

From: cllr.matt.babbage@cheltenham.gov.uk
Sent: 23 March 2021 11:38
To: Palmer, Leanne
Cc: Cllr.Louis.Savage@cheltenham.gov.uk; alex.chalk.mp@parliament.uk
Subject: Submission - Oakhurst Rise Planning Inquiry - APP/B1605/W/20/3261154

Dear Leanne,

Please see my proposed speaking notes for today, on behalf of myself, Cllr Louis Savage and Alex Chalk MP

Regards,
Matt

Matt Babbage
Cheltenham Borough Councillor, Battledown ward

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Dear Madam Inspector,

RE: Land at Oakhurst Rise, Cheltenham, GL52 6NR (Appeal Ref: **APP/B1605/W/20/3261154**)

We would like to take the opportunity once again to put on record our clear opposition to the inappropriate development of this site.

Whilst there are a number of core issues that Cheltenham Borough Council and Charlton Kings Friends will be outlining, including for example heritage issues and the impact on listed buildings, there are also a number of wider issues of great concern to local residents that we would like to highlight on their behalf.

One of the defining and most treasured features of Cheltenham is its beautiful and largely unspoiled surrounding countryside. It is a feature valued not just by local residents, but by innumerable visitors. Whilst the proposed site does not itself sit within the Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), its elevated position and prominent visibility from many sites in the AONB right across the Cotswolds escarpment mean that permitting this development would have a clear deleterious impact on our most treasured asset. We are acutely aware of the imperative to meet local and national housing need, and in the Joint Core Strategy Cheltenham has identified sites to meet the town's housing needs until 2030 and beyond, but this must be done in a manner which safeguards our AONB and other sensitive sites for current and future generations.

Additionally, we are concerned that the number of dwellings far exceeds that indicated by previous planning inspectors. The approved Cheltenham Plan has allocated the site for 25 houses, yet the current plans for 43 dwellings clearly far exceed this.

Since this site was last reviewed by an inspector (either as part of the previous appeal, or in setting the Cheltenham Plan), the fields in question have been identified by the Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust as a Local Wildlife Site (previously Key Wildlife Site), one of only six in Cheltenham. Had this designation been in place prior to the initiation of the Cheltenham Plan, it is in our view highly unlikely that Cheltenham Borough Council would have suggested the site for any housing at all, and we would therefore question even the 25 dwelling allocation identified for this site, let alone the current 43 dwelling application.

Further, we are particularly concerned that the transport links for this proposed development are inadequate. The suggestion that Oakhurst Rise, a steep, narrow, winding cul-de-sac, should be the sole point of access to a major development like this is an obvious area for concern. Whilst a previous inspector has determined that the proposed access route is not in and of itself a strong enough reason for refusal, the fact that the inspector described the route as "tortuous and far from ideal" do suggest that some weight at least should be given to this concerning aspect.

As elected local representatives, we feel uniquely well placed to give you the perspective of the residents we serve. For clear and well founded planning reasons, these residents are almost unanimous in their opposition to this application, and in their opposition to this appeal.

We would urge you to dismiss this appeal.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Chalk MP, Cllr Louis Savage and Cllr Matt Babbage