

Copy of Email to Planning Committee dated: 9 January 2017

Subject: Safety Concerns with Respect to TWC/2016/0785

Further to a recent meeting of the residents of the properties bordering the access lane to the proposed development, we would be grateful if you would read the following comments prior to coming to a decision regarding planning application no. TWC/2016/0785 - Land to the East of Back Lane, Tibberton, to the rear of Sheldar, Covings and The Old Stables.

Firstly, may we make it clear that we do not object to the adjacent field being built on in principle, this would be very much dependent upon the detailed planning application and whether there would be any intrusion upon the privacy and enjoyment of our properties. We realise the land is within the Telford & Wrekin local plan and that it would seem a logical place for development with it being within the village, however what seems totally illogical is this whole site is not developed in conjunction with adjoining parcels of land in a comprehensive manner with access to the south of the village onto Plantation Road, via the Orchard House development, or better still by the purchase and demolition of one of the adjoining properties giving direct access to Back Lane. Over the years there have been many planning applications for the development of this field and all were rejected, mainly due to the poor access, however the committee may recall an earlier proposal for the demolition of Orchard House and the construction of a fully adoptable road into a proposed new estate utilising both plots.

We, amongst many others, strongly object to this planning application purely because the proposed access is wholly inadequate and due to the restricted width of the lane, it would never be suitable as a point of access to a housing development.

There are numerous inaccuracies and contradictions both within and between the various documents supporting the application including the positions of the site boundaries. At the very least the application should be updated to utilise a single accurate site plan agreed with the Land Registry and adjoining land owners.

By way of background the proposed access is currently used as a private driveway to an agricultural field and two private bungalows (Covings and Sheldar). We, the owners of Covings and Sheldar, have a right of way at all times with or without vehicles over the first 47.5m and share a minimal maintenance with the landowners. How can this possibly be maintained during construction of the proposed new roadway and development?

Key Objections

The development of a further 14 homes, each with an estimated 2-3 motor vehicles, will greatly increase the quantity and size of traffic along this narrow lane which is only 4.1m at its widest point and just 3m at its narrowest. The narrowing of the access lane to 3m coincides with the driveways of both Covings and Sheldar and due to their layout, reversing out is done either "blind" or with very limited and poor visibility. In recent years, there has actually been a minor collision involving a postal van and also several near misses between vehicles and residents maintaining their hedges – and that's with only two properties serviced by the road, let alone an additional 14! Delivery vehicles often need assistance in reversing out of Covings' driveway whereas when they deliver to Sheldar they can't even get on to the drive so block the lane anyway.

The roads within the proposed development are 4.5m wide which we feel merely reinforces how completely unsuitable the proposed access to the site would be as it is only 4.1m narrowing to 3m and would have more traffic using it than the proposed site's wider roadway.

As a result of the proposed footpath to Tibberton Primary School, it is realistic to presume that parents will park along the access lane and within the new estate to drop off and collect their children. As stated above, due to the narrowness of the road particularly where it runs past the driveways of Covings and Sheldar, this will result in drivers pulling onto the driveways to let vehicles pass causing undue wear and tear on the private driveways and unnecessary stress to us.

Regarding emergency access and fire appliances the 3m wide road narrowing for 22m is a concern. Having looked at the guideline documents of other councils the general consensus appears to be a minimum requirement of 3.7m to physically tackle a fire outside a property (as described in the Manual for Streets).

Contrary to the statement in the Design Access Statement (section 5.1.1, Road Hierarchy) that the street alignment has been designed to maintain low vehicle speeds (20 mph), we believe it is likely to lead to an increase in vehicle speed as drivers will rush through the 3m section to get past the restriction before a vehicle comes the other way. Clearly this creates an inherent danger to residents and visitors using the road both as pedestrians and drivers/passengers.

Road narrowing as a traffic calming measure only works over short distances and when accompanied by appropriate road markings and signed flow priorities. We respectfully request that a road safety audit be carried out where the driveways of both Covings and Sheldar intersect with the 3m wide section of the proposed new road.

Any number of vehicles travelling along the access lane represents a significant increase in the ambient noise level in front Covings and Sheldar whose driveways are just inside their western boundaries, currently no traffic passes them, apart from the very occasional agricultural vehicle. The proposed paviour finish will significantly amplify traffic noise, particularly during peak periods and late at night.

Bin lorries currently collect waste only from the end of the access lane in Back Lane. If they are instructed to travel into the new development it will significantly increase the likelihood of a collision with vehicles exiting either Covings or Sheldar, and injury to pedestrians. The same also applies to delivery vehicles. If the new roadway is not adopted (due to its limited width and access issues), it is likely that a refuse bin collection point will be required. This is not allowed for within the current proposal.

We were pleased to note Telford & Wrekin Council's promotion of the protection of hedgerows (http://www.telford.gov.uk/info/20170/planning_applications_and_guidance/515/hedgerows). In the Design Access Statement submitted by the applicant dated August 2016, section 2.4 (Ecology and Landscape) it clearly shows that hedgerows H1 and H4 are to have a 2m protection zone. Clearly this would make it impossible to construct an access lane whilst protecting the hedgerows. In fact, if the access lane were to be constructed the private hedge (H1) within Sheldar's ownership would be destroyed by the laying of road kerbs and there would also be a loss of the wildlife living within the hedgerow.

The applicant's plans appear to show the hedgerow designated H4 in the Arboricultural Assessment-161948 as being within the site, whereas this hedgerow in fact forms part of the western boundary of the site bordering Covings.

No reference is made to the land height in any of the planning documents. The site is significantly lower than Back Lane therefore the depth of the exiting sewers will greatly affect any drainage schemes for both foul water and surface water. The foul water sewer located in the access lane to the site became blocked twice in recent years when only serving three properties (Covings, Sheldar and West Wind). The addition of 14 properties will inevitably significantly increase the risk of this happening again.

In closing we would like to reiterate how strongly we feel that the private drive is completely unsuitable to be used as access to a housing development and would present a danger to all users. The last thing we would want is for anyone to be injured and we are sure that neither the committee nor the borough council would not wish to be at the receiving end of the bad press that would result.

There is an existing requirement for us to contribute towards the maintenance cost of the current lane. If the proposed application is approved we request the requirement regarding maintenance be removed as the new lane will be both longer, constructed to a significantly higher specification and suffer from greatly increased wear than is currently the case.

We, the residents of Covings and Sheldar and also the residents of Hoffentlich and West Wind therefore request that if outline planning is given for the development to proceed it is on the basis that access to the site is from an alternative, more suitable position which we believe to be entirely possible with the application of a little joined-up thinking.

Thank you for your time.

Kelvin & Christine Ingram (Covings)
Stuart & Sue Norton (Sheldar)