

Corrine Doust – Written statement supporting oral submission

I was born and bred in this village, and hold it in deep affection. My husband, our nine year old daughter and I live at xxxx High Street and my parents live in Park Lane, opposite. I am a secondary school teacher in Potters Bar and a governor at Colney Heath School.

12 years ago, we were delighted to find our house for sale, just a few doors from our primary school and from my parents. With two professional, full time jobs and help from the “Bank of Mum and Dad” we managed to get a mortgage. Our proximity gave our daughter a guaranteed place at our one-form entry primary school. Her friend, living in Bullens Green Lane, at the other end of the village, did not get a place on allocation day as the class was full. Our neighbour drives her children to and from Brookmans Park primary school as there were, and continues to be, no places available at Colney Heath. She does an 8-10 mile round trip, twice a day and has been doing so for about 18 months. With the 100 houses currently being built in Bullens Green Lane, even more village children will be forced to attend schools elsewhere and that is before we consider the impact of this proposed development. Colney Heath may not ever have enough children to support a two-form entry school. Financially, socially and environmentally, the proposed development is harmful.

Secondary schools are probably the biggest challenge facing village parents. Our nearest schools are Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School and Beaumont School. Nicholas Breakspear only admits practising catholic children and therefore is not suitable for the majority of village children. Beaumont, the next nearest school, is about two miles or 3063 metres away. On allocation day this year, the address of the furthest child admitted was 511 metres away. Without being the child of a member of staff, being in care, having an EHCP, or having an older sibling already at the school, there is no way that a Colney Heath child would be given a place at Beaumont.

So what do our children get? Lots of parents select schools that are miles away but undersubscribed like Townsend, in the far north of St Albans. Those families are safe in the knowledge that their children will at least get a place. A few years ago, a significant number of village children were not given any secondary school place on allocation day. It was heartbreaking. Every year, many village children are given schools that are not on their list of preferred schools. Our village children are regularly given a place at Onslow St Audreys, on the far side of Hatfield, or sometimes at Samuel Ryder School in St Albans. Village children may not even be offered Samuel Ryder in future as this year, the most distant child admitted was 3944m away, which only just reaches the edge of the village.

For secondary transfer this year, our year 6 children have been given 14 different secondary schools. Most are far away and impractical to reach on foot or by bicycle, as well as difficult or impossible to get to by public transport, particularly when children attend extracurricular activities before or after school. The underpass to Hatfield under the A1 motorway is vile: often flooded, the location for drug taking and muggings. Not somewhere I would use as an adult, let alone send any child. So, having to drop off one child to primary school in say London Colney, and your older child to secondary school, in Hatfield, is impossible for parents without a vehicle. There are such limited public transport options that these children need to be driven to school.

Most of our primary children are also driven to and from school, either because they live a long way away or because parents are taking older children to secondary schools. In a number of cases, parents are dropping children on their way to or from work.

Having a car is critical here - the buses simply don't go to the places we need to get to, or when we need to get there. The train stations are too far away... We are car-dependent for shopping, visits to the doctor and dentist, and getting to work. There are few safe walking or cycling routes to exit the vicinity of Colney Heath or even within the village itself. Our public transport issues, for example, like the secondary school children getting to at least 15 schools, all in different places, cannot be easily fixed by "an extra bus".

Pavements often offer little protection to pedestrians - the pavement opposite the site entrance narrows just 80cm wide, and between the school and 96-106 High Street the hedge regularly gets so overgrown that pedestrians must walk in the road. Tarmac upgraded the proposed access road in 2015, as a gift to the community, as they knew that it was such an important parking resource for the village and it is needed more than ever. The Football Club and school mean that this parking is used morning, noon and night, in the week and at the weekend. The school has several football pitches so hosts a large number of events, e.g. St Albans district tournaments for teams from all the St Albans schools to attend, or football trials for the district team. These might mean upwards of 50 children and their families descending for the afternoon or the day. I have attached a couple of recent pictures to the end of this statement showing the need for parking. .

Tarmac's assessment of the traffic impact is fundamentally flawed. Tarmac's and HCC Highways offer feedback that is contradictory to Highways own initial report, and even to assessments made for other development applications in the village. The effect of this development on the safety of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists is not adequately addressed, and the new access road combined with the already busy High Street offers potential for future tragedy.

The objections submitted included many examples of parking exceeding the capacity and about dangerous parking. I recently met with HCC to discuss their actions in response to a petition about road safety in the village. We are inundated daily with HGVs driving through the High Street, despite a 7.5t limit. A huge lorry recently crashed into the Grade II listed, and now our only village pub, the Crooked Billet. One of the former village pubs, The Cock, has been crashed into several times - its bay windows and front door are directly on the highway. The owners say that the whole building shakes when lorries go past. Adding more HGVs to the High Street will be unsafe - particularly where the pavement is less than a metre wide and the hedges overgrown.

The displacement of parking on the access road will result in dangerous parking. The movements of HGVs outside the school gate during the construction phase are simply incompatible with young children with little road sense. In recent months double yellow lines have been added to Cutmore Drive, the quiet "dead end" residential area opposite the school, which makes parking even more difficult. I implore you to visit the village at 7.45pm on Wednesday when there is a football match on and you will see the problem for yourself.

The pandemic taught us the true value of the green spaces around us. The green belt is desperately important to the enjoyment of the village and this farmland has been in continuous use for arable crops for all of my life. Our house, overlooking the site, has huge windows - some 2.5m wide - to take in the far reaching views across the open countryside. One of my greatest joys is sitting quietly in the garden, watching our many bats hunting along the hedgerows. I have been known to invite people round to just

watch their aerial display! We have always had hedgehogs in the garden and in the summer, we see them snuffling along the hedges at the bottom of the gardens - it's their route from garden to garden. Some years ago, we built a large hedgehog house which, I'm pleased to report, is very well used. Tarmac's proposal underestimates, and will deeply harm, the biodiversity in the area, which also includes skylarks, red kites, grass snakes, slow worms and deer.

In their consultation and "planning statement" documents, Tarmac disingenuously drew the proposed houses at approximately the same size as a garage. I wonder how many more objections there would be, if residents had been shown the true scale and density of the proposed development from the various rights of way.

Our gardens are very short and the buildings will be overbearing - I cried when I saw the photomontages presented in the Parish Council's evidence. The windows of the new dwellings will directly face our windows and will overlook our entire garden. The same is true for our neighbours. We will have no privacy whatsoever - It will be like living in a goldfish bowl - and this will adversely affect our health and welfare. The development would have a huge, negative impact on the residential amenity of the neighbours. What is currently birdsong and nature will be replaced by visual disturbance and noise. The open farmland is an important part of the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties and the wider Colney Heath community. This proposal would significantly harm the living conditions of the occupiers of existing properties surrounding the site.

This farmland forms a fundamental part of the open countryside that makes the identity of Colney Heath as a village and a community. Particularly, the view from the right of way to the south of the site. The site makes a positive contribution to the rural nature of the village, which is constantly under threat from a large number of applications around the village, including a new town of six thousand houses on Coursers Road. You will notice that the entire north side of the High Street, about three quarters of a mile, and most of the south side, is just one house deep, with views of the countryside in between. The proposed properties will harm the visual amenity. The effect of the loss of this important green belt land would be a travesty for current and future village residents.

Socially, the village will struggle to maintain its community cohesion. We already have 100 houses being built on green belt farmland at Bullens Green Lane. The proposed homes will be completely unaffordable for local people, at around 16 times the average salary.

Tarmac's proposals attracted in the region of 700 individual objections - you will know that this is a staggering number for a development of this size - and there were just three letters in support. The objections make it patently clear that economically, socially and environmentally, Colney Heath is not a sustainable location. My family and I urge you to refuse this appeal.

Please do remember that it's 7.45pm on Wednesday for the football match - we hope to see you.

Parking

Sat 20/4/22 at 14.32 - Parked cars for football match



Tues 26/3/24 at 3.15pm - Coach returning from a school trip having to stop on zig zags - the car park was full and all other roads already lined with parked cars when the coach arrived. Cars overtook the coach, completely blind. Video here: https://share.icloud.com/photos/009REz3_siGB0kVNFSDFveUw.



Andy Doust – Supplementary statement

Dear Inspector,

I have been listening online and am concerned that it has been accepted that **only** 17 spaces will be lost when the access road is built. I just wanted to let you know that when the football club have matches, they marshall the parking to ensure the parking is as efficient as possible. As these pictures show, there were 29 cars parked on Tarmac's land this evening. There were 27 more on the Parish Council's land (on either side of the air raid shelter) and 43 on the tennis courts (the players and officials car park). The football club had done everything they could to get cars off the road, including using the school car park, and still there were no spaces on the road between the far sides of the church and the pub.

So whilst it might be about 17 spaces for school pick up, it's many more for football matches. My wife and I have talked about this in our objections previously - I think the true number of vehicles on the access road varies from 17-30. I believe it to be unfair to the football club to risk their livelihood by removing the parking area they have had access to for decades,

Thank you for reading this.

Kind regards,
Andy Doust
100 High Street



