

Lesley Bloomfield

Good morning and thank you for allowing me the time to address this Inquiry. My name is Lesley Bloomfield and I have lived in the village of Colney Heath since 1976 when I moved to Tollgate Road as a child with my parents and brother. My parents chose the village because of its rural location and because they wanted an outdoor life with green and farmed fields around them.

I still live on Tollgate Road today with my own family having stayed in the village for the same reasons.

So why, might you ask, if I live on Tollgate Road about as far as is possible within the village from the proposed development am I concerned about it?

The answer is clear – my environment and my village is under a serious and sustained threat from speculative development that is not part of any professional, logical or ordered development plan. This morning I would much rather be walking my dog or riding my horse yet I am here because my environment and my village is worth defending.

St Albans Council has not allocated any housing sites in Colney Heath village. Landowners around Colney Heath are failing to act responsibly as custodians of the land for future generations. They could continue to farm the land to produce our food and enhance our country's food security. They could protect and enhance our wildlife habitats where they *currently* exist. They could protect our open spaces with their views and fresh air, both of which are essential to the mental health and wellbeing of every one within our community and the surrounding areas. Someone has to stand up for our village, and the purpose of the Green Belt which surrounds us, against these opportunistic and irresponsible developments.

Perhaps some listening to this might consider me to be a so called NIMBY, so let me tell you about Colney Heath village and why it is not a suitable place for large scale development.

Firstly, let me be clear that although it is close to St Albans City the village of Colney Heath is a distinct and separate village and is not an urban, fringe suburb.

In my nearly 50 years in the village I have not objected to any of the small scale infill type developments of about 6 or 8 or 10 houses which have been built. These have not been built on good and fertile farmland or woodland. They have been designed sensitively and in context to the rest of the village. Traffic has not increased dramatically. The assimilation of even this modest number of new residents takes time, perhaps a generation is needed, but it is happening and it can happen in a natural and organic way.

The village is already being expected to cope with the 100 new houses being built on Bullens Green Lane. The extra traffic expected to be caused by the 300 to 400 additional residents to the village is frightening. This number of people is a massive step change for the village. It is hard to imagine how they will be assimilated into village life in any meaningful way. A further 45 houses with another 150 or so residents added to this mix would further distort the social cohesion of the community.

So again you might ask – why does this matter? Let's talk about education. For 12 years until very recently I worked at Verulam Boys secondary school in St Albans in the Special Educational Needs

and Disability Department. For a similar amount of time I was a Governor at Mount Grace secondary school in Potters Bar. Education of our young people is dear to my heart.

As a child I, like many other village children, went to Beaumont secondary school in St Albans. My brother and I were driven there and back every day by my parents. 20 years ago when it was time for my son to attend secondary school I naively expected that he would follow in my footsteps. On attending the open evening we were told that there was no chance of children from the "villages" getting a place there nowadays. There were in fact very few choices and my son was allocated a place in Potters Bar. Today the situation is even worse with village children scattered to the 4 winds in terms of available places. Where will all the extra children from the Bullens Green Lane site go to school? Should this appeal site be built where will all these extra children go to school? This level of stress and worry at choosing time, and throughout the child's schooling as they are ferried around in cars by their parents, is detrimental to their education and ultimately to their mental health.

I now understand that the theme of cars and transport in general is not just important to me as a resident, but is also important in decisions about where housing developments should be built. To paint a picture of village life in this respect is in some ways easy, but is difficult to do without sounding negative. I will give it a try.

I love to walk my dog on the footpaths which cross the fields in and around the village. The roadside pavements in the village are however another matter. Some of the routes do not feel safe as they are uneven and narrow in places. It is hard to see how this narrowness can be improved since they are squashed between the houses and the road itself.

I have in the past tried to ride a bike locally for fitness purposes. I considered myself as a competent cyclist but the narrow, 60 mph hour single carriageways of Tollgate Road and Coursers Road were truly terrifying. The High Street was not much better as I dodged parked cars and oncoming vehicles refused to slow down for me in restricted spaces even if I technically had the right of way. It is totally unrealistic for me, as a reasonably fit person in my late 50s, to cycle beyond the village to access food shopping, healthcare, employment and the like.

The bus service from the village is worth noting as well, but unfortunately for its lack of service. There are so few buses, going at so few times, to so few destinations that it is unrealistic to use this service for the day to day needs of modern life.

In the 70s my parents understood that the village location meant that we would be car dependent for virtually all of our day to day living needs. Even back then as I grew up we were a two car family. My brother and I had driving lessons for our 17th birthdays as did my son in more recent times. Indeed learning to drive is a rite of passage for most village children to give them independence and spare their parents from nearly two decades of operating as a children's taxi service.

Residents in our village are almost totally car dependent for shopping, education, employment, health care be that GPs, hospitals or dentists and of course for most of their leisure requirements as well. My GP is in Hatfield and I've attended hospitals in Stevenage, Watford, Hertford and Enfield to name but a few, none of which it is practical to use public transport for. When I worked at Verulam School there was no choice but to travel by car in order to make my start time and to get home in a

timely manner at the end of my working day. I use my car for food shopping at London Colney. I could go on, but hopefully I have painted a clear enough picture.

I would like to end by saying that I have walked the footpaths and ridden the bridleway near the appeal site ever since I came to the village. The openness of the site and the views across the fields from these public vantage points are very special to me. It is unthinkable that the protuberance represented by this site could be allowed to spoil this public view and obliterate this Green Belt farmland.

I would like to end by saying that I agree with and endorse everything that Councillor Clemow said in his opening statement. I would like to thank the Inspector for allowing me to speak and I would respectfully suggest that this appeal be dismissed.

Thank you