

## **Objection to Planning Application Ref: 2024/62/91242/E**

I am writing to strongly object to the above proposal by Newett Homes to build 50 new houses on a plot of land off Shepley Road, Stocksmoor. There are many good reasons why this development should not go ahead, but I wish to focus briefly on a few key issues, followed by a more detailed examination of the Andrew Moseley Associates Travel Plan and Transport Assessment, particularly with regard to Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane.

### **Character of the Hamlet of Stocksmoor**

50 new homes would increase the size of the hamlet by about 30%. Added to the Stocksmead seventeen house development of six years ago, the size of the hamlet would have increased by about 45%. I doubt that many other places will have grown to the same extent. Such an expansion is a serious threat to the character of Stocksmoor.

### **Loss of Farmland**

In these uncertain times, the U.K. being only 60% food self sufficient is becoming a more serious concern. Further, green spaces are important for welfare. Indeed, many people visited Stocksmoor during Covid to enjoy open spaces and walking opportunities. There are many relatively ugly pieces of land in and around Huddersfield which would be improved by sensitive development. This would not only provide attractive homes but improve the environment for local workers, visitors and passers-by of all kinds. The Stocksmoor proposal would provide some new homes but in all other respects the environment would be damaged. New homes are needed but they should be built in locations where the locality benefits too.

### **Services and Sustainability**

Stocksmoor has very few services and is lacking in infrastructure: a pub, a village hall, a railway station (once an hour service) and several bus stops (a service every two hours at best; nothing after 8 p.m. or on Sundays). Nearly all residents need to drive to shops, schools, medical centres, etc.. Expanding this way of life can hardly be described as sustainable.

### **Schools**

The local first schools have traditional village origins. They are almost full and some are currently over-subscribed. There is very little practical scope for expansion.

### **Drainage**

There is frequent flooding at Thunder Bridge below Stocksmoor and at the houses by the train station. This is likely to worsen with the addition of 50 new homes.

## Travel Plan and Transport Assessment

These documents and models have numerous flaws, including:

- It is argued that home working is likely to increase. This is contrary to many employers encouraging staff to return to the workplace. Public sector productivity has declined 8% since Covid and home working is probably one factor. The private sector has not fared much better. Call centres are clearly much less efficient than they were in the past; again probably partly due to home working. I was a home worker for 25 years and I know that it is neither suitable for all people nor for all types of jobs, in normal circumstances. Assuming that it will continue to increase, when it has already declined from a peak, is unreasonable;
- Surveys and monitoring of traffic patterns are described. These generally will take place after the houses will have been occupied for some time. By this time the builder and consultants will have lost interest in the issue and if these activities take place at all, they will almost certainly be pointless;
- Encouragement of cycling and walking are mentioned in the plan. However, there is no information about significant planned expansions to pavements and cycle paths: just something for pedestrians by the development itself. The consultant states that Stocksmoor is credible for cycling. I utterly disagree. There is not a single cycle track. The roads are narrow, steep and with poor sight lines. Only keen cyclists ride bikes here. It is simply not an option for 99% of workers, shoppers, school access, etc..
- Promotion of internet shopping is mentioned. How do they plan to do that? Is it desirable anyway? On Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> June, I walked to Shepley and back and was passed three times by a Morrisons delivery van. He met three cars on Jos Lane forcing them to reverse and squeeze to the edge of the road.
- The Transport Assessment mentions a lack of recorded accidents. This is because fortunately most accidents on roads local to Stocksmoor are relatively low speed. Thankfully most people are not injured but that means that the police probably will not be called and the accident will not be officially recorded. Nevertheless, vehicle damage is still a serious matter and occurs too frequently. My wife has suffered accidents, neither of which were her fault, on Jos Lane and Dam Hill. She also came across a car on its roof on Fulstone Road one evening. I am aware of other local people who have scratched their cars on protruding rocks when reversing on Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane. There was a two vehicle accident, with significant damage, on Jos Lane around 18:30 on Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024, witnessed by a resident who lives on Cross Lane;
- The TRICS model predicts that just 3.8% of trips from the new development will be along Stone Wood Lane, which implies less than one vehicle on average between 8 a.m.- 9 a.m. on weekdays. This is totally unrealistic and is suggestive of use of an inappropriate model for the nature of Stocksmoor and its road network. I suspect that the many of the developments used to provide data to the model, located all over the country, have very few, if any, partially located on a single track road. It is stated that nearly all motorists travelling to Shepley, Sheffield, Barnsley, the M1 south and so on, will use Dam Hill instead. This road is not much better than Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane. It is two lane, but quite narrow in parts, frequently forcing cars to slow down and squeeze to the left. On the hill there is a line of parked cars which reduces the road to single track and at the top there is a narrow and steep junction for entering the A629. Plus of course, this route adds extra mileage and usually time, which most

drivers are keen to avoid. On Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> June I became temporarily stuck in a three car jam at this junction when use of the road had temporarily increased due to road works on Thunder Bridge Lane.

Given the above, I decided to undertake a traffic monitoring study to obtain some data to show what actually happens on our local roads, especially Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane.

## **Traffic Monitoring Study**

### **Brief Relevant Qualifications and Experience**

- Combined Honours BSc, 2.1, Physics and Economics, Exeter University, 1978;
- University physics prize, incorporating statistical physics;
- Graduate Member of the Institute of Energy;
- Transport Supervisor for a major oil company;
- Full Member of the Market Research Society;
- Member of a team of two which managed all the market research for a major oil company;
- Developed a system for detecting and managing fuel run-outs at over 1000 UK service stations for crisis management (fuel terminal blockades, panic buying, severe weather, etc.), including central government reporting under the Official Secrets Act, plus improved day-to-day management;
- Member of the Institute of Advanced Motorists.

### **Brief Methodology**

- The single and double track sections of Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane were measured. The single track portions add to around half the total length of 0.68 miles. The single track length of about 600 yards is in notable contrast to the builder's consultant's figure of 120m;
- Office for National Statistics data used for speeds;
- Vehicle, excluding motorbikes, movements along Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane in both directions, observed, timed, and recorded;
- Vehicle, excluding motorbikes, movements counted in and out of Stockmead and whether they used Stone Wood Lane noted;
- Repeated on weekdays, Monday-Friday, at peak times: 8 a.m. - 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. - 6 p.m.;
- Data analysed.

### **Results**

- The average two-way vehicle flow on Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane was 63 vehicles between 8 a.m. - 9 a.m.. At this level over half of vehicles will have had at least one conflict (meeting at least one other vehicle on a single track section necessitating stopping before entry or reversing) and around 16% will have had 3 or more conflicts, either separately or multi-vehicle;

- The average two-way traffic flow on Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane was 69 between 5 p.m. - 6 p.m.. At this level only 40% of vehicles will have had no conflict at all and around 24% will have had 3 or more;
- The busiest hour observed was on Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> June, 5 p.m. - 6 p.m. when there were 84 vehicle movements along Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane. At this level the risk of 3+ vehicle conflicts rises to over 50%;
- On average just under twelve vehicles travelled to and from Stocksmead during the morning peak. This is important because Stocksmead consists of 17 houses of mixed size built six years ago. Demographically it is probably reasonably representative of the potential occupant profile of the new development, unlike the remainder of the hamlet, which has a higher than average proportion of retired people. Accordingly, Stocksmead's figures can be multiplied by 50/17 to give a reasonable idea of the traffic levels from the new development. In this case the just under twelve vehicles translates to about 34 at the new development. This contrasts with Andrew Moseley Associates' figure of 26, where it is claimed that any figure below 30 is low impact. As stated above, the much more likely number is well above 30, indicating medium impact. This is supported by Hassocks Parish Council's published semi-quantitative model for "Traffic Effects of Housing Development". I have completed the model and the results indicated medium impact on Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane. This does not allow for the nature of the affected road, which will be seriously adversely impacted by even a small increase in traffic;
- Using the same approach for vehicles leaving and arriving at Stocksmead, which also use Stone Wood Lane, eight peak a.m. movements in one hour can be projected for the new development. This figure rises to eleven in the p.m. peak. Eight is significantly at odds with the Andrew Moseley Associates figure of about one vehicle in the a.m. peak hour. Further, the proposed development is located at the beginning of Stone Wood Lane, much closer than Stocksmead which is half way along Cross Lane. This will further increase the propensity of the new residents to use the direct route to Shepley and beyond.

## Conclusions

- I am not aware of any official definition of "capacity" for a semi-single track road. However, a greater than 50% chance of a conflict, typical of the peak hours, is likely to concern safety conscious motorists. Nevertheless, the risks of 3+ conflicts are particularly informative. At this level most motorists will feel hassle and frustration leading in some cases to annoyance and the potential for bad driving: going too fast, refusing to reverse, etc., which can lead to road rage and accidents. The likelihood of this happening during the peak hours is frequently around 25%, and even rose to 50%. I believe that this is a real local indication that effective "capacity" is being reached taking the situation to a safety limit;
- It should be noted that the risk of 3+ vehicle conflicts rises quickly with only modest extra traffic. For example, comparing the average peak a.m. and p.m. figures, the number of vehicles rises by ten per cent, while the risk of a 3+ conflict increases by 50%. The contrast is even greater when a similar comparison is done using the data observed for the busiest hour. This means that even a small increase in traffic along this road at peak times can have a major impact on its characteristics;
- General traffic levels continue to slowly increase and locally Stone Wood Lane/Jos Lane will become busier from the new housing development at Shepley and the much larger one at Penistone. Further development on the A629 towards Huddersfield,

including new traffic lights, will delay traffic at peak times. This will encourage more “rat-running” between Shepley and Stocksmoor, which is already a significant factor in the peak hours. So, the background picture is not great, which means that any additional traffic from a discretionary large increase in Stocksmoor housing will have unacceptable effects;

- **All of the above strongly indicates that the new development should not go ahead;**
- If in doubt, I would encourage a visit to these roads by decision-makers. However, it would be important to do so during peak hours to fully appreciate the problem: 5 p.m. - 6 p.m., Monday-Thursday would be ideal, but not during school holidays or when England is playing in the Euros!

### Access to the New Development

The proposed single access where Shepley Road meets Stone Wood Lane may meet the basic visibility splay requirements, but the broader situation needs to be considered. It would be on a narrow and steep bend with no significant forward visibility for vehicles using the current road. At the best of times this bend requires caution. During the busiest hour of my survey work, I saw several groups of four vehicles heading round this bend together towards Shepley and a similar number of three vehicle sets heading in the opposite direction. Access roads to new developments are often quite narrow and there would be a high likelihood of vehicles sometimes struggling to enter resulting in stationary obstructions on the bend. This would be particularly dangerous in darkness and poor weather when visibility is impaired. Stone Wood Lane is not gritted and in winter conditions cars often get stuck on the hill just below the bend. I have pushed many of them over the years. Vehicles queuing on the bend would make the safety risks totally unacceptable in such circumstances.