



**Response to 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 submits this comment in response to the planning application PT16/6924/O.

In November 2016, we undertook a comprehensive parish wide survey to establish the community's views on a wide-ranging number of topics. We received the analysis of the questions from the Gloucestershire Rural Communities Council in late December. While the Neighbourhood Plan is not yet made, the results of this survey are key components in determining the policies that will be included in the Plan. The results do not need much interpretation and new planning applications should take account of them.

This survey did not seek to gather opinion on numbers or locations of new houses but to understand what was important to the residents in terms of land usage. The outcome of the survey has established that the village residents have a clear view on many issues that should be reflected in this application.

We have described in this commentary those topics particularly relevant to applications of this type but we are happy to make the full results available to South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) and to the applicants themselves. We have not addressed the emerging infrastructure needs and S106 issues in any depth in this response.

We are not a pressure group and our purpose in responding to this application is to ensure that now we have a good baseline to describe what the village wants in any new housing, this should be made available to the developers and planners as early as possible.

We have not looked in detail at this application, as it is not our intent to comment on specific applications nor do we have the resource to do so. It may be that the application addresses some or even all of the requirements that the village has identified as necessary in new builds.

#### **How Charfield Residents See Their Village**

The rural feel and access to the countryside is fundamental to the quality of life, community identity and to day-to-day living. For the future, the hope is for Charfield to remain a rural and peaceful village where the residents feel safe and it retains its feeling of tranquillity.

#### **Infrastructure**

The survey included a number of questions addressing infrastructure and we are also engaging with key partners such as local schools, GP surgeries and other service providers including community groups. As a result of these discussions it is obvious that if the JSP's proposals for an expanded Charfield go ahead then there is going to be a **significant** need for new and improved infrastructure in the village. This could include a new primary school, some units for business use, a business hub, parking for a re-opened train station, a doctor's surgery and a sports centre.

This is an important factor to consider in relation to this site. The site is centrally placed in the village – it is close to the Memorial Hall, the protected site for a re-opened station and the school. Potentially this could be the strategic site for some of this infrastructure build.

It is also a potential candidate for the alternative site for the railway station that SGC are looking for.

#### **Interconnectivity**

The developments at Charfield Green and Days House Leaze are based on a 'one road in and one road out' single access with no additional footways or cycleways for accessing the rest of the village. The results of the survey showed that 89% of respondents felt that it is

*important* or *very important* that new developments are designed to include additional footpaths and cycleways that promoted inter-connectivity with the rest of the village.

A related question provides further support that development should incorporate better footpaths (97%) and better bridleways and cycleways (91%).

Given that this site at Warners Court neighbours the Days House Leaze site, it is important that this issue is addressed in the plans for this development. Whether the Warner's Court application goes ahead or not, some strategic planning between the two sites will make any future development (be it 2 years hence or 35 years) more cohesive and reflective of local requirements.

### **Green Areas**

*[We have used the term 'green areas' to make a distinction from the Government's term Green Space.]*

Respondents agreed that green areas were very important in making the village a pleasant environment and village developments gave opportunities for new green areas to be established. Respondents were very clear on how green areas should be included:

- Green space used throughout the development to give an overall feeling of space (74%)
- Wildlife corridors including woodlands, hedges, grasslands and waterways (71%)
- Wildlife habitats (57%)
- Large areas of green space to provide public woodlands and grasslands created by multiple developers "pooling their green space" contributions (50%)
- Mini-'village greens' in larger developments (50%)
- Small copses of trees (46%)

These different types of green areas are not incompatible with each other neither are they conflicting with the support for footpaths, bridleways and cycleways to connect the village.

It important to highlight that amenity space generated the lowest support at 29%. However we know from a separate survey by the Parish Council that there is a demand for allotments and as this application includes allotment space we would not see the low rating on amenity space negating this specific need. There are allotments planned at Charfield Green development and at the Day House Leaze site . We do not believe that any more land allocated for allotments is required. This land could be better allocated as green areas as indicated above.

With this application and the new developments at Charfield Green and Days House Leaze there is a degree of cynicism in the village that developers only include play areas and allotments in their plans to get a 'tick in the box' and these may be reflected in the low support for amenity areas. We also are aware that amenity sites can be seen as places for anti-social behaviour and a source of friction among neighbours.

### **Cars, Access, Roads & Parking**

#### Cars

It is clear from the survey responses that Charfield is a car-dependent village. 93% of all journeys are by car. It is therefore important that new developments address and manage this fact.

#### Access onto Wotton Road

This has been a dominant topic at Community Engagement events. Improving the access onto the Wotton Road and the amount of traffic and the speed at which vehicles travels on this road has been an on-going concern of residents particularly when the road bi-sects the village infrastructure and there are few safe official crossing points.

Residents see one of the main benefits arising from sustainable development as improving road junctions onto the Wotton Road.

This issue was developed in a survey question where 68% of respondents wanted roundabouts to control traffic from new developments onto the road to provide good, safe access. In the past SGC transport planners have not adopted roundabouts as means of controlling traffic onto the Wotton Road and it is important that given this level of support for this traffic management mechanism that this is given serious consideration and that residents are kept fully informed as to why such solutions are not adopted. Coming in as a second preference but with significantly less support (34%) was traffic lights.

### 20 mph speed limit

The SGC Local Plan includes a scheme encouraging 'quiet lanes' where 20 mph speed restrictions are in force – this scheme being used on at least some of the roads in the village was supported by 81% of respondents.

This is refined by support of 53% on roads of the type within this development. Given this level of support then it would seem appropriate that if this application was approved that a 20 mph speed restriction is in place on site.

The 20 mph limit on Wotton Road itself was supported by 52% of respondents and this may have implications for the access into and out of the development.

### Parking

The survey showed that most residents park their cars off the road and the support for new developments to provide off-street parking was a resounding 96%. More specifically 56% saw the current SGC recommended parking spaces as insufficient (1 bed & 2 bed - 1space, 3 & 4 bed 2 spaces, 5 bed plus – 3 spaces)

It is therefore important in this development that more parking spaces than the SGC minimum recommended are provided for and we would suggest that as a minimum the spaces should be 1 & 2 bed – 2 spaces, 3 & 4 bed 3 spaces and 5 bed plus 4 spaces.

## **Housing and homes**

### Development Size

The survey results clearly **do not** support developments of this size. Developments of 100 homes and above were only supported by 5% of respondents and only 16% supported individual developments of 50 to 99. The overwhelming majority at 71% saw smaller developments of between 1 to 49 houses to be the most suitable approach for Charfield.

### Pace of Development

Residents were over-whelming in favour of any further development being evenly phased over the next 20 years. We currently have 170 houses being built over the next 2 to 3 years. The outcome of the JSP is unknown. Further development cannot be supported at this time and we would suggest no further development can be approved for at least a couple of years or until the JSP is made whichever is the later.

### Style of development

SGC are encouraging new development to make a positive contribution to the distinctiveness of that particular area and the results of the survey show that the village agrees with this approach. The clear top three preferred styles and features are:

- Traditional stone with slate roofs
- Eco-friendly builds
- Cottage style (railway/agricultural workers cottages)

Stone houses and workers cottages are features of the old Charfield and so it is a style that has a local resonance. The eco-friendly builds can be interpreted in these traditional styles very easily and provide the best of the past with a sustainable build standard of the future. These 3 preferences are quite complimentary and there is no reason not to see Charfield's new builds as beautiful stone cottages with the state of the art eco-friendly features.

These results are particularly significant given the proximity of the site to Poolfield Farm and Warners Court - both buildings that are valued by the community and whose settings should be respected by sympathetic neighbouring developments.

### Eco-features

There was an over-whelming support from respondents to support eco-features as part of all new builds (75%). These were specified as using high levels of insulation and glazing, good draft sealing and ventilation schemes with heat recovery to provide a fundamentally more efficient home which would minimise the need for expensive heating systems. Further improvements for the environment can be made with the inclusion of rainwater harvesting, green roofs, PV panels, ground or air sourced heat pumps.

*Residents want to see Charfield as a leading example of eco-builds.*

It is very important to the village that all new housing in Charfield is built using these features as standard.

### Size of homes

Residents were evenly split between developments of 2 bedroom homes (24%), 3 bedroom homes (24%) and mixed developments (37%). Support for 1 bedroom, 4 bedroom and larger developments was very low (4%).

### Type of home

Residents were asked to comment on the type of home most needed. Responses supported mixed developments (35%) of houses (32%), bungalows (12%) and retirement/sheltered housing (13%). The support for flats and apartments was very low at 4%.

There was significant support for land being made available for self-build (58%) and shared ownership (52%). These types of housing are part of the Government and SGC's housing policies and we would expect to see them as part of developments going forward.

### Covenants on house deeds

We canvassed for views on how to make any new development an easy place to live in and how design could make good neighbours and communities.

There was overwhelming support for covenants that dealt with fencing and boundaries (height and responsibility) (71%) and that placed restrictions on the parking of caravans/commercial vehicles or similar on front drives (72%). Neither of these requirements are unusual nor would they negatively affect the marketing of houses and should be an easy requirement for developers to deliver.

There was a significant element of other comments (19%) provided in the free text box, which we have not yet analysed.

### **Character Assets**

This site is close to a number of buildings that have been supported as character assets in the Parish namely Warners Court, the Market Bank, Newtown, the Station and Poolfield Farmhouse.

It is therefore important that these buildings and their settings are respected and enhanced by any future development. It is perhaps no coincidence that these old buildings are valued given the choice of the village is for new builds to reflect the old buildings of the village and be built in stone and slate.

### **Conclusion**

The survey has clarified many of the aspirations of the village with regard to its present and its future. Charfield is the first parish in South Gloucestershire to engage in the Neighbourhood Planning process. Residents are engaged in the process in the expectation that their voice will be heard and that the process will be respected. We believe that even at this stage the results of the survey give clear direction as to the type and content of policies that will be included in our Plan itself. The policies will be in accord with the Local Plan and will be robust to address the future JSP outcome given the topics do not address numbers of houses nor suitable sites for expansion, if any.

We will advise the Council of any developments that may affect this and any further planning applications for strategic (i.e. large) developments.