

Representor Christine McDermott 5186 has requested that the following statement be added to her earlier submission, both of which are now numbered EL2.004a-b.

## **Hearing Statement**

### **ii) Is the site capable of being safely accessed? Have the concerns of the local Highways Authority been satisfied?**

*Currently, there is only one access from the road (Back Cowm Lane) leading to the quarry. It is too narrow for any potential traffic and includes two bridges, one over the reservoir spillway and the other over the outflow. Thus, the site is not capable of being accessed safely.*

*Back Cowm Lane is already subject to very heavy traffic servicing the quarry. The consequences of which are dangerous potholes, drainage problems causing frequent flooding in some of the existing properties adjacent to the road. Additionally, ever increasing numbers of Lorries and other HGVs cause traffic congestion and are a safety hazard. Between 1-4 times per week, residents on that road are requested not to park outside their houses in order to allow extremely long vehicles access to the quarry. This situation creates further safety hazards for traffic and pedestrians. Only today, we witnessed a near accident when 2 heavy and over sized vehicles tried to pass each other at the very access point for the proposed new development.*

*There are also listed buildings on this road reflecting Whitworth's past heritage and character which could be damaged by further excessive traffic. We are already losing too much of 'old' Whitworth.*

*Geographically, the landscape makes widening the existing access road, or building a new one, difficult. It would require radical and costly solutions. Where would a new access road for this development be and what kind of problems would it create? Additionally, in winter such roads are often not salted or gritted making them a hazard for children, the disabled and the elderly resulting in more accidents and costs for the NHS.*

*If the existing road is widened, access to the current greenbelt area behind Hedgerows could lead to more unwanted developments with all that implies on an already over stretched and crumbling infrastructure. Currently, it this access is barely wider than a tarmac path. Furthermore, wouldn't the existing power lines have to be moved?*

*Such development would also cause further pollution to air quality by creating more traffic particularly on the already very busy quarry road. All of which would lead to a greater carbon footprint for the valley and the next generation. Article 19 from the Government's Planning Policy Statement (GPPS), in line with UK Sustainable Development Strategy, states that "the environmental costs should fall on those who*

*impose them” - will the council take this “polluter pays principle” into consideration before making any decisions?*

*There is already inadequate infrastructure in transport in Whitworth, with roads gridlocked at peak times and in need of repair e.g. the already congested road leading to the reservoir and quarry. On the rare occasions repairs are carried out, they are of a substandard quality. With one main road in and one out, Whitworth is already a congested village. Public transport is very limited e.g. no train/tram services. Overall, how will the increased traffic be managed with all the proposed new housing developments in the village (including this site)?*

*As a local beauty spot, Cowm Reservoir is an enhanced environment for tourists to walk around. Thus, many visitors’ cars use the access road which leads to the quarry including parking on it. Have any surveys been carried out e.g. a traffic survey at peak times? What are the implications of the above with regard to safely accessing the proposed site?*

*Further house building here, would also expose a failure “to deliver sufficient community infrastructure and services to meet local needs” (a key principle of the National Planning Policy Framework).*

*Could any concerns of the Highway Authority be discussed at the Hearing Programme? What was the protocol for arriving at these concerns?*

### **iii) What implications does the underground reservoir have on site capacity and the achievability of development?**

*Compromising the underground storage reservoir would increase the risk of flooding. Wouldn't this development also affect the soakaway capacity for the surrounding hills necessitating further frequent and costly tests being performed on the structure of the reservoir?*

*With the unpredictability of climate change (e.g. more frequent flooding in the valley), should the council be protecting residents from it rather than creating further problems? Local drainage (water and sewage) cannot cope now in some areas.*

*In the light of the recent Whaley Bridge potential disaster, surely any further development adjacent to the underground reservoir and at the closest base of the main dam would seem irrational and be a flood risk? Residents in the existing properties at the base of Cowm Dam have been informed that they are in a flood risk area and are therefore very concerned about the potential inundation. Why then build more houses which would be at even greater risk?*

*Is there any risk of ground contamination under and adjacent to the treatment works where the new properties would be built?*

*Have any surveys been completed on the achievability of development for this site? If so, will they be discussed at the programme hearing?*

**iv) What effect would the proposed boundary change and allocation have on the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it? Are there exceptional circumstances that justify altering the Green Belt?**

*According to the NGPF planning should contribute to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Wouldn't this housing development encroach upon that aspiration?*

*According to article 8 of the Human Rights Act, everyone has "the right to peaceful enjoyment" of their home and immediate surroundings. These planning proposals would interfere with that right. Public access to surrounding countryside would be compromised. There is also research that suggests that being in, and having access to, a green landscape can improve mental wellbeing and quality of life.*

*According to article 17 of the Government's Planning Policy Statement on Greenbelt conservation, "a high level of protection should be given to wild life habitats". Further house building would have a devastating impact on them, and the landscape as a whole. We believe they would represent a loss of residential amenities to the community, particularly this site which is close to a much loved beauty spot.*

*Greenbelt land is important in the protection of Whitworth wildlife. In the present emergency climate, cutting down any trees represents an act of ecological vandalism. Birds sing and bats nest in this site. It also provides important habitat for deer and foxes. Rare protected newts live in nearby ponds. Additionally, in the coppice, surrounding Cowl Waterworks, there are owls, badgers and increasingly rare, English bluebells. All of which are on the protected species red list. Government Planning Policy is supposed to protect Greenbelt except for exceptional circumstances. What are these circumstances and how can they be justified by the planning committee?*

*Building in this area would expose adjacent Green Belt to further developmental pressure. Creating a housing development within the Green Belt would not only decrease the size of it but would also have devastating effects on the local habitat and would mean chopping down much needed trees. In the light of trees being burned down at an alarming rate in the Amazon, surely any felling of trees however small is irresponsible? Surely, planting more trees is essential to combat the effects of climate change?*

*Taking away more Green Belt would also increase the carbon footprint, further endangering the quality of life for future generations. In this climate emergency, there are no circumstances which justify altering the Green Belt. We don't need less, we need more.*

*Would the exorbitant cost of this development be outweighed by the loss of our much needed local Green Belt?*

*A new EU report (August 2019) shows that the UK is already 'failing to protect wildlife habitats'.*

*The National Planning Policy Framework states that we should take account of “the different roles and character of different areas”; promote “the vitality of our main urban areas”; protect “the Green Belts around them”; recognise “the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside”; support “thriving rural communities within it.” Shouldn’t the council take heed of these Core Planning Principles and vote against the proposals?*

*Please don’t reduce our beautiful valley to a dormitory suburb.*

**Associated issues directly related to the above questions (ii, iii, iv) in the Hearing Statement (e.g. effects on infrastructure).**

*Water and gas would also need upgrading (representing further expenses on already overburdened service users). Present resources would fail to deliver the increased demand new residents would require, thereby failing to meet the criteria set out in NPPF.*

*Currently, schools, doctors and the sole dental practice are all over overstretched and over subscribed. This depletion in resources would curtail the life chances of future generations. Further house building would further increase class numbers in schools and severely overload resources there. Frequently, waiting times for doctor’s appointments are well over four weeks. Dental practices have gone from three to one. There is no optometrist. Long queues are the norm at peak times at the chemist. Any extra patient loading would exacerbate already inadequate NHS provision.*

*Local amenities are already perceived to be at breaking point. Any extra pressure would lead to a failure to meet future local community needs impeding the NPPF’s strategy of improving “the health, social and cultural wellbeing” of all.*

**Hearing Statement Conclusion**

*Have surveys been undertaken on this site and if so has the result been published prior to this consultation? How would all the problems described above be resolved? How long would it take? What would it cost? Who would pay for it? Has any planning been done on the extra infrastructure, services and resources required? Do the local council have a legal responsibility to ensure adequate provision of services for all its residents?*

*Can Whitworth cope with a 25% increase in population?*

*With a costly no-deal Brexit looming and a potential world recession can we afford all the costs which the above would entail when we desperately need to invest in current infrastructure?*

Sandra Hesten (Dr) & Robert Hesten

