

Cotswold District Council Development Strategy and Site Allocations, January 2015

Blockley Parish Council representations, February 2015

Settlement Strategy 4:

1. At the first consultation stage, Blockley Parish Council (BPC) argued against Cotswold District Council (CDC)'s search for housing sites only in Blockley village, rather than the Parish as a whole. BPC believes that CDC's stance is unsound, given, for example, the recent grant of planning permission for 16 dwellings, 8 of them affordable, in Ebrington.
2. The 3 sites in Blockley are proposed on the grounds that they are available, but this does not make them appropriate or justifiable. The proposed capacity of the sites (para. 8.88) is unsound : the calculations equate to 10 dwellings per hectare – half the density that could reasonably be expected of house builders. Hence the number of new dwellings resulting from the sites could be far in excess of the 51 proposed in the document.
3. Overall, BPC is concerned about the location, size and phasing of the 3 development sites proposed for Blockley. In the past, Blockley has accommodated 60 dwellings over a 20 year period, but appropriate scale and phasing are vital.
4. CDC has acknowledged that this figure of 51 new dwellings will be subject to review over the plan period, and therefore is not a fixed, maximum number. CDC's ability to control the phasing of development is open to question, and hence the situation could arise where 51 dwellings are built in year 1, leaving years 2 to 20 of potential additional development.
5. BPC does not consider that CDC has taken sufficient account of Blockley's environmental sensitivity (para. 8.89), given the village's Conservation Area and location within the AONB. The Parish Council is submitting substantial new evidence in the form of a Blockley Conservation Area Review, commissioned from RPS Environmental Consultants. BPC requests that CDC responds positively to this evidence, and reviews Blockley Conservation Area as a matter of priority. CDC has identified the following issues as a basis for prioritising such reviews, and all four apply to Blockley:
 - Location of conservation area in a key settlement
 - Development pressures
 - Relevant appeal decisions that highlight conservation area boundary issues (Appeal Ref: APP/F1610/A/14/2213214 – View Cottage, Park Road, Blockley – refers ; copy attached)
 - Community support for conservation area review

(Letter from CDC to BPC dated 19 December 2014 refers – copy attached)

Local Green Spaces:

6. Local Green Spaces (section 10): BPC welcomes the inclusion in Policy SP 9 of the two Blockley sites (Allotments, Station Road, and Blockley Mill, also known as Coneygree Mill). However it is concerned about para. 10.5 which states that the boundaries of the Allotments site will be "further refined during the local plan process" , because it is a potentially

deliverable SHLAA site. This proposal is ambiguous and lacks any detail. It leaves the site open to development pressures and is not acceptable in its present form.

Objectives: (6.1):

7. Objective 1a Natural and Historic Environment is to “Conserve and enhance the high quality, local distinctiveness, and diversity of the natural and historic environment. Objective 1b is to “ensure new development Is appropriately sited”.

There is no evidence that either of these objectives has been taken into account in the proposals for Blockley in Settlement Strategy 4.

Local Housing Need:

8. BPC has updated the Blockley Housing Needs Survey that formed part of the Parish Plan 2010, having repeated this survey in December 2014/ January 2015. This new evidence is attached. The updated survey shows clearly :

- Only 19 households said they were in any type of housing need (13 % of respondents). However, of those 19, 11 (58%) wished to move to a smaller property, and hence could not be described as being in urgent housing need. The remaining 8 households represent 5% of the 149 that took part in the survey.
- 11 households currently owned their home outright, 3 rented from a Housing Association, and 2 from a private landlord. 2 had a mortgage on their home, and 1 respondent lived with a parent
- 13 wished to buy on the open market, and 4 to rent from a Housing Association
- Overall, the responses showed very limited housing need. Two groups emerged: 1. Elderly owner-occupiers (one person, or couples) who wished to downsize, and 2. Families with children who wanted larger accommodation.

BPC is not aware of any current CDC evidence of local housing need in Blockley, and would argue that district-wide statistics cannot and should not be used to justify local housing proposals.

9. In conclusion: Blockley Parish Council is aware of the pressures on CDC to find housing sites, but concerned about the scale, location and phasing of the 3 sites proposed for Blockley, and the environmental and infrastructure implications. In the past, Blockley has accommodated 60 dwellings over a 20 year period, but appropriate scale and phasing of development are crucial. The sites currently proposed for Blockley are too large. As defined in section 3.2 of the Blockley Parish Plan 2010, Blockley Parish does not support “Large-scale (averaging over ten homes per year) development”. Given the nature and limitations of the previous review, BPC intends to undertake a more detailed assessment of the Parish and to consult further with the local community. The Parish Council will send the results of these consultations to CDC as soon as they are completed, and trusts that CDC will accept that evidence, particularly as it is not suggesting any downgrade of the present totals.