

Sibford Ferris Parish Council

Village Categorisation

Parish Council propose a revision of village categorisation from A to B

Sibford Ferris Parish Council (SFPC) believe that the current village categorisation of 'The Sibfords' as a 'Category A - Service Centre' to be incorrect and propose to discuss and seek a revision during Cherwell District Councils (CDC) Review of their Local Plan that commences in 2020. SFPC believe that the two villages should be 'unbundled' by CDC and treated as separate 'Category B' villages, returning them to their previous classification.

The main points supporting this proposal are:

- The small size and scale of 'The Sibfords' are not comparable to other 'Category A' villages, making the current categorisation invalid. The combined villages (when viewed by household number) are one of the smallest identified 'Category A' villages, looked at separately they are individually amongst the smallest Category B villages within Cherwell.
- CDC took a decision to group Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower, when creating the current version of 'The Local Plan' and allocate 'Category A' status, largely in our opinion based on a 'tick box' exercise that ignored the size, scalability, supportability and sustainability of local services. Failing to properly assess the key criteria has resulted in an inappropriate categorisation. 'The Sibfords' (to our knowledge) were the only villages that were grouped during the last version of CDC's local plan and as such are an anomaly (recognised by CDC at the time). It should also be noted that while termed as a 'Service Centre' there are no villages that 'The Sibfords' are identified as servicing.
- The topography of 'The Sibfords', and the interconnection between, the villages make it very difficult for residents of either village to access key services (Surgery, Shop, Primary School etc) that only exist in one or the other. For the majority the only viable access method is by car to overcome steep hills and lack of footpaths, undermining the single community goal CDC aimed for by grouping Ferris and Gower'.
- CDC's integrated transport report produced in 2009 (CRAITLUS) highlighted the relative inaccessibility by road of Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower, when compared to other villages. This appears to contradict the stated purpose of 'Category A', that is that they are easily accessible.. The report stated:
'Of the 33 villages, only four show little capability to sustainably support additional housing. Shenington, Sibford Ferris/Sibford Gower and Charlton on Otmoor perform poorly due to their location on minor roads, with long travel times and distances to access key facilities. Hanwell is located close to Banbury which provides key facilities, but has few facilities of its own and few public transport links.'
- During a CDC Planning Committee site visit in April 2018 a significant proportion of the group commented that they did not understand why Sibford Ferris and Sibford Gower had been categorised as a 'Category A village' given their experience of the access difficulties and challenges represented by the local hills and lack of public footpaths.. Showing that even CDC officials question the current village categorisation of 'The Sibfords'.