

November 9 2021

Good Morning/afternoon Madam Inspector, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My Name is Helen Cleaveland. I am here as a private citizen and member of Care4Cary, a voluntary group set up to support the local community where there is a clear local consensus on a proposed development.

The high attendance today is because the impact on a cherished part of the landscape is self evident and the unsafe road environment on Ansford Hill is self evident. The level of public interest in this appeal is not surprising.

There is also increasing cynicism over the apparent lack of weight given to our Neighbourhood Plan. A huge amount of time was donated by volunteers to develop that plan and to take it through painstaking professional scrutiny to approval -done on the understanding the exercise would carry real weight.

Care4Cary commissioned the professional ACT survey and transport report from Moss Naylor Young submitted to the inspector. We know from past experience that constraints on public resource can mean traffic impact on road users and on pedestrians is not adequately scrutinised on some proposals.

The objective data collected in the survey were not a surprise. In practice, the A371 on Ansford Hill is not a 30 mph speed area, the actual speeds are higher. Nor does this road cater properly for pedestrians. These safety concerns are compounded by blind bends on the approach to the proposed site access.

**In summary, the objective data show the proposed road configuration for access to the development site is based on incorrect assumptions, raising serious safety concerns.**

This simple but key fact is itself a basis for refusing this appeal. [Alternatively, if minded to allow the appeal I request that the development is subject to two additional conditions (a) firstly that the site access design be reconfigured so that it satisfies junction design requirements for a 40mph roadway with visibility problems, and (b) secondly that the developer should contribute the funding for a pedestrian

crossing across the A371 to a point where there is adequate pavement access to Castle Cary town centre.]

In making this request I take into account the precedent of other local planning appeals where inspectors have not agreed with the "no objection" views of our Highways Authority. Two, where the inspectors refused the appeals on transport grounds, have interesting parallels to this case. They relate to the traffic impact on the B3153 which joins the A371 on the awkward junction just below this development site.

In one, the inspector noted that insufficient attention had been paid to safety implications for pedestrian and cyclist use and to stretches of road without footpaths<sup>1</sup>. He observed that local concerns raised on these issues reflected his own observations on inspection. [He also confirmed that in cases where highway safety (rather than capacity) are at issue, it is not necessary to demonstrate severe traffic impacts in order to refuse permission on transport grounds<sup>2</sup>].

The other inspector came to very similar conclusions following his own inspection. [Notwithstanding the theoretical capacity of the road, he concluded it had not been shown the likely traffic consequences could be accommodated without causing danger to existing users<sup>3</sup>.]

Finally I flag, in case of misunderstanding, that the proposed pedestrian crossing on Station Road will not assist pedestrians to cross the A371. In any event the developer who is required to fund the Station Road crossing has already started the process to dilute that obligation<sup>4</sup>. There remains no safe pedestrian crossing point on the A371 – current or proposed.

The proposed development is contrary to the Neighbourhood plan. It will contribute to unsustainable transport given the lack of employment opportunities in Castle Cary. It will permanently spoil the natural escarpment down to the Brue valley and noted

<sup>1</sup> Para 12 – APP/R3325/W/17/3186158.

<sup>2</sup> Para 15 – as above.

<sup>3</sup> Paras 6, 7 and 25 - of APP/R3325/W/15/3204073.

<sup>4</sup> 21/00929/DPO - s106 modification on pedestrian improvements.

rural location of the station in that setting. It will create unsafe road conditions for other road users and for pedestrians. I request the Inspector refuses this appeal.

Thank you.

[What Castle Cary needs is jobs not more housing for those who will have to commute unsustainably to get to work. Neither the bus service nor the train service realistically support local commuting to employment. There is a reason local plan development has never targeted Castle Cary as the site to bear the brunt of South Somerset's housing supply – and that reason is sustainability and the need to protect the market town character which we know, from other local towns, cannot be revived or replaced once destroyed. ]