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PUBLIC INQUIRY - APP/R3325/W/20/3259668 - Land north of Ansford Hill,
Ansford, Castle Cary

Good morning. Madam Inspector, ladies and gentlemen.

My name is Mark Main and I am here as a private citizen and a founder member of Care4Cary, an organisation formed by local residents in 2009 to help ensure appropriate local development of Castle Cary and its immediate surroundings, for the benefit and continued amenity of residents and businesses.

I am most grateful for this opportunity to present to the Inquiry.

Care4Cary commissioned a full classified ATC traffic survey very close to the site of the access to the proposed development site on the A371 on Ansford Hill, and I would like to highlight some of the findings of that survey together with the issues and implications that are raised. A copy of the report from traffic and road safety consultancy Moss Naylor Young has been lodged with yourself, SSDC and the Applicant.

The survey measured two-way traffic flows, 24 hours a day for the two weeks from the 13th September this year. The daily mean two-way flow was 5800 vehicles, with 85% of those passing the survey point between 0700 and 1900. That means that a vehicle would be passing the proposed access every 9 seconds. Hold that thought.

At no time during the 336 hours of the survey was the hourly, mean recorded traffic speed in both directions below the 30mph limit. There were only 4 hourly intervals when mean uphill speeds were within the speed limit, all between 00:00 and 04:00. The 85thile speed of vehicles throughout the two weeks was 39 – 40 mph both uphill and down.

Approximately 10% of these vehicles are HGVs.

So, we have vehicles passing the proposed site access every 9 seconds, the vast majority of which are travelling at least 10mph faster than the 30mph limit, one-in-ten of which are HGVs. This despite the fact that this section of the A371 has a plethora of traffic markings and signs installed by Highways to slow the traffic down.

Into this location, acknowledged in the adopted Castle Cary and Ansford Neighbourhood plan as an HGV 'hotspot', the Applicant threatens to impose a development that by their calculations will generate 100s of vehicle movements a day - either slow starting traffic (car or cyclist) pulling out into speeding traffic or decelerating or stationary traffic negotiating the planned Right Turn Lane at the site access.

This Right Turn Lane seems to be designed using geometry from the Manual for Streets within 30mph limits and will therefore be too small for the location. Too small means not enough room for cars to slow down, stop or queue resulting in possible stationary traffic in the fastest downhill part of the road just around a blind corner.

This section of the A371 has seen at least 7 vehicle accidents involving injury and or roadside damage over the past 4 years, clear evidence of drivers making errors of judgement or failing to stop, and an indicator of excess speed for the prevailing road conditions.

The dangers are obvious and will be exacerbated in wet weather. We will return to them in a moment.

Cars as a means of transport, in a potential development location such as this, should be minimised as much as possible with walking, cycling or taking the train encouraged instead. Built-in sustainability must be a key objective of any new development. Despite the location being right beside a railway station, the Applicant predicts only 25 movements per day in that direction, out of a total of approximately 1000 daily movements generated by the site.

Much is made in the Applicant's Transport submission of the proximity of the proposed development to Castle Cary and Ansford. Schools, shops and services are all within approximately a mile, all therefore accessible within around 20 minutes at the assumed walking pace of 3mph. Mistakenly, this assumes a fit, unencumbered adult walking on the flat. The reality is that many of the potential pedestrians will have children, pushchairs or may be less than fit and the walk will inevitably involve uphill sections (going or coming back) and will take a lot longer than 20 minutes.

The worst of it though is that to get to any of the schools, shops or services pedestrians must walk along the unimproved, narrow footpath along the northern edge of the A371 and then will have to cross it. There is no safe location, or designated crossing for pedestrians across the A371 reachable by the footpath. The Applicant has made no suggestion as to how this situation may be remedied.

This leaves parents, children, able and less-able adults having to brave a narrow footpath and an extremely hazardous crossing in close proximity to regular, speeding traffic in both directions.

Inevitably, these dangers will drive people to make their journeys by car – exactly the opposite of that which should be encouraged.

So now we have both serious safety implications for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians created by this proposed development accompanied by a complete lack of sustainability.

To complete the picture of negative impact that this proposed development brings, the increase in car usage for short, local trips to Castle Cary will, in turn, swamp the already limited and much valued parking provision.

In summary. The Somerset Highway Authority has submitted opinion that the A371 is able to accept the additional traffic volume generated by this proposed development, and that with a limited alteration to road architecture and geometry, the access to and from the proposed site is acceptable. This advice makes absolutely no reference to the safety of the various transport modes in question and provides no analysis of vehicle numbers, speed or type using the A371.

We believe our Transport report exposes significant traffic safety concerns for the proposed development.

The road geometry, traffic mix, excess traffic speeds and frequency are not suitable for the imposition of the site access as proposed.

Provision for pedestrian and cyclist travel off-site is poor and dangerous.

We conclude that there will be a significant and negative impact on safety for the transport environment of the A371 caused by the proposed development,

and that these safety concerns and the inherent lack of sustainability demonstrated by the presented traffic survey data, raise serious doubts as to the viability of the proposed development and its location, and we would urge you to refuse this Appeal.

THANKYOU.

Dr Mark J Main

9 November 2021