

ADDERBURY PARISH COUNCIL
RESPONSE TO CHERWELL DC CONSULTATION ON
CHERWELL DESIGN GUIDE – SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

Introduction

- 1 Adderbury Parish Council (APC) welcomes Cherwell District Council’s initiative in drafting a Design Guide to provide the framework for the significant number of homes likely to be built in the District in the foreseeable future. However, APC is concerned that it will fail to address significant failings that have become evident in the dash for housing growth that has characterised the last two decades.
- 2 APC lists these failings as:
 - (a) The inability to provide a creative design assessment of developments to ensure that the development layout, building designs and landscape treatment fits the development into the receiving landscape in an harmonious way. In designing the layout, more consideration should be given to the aspects of the houses, keeping north facing rear gardens to a minimum. This deficiency was clearly highlighted in the Clockmakers Turn estate on the north side of the Milton Road. Present development proposals indicate too much regularity of sameness in proposals devoid of any creative design input. Assessments should take a view from all angles and identify features and buildings that will dominate the local landscape and how best to overcome them. homes that fail to provide for increasing economic prosperity represented by ever-growing quantities of physical possessions for which storage is wholly inadequate;
 - (b) The use of pre-designed roof trusses should be resisted to allow for easier loft conversions for growing families to expand into and create additional storage.
 - (c) the increasing pattern of home working meaning that many households need a dedicated space for one or more family members to work from home for some or all of the working week;
 - (d) absence of adequate storage space in new homes causing garages to make up for that lack of storage and leaving no space for motor vehicles owned by the occupants;
 - (e) tightening provision for the private motor car in the name of promoting sustainable transport, particularly walking and cycling which only leads to many housing estates resembling municipal car parks, particularly combined with the use of garages for the storage space absent in the homes;
 - (f) planning permissions being given for urban style estates on the edges of villages which totally fail to reflect the style of the village they border and of which they provide the first glimpse. APC cites the estate on the north side of the Milton Road, leaving Bloxham for Adderbury and the corresponding Clockmakers Turn estate on the north side of the Milton Road as one enters Adderbury. Neither of them show any sympathy for the historical style of development of these villages.

Density and storage space adequacy

- 3 The pressure for housing numbers inevitably comes down to demanding more homes per acre but this country now seems to be building smaller homes than any other country in the developed world. In time, APC suspects we will see significant pressure for extensions that swallow up much of the small space allocated to gardens in many homes and the conversion of garages into living space, consigning more motor cars to estate roads that have been deliberately down sized in a failed attempt to reduce car ownership. APC suspects we may also see engineering innovation looking at going

down into garden space or up into higher storeys to provide the space for which families will increasingly yearn.

- 4 There is anecdotal evidence of potential house buyers on a local estate who remarked to the sales agents how small the main bedroom was and just too small to contain a wardrobe as well as a bed. The agent apparently replied that the answer owners had found was to use the smallest bedroom as a wardrobe because it was barely large enough to contain a small bed!
- 5 The average family will own an increasing and perplexing quantity of material possession: freezer, suit cases, tool boxes, children's toys, ladders, a garden mower, barbeque kit, bicycles, old TVs and other electrical goods "kept for a rainy day" and so on. Where will they store them? Certainly not in a house that barely has room for people to sit round a dining table. They will all go in the single small car garage leaving the two or three cars owned by the average family parked on streets deliberately made small to discourage car ownership!

Changing socio-economic patterns

- 6 This response has already referred to the accretion of physical possessions which most see as an absolute need and right and to the lack of adequate space in modern homes to house them.
- 7 Internet connectivity and business innovation are leading to increasing home working for many employees. This necessitates, not only good broadband but also a good and quiet working space with adequate storage for computer, printers, routers and business papers.
- 8 Children similarly need space for their homework and, as they grow, to meet with their friends apart from parents. These pressures are likely to increase and represent a direct contradiction to the present insistence on increasing density.

Inadequate car parking provision

- 9 The County Council believes it can reduce car ownership by deliberately planning for inadequate car parking.
- 10 A husband and wife will normally own a car each, quite probably needing to travel in different directions at different times so their household will have two cars but a single garage filled with personal possessions. Result: two cars parked on narrow estate roads.
- 11 As children reach driving age, they will want a car and a three bed house will have three or four cars and parking space for one or, if they are lucky, two but probably filled with personal possessions.
- 12 The second picture on page 74 of the consultation document demonstrates the problem perfectly and is typical of many estates, particularly in larger villages like Adderbury that are subjected to urban parking standards but suffer the rural lack of regular bus services and are certainly too far from their urban neighbours to walk or cycle.

Developments should reflect the architectural style of their neighbourhoods

- 13 Para 2 (e) above refers to two red brick developments on the north side of the Milton Road, one on leaving Bloxham for Adderbury and the second on reaching Adderbury from Bloxham. These two estates, predominantly of red brick, are blights on the entrances of two fine ironstone villages which have developed their own architectural style over 1,000 years. These estates could be seen anywhere in the urban areas of Banbury or Bicester and travellers passing them might well believe they were entering one of these towns and not a fine old ironstone village.
- 14 This Response to Consultation now makes specific recommendations which reflect the comments above.

Recommendation: Adequacy of storage space

- 15 The only references to storage space in the draft Design Guide are:
 - (a) Chapter 5 page 74 storage of bicycles;
 - (b) Chapter 5 page 86 waste storage;

- (c) Chapter 6 page 102 refuse storage in amenity areas;
- (d) Chapter 7 page 109 bicycle storage.

Nowhere in the draft Design Guide is there any reference to adequate storage space for family possessions.

16 Chapter 5 states:

In general, the Council seeks to limit the use of garages as they are often used for storage rather than parking, pushing parking demand elsewhere. Where garages are provided they should have a minimum internal area of 3m by 6m and the use of double garages should be limited.

- 17 This recognises a design failure but blindly refuses to do anything about it. The design failure is the inadequacy of storage space to reflect the growing volume of tangible personal possessions in a modern family home. Para 5 above contains an illustrative list of some of these possessions likely to be found in modern homes and usually in a garage where one exists.
- 18 **RECOMMENDATION:** The Design Guide to include a specific indication of the storage space necessary in homes of varying sizes, sufficient in design and location to hold a typical family's possessions that might otherwise be placed in the garage. Some storage space should be within the home itself; some storage to be a separate structure either connected to the garage or free-standing for garden tools and machinery.
- 19 **RECOMMENDATION:** The reference to “limiting double garages” should be omitted.
- 20 **REASON:** To free garages for the storage of cars and bicycles and prevent housing estates looking like parking lots.
- 21 **FOOTNOTE:** There is an interesting innovation in the Oak Farm development at Milcombe where some car storage areas take the form of open-sided garages. This prevents their use for the storage of personal possessions but, if adopted more widely as a design option, should not prevent the specification and inclusion of adequate storage in new homes.

Recommendation: Balancing density with living space

- 22 The pressure to maximise use of scarce land supply has led this country to build smaller living units than most of the rest of the developed world. The draft Design Guide makes no attempt to specify a decent quantum of living space and should specify space for:
 - (a) In all family homes, a dining table and chairs commensurate with the size of the home and likely number of inhabitants;
 - (b) In at least 50% of homes, an area for homeworking, adequately supplied with power points, broadband and storage space;
 - (c) In all family homes, all bedrooms to be capable of holding a medium-sized double bed and a wardrobe and chair as a minimum.
- 23 **RECOMMENDATION:** The Design Guide to specify a minimum volume of space adequate to provide the facilities described in (a) to (c) above.
- 24 **REASON:** To improve the living conditions of modern families and to promote social integration and comfort for family members.

Car parking provision

- 25 The County Council has long promoted reducing car usage by specifying inadequate car parking standards on new developments in the name of promoting walking, cycling and public transport. That this policy has failed so far is abundantly clear from an examination of any modern housing estate and is exemplified by the second “bad example” photograph on page 78 of Chapter 5. This photograph could have been taken on almost any of the developments built in Cherwell in the last 25 years.

- 26 While Cherwell may be bound to reflect the County Council policy it should seek to mitigate it in the short term and, in the longer term, hopefully research its efficacy and, if found wanting, seek to change it.
- 27 In the meantime, the policy should be applied where it has some prospect of working – in the urban areas with adequate public transport and short enough distances to schools, stations, shops etc to make walking or cycling a realistic option for at least some of the population.
- 28 Villages like Adderbury, Bloxham and Bodicote are currently classified as “urban” in the calculation of car parking provision and of residential road design. This is a total travesty given the paucity of bus services and the inevitable travelling patterns of many families involving work, school and shopping in these villages
- 29 RECOMMENDATION: Remove Adderbury, Bloxham and Bodicote (and, quite probably, Yarnton and Gosford & Water Eaton) from the list in Appendix F, page 142.
- 30 REASON: To recognise the fundamental differences in transport facilities and travelling needs between the main urban areas and the larger villages of the district.
- 31 FOOTNOTE: Those involved in planning at county and district level are clearly very strongly committed to their perception of sustainability involving reduced dependence on the motor car by prescription as well as persuasion. Many policies stemming from this concept have been in place for long enough to merit rigorous testing of their efficacy. If they are found not to be working after a significant time, serious questions should be asked about their modification or withdrawal.

Recommendation: Local character

- 32 Chapter 2 requires new development to promote (*inter alia*):
- ❖ Development informed by an understanding of the historic evolution of the District
 - ❖ The creation of new places which fit well with the pattern and character of local towns and villages
 - ❖ Development which is locally distinctive and reinforces the different characters of the north and south of the District
 - ❖ Development which is located appropriately in response to landscape and topography
 - ❖ Use of appropriate local materials and detailing (see also chapter 7)
- 33 Chapter 2 also requires new development to avoid (*inter alia*):
- ❖ The creation of ‘anywhere places’ which do not reflect local character
 - ❖ Inappropriate settlement patterns, architecture and materials.
- 34 Chapter 7 contains the following:

The North of the district is dominated by golden-yellow ironstone while paler limestone is used in the South. Red brick is also used, particularly in Banbury and Bicester.

Chapter 2 provides further details on the distribution of materials across the District.

New development is expected to continue this tradition, through the use of locally characteristic materials for the construction of all new homes across the District. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 provides details of acceptable building materials and detailing.

Principles for use of building materials:

- ❖ Where stone is used it should be natural stone (not reconstituted or artificial stone)
- ❖ Brick should match local Banbury or Bicester brick
- ❖ The Council expect the proportions of natural stone, slate to be used:
 - 80% conservation areas
 - 60% village locations
 - 40% elsewhere

- 35 RECOMMENDATION: Change “The Council expect the proportions of natural stone, slate to be used:” to “The Council **require** the proportions of natural stone, slate to be used:”
- 36 REASON: To avoid another Clockmakers Turn in a rural area.

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