

Public meeting on the proposed 750 dwelling development at Elsfield/Bayswater

Meeting held on Monday 12th March 2018 in the Mortimer Hall at 7pm.

Present:

Paul Silver, Gavin Angell & Alex Mortimore – Dorchester Residential Management,
Will Benbow – Savills,
James Lawrie - Christ Church

Members of the public: 114

Duncan Hatfield, chairman of the Old Marston Parish Council, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and, although people have strong feelings about the subject, for people to show respect.

Duncan then introduced James Lawrie from Christ Church who advised people that there had been two requests to record the meeting, he did not have a problem with it, so hopefully no one else had. James said he had suggested the meeting so that everyone could be made aware and be able to ask whatever questions they may have, he there may be further meetings in the future if needed.

Paul gave a brief introduction to Christ Church and some of the other projects they are involved in. He gave a presentation explaining the reason for the housing shortfall which has driven up the price of houses due to the lack of supply. That house prices had increased over the last 20 years by 260% while wages had only increased by 70% hence why people, especially the lesser earning young, have problems getting on the property ladder. The population growth for Oxford is due to people living longer not migration, meaning fewer people living in larger properties. For Oxfordshire 40% of the population growth comes from the Oxford City, the city has 4 Parish Councils on its outskirts who also have a duty to work to help with the housing situation. South Oxfordshire District Council have decided to build on the Green Belt so he felt it pointless objecting to this.

Paul assured everyone that these houses will be for local people.

He confirmed that the development would run along the contour of the already started Barton park development and would be for University and NHS staff.

James Lawrie advised that Christ Church were about to celebrate 500 years old yet committed to the future and committed to making this project the best it can be.

Duncan introduced Oxfordshire County Councillor Dr Kirsten Johnson who represents Wheatley including Elsfield who stated that she was against this

development as she would be any proposed to be built on the Green belt saying that she felt that brown field sites should be considered first.

Old Marston Parish Councillor Peter Williams gave a presentation on behalf of the Parish Council stating that although proposed development was outside the parish it would have considerable impact. The Council's concerns were:

- 1) Traffic and Access: Marsh Lane already gets congested at peak times and there has been no mention of any infrastructure solutions considered,
- 2) Threat to the integrity to the village of Old Marston. This development would engulf Old Marston geographically into the City bringing prone to flooding, pollution and noise.
- 3) Loss of the Green Belt. IF any development is going to go into the Green Belt then it needs to be managed so as to ensure it is not just the first phase and that what is gained is more beneficial than what we have lost.

Peter asked if the Oxfordshire Preservation trust had a view on the development. He stated that Old Marston feels squeezed by this development and the potential Swan School.

Duncan then opened the meeting for questions:-

Paul stated that SODC were compiling their local Plan going through to 2033 so the project was being developed now with the intention of getting it included. He confirmed that this was not the final version, they were looking for local opinions but the final development would probably have about 40% social housing.

Q: On Barton Park a one bed flat is talked about being £300,000 so not affordable.

Paul confirmed that for the reasons given at the start houses are expensive, demand is still outstripping supply.

Q: In November Pegasus stated that 750 houses was just phase one so phase two could be another 750!

Paul stated that there is a substantial housing need.

Q: How can you guarantee at least some of the houses will be affordable.

Paul replied that was why you need to be talking to us however at this stage we do not have all the answers.

James stated that Christchurch will own a portion of the development and those will be let to key workers.

Q: So the affordable houses will not be for local people

Paul confirmed it is not a case of ownership but the amount of rent paid that can make it affordable.

Q: Traffic a big issue already for Old Marston so how do you think you can improve this

Paul: It is our duty to make sure the finished development is no worse than before it was there.

Q: Will the Housing Register provider be used for the affordable houses and what about infrastructure such as primary healthcare and primary school

Paul: We are a Housing Register provider. At the moment the signs are that the new primary school proposed in Barton park will be undersubscribed. We will be interested in talking if the current location for Swan School is felt not right. As for GP surgery as I said from the start we have an aging population so makes sense to cater for them.

Q: Does Christ Church have a policy of building on Green Belt land

James: No all land is looked at on individually with the pros and cons considered accordingly.

Q: Can Christ Church make a public statement regarding building on Green Belt land.

James: I will take this back to the board of trustees and a statement would be made as and when they feel necessary.

Q: Why does Christ Church feel the need to build on this land?

James: Not a case of the need to build on this land. Christ Church feel houses are needed it is not Christ Church needing to build.

Paul: I am not saying we need to build on the Green Belt I am saying what 'is the alternative; build up or build on Green Belt'.

Q: What about access to site

Paul: We are in talks with the County Council to come to a solution. No plans have been submitted yet so we are looking for people to talk to us

Q: The County Council does not have a good record regarding infrastructure, Swan School location as an example

Paul: I have a lot of sympathy as County do not look forward, it is all in pieces. We are open to talk, if this site better for Swan School we are open to talk.

Q: Housing crisis is due to low interest rates not housing supply. How do you ensure housing for locals

Paul: Population growth is not due to migration. If this meeting was mainly under 40 year olds I think they would be saying completely opposite tonight.

Q: Can you assure us houses for low earners

Paul: We made commitment at Cherwell to build 30% affordable houses and we delivered 30%

Q: Is this development going ahead regardless

Paul: This is one of the most sustainable around so unlikely not to happen but people need to talk to us to get the best solution.

Q: How much renewables will be used

Paul: To be honest I have no idea but there are Local Authority policies we have to follow.

Q: If we are all to old tonight what age would you like here

Paul: Your children need houses. It should not be a case of don't build house

Q: Christ Church own the land if they want to help Old Marston they should build a car park to help relieve traffic

James: We will consider what is needed in context of the whole project.

Paul: By having the development here will not make it necessary for people to use cars as they will be near enough to cycle or use public transport.

Meeting ended: 8:36pm.