

**Fir Lane Cottage
Fir Lane
Steeple Aston
Oxfordshire
OX25 4SF**

13th March 2023

**OBJECTION TO PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT HATCH END, OLD POULTRY FARM
FOR THE ERECTION OF THREE INDUSTRIAL BUILDINGS, REPLACEMENT OF FORMER
SCOUT HUT BUILDING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS (PLANNING APPLICATION
REFERENCE 22/03877/F)**

Dear CDC Planning Department,

We write, as parents of a former pupil of both Dr Radcliffe's C of E Primary School and the pre-school; as grandparents of two children, both currently attending Dr Radcliffe's Primary School; as very concerned residents of Steeple Aston who live on Fir Lane and thus, very close to the proposed Hatch End development, to object in the strongest possible terms, to planning application 22/03877/F.

We have first-hand experience of daily accompanying our daughter to both the pre-school and Dr Radcliffe's School from 2003 - 2012 and of the serious traffic congestion during drop off and pick up times back then. We observe that this has increased significantly over the years as more pupils attend from other local rural villages in the school's catchment area and as cars get bigger. We are constantly amazed that there has not already been a serious accident. There is inadequate parking in and around the school, there is one narrow footpath up to the school and no official supervision of children crossing the road. After school, many of the pupils visit the playground directly across the road, often very excited at their "freedom" and are not always aware of the traffic danger. When you factor in the school bus, which struggles daily to deliver and collect children from the school the scene is often chaotic.

All the village amenities for children, young people and residents of Steeple Aston are located on Fir Lane – the playground, the sports playing field, the Sports and Recreation Centre, the Village Hall, the church, and the graveyard. Too often, impatient drivers, not attached to the school or the village, drive at reckless speeds at all times of the day along Fir Lane. The pavement between the church and the school is so narrow that two

pushchairs cannot pass one another. Pupils travelling in groups can often spill over into the road.

On the occasions that we escort our grandchildren to school, we feel like we are running a gauntlet. Little ones do not understand road safety and often act on impulse before a parent can react. This is the position now, so we dread to think what the impact of additional, heavy-duty vehicles and site traffic will be during the construction of the Hatch End development, and of course, the increased traffic to and from the development thereafter.

The road from Steeple Aston to Middle Aston can best be described as a single-track road, already unsuitable for the current level of traffic. The increase in heavy construction traffic during the construction phase will decimate an already fragile road surface. The construction traffic and increase in cars, vans and trucks when the development is complete will increase the danger to school children, their parents and carers. These cars will be arriving to and from the Hatch End development through Steeple Aston - up Fir Lane past the school during drop off and pick up times. Indeed, the times at which pupils start their school day can be as early as 8 a.m. and pick up continues from 3pm to 6 p.m. to cater for pre and after school clubs. In the evenings, many extracurricular activities for children and adults take place in the Village Hall and the Sports and Recreation Centre.

Dr Radcliffe's maximum capacity is for 30 pupils per class - 210 pupils including Reception Class. Add to that, teachers, teaching assistants, administration staff, cleaners, catering staff and ground staff, possibly up to twenty-five people working at the school, all with their own transport, coming and going, and requiring to park. **The roads into and around both Steeple Aston and Middle Aston can only be described as "Single-Track" with Significant pinch points on Southside, North Side, Paines Hill and Fir Lane.** A recent house renovation on Fir Lane had at one point 14 contractor vehicles parked on or around Fir Lane, North Side and Cow Lane and this caused considerable disruption and angered both parents and residents.

This proposed development will promote the **urbanisation** of the area between Steeple and Middle Aston to the detriment and integrity of both villages and contrary to the Mid Cherwell Development Plan. If planning permission is granted for this development, it will open the doors for further planning applications for developments by speculators. According to the Cherwell Local Plan 2006 – 2031, a report submitted in January 2014, Steeple Aston is considered as a Category A village. This report stated "the village is not suitable for large scale new development schemes". How can the village infrastructure, now be seen to suitable to support this revised application? We are concerned that if the application is accepted, there is nothing to stop the developer submitting a revised and substantially larger application in the future.

There is **no viable public transport infrastructure** to support this development. The railway station, located at Lower Heyford, is over one and a half miles away and the trains only stop once or twice a day. The bus service to and from the village is limited and the bus already has great difficulty navigating through the village due to the narrowness of the roads and the parking of residents' vehicles. It is therefore highly likely that busses will bypass the village all together because of the increased congestion this proposed development will bring. Currently, busses traveling in opposite directions through the village struggle and have great difficulty in passing on South Side. There is no pathway linking the site to either Steeple or Middle Aston. There are no cycle ways!

OCC Highways response to the initial application was considered totally inadequate. So far as we can ascertain, they have never visited the site before or since, which is a shame given its proximity to the school and pre-school. The Transport Statement provided by Mode Transport Planning provides no primary research as far as we can ascertain, fails to take into account the wider context, relies on out of date survey information from 2011, a vehicle count taken in November 2019 and attempts to estimate current traffic movements relying on a Hatch End employee's guestimate. There is no evidence presented of a meeting or contact between OCC Highways Department and Mode Transport Planning which Mode relies on to give weight to their submission. There are lots of tables and statistics. One is reminded of the old adage: lies, dam lies and..... Statistics fail to take into account human factors.

The proposed development and the unavoidable increase in traffic, takes no account of the stress that will, inevitably, be caused to residents (many of whom are elderly) walking or driving in and around the village. As mentioned, the road infrastructure in Steeple and Middle Aston is single track with many pinch points throughout both villages. At present cars, vans and trucks are, constantly having to mount the pavements and verges just to pass one another.

During the proposed construction phase, very heavy trucks will pound our small village roads for a year or more. A fully laden cement truck can weigh up to 70,000 pounds! This constant pounding will damage the many fragile and listed buildings along South Side, Paines Hill and Fir Lane. Many of these buildings have shallow or no foundations. The damage sustained by listed buildings during the construction phase may not become obvious until many years after the proposed development is completed. Residents are already very worried about this.

There is **no economic imperative** to expand Hatch End. A few short miles away there is a substantial development underway at Heyford that is supported by Cherwell District Council and many surrounding villages.

As residents of Steeple Aston and the owner of a listed building, in a Conservation Area, located on Fir Lane, we are extremely worried and concerned and have serious reservations about this new planning application.

We strongly object to this new planned application.

Yours sincerely

Maurice and Marie O'Connor