

**CHESWICK GREEN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
SOLIHULL LOCAL DRAFT PLAN – Planning Inquiry Submission
SITE 21 – MOUNT DAIRY FARM**

Introduction

My name is Brian Brown. I am Vice Chairman of Cheswick Green Residents Association. Cheswick Green Residents Association has liaised with Cheswick Green Parish Council in respect of the extremely strong objections made by residents to any development of Site 21 known as Mount Dairy Farm, which were initially made by the Residents Association in its letters in December 2010 and 19th February 2012 addressed to Solihull MBC.

These objections stem from the real fears and concerns of flooding, rather than the attitude of 'not in my back yard' syndrome. This pragmatic approach is demonstrated by the Residents Association not raising strong objections to houses being developed at Blythe Valley Park.

In fact, the Residents Association was in correspondence with Solihull MBC in October 1998 and March 1999 in respect of the 'rounding' of Cheswick Green by the development of land off Tanworth Lane (now known as Site 21). Subsequently, flooding issues has changed the views of residents.

Flooding Risk

Over the last thirty years, residents of Saxon Wood Road and Willow Drive have experienced flood water reaching half way up their gardens when the flood plain at the rear has been flooded in times of heavy rainfall. More recently, flood water has on occasions reached close to the back door levels of many houses. These problems have got worse since the development of Dickens Heath. About five years ago, I could no longer cross Mount Brook in the summer to cut back the hedge of an elderly friend living in Saxon Wood Road when using wellington boots. Waders were then purchased!

Improved Flood Defences

The Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP has stated in her Submission dated 9th January 2013 that '... recent changes to the flood defences made by the Environment Agency have reduced the risk from 1 in 100 to 1 in 120 year risk of flooding'. I am not aware of any changes to the flood defences by the Environment Agency. I wonder whether Caroline Spelman is confusing the flood defence barriers installed in the Village Hall or whether Caroline Spelman is thinking of a totally different area!

Cheswick Green Village Hall – Flooded 20th July 2007

On Friday 20th July 2007 Cheswick Green Village Hall was flooded to a depth of a few inches / centimetres.

Immediate measures were taken in order to minimise water damage and mitigate any potential loss.

Reinstatement costs exceeded £10,000.00, which mainly related to replacement flooring. The Insurance premium excess has increased. It is rumoured that the reinstatement cost of Chadwick End Village Hall that was flooded at the same time was in the region of £100,000.00.

Some houses in Coppice Walk, Coppice Close, Saxon Wood Road and Willow Drive were affected by flood water. The foul and surface water sewers were overflowing.

Cheswick Green Parish Council has organised and met the cost of flood defence barriers that are now installed in Cheswick Green Village Hall.

The flood defence barriers have been utilised on a number of occasions as a precautionary measure when flood water levels are particularly high. The latest occasion when the flood defence barriers were utilised was on 21st November 2012 (water level reached was 1.61 m) and were left in place until flood waters and risk of flooding receded. The highest flood water level was at about 4.00 am on the morning of Sunday 25th November 2012, when the level of 1.65 m was about two inches / 50 centimetres from the floor level. The typical water level is about 0.3 to 0.4 m. This morning it was 0.36 m.

Previous Flooding concerns

On 12th February 1999 the Residents Association wrote to the Environment Agency expressing the concerns of residents over fears of flooding. This was because on two occasions during the preceding two months, the flood water level was the worst experienced for about 28 years.

From experience, it is noted that during the five years prior to the Village Hall being flooded on 20th July 2007, there were at least three occasions when flood water levels reached within about two inches (50 cm) of flooding the Village Hall.

Conclusion

The Environment Agency has just produced a Report Flood Risk Cheswick Green Hazard Mapping Study, which has been submitted to this Inquiry. We believe that this Report supports the real concerns and fears of residents that there is a potentially serious flooding risk to dwellings in Cheswick Green.

Despite reassurances given that measures would be taken in the development of Dickens Heath that the potential risk of flooding would not be increased, this has clearly not been the case.

Residents strongly object to any development taking place at Mount Dairy Farm, because it will increase the risk of flooding that could affect over ninety houses.

There are already a large number of residents on the Environment Agency's Flood Alert automated flood warning system. They were woken in the early hours of Sunday 25th November at about 2.00 am!

Statement by: Brian Brown Vice Chairman of Cheswick Green Residents Association

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