

Comments Objecting to the Hatch End Development April 2021

The plan for the use of the site and for construction both make great play on 'sustainable' transport options, referring to bus and rail options available to workers at the site.

These options are in fact a once an hour bus that stops nearly a mile away, and a less-than once an hour train that stops nearly two miles away.

This may look reasonable as part of a tick-box exercise, but nobody seriously expects it to happen this way in the real world. Arrival and departure times of trains and buses will not fit with the needs of employers, and workers and visitors will not wish to walk two miles in winter weather, facing serious uphill climbs in the process.

More, the buses and trains available do not travel to and from Bicester or Heyford Park, the local areas with the biggest growing populations. Transport from these areas has to be private.

On site, there seems to be little if any provision for electric vehicles, which after 2030 will seem to be rather shortsighted and already seems to fail in terms of sustainability.

It is suggested local businesses will benefit from the development: the village shop, the pub. Of course, they lie at around a kilometre and a mile respectively from the development. So workers are envisaged walking to them during their lunch hour and then walking back, having used their services in the meantime. This seems - unlikely - simply on the basis of time, never mind weather or topography. If the shop and pub are to be used by workers at the new development, this will clearly therefore produce more traffic in the village, reducing the calm of the current environment which residents have chosen as part of their lifestyle here, as well as resulting in more more parked cars at the shop and the pub where parking is already limited. Both businesses clearly welcome more trade; but has the impact of the number of potential vehicles from the development on their sites and surrounding properties been looked into with any understanding? I can't find this report in any of the online papers. Realities seem repeatedly to be avoided by the developer.

The roads into Steeple Aston are all narrow and at many places become single track roads.

The preferred route for site traffic - via Southside - is the main bus route. Cars already cannot park outside houses for much of Southside because it would block the bus route. No consideration of this has been made - or of what happens when a car and an HGV meet in opposite directions, still less the bus and an HGV which cannot pass each other anywhere on this route and neither can reverse and find a passing place. What are they supposed to do? Could the planning officers offer a suggestion?

The alternative route - Northside - is narrower and far from straight. Every resident of Steeple Aston can tell stories of having to reverse a distance in order to let a tractor through. What happens when an HGV and a tractor come face to face round a sudden bend on this road? Whose parked car or II* listed house wall gets damaged first? Does Cherwell planning pay for this damage, or does the developer?

What happens when an HGV cannot drive up the blind summit of Paines Hill because of school traffic coming the other way at 8.45am? What happens when Fir Lane is clogged with school traffic between 8-9am every morning, just as work on site is beginning for the day? Why have none of these issues been addressed in any way?

The danger to schoolchildren remains unaddressed. The plan for construction has work beginning as children arrive at school, on a road which has - for a large section where parents park with their children - no footpath. Parents arrive carefully, knowing the needs

of their children. But the developer wishes their own construction vehicles to arrive at the same time on what is little more than a single track road, clogged with cars, parts, children and the occasional school bus. There is no sense of understanding a village community or what this work will do to our most precious resource - our children. That is without the sense of increasing an industrial complex right next to the school itself, with just a thin break of trees between it. The current complex is small and rural and entirely in keeping. The development seeks to bring something entirely inappropriate to the village and to the school to which it will be immediately adjacent.

Nowhere in the application is mention made of the decision to run all traffic past the 12th Century St Peter & St Paul church which lies on the corner of Northside and Fir Lane, surrounded by a historic churchyard, an important feature and site of quiet and reflection in our village. No questions are asked as to the impact of increased traffic or heavy machinery going past this site. And no reference is made to the open cemetery next to it on Fir Lane which is used daily by local residents. This place of remembrance, quiet and holiness for local people will be disturbed repeatedly every day for a year during the construction process and then the increased traffic under-projected afterwards risks turning the quiet road past the cemetery into a suburban nightmare. Why has this not been mentioned or considered? When a large village funeral takes place, the roads around are blocked by family cars and by the funeral procession flowing out on the street. Why is there no reference to this local practice in any of the documents? Why is the cemetery not on any of the application plans? Why are local families being ignored?

As Rector of Steeple Aston and chair of the Steeple Aston Parochial Church Council I continue to oppose this application.