

Minchinghampton Parish Council

Site Designated PS05. Glebe Farm Minchinghampton. MIQ 20

The Emerging Local plan proposes this as an open market development site suitable for 80 dwellings. When originally mooted in review discussion papers it was promoted as a site capable of supporting up to 100 dwellings, together with a surgery, community uses and public open space. The proposal in the Examination iteration of the Plan leaves all of that effectively “on the table” by suggesting a future phase PS05a for longer term development. However, the Plan now proposes access from the north to avoid traffic pressure into the Town centre via Tetbury Street. The implications of that alternative entry have never been tested.

The existing Glebe estate, through which access is proposed, was constructed in the early 1960s, when Minchinghampton was subject to significant expansion, to the north, east and west. The roads through the estate are therefore limited in width, and have to cope with parking for houses built to 60 year old standards. Many do not have off-street parking, and vehicle size has grown over time. In consequence the access through the estate is congested and restricted. Emergency vehicles already have difficulty getting through. Construction traffic will also have a problem.

The Parish Council does not accept that such access is realistic or acceptable. The pressure it will add to the already existing problem will be contentious.. If all other considerations in relation to PS05 were not a problem, this one issue should have dismissed this site from any proposal.

The case for this number of additional dwellings has not been made. The Parish Council is not opposed to additional development as such (we are not NIMBYs ie) The number of dwellings delivered over time proves that, and has been achieved at an organic absorption rate.

The churn rate of properties changing hands shows a healthy property market, including ex-council houses. Some have estimated the rental churn within the council’s own housing stock to be as high as 30 dwellings per annum. That figure needs to be proved however.

Developer lead projects do not provide the right kind of housing stock. The Neighbourhood Development Plan looked in detail at what the housing priorities should be, and concluded that single storey 1 or 2 bedroom development was where the focus should be, to release larger houses elsewhere in the parish through down-sizing. The percentage of older residents in this parish remains higher than national averages, in spite of post-Covid family influx from elsewhere.

As a response the Parish Council has now established its own housing site review, as an initiative on the back of NDP expectation. Covid got in the way of that regrettably. There are a number of pockets of land, much smaller in scale than a large allocation. In principle the Parish Council will work with Residential providers (housing Associations eg), or establish a Community Land Trust, to create the right sort and mix of housing, immune from the “right-to-buy”. This has to be given time to work through.

Critically the planning application still in the system for 32K sq.m of additional commercial development at Aston Down needs to be finalised. Another major employer in the same area is known to be about to submit a planning application for expansion. That additional facility if approved will accelerate to the relocation of businesses from the older brownfield sites in the valley, releasing other potential redevelopment opportunities elsewhere. Without stripping out greenfield sites.

It is regretted that the Cotswolds Conservation Board has allowed itself to be persuaded the Glebe Farm is an acceptable intrusion into the AONB. Was their previous objection diluted by the apparent reduction in housing numbers suggested in the Emerging Plan?

However, and fundamentally, the cost of land in the Parish completely obviates any chance of truly affordable housing provision with a tighter control on delivery. The national pressures that have now been built into the Housing Market through prolonged low interest rates have only served to force up the basic cost of housing, completely counter to Government drivers. Planning controls in themselves are not the issue.

The Town must have time to absorb the requirements of its Neighbourhood Development Plan, and the pressures that might come from large scale sites, while the S106 contributions to meeting the cost of community initiatives is to be welcomed, will be counter-productive. The Town and wider Parish is a desirable place to live because its constraints have limited over-bearing development, and forced a different approach to organic growth.

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