

Your Ref : P/18/0005/OA

The Spinney,
East Cams,
Fareham,
PO16 8QB

Fareham Borough Council,
Civic Offices,
Civic Way,
Fareham
PO16 7AZ

09 Feb 2018

Re: Planning Application P/18/0005/OA by Miller Homes

Dear Mr Wright,

I would like to lodge my formal objection to the proposed development on the following grounds:

- The principle of the proposed development
- Highway safety, traffic and access considerations
- The effect on members of the community
- Protected species and nature conservation

Principle of the Proposed Development

Unlike Wellbourne, the proposed development is not part of the Local Plan and is thus not part of any holistic, strategic or measured approach to the Borough's housing needs. As such, it is unlikely to satisfy those needs, be served well by existing services or avoid impacting negatively on existing residents and businesses. Rather than seeking to satisfy these admirable goals, it seems that the developer's planners have been set a wholly different brief: to make the best of a bad job, given the circumstances.

Highway safety, traffic and access considerations



Stott Hall Farm: Miller Homes next acquisition?

The circumstances I refer to, are amusingly reminiscent of Stott Hall Farm: a parcel of land, famously cut off from the rest of Britain, ironically, by being located slap-bang in the middle of one of Britain's busiest thoroughfares, namely the M62.

Winnham Farm might not be bounded by contra-flowing carriageways, but it is effectively isolated by transport arteries. The motorway to the north is too costly to 'junction' directly to the site. The railway, south, is a de facto moat. Only the quarry-access road, west, offers suitable access to the larger road network (Junction 11, M27). However, any thought that this might provide a solution is instantly debunked by the knowledge that the quarry-access road can only itself be accessed via a true *horror-show* of a network pinch-point, and only then, by inserting two new crossings. What is this *horror-show* of which I speak?

What's that coming over The Hill? Is it A-Downend_Road?

In the (mid-)daytime, it's a sweet country road over a lickle, brick-built railway bridge. But as darkness falls across the land (by which I mean rush-hour), the ghouls come out. The Downend Road goes all Halloween. Buckling in spasms behind the sofa, it dons its flimsy, implausible fancy-dress, before rising, to emerge from the shadows: Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaargh! It's the A-Downend_Road!

Yep, this minor road starts pretending it's a major road. And within minutes the traffic is at standstill right up to and even past the railway bridge.

But wait dear reader, for there are more horrors. The foulest stench is in the air. Is that the "funk of forty thousand years"? Probably not. But government scientists assure us it's breaking safe nitrogen oxide limits, and heaven only knows about those cancer-causing PM2.5s.

You are terrified: you realise there's nowhere left to run.

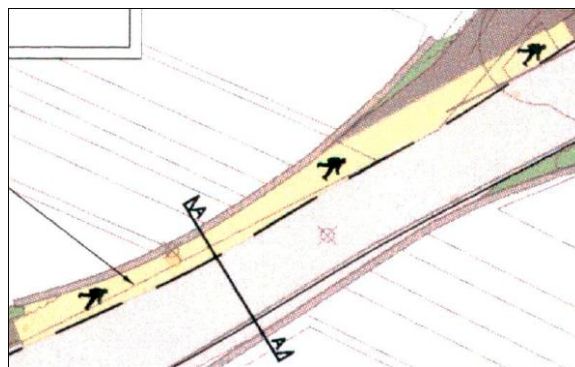
Or walk. Or cycle for that matter. Even with government insistence we exercise more, who would want to with all that pollution?

Of course no horror movie would be complete without the sacrifice of fresh, young blood. How convenient then, that Cams Hill School is situated slap-bang in the middle of the developing maelstrom, its children, all 1,200, delivered with perfect timing into the jaws of the beast.

Eventually the traffic subsides. It's a wrap. But I see no Oscar here for 'Best Director'. In fact, one can only conclude there is no director. Just buck-passers at the council.

Trick or Treat? It's No Joke. Or is it?

So what sort of people would choose to put the *car* (all 700 of them) in this *carnage*, by proposing a development of 350 houses at Winnham Farm? Maybe people with a weird sense of humour, like the kind who find it amusing to pedestrianize a busy, pinch-point bridge with a history of RTAs? The kind who'd put that pedestrian pathway on the *opposite* side of the road to the development. Like how funny is that? Nearly as funny as Miller Homes' diagrams of the walkway, that show pedestrian icons painted on the bridge in a manner oh-so reminiscent of those corpse chalk outlines from 70's movies.



Miller's pedestrian walkway: a crime scene just waiting to happen

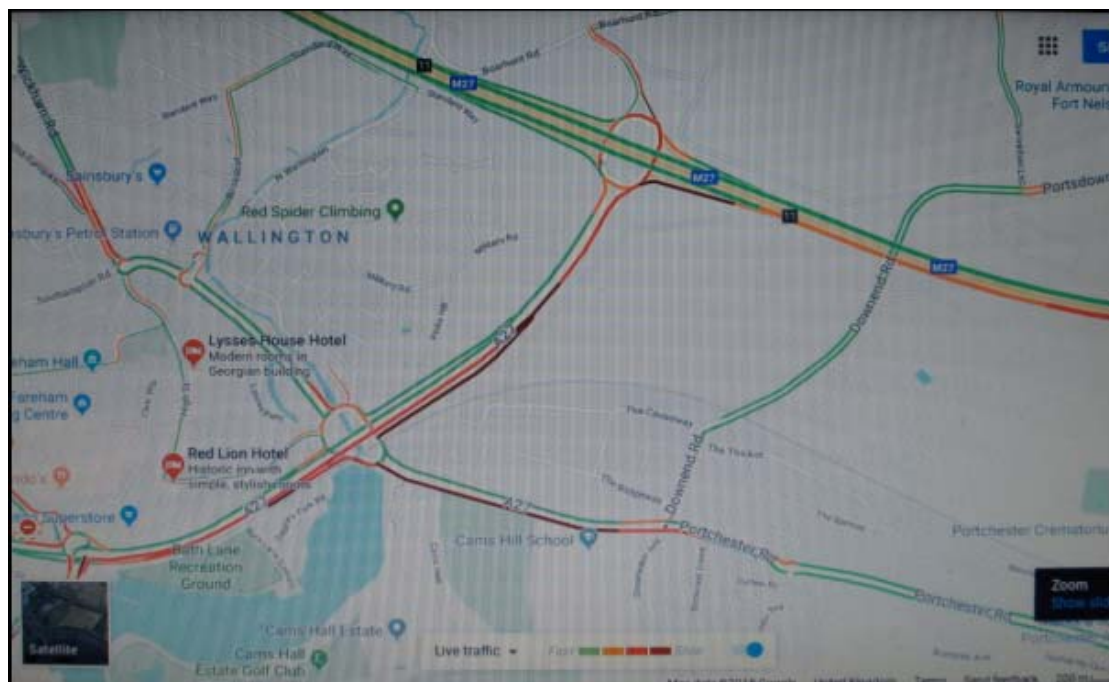
I suppose it will save the CSI guys a few minutes after the inevitable fatality; there's planning for you.

When I raised the issue of likely pedestrian casualties, caused by fast-moving traffic coming off Portsdown Hill, at Miller's Cams Hill School soiree (the irony!), their representative cheerily retorted that his development would cause so much congestion, it would likely reduce speeds at the bridge to a range incapable of rendering harm to anyone on foot. If these guys don't do stand-up, they are wasting their talents!

Yet more laughs were to be had when I found out they wanted to formalize the Thicket de facto rat-run, by making it part of their site access solution! I can see this spilling into The Spinney, home to many senior types who can do without the noise, danger and pollution. We will be insisting on bollards / road closure measures in that eventuality. I'd advise getting the money from Miller now.

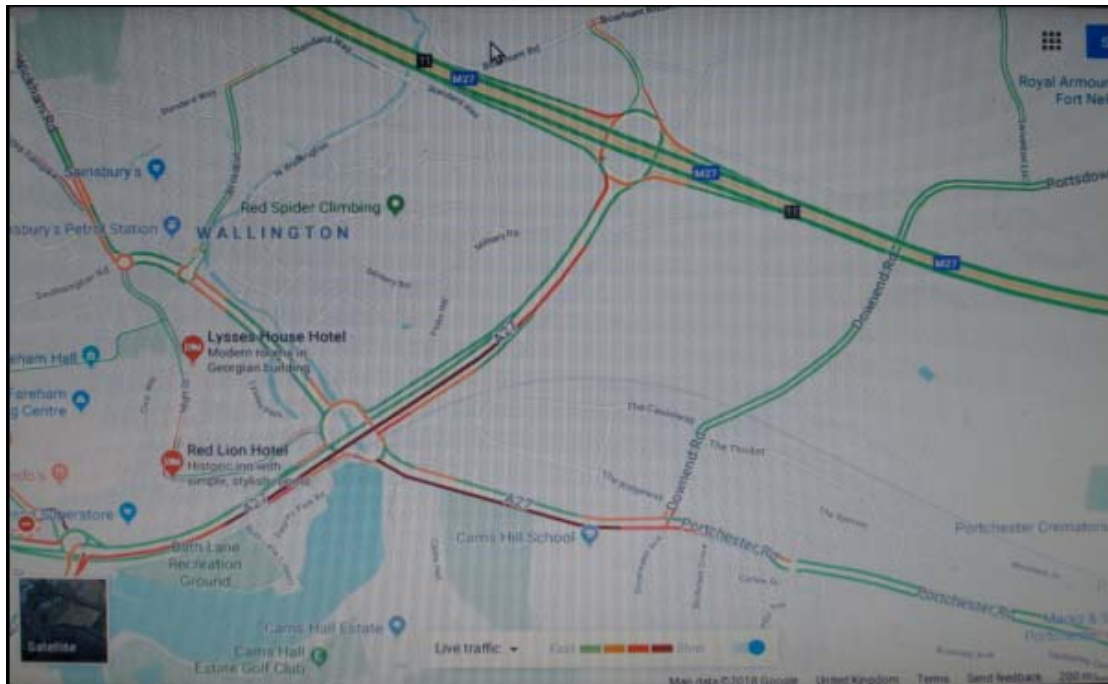
But besides giving Miller Home's people scope for demonstrating their masterful grasp of off-colour humour, this 'footpath' is almost certainly a red herring. Expect them to argue 'passionately' (like an "Apprentice" candidate) for it, only to drop the suggestion at the eleventh hour, declaring "oh, in that case we just made the bridge's road wider for traffic!"

Because it's that bridge road width, traffic-wise, that really puts a nail in Count Miller's coffin. It is simply too narrow. And moreover, it's narrow not merely because it goes over a fragile, narrow bridge. It's narrow because no matter how wide you make it, it won't change the fact that Downend Road will back up at rush hour, simply because the road it feeds into, the A27, is itself backed up to the Downend Road. Don't take my word for it: ask Google (traffic maps). The brown lines show where traffic flow has basically stopped.



The local network: 09/02/2018, 16:45

And it more or less stays that way for the entire rush hour.



The local network: 09/02/2018, 17:30

Puffin'? They might as well be.

When traffic backs up to another junction, that junction is grid-locked. You can have *Deep Mind* controlling the junction light sequence; it'll make no difference. So this "Puffin" system suggested by Miller is quite pointless.

And when traffic backs up to another junction, you've got a bigger problem than fulfilling central government housing targets. To put it bluntly, you are killing people. Traffic is the chief source of harmful nitrogen oxides and the deadliest particulates, PM2.5s, reportedly responsible for some 40,000 premature deaths in the UK alone. Experts claim that stop-go idling traffic exposes drivers and pedestrians to the very worst levels of those pollutants. And the Government agrees.

That's why, when the Government published its National Air Quality Plan just before Christmas, it highlighted the backed up stretch of the A27 leading to the Delme roundabout, as an area in need of urgent air quality improvement. It has demanded FBC submit plans to improve conditions on the road no later than March.

The map below was published by FBC in the 'Winter' edition of *Fareham Today*, but it's more than probable, looking at the above traffic maps, that harmful levels of pollution persist right back to the windows of Cams Hill School.

And while you contemplate this map, bear in mind that children are known to be more vulnerable to the adverse affects of air pollution due to their higher minute ventilation, immature immune system, involvement in vigorous activities and longer periods spent outdoors. Indeed, researchers have now concluded that car fumes can be just as harmful to children as second-hand smoke.



Pollution: The A27 is up there with the 'best' of them

Again, one has to wonder what kind of developer would want to add to this problem, or indeed what kind of local council would let them.

Miller claim they can reduce backed up traffic at the Delme Roundabout with some minor road widening and on-roundabout traffic lights. But again, this seems to purposefully ignore the fact that the roundabout problems stem from a further tail-back on the ramp adjoining the Gosport Road, itself caused by the merging viaduct traffic that comes from junction 11. And that is THE MOTHER of all tail-backs. Just check it out on Google traffic maps: you won't find a bigger tail-back on the 100 miles of road that is the A27. Maybe they can fix that too! LOL.

An even bigger stink to worry about?

Pollution. It's bad. But what about sewage? That's smelly too, and it's also something we might want to worry about if Miller gets the go-ahead. And by we, I mean the Council as well as rate payers.

Because the site is like Stott Hall Farm, it isn't just cars that have trouble leaving the site. It's poos too. Miller can't simply plumb the site straight into the main sewer system, because they'd have to lay a pipe under the railway, and that would cost £££££. So they've come up with a scheme to store up residents number twos during the day in a big gravity fed tank at the bottom of the site. They'd then pump that lovely lot back up the site and out (where they the hope to tap into the main sewer), over night.

When I asked them about this system, they assured me it was all perfectly normal and there was nothing to worry about. I wasn't so sure. And it just so happens, nor are Southern Water, the owner-operators of the local sewers. Indeed, on the FBC website, Southern Water basically refuses to adopt (take responsibility for) this system if implemented. And that would leave Miller or one of their facilities management bods holding the baby.

So why should you or the Council care about that?

For one, taking over freeholds of sites like this ain't nowhere near as lucrative since the Government BANNED the sale of leasehold newbuilds at Christmas. So Miller may struggle to find a facilities

manager willing to take the sewerage system off their hands. So they just manage it themselves, right? Forever, yes?

And there's the thing: how long is forever? And will Miller be there? Well, that's a question the Council will have to answer. I'd just like to add a few words of caution.

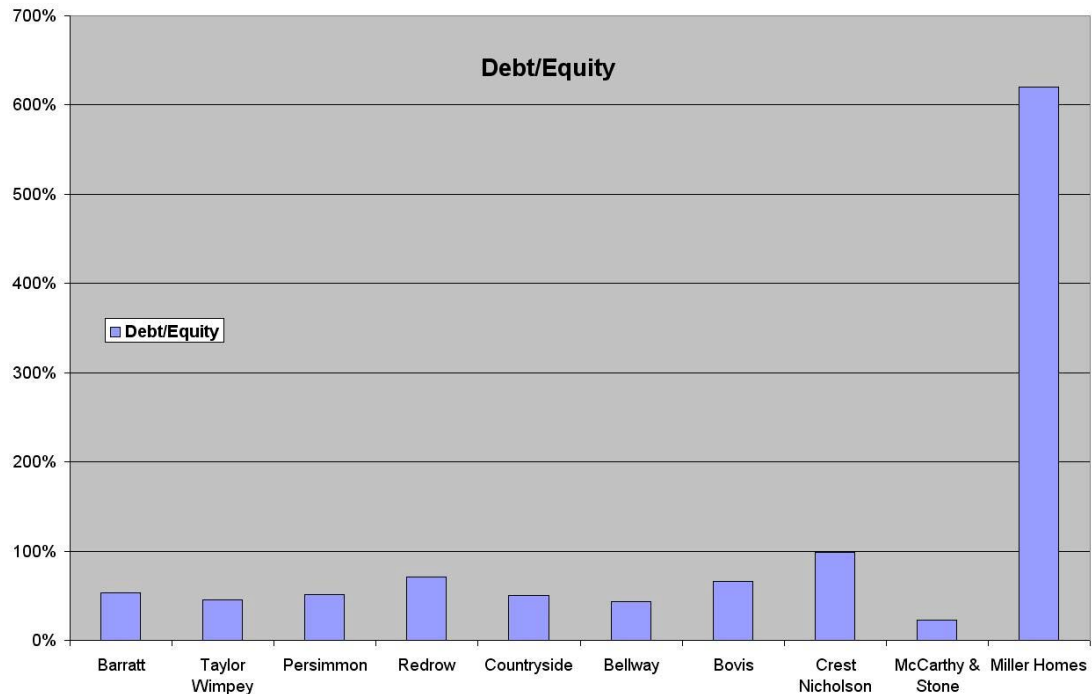
Miller Homes as it now stands was acquired by Bridgepoint Capital, in a leveraged buyout transaction.

They were sold by leverage buyout kings Blackstone, through its GSO Capital Partners arm. Less than three months later, the UK Government banned the sale of leasehold properties, an activity that allowed housebuilders like Miller, to enhance their profits by selling on the associated freehold revisions, to the tune of tens of millions each.

Last year Miller sold 2,380 properties. It looks to increase that number to 4,000 presently. It might be reasonable, prior to the ban, to suspect such a company might make some £20m in sales of freeholds per annum, if it sold all its properties leasehold. That money is no longer available.

In April 2017, Taylor Wimpey decided to pay out £130m in compensation to leaseholders of its properties, following a media campaign highlighting the so called "ground rent scandal". Six days ago Hilary Benn rounded on Miller Homes, accusing them of "sharp practice" in the sale of leasehold newbuilds, following a debate in Parliament adding "One national housebuilder has set up a compensation scheme, but I think they all should." On a pro rata basis, assuming Miller sold the same proportion of leaseholds as Taylor Wimpey, and sold on the freeholds in the same way, I'd estimate Miller would need to stump up about £20m to fund such a scheme.

Highly leveraged companies are necessarily more prone to financial shocks and rising interest rates, even if their borrowings are at a fixed cost. At least £175m of its debts are floating rate, based on GBP Libor. Of the major housebuilders, it relies heavily on debt to fund its assets. It is currently paying about £24m in interest on the loan notes issued to fund the LBO.



And Mark Carney warned only yesterday that interest rates will rise faster and further than previously thought. Meanwhile the BoE also sees wages rising. That means housebuilders continue to pay ever higher construction costs at the very time interest rates begin to press on average selling prices.

But hey, we're talking housebuilders right? What could go wrong? Just pick up a copy of the FT from the last cyclical down turn. It makes scary reading.

Strictly for the birds

Speaking of endangered species, finally brings me to the question of wildlife.

If there were bats involved we could probably sleep safe (with garlic, crucifixes, wooden stakes etc) in the knowledge that their future would be looked after by their kin at Miller. But my concern is for the Red Kites who's majestic soaring above the farmland has become a regular treat for locals. Miller's bought and paid for 'environmentalists' describe the wildlife at the site as being low grade. Typical of nosferatu to value no species other than their own. For their information, red kites are Schedule 1 listed, and that makes them pretty damn important. They better hope there are no nests on the site!

Yours sincerely,

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