



HANBOROUGH ACTION GROUP

Proof of Evidence

Planning Inspectorate Public Inquiry

**Housing Development and
New School Playing Field,
Long Hanborough
References APP/D3125/W/15/3129767 and
APP/D3125/W/15/3139807**

22 January 2016

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Hanborough Action Group (HAG) is a group of Hanborough residents concerned about the scope and scale of proposed developments within the Parish of Hanborough. Founded in July 2014, it held its first AGM on 13 July 2015, attended by 75 members of the public.
- 1.2. This inquiry relates to an **outline** planning application, 14/1234/P/OP, to erect up to 169 houses and a new doctor's surgery on agricultural land adjacent to the Witney Road, Long Hanborough. The WODC Uplands Planning Committee unanimously refused the application on 2 March 2015.
- 1.3. Following the refusal, the Applicant submitted an almost identical application for the same site, 15/02687/OUT.
- 1.4. Subsequent to application 15/02687/OUT, the appellant applied for **full** planning permission, 15/03341/FUL, to build a new replacement school playing field on agricultural land adjacent to Riely Close, Long Hanborough. The strategy is to release land on the main Hanborough Manor School site to construct extra classrooms to cater for the expected increase in the number of school age children consequent upon the proposed construction of 169 houses.
- 1.5. The appellant has applied for the Planning Inspectorate to determine this latter application on the basis of non-determination. The interdependence of both applications, 14/1234/P/OP and 15/03341/FUL, has prompted the Planning Inspectorate to decide to consider both at this inquiry.
- 1.6. HAG has registered as a Rule 6 party and submitted a comprehensive Statement of Case concerning the application to build up to 169 houses. This document is based on this Statement of Case but also includes details of grounds for objection to the playing field application.

2. Analysis of Public Comments

- 2.1. WODC received 629 individual objections concerning the application 14/1234/P/OP to build 169 houses, and a further 385 objection letters to the very similar application 15/02687/OUT, making a total of 1014 objections to, in all intents and purposes, the same development.
- 2.2. In addition, WODC received 60 letters of objection, as well as a petition of 80 signatures, none in favour, to the playing field application.
- 2.3. HAG undertook a detailed analysis of the 629 objections to the housing scheme (*Attached*)
- 2.4. This shows that the major issues highlighted were traffic on the A4095, the impact on services such as the village's health centre and Hanborough Manor School, and the possible coalescing of the villages of Long Hanborough and Freeland.

3. Transport

Bus Services

- 3.1. Hanborough is served hourly by the No. 11 bus, which runs from Oxford to Witney, and the No. 233, connecting Woodstock and Burford. At the time of writing, Oxfordshire County Council is reviewing its bus route subsidies, and both services may be under threat.
- 3.2. Currently, there is no bus service out of the village in any direction before 06.23 or after 18.53; no buses operate on Sundays. It is therefore questionable for the appellant to state in their Travel Plan that Hanborough is "well served by buses."

Rail Services

- 3.3. Although Hanborough Railway Station passenger numbers have grown rapidly in recent years, with commuters driving from far and wide to the station to continue their journey by train, the train service has limitations in terms of destinations and timings. Parking facilities are under pressure even though First Great Western added another 191 spaces to the car park in 2013. The station car park is invariably full weekdays.

Road Traffic

- 3.4. The A4095 runs right through the whole length of Long Hanborough carrying traffic to Witney in the west and through Bladon to Woodstock and Oxford in the east. At peak times it is heavily congested. 91% of the objections received by WODC in the period up to 29 December 2014 identified this as an issue
- 3.5. In their Transport Assessment, dated August 2014 (WODC IDOX 14_1234_P_OP— 292220), the appellant stated that the Co-op junction in the centre of the Long Hanborough operates below capacity on both the morning

and evening peaks. This assertion was based on a “recalibration” of the capacity relationship in the model used to predict the future traffic impact of the development on traffic flows (Arcady). The finding that the A4095 operates below capacity contradicts the conclusions of a similar study by Cole Easdon for the Church Road housing scheme 14/1102/P/OP, approved 27 April 2015.

- 3.6.** The Officers’ briefing paper to the WODC Uplands Committee meeting 3 November 2014, when application 14/1234/P/OP was first considered, stated that Oxfordshire County Council Highways objected on the basis that: *“The proposed development would increase traffic through the ‘mini-roundabout’ at the junction of Main Road (A4095), Church Road and store access, resulting in considerable queuing and delay to the detriment of the convenience of highway users and contrary to Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 3 and the NPPF. It is noted that the subsequently submitted transport assessment fails to appraise properly the traffic impact of the development.”*
- 3.7.** When Geoffrey Arnold, Senior Engineer and Transport Planner, OCC, sent in his note concerning their above objection (5.4.5) he commented that: *“The model used to assess the junction has been calibrated to provide greater capacity as the transport assessment contends observations of the junction show steady movement without heavy queuing. This does not concur with my experience of this junction at peak times.... I do not agree with the increased capacity assumed at this junction and consider the queues and delay has been further underestimated.”*(Note to WODC Planning dated 24 September 2014).
- 3.8.** Subsequent to the meeting of the WODC Uplands Planning Sub-Committee on 3 November 2014, the appellant revised their Transport Assessment, concluding that the A4095 did indeed operate above capacity at peak times but that their development would add less than 4% to traffic flows (WODC IDOX 14_1234_P_OP—Technical Note298843.pdf, dated 11 November 2014).
- 3.9.** 4% is below the threshold of 5% that OCC use as a benchmark to judge significance. Having received further justification from the appellant, OCC accepted the appellant’s revised Transport Assessment and withdrew their objection in a communication to WODC dated 10 December 2014. This decision was confirmed in an email from Geoffrey Arnold, subsequently Principal Engineer, Transport Development Control, OCC, sent to WODC Planning at 09.58 on 2 March 2015.
- 3.10.** Notwithstanding this decision, there is significant public disquiet regarding the robustness of the revised study and the experimental error within the 4% figure, particularly as this figure was derived from computer modelling studies, and as such may have a degree of error.
- 3.11.** Concerned that OCC was using the traffic survey of the appellant, HAG raised this issue with David Cameron, MP for the Witney Constituency, and the two letters exchanged between him and Ian Hudspeth, Leader of OCC, are attached.

4. School and Playing Field

- 4.1. Hanborough Manor School currently has a single form entry. OCC believe that in order to meet the local need arising from the new development, the school would have to move to a 1.5 form entry, thereby raising the yearly admission number from 30 to 45 (WODC IDOX 14_1234_P_OP_LETTER_SETTING_OUT_AMENDMENTS-312559.pdf). It is estimated that three new classrooms would be required
- 4.2. The original application (14/1234/P/OP) assumed that expansion of the school could be achieved by extending into the adjacent recreation ground, part of the Parish's amenities, run by the Hanborough Playing Fields Association. This approach however, has not proved possible.
- 4.3. The Playing Field application that forms the second part of this inquiry concerns an area of land in the applicant's ownership, approximately 250m from the school, which could be used as a school sports field, and which, it is proposed, would release sufficient land on the school site to build the extra classrooms.
- 4.4. The school's capacity and roll will therefore be increased substantially but the size of the play area on the main school site would be much reduced. Where will children run around and play at break times? What about the capacity of the school's communal facilities?
- 4.5. In the appellant's playing field application, it is suggested that pupils could reach the playing field using public roads and access through the adjacent housing estates. This is not a satisfactory solution as the distance between the school and the proposed new sports field site is considerable and potentially hazardous for groups of small children. Disabled access is problematical, because of the public roads, vehicle movements and parking.
- 4.6. Most importantly, the application clearly does not meet the exemptions provided for in the National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 74, that stipulates existing sports and recreational land should not be built on unless either, *'an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements or the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.'*
- 4.7. A playing field that is remote from the school raises not only issues of child safety, but also concerns regarding the pupil and teacher experience, the potential disruption to the school timetable, and the amount of school time required to organise and conduct the transfer of a significant number of small children between sites.
- 4.8. The proposal is to build a large wire mesh enclosure, 2.1 metres high, protruding into open countryside between Kents Bank and Pinsley Wood, an ancient woodland, one of few remaining parts of the Wychwood Forrest and a county wildlife site. Kents Bank, a recent development of affordable homes, has been sensitively designed to have an open aspect. This will be destroyed

and views from various parts of Long Hanborough towards Pinsley Wood lost. Walking from Church Hanborough to Long Hanborough on the public footpath, the wire mesh compound will be an undoubted eyesore.

- 4.9. A larger school will place pressure on parking in the immediate area around the school, particularly in Riely Close. The present school car park has space for 9 vehicles, used only by staff. With the necessary increase in employees required by a larger school, some would have no alternative but to park in Riely Close. There would be yet further demand for parking in nearby roads by parents/guardians delivering or collecting their children.

5. Health Services

- 5.1. The Eynsham Medical Group's surgery in Long Hanborough is used by many residents of Hanborough and the surrounding villages. Of the 629 objections, 80% of respondents noted surgery capacity was a reason for objection to the application.
- 5.2. The surgery is conveniently located in the centre of the village, within easy walking and access distance for elderly and disabled residents. Moving it to a new location, over half a kilometre from the current surgery, and beyond Hanborough's present western boundary, will significantly increase car usage and present problems for elderly and disabled patients.
- 5.3. The surgery incorporates a pharmacy that dispenses many thousand prescriptions a month. Patients living at the eastern end of the village would have to travel a considerable distance for appointments or to collect medicines.
- 5.4. The appellant proposes that the new surgery would need only 27 car parking spaces. This is totally unrealistic because of the demand by doctors, nurses, and all the teams associated with running the surgery and pharmacy, numbering about 25 people.

6. Housing Site

- 6.1. HAG fully endorses the comments made in sections 5.19 to 5.23 of the Officer's report to the 2 March meeting of the Uplands Planning Sub-Committee (Applications for Development briefing paper).
- 6.2. The site was not adopted in the current WODC (2011) plan and has not been included in the new WODC (2031) local plan currently undergoing the adoption procedure.
- 6.3. A significant concern for residents is the removal of much of the spatial gap between the villages of Long Hanborough and Freeland.
- 6.4. The indicative site plan shows that the proposed layout provides potential options to extend the development towards Freeland.

- 6.5. Urbanisation and the coalescence of Long Hanborough and Freeland were major reasons for the refusal of the application by the WODC Uplands Planning Sub-Committee at their meeting on March 2 2015.
- 6.6. There is a well-used footpath to the north of this site. Should the appeal be allowed current countryside views to the south will be significantly obscured at all times of the year.

7. Summary

- 7.1. This appeal should not be approved on the basis of its impact on the following outweighing any benefits:
 - 7.1.1. Traffic on the A4095
 - 7.1.2. Hanborough Manor School and the impact of the proposed playing field on open countryside
 - 7.1.3. Health services
 - 7.1.4. Site issues relating to urbanisation and coalescence

8. Supporting Documents

- 8.1. Final Analysis of 14/1234/P/OP objections sent to WODC
- 8.2. Hanborough Action Group objection to planning application 15/03341/FUL
- 8.3. Letter from David Cameron to Ian Hudspeth, Leader of OCC, 11/02/15
- 8.4. Letter from Ian Hudspeth to David Cameron, 05/03/15