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### **Parish Council Response to WNS/2022/2060/MAO**

Whittlebury Golf Club Buckingham Road, Whittlebury

<https://snc.planning-register.co.uk/Planning/Display/WNS/2022/2060/MAO>

Outline Planning with all matters reserved to provide Later Living Accommodation (Class 2) as three integrated types of accommodation on a site off the main entrance to Whittlebury Park

The Parish Council **OBJECTS** to this outline planning application on the following grounds:

- Scale of the proposed development is totally inappropriate for a rural setting
- Location – the proposed development lies outside the village confines in open countryside and contravenes the Local Plan Parts 1 and 2, policies R1, SS2, EMP5, LH6 and LH7
- Highways impact – concerns around the significant extra traffic on the A413 through Whittlebury village, and inadequate vehicular and pedestrian access to the site
- Landscape impact –the proposed development is excessive in size and threatens to destroy the historic landscape and undermine the rural character of Whittlebury village

Addressing these in turn:

#### **Scale of the proposed development**

Senior Dwellings, Assisted Living apartments and Nursing Care home with accommodation for several hundred residents, this is a significant development outside the village confines. The proposed development is totally inappropriate in terms of scale for the rural setting in which it is proposed and would undermine the rural character of Whittlebury village which is designated a 'Small village' within the scope of the Local Plan Settlement Hierarchy.

With 150+ dwellings for some 200 to 300 additional residents, this would be a dramatic increase in the size of Whittlebury which currently has a population of around 580 people. This huge increase would put a significant extra pressure on the local infrastructure, including the inadequate local road system and sewerage systems which are already under strain and causing problems.

The "Assisted Living apartments" and the "Care Home" have the appearance of large blocks of flats (Appendices Part One p44, p96, p99 and p100) and are totally not in keeping with a rural or village environment. The Parish Council objects to this proposed development on the basis of its size and location. If built as proposed, it would have a dramatic negative visual impact on the southern approach to the village.

## Location and contravention of Local Plan Parts 1 and 2

The application is outside the village confines in open countryside, and contravenes the Local Plan Parts 1 and 2 in a number of areas including R1, SS2, EMP5, LH6 and LH7.

Local Plan Policy R1 covers the spatial strategy for rural areas, and since the proposed site is outside the village confines of a Small village (Whittlebury) as defined in the spatial hierarchy, it is in a rural area.

Policy R1 states that residential development in rural areas will be required to “not affect open land which is of particular significance to the form and character of the village; and preserve and enhance [...] areas of historic or environmental importance including those identified in conservation area appraisals and village design statements; and protect the amenity of existing residents; and be of an appropriate scale to the existing settlement”.

The proposed development will have a dramatic negative visual impact on the southern approach to Whittlebury village, especially if the proposed large three storey buildings are erected along the side of the A413. The historic “open country views” and “formal parklands along the southern approach” mentioned in the Whittlebury village design statement would be lost, and the approach to the village would resemble the approach to an urban area more appropriate to a town than a small rural village. In short, the size of the proposed development is excessive and will undermine the rural character of the village and its presence within historic surroundings.

Local Plan Policy SS2 states that Planning permission will be granted where the proposed development:

1a “maintains the individual identity of towns and villages and their distinct parts, does not result in physical coalescence that would harm this identity and does not result in the unacceptable loss of undeveloped land, open spaces and locally important views of particular significance to the form and character of a settlement”.

The proposed development will have a dramatic negative visual impact on the southern approach to the village, especially if the proposed large three storey buildings are erected along the side of the A413. The historic “open country views” and “formal parklands along the southern approach” mentioned in the Whittlebury village design statement would be lost, and the approach to the village would resemble the approach to an urban area more appropriate to a town than a small rural village. In short, the size of the proposed development is excessive and will undermine the rural character of the village and its presence within historic surroundings.

1b “demonstrate compatibility and integration with its surroundings and the distinctive local character of the area in terms of type, scale, massing, siting, form, design”.

The proposed development is totally inappropriate in terms of scale for the rural setting in which it is proposed and would undermine the rural character of the village.

1d: “incorporates suitable landscape treatment as an integral part of the planning of the development”.

There is no landscape treatment to hide the size of the proposed buildings.

1j: “would include a safe and suitable means of access for all people (including pedestrians, cyclists and those using vehicles”.

The A413 through Whittlebury village is very narrow, with parked cars and the footpaths are unsafe for elderly people with mobility issues.

1k: “takes into account existing or planned social and transport infrastructure to ensure development is adequately served by public transport or is in reasonable proximity to a range of local facilities which can be reached without the need for private car journeys”.

There are no local facilities within safe walking distance and there is no public transport. Residents will need to undertake private car journeys for almost everything.

1l: “is adequately serviced with utility infrastructure appropriate to the development including power, water supply, sewerage, waste management and telecommunications”.

The sewerage system within Whittlebury is not currently fit for purpose with residents suffering from odour issues for more than a decade.

2: “Proposals that contravene any of the above criteria (of relevance to that proposal) will be refused unless outweighed by other material considerations”.

Local Plan Policy EMP5 LEISURE AND TOURISM AT WHITTLEBURY HALL states that “any accommodation will be under use class C1” which covers Hotels and Hostels which do not offer care as part of their services.

The proposed development is for use class C2 so does not fall under this property use category.

Local Plan Policy EMP5 also states that all proposals for new development must demonstrate they are “of a nature and scale suitable for a rural location” and “are sympathetic to the character and form of adjacent existing buildings and landscape setting”.

The size of the proposed development is excessive for the rural location and threatens to destroy the historic landscape and undermine the rural character of Whittlebury village.

Local Plan Policy LH6 SPECIALIST HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION NEEDS states that “Proposals to meet older persons/specialist housing needs for two or more dwellings will be supported on suitable sites that are within settlement confines [subject to certain criteria]”.

The proposed development is neither a suitable site nor within settlement confines.

Local Plan Policy LH6 SPECIALIST HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION NEEDS also states that “Proposals for older persons/specialist housing on suitable sites immediately adjacent to the settlement confines of Rural Service Centres and Primary Service and Secondary Villages [subject to additional criteria]”.

The proposed development is not adjacent to the confines of a Rural Service Centre, Primary Service Centre or a Secondary Village. Whittlebury is designated as a ‘Small village’ within the Local Plan

Settlement Hierarchy (Policy SS1) as it has a very limited range of services required for day-to-day needs.

Local Plan Policy LH7 RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING CARE states that “Proposals for residential care homes/nursing care will be supported on suitable sites that are within or adjoining the settlement confines of Rural Services Centres, Primary Service Villages or Secondary Service Villages [subject to criteria]”.

The proposed development is not on a suitable site within or adjoining the settlement confines of a Rural Services Centres, Primary or Secondary Service Village. Whittlebury is designated as a ‘Small village’ within the Local Plan Settlement Hierarchy (Policy SS1) as it has a very limited range of services required for day-to-day needs.

The intent of the Local Plan is to ensure that developments of this size are permitted only in appropriate locations where such development would be sustainable, where day to day facilities such as shops, medical facilities and public transport are readily available within walking distance. Whittlebury does not have any of these.

- Travel to shops will require a car or taxi journey
- There is no bus service or any form of public transport
- There are very few local facilities in the village
- Local pavements and footpaths are old, inadequate, poorly maintained and represent a danger to elderly people with mobility issues
- Local NHS medical services are already over-subscribed
- Nearest hospital is more than 30 minutes away, not good for emergencies

The applicant claims there is a need for later living and care home facilities within the area, but the proposed location is poorly suited to elderly residents and care home development on such a large scale.

It should be noted that there is already a residential care home in Silverstone and two large blocks of retirement apartments have recently been constructed in Towcester (4 miles from Whittlebury) where they are much more suitably located within walking distance of a nearby supermarket, Towcester Medical Centre and all the facilities in Towcester High Street.

In addition, the Council has heard from several sources that care and assisted living facilities in Buckingham and Towcester are struggling to fill rooms, so the need to build additional capacity on this scale is questionable.

### **Highways Impact and Access**

The Parish Council objects to this proposal on the basis that a development of this scale, with hundreds of residents in Assisted Living apartments and a Care Home, will inevitably lead to a significant increase in the amount of traffic travelling to/from the site. This extra traffic will be composed of residents themselves, visitors, additional employees, carers, service providers and deliveries. The applicant states that there will be an extra 100 employees to serve the proposal, but it is highly likely that practically none of these will be local people.

There are very few facilities within walking (or mobility scooter) distance of the proposed development, so almost everything will require a car or taxi journey or a commercial vehicle delivery. Most of this extra traffic will pass through Whittlebury village where the A413 is very narrow, and which is already under great pressure during peak times, with traffic passing the local Primary School and the safety of the children walking to and from school being a particular cause for concern.

Pedestrian access to the site is also a concern. There is no footpath access to the section of the A413 outside the village heading south. Access from Whittlebury Park main entrance heading north through the village is a challenge; cars parked on the pavement (as the road is so narrow) and inadequate footpaths represent a danger to elderly people with mobility issues, including wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

The Council notes that vehicular access to the site itself has been questioned by the Highways Authority and that the applicant has been requested to provide a full transport statement. There are also concerns around adequate parking and access/turning facilities for emergency vehicles, and clearly these issues would need to be addressed.

The Parish Council objects to the applicant's suggestion of effectively extending the village boundary by moving the 30mph speed limit out along the A413 to accommodate the proposed development site and access roads.

### **Landscape Impact**

The Parish Council objects to this proposed development because it will have a dramatic negative visual impact on the southern approach to the village, especially if the proposed large three storey buildings are erected along the side of the A413. The historic "open country views" and "formal parklands along the southern approach" mentioned in the Whittlebury village design statement would be lost, and the approach to the village would resemble the approach to an urban area more appropriate to a town than a small rural village.

The size of the proposed development is excessive and will undermine the rural character of Whittlebury village and its presence within historic surroundings.

In addition, the proposed site is directly on the A413 and abuts Whittlebury village confines at the southern end of the village High Street. The proposal has a complete absence of congruity with the cottages, pub and houses along the High Street which all give character to the village. The Parish Council feels strongly that the congruity of this application must be judged in respect to the houses on either side of the High Street, and not Whittlebury Hall and associated buildings.

14t Jan 2023