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26<sup>th</sup> July 2005  
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Mr Rodger Hood MA BSc MRTPI  
Assistant Director Planning  
Vale of the White Horse District Council  
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Dear Mr Hood

### Proposed Chilton Field development

Chilton Parish Council has had the benefit of detailed presentations by Mr Steve Moss and his UKAEA colleagues regarding preliminary ideas for residential development on that part of the Harwell/Chilton campus known as Chilton Field. In advance of an application for outline planning permission the Parish Council has some observations which it believes merit consideration. They are put forward in a constructive spirit so that the best possible outcome may be achieved bearing in mind the interests of all the parties concerned.

We should like to stress that we are not opposed in principle to proposals on an appropriate scale to provide additional accommodation for newcomers wishing to settle in this village. With careful planning and design this could enhance the community life of the village while still retaining the rural tranquillity in an area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB) that is one of Chilton's main attractions for existing residents

There are two matters of general importance which need to be addressed. The first is that a whole-site approach to the Harwell/Chilton campus is fundamental to dealing with strategic issues. A comprehensive approach enables development to contribute usefully to sustainability and green travel plans for the whole community. Individual proposals taken separately and without regard to the overall picture inevitably lead to sub-optimal decisions and solutions. A whole-site approach will become even more important if a substantial residential development on Chilton Field is added to the three which already exist on the campus (Severn Road, the North Drive estate and the South Drive estate). We are encouraged to believe that the UKAEA authorities have recognised this need and we look forward to seeing evidence of its implementation.

The second point leads on from this. A substantial development on a major site within an area of outstanding natural beauty clearly needs to be assessed in the light of a development brief for the whole site. Such a brief would need to set out the importance of the relationship between the site and the AONB. It would also identify the relevant objectives and policies of the AONB

Management Plan that developers will be expected to take into account. Planning decisions will be seriously weakened without the careful reconciliation of proposals with the terms of such a development brief and we would welcome your assurance that all planning decisions will be made in the light of a brief of this kind.

With particular reference to Chilton Field, there are several specific issues all of which need careful and early consideration to inform the planning process:

1. Road Safety. At present severe overload at peak times at the A4185/Newbury Road junction makes this a hazardous area for pedestrians and cyclists, particularly for children attending Chilton School. The situation will be further exacerbated by new developments on the Horse and Jockey site on Newbury Road, one of which (of 11 dwellings) has now reached detailed planning stage. If, in addition, the junction became the sole access point to dwellings on Chilton Field this difficult situation would be rendered even more dangerous. An enclosed report by the Chilton Road Safety Group contains recent and relevant data.

A new development on Chilton Field would need to incorporate a travel plan for sustainable access with measures to encourage walking and cycling and use of public transport to access local amenities and beyond. It should discourage reliance on private vehicles. It should take account of the considerable weight of traffic that the school attracts and ensure that walking and cycling to school from Chilton village can be promoted safely. A further report by the Chilton Road Safety Group (enclosed) reflects the concerns felt by many residents on this issue.

2. Visual Impact. In order to preserve Chilton's character and surroundings for the appreciation and enjoyment of its population, both newcomers and long-term residents, it is essential to retain the quality of views both from and to the North Wessex Downs and to avoid intrusive and unsympathetic development. Moving the "footprint" for development away from the original prefab bungalow site on Chilton Field makes this a more challenging task. Key views from the AONB to the site and vice-versa will need to inform the design. Mitigation of visual impact can be achieved through the lay-out and height of buildings, type of materials and landscape buffers. Particular attention should be paid to the visual impact from Bury Down and the Ridgeway. The architectural design should reflect the local landscape character through the appropriate use of traditional local design features.

3. Light Pollution. Dark skies in the AONB above and close to Chilton are already adversely affected by light pollution from research facilities and car parks on the Harwell/Chilton campus, roundabouts on the A4185, Chilton School and the Garden Centre. As seen from the Ridgeway an extensive east-west Chilton Field development would undesirably link existing concentrations of light pollution unless energy efficient and directional lighting were used to minimise light spillage and glare.

4. Environmental Aspects. To achieve significant environmental gains, and at the same time minimise the impact of redevelopment, particular attention should be given to water demand management and energy efficiency. The use of sustainable urban drainage systems, water recycling, renewable energies and effective insulation for heat and noise are all highly desirable. The open aspect of the proposed site would be well suited to new-build solar water heating at minimal extra cost over standard systems. A residential development on Chilton Field adjacent to some of the most advanced scientific research facilities in Europe presents a unique opportunity for an innovative and sensitive approach demonstrating modern methods of construction technology. It would be a source of pride for local residents if the quality of the Chilton Field development stood comparison with the high standards and prestige accorded to research establishments on the Harwell/Chilton campus.

5. Community Integration. The new development should contribute to sustainability, provide essential services and affordable housing, and a safe environment for local people. Measures should be considered and put in hand to promote the integration of the residential communities on the Harwell/Chilton campus and the old village. Improving links across/under the A34, common recreational facilities which could also be used by Chilton School, an enhanced Village Hall, and a variety of outdoor facilities for younger people can all help to achieve this aim.

6. Proportionality. Chilton currently has about 350 dwellings and 900 residents. A new development on its doorstep needs to be appropriate in scale and perhaps staged over time to maximise the chances of successful absorption and integration. A proposal for 275 dwellings is grossly disproportionate. A scheme designed to replace the original 100 Chilton Field prefabs by a similar number of new dwellings, on the other hand, would improve the chances of finding solutions to, or at least alleviating, some of the issues referred to above. Furthermore, the Parish Council would wish to see safeguards in place to avoid any possibility of increasing the density of development subsequent to outline planning permission.

In view of the wide community significance of a development on this scale a public meeting at which developers could present their plans would attract a good deal of local interest. The Parish Council will also be happy to expand on any of the questions raised above or meet with you and your staff at an appropriate time to discuss these issues further.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Liz Morris  
Clerk to the Parish Council

cc Mr Steve Moss, UKAEA  
Mrs Margaret Turner, District Councillor  
Mr Colin Lamont, County Councillor  
Mr Huw Williams, Planning Policy Advisor, NW Downs AONB Office  
Mr Ed Vaizey, MP

**CHILTON PARISH COUNCIL: Planning Application CHI/16952/1-X**

**Executive Summary**

1. Chilton Parish Council has considered with care the outline planning application by the UK Atomic Energy Authority for a residential development on Chilton Field and herewith submits its comments to the Vale of White Horse District Council. Replacement of the former pre-fabs on Chilton Field has been under discussion for many years. More recently the proposed site has been moved south to allow for the potential expansion of the Diamond Synchrotron facility. The new location, close to Chilton School, is exposed to open countryside in a sensitive region of the North Wessex Downs area of outstanding natural beauty.

2. Chilton Parish Council is prepared to consider carefully proposals for new housing development which:

- is on a scale appropriate to Chilton's status in the Local Plan as a "small village" with only 350 dwellings and few facilities; a total of 200 new dwellings would be a maximum.
- is carefully designed and constructed to blend in with surrounding countryside in an area of outstanding natural beauty;
- contributes to road safety, especially near the School, and to sustainability through improved footpaths and cycle ways and access to public transport;
- promotes the integration of new communities with those already established on the Harwell/Chilton campus and in Chilton village;
- is of a quality and environmental efficiency appropriate to a location adjoining high-tech research facilities of international standing.

3. The current application contains no development plan for the whole Harwell/Chilton campus and no environmental impact assessment to demonstrate how these aims may be achieved. For these reasons and those given above in para.2 the Council is objecting to the application in its present form.

4. Chilton has long benefited from its unique position close to nearby research organisations of international reputation with whom it enjoys excellent relations. At the same time it gives high priority to preserving the tranquillity of its rural location in beautiful surroundings to provide recreation and benefit for its present population, future residents and all lovers of the countryside. This aim can be achieved only if new residential development adheres to the requirements outlined above and described in more detail in this report.

CHILTON PARISH COUNCIL

## **CHILTON PARISH COUNCIL: Planning Application CHI/16952/1-X**

### **1) Observations on Planning History**



**Photograph from the Ridgeway at Bury Down Aug 2005. The proposed development site is in field behind hedge line in middle of picture.**

The original 1992 planning application CHI/1541/1-X was withdrawn in 2003. It is our understanding that only segment "C" (Figure 1C) of this land currently has outline planning permission for residential redevelopment, the other areas either having lapsed or not having an established residential land use. The background is as follows:

- Planning application CHI/1541/1-X for Chilton Field had a 9-year history starting in 1992. During the lifetime of this application the location and approximate layout of a proposed development was approved by the VWHDC and then incorporated in the 1992-2001 Local Plan, adopted in 1999 (Figure 1A see attached). Since 1999 much has happened:
- The successor to the Local Plan for the 1990s has been published and is expected to become the guide for planning in the Vale until at least 2011. The New Plan differs significantly from its predecessor in the importance that it places on sustainability principles. These mirror larger changes already being adopted at county, regional and national levels in the UK and also internationally amongst other Agenda 21 signatories. These principles apply especially to the siting of new developments because of the long-term implications for community infrastructure and transport.
- A major new development, the Diamond Project, has appeared on the scene. As the decision by CCLRC and its partner to site the Synchrotron and support facilities in Chilton evolved, UKAEA amended the original footprint. The applicants relinquished an area on the northwest side of their permitted area and made a new application CHI/16952-X in which land ceded to the Synchrotron site was replaced by a slightly larger area south of Avon Road that had formerly been

public open space, arable land and a line of garages at the time of the prefabs (Figure 1B see attached). This permission was granted in 2001.

- A legacy of ground contaminants at the Southern Storage Area (SSA) was removed by an extensive site remediation programme completed in 2002; this brownfield area provided additional land that was not available at the time of the original application in 1992 in a strategic position adjacent to and south of the consolation land referred to above.
- In 2003, in response to requirements by the Diamond Project for expansion space adjacent to the Synchrotron on the original prefab site/Chilton Field location, UKAEA withdrew application CHI/1541/1-X and identified a new housing development site located entirely south of Avon Road. This comprises the L-shaped remnant of prefab land adjoining Avon Road and Downside ("A" in Figure 1C see attached), the remediated brownfield SSA site ("B"), the intervening consolation land ("C") and a new L-shaped eastward extension that has always been arable land and was cultivated until recently ("D").

In the light of these considerations the Parish Council makes the following observations:

1. A substantial case could be argued for no residential development at all on Chilton Field because the proposed new site shares hardly any land with the original prefab site where residential land use was the prime reason for a development of this size in 1992. However, we recognise that the Vale is under undeniable pressure to meet central government requirements to identify and release land for new housing. We also recognise that parts A, B and C of the proposed new footprint could be suitable for a residential housing use provided that comprehensive measures are included at outline, reserved matters and detailed planning stages to ensure that the resultant development is appropriate in its scale for the setting and sustainable in its functioning. We see absolutely no justification for the farmland area D west of this consolidated area to be included, especially as it is much more prominent in relation to views from the Ridgeway National Trail.
2. The area of A+B+C is approximately 12.1 ha. This area would be able accommodate the 200 dwellings arising from the consolidation of the former Chilton and Aldfield prefab sites and 15% public open space (Policy H23).
3. Whilst recognising that the history of this development is a long one, so many changes to the original proposal have occurred, not least in terms of location, that the original justification for a 275-dwelling development in this rural area can no longer be used as a precedent for assessing the merits of this application; it must be assessed on its own merit. As such, we believe that a maximum of 200 new dwellings (an almost 60% increase in village size) is the most that the present village with its limited facilities could accommodate successfully.
4. We challenge the rationale that asserts that the new application is merely a modification of an agreed scheme carried forward to a new Local Plan; it is radically different. Only 13% of the land with a prior residential housing land use

(which was the original justification for a development of this large size in a prominent AONB setting) remains in this new application.

## 2) The Parish Council's objections.

### **Bearing in mind the history outlined above the Parish Council objects to the current outline planning application CHI/16952/1-X on the following grounds:**

- A. In marked contrast to the former pre-fab site (Application CHI/1541/1-X) the new site is exposed in open countryside in a particularly sensitive region of the North Wessex Downs AONB clearly visible from the Ridgeway National Trail. The Parish Council has expressed consistent opposition to this new site since it was first proposed in 2003 and still awaits the Inspector's comments regarding objections to its inclusion in the revised Local Plan.
- B. The applicant should submit a comprehensive environmental impact assessment of broad scope, together with a discussion of alternative sites, to provide a proper basis for rational decisions on a large-scale development of this kind. Essential components of such an assessment include views to and from the AONB, landscape protection, light pollution effects and an improved traffic impact evaluation that takes account of recently announced major expansion plans by the UKAEA and highway and traffic effects arising from the Great Western development in Didcot.
- C. The application lacks a development brief relating the site to the rest of the Harwell/Chilton campus, Chilton village, transport infrastructure and surrounding countryside. The need for a "whole-site" approach taking into account the interests of the whole community is self-evident, especially given the likely pressures on local routes arising from the Great Western development in Didcot.
- D. Chilton, with few facilities and only 350 dwellings, is classified in the Local Plan as a "small village". It is unrealistic to expect the successful absorption and integration of a new community of comparable size. The creation of a sustainable community in these circumstances would be difficult to achieve. We believe that a maximum development size of 200 dwellings, equivalent to approximately 60 % increase in current village size is the most that could be absorbed.
- E. Implications for road safety close to the A4185, Newbury Road and Chilton School need a more thorough consideration than is contained in the inaccurate Transport Assessment enclosed with the planning application. The Parish Council has undertaken a detailed review of the applicant's transport assessment and has many objections (see Appendix A). Road safety is a matter of concern and priority for all local residents on whose behalf the Chilton Road Safety

Group has published two recent and relevant reports (available from Parish Clerk).

### 3) Conditions

If, notwithstanding the above fundamental objections, consideration is given to the planning application, the Parish Council believes that the following conditions should apply to any outline planning consent:

- A. A strict limitation on the number of dwellings to be constructed to 200 units and the exclusion of further residential development on the site.
- B. Building design and layout should be consistent with the maximum possible landscape protection within the AONB.
- C. A Section 106 agreement to promote integration, sustainability and road safety through improvements to access routes, foot and cycle paths, public transport and community facilities, including those designed to encourage youth activities.
- D. The Parish Council believes that the quality of the design, landscaping and materials should take account of the national importance of this site and unique location in an AONB adjacent to high-tech research facilities. Building specifications should incorporate systems for reducing energy and water consumption and the highest insulation standards. The Council seeks an assurance that the Vale of White Horse District Council will explicitly support and encourage these endeavours.

### 4) Heads of Terms

The Parish Council assumes the applicant's lodging of a Head of Terms document with the application sets out proposed terms for inclusion in a future Section 106 agreement. The Council carried out consultations at a well-attended public meeting on 8 September 2005 and is actively discussing the issues that clauses in a Section 106 would need to cover. The Council will report shortly on the outcome and will table a list of conditions. The interim view is that substantial upward revision of the tabled list will be required to reflect current standards for a development of the proposed size. The re-tabling of conditions copied across from a 13-year old now-withdrawn planning application will not be adequate for this purpose. The Council expects to respond to the Planning Officer on this matter before 15 October 2005.

### 5) Summary

One of Chilton's principal attractions is the tranquility of its rural location, a benefit its residents have enjoyed for centuries. Chilton has always welcomed new residents and they have contributed a great deal to the community. We believe that they also will seek to preserve the unique landscape, so that it can provide recreation and benefit for all lovers of the countryside. If this fundamental aim is to be achieved the Parish Council believes that new residential development requires



the most careful attention and adherence to all the factors outlined in 2) and 3) above.

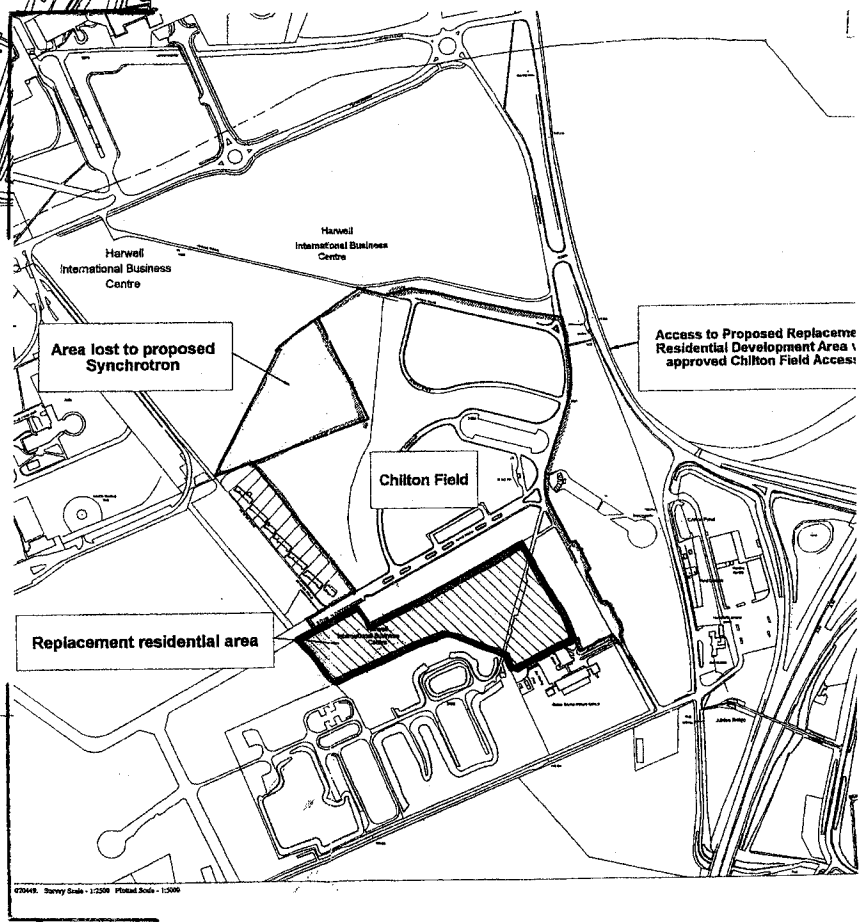
**CHILTON PARISH COUNCIL**



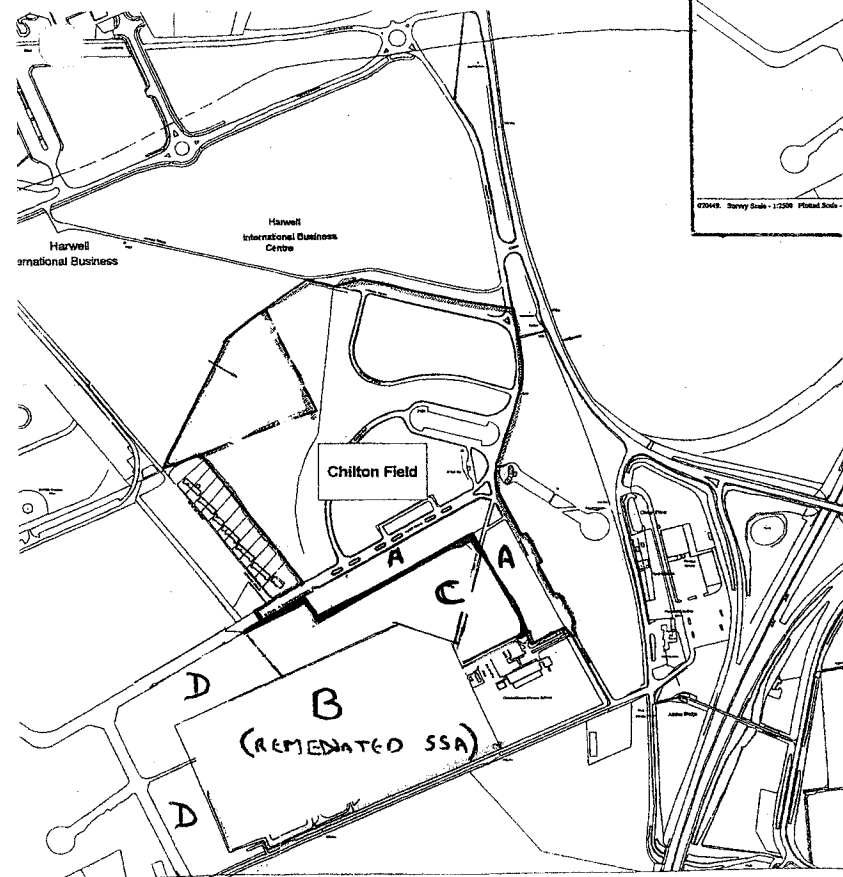
← Fig. 1A Development Application CHI/1541/1: site footprint 1992



Fig 1B Development Application CHI/16952-X: site footprint 2001 →



← Fig 1C Development Application CHI/16952/1-X Proposed site footprint 2005  
 (Area A is land in common with original application, Area B is remediated Southern Storage Area, Area C is consolidation land, Area D is arable land, never built upon)



## **CHILTON PARISH COUNCIL: Planning Application CHI/16952/1-X**

1. Bearing in mind that this is a new site the Parish Council seeks an assurance that a decision on this application should await the Inspector's comments on the objections relating to this site in the revised Local Plan. Has a proper assessment been done by the Vale to establish whether this is the right site? Are the extra 75 dwellings still justified?
2. A proposal on this scale and importance within an AONB requires a comprehensive environmental impact assessment (EIA) of wide scope to provide a suitable basis for rational decisions. Has a Scoping Report been prepared for the EIA? Has an assessment been done of key impacts beyond purely soil issues and covering landscape and surrounding countryside together with an assessment of alternatives?
3. A development brief on how the site relates to the rest of the campus, Chilton village, transport infrastructure and surrounding countryside is highly desirable. This should be prepared while the site is in the ownership of UKAEA. The Council is asked to ensure that a development brief is prepared for the site before planning permission is granted. Is the Council prepared to carry this out or encourage UKAEA to undertake this?
3. Implications for road safety close to the A4185, Newbury Road and Chilton School need a more thorough and careful consideration than is contained in the inaccurate Transport Assessment enclosed with the planning application. This is a matter of concern and priority to all local residents. Two relevant reports on this area have recently been produced by the Chilton Road Safety Group.
4. In view of the sensitive location of the site special attention needs to be given to the relationship between the site and adjoining countryside, including views from and to the AONB, and to the effects on landscape character and light pollution. The preservation of all existing trees and additional necessary screening are crucial.
5. Furthermore, the Parish Council seeks a number of conditions to be attached to the granting of outline planning consent:
  - The number of dwellings is strictly limited to the figure (275) contained in the Local Plan and no further increase beyond this maximum is permitted.
  - The quality of the design, landscaping and materials should take account of the national importance of this site and unique location in an AONB adjacent to high-tech research facilities. Building specifications should incorporate systems for reducing energy and water consumption and the highest insulation standards.
  - The integration of the new households with the existing communities should be encouraged through improved access routes and the construction of footpaths and cycle ways of benefit to the existing village and the whole community.
  - A carefully considered Section 106 agreement (see attached) is required to promote the sustainability of both new and old communities through improvements to public transport and the provision of community facilities, including those designed to encourage youth activities.

## Heads of Terms

1) If the 'Heads of Terms' is the first draft of a Section 106 benefiting the Parish then there should be a significant increase in the contributions offered. A new residential estate adding at least 80% to the existing housing stock of a receiving village which has designated 'smaller village' status needs wider appraisal of context and community needs than just those for the new development alone, and the Parish Council does not note an awareness of this need in this first Heads of Terms draft.

2) The planning application was lodged in the middle of August when the usual community networks were broken up because of summer holidays. It is essential that the community has more time to evaluate this first offer and make their representations to the Parish Council so that a response can be made on a considered basis.

3) In these circumstances the Parish Council's initial response is an expectation of the following;

- Increased contribution towards capital items to improve provision of community facilities and integration of Chilton Field with the original village, in particular:
  - social and recreational facilities for youngsters ( for example - skateboard park, lit youth shelter)
  - enlargement of existing village hall to accommodate larger audiences at events and socials
  - refurbishment and lighting of footpath under A34 to encourage people to walk between the two parts of the village
- Additional contributions to support an improvement in the public transport services, create a sustainable community, decrease car use, and make Chilton Field acceptable under the VWHDC planning policies, for example:
  - Bus services to operate to Didcot until 23.00 each day, as well as on Sundays
  - Shared contribution with Section 106 agreement for Didcot West development, whose residents will use route for access to employment on Harwell/Chilton campus as well as for commuting, shopping and entertainment in central Didcot (shared contribution allowed for in ODPM circular 05/2005 Planning Obligations, para B.21)
  - Planting of mature trees to screen development from the Ridgeway

A final response will be submitted after a consultation with the Parish.

Chilton Parish Council 8 Sept 2005

## **Chilton Parish Council's views on the Revised Environmental Statement for the proposed residential development on Chilton Field (Site of the remediated Southern Storage Area)**

This submission by Chilton Parish Council is based on extensive and long-standing knowledge of Chilton village and its surroundings and the views of many local residents.

### 1) Introductory Remarks

The revised environmental statement (ES) is a more thorough analysis of landscape and visual impact than the previous version. It attempts (not always convincingly) to satisfy the legitimate concerns of the AONB and Countryside Agency by referring to official guidelines and consulting AONB in the process.

#### Scope

The Council regrets that the scope of the ES is limited to visual and landscape impacts bearing in mind that the importance of environmental effects in a sensitive part of the countryside with wildlife.

#### Objectivity

We also note that the ES is not an independent examination of the impact of the proposed development. Kemp and Kemp's introduction states that it is 'prepared in support of a planning application' which implies it is not impartial.

### 2) Conclusions of the Report

There is a basic discrepancy between the conclusions on pp.24 and 29:

p24 (5.33) 'The landscape sensitivity of the site was assessed earlier as being medium. Combining this with the assessed medium magnitude of change gives a significance level of moderate. This is considered to be mainly adverse in nature, since adverse changes (mainly the proposed new buildings themselves) would be only partly balanced by beneficial impacts (mainly the proposed new woodland planting).'

p29 (7.8) 'Whilst the landscape impacts on the AONB would be noticeable, it was concluded that they would not be significant, largely due to the existing urban fringe character of the site. Visual impacts on the AONB would be only marginally significant in the short term, but would become barely perceptible once the proposed mitigation planting has fully established. It was therefore concluded that the proposed development would not result in unacceptable landscape and visual impacts within the AONB, and that the natural beauty of the landscape would be conserved.'

p29 (7.9) 'The proposed development would not be significantly deleterious to the AONB, and would not result in unacceptable levels of landscape and visual impact.'

These conclusions are contradictory. Furthermore, the designation 'urban fringe character' is wholly inappropriate for a rural site adjacent to unfarmed, undeveloped land in open countryside.

### 3) Kemp and Kemp's Introduction

There are a few points that are included in Kemp & Kemp's introductions that we challenge at the outset;

3.1) The Heads of Terms (3.20 p5 Introductory letter) do not reflect the Parish Council proposals submitted last year.

3.2) The application attempts to increase development to 300 dwellings, a move that we reject. The rationale for the original development was for 275 homes (endorsed in the Local Plan), representing the merging of two prefabricated housing permissions (Chilton and Aldfield Avenue) and a further 75 homes. Since then the footprint of this site has moved very substantially, and the proposed development only remains extant because of its history. Planning officers have agreed that it would be difficult to argue a case for a development of this size at this site if it were a fresh application in the light of current planning criteria. Given this history, we see no logical basis for a further increment in the total number of dwellings, and this view is consistent with the recommendations of the Planning Inspector.

If the land area demarcated is considered too large for the 275 dwellings the area available for development should be reduced.

In summary, the Parish Council would like to see a measure to constrain the number of dwellings built to 275. This would limit the net site area (that part of the 15 hectare site which is for dwellings development) to a maximum of 9.167 ha (equivalent to a density of 30 per hectare), but a smaller housing footprint would also be possible if a higher density were required to meet national planning criteria.

#### 4) Methodology for Visual Impact Assessment

The main conclusion seems to be that there will be a moderate adverse impact immediately with an acceptable adverse impact in 10-15 years time when the screening trees have grown.

The Parish Council believes the methodology used to draw these conclusions (see Appendix) is flawed. In fact there could be no mitigation at all during the period that the trees are not in leaf.

The ES overlooks the severe visual impact of the proposed development on users of the bridleway close to Ordnance Survey grid reference SU470854. *— view point C*

Given the issues we have with the methodology, we question the value of the ES at the outline planning stage since the layout of the development and the preservation of existing trees within the site (to which we attach importance) will have a big effect on the visual impact.

A bund planted with trees on the Western edge of the site and generous tree planting within the final design of the development will be necessary to break up the groups of buildings.

#### 5) Lighting

Any proposed lighting scheme must minimise potential impacts on the adjacent landscape (2.35 p10). The existing lighting on the Harwell/Chilton campus (eg in the adjacent car parks) is in any case in need of better regulation.

It is unacceptable to argue that an increase in light pollution in an AONB is justified because of existing lighting.

#### 6) Alternative Sites

It is regrettable that the ES still rules out the need to identify alternative sites for the previous inadequate reasons (2.10 p4) despite the Countryside Agency's response to the original statement. The Guide to Procedures for Environmental Impact Assessment published by the ODPM

(paragraph 33) emphasises the need for developers to consider alternative approaches. An explanation of why the Government's guidelines have not been followed in this case would be appreciated by the Council. *— not needed*

The justification for 275 houses is based on the original 100 dwellings on the Chilton Field prefab site plus the 100 prefabs on the Aldfield farm site (towards the northern end of the campus) and the extra 75 included in the Plan. As there are signs that UKAEA wish to develop other areas of the campus for new housing this point is important.

No attempt has been made to consider the impact of a reduced footprint limited to the Eastern part of the site (see point 3.2 above) where exposure to open countryside would be less conspicuous. ?

7) Cumulative Impact *on what basis?*

The need for a Development Brief for the whole Harwell/Chilton campus has been recognised by the Vale of White Horse District Council and the ES suffers from the lack of a whole-site approach. The cumulative impact of the major developments at Great Western Park, the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus and Chilton Field requires urgent consideration.

To take just one example, the visual impact on the AONB of an increase in traffic over Hagbourne Hill needs to be addressed.

8) High Quality Design

Although tree planting in the long term may help to mitigate the visual impact in summer a high-quality design, layout and living environment is essential so that the view created is pleasing to the eye at all times of the year.

We would like to see the involvement of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) in developing a pleasing design for this major project. This would bring substantial benefits not only to future residents of Chilton Field but to all residents of Chilton who value their village and its environment.

## APPENDIX

### Inaccuracies in visual impact assessment

The assessment concludes (paragraph 7.8):

“Visual impacts on the AONB would be marginally significant in the short term, but would become barely perceptible once the proposed mitigation planting has become fully established.”

This statement is incorrect for the following reason.

The most sensitive viewpoints of Chilton Field are from the Ridgeway (identified as principal viewpoints B, C, D, paras 5.13, 5.14 and 5.15).

The elevation of these is just over 180 metres above AOD (identified on drawings CF/2, CF/3 and CF/4).

The elevation of Chilton Field is approximately 120m above AOD (para 2.17).

Thus the viewpoint from the Ridgeway is 60 metres higher than Chilton Field.

The Ridgeway is approximately 1.5 kilometres from Chilton Field, so the average gradient fall is 40m per km, or 4%.

Table 5/4 in the assessment (page 25) shows the significance levels of the development from the viewpoints. For viewpoints B, C and D the magnitude of change is claimed to be “medium and adverse” before the mitigation planting has fully established, falling to “negligible and adverse” after the mitigation planting is 10 metres tall.

The height of buildings to be concealed behind the mitigation planting is “an assumed pattern of two storey dwellings (ridge height 8 metres) covering the proposed development area” (Appendix 2)

Therefore the ridge height of the dwellings is 2 metres lower than the mitigation planting, once it reaches 10 metres tall.

Looking down at Chilton Field from the Ridgeway with its elevation of 60 metres, the mitigation planting would only conceal the roof lines of the houses for 50 metres, because of the 4% downward angle of the viewpoint. After that the roofs would be visible.

As the viewpoints from the Ridgeway are diagonally across Chilton Field (from the south west corner) the length across the housing development that would be seen from the Ridgeway is about 615 metres. The mitigation planting would only hide the first 50 metres of the development, therefore a roofscape of at least 500 metres would be visible.

The assertion in para 5.35 that: “once the planting is around ten metres tall nearly all visual impacts would be either barely perceptible or only just noticeable” is simply not true. SLR Consulting seem to have failed to take into account the elevated viewpoint from the Ridgeway.

It also needs to be made plain whether the illustrations showing the simulated effect of mitigation planting (drawings CF/3 and CF/4) have been made with leaves on the trees or with bare branches. The Ridgeway is used by walkers all year round, particularly now that motorised vehicles have been banned, and the houses need to be adequately screened in winter as well as summer.



Copies sent to Mr Huw Williams, North Wessex Downs AONB

Ms Julie Delcroix, Countryside Agency

de  
AB

Sent to Agent



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APPENDIX 7

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Tel: 01865 815700  
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21 December, 2005

Highways

Your ref: CHI/16952/1-X

Direct line: 01865 815729

Please ask for: Tim Foxall

e-mail: tim.foxall@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Dear Mrs LeCointe

**Proposal:** Residential Development with associated community facilities and access

**Location:** Land to the south of Chilton Field, Avon Road, Chilton, Didcot

**Application No.** CHI/16952/1-X

Thank you for your consultation on the above planning application.

Having had the opportunity to visit the site and read the Transport Assessment (TA) accompanying the application, I write with my initial comments on the above proposals. In brief the TA considers the impact of a residential development of up to 300 dwellings and community facilities on land to the south of Harwell Chilton Campus with access achieved from the existing A4185 / Newbury Road junction.

**Access Principles**

It is proposed that access to the development be made from the existing A4185 / Newbury Road junction, with the addition of a ghost right turn lane into Newbury Road itself. Having visited the site, Oxfordshire County Council consider the addition of a ghost right turn lane and the extension of the 40mph speed limit and street lighting past the site to be the minimum acceptable enhancements to accommodate the intensification of the junctions use, should residential development proceed.

Without the proposed enhancements to the existing junction, the access would be unable to sustain an intensification of use to the scale proposed. An intricate part of the proposed improvement is the reduction of speed past the junction, without which vision would be substandard.

In addition to the proposed alterations to the A4185 / Newbury Road junction, it is also proposed to alter the A34 northbound off-slip / A4185 junction. This will involve the re-alignment of the off-slip carriageway and the removal of the merge lane onto A4185 such that a conventional 'T' junction is formed. This is viewed as a positive enhancement as vehicles were observed to join the A4185 at speed, with visibility of vehicles approaching from the other side of the bridge obscured by the

Richard Dudding - Director for Environment & Economy    Richard Dix - Interim Head of Transport

gradient. Improved pedestrian crossing facilities will also be provided at the junction through the installation of a pedestrian refuge in the bellmouth. This too is viewed as a positive addition.

In summary, although Oxfordshire County Council as Highway Authority will accept the intensification of the junctions use, it is paramount that the extension of the 40mph speed restriction, the addition of street lights and the provision of a ghosted right turn lane is conditioned as part of the development to safeguard highway safety.

The TA makes reference to previous discussions with the County with respect to this junction arrangement and as such it is requested that the applicant forwards any information pertaining to these discussions for appraisal.

As an aside, it was noted that an existing 'T' junction serving the Perimeter Road around Harwell South is located between the proposed access junction and the new Fermi Avenue roundabout. This junction serves Avon Road, runs parallel with the northern boundary of the proposed residential development and appears to be a secondary access to Chilton Primary School. It was noted on egress from this junction that available visibility is better than that available from Newbury Road and both approaches to the junction are straight. As such, it may be worth investigating the potential for the principle point of access utilising this access, if landownership issues and the like are not prohibitive.

### ***Internal Junctions and Layout***

The proposed access arrangement will result in the existing alignment of Newbury Road forming a 'T' junction with the main site access road. Although exact assessments are difficult on-site, it would appear that visibility to the right from the new Newbury Road/site access junction is likely to fall below required standards especially due to the location of a tree on the boundary of the garden centre. As such, it is requested that the applicant submit a full engineering drawing illustrating achievable visibility.

The proposed alignment of the access road will cross Downside and therefore consideration should be given to how this new junction should operate in the future. Furthermore, the apparent discontinuation of Downside to the north towards its existing junction with the Perimeter Road will prevent the use of this lightly trafficked route by residents of Chilton as means by which to reach the shops on Currie Avenue or HIBC. As such, due consideration should be given to how this impact will be negated.

The internal layout of the development appears acceptable and the provision of a loop for future servicing by buses is laudable.

The County Council have been made aware of a study undertaken by Chilton Road Safety Group examining the operation of the existing garden centre egress / Newbury Road / Upper Farm Lane junction. It was highlighted that at peak times this junction can become congested with particular concern over the need for road space to be shared between pedestrians, cyclists and car drivers.

Although ideally, enhancements to this junction would be sought as part of the development, it is considered that the junction is not adversely impacted upon by the development and thus such a requirement could not be justified. Indeed, the provision of a secondary access to the school through the development may actually reduce the level of traffic at this junction thus alleviating some of the existing pressure at the junction. Furthermore, scope does exist to formalise access arrangements to the school by way of initiating a one-way system for example, such that potential conflict is further minimised.

### **Traffic Generation and Trip Distribution**

The assumptions made in the TA with regard to traffic generation are broadly acceptable, however no account has been taken as to the likely trip attraction of the sports facilities proposed in the heart of the development. As such it is requested that this be appraised within the TA accompanying any forthcoming full application. It is anticipated however that the peak generations of the sports facilities will not coincide with the rest of the development.

It is noted that the traffic generated by local consented developments such as the Diamond Synchrotron has been taken into account in the appraisal of the access junction and A34 slip road junction. However, it is not accepted that this should then in effect substitute the need to factor up existing background traffic. As such it is requested that for junction capacity appraisal means, existing background traffic is factored up before being added to the traffic generated by the proposed development and the agreed consented development traffic. This will result in a more robust assessment.

Development traffic generation has been calculated by way of a TRICS interrogation and by establishing an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile site which has in turn been used to establish trip rates. Although the selected site is unusual in as much as it is located in Northern Ireland, the rates proposed are broadly acceptable and robust by the virtue that they have been based upon an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile site. However, it is the opinion of Oxfordshire County Council as Highway Authority that the AM peak hour inbound and PM peak hour outbound rates are slightly conservative.

The total traffic anticipated to be generated by the development is outlined below;

| Time Period                  | Number of Vehicular Trips |            |        |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|--------|
|                              | Arrivals                  | Departures | Totals |
| Am Peak Hour (08:00 – 09:00) | 48                        | 201        | 249    |
| Pm Peak Hour (17:00 – 18:00) | 177                       | 69         | 246    |

The County Council accepts that the site previously generated trips from dwellings as 200 prefabricated units have been demolished. However for the sake of looking at traffic generation, this has not been taken into consideration.

The drawing reputed to illustrate proposed trip distribution was missing from the TA and therefore a copy is requested from the applicant such that it maybe agreed by the Highway Authority.

### **Highway Impact and Mitigation**

The impact of the additional trips generated by the development has been assessed at the Newbury Road / A4185 and A34 slip road junction, both of which were shown to work within capacity. However no comparison assessment has been undertaken between existing conditions and future conditions at the junctions – it is accepted however that it is proposed to alter the junction as part of the development and thus such assessments need not necessarily be undertaken.

Furthermore, no assessment has been made as to the impact of development traffic at either the Rowstock Roundabout (A417/A4185) or the Fermi Avenue Roundabout to the north of the site or indeed the A4185/Lower Road roundabout to the east of the site. As such it is requested that these assessments (both existing and future) be undertaken and submitted to the Highway Authority for approval as mitigation measures maybe required.

## ***Sustainability***

In general terms, the site cannot be regarded as being well located in terms of sustainability. Despite bus services being located within 400 metres walking distance of the site, frequency and choice of destination are poor with a need for changes between services required for access to Oxford and other large urban areas. The sites comparatively remote location is not conducive to walking and cycling trips being made for shopping or commuting purposes despite there being a recognised network of footpaths and cyclepaths in the vicinity.

However, with the addition of housing to the HIBC site, it will become a mixed use site and in doing so could arguably be regarded as becoming more sustainable as will the housing development itself as the need for car travel between home and employment site is reduced.

It is recognised that the development will be designed such that buses may serve the site in the future, however it is not accepted that further contributions would **not** be required on the basis of the applicants previous contributions towards public transport services in the area - each development is assessed on merit and therefore a further contribution maybe required.

## ***Conclusion***

The County Council as Highway Authority do not object to the development although would recommend that the following condition is attached to the permission;

1. The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the existing vehicular access junction into the site has been remodelled as shown in the applicants drawing 03081/185.

Further to this, the Highway Authority seek a contribution towards the Didcot Integrated Transport Strategy of £199,013.87.

These monies have been calculated based upon the average two-way peak period trip rate (0.83) as derived from the TA, multiplied by the 75 additional properties that will be on the site (over and above the 200 which were originally on the site) multiplied by the applied cost per trip (£3197.01).

I trust you find my comment useful, but should you wish to discuss them in further detail, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Tim Foxall  
*Senior Transport Planner*