

Dark Lane, Backwell

Planning and Regulatory Committee 18.12.24

1. Good afternoon, I am speaking on behalf of Backwell Parish Council and Backwell Residents Association in respect of item 9 on the agenda – an application by Persimmon Homes for up to 125 homes off Dark Lane, Backwell.
2. The Officers' report before you recommends that the Council should present no opposition to the Applicant's appeal and associated Inquiry.
3. The Parish Council and Residents Association are concerned that this recommendation is based on:
 - a. Technical Reports which have not been made public;
 - b. Road safety audits which identify a catalogue of unresolved safety concerns; and
 - c. A reliance on planning conditions to secure mitigation measures with no certainty that this will achieve a safe junction design.
4. There is an absence of evidence to demonstrate that these safety concerns can be satisfactorily addressed is particularly concerning given the site's proximity to Backwell Junior School and the use of Dark Lane as the main pedestrian route to the school.

5. The Officer's recommendation relies a Capacity Assessment of Backwell Crossroads, commissioned by the Council's Highway Teams which has not yet been published.
6. Can you safely support the Officer's recommendation without sight of these technical reports?
7. The Road Safety Audit identifies safety concerns with the site access, likely driver behaviour and vehicle manoeuvring at the access point and on the rest of Dark Lane. Six problems identified through the Stage 1 audit, all concerned with the potential collision of vehicles, remain unresolved at this point in time.
8. The outstanding road safety issues are not matters of design detail, but matters of whether a safe access for all road users is achievable.
9. The limited road frontage available to achieve the site access combined with the limited width of the existing public highway severely restricts the design options available. It limits existing and new pedestrian footways to a sub-standard width of 1.5m compared with the standard 2 metres.
10. Despite the 20mph speed limit, the Applicant's speed survey shows northbound traffic travelling at speeds of just under 30mph. The site

access can only achieve a visibility splay of 25m which can only be deemed safe if traffic speeds are reduced to 20mph for ALL VEHICLES.

11. The Officer's report supports the use of speed bumps to reduce speeds.

Speed cushions of 1900mm width at a spacing of around 40m would be necessary to achieve speed reductions to 20mph. However, due to limitations of Dark Lane, it is only feasible to use 1700mm wide cushion at a spacing of around 56m. This would not achieve the necessary reductions in traffic speeds to enable the access to operate safely. Nor would it affect the speeds of motorbikes, SUVs and HGVs.

12. There are no proposals to replace on-street parking displaced to achieve the required visibility splays, despite the importance of this parking provision for Backwell Junior School to manage the safe collection and drop-off of children.

13. The Officers' recommendation is to not contest the appeal, despite insufficient evidence that the site access is capable of operating safely.

14. In determining the Council's position at the forthcoming inquiry, I urge Members to ask themselves whether it is safe to allow the Appellant's proposals, particularly in respect of the proposed access to be unopposed,

given the shortcomings in the proposed design and the severe limitations upon achieving a safe and technically compliant junction.

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