

## **Formal Planning Objection**

### **Planning Application 25/01696/OP – Land South East of Holwell Road and North of Hambridge Way, Pirton**

#### **Objection specifically concerning the proposed access via Coopers Elms and Drovers Way**

I wish to object to the amended proposals for up to 130 dwellings, with particular concern about the proposed access to the development through Coopers Elms and Drovers Way.

My objection is based on the practical suitability and safety of the existing roads and, in particular, whether they are capable of safely accommodating the substantial increase in traffic that would result from a development of this scale.

#### **1. Coopers Elms and Drovers Way are already difficult roads to negotiate**

My principal concern is the physical layout of these roads.

The entrance to the existing estate is approached through a series of bends and changes in direction. Visibility of approaching vehicles is restricted, and drivers cannot always see what is coming around the next bend before committing themselves to the manoeuvre.

This is not simply a matter of whether the road technically meets a particular classification or whether traffic can pass along it under normal conditions. It is about how the road actually operates.

When driving along Drovers Way and Coopers Elms, the bends can result in vehicles being positioned towards the centre of the carriageway. When two vehicles meet, particularly if one is a larger vehicle, there can be very little room for comfortable and safe passing.

The limited visibility also means that an approaching vehicle can appear with relatively little warning.

I therefore have serious concerns about making this route the principal access to a further 130 homes.

#### **2. The proposal would fundamentally change the function of the existing road**

Coopers Elms currently serves an established residential area.

The proposed development would substantially increase the number and variety of vehicles using the road. This would not simply mean 130 additional households using an otherwise unchanged road.

There would also be regular movements by:

- delivery vehicles;
- refuse collection vehicles;
- trades and service vehicles;
- emergency vehicles;
- visitors; and
- construction vehicles.

There will consequently be considerably more opportunities for vehicles to meet one another at bends and other constrained points.

The issue is therefore not simply whether an additional number of cars can technically travel along Coopers Elms. It is whether the existing road geometry is appropriate for the increased volume and range of traffic that the development would introduce.

I do not believe this has been adequately demonstrated.

### **3. Large vehicles are a particular concern**

The difficulties become more significant when larger vehicles are considered.

A delivery van, refuse vehicle or construction vehicle has very different manoeuvring requirements from an ordinary car. On a road with restricted visibility and bends, the available space for two vehicles to pass safely is reduced.

I am particularly concerned that a large vehicle negotiating one of the bends could require an approaching vehicle to slow significantly or move towards the opposite side of the carriageway.

This is precisely the sort of situation where restricted forward visibility becomes important: drivers may not have sufficient warning of what is approaching from the other direction.

The applicant's own assessment of the surrounding highway network acknowledges problems associated with bends, restricted visibility and the movement of larger vehicles.

While those comments relate to an alternative access considered by the applicant, they demonstrate that the physical constraints of the local highway network are real and significant.

The Council should therefore be satisfied that the same underlying constraints have been properly considered in relation to the access that is actually proposed.

#### **4. The increase in traffic should be considered in terms of safety, not just capacity**

I am concerned that the question of whether the access is acceptable could become overly focused on traffic numbers and theoretical highway capacity.

The problem here is not simply congestion.

A road can have sufficient theoretical capacity to carry additional vehicles while still being an inappropriate or uncomfortable environment for those vehicles because of its geometry, visibility and interaction with other road users.

For Coopers Elms and Drovers Way, the important questions are:

- Can drivers see approaching vehicles in sufficient time?
- Can two vehicles safely pass at the bends?
- What happens when one of those vehicles is a refuse, delivery or construction vehicle?
- Can pedestrians and cyclists safely use the route at the same time?
- What happens when vehicles are parked along the road?
- Will increased traffic make existing hazards more frequent?

These are practical safety questions which cannot be answered simply by describing the road as a residential street.

#### **5. Pedestrian and cyclist safety**

The additional traffic will also affect people who are not travelling by car.

Drovers Way and Coopers Elms are existing residential roads, rather than roads designed solely for the movement of traffic to a large new development.

Increased vehicle movements will mean more interaction between cars, larger vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists.

This is particularly concerning for children and other vulnerable road users who may be using these roads to travel around the village.

A route which is already difficult to negotiate between vehicles becomes potentially more intimidating and less safe when substantially more traffic is introduced.

The applicant itself acknowledges that construction traffic presents a potential risk to pedestrian and cyclist safety.

That concern should not be regarded as applying only during construction. The same fundamental interaction between vehicles and vulnerable road users will continue once the development is occupied.

## **6. Construction traffic will create an additional period of risk**

There is also a separate concern about the construction period.

The applicant proposes that construction vehicles will access the site through the existing network, including Drovers Way and Coopers Elms.

This means that existing residents would potentially experience several years of additional heavy and commercial vehicle movements before the development is even complete.

The applicant anticipates a construction period of approximately three years.

Traffic marshals, signage and wheel washing may help to manage some of the effects, but they do not change the underlying geometry of the road.

A traffic marshal cannot remove a blind bend or increase forward visibility. Nor can mitigation measures make two-way passing on a constrained section of road inherently easier.

The construction phase should therefore be considered as a significant additional impact rather than simply something that can be dealt with through a Construction Traffic Management Plan.

## **7. The proposed access would place a disproportionate burden on an existing residential road**

The fundamental issue for me is the change in function of Coopers Elms.

This is not simply an extension of the existing estate. The road would effectively become the gateway to a development of up to 130 additional homes.

That represents a substantial change in the amount and nature of traffic using the existing residential highway network.

The applicant's additional information does not, in my view, adequately demonstrate that the existing Coopers Elms/Drovers Way route is capable of accommodating that change without compromising highway safety.

## **8. The applicant's alternative-access assessment does not demonstrate that Coopers Elms is safe**

I note that the applicant has considered other potential access arrangements and has rejected them because of highway constraints.

However, the fact that another potential access may be unsuitable does not in itself demonstrate that the proposed Coopers Elms access is suitable.

The Council should consider the proposed access on its own merits.

In particular, it should consider whether the actual physical characteristics of Coopers Elms and Drovers Way — including their bends, visibility, width and interaction with existing residential traffic — are appropriate for the additional traffic generated by up to 130 dwellings.

## **Conclusion**

I have serious concerns that the proposed access through Coopers Elms and Drovers Way is not appropriate for a development of up to 130 dwellings.

The existing roads already contain bends and areas where visibility is restricted. Vehicles can be required to position themselves towards the centre of the road when negotiating these bends, creating potential conflicts with oncoming traffic.

Increasing the volume of traffic, while also introducing substantially more delivery, refuse, servicing and construction vehicles, will increase the frequency and severity of these potential conflicts.

I am particularly concerned about the consequences for pedestrians and cyclists, including children, who will continue to use these existing residential roads.

The applicant's own documents acknowledge significant highway constraints in the surrounding area, including restricted visibility, tight bends and difficulties associated with larger vehicles.

In my view, these concerns have not been satisfactorily resolved by the amended proposals.

I therefore respectfully request that **planning permission be refused on highway safety grounds**, particularly because the proposed access through Coopers Elms and Drovers Way has not been demonstrated to be safe and suitable for the scale and nature of traffic associated with up to 130 additional dwellings.