is not one of the identified SHLAA sites rated in the NP

LC2. *New development proposals within the Downton Conservation area (as shown on Figure 8) will be required to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. New development proposals will also be expected to conform to the principles included both in the Downton Village Design Statement and in the Downton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.*

Although it is recognised that both of these documents are some years old, the principle remains and the proposed development does nothing to enhance the character of Downton, has the potential to further change the character of the village and specifically is contrary to the Village Design Statement which states that ‘future development should take account of the variety and individuality of design that gives the village its harmonious and mature look. The use of developers’ standard design which create uniform suburban development, should be avoided.’

LC3. *All new development and any alterations to existing buildings must achieve the highest possible level of energy efficiency and sustainability, taking account of the visual impact and its position in the landscapes.*

This application applies only minimal contribution to sustainability and proposes to meet little more than the minimum standard

T1. *Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they can be incorporated in a satisfactory way into the capacity of the local highway network. Planning applications will be expected to identify and assess the impact of the proposed development on pedestrians, cyclists, road safety and the free and safe flow of traffic in the plan area. Where appropriate measures should be included in proposals to mitigate the impacts arising from the development proposed.*

The section above demonstrates that the proposal is inadequate

TD1. *All applications for development (other than for minor extensions and changes of use of existing buildings) will be required to take account of the groundwater levels and surface water flows in the Plan area. Where appropriate flood risk assessments will be required to be submitted with planning applications.*

Planning applications that demonstrably add to existing foul and surface water conditions within the plan area or which do not provide acceptable mitigation will be resisted.

Again the section above demonstrates that the proposal is inadequate

Downton is in the process of revising our NP and a new housing needs assessment will take place in October this year – there is no evidence yet, or from previous HNA, that housing of the type proposed is needed in Downton.

Contrary to Wiltshire Local Policy

The proposed site is outside of the Housing Policy boundary and therefore contrary to clause 4.13 of Core Policy 1 of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and is described as agricultural land so is not appropriate for housing.

We accept that Wiltshire does not yet have a five year land supply but the potential for this to be achieved shortly is understood to be high.

Consultation and analysis of a revised Local Plan has not yet been completed or the new Plan approved. This is not likely to be in place for approximately eighteen months – to 2 years and the figure applied to Downton of 108 additional houses was based on a division of total housing required proportionate only to the relative size of Downton and does not take into account the infrastructure, the timing of recent building etc. It was for consultation purposes only. Downton has achieved its current allocation.

Public consultation failures

The Statement of Community Engagement illustrates to us the superficiality of the intention to properly engage residents and local agencies. The outline of the meeting with the Downton Society completely fails to mention the strongly felt objection of that society to the proposal and the outline of the meeting with the Parish Council describes some of the questions we asked but does not mention that the developer was unable to answer these questions, agreed to find answers but then failed to explain how they would propose to meet the Council's expressed concerns. It also fails to identify that the Parish Council expressed its commitment to the Downton Neighbourhood Plan. The references to the consultation in this planning application is subject to selective reporting, identifying some of the concerns expressed by residents during the consultation but failing to reference the proportion of the 229 responses that identified objection to the proposal. Our local experience via Facebook and anecdotal evidence is that there is a high level of objection.

The public consultation was held during a three week period which included two weeks of the Easter holiday making response time very limited and could possibly be described as inadequate. Despite this 229 people submitted responses with a high level of concern about traffic and drainage.

The response provided in the Statement of Community Engagement demonstrates an ignorance of understanding of local people's reality and experience. The statement that a 5% increase in traffic congestion is negligible fails to recognise the frustration and waste of valuable time experienced waiting in traffic at peak periods.

The response provided regarding car parking fails to address the real reason why respondents cited car parking as an issue mainly referencing the car parking on the

housing development site and not the car parking at school pick up and drop off times or at village pinch points.

Similarly there is an unwillingness to consider the reality of the experience of local people who know that the site floods throughout the year. The applicants rely on research about flood risk rather than paying any attention to the real life experience of local people.

In addressing foul water disposal, the inadequacy of the local pumping station is not recognised and the idea that treated water can be appropriately managed by a 'wetland' provision is unacceptable to us. There will certainly be enhanced facilities for amphibians as only creatures used to living with water will be appropriately accommodated!

We consider that some of the information included in the statement of Community Engagement is highly questionable, for example the Statement includes the comment that *'there are 1,137 people living in Downton who are registered at Whiteparish Surgery in Whiteparish. There are 1,495 people living in Downton attending one of four Salisbury Medical Practices.* Our own research obtained from the Practice Manager at the surgery confirms that they have 6,981 patients registered at Downton surgery but, with only fewer than 3,500 total residents in Downton, the Practice Manager is very clear that the vast majority of local residents do use the surgery which would indicate that the total of 2,632 Downton residents that are said in the application to use surgeries outside of Downton is very unlikely. In fact, the Practice Manager made it clear that they are currently having to ask residents who live outside of Downton if they would consider moving to a service more local to them as the surgery is at capacity and would consider that more patients would require the provision of a new consulting room and another doctor.

Recent new build additions to Downton

Downton has welcomed 100 new homes in the past three years and is about to welcome a further 17 homes which are not yet complete. Such change to the community, although supported and achieving a welcome level of diversity to the village, will take time to assimilate and build community purpose. Further new build and an increase to the residential demography of the area should not be considered until later in the proposed Local Plan, if required at that stage. It is important to remember that any increase in housing allocation in the revised Local Plan would be during the timescale up to 2036, meaning that applications submitted by developers keen to access the period during which Wiltshire may not have a five year housing land supply, need not be utilised at this early stage.

Conclusion

Formula Land recognizes the serious challenges of this site and this application proposes not to solve the issues but to push them on to others outside their jurisdiction to deal with in the future when Formula Land no longer have responsibility; namely the drainage onto the surrounding landowners and residents and the potential sewage pollution on the biodiversity of the stream with future costs having to be picked up by the future residents of the site. The lack of sustainable transport links to the main village and bus stops and the resultant congestion that will be caused around the centre of the Village with parents driving children to school and not walking.


Downton Parish Council objects strongly to this application and cites reasons of inadequate drainage mitigation, lack of understanding of local experience, poor

access arrangements, failure to comply with the policies of the Downton Neighbourhood Plan, increased traffic congestion, increased danger to pedestrians, cyclists and road users and inappropriate timing for increased dwellings in Downton. Primarily our reasons for objection is that this application is outside of Local Policy, sited on green field land and is a disrespectful, speculative application which includes inaccurate and poorly researched information.

Section 106 terms would be considered at any future point if a full planning application were to be submitted but, in view of Downton Parish Council's strong objection to this application, any proposals for such monies are inappropriate at this stage.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bev Cornish', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bev Cornish
Clerk to the Council

APPENDIX 1

Downton Parish Council PL/2021/06433 Site Waterlogging

