

Hello. I'm Councillor Emma Kennedy and have been asked to make a statement on behalf of Chobham Parish Council.

For our more substantive response I refer you to our letter of 12th August.

The Parish Council was not formally notified of this public inquiry until 10th August due to the sender's system error, and there has also been insufficient time for the council to consider the late publication of hundreds of pages of evidence in any substantive way. We would ask that it be made possible for the Parish Council to make further comment should any significant new evidence be put forward.

We support the objections of SHBC and MLPG and recognise their challenges in considering the vast amount of documentation supplied by the appellant in a very short timeframe.

On the matter of affordable housing, it is the Parish Council's view that there is no demonstrable need for the proposed discount market housing in Chobham.

The appellant continues to set a pathway to cascade homes to people without a Chobham connection. This is contrary to policy and indicative of a lack of confidence that there is sufficient local need. They're right on that. There's isn't sufficient local need.

The Parish Council has no reason to doubt SHBC's evidence that the more acute need in the village is in categories other than discounted market housing. It is our opinion that the most acute need for affordable housing within Chobham is for social rented housing.

The appellant's recent submission remains unconvincing with regard to demand, now and in the future. It should be noted that wages do not rise in line with house prices and when these houses would come onto the market in perhaps three to five years time, the housing market will have inflated. In the past five years the cost of houses in Chobham have risen by 14.2%. There are three things we can all be certain of: death, taxes and house prices rising. What may seem affordable to prospective buyers now won't necessarily be affordable by the time they would come to market.

With that in mind, it remains unconvincing that there is sufficient demand now or in the future from people with a Chobham connection who will be in a genuine position to afford the properties. It is noted that the properties are proposed to be run by a Trust but we can confirm there has been no approach made to the Parish Council to play a part in future governance of the site to ensure the obligation to provide affordable housing for local people in perpetuity.

The Council has several recommendations for your site visit.

We recommend that the telegraph pole hazard on Mincing Lane be inspected. You should also note the footway at this point is not fit for purpose – even I, an able bodied person, have to step onto the road at this point. That will not be possible or safe for anyone in a mobility scooter or wheelchair or anyone with a buggy.

We also request that the neighbouring pet cemetery is viewed as part of the site context. The Parish Council feels its value as a heritage asset should be considered and that the potential for disturbance or damage has been completely understated.

We will not state here our considerable additional concerns about this application as we have provided those in detail in our letter of the 12 August but we will reiterate that the Parish Council has objected in terms of Rural Exception Site criteria, design, sustainability, highway safety, nature conservation and more.

Representatives from the Parish Council intend to observe the majority, if not all, of the Inquiry and can be called upon if clarification or more detail is required on the points raised.

To conclude, there is no demonstrable need for the development as proposed within our village and the Council continues to object to the application.