

I realise that in the letter sent on 6th February I repeatedly referred to a proposal to develop in Thornbury at Morton Way South – this should have read Morton Way **North** and I apologise for any confusion caused.

Clare Fardell

From: Clare Fardell
Sent: 06 February 2013 10:56
To: Programme Officer
Subject: Proposal to build at Morton Way South as part of the Core Strategy

Dear Kath

Please find attached a letter from me to Inspector Crysell.

With thanks

Clare Fardell (Councillor for Thornbury North)

6th February 2013

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Inspector Paul Crysell
c/o Kath Thorne, Programme Officer
South Gloucestershire Council

Dear Mr Crysell

As one of two councillors for Thornbury North with both Park Farm and Morton Way South in my ward I wish to object in the strongest terms to the very recent proposal to include 300 houses on the land known as Morton Way South as part of South Gloucestershire Council's Core Strategy. My reasons are:

1. This proposal is not in accord with the new Core Strategy because most of the Core Strategy Consultation here was based upon the proposal to build only at Park Farm.

Following many years of careful and difficult work done on the whole Core Strategy as it relates to Thornbury, all their then local councillors, including Town Councillors, eventually took a VERY difficult decision and agreed that Thornbury needed about 500 new houses and that Park Farm was their preferred site. Three sites on Morton Way had been investigated carefully and rejected, as were the other two in the Green Belt.

A great deal of detailed work was done to check that Park Farm was indeed what the Town Council described as "the least worst site". Nobody ever likes proposals to build on any green fields, but after much consideration it was felt that Park Farm would be the right place to build for a number of reasons. The new estate at Park Farm would be safe and attractive to live in, fit in well with the existing Thornbury community, have limited adverse impact on the current residents of Park Farm, and be enough to revitalise the town.

It was greatly preferable to allowing development on Morton Way which is perceived as "outside the town" and also will inevitably lead to very much more development that the town needs or can easily accommodate. At no point were local councillors told that more than 500 houses would be required.

Opposition to this proposal came from two sources – those living near Park Farm and those who consider that very few houses if any should be built at all. Many people in the town deny there is any need for more houses anywhere, but that is not a realistic hope. I am sure you already understand how stressful and divisive the process has been for the whole community.

I was very relieved when, after investigating very carefully last Autumn, you concurred with the view that Park Farm was a suitable place for 500 houses, and we could look forward to the new development going ahead and finding that most of people's negative fears were unfounded.

2. The proposal to release Morton Way for speculative development already threatens to lead to "Planning by Appeal"

You then requested South Gloucestershire Council to find sites to accommodate another 850 houses. Soon afterwards and with no local consultation whatever, South Gloucestershire Council, having found sites for most of the 850 houses, reluctantly proposed putting the remaining 300 on Morton Way after all.

The main reason for this choice seems to be that a developer has recently applied to build 300 houses there, and so there is every likelihood the houses would be built. (Now the developer has just appealed for the application to be determined on grounds of non-determination by the Council.)

I thought that this kind of piecemeal development was exactly what the Core Strategy and all local plans are designed to prevent. It cannot be right to undo all the careful consideration which has gone into this new Plan by allowing an unwanted and unplanned development to be summarily attached on the edge of a coherently planned town just to make up some numbers.

3. Eight hundred new houses all at once in Thornbury are too many!

There are many disadvantages of Morton Way as a suitable place for development. These include the distance from the town centre, the existence of a large and fast ring road separating it from Thornbury, the risk of the new residents feeling detached from the town, the impact on the settled hamlet of Crossways, and the risk of out-of-town “sprawl”. I am sure that many people will outline these points in detail.

But I also ask you to consider that Thornbury has not had to absorb 800 houses all at once in the forty-seven years since we came to live here. Whenever the town grew, it grew in steps of 300 – 400 houses at a time and this allowed our small market town of a very few thousand houses to adapt itself and absorb the newcomers in a welcoming and well-planned way.

You may be aware that Thornbury is an exceptionally cohesive and active market town with a strong sense of community and heritage. Newcomers, as I was once, have been glad to become part of all this and add their own input.

I strongly feel that, though adding 500 houses – 10% overall – will be manageable and even enhance Thornbury, the addition at the same time of *another 300 new houses* will put far too much pressure on the facilities and ethos of the town we all love, especially if built on the outskirts where residents will have always to use their cars,.

4. Does South Gloucestershire really need 300 more houses on top of the 28,500 already agreed?

I cannot believe that it does. I believe that the Core Strategy is likely to be a Plan which will be good for Thornbury as well as for South Gloucestershire as a whole, and so I am very grateful to you for agreeing to reopen your Inquiry to consider the new issues raised by the apparent need for extra houses.

I ask you, please, to listen to hundreds of very concerned residents and not to damage what is overall a good Local Plan just to accommodate a mere 300 additional houses.

Yours sincerely

Clare Fardell (Councillor for Thornbury North since 1987)