

PL/2025/03672 Land to the East of Biddestone Lane
Proposed Development of 55 Houses by Cotswold Homes

OBJECTION

At its meeting on 12 May 2025, Yatton Keynell Parish Council unanimously agreed to object strongly to this application for the reasons set out in this document.

Background

Wiltshire Council overwhelmingly approved the Wiltshire Local Plan which was submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government for independent examination on 28 November 2024. The approved Local Plan, rejected this site and the Local Plan – Rural Housing Requirements Pre-Submission Review (Cabinet Version July 2023) states that:

‘Yatton Keynell is the subject of a housing allocation through the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocation Plan which means that, together with planning permissions already granted, the requirements for the village over the Local Plan period have already largely been met.

*The Local Plan therefore proposes to set a requirement of 39 homes, with a residual figure of 2 to be planned over the remainder of the plan period to **2038**’.*

Yatton Keynell Parish Council collaborated constructively with the developers of the 31 houses in Drovers Green (Persimmon/Charles Church) and 7 houses in Phillips Grove (Princeton Homes) to fulfil most of the requirement, leaving only a balance of 2 houses to be delivered by 2038. The former was included in the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocation Plan and the site comprised brownfield and non-agricultural land. The latter was a redevelopment of a former garage and car body workshop – a brownfield site. The developers delivered estates that have integrated well into the village and improved its overall amenity.

It is also clear that Cotswold Homes (**The Applicant**) are simply taking advantage by seeking to exploit the current turbulence arising from the Government’s changes in housebuilding policy and the temporary hiatus whilst the Planning Inspectors examine the Local Plan. In effect, the applicant is simply dismissing the extensive, detailed and comprehensive review undertaken by Wiltshire Council in formulating the Local Plan, and are seeking to exploit the current lacuna in the changed housing targets for their own gain. Furthermore, they propose to build on Grade 3b agricultural land, which, whilst just below ‘Best and Most Versatile’ is still productive and not set out in the emerging local plan for potential development. In a world concerned about food security the proposal to use agricultural land in this form is abhorrent to the Parish Council.

In preparing this document, the Parish Council has drawn upon a recent Appeal Decision APP/Y3940/W/24/3348191 -Land West of Sand’s Lane, Rowde, Nr Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2QW. (**‘The Appeal’**). This application was for a similar number of houses on a site not dissimilar in nature to the subject of this application. We therefore draw on The Appeal conclusions to support this objection.

Site Location

The site location fails a number of suitability tests:

- There is no determined need for additional housing;
- It is remote from the village;
- lies beyond the settlement boundary;
- by virtue of its location, it cannot be physically integrated into the fabric of the village.

No Determined Need and Remoteness from the Village

Core Policy 1 (CP1) states:

‘Development at Large and Small Villages will be limited to that needed to help meet the housing needs of settlements and to improve employment opportunities, services and facilities’

As set out in the background above, the Local Plan recognises that having regard to existing consents and completions at the time the Local Plan was written, Yatton Keynell’s residual figure for new house in the Plan period to 2038 is 2. Consequently, there is no demonstrable local housing need and the application does not comply with CP1

Additionally, Core Policy 2 (CP2) of the Core Strategy provides that except in circumstances as permitted by any of the circumstances identified in paragraph 4.25 of the Core Strategy, development will not be permitted outside the limits of development. This site is most definitely situated outside of the settlement boundary for Yatton Keynell and does not fall within the remit of any of the exceptions referred to in paragraph 4.25 of the Core Strategy. It therefore follows that the proposed development is unacceptable in principle.

Separation From Main Settlement

A key tenet in planning Drovers Green was the new development should blend in well with the existing settlement that there should be no impediment to social integration of the families living in adjacent developments. This has been achieved and, together with the smaller Phillips Grove, the developments have been accepted as a natural and desirable evolution of a Large Village as envisaged in CP1. The same was true of the Church Farm and Blacksmith Close developments around 2010.

Because the Cotswold Homes site is so remote and detached from the main settlement this is completely precluded. What the applicant is proposing would, in effect, create a new and separate community with its own identity, outside and detached from the main village settlement. This is highly undesirable and resonates with the sentiment expressed in The Appeal in paragraph 33. This is not acceptable and this application represents a serious threat to the best interests of the community.

Furthermore, the development will be enclosed by existing mature hedges, and therefore it will not be visible on entry to the village. This will add to the sense of separation. The proper transition from country to developed settlement featured significantly in the Urban Design recommendations relating to Drovers Green.

It should also be noted that the applicant has at no stage formally consulted the Parish Council prior to or since submitting the application. A public consultation was held in November 2024 which was

attended by 47 people and prior to that the Chairman of the PC and the then Unitary Councillor for ByBrook, Cllr Botterill attended a very informal meeting with one representative for Cotswold Homes and their PR consultant in Trowbridge.

Size of the Development

The largest single development in Yatton Keynell is Drovers Green with 31 houses followed by the much earlier (1970's), John Aubrey Close with 28 and The Maltings with 26. Within the main settlement, there are 319 properties after the completion of Drovers Green and Phillips Grove. An increase of 55 represents a further unplanned increase of 17.2%. More starkly, since 2020, if this development is approved, the village will have grown from 281 to 374 house, an increase of 33%.

It is recognised that it is right for large villages to grow but such growth should be in proportion to the historic rate of expansion of the main settlement. This unplanned development of 55 houses on top of the 38 houses recently completed is disproportionately large and represents a rate of expansion that seriously threatens the rural character of the village. It is not acceptable.

The proposed development irrevocably compromises the distinctive rural identity of the village. Harm to the character and appearance of the village would inevitably result and to that extent the application is arguably in conflict with the salient parts of Core Policy 57.

Traffic and Transport

The Transport Plan and accompanying Transport Statement are both flawed and paint an inaccurate and a very partial picture. The inaccuracies and manifestly incorrect information presented make us question the professionalism of this application.

Roads

Biddestone Lane (C86) links the centre of the village (B4039) to Biddestone and Corsham to the south, Chippenham to the east and Bath and Bristol to the west. These journeys involve crossing/joining the A420 by means of an uncontrolled four-way crossroads (Biddestone crossroads) where the speed limit is 60 mph. These crossroads are a known accident blackspot which has not been considered by the applicant. It would be foolhardy to contemplate increasing the traffic using this crossroads without major improvements for which it would be reasonable for the applicant to fund.

The village hall is accessed from Biddestone Lane and is used daily by the By Brook Preschool. The car park at the hall is also the official car park for parents dropping off and collecting children from By Brook Primary School, an area school, which serves surrounding villages and further afield. The car park is also used by some staff, patients and visitors to Jubilee Field Surgery. This generates a large volume of traffic in both directions ie from the B4039 in the centre of the village and from the A420. During the day, and in particular around 15:15 when school finishes, the carpark is regularly full to overflowing with cars parked out onto the access road. The traffic survey undertaken by the applicant fails completely to recognise traffic from the B4039 to the Village Hall, and therefore not reflected in their Travel Statement.

The applicant although asserting that the road on average is about 5.5m wide, has failed to recognize that the width of Biddestone Lane between the village hall and its junction with B4039 road reduces in width to just four metres when passing the property known as Fairview. This causes a significant

restriction to traffic flow frequently reducing the flow to single file traffic. This is a known, critical point and regular users know from experience how difficult it is for two cars to pass. Other consultees have drawn attention to this recognised danger spot which has resulted in numerous accidents, some recorded, some not.

The consequence of this application would be to increase the traffic using this stretch of road. For commuters living on the development and travelling to Bristol eg Abbey Wood or Aztec West the shortest and quickest route to the M4 is back through the village via the Biddestone Lane through the pinch point, along the B4039 to Acton Turville and then to junction 18 at Tormarton. Traffic travelling to Chippenham would leave to the south and travel via Biddestone Lane and join A420.

The applicant has chosen to ignore the significant constraints presented by the road which in one case, cannot be ameliorated. This should therefore weigh heavily against this application being considered acceptable.

The applicant proposes the installation of a pavement between the site entrance and public footpath YKEY16 (which itself would require improving and at least partial resurfacing) to facilitate pedestrian access to the village. This plan adds (by their own data) 300m to the more direct route. There is no certainty that residents, particularly in bad weather would be prepared to walk and extra 600m round trip to access the centre of the village.

The ability to walk or cycle to any amenity or employment outside the village is extremely limited. There is no pavement on the B4039 towards Chippenham for a distance of 1,462 metres from Drovers Green to Lanhill, the majority of which is subject to 40 or 50 mph speed limits. As such future residents are unlikely to opt to cycle to their employment particularly in Winter or any period of inclement weather. The data presented in Table 2.2 (Summary of local facilities and amenities) is not only irrelevant for locations outside of the village for the reasons stated above, but also contains inaccuracies eg Uniserve – Felixstowe Mega D is not a 9 minute cycle ride away from Yatton Keynell. The distances stated for amenities within the village are inconsistent.

Bus Service

The village is served by one bus route, from Chippenham to Castle Combe, the 95 or 95A merely denotes the route the return service takes between Castle Combe and Yatton Keynell. The service can be summarised as 5 return services leaving the village from 09:15 to the final service from Chippenham at 17:40. There is also a daily bus service to serve the two secondary schools on the western side of Chippenham.

This extract from the published timetable shows there are no bus services that routinely stop at the Railway Station at any useful time for commuting

Yatton Keynell, Clarks Leaze	--	--	--	11:13	13:13	15:15	R
Yatton Keynell, Bell Inn	07:56	08:00	09:15	11:14	13:14	15:16	17:16
Cepen Pk North, Stainers Way, Morrisons	--	--	09:22	11:22	13:22	15:24	--
Cepen Pk North, Stainers Way, Sheepscoft	--	--	09:23	11:23	13:23	15:25	--
Bristol Road, Willowbank, Health Centre	08:05S	08:07	09:25	11:25	13:25	15:27	17:22
Chippenham, Rail Station	--	--	--	11:30R	13:30R	15:31R	--
Chippenham, Town Bridge, Rivo Lounge	08:17	08:15	09:32	11:32	13:32	15:33	--
Chippenham, Bus Station	--	--	--	11:35	13:35	15:36	17:35

It is therefore self-evident that the bus service is wholly inadequate either for regular commuting into Chippenham or for those wishing to connect to a trains service to Bath/Bristol and Swindon/ London. Because the service is of no practical value, the primary means of transport for commuting will involve the private car.

The same can be said of journeys for social, domestic and pleasure purposes.

The unsuitability of the bus service as a form of sustainable transport was highlighted by a recent delegated planning officers report for a site in Tiddleywink (PL/2024/10949).

Core Policy 60 which provides that Wiltshire Council's sustainable transport strategy should be achieved by, *inter alia* planning developments in accessible locations, and Core Policy 61 which provides that new developments should be located and designed to reduce the need to travel particularly by private car, and to encourage the use of sustainable transport alternatives. In both respects the application does not comply, and should be rejected.

Surface Water Drainage

A thorough review of any surface water scheme is a necessity. The land in question is renowned for becoming heavily waterlogged and regularly causes Biddestone Lane to flood. The development of Drovers Green has introduced an, as yet, unresolved flooding related problem which has been reported to Wiltshire Council and until the cause and effect are fully understood and resolved it would be negligent to approve any further building schemes that could exacerbate the problem.

Other Service improvements

Following discussions with Jubilee Field Surgery, in order to absorb the additional numbers envisaged, additional consulting and treatment rooms would be required. It would be expected that the applicant would contribute to this expansion through the S106 process.

Conclusion

Because this is a highly speculative proposal, the applicant is seeking to exploit the current planning lacuna created by the reimposition of the 5-year land supply and emerging Local Plan. This application would add only a modest number of houses in terms of the overall requirement within Wiltshire, weighed against the significant permanent harms and multiple non-compliances with Core Strategy as outlined above, this application must therefore be refused.

This application is for a similar number of houses on a site not dissimilar in nature to the subject of The Appeal. Refusal would therefore be consistent in the findings of The Appeal - APP/Y3940/W/24/3348191

Yatton Keynell Parish Council therefore objects strongly to this application.

