Development Management
Wiltshire Council
Monkton Park
Chippenham, SN15 1ER

For the attention of Mr Paul Gaplin, case officer.

Dear Mr Gaplin,

**PLANNING APPLICATION NO 18/09884/OUT**

A proposed residential development for up to 95 dwellings including roads, footpaths, balancing areas and open space on the land south of Westwells Road, Neston, Corsham by Mr M Dobson.

I write in connection with the above planning application, and having examined these plans, I wish to object in the strongest terms to the development of these houses in this location. They are contrary to a number of Core Policies that have been established by both Corsham Town Council in their Neighbourhood Plan, and by Wiltshire Council in The Wiltshire Core Strategy that covers the period from 2016 to 2026.

**CORSHAM Neighbourhood Plan**

**Core Policy HERITAGE**

**5.5**

This policy wishes to conserve and enhance the distinctive characteristics of the historical landscape. To retain the separate identity and unique nature of Corsham’s surrounding Villages and settlements

**Core Policy Housing in Corsham**

**59**

The latest published housing land supply statement for Wiltshire (Wiltshire Land Supply Statement 2016 (update) published March 2017, demonstrates that Corsham Community area as a whole has met its allocated housing requirement, and that it has been been exceeded its by 190 dwellings (13.6%)

**60**

There is no evidence to suggest that Corsham should accommodate additional housing growth beyond that already permitted*.*

***As you will be aware, there are currently, a further 190 dwellings either under construction, or already have permission to develop within a half a mile of the proposed site, on the same road (Westwells) Should the Rudloe ex MOD site (Decision Notice - 14/11354/OUT) be started before August 2019 (the three year deadline) the housing stock of Neston would be increased by nearly 35%, in the space of eighteen months. The further addition of 95 houses on the proposed site would increase the village housing stock from 550 dwellings to 835 dwellings (an increase of more than 50%)***

 ***I fail to see how this can ‘conserve and enhance the unique nature of a Wiltshire Village’.***

**CORSHAM NEIBOURHOOD PLAN**

**The Executive Summary**

 **HOUSING**

The Plan proposes housing development that supports the overall aspirations of our community and which is sustainable, in the right places and of good design. The Plan supports a limited number of small scale residential developments (of up to 12 houses per village) in the small villages where there is an identified local need. The Plan does not propose any major new housing allocations to 2026

***The situation in Neston, (which is part of the Corsham Community Area) , is that the allocated house building requirement to 2026 has been exceeded, and it is anticipated that possibly, 12 further houses that might be required as infill projects. to address local need, (in the coming 9 years). Despite this achievement, an application for a development of 95 houses, on land that has not been identified in the Development Plan, on a site that is not relevant to WC core policy 37, and that contravenes numerous other policies set by Corsham Town Council and Wiltshire Council has been lodged.***

**WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY**

 **POLICY 11**

**Corsham Area Strategy**

**5.59**

……’.However, despite the area’s proximity to the M4 transport corridor, the transport network in the area is generally poor, characterised by a rural road network with limited rail connectivity. Community and health facilities in Corsham are under pressure, with most GP surgeries at capacity’.

***Despite the lengthy and detailed Transport Report submitted with the application, no mention has been made of the fact that the proposed site has just three vehicular means of access, two of which (Moor Green and Westwells from the Potley direction) have considerable terrace housing with no garage provision. This means that at all times of the day, these thoroughfares are reduced to single lane in parts, due to presence of parked cars, and during the key periods at each end of the day, the influx of more than two thousand workers to MOD CORSHAM cause unwelcome congestion.***

***The lack of GP surgery provision across the wider Corsham Area is already causing concern, and this is without taking into account the enormous increment of housing, currently under construction, throughout the Corsham area. The applicant dismisses this concern by simply stating that both surgeries are still accepting new patients.***

**Core Policy 11**

**Spatial Strategy: Corsham Community Area**

Development in the Corsham Community Area should be in accordance with the

Settlement Strategy set out in Core Policy 1.

**Hierarchy of settlements (large to Small)**

**Market Towns:** Corsham

**Large Villages:** Box, Colerne and Rudloe

**Small Villages:** Gastard, Lacock, Neston and Westwells

***As can be seen from the classification above Neston is classified as a Small Village. The Neighbourhood Plan and Framework document both advocate a policy of retaining a Green Buffer between Corsham and the surrounding Villages. It goes on to say: Further growth on the fringes of Corsham would be contrary to this policy and result in villages becoming suburbs of Corsham. (ref.61)***

***As already mentioned, the Corsham Neighbourhood plan summary states that:*** ***The Plan supports a limited number of small scale residential developments (of up to 12 houses per village) in the small villages where there is an identified local need.***

 ***If this is the case, why is a proposal for 95 dwellings being submitted, in a small village?***

I would now like to report a number of inaccuracies in the applicants Planning Support Statement.

Some of these comments are breath taking in their inaccuracy.

1. The applicant makes repeated reference to this site being an ex-Ministry of Defence site.

***We have found no evidence that this site was ever occupied or used by the Ministry of Defence.***

***This site was under the control and administration of the Ministry of Works during the war years, and it was that department that authorised the construction of 12 Temporary ‘HOSTEL HUTMENTS’ to be occupied by EVW’s (European Volunteer Workers), some 28 years before the MOD was formed on April 1st 1964. Documentation we have, shows that the site was closed in the Autumn of 1957 with the comment ‘No Further Accomodation’***

***These workers and their families were mainly of Polish and Latvian ethnicity, and they fled to the UK to avoid the occupation of their own countries by Nazi Germany. We have a report dated September 18th 1946, giving a detailed description of the construction of these HUTMENTS and their rudimentary materials confirm their temporary nature. A single roadway was formed with an entry and exit to provide access to transport the workers. In one of the Survey reports, traces of Asbestos have been located on the site that might be related to the Hutment roof sections.***

***As part of the evacuation of industrial production from the main centres that were the targets of repeated bombing, the Bristol Aeroplane Company moved an aircraft assembly plant from Filton in Bristol to Sands Quarry, and it is likely that several of the hostel occupants worked in that facility,***

1. When it comes to a description of the site, the developer has referred to it as an ‘eyesore’, and how clearly the rubble remains and upstands (foundations) can be seen. He also states that the owners of the site have managed it so as to avoid extensive weed contamination and will continue do so to ensure that the Brownfield status is retained.

***The only reason that this site is currently an ‘eyesore’ is because the current, and previous owners have attempted to remove all traces of naturalisation that has taken place between 1957 and***

***1984 by employing industrial earth moving equipment, and teams of chain saw and undergrowth clearance specialists***

***I suppose that could be described as weed control.***

***In 1983, the entire site resembled the stand of woodland at the far, rear, right hand corner (viewed from Westwells) and thankfully, a forward thinking villager managed to save that area by requesting a GROUP Tree Preservation Order for the mature trees. Fortunately that order is still in place. To the village, it was a much cherished area for walking and for children to explore and the wildlife was truly memorable.***

1. In section 2, Site Description and Location, the developer refers the existence of both the adjacent Military locations and to some areas that are being redeveloped for commercial uses (presumably Five Ways Trading Estate) and also to a limited amount of residential development at the ‘top end of Westwells’

***I do think that to describe the area at the top end of Westwells as being of ‘limited residential development’ is somewhat ingenuous. The area referred to is the within the Basil Hill military compound, where all the single story huts are located. This site has been sold and has permission* (Decision Notice - 14/11354/OUT) for 180 houses (twice the size of his proposal). *It is also incomprehensible that the applicant willingly acknowledges this figure of 180 dwellings, in the same document, in para 6.3 page 1***

1. Public Consultation Feedback Summary. Apparently, of the great many attendees at the Village Hall public consultation, just 107 chose to complete and return their forms. 42 of these were left and completed on the day, and the remaining 65 forms were posted back to the organisers of the event

***It is interesting to note that the developer has only chosen to relate the outcome of those responses received on the day. Of the 42 responses left in the Hall,***

***16% in favour and 42% against. Apparently 43% were undecided on the day and the general reason given for those wishing to see the site developed was to improve the…’eyesore’ that had been created.***

***It would have been interesting to have had the same information supplied for the postal returns, which exceeded those left in the Hall, but the organisers deemed this unnecessary.***

1. Education. The applicant states, correctly that the figures for Neston Primary School in 2016/2017 showed 188 pupils attending, and that Neston has a capacity of 210 children. Using the Councils own pupil rates for new developments, the indication is that 95 dwellings would create a need for 28 additional Primary places,

 ***As a Governor of the school for the past 30 years, I am able, with certainty, to advise that the applicants’ proposal to ‘make provision for extra places to be made available at***

***Neston by payment of a Section 106 contribution in accordance with the provisions of the Schools Places Strategy’ is not an option.***

***Neston primary School was built in 1861, is a Grade 2 listed building and stands in a prominent position within the Neston Conservation Area, adjacent to the Village Church and open farmland.***

***It took just over 3 years to gain planning permission from the Listed Planning department to build two classrooms three and a half years ago, and that expansion took us to the limit of land owned by Wiltshire Council. In fact we had to seek the permission of the local landowner to gain permission to extend our playground, onto land leased by the school, to replace the area used for the build.***

***With currently 202 children on roll, and full classes at the lower end of the school, it is almost without doubt that Neston School will be full by the time this development would be completed, should it succeed in gaining permission. Any primary aged children from this estate would need to be transported to another school by road transport.***

In summary, I find this application to be totally dismissive of many of the policies that both The Corsham Town Council and Wiltshire Council have put in place to ensure that that both the local and wider communities are able to develop and expand in a structured and planned way.

To ignore this process, is to almost introduce an anarchic approach to the whole question of future development, and such an approach would effectively neutralise the efforts of the Wider Councils and ignore the wishes of the local communities.

Eventually, a natural progression of this approach would end with unsustainable communities that had none of the infrastructure and services required to service them.

This application illustrates this perfectly by ignoring the local, and Wiltshire Council’s concerns about GP provision, and to have totally ignored the fact that the local community Primary School will not be able to accept any Primary aged children from this development.

It is for the many reasons (contained in this letter) **that I urge you to refuse permission** for this ‘opportunistic’ attempt to ride ‘rough shod’ over the policies that are already in place.

Yours sincerely

Tim Awmack

Neston Action Group