

Ruaridh O'Donoghue
Development Management
Wiltshire Council
Monkton Park
Chippenham
SN15 1ER

Dear Mr O'Donoghue

Ref 20/00379/OUT

We wish to object to the proposed application on the following grounds. We are also compiling a more detailed submission containing further argument and evidence that will follow in due course.

The proposed access road to a development on land south of Trowbridge is unsatisfactory and impractical and should not be approved.

HERITAGE

The proposed development, and especially the access road joining Frome Road, damage the historical landscape and setting of Southwick's only grade II* listed property, and the oldest surviving private residence within an area of approximately 10 miles. This is a medieval moated manor house that predates every other building in the surrounding area except churches.

A house has existed on this site since the 13th century. Previous owners of the house include John Stafford, Lord Chancellor to Henry VI (1432-1450) and Archbishop of Canterbury (1443-1452), and Sir David Owen, great-uncle to Henry VIII. The existing house is essentially unchanged since it was built in 1567, and was described and sketched by John Aubrey in his celebrated Topographical Survey of the County of Wiltshire in 1665.

The surrounding fields are ancient farmlands that have always been associated with Southwick Court and should not have a road built through them. They should be retained, as closely as possible, in their original state.

The "Park" field that adjoins Frome Road represents the main approach to Southwick Court house and is an intrinsic part of its historical setting and its position in the landscape. The proposed access road, the sole access point to the proposed development for all traffic, would bisect that field, causing an irreparable scar right through that setting, and damaging the roots of the ancient 400-year-old oak that stands there.

The Heritage Impact Assessment report commissioned in March 2018 from LUC for the Wiltshire Housing Site Allocation Plan (p 62) warns that development "would result in extensive harm to this landscape that could not readily be mitigated" and would "reduce the prominence [of the house], reducing the ability to understand the assets as a high status farm, set apart from contemporaneous settlement and modern settlement".

ECOLOGY

The enclosed six acres of undisturbed and sheltered woodland, lake and stream that comprise the grounds of Southwick Court represent an oasis for wildlife in the midst of 100 acres of mostly bare open fields that are traversed daily by dog walkers throughout the year and by a herd of 100 or more cows in the summer.

The enclosed lake and stream have a surface area of well over 3,000 square metres. That constitutes the largest body of water within at least two miles, and is roughly six times the size of the next largest water body situated within Southwick Country Park. The grounds of the house also include two acres of sheltered natural woodland.

This area offers a home and a feeding ground for a profusion of wildlife including many sorts of bats, as well as otters, water voles, dragon fly, slowworms, kingfishers and a huge variety of other animals.

The ecology consultants commissioned by developers Waddeton Park conducted an exhaustive survey of open fields, but completely ignored the six acres where all the wildlife actually lives and feeds.

Their survey noted "It was not possible to gain permission to survey ponds within 500 m of the development site... The pond at Southwick Court could not be seen, but it is surrounded by trees and various terrestrial habitats that may be suitable for great crested newts."

The proposed access road through the front "Park" field and across the Lambrok stream will cause immeasurable disruption to the migration, foraging and feeding patterns of untold numbers of animals.

No application should be approved until a full ecology survey has been done of the private land at Southwick Court.

TRANSPORT

The proposed access road is absurdly over-extended, is by any measure inconvenient for its intended users, and is entirely impractical. The nearest shop of any description – Tesco Express on Frome Road - would be more than a mile away by car from the development.

Frome Road is already far too busy. It's not practical to add to the daily traffic build-up entering Trowbridge by adding a minimum of another 300 car journeys a day from a new development which has only one road in and out. Any disruption to that road will cut off all access to the development, and disruption is inevitable because the road traverses what is already a known flood plain that has already been flooded on several separate occasions since the beginning of 2020.

FLOODING

The fields south of Trowbridge are ancient water meadows and are regularly flooded in by the Lambrok stream, from both the horizontal watercourse that skirts the grounds of Southwick Court house, and the vertical watercourse that joins that stream from the direction of North Bradley.

Any one who walks there knows that they are marshy and water logged throughout the Autumn and Winter especially at the end of Spring Meadows, where the proposed access road would cross the Lambrok stream. Any development of those fields will make the flooding even worse, not just on the site itself but also spreading out into the existing houses in Trowbridge Grove.

Disruption and building works and run-off from the development site, which sits on higher ground above the horizontal watercourse will merely add to flow of water and will exacerbate the flooding.

SPREAD OF TROWBRIDGE

This proposal offers developers the cornerstone for further building works that will completely erase the buffer zone between Trowbridge and the neighbouring villages of Southwick and North Bradley, in a direct contradiction of Wiltshire's core policy to preserve and maintain the buffer zones between the current settlements.

The proposed road is a relic left over from previous applications, and is clearly intended to allow developers to fill in further development in the land to the western end of the allocation site.

SUMMARY

In summary, this application is entirely unsuitable and unsatisfactory. Even if development on the fields south of Trowbridge is to proceed at some point in the future, the proposed access road that is the main subject of the current application is entirely unsuitable and permission should be refused.

Yours sincerely

Mr Simon Tesler & Mrs Carey Tesler
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I/we [insert name/s] of [insert address] would like to add my/our names to this letter of objection. Please count my/our name/s as (number) submissions in opposition.