

Thames Farm Action Group (TFAG)

By E-mail only

Dear [REDACTED]

27 November 2020

Thames Farm Development, Lower Shiplake, Oxfordshire

Thank you for the response of 16 November on behalf of the Taylor Wimpey Board sent to The Chair of Shiplake Parish Council re his letters to Irene Dorner and others. As I am Chair of TFAG, and will be the main group that takes this issue forwards on behalf of the village residents, he has asked me to respond to you.

I think that perhaps you have misunderstood the comments and concerns of the entire community of Shiplake as your response talks about matters that happened some years ago and the presentation of your companies plans in early 2019, which does not really address the current issues we are referring to at all.

To be more specific, the villagers have concerns over the things that have materially changed with your proposals since the original grant of consent, and how these matters are being advanced through the planning process by your company. These matters include:

- the very late discovery of the problematic ground conditions in a location that is well known for chalk, gravel and clay extraction;
- the variation of the Planning Permission to allow works to happen even though such a major issue was known to exist with the ground, and;
- the discharge of reserved matters - Condition 11.

It is the consequent geological faults arising due to the movement of water and soil underneath the surface and how you have sought to vary the scheme very materially as a result thereof, that has caused the major concerns. This is firstly, because these discoveries have only arisen so late in the day (in the last year or so) and secondly that the company has chosen to try and push through its resultant 'alternative drainage solutions' in a manner that would have left virtually zero scope for public and wider stakeholder consultation. Your statements about *working and engaging with communities, protecting and enhancing ecology and biodiversity, treating local communities with fairness and respect* etc can hardly be said to have occurred here and in relation to these very worrying issues.

In the final analysis, your company is proposing to create circa 13 acres of impermeable ground by filling with liquid concrete and ash, creating some on-site storage facilities to prevent the resultant surfeit of surface water running off of your site, and then building a pump house that will release that water to a distant, off-site location. In this instance that proposed point of discharge lies in a Class 3b flood zone where flooding already occurs with alarming regularity. I hope you will therefore understand why the local community is so very disappointed with Taylor Wimpey's approach to the problems that its proposed development would create, a situation that has resulted from inadequate due diligence when the site was purchased.

I think if the company had genuinely come forwards and engaged with the community rather than submitting its proposals in what must be seen as a very much back-door approach (without even submitting a new flood risk assessment), then the local feeling of the community would be different. Such openness and engagement would have been in line with your stated aims of social responsibility and good neighbour relations. As it is, it is only

because the community were alerted to the very material changes that were being proposed in what is normally a simple 'tick box exercise' of approving reserved matters, that they had to take immediate action and raise 150 objections to the proposals which in turn brought the matter out into the open. This level of public outcry has thankfully resulted in the request for a detailed flood risk assessment as well as a period of extension for everyone to consider the revised proposals. With the benefit of a more detailed design and a thorough assessment of the downstream implications, all parties will be able to understand and consider the risks associated with your surface water being discharged a long distance away from your site and make an informed decision as to the sustainability of your scheme.

Much of the earlier work that your company has undertaken with method statements and working practices of managing your efforts on and around the site will have to be completely re-worked and re-presented to have regard to the major engineering works now newly proposed on site; the impact on the adjacent aquifer and the potable water supply to Henley and the vicinity; the major traffic disruption that will occur when the A4155 has to be dug up yet again following your 9 months of work on it; and not least the disruption to Lower Shiplake when the primary but very narrow road into the village is dug up. The construction phase of your proposed drainage solution will have significant implications on the village. In particular, access to shops and local businesses, the pub, the railway station and car park, the turning areas for public service vehicles; and the diversion of local buses as well as collection points for children going to and returning from school. The houses on Station Road and beyond it and also Mill Road will be massively impacted by constrained access, and delivery vehicles will no doubt suffer many months of delays as will most residents together with traffic coming in and out of the village generally.

Once operational, there is then the added risk of increased flooding both around your site and also at the point of discharge to be considered; its impacts on extant houses and premises and also a nursing home for the elderly which is immediately adjacent to the proposed discharge point. The risk of flood evacuation is a very real one, and local residents often receive hourly updates from the EA at times of high risk. This happens frequently.

In reference to the contribution the development will make to the local economy, I understand that as a major national housebuilder Taylor Wimpey is a generator of economic activity much like any other business, and as a result creates employment and the other outputs generated by being in that business including affordable housing and the like. All of this is standard practice for any housebuilder in order to obtain a planning permission. I don't however regard those matters as the critical ones that our residents have such major concerns over.

In summary, the community is understandably very worried about your proposals, and rightly so given the very poor communications that have occurred, the aggressive way in which your advisors have tried to push the proposals through, the lack of a revised FRA to demonstrate the impacts of what you were proposing and the fact that the proposal was submitted in a manner where normally no consultation could occur. A Freedom of Information request was submitted by one of our residents and highlighted the significant pressure that was being applied by your advisors, no doubt at the request of the person running that team at your company.

I do hope that your company will now adopt a more collegiate approach to how it is going about this exercise, and also to consider any other alternatives that may be open to it, such as a fundamental rethink of the entire proposal for this site possibly to a far less intensive development which may in turn alleviate some of the issues you face.

Thames Farm Action Group (TFAG)



I am sorry that the company has found itself in a position where it is very likely to suffer a significant economic loss as a result of this site purchase, but you will readily understand that the villagers do not wish to be made to suffer for your company's poor investment decision and lack of due diligence. There is a very clear risk that additional flooding will occur in extreme weather conditions at one end of your proposed pipe or the other, but it must be recognised that that is solely as a consequence of your development proceeding and for no other reason whatsoever.

I look forward to hearing from you further on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Signed Electronically

Peter Boros

For and on behalf of TFAG