

**Planning application 09/20/0004 – Change of use of land to residential with re-direction of access and formation of parking area at Halsdown Farmhouse, Pinkhouse Farm Lane, Waterrow**

I am Ward Councillor for Wiveliscombe and District. There are local concerns about this application as described below.

The new access road has been built for some time and in recent months has been used by dumper trucks to transfer waste material from Halsdown Farm to another location on the other side of the valley.

Previously, I am told there was not vehicle access to the farm and the track from Bibors Hill was simply a public footpath. This went on past the farmhouse towards Trowell Farm, as can be seen on OS maps.

Local walkers report it was narrow (single width footpath) and it took tricky footwork for to cross the stream. It had just a 3/4 ft gate. It was very uneven and needed good a balance to get across the rocks and stones. It may have been possible for old, smaller, tractors to have used the track decades ago, but not in recent times.

The first section was a narrow path on the down sloped field from the path. It was overgrown with bracken going up mixed in the hedge. There were orchids too and it was only narrow with a 'green' path. Higher up, beyond the next gate there were beautiful old hedges and trees and a dense bank of flora and fauna either side of a track leading up to Halsdown farm and barns. It was a haven for wildlife and flowers. This section also looked unused. It was a 'green' dirt track, cart width, not as it is now.

Almost all of this ancient hedgerow, ferns and seasonal wild flowers have been ripped up to make way for a wider track, which has been used in recent months by the dumper trucks and by diggers.

There is now little plant life coming through, nothing like the diversity of what was there, the land above this section of track has recently been re-landscaped, flattened and covered with lawn. It is no longer a continuation of the hill and grazing field. The contours are very different from before.

The removal of vegetation and new track will be less efficient at retaining water and may lead to flooding lower down and contribute to increased flow of flood water beyond. The new track is already showing signs of erosion and leading to deposits

lower down by the stream. It has also required the Council to clear debris that has washed down on to the road.

The damage caused by the works is shown in the photos that follow below. The first photo shows the hill that was previously grazing pasture, which has been levelled off at the top and planted as a lawn. Previously the hill extended up higher and the land formed a hill where the new lawn is now.

The other photos show the new track and the damage caused alongside, including where hedgerows were previously.

I ask that officers look into all these matters and confirm whether the current planning application can be allowed due to the damage and impact to the landscape and environment that has resulted. Should the previous situation be reinstated as best as it can be now?

There is already a driveway to the farmhouse from the other direction. Can additional access be justified by the damage and impact caused? If access really is needed, should it have been built in a different way to be acceptable.

Cllr Dave Mansell

Wiveliscombe and District Ward - Somerset West and Taunton Council

6<sup>th</sup> July 2020











