

Agenda Item 25/008 (a) Planning Application recommendations from the GPC Planning working group for consideration at GPC meeting on Tuesday 28th January 2025.

a) 24/02889/FP - Land At Roundwood, Back Lane, Graveley.

Residential development of 281 dwellings and associated roads, parking, realignment of Back Lane, drainage, landscaping, open space, servicing facilities and associated works.

This application is a resubmission of the planning application 23/02492/FP considered by GPC last year. This original application was withdrawn and has now been resubmitted. The main changes are that the number of houses has been slightly reduced to 281, and following a series of workshops between the developers and planners, a redesign of the road access onto Back Lane has been made. Now, the site has been split into two, with no vehicular access between the two sides: 96 houses open onto Back Lane / Calder Way and 185 houses open onto Haybluff Drive. The original course of Back Lane through the development is proposed to be a greenway (no vehicles), and the road has been diverted through the western and northern region of the development. This is to reduce the number of cars from the new houses being able to access Back Lane to Graveley or Weston. The developers state that 'the proportion of traffic looking to travel north or west would be relatively small' and this new design would 'limit the increase in traffic on Back Lane as far as is reasonably practicable' (from the Transport Assessment).

When the previous application was discussed at GPC there was a big turnout of local residents, all very unhappy at this application as it would clearly increase traffic along Back Lane into Graveley. This narrow road is already a rat run and suffers from too many cars, often travelling too fast, and non-vehicular road users such as horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians are already at risk of injury. Due to the narrow nature and sharp bends of the road, car jams are frequent.

Whilst this new design is probably a slight improvement over the original, it still will mean increased traffic down Back Lane to Graveley and will worsen the already unsatisfactory and dangerous situation residents and users of Back Lane experience.

Recommendation: Objection

Proposed response to Planning:

The proposed development still has completely inadequate road access both via Great Ashby and via Back Lane to Graveley and Weston. The redesign of the road access is probably a slight improvement over the original design. However, all our comments on the previous application about the very narrow nature of Back Lane, the high banks and sharp blind bends, and that the volume of traffic along this road is already too high, still apply to this new application. Non vehicular road users, such as horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians, and their safety, have not been considered.

Accidents and near-misses ARE frequently occurring along Back Lane coming into Graveley.

This photograph below shows the result of a collision between a car and a tractor on Monday 6th January 2025.



In October/November 2024 there was a head-on collision along Back Lane requiring police and ambulance.

Traffic frequently is log-jammed as the road is too narrow for 2 cars to pass. *The photos below were taken on the stretch of Back Lane within Graveley village by Halcyon Days nursing home.*



There have been several dangerous incidents between horse riders and vehicles.

Back Lane is already dangerous and the road cannot cope with more traffic. Disappointingly, the Planning Statement submitted with this application (section 6.3-4) talks about concerns re rat-running to Weston, but makes no mention of the clear and significant problem of rat-running to Graveley.

This proposal will impact on Graveley in respect of further increasing traffic along Back Lane between Great Ashby and Graveley. This is a single-track road along most of its length with high banks, no footpath or space at the edge of the road for walkers, cyclists or horse riders, and several sharp bends. As it reaches Crow End on the outer edge of Graveley village there are two right angle bends and a very narrow stretch of road between the houses with no space for a pedestrian / horse if a car is there. The next narrow stretch of road downhill towards Graveley church is part of the Hertfordshire Way. There is no pedestrian footpath. Elderly residents from the nursing home here come onto this narrow stretch of Back Lane with walkers or wheelchairs. There are six stable complexes along Back Lane, and along its length it is regularly used by horse riders, cyclists and walkers.

Back Lane has seen a significant increase in traffic over the last few years and is regularly used as a rat-run from Great Ashby to access the A1, Hitchin and Letchworth via Graveley. There are regular problems where large vehicles and even HGVs get stuck around Crow End. As described above there have been a number of dangerous interactions between cars and horse riders along Back Lane and it is ALREADY dangerous for non-vehicular users of this road. Back Lane is unlit – the last street light coming out of Graveley is at Crow End and in winter during icy conditions Back Lane is untreated. All of these factors increase the danger to road users (non-vehicular and car drivers) if the traffic volume along Back Lane increases further.

The proposed development will increase traffic along Back Lane. There is still no reference in the plans for how non-vehicular users of the road will be kept safe. The recent changes to the Highway Code where extra room should be given to horse riders, walkers and cyclists cannot be achieved along Back Lane. It could be viewed as reckless, and even irresponsible to increase the hazard to these types of road users.

Widening Calder Way to make it easier for traffic to use this route in and out of Great Ashby from the proposed new development would reduce the amount of traffic from the new development going onto Back Lane to either Graveley or Weston.

S106 suggestions:

1. Gateway entrance to Graveley village on Back Lane
2. Continue street lighting out of Graveley village to new gateway entrance
3. Chicane on Back Lane between Graveley and Great Ashby
4. Four passing places to be created – tarmacked (not current mud and deep ruts) to provide places where vehicles, and non-vehicular road users, can pass more safely



5. Better signage that road is narrow and has many bends
6. Can a parallel bridleway for non-vehicular uses be created?

Consultation with Highways required to ascertain details for these.
