



## **WSL PC BELLMAN HANGER – REASONS FOR REFUSAL** **20/02462/FULL RBWM**

### **It is hard to find a site less suitable for such a concentrated residential development in the Parish**

- 1. Building redevelopment should be restricted to replacing the footprint of the existing site buildings (not hard standing or moveable storage – east only); this previously resulted in a reduction (in withdrawn applications) from 20 to 18 and the approved 3 houses are all contained within the hanger footprint itself – not scattered throughout the site (14/03036) in order to provide 'openness'. Very Special Circumstances do not exist to justify approval.**

In recommending approval of 14/03036 (3 houses) and the refusal of 14/00350 (4 houses), the officer stressed that it is only appropriate development if the development does not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The officer concluded in 14/00350 that “the proposed development would be perceived as more urbanising impact (sic) and the buildings would be seen as sprawling over greater area than the existing hanger building. It would therefore have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development on the site and would thus cause harm due to its inappropriateness, its impact on the openness of the Green Belt and its harm to the amenity of the Green Belt and the rural character of the site and its countryside setting.”  
GB2

- 2. Whilst there is now a greater distance of development away from the protected woodland, with the internal road intervening (compared to 17/03903/OUT (withdrawn)), there is more housing along the farm boundary with nuisance impact on both the occupants and the cattle rearing farm – this is too close and as such unacceptable. A development of this scale would inevitably result in increased lighting, impacting the rural green belt. GB2 2.1.15 highlights that the use of lighting may have a damaging and urbanising effect on the rural character. This is particularly relevant given the close proximity of the wildlife in the neighbouring ancient woodland and the breeding cattle farm.**

Any residential development on the site would need to be completely secure to prevent dogs from straying on to the farm with a minimum 6 foot barrier fence. Neosporosis is an infectious disease of cattle caused by a parasite transmitted in dog faeces, and is the most commonly diagnosed cause of abortion in cattle in the UK. With a breeding cattle farm neighbouring the site, a development of this scale clearly greatly increases risks to the herd. It is understood that cattle are affected by loud noises (such as fireworks etc), which would undoubtedly increase with a development of this scale and put the livelihood of the farmer at risk.

- 3. The site is located on the apex of a bend in the road. The concealed access leading into an unrestricted commuter route with bends, no pavements and an inadequate sightline going south with questionable going north when verge fully reinstated (RBHA), is a hazard to both pedestrians and cyclists with traffic accelerating in both directions as they come out of speed restrictions. This is supported by our own highway expert & NP T1 conflict.**

There is a significant difference between the impact of single (or three as in the case of the approved planning permission on this site) properties accessing a fast moving road with limited sightlines and a large housing estate of 14 family properties. It is of note that Shurlock Road itself only has a total of 14 separate properties on this stretch.

Visibility splays of 2.4 x 215m are required in both directions for a road subject to a 60mph limit (TD 9). This site has less than half of this in both directions (as acknowledged by the applicant) – and, even then, incorrectly measured by the applicant as noted by the Parish Council Highways report.

Even at applicant measured average speeds of 38.3-40.7 mph the sight lines are insufficient. At 40mph sight lines of 120m are the minimum expected.

- 4. The living constraints of being wedged between a dense wildlife woodland on one side and a working cattle breeding farm on the other, with no adequate recreation open space (unlike Downfield Road both front and rear), is such as to logically require a reduced scale of development. This site is not only well outside both villages 'recognised settlements' but, in view of limited local facilities, it requires extensive car use to access workplaces, shopping, stations, some schools, leisure activities, even village pubs, hall and church or to Twyford surgery. This goes against policy statements and should be taken into account ie: NPPF 8b) +9 and 122c).**
- 5. Sewage disposal for such a large number of households is of real concern as it will create extra pressure on our system which is already overloaded in a high water table area with inflow from Knowl Hill and causes severe winter raw sewage flooding in WSL village street. Apart from surface water restriction this has not been addressed by Thames Water and we still await their solution.**

Thames Water's assessments are based on "paper" considering the expected impact of an additional 14 houses on a sewage system. The planning officer and panel members should be aware that the villages are old and many houses' gutters were historically connected to the sewage system rather than soakaways. Together with run off from fields into the sewage system (not addressed by Thames Water) at times of heavy rainfall this results in raw sewage "fountaining" from manholes in the village for several days (with the Borough needing to deploy tankers to minimise the effects) and sewage backing up into houses in the villages rendering the sewage and running water systems inoperable in those houses.

6. The NPPF considers habitats and biodiversity. It states in paragraph 175 (c) that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles... c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons. Government guidance on ancient woodlands states that nearby development can also have an indirect impact on ancient woodland or ancient and veteran trees and the species they support. These can include:

- increasing the amount of pollution, including dust
- increasing disturbance to wildlife from additional traffic and visitors
- increasing light or air pollution
- increasing damaging activities like fly-tipping and the impact of domestic pets
- changing the landscape character of the area

Given the examples given by Government guidance it is hard to see how 14 properties on the site could not result in a deterioration of the nearby Ancient Woodland and its buffer zone.

## CONCLUSION

For all these reasons the latest application still amounts to a clear over-development in what is an essentially rural agricultural and green belt location with three adjoining conservation areas and many listed buildings. A non-conforming housing estate on this scale would be out of character with its immediate surroundings and, accordingly, should be refused as it stands.

NB we request this response from the PARISH COUNCIL will be reproduced in full to the PANEL

Panel members are encouraged to visit the site to, as a minimum, witness the limited sight lines from the site

October/November 2020.

Copies: Cllrs Johnson/Hunt

## Appendix 1

Selected misleading statements included in the applicant's submissions

1. The applicant quotes existing internal floorspace of 3,120 square metres.

Previous planning officer assessments state the overall floorspace as 2,684 square metres with a building footprint of 2,161 square metres. This compares to the proposed area of this application of 2,028 square meters spread over the site

2. The applicant's access strategy suggests that the site benefits from existing bus stops (Transport statement 2.6 "it is also pertinent to note that Shurlock Row is a bus route" – they do acknowledge that these are no more than 5 per day) in close proximity within a walkable distance (540m North, 350m South).

There are no pavements for safe passage of pedestrians along this unlit country road. To walk 540m the average person might take 20 minutes (at 3mph) meaning that they would encounter vehicles travelling along a 5m wide road averaging 40 mph (applicant's assessment) and poor sight lines to reach the bus stops or to return home.

Transport statement 2.15 states that "a grassed verge exists on Shurlock Way" (sic). A visit to the site or a view via google maps makes it clear that this is not safe to walk on and on the West side features a drainage ditch.

Transport statement 2.17 refers to public rights of way. To access these from the site involves the same dangerous pedestrian requirement as noted above. The paragraph even appears to suggest that pedestrians should venture on the highway as part of access to the local primary school.

Paragraphs 2.25-2.28 of the transport assessment refer to no accidents recorded on a 1km stretch of road centred on this site. It is noted that this is a small stretch limited by 500m in either direction. This is not disputed but the potential impact of a dangerous junction on this statistic is not considered as part of the report. It is noted that there are two TPO trees at the entrance to Bellman Hanger which impact on visibility North.

3. Paragraph 4.9 of the Transport statement attempts to suggest that the development would support increased use of the bus route and its economic viability. Given the notes above on pedestrian access and the extremely limited service provided, this is misleading to the user.
4. Transport statement paragraph 4.13 states that the proposed development is in line with national transport policy. As demonstrated above, it is hard to see how the applicant aligns the statements made to this site.
5. The Highways Authority drew reference in their assessment 16/02861/OUT to previous applications to concerns about increased traffic along a road containing several bends with restricted visibility, narrow verges, some of which contain drainage ditches. The applications were dismissed by the inspector. Application 99/34780/VAR included restrictions on vehicle movements which would not be possible with a residential development.

An amended submission by the Highways Authority on 16/02861/OUT noted that the applicant's commissioned speed counts indicated 85th percentile speeds of c48mph in both directions requiring visibility splays of 139.3m, still significantly less than the visibility splays

at the site. The Highways Agency officer suggested that they were prepared to take “a pragmatic view” and accept the reduced visibility splays due to relatively low traffic levels. There was no explanation or rationale assessment of the reason for the unjustified change in stance which conflicted with the views of the Inspector in the previous cases. The Applicant’s current application seeks acceptance of this revised assessment without question or reassessment even though they are relying on a withdrawn application that was never challenged or properly assessed.

6. It is noted that the applicant’s vehicle survey was undertaken shortly before the first national lockdown caused by CV19 when reduced traffic movements were being experienced nationally. A development of 14 houses might be expected to generate, say, 28 vehicles leaving the site on to a fast running road at this peak time which the Parish Council do not consider to be “very low traffic levels” at the rural junction and would result in an extremely dangerous site for a junction with inadequate visibility splays.

A development of this size and nature would result in a large number of families and children on the site. There is a lack of footpaths along the main road and children will undoubtedly use bicycles from this remote rural location. With the reduced visibility splays a development on this scale would, in the opinion of the Parish Council, result in a significant risk to life.

It should be noted that any suggestion to reduce speed limits to address reduced visibility splays would be ineffective due to the lack of enforcement of speed limits in this rural location. In opposing reduced speed limits elsewhere in the Parish, the Police have stated that they would not be able to enforce reduced limits. In addition, any suggestion that the junction should be revised to accommodate the development would harm the character of the countryside (GB2 B).

7. The applicant provides a misleading assessment of the trip generation at the site. By comparing to TRICS database data they imply that the site currently generates 176 daily traffic movements. The planning permissions contained in 99/34780 (condition 6) limited movements to one round trip per user per day (ie 18). In reality the vehicular trip generation currently is negligible.

The trip generation statistics in the applicant’s transport statement are intended to mislead the user.