

Gawsworth Parish Council

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Cheshire East Borough Council
Westfields
Middlewich Road
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January 2019

Dear Mr Crowther,

18/5544M LAND AT DARK LANE, GAWSWORTH

Gawsworth Parish Council has carefully considered the Dark Lane application and consulted extensively with its residents, including holding a public session at its meeting on 11th December 2018.

The Parish Council has several strong planning objections to the application. These are summarised below, with more detailed comments set out in an attached appendices.

Our objections relate to:

- a) The rural exception for housing for local needs
- b) Effect on the Green Belt
- c) Impact on Jodrell Bank
- d) Local Landscape Designation Area
- e) Highway Safety
- f) Sustainable Development, including agricultural land quality and non-designated heritage assets
- g) Trees and hedgerow
- h) Design Standards
- i) Neighbourhood Plan

The information provided in the appendices details:

- a) Additional information on the location of the proposed development and its effect on the Landscape
- b) Additional information on Housing Need and Supply in Gawsworth
- c) Additional Information on Highways Safety and related concerns.
- d) Failure to meet national design standards

e) Inconsistencies with the Gawsworth Emerging Neighbourhood Plan

It is with considerable concern that the Parish Council's views on the emerging application have not been adequately addressed by the applicants, Cheshire Engine of the North. The planning policy for the development of affordable housing schemes emphasizes that Cheshire East Council relies on the support of Parish Councils, unfortunately this has not been the case in relation to the Dark Lane application. There has been limited consultation and over the past 2 years it has been excluded from the development of the scheme and the analysis and interpretation of the Housing Needs Survey, which does not reflect the ethos of community involvement which underpins Rural Exception Schemes, and Cheshire East Guidance.

1. Rural Exceptions housing for local needs.

Policy SC6 of Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (2017) (CELPS). Paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2018) (NPPF). Housing Survey 2015 and "update" 2018,

Viability Study submitted with the application. Paragraph 57 of the NPPF, & Viability & Decision Taking section of the National Planning Practice Guidance (2018) (NPPG).

Policy SC6 indicates that:

affordable housing will be permitted as an exception to other policies concerning the countryside, to meet locally identified affordable housing need, subject to all of the following criteria being met.

There is a list of 8 criteria, all of which have to be met.

The Dark Lane site does not meet 6 of the 8 criteria 1,2, 3, 4, 5 & 8.

There is very limited local employment, no health facilities, and limited retail and other services in Gawsworth Village. The primary school & the built-up area of Gawsworth within the settlement boundary lies on the other side of the dangerous crossroads on the A536. The public transport links to employment centres, health facilities etc. are limited.

The development site does not adjoin the Gawsworth Village settlement.

The proposed development is not appropriate in scale, design and character of the locality. A rural setting along a country lane will be transformed into built environment on high ground visible from all directions.

The choice of the site has been based on the ownership by the Council and not a thorough Site Options Appraisal.

The Housing Needs Survey does not present a reliable view of current housing need in Gawsworth Village and Rural areas and does not reflect the Parish Council's understanding of that need, based on all available information. The 2015 Housing Needs Survey covered the

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whole parish. The needs in the area around the village have been extrapolated from the 2015 survey. Neither the 2015 survey nor the 2018 extrapolation (referred to as an “update”) were submitted with the application and were not therefore made available for scrutiny as part of the public consultation on the application. The Parish Council would support a new survey to establish the up to date and true extent and type of affordable housing need in Gawsworth.

In addition, well over 2,000 houses have been given permission, including 500 affordable houses to the south of Macclesfield. A significant number of affordable homes are likely to be provided at site LPS15 which lies wholly within Gawsworth Parish.

Those households looking for affordable houses around the village, based on the financial information provided, could not afford to buy the discounted sale houses.

The policy requires that occupancy in perpetuity will be restricted to local housing need (i.e. Gawsworth Village and rural areas). This requirement cannot be met since local need has not been reliably established and where there is eligible need there is no realistic possibility that local people who qualify for affordable housing will be able to afford these dwellings.

Whilst a Viability Assessment has been submitted with the application, the Council is required to commission an independent appraisal of the submitted Assessment in line with the National Planning Practice Guidance. There is no indication that this has been done. Parish Council wishes to see this independent appraisal when it has been completed.

Paragraph 12.59 of policy SC6 in the LPS states inter alia: “The council would expect such schemes to be developed with support from parish councils and the Rural Housing Strategy.” The inclusion of market houses was notified to the Parish Council during consultation however support from the Parish Council has not been given so this condition has not been met.

Further information on the location and effect on the Landscape are provided in Appendix 1

Further information on Housing Need in Gawsworth is provided in Appendix 2

As the proposed development does not meet all the 8 criteria within Policy SC6, the Parish Council objects strongly to the application.

2. Green Belt

CEPLS Policy PG3 Green Belt

MBLP Policy

NPPF Section 13, paragraph 145 (exception f).

Exception f allows for limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Development Plan (including policies for rural exception sites).

Policy PG3 states that new buildings in the Green Belt are inappropriate, although there are several exceptions to this.

Exception (v) allows limited infilling in villages & limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan.

Policy GC1 of the MBLP also has an Exception (6) for affordable housing for local community needs.

There is therefore an exception to Green Belt policy subject to any proposal meeting all the 8 criteria set out in Policy SC6 of the CELPS.

Other settlements and rural areas.

CELPS Policy PG2 Settlement Hierarchy

Gawsworth village falls with the category of Other Settlements and Rural Areas.

Policy PG2 sets out the policy in relation to development within Other Settlements, including Gawsworth.

In the interests of sustainable development.....proportionated development should be

confined to locations well related to the existing built up extent of the settlement. It may be appropriate for local needs to be met within larger settlements, dependent on location.

Gawsworth parish adjoins the principal town of Macclesfield. Part of the built up extent of the parish forms part of the built up area of Macclesfield.

There are **3 Strategic Site Allocations** which either abut or are located in the parish of Gawsworth These are:

LPS15 Land at Congleton Road, Macclesfield. Allocated for 300 houses and 5 hectares of employment. Including a requirement for 30% affordable houses. The site is wholly within Gawsworth.

LPS13 South Macclesfield Development Area, Congleton Road, Macclesfield. Allocated for 1,000 houses, retail development and employment. The permission allows for 15% affordable houses.

LPS17 Gaw End Lane, Lyme Green. Allocated for around 300 houses. Permission granted for 310 houses on part of the site. The permission permits 30% affordable houses. The site is partly in Gawsworth.

Together these 3 sites will provide over 350 affordable houses over the next few years.

In terms of Policy PG2 the proposed development lies outside the settlement boundary defined in the 2018 Site Allocations and Development Policies Document, it is not well related to the limited services and facilities provided by the village, being on the wrong side of the dangerous A536 road, and within & adjoining the parish over 350 affordable houses are to be provided over the next few years.

As such the proposed development does not comply with the requirements of Policy PG3.

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3. Jodrell Bank

CELPS Policy SE14 Jodrell Bank

MBLP Policy GC14

Policy SE14 states that development within the Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope Consultation Zone will not be permitted if it:

- 1. Impairs the efficiency of the telescopes or**
- 2. Has an adverse impact on the historic environment and visual setting of the Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope.**

Over the past 2 years Jodrell Bank has objected to all applications which involve the creation of new houses within in the Consultation Zone which are not allocated for development in the CELPS. This includes barn conversion, redevelopment of brownfield sites, and all scales of residential development. These have resulted in the refusal of the applications, and where they have been taken to appeal, the Planning Inspector has supported the Council's decision.

The Parish Council has experience of the responses from Jodrell Bank on infill sites (16/5449M) and barn conversions (18/0229M). With regard to the latter the response from Jodrell Bank contains several standard paragraphs, and a consistent approach to objecting to all residential development.

The response letter dated 12th April contains the following paragraph:

In the case of 18/0229M, we oppose this development. Our view is that the impact from the additional potential contribution to the existing level of interference coming from that direction will be relatively minor. This is a general direction in which there is already a significant development close to the telescope.

We would ask the planning authority to take this in to account in reaching its decision on this development, noting that the cumulative impact of this and other developments is more significant than each development individually.

The site of this application Dalehouse Farm is less than a mile to the north of the Dark Lane site, involves fewer dwellings and unlike the current application is not set on elevated ground with a direct line of sight to Jodrell Bank.

On the basis of Jodrell Bank's response on all housing applications, it would be consistent for the Council to refuse the Dark Lane application on the grounds that proposed development will impair the efficiency of the Jodrell Bank Radio Telescopes and therefore would be contrary to Policy SE14 of the CELPS and Policy GC14 of the MBLP.

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4. Local Landscape Designation Area

CELPS Policy SE4 The Landscape

MBLP Policies NE1 & NE2

NPPF Paragraph 170

Policy SE4 3 states that in Local Landscape Designation Areas the aim is to conserve and enhance the quality of the landscape and protect it from development which would affect its character & appearance and setting.

Paragraph 170 emphasizes the importance of *protecting and enhancing valued landscape*. Planning Inspectors have widely supported this principle in reaching decisions at appeal.

The Dark Lane site lies within the Bollin Valley and Parklands Local Landscape Designation Area.

The site is at present part of a field of pasture which forms part of the traditional dairy farmland for which Cheshire is well known. The site is bounded by treed hedgerows and is elevated from the land around.

Further information on the location and effect on the Landscape are provided in Appendix 1

To redevelop part of the field for 10 houses with a new access road from Dark Lane, will have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the site and area. As a consequence the proposed development is contrary to Policy SE 4 of the CELPS.

5. Highways

CELPS Policy CO1 Sustainable Travel & Transport.

MBLP Policy t11

NPPF Paragraph 109

Policy CO1 states that the Council will expect development to reduce the need to travel by guiding development to sustainable & accessible locations.

Policy T11 states that the Council will support links between Macclesfield and the M6 motorway in particular via the A536 (to Congleton).

Paragraph 109 takes the view that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there is an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

The Strategic Infrastructure Manager (SIM) is satisfied that the development proposals can be safely accommodated on the adjacent highway network, subject to appropriate highway conditions (see consultation response dated 11th December). He refers to Dark Lane being a lightly trafficked semi-rural road, with a carriageway width of around 5.5m with no footway

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provision or street lighting. No comments are made on whether Dark Lane is satisfactory in terms of highway standards, and road safety. No reference is made to the personal injury accidents over the past 20 years; it is understood that over 20 incidents have been recorded at the junction of Dark Lane and the A536. The Parish Council is aware of many other “damage only” accidents.

The Parish Council has for many years been extremely concerned by the dangerous situation along Dark Lane and at the crossroads with the A536. Our extensive experience and local knowledge lead us to conclude that the proposed highways changes are likely to lessen safety for vehicles and pedestrians in this dangerous area. This is principally because of the reduction in carriageway width. We believe the safety of motorists, cyclists and pedestrians will be compromised should the proposals go ahead.

The Parish Council is concerned about the significant increase in traffic along the A536 corridor as a consequence of the proposed increase in housing in south Macclesfield (1,600 houses), and around Broken Cross (350 houses), with a further 2-3,000 houses proposed on Safeguarded Land in south west Macclesfield. Dark Lane is already highly trafficked at peak times with significant delays incurred on a daily basis.

The SIM does not comment on the sub-standard nature of Dark Lane, considerably less than 5.5m when the proposed 1.5m footway is provided on the north side of the lane.

We have taken our own measurements along Dark Lane at key points and these do not concur with all statements and measurements in the application.

We have particular concerns on these points:

- a) Our measurements indicate that the vehicular access to the site is proposed at a particularly narrow stretch of Dark Lane currently measuring 4.4m with no possibility of cutting into the bank opposite to increase width.
- b) Our measurements indicate that the inclusion of the 1.5m footpath will decrease the carriageway width to 4.1m at the point of the proposed pedestrian crossing in Dark Lane. This could be increased somewhat if the hedge to the north is destroyed (but this is not proposed in the application). Pedestrian safety for residents is unlikely to be assured because of the narrow carriageway, frequent large commercial vehicles and a need to mount the proposed pavement in order to pass.
- c) At the dangerous crossroads of Dark Lane and the A536 it is proposed to reduce the carriageway width in Dark Lane by at least 0.5m. We believe this will increase risk at this site which is already acknowledged as dangerous.

The proposed highway works in the application are incompatible with the specific safety improvements proposed under the Safer Roads Grant which the Council has received from the Government. Although details are currently being finalised it is already clear that safety improvements are planned for the same location as changes outlined in connection with this application. The ‘Safer Roads Grant’ proposals include installing traffic Lights at the Dark Lane

– A536 junction. The safety improvement works are scheduled for 2020 – 2021 which is immediately after completion of the proposed development described in this application.

In summary, there is no need for the Dark Lane development to be permitted to enable the essential highway safety improvements to be funded and put in place. The proposals are likely to reduce safety rather than improve it. The proposed highways changes are incompatible with other scheduled safety improvement works at the site.

More Information on Highways Safety is provided in Appendix 3

6. Sustainable Development, including Agricultural Land Quality & Non-Designated Heritage Assets

CELPS SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

CELPS SD2 Sustainable Development principles

CELPS SE2 Efficient use of land

NPPF Paragraph 197

Policy SD1 indicates that development should wherever possible:

15. Make efficient use of land, protect the best and most versatile agricultural land and make the best use of previously developed land where possible.

Policy SD2 states that all development will be expected to:

1(iii) Respect and where possible, enhance the landscape character of the area.

1(iv) Respect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets including their wider settings.

1(v)

Avoid the permanent loss of areas of agricultural land quality of 1, 2, & 3A, unless the strategic need overrides these issues.

Policy SE2 is concerned about the Efficient Use of Land; it states that:

4. Development should safeguard natural resources including high quality agricultural land (1, 2, 3A).....

Paragraph 197 of the NPPF indicates that:

The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application.

The application site is Grade 3A agricultural land. It is also a protected landscape, that is a Local Landscape Designation Area. The Old Post Office and the Old Police House are locally listed and form part of the setting of the proposed development.

Further information on the location and effect on the Landscape are provided in Appendix 1

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The proposed development would result in the loss of Grade 3A the best and most versatile agricultural land, and the loss of an area of protected landscape, contrary to policies SD1, SD2, and SE2 of the CELPS.

The development of the site would also have an adverse impact on the setting of two Locally Listed Buildings, contrary to Policy SD2 of the CELPS and paragraph 197 of the NPPF.

7. Trees and hedgerows

CELPS Policy SE5 Trees, Hedgerows and Woodlands

MBLP Policy DC8 Landscape scheme requirements for new development

MBLP Policy DC9 Tree protection

The proposed development involves the removal of a 50m section of hedgerow on the south side of Dark Lane, and the potential removal of a similar length of hedgerow on the north side of Dark Lane at the rear of the proposed footpath. This latter loss is not identified in the application although we believe the proposed footpath and carriageway measurements cannot be achieved and the hedge also retained.

There is also a concern re the potential loss of the prominent sycamore adjacent to the existing access to the Methodist Chapel.

The Forestry Officer has sought clarification re the ecological and historic value of the hedge (consultation response dated 3rd December). If it is found to be “important” it would be a material consideration in the determination of the application.

The status of the hedgerow on the north side of Dark Lane, and the potential threat to its long-term life is not addressed in the Forestry Officer’s consultation response.

Bearing in mind the removal of a very significant part of the mature hedgerows which provide a key part of the landscape character of this western entrance into Gawsworth, the views of the Forestry Officer’s should be sought on the potential loss of the hedgerow on the north side of Dark Lane.

8. Design Standards

The Department for Communities and Local Government published Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards in March 2015.

It sets out requirements for new dwellings.

The proposed houses fail to meet these standards. The details of these deficiencies are covered in the attached appendix 4

9. Neighbourhood Plan

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The Gawsworth Neighbourhood Plan has progressed as far as setting out emerging policies. These are based on the very extensive Neighbourhood Planning Survey in 2016 and extensive local consultations. The principles of the emerging Neighbourhood Plan are very relevant in relation to the consideration of the Dark Lane application both as a valuable reflection of residents' views and also with respect to the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 directions. Paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 states that "Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given);

and

- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)

86% of the respondents in the 2016 Survey said that road safety around the crossroads and the A536, in particular, was a concern. 83% considered that the most appropriate type of development was "infilling" of small gaps in the built up area of the village. 72% were in favour of small scale development of less than 9 dwellings within the village.

In terms of sites, those in the Green Belt were considered to be the most important to protect and least desired for development.

These views have to be seen in the context of the residents accepting the large scale development of Strategic Site LPS15 for 300 houses and 5 hectares of employment, all of which lies in the northern part of the parish.

The Neighbourhood Plan also outlines several principles which have been carefully developed with local consultation, are consistent with the Local Plan and there are no unresolved objections to relevant policies. Details are given in Appendix 5

The development of the Dark Lane site would be contrary to the wishes of local residents and the emerging policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Conclusion

In reaching a decision on the Dark Lane planning application it is important to weigh up the benefits of the provision of 8 discounted price houses for local people who are eligible and could afford them, as against the harm caused by the development in relation to the planning policies in the up to date Development Plan, and any other material considerations.

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The proposed development could be regarded as an exception to Green Belt Policy, if it met all eight criteria within the Rural Exceptions Policy SC6 of the CELPS. However, it only meets two of the eight criteria, and therefore is regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The Council should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm caused by inappropriate, and any other harm resulting from the proposed development, is outweighed by other considerations.

In terms of the harm caused by the proposed development, the following can be identified:

- The impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt.
- The encroachment into the countryside.
- The loss of the best value and versatile agricultural land (Grade 3A).
- The adverse impact on the valued landscape both in terms of the site, and the loss of mature hedgerows off site.
- The adverse visual impact of the development in terms of its prominent location.
- The adverse impact on the efficiency of Jodrell Bank Radio Telescopes, resulting from the cumulative impact of housing development.
- The loss of extensive sections of mature hedgerows which characterise the western approach to Gawsworth.
- The reduction in width of the sub-standard carriageway of Dark Lane.

The cumulative impact of these harms has to be weighed against the benefits of the proposed development. The following benefits can be identified:

1. The provision of 8 discounted price houses for local people

However, the “updated” version of the 2015 Survey, indicates that those people seeking affordable housing could not afford the mortgages required to purchase these houses. Their needs can be catered for by existing housing in Gawsworth Village and imminent developments in Gawsworth and on its borders.

2. Improvements to road safety in the vicinity of Gawsworth Crossroads.

However, the proposed development is not required to enable these improvements to take place, as Government funding has been made available. In fact, the proposals are incompatible with the Councils stated intentions for safety improvements at the location.

In conclusion the Parish Council considers that the limited benefits resulting from the development do not outweigh the substantial harm that the Parish Council has identified would be caused by the proposed development.

Consequently, for the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters, the Parish Council requests the Council refuse the planning application.

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In the event that permission is granted the Parish Council requests the following conditions:

- 1) The Parish Council must be actively involved in the allocation process with Cheshire East Council
- 2) Approval should be conditional upon Cheshire East having identified eligible purchasers for all properties who
 - a. are from Gawsworth Village and Rural areas or have a close connection with those areas
 - b. who have stated a wish to purchase the properties on the advertised terms and have demonstrated that they are in a financial position to proceed.
- 3) Any removed trees or hedgerows, or any trees or hedgerows which fail/die within 5 years of the development shall be replaced with semi-mature native species replacements
- 4) Prior to the start of any development on Dark Lane the safety improvements of the A536 / Dark Lane in the vicinity should be completed.
- 5) Dark Lane should remain open to through traffic at all times during the development.

Appendix 1: Additional information on the location of the proposed development and its effect on the Landscape

The descriptions in various places in the planning application misrepresent the environs of the proposed development. Gawsworth Parish Council, with its detailed and thorough knowledge of the site and its surroundings are pleased to be able to provide accurate descriptions.

The building site boundary does not adjoin the Village Settlement boundary. It is separated by the A536 and section of Dark Lane, (about 45m). The pedestrian and vehicular access points are over a hundred metres remote from the settlement boundary. The site boundary drawn on the plans creates a narrow corridor along Dark Lane to the settlement boundary, but this should not be interpreted to mean the site adjoins the settlement boundary.

The proposed development is not appropriate to the character of the locality. It is situated on elevated ground and will be distinctly visible from all directions despite proposed screening. There is no street lighting in the vicinity. A field adjoining a country lane will be transformed into a built environment. The development could be appropriate within a village settlement boundary but not outside it.

The proposed development will extend the built environment of the village settlement into the rural area. The design and access statement conclusion confirms that the proposal represents 'an extension of the Gawsworth Village settlement area' while incorrectly stating that the site 'immediately borders on an existing settlement'

Statements describing the site surroundings and location made in support of the application are incorrect in some significant respects. The area is currently a narrow but busy country lane bordered by established hedgerows with fields beyond. There is sporadic housing along the length of the lane approaching Gawsworth village settlement. Building frontage represents only approximately 25% of the site perimeter. Two building dwellings are separated from the site by Dark Lane and are set well back from the road. There is a separating access road to the third building, a Methodist Chapel. The application incorrectly states that there are buildings on 3 sides. Approximately 75% of the site border faces open fields

The planning statement incorrectly states (5.22) that no listed buildings will be affected. The Old Post Office is a locally listed building and has received a notice under article 13 with respect to this application. The proposed development is likely to result in the loss of a boundary hedgerow to that property. The Old Police House which is situated between the development and the Settlement Boundary is also locally listed.

The 'Cheshire East Rural Housing Guide 2012' gives useful guidance on policy interpretation and requires that "No scheme should be allowed to overwhelm the existing homes and buildings and should be proportionate in number and be complementary in design to the surrounding area". The proposed estate of 10 dwellings will dominate the area.

Appendix 2: Additional information on Housing Need and Supply in Gawsworth

Housing Needs Survey

Local Plan Policy SC 6 – Requirement 4 requires that, In all cases, proposals for rural exception housing schemes must be supported by an up-to-date Housing Needs Survey that identifies the need within the parish. The Housing Needs Survey information is essential to justify an exception to develop Green Belt Land and it is implicit that this should provide reliable, meaningful and relevant information.

No Housing Needs Survey was submitted in support of the application. The 2018 amendment to the 2015 Housing Needs Survey was not publicly available during the consultation period for this application. The 2018 amendment to the 2015 Gawsworth Housing Needs Survey does not represent an “update”, as stated in the application. Rather, following an intervention by an independent regulatory compliance expert, Cheshire East undertook a recalculation of 2015 figures to exclude urban housing need in order to be consistent with legal case law. The basis for the recalculation is not fully and clearly described in the application.

The fairness and objectivity of the interpretations and conclusions of the 2015 Gawsworth Housing Needs Survey have been the subject of a detailed challenge which has not yet been fully resolved. The Parish Council believes that the interpretation of the results given in the application substantially overestimates current local housing need. The Parish Council would like to partner with Cheshire East Council to undertake a new Housing Needs Survey for Gawsworth which can demonstrate in a reliable manner the true current extent of the need for affordable housing, the types of dwellings needed and options for their provision.

The proposed housing development will not contribute significantly to the affordable housing need the survey identifies. The survey indicates that the 14 required households would have an annual income under £35,000 and less than £10,000 in savings. The submitted viability assessment states that the affordable households will be sold at 60% of the market value, ranging in price from £138,000 to £170,000. Referencing financial organisations’ mortgage calculators, it is clear that the households identified by the survey would not have sufficient savings nor a sufficient household income to afford a mortgage to purchase any of the properties.

The Parish Council concludes that the proposed development is not necessary to meet housing needs. Site LPS15 – (Land at Congleton Road) is wholly within the Parish of Gawsworth and is mentioned as a Site Option in the application. However, the grounds on which it has been dismissed are not valid. The site should provide around 100 affordable homes at a similar time or shortly after the Dark Lane site. In practice, these homes will be available to persons throughout the Parish of Gawsworth and are likely to be preferred to the Dark Lane location because of their proximity to local services and facilities in Macclesfield. Several additional imminent housing sites including those in the South Macclesfield Development Area and Gaw End Lane border the Parish of Gawsworth and will provide additional affordable housing which will be available to satisfy the need from Gawsworth residents.

Gawsworth Village already has a supply of houses that will appeal to those who have expressed an interest in affordable houses. Approximately 25% of the housing stock is, or was at one time, local authority housing. This includes a substantial number of dwellings still available for rent and designed for the elderly and those with disabilities. There is also a good supply of houses which are often bought

by young persons, extended and improved. These are in the heart of the Village Settlement and provide an alternative and probably more attractive option than those proposed in the development.

Appendix 3: Additional Information on Highways Safety and related concerns.

The Parish Council objects to the proposal because the introduction of a footpath along Dark Lane will decrease highway safety and because there has been no consideration of important road safety improvements at this location which have received funding and which are almost contemporaneous with the projected delivery dates for this application.

Dark Lane is a through route which acts as a connecting road to the A536 trunk road from Broken Cross and the A34 providing a much-used direct route for traffic from Knutsford, Alderley Park etc. heading towards destinations south of Macclesfield and avoiding the traffic jams in Macclesfield. It is particularly busy during commuting hours. Queues routinely build up alongside the site location to exit Dark Lane. The 30mph speed limit is often exceeded. Heavy, wide vehicles frequently use the route for local business purposes. Non-injury minor collisions are common, and vehicles routinely have to stop and pull into the soft verge where it exists or reverse in order to allow passing. A large increase in traffic passing the site will result from the planned additional housing, businesses and the relief roads to the south and south west of Macclesfield and also to the north of Congleton, exacerbating the current difficult situation.

The introduction of a footpath will significantly narrow the road below the current minimum width of 5m and restrict the ability of vehicles to safely pass one another.

The carriageway measurements provided in the application are, in some respects, incorrect or misleading. Our measurements indicate that the inclusion of the 1.5m footpath will decrease the carriageway width to 4.1m at the point of the proposed pedestrian crossing. This could be increased if the hedge to the north is destroyed (but this is not proposed in the application although cutting into the bank is mentioned) and a disagreement over land ownership is resolved.

Risk to pedestrians and to cyclists will also be significantly increased along Dark Lane to the west of the end of the proposed footpath. Even along the length of the proposed footpath pedestrian safety is unlikely to be assured because of the narrow carriageway, large vehicles and need to mount the pavement in order to pass. Narrowing of the carriageway will exacerbate the risks to cyclists along this narrow stretch of Dark Lane and at the crossroads with the A536.

Our measurements indicate that the vehicular access to the site is proposed at a particularly narrow stretch of Dark Lane currently measuring 4.4m with no possibility of cutting into the bank opposite to increase width. Even with splaying of the entrance to the site we believe the risk of vehicle collisions will be increased.

It is proposed to widen the footpath by the Old Post Office. This will result in a reduction of the road width at the access to Dark Lane at a point where northbound traffic on the A536 routinely swings at speed into Dark Lane with limited visibility. These crossroads are known to be an accident black spot with a record of fatalities and serious accidents and we believe the risk will be increased.

Existing residents will not experience a net safety benefit as suggested in the application. While a safe crossing for the A536 is needed this can be provided by the alternative Cheshire East proposal of installing traffic lights which has been funded under the safer roads grant– see below.

Safety of visitors on foot to the Methodist Chapel and Community Hall will not be significantly enhanced as pedestrians are very unlikely to embark on the lengthy detour into the site and in the opposite direction from their destination.

The design of the proposed footpath includes cutting into the northern verge of Dark Lane. Our measurements indicate that to achieve the width of carriageway and footpath proposed in the plans an existing mature hedge on the north side will have to be removed and/or cut in half and therefore killed. This is not mentioned in the application and no ecological compensation is offered.

This planning application does not refer to and is incompatible with proposed and funded highways improvements at the site including traffic lights installation at the A536 / Dark Lane junction

The A536 has been identified as one of the 50 most dangerous A roads in the country and this includes the Dark Lane/ A536 junction. Installation of traffic lights at the Dark Lane/ A536 crossroads was proposed by Cheshire East Council in their successful bid for a £2.3m grant under the government's 'Safer Roads Scheme'. The site of the traffic lights is within the area covered by the submitted plans. This and other enhancements to highways safety affecting this location have funding for 2020/2021 confirmed by the national government. The highways proposals in the current application are incompatible with the specific safety improvements proposed under the safer roads grant the details of which are currently being worked on by Cheshire East Council.

The application should be revised to take a holistic view of highways safety including the proposed and funded traffic lights at the A536/Dark Lane crossroads. There should be a thorough assessment of proposed works on Dark Lane carriageway and footpath, the proposed moving of the bus stop, the proposed puffin crossing on the A536, safety of vehicles and pedestrians attending the Methodist chapel and community hall.

Appendix 4: Failure to meet national design standards

The Department for Communities and Local Government published Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard in March 2015. It sets out requirements for new dwellings. The proposed houses fail to meet these standards.

- The standard requires that plots 9 and 10 have a gross internal floor area of 70m² whilst the proposals show them as 67m²
- The standard requires that a double or twin bedroom has a floor area of at least 11.5m² – the master bedroom in plots 4 and 7 have a floor area of 11.1m², the secondary (twin) bedrooms in plots 4,5,6 and 7 have a floor area of 10.7 m², the secondary (twin) bedrooms in plots 9 and 10 have a floor area of 11.4 m²
- The standard requires that a single bedroom has a floor area of at least 7.5m² – plots 4,5,6 and 7 have a floor area of 5.9m²

Appendix 5. Inconsistencies with the Gawsworth Emerging Neighbourhood Plan

The application fails to place adequate weight on the Gawsworth emerging neighbourhood plan. The application does not accord with all the emerging policies in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Gawsworth's Neighbourhood plan is under development and does not form part of the development plan at this stage. Nevertheless Paragraph 48 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018 states that:

“Local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);*
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given);*

and

- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given”*

The plan in its current state has been based on extensive public consultation and debate, which is far in excess of any undertaken in connection with this planning application. Remembering that the application is for a rural exception development where community support is especially important the emerging policies represent a valuable insight into community views on development in their locality. The Neighbourhood Plan is consistent with the Local Plan Strategy.

The planning application asserts that the emerging Neighbourhood plan “broadly accords with the tone of the broad policy objectives”. However, contrary to this assertion there are significant areas in which the application does not accord with the emerging policy objectives. The areas of non-concordance relate to the following areas which are detailed in our other objections:

- o Safe access to and from the site and to local amenities
- o Highways Safety
- o Design and appearance
- o Effects on the Landscape
- o The integrity of the Gawsworth Village Settlement Boundary
- o The setting of Gawsworth within the Green Belt
- o Protection of trees and hedgerows
- o Effects on locally listed buildings and heritage assets

Additionally, the emerging Neighbourhood Plan includes a dark skies policy which will resist the introduction of new streetlighting across the parish except where required for safety. The planned street lighting will be contrary to this policy.