

## Clifton Hampden Neighbourhood Development Order

### Response to Examiner's second update (dated 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024)

Clifton Hampden Parish Council wishes to express its appreciation to the Examiner and SODC for their patience and understanding regarding matters related to the Neighbourhood Development Order. We acknowledge the initial comments you make regarding the lack of clarity, as well as the significant differences which exist between the two parties. Unfortunately, these differences have hindered progress in clarifying the content of the order and determining the appropriate way forward. Your letter of 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024 was considered as agenda item at the Parish Council meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024 as follows; -

*To consider and decide whether to agree with the Examiner's recommendation in his second update stating "I continue to conclude that there is insufficient clarity to underpin a meaningful debate on the Order, and to allow me to assess its proposals against each of the basic conditions. Moreover, it is my role to examine the Order against the basic conditions. It is not my role to secure agreement between the Parish Council, the Order's Steering Group, and the affected landowners and organisations.*

*The Next Steps*

*In all the circumstances, I invite the Parish Council to withdraw the Order..."*

The meeting was well attended by members of the public (about 60+ people) representing many perspectives, demonstrating the significant interest in the NDO. Some parishioners raised fears that dropping the NDO would threaten the continuity of the surgery and the PO/shop and that their democratic rights to a referendum would be negated. Also, it was suggested that the Parish would incur a debt of £125,000 for repayment of the grants awarded by Locality for the development of the application were the NDO to be withdrawn by the Parish Council.

The atmosphere became highly charged, and the behaviour of several attendees escalated to the point where it was deemed intimidatory and, at times, aggressive. Regrettably, this necessitated the suspension of the Parish Council meeting. Members of the public were asked to leave the room to ensure the well-being of all present.

The NDO has clearly generated significant interest and polarized opinions within the parish. The Council recognizes its responsibility to serve as an impartial and fair representative body, ensuring that all views are considered while striving to secure the widest possible support for decisions that promote the long-term interests of the community. Since taking office, this Council has sought clarification on several key aspects of the proposed NDO, including assurances regarding community benefits and the viability of the scheme as submitted by the previous Parish Council, especially in light of changes and major development announcements since submission. Over the past 18 months, despite ongoing efforts, critical gaps in information remain, particularly concerning long-term sustainability of the now proposed arrangements for key community assets, such as the surgery and post office.

It is also recognised that the NDO not only needs updating to reflect changes made since submission, but also to take account of the recent approval of the HIF1 scheme which in turn will bring forward the Culham scheme to include 3,500 homes and a new medical centre.

Considering the outstanding uncertainties, the Parish Council maintains the position previously communicated to the examiner, emphasizing that there is a lack of clarity and surety in the proposal sufficient to provide confidence in the long-term community benefit of the scheme. However, the events at this meeting prevented the Parish Council from holding meaningful discussion on the Examiner's invitation to withdraw.

In consideration of these challenges, the Parish Council requests the Examiner to proceed with an independent determination of the most appropriate course of action.

The Parish Council remains committed to fostering constructive dialogue and upholding its responsibilities to represent and support the community in a fair and transparent manner.

Clifton Hampden Parish Council

13<sup>th</sup> December 2024