

We are residents of Straight Elms Farm, Stoney Lane and are objecting to the proposed housing development at Coley Farm.

There were compelling reasons to reject the original planning application in 2017. We understand the application was approved by a very narrow margin.

Crucially, since 2017, there have been substantive changes which further strengthen the case for rejecting the application.

The main reasons for our objection are set out below:

1. The proposed development is on a green field site and would cause loss of amenity to local residents. We regularly use it with our young children. Such recreational sites are rare in the local area. The importance of them to residents' mental and physical wellbeing has been underlined by the recent Covid 19 restrictions.

2. There is a consistent history of flooding at the bottom of the hill. A new development will only increase run-off thereby adding to the inherent problem and putting an unnecessary, additional strain on emergency response teams.

Important to note that average rainfall in the area has increased sharply since 2017. 857.9mm of rain fell in Thatcham in the last 12 months vs 151.89mm in the same period in 2016/2017 (source: Worldweatheronline.com).

Even if this trend settles somewhat, global warming points to a long-term pattern of increasing rainfall, which means the risk of flooding will continue to increase vs 2017.

3. Traffic levels in the area are very high and have increased noticeably since 2017. This development will inevitably increase traffic further, causing noise pollution and endangering local residents, including our young children.

Stoney Lane is listed as a Quiet Lane. It is a single-track road in many places, with steep slopes and blind corners.

4. Utilities (water and broadband in particular) have come under increasing pressure since 2017 and more home-working will intensify this pressure.

Residents of Stoney Lane were without any water for 36 hours in May 2020 and endured very low water pressure for several weeks. There have also been water shortage problems in 2019 and 2018.

'A supply/demand imbalance' has consistently been cited as the main reason for the water shortages by Thames Water, a problem that will only increase if the Coley Farm development was to go ahead.

5. Community services, including doctors surgeries, have become increasingly over-stretched since 2017.

6. There will be significant ecological impact to wildlife if this application goes ahead. The rural character of the area will be significantly affected.

7. There are suitable 'Brown Sites' available in the area which would be far more suitable than this scarce green field site.

In summary, we are very sympathetic to the need for additional housing. But the case for the Coley Farm development, which was tenuous in 2017, has become untenable in 2020. We urge the committee to reject the application.

Thank you,