

Dear Havant Borough Council,

I wish to express my strong objection to the above planning proposal for a further 43 dwellings to be built on land south of Lower Road, Bedhampton.

The bulk of my objections are as already detailed in the objections I made to the earlier planning proposal for 50 houses (APP/20/01031) in December 2020. The same objections apply again. On that occasion, HBC did the right thing and rejected the developer's (Bargate) proposal but was unfortunately overruled by the Government Planning Inspector on Appeal. I am particularly familiar with the circumstances. I attended the 3 day virtual Appeal Hearing and was even granted the right to make a statement to the Hearing by the Inspector.

I have lived in the same house at 14 Lower Road for 40 years which is right on the corner of the dangerous double bends with no footpaths. As well as being a resident, I am also Chair of Trustees and CQC Responsible individual for the Lodge Care Home, part of the Manor Trust Charity which lies right in the centre of the dangerous bend area at 2 Lower Road. To re-state what is well known but needs to be continually emphasised, this dangerous double bend area is the only access and exit to all the existing, currently being built and newly proposed additional houses. There are no footpaths along it because there is no room or even a refuge space for pedestrians including elderly persons and schoolchildren. The only aspect that prevents children and other pedestrians being run down every day is that drivers spot them in time and either swerve around them or stop in time. Indeed, a driver stopping in time is the only option when a another oncoming vehicle appears very suddenly from coming the other way from around the blind bend.

The Inspector, prior to making his decision to allow the Appeal did state he would personally visit the area and was seen to do so. Although the Inspector claimed that he was aware that making his decision in the middle of the pandemic lockdown should take into account vehicle traffic would be much lighter when he visited, he cannot possibly have been aware of the enormous increase in traffic with the accompanying safety hazards we are experiencing in September 2022 as we move back to normal economic activity post-pandemic. This will continue to increase as the first tranche of 50 families move into the houses in Lower Road which are now nearing completion. Even employees of Bargate and their site sub-contractors have privately voiced their astonishment at the existing high traffic volumes and that planning permission was ever granted for the first 50 houses. A recent visitor on seeing the current volume of traffic activity described the decision as "insane".

Of course, however strongly felt, all the above concerns could be said to be "qualitative" rather than "quantitative". In other words, there should be proper engineering, scientific and mathematical analysis to assess numerically the danger to life being described above. As it happens, I am a physicist and qualified engineer. My son, (redacted) is a post-doctorate mathematical modeller at the University of Bath. Together we examined the original traffic analysis produced the traffic consultants, i-transport and relied upon by Bargate, HBC and Hampshire County Council. We found the mathematical analysis of traffic by i-Transport to be massively flawed. It grossly under-estimated the number of occasions when 2 vehicles coming around the blind bends from opposite directions would meet a pedestrian, a child or a mother with a pram. One of the 2 vehicles will either run into them or be forced to stop,

assuming the drivers observe them in time to stop. Using the same survey data contained in the i-transport report, we repeated the analysis using computer modelling and presented it to both HBC and HCC in a Technical Note on 11th December 2020. (Attached again for convenience).

Our analysis showed that instead of 2 oncoming cars meeting a pedestrian by 1 chance in 56,000 pedestrian transits (as claimed by i-transport – or in other words, many years before it is even likely to happen once), the correct analysis shows it to be 1 chance in 2 pedestrian transits. Hence one person out of the average total of pedestrians walking daily through this section would be “in the traffic sandwich” so to speak every other day. ***This is a 27,000-fold error in the calculations by i-transport.***

Of course, our analysis is now an underestimate. It only analysed the effect of the first build of 50 houses currently nearing completion but not yet occupied. Adding an extra 43 houses would make the situation considerably worse. Our detailed computer modelling would need to be repeated but an estimate based on technical judgement would suggest one person out of the average total of pedestrians walking daily through this section would be “in the traffic sandwich” every single day. This is much closer to the actual situation residents say they have personally experienced. As a frequent walking attendee to The Lodge Care Home via my role as CQC supervisor, I have frequently had to flatten myself against the boundary wall as vehicles approach simultaneously from both directions coming around the two blind bends.

Tragically there is an analogy to this situation:

So-called “Smart Motorways” with the hard shoulder converted to a running lane have been introduced by the Highways Agency into the UK. There was of course many detailed traffic analyses done beforehand to demonstrate they would be “safe” in the event of someone breaking down.

After a significant number of deaths and injuries associated with breakdowns on Smart Motorways, in March 2021, a Coroner took the highly unusual step of referring the death of a woman on a smart motorway to the Crown Prosecution Service with a view to charging Highways England with Corporate Manslaughter.

Is it conceivable that in a few years time, another Coroner would be expressing the view:

“How is it possible, with all the information available to HBC years in advance, they could allow this housing proposal to proceed without taking the relatively simple mitigation steps to ensure pedestrian safety that they were so strongly advised to take at the time?”

What simple pedestrian safety mitigation steps?

As advised at the Government Inspector’s Appeal Hearing, the safety issue with the blind bends could be largely eliminated by installing one-way traffic lights at each end of the 150 metre stretch encompassing the blind bends. Over this length, a protective pavement should be laid with railings to protect pedestrians from the extensive vehicle traffic flows.

In summary, I urge HBC **not** to approve the proposed building of a further 43 dwellings.

If unfortunately, HBC are minded to grant approval, I must press HBC as strongly as possible for all the reasons given above, to implement the pedestrian safety mitigation measures described.

I could understand that HBC may not be willing to accept the accuracy of the Technical Note we presented to you in 2020, given the extent to which it contradicts the i-transport document which uses the same traffic data.

HBC may rightly say "who should we believe?"

The answer is simple.

There are many very competent academic institutions with mathematical modelling departments in the local area. They do not need to have traffic management expertise. That aspect has already been taken care of to produce the data set. All that is needed is to repeat the computer modelling simulation independently to verify whether our claims of the analysis errors in the i-transport document are correct.

HBC could approach such institutions and as someone with appropriate expertise, I would be happy to assist if requested.

I urge HBC to refer back to the Smart Motorways situation. After spending around £3billion on roadworks and witnessing many deaths and injuries, the government has realised all the traffic engineering safety analysis that underpinned this expenditure was inadequate and thankfully has paused further roll-out.

The cost of the safety mitigation measures I have described (which of course should be funded by the developer) are fairly minimal. What price the value of the potential lives saved?

Best Regards