

Dear Mr Gough

**Re: Proposed construction to rear of 5 Tring Road,
Dudswell, HP4 3SF
District ref: 4/03324/17FUL
HCC ref: DA/52/2018 (Amended)
Case officer: Valerie Spiers**

Thanks for your time yesterday when we discussed the concerns raised by local residents, which I share, regarding impact on road traffic safety of the proposed construction of two pairs of semi-detached 2 storey homes with shared driveway to the rear of 5 Tring Road, Dudswell. During our conversation you were able to view the junction in question on Google Earth.

You asked me if I could outline the points that I had raised in writing and I am most happy to do so. I understand that Martin Stickley at DBC is willing to take into account any further representations received by 9 April before further considering the case.

I was elected to represent Northchurch at a by-election on 8 March 2018 and shortly afterwards was made aware of the strength of local feeling about the danger that this planned construction may pose to local road users, particularly to school children who use the bus stops in close proximity to the junction during rush hour. As the wider community has become aware of the proposed development I have had concerns about road traffic safety expressed to me, not just by the immediate neighbours, but by the wider community.

Prior to my election to DBC on 8 March 2018, the HCC case officer Valerie Spiers had concluded on 2 March 2018 that, subject to stipulated conditions in the highways report, the proposals would not have an unreasonable impact upon

highway safety or capacity. However I am concerned that Ms Spiers has not had full information about the day to day usage of the junction, particularly at rush hour. She has therefore not been able to give due weight to the impact of this proposed development on road safety in view of the complexity of the junction and its day to day usage. As I was not representing the residents prior to Ms Spiers' decision, I was unable to raise my concerns before she reached her decision. I therefore hope that my representations on behalf of the local residents can be taken into account at this stage. Ms Spiers also would not have been aware when she made her decision of the petition signed by over 2000 residents subsequently presented to HCC, on 27 March and the HCC motion passed with cross party support to consider road traffic safety measures in Northchurch.

I have recently visited the junction towards the end of rush hour and spent some time there hearing the concerns of the residents and observing the usage of the junction. I formed the view that this development would have a concerning impact on road safety and in particular put children using the bus stops in close proximity at an unacceptable level of risk, which could not be easily mitigated.

Context of the Junction

I use this stretch of road on a daily basis. Travelling from the Tring direction, even as an established resident, I find this stretch of road deceptive in that it gives a rural impression, but is more densely populated than it feels. This is because on the Dudswell Lane side the houses are completely shielded from view by high hedges, whilst on the 5 Tring Road side most of the properties are well set back from the road with junctions and driveways emerging from banks covered by grass or undergrowth. This creates a false sense of a rural landscape which is hard to distinguish from the approaching route, yet there is quite a high housing density with driveways and junctions hidden or obscured. From the Berkhamsted direction the recreation ground and hedge to the cricket club also provide

a sense of entering the countryside with the junctions and houses not being clearly visible on the other side.

Complexity of Junction

The proposed development means that a single driveway, currently used by a single property with space for at least 3 cars, will become a shared driveway for a further 4 properties each with 3 spaces allocated. This means a total of at least 15 cars could be regularly using the driveway.

I would submit that most people would tend to consider an entrance serving up to 15 vehicles as a cul de sac, rather than a driveway. It is also worth noting that refuse collection lorries will be using this entrance as well as the numerous delivery vans that would be normally associated with 5 residences on a day to day basis.

The driveway is situated directly opposite the junction between the Tring Road and Dudswell Lane, a dangerous junction in itself due to the angle of the junction. There is a further single track entrance to Northchurch Cricket Club from Dudswell Lane immediately opposite the proposed development, which would effectively form a crossroads with the entrance to the development (it can be seen that the sign post for the cricket club is right at the bottom of the current driveway to 5 Tring Road).

In addition to this there is a telephone repeater building with a hard standing access for 2 vehicles which joins the access road to the cricket club near the junction with Tring Rd/Dudswell Lane. I understand that there is a currently a planning application in progress for this to be extended to be used as storage, introducing the prospect of vans or trucks using the hard standing as they access the storage facility.

Immediately adjacent to the driveway in question is a lay-by bus stop. I understand this is frequently used by double decker

buses as well as lorries for rest periods. This clearly introduces the prospect of the visibility in the direction of Northchurch/Berkhamsted being obscured for both drivers exiting the development as well as pedestrians who may be crossing the road after getting off a bus.

There is also a bus stop diagonally opposite the junction on Tring Road.

Additionally, the current junctions of Lyme Avenue and Birch Road provide further hazards in each direction as the proposed development is situated between these junctions.

The neighbouring driveway is approximately one car width from the exit in question and there are other driveways exiting directly onto the road, including one next to the bus stop opposite the exit to the proposed development.

The road bends away in each direction, meaning driver visibility in both directions is limited, reflected in the fact that there is a double solid white line in the centre of the road indicating overtaking is prohibited in both directions at the entrance to the proposed junction.

Whilst all of the above may have been evident when Ms Spiers reached her decision, it is not clear from her report that she took into account the weight of the traffic at rush hour, the use of the lay by for rest periods or the use of the bus stops by children at rush hour. It is also not clear that she would have been aware of the planning permission being sought for the telephone repeater as a storage facility or the daily use of the cricket club pavilion as a kindergarten. Nor would she have been aware of the petition reflecting local residents' concerns for road traffic safety, subsequently presented to HCC.

Usage of Junction

Presence of a kindergarten has not been taken into account

Home from Home Kindergarten is based in the cricket pavilion during the day. The access is via the narrow entrance to the cricket club from Dudswell Lane. My child attended this kindergarten several years ago. I recall it was difficult turning right into the junction at busy times as there was often a vehicle leaving the kindergarten as I was trying to enter it and it was difficult to see if this was the case. I would tend to wait to turn right on Tring Road and then have to slow immediately to see if a vehicle was exiting the kindergarten. If it was busy this could sometimes cause traffic to back up behind me as I was waiting to turn right, whilst traffic exiting the kindergarten could be waiting at the junction between Tring Road and Dudswell Lane.

Recent enquiries have revealed that about 20 customers per day use the kindergarten and their drop off/collection times are 0800-0900, midday and between 1630 and 1830. All or most of the customers use cars according to the staff. In my experience this means an almost constant flow of traffic in and out of the Kindergarten at peak times.

Children crossing the roads to and from the bus stops beside and opposite the junction will be endangered

Children from Tring school, Ashlyns and Chesham Grammar school need to cross the road to use the bus stops. In the winter many children will be attending after school events and could be crossing after 1630 during dusk or darkness. It should be noted that the pavement on the 5 Tring Road side in the Berkhamsted direction ends at the end of the lay-by where Birch Road meets Tring Road. As it is dangerous to cross from within the layby, there is quite a limited area in which children on the 5 Tring Road side can safely cross the road and be received onto pavement on the opposite side. If wanting to walk towards Northchurch, they will have to cross almost opposite the bus shelter on the Dudswell Lane side as space is restricted on the Dudswell Lane side by a driveway and the pavement

then ceasing. This narrow strip, where it is possible to cross onto pavement, is close to the proposed junction.

It is already quite dangerous in that children will need to be aware of traffic coming from both directions on the Tring Road where visibility is already limited; traffic coming from Dudswell Lane; a number of driveways ; turnings onto Tring Road from Birch Road, Lyme Avenue and Pea Lane as well as from the Kindergarten and the telephone repeater station on the Dudswell Road side.

For a young secondary age child of 11, clearly with no driving experience, it is already a significant challenge to anticipate where traffic might emerge from and at what speed and to work out if it is safe to cross the road. Children may be under pressure to cross to catch the bus and during the winter months, when it may be dark during the morning or afternoon journeys to and from school. This could clearly put them at risk. This situation is already dangerous. The introduction of more rush hour traffic using the access road to the new development would simply add to the information a child would have to process before crossing the road. Children will be in a situation where there are so many junctions to check, it is quite possible that once they have checked in every direction, the situation will have already changed, meaning that it will be impossible for children to cross safely at rush hour.

Cricket Practice

During the summer months when I would collect my child from Home from Home between around 1730 and 1800 I would notice that cricket practice was already taking place. I understand from the residents that children will travel unaccompanied to use the cricket facilities during the summer months.

Pedestrians & other road users

During the time I observed the road traffic I noticed a couple collect a child from Home from Home in a buggy and cross diagonally towards Birch Road; I noticed cyclists and joggers. There were also a number of dog walkers as there is a gate to a dog walking area just inside the entrance to the cricket club where there is also a dog waste bin. At times the road was very heavy with traffic. It is not hard to imagine how difficult it would be on dark mornings for children trying to cross to use the bus stops, when the Kindergarten parents were dropping off.

Concerns by wider community

The general weight of traffic and the hazardous nature of the roads in Northchurch has been a major concern of the local community over a number of years. There is a local Go20 campaign calling for improved road safety in Northchurch. A petition calling for road safety improvements in Northchurch which attracted over 2000 signatures was presented to HCC on 27 March and is currently being considered by HCC. A motion connected to the petition calling for road traffic improvements in Northchurch also attracted cross party support at the HCC meeting on 27 March.

Road traffic safety was my priority campaigning issue leading up to my election and it is clear that Northchurch and Dudswell residents want this to be prioritised. During my conversations with the residents of Boswick Lane and Dudswell Lane prior to my election, many residents were already concerned about road traffic safety on this stretch of road due to the speed of traffic and lack of visibility. Residents have raised particular concern about children using the bus stops. As well as the residents immediately affected by the development members of the wider community including the Go20 campaign have expressed concern about the impact of this development on road safety.

I hope that the information I have provided you with enables you to reconsider the assessment of the risk to road users generally and in particular vulnerable road users regarding the proposed development.

The image below shows the pavement comes to an end where



the bus lay-by meets Birch Road

The image below shows the only space where children are able to cross the road after getting off a bus. It is in the distance at the point where the two cars driving away are passing. It can be seen that this is very close to the entrance to the proposed development.



This image shows the limited area on the Dudswell Lane side



that children can cross to after getting off the bus

Kind Regards

Cllr Lara Pringle

Sent from my iPad