

Re: Planning Reference P/21/002/OUT

4th February 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

We welcome the provision of a much needed opportunity for affordable local housing, however we believe this proposed site is not the most suitable, and raise the following objections.

This field is too wet

As the current occupiers, we know how waterlogged and impassable this field is for the majority of the winter. The consultants took measurements on only two distinct days, and have proposed plans that do not appear to be robust or satisfactory. The intention is to collect, pipe and tank surface water runoff, thus allowing dissipation from the whole site to be concentrated into the wettest corner of the field, merely "replicating the current surface water drainage at the site" which is known to be inadequate. There would appear to be nothing to mitigate the effect this will have on the neighbouring land which is already waterlogged, or indeed on the very nearby SSSI Lower Moors.

Historic boundary removal

The plans have been substantially changed since some of the reports were conducted. Does this not invalidate these reports? The Heritage Review requires "retention of existing boundary banks and trees" and the Heritage Impact Assessment states that "The proposed layout ensures that the existing historic boundaries, banks and trackway are retained to ensure that the development sits comfortably within the village setting". However, the entire eastern boundary lining the road is to be removed, comprising of a line of elm trees and vegetation, and a stone hedge/wall. The intention is to work with a landscape architect to ensure suitable landscaping is implemented, and that the stone wall will be rebuilt further into the field and trees planted closer to the houses. This does not fulfil the findings of the above reports, and planting trees closer to houses does not sound appropriate. We understand that these changes have been made to ensure both access points into the site provide the required level of visibility to satisfy the Highways authority, but this just emphasises that this site is not suitable.

Loss of prominent greenfield site

The reports state that this field has been in agricultural use since at least the late 1800s, and it is a highly visible part of the historic landscape of Scilly. Development of this site will be a very obvious extension of the settlement of Old Town out into the rural surroundings, which would not seem appropriate considering that other potential development sites exist without necessitating this irreversible loss. Obviously as the current occupants of the land we do not want to lose it, as it provides key access to our other fields and is of critical importance to our conservation grazing and traditional breed beef production.

Inadequate access

We have been informed by the Council's Housing Enabling Officer that the surfacing of the access roads will not be completed until the site has been fully developed. With individual plots to be marketed for sale, and self-builders progressing at different rates, it would seem that the site will have an indefinite, and possibly extremely prolonged, timescale to reach its completion. Would this not result in a perpetual building site with inadequate access? We are concerned that our access to our home and farm will be compromised.

Insufficient number of car parking spaces

The figures used to inform the submitted Residential Travel Plan would seem outdated when compared to the obstructive parking already occurring in Old Town: Launceston Close and the

'village centre' area of Old Town Lane are regularly congested with illegal parking, with a considerable number of work vehicles in addition to private cars. Perhaps out of town areas like Old Town have a higher than average ownership of vehicles which is not reflected in the figures used, which cover the whole of St Mary's, where the biggest population is in Hugh Town which also has presumably the highest number of households with no access to a vehicle. This means that the already outdated figures used for this Travel Plan are also skewed and unrepresentative of the likely use and ownership of vehicles within Old Town. Planning for parking spaces always seem to be underestimated (eg Normandy House, Carn Gwavel Wellbeing Centre, the school), and with no provision of householders to have more than one vehicle, where will other vehicle be parked? This poses safety risks if Old Town Lane and the site access roads become obstructed.

Creation of wetland/retention pond

The proposed site plans shows the creation of a pond, but contrarily we have been informed that "There is no plan to form a pond, however during detailed design a holding feature may be developed to give a water source to the allotment owners". If there was to be a pond created, would this result in a breeding area for biting insects, similar to what appeared to happen with the creation of ponds in front of the new school development, which resulted in an unusually high incidence of severe reactions to insect bites, particularly amongst school children? Whilst we are very much in favour of wildlife and biodiversity, the neighbouring SSSI Lower Moors wetland already provide for this aspect in this location, as well as our conservation grazing of this field.

The consultants state that the creation of wetlands within the site will provide amenity and biodiversity value to the development, but this is already present in the current and neighbouring land use.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully
Philip and Anthea Roberts
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