

**Case Ref: 3273053.**

**Sir,**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak at this inquiry.

I object very strongly to the proposed development of up to 250 houses on Oakley Farm Pastures for many reasons. However, today, I would like to talk about homes and about residential amenity.

To start, I need to say that I fully respect that there is a need for homes in Cheltenham. Everyone needs a home but quality of life to include the “free” enjoyment of beautiful AONB countryside, particularly when it is local is also important. One should not be traded in for the other.

So, moving on to residential Amenity. To set the scene, I will begin by explaining that I attended the very short notice, public consultation presentation, held by representatives of Robert Hitchins Ltd in June 2019. Here, I raised my concerns about the adverse impacts on my property, to include my outlook. The response, which is recorded in their report, was that steps would be taken to **protect visual amenity** and the **rural setting of residents** within the residential area generally. I was reasonably reassured. The indicative site plan which I studied later, was therefore shocking, in relation to the positioning of new houses, relative to my home and that of my neighbours.

While understanding that if the outline application is approved, the finalising of the site plan and any conditions will come later, the indicative plan is a good representation, of how the applicant will accommodate up to 250 houses on the site. It shows the proximity of development and tree mitigation, to existing dwellings on the eastern boundary which, is of serious concern to those who live there.

I would like to draw your attention to the changes to the living conditions of families who live on the eastern boundary of Oakley Farm, which will come about should this application be approved. Some of their properties, like mine on Birdlip Road, currently back onto the pastures and, just like the land in question sit entirely within the AONB.

I am fully aware, that no one is entitled to a view or a lifestyle of relative peace and quiet associated with living close to countryside. However, as a matter of principle, shouldn't anyone who may have resided for years within or adjacent to an AONB, feel secure in the knowledge, that their expectations of retaining the rural or semi-rural way of life they treasure, should not change due to inappropriate development by a third party?

The site plan shows my house and garden, and those of my immediate neighbours being dominated by the side elevations of houses, which will presumably be “camouflaged” to some degree by relatively small, slow growing trees which will eventually shade our currently sunny gardens and compromise the current openness, afforded to our main living areas and gardens. Some properties have their living and dining areas and their main family outside space on the first floor. Their privacy will be severely compromised, and their properties will no longer be attractive homes in which to live. They will, in the future, feel obliged to draw their curtains early in the evening to dine or relax in privacy or be dissuaded from having family gatherings on their first-floor terraces with the usual glass balconies, as these will be in full view of passers-by and overlooked by new development. Is it acceptable that people's current living conditions and their lifestyle will be subjected to such significant change?

I am dismayed that this plan has shown little genuine consideration for the AONB or for those properties in closest proximity to this proposal. The appellant in their application documentation, has assessed the effect of the development on properties on Birdlip Road, as a whole as having “medium” sensitivity and a “medium” magnitude of effect. The significance of effects are also assessed as “moderate adverse”. As a whole, this is probably correct but in fairness, anyone visiting my particular property, or my neighbours with living accommodation on the first floor, would be much more likely to re-categorise all of the effects as **major adverse**.

I ask you Sir, to compare our currently enjoyed living conditions, which include pleasant residential visual amenity, reasonable levels of privacy, tranquillity, and an open outlook from the rear of our homes, to what we are expected to endure in the future, brought about by this proposal’s unsympathetic, over-bearing nature, with its harmful visual impact, shading, road noise and the close proximity of solid brick walls. I ask you to consider these changes **at this inquiry** so that the impact to our current lifestyle is not lost in the passage of time or eclipsed by the principal points for refusal, highlighted by CBC and other parties.

**To conclude Sir.** Should you decide to dismiss this appeal, in which case I feel sure further proposals will follow; in the interests of time, public money, and to alleviate the long-term concerns of local people, can I ask you to consider including in your report concerns; not only about the protection of the AONB pastures for the benefit it brings to visitors and local people, but also about the residential amenity of bordering properties. Public interest weighting must surely include, not only the provision of new homes but the protection of locally cherished countryside, **and** the harmful effect these developments will have on the well-being of groups of existing residents.

If this proposal goes ahead, contrary to policies within the Development Plan, and the Cotswolds AONB Management Plan, we will not be able to enjoy our properties, residential amenities and lives, in the future, in the way we do now. This cannot be right.

I do hope that the appellant reflects on the lack of care and consideration shown to local residents.

Thank you all for listening.