



**Planning Application PT16/6924/O**  
**Erection of up to 121no. dwellings, retail unit (Class A1), open space, ecological mitigation land and associated works with access from Wotton Road. Outline application with access to be considered (all other matters reserved). - Land North Of Wotton Road Charfield GL12 8TG**

The Charfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is writing to South Gloucester Council in response to the above referenced planning application. This is the first strategic planning proposal that has come to the attention of the Group since we started the process of 'making' the Charfield Neighbourhood Plan.

Given the current situation where the Emerging Spatial Strategy Document (JSP) is out for consultation and where the Neighbourhood Plan is progressing on schedule but is not yet made, we believe this proposal is premature.

We fully understand the role of a Neighbourhood Plan, which is drafted in conformity with national and local policies, including the National Planning Policy Framework, the South Gloucestershire Core Strategy, the emerging Policies, Sites and Places Plan and the emerging Joint Spatial Plan. We are not a pressure group. However we are aware that Charfield residents consider the proposals and rationale for proposing up to 1000 extra houses in the village over the next 18 years are ill conceived and many residents are responding to the JSP on this basis.

We are therefore very concerned that SGC do not approve planning applications in anticipation of the outcome of the JSP Consultation or ahead of the made Neighbourhood Plan. Realistically we would expect the first draft of the Plan to be available in early summer 2017.

Given that the Neighbourhood Plan process is allowed for in the Localism Act 2011, due weight must be given to this process. We are in the course of preparing the plan and have carried out significant community engagement including a major parish wide survey to gather the views of the Charfield community on land use in the village. It is vital that the community is given the time to form the plan without having to absorb developments which do not relate to any adopted Local Plan in the designated area. At this stage of development of the Neighbourhood Plan we are already getting clear indications that villagers do have a view about the type, style, function, timing of any new housing in the village and related infrastructure that might be needed to support these new builds.

To proceed with large scale planning applications in the village without giving significant weight to the current Neighbourhood Plan exercise will alienate confidence in the process in Charfield.

We are pursuing the development of the plan with urgency but the planning environment in the area is very fluid and unsure and we are trying to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is a robust one for the circumstances where the wider strategic policies of the Local Plan are still emerging.

This proposal for over 100 dwellings is a **strategic** development and as such needs to be re-assessed if and when this site is allocated for such development and when the settlement boundary for Charfield is re-drawn.

We want to emphasise that Charfield already has 2 new approved planning permissions adding up to 170 houses outside the established settlement boundary which equates to a 15% unplanned increase to the village. As such we believe that it is logical to slow down any further speculative developments and ensure that any new developments in the next 20 years should be only those that are *planned and agreed* in the updated Local Plan and the made Neighbourhood Plan. No further unplanned and random sites should be approved in the designated area.

Charfield has embraced the Government's aims to involve the community in planning decisions and is the first community in this county to aim to produce a neighbourhood plan. From a public relations standpoint it would be very damaging to the Government's aims if the community sees the Neighbourhood Plan process easily circumvented and downgraded because higher-level policies are not in place.

It is important that the Charfield community is given the necessary space and time to produce a neighbourhood plan that impacts the future positively, not one that addresses a fait accompli with developments that are approved and built before the ideas of the community have been formalised.

We have not sought to look at this proposal itself except in the broadest terms. However we are aware that the survey results are likely to identify Warners Court and its setting as a valued historical building and important to retain as a character asset. This in itself may impact the style and nature of the houses, if any, which might be built around it.

To conclude, we have concerns about **any** strategic proposals that developers may submit at this time and would request that South Glos Council recommend, as part of their pre-application advice, that developers delay submitting any planning applications until the JSP (or any successor document as appropriate) is agreed and the Neighbourhood Plan has been made. We would further request that if the developers proceed to submit their applications contrary to such advice we would suggest that SGC must refuse them on principle. The NPPF para 216 supports the validity of this approach.

Charfield Steering Group