

Planning application comment was submitted on the **30 June 2024 13:21 PM**

The following is a comment on application **P241388/F** by **Clare Suart**

Nature of feedback: Submitting a general comment

Comment: This is an objection to P241388/F. I live within sight of The Oaks, which is now in clear sight of our house as the copse that used to be in that location was cleared for its construction. The house proposed in these plans would be even nearer us. To have a natural landscape, outside the Neighbourhood Development Plan, destroyed by the construction of a large house with large outbuildings, and now a second, is very distressing.

The site is within the curtilage of the owners previous planning application (P230133/F) and in that application had been designated as grazing for a horse, or for the planting of an orchard/meadow as part of the green credentials for that planning proposal.

This present application, as well as the previous application, are both outside the settlement plan, and so do not comply with the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). Excessive development has already been permitted outside this envelope, to the increasing detriment of the environment and landscape, despite it being acknowledged that Marden Parish has already exceeded its proportional housing growth target. Continued permission for further development outside the settlement, will only encourage more proposals which can then be permitted as 'infill'.

The new proposal P241388, is for another massive dwelling, of similar size to the completed P230133, now called The Oaks, including an equally large 3-bay garage. All these buildings are totally out of proportion to the traditional vernacular buildings in the hamlet, completely changing the local character.

The hamlet's name, Litmarsh is a giveaway, MARSH land, and the proposed site is part of this low lying area. It has always been the swampy area between two catchment zones: one draining directly to the Lugg via ditches and Berrington Lake; the other taking a longer route via the stream through Monmarsh and Urdimmarsh. A previous owner tried to reclaim and drain this area in the late 1990s, but it didn't last and the land has flooded again. New extensive drainage has been carried out on site as part of the development for P230133/F. A land drain has been installed and exits into the ditch which lies at the corner of the site. However, there has still been a problem because water backed up and flooded the road and land around the adjacent houses.

Also, that land drain is of concern as it is a mere 50m from land that is proposed to be used for sewage processing, it takes the ground water, storm water and surface flow to Berrington Lakes, and then on via another ditch to the River Lugg. 50m is not enough space for foul sewage to be neutralised, particularly in this swampy land, so sewage is also a concern.

Litmarsh is not on mains sewage. The new development of 5 houses (also permitted despite being outside the NDP) had to install special individual mound systems. The Oaks were at one stage to build a similar system, being so close to a water course. However this has not happened, and Balfour Beatty in their submission as drainage engineers, have stated that The Oaks' foul water drainage has not yet been 'proven', and that this new proposal (P241388) intends to be linked to the same drainage field as The Oaks, suggesting that there is insufficient processing of potential sewage. It needs to be remembered that this application lies within the river Lugg subcatchment of the River Wye/Lugg Special Area of Conservation. From data collected by Citizen Scientists, there is evidence that the local sewage works already regularly releases untreated sewage into the Lugg, this proposal could only increase the pollution.

The runoff from these new buildings (including the 5 houses recently permitted) is no longer able to sit and soak

into the ground resulting in the collapse of an ecosystem and depletion of the environment. The loss of the swampy land and copse has resulted in the reduction and almost disappearance of frogs, toads and other amphibians like great crested newts, this has been totally ignored with no attempt to mitigate the situation with the construction of ponds or reed beds. A missed opportunity.

The Oaks, (P230133) was initially granted as a part Q on a small rusty 'Dutch' barn, which was then adjusted to permit a large, 4-bed modern, 'urban' house, with a large 3-bay garage, drive and wide gateway, (all of which tower over the adjacent, traditional buildings), in the interests of being 'more eco-friendly', by means of the 'fall back position'. The excessively large garage alone is bigger than the original barn, let alone neighbouring houses, it was claimed to be for the purpose of housing the batteries to be powered by the solar panels on its roof. Yet many local residents with solar panels on their roofs, accommodate the batteries in their houses despite being smaller houses. Modern batteries are not that large!

Unfortunately many, many trees were felled, and many metres of hedges were scrubbed out to the horror of local residents. These had formed a copse providing safe habitat for many birds, (including various owls, blackbirds, various woodpeckers, even the cuckoo in season), and mammals, including bats. It was a wildlife corridor and link from the River Lugg to the lakes, and garden ponds in Litmarsh which has been completely cleared. I am aware that ecological 'surveys' and 'reports' have been produced by the developer, but these relied on a brief daytime site visit and a desk top search, and took no note of local sightings and reports, such as otter, nor of what has been lost already by this development.

The latest planning proposal should not require any further clearing and environmental/ecological damage, however the small remaining area of meadow (supposedly part of mitigation and green credentials in the proposal for the building of The Oaks) will be lost to another over-sized development, with no particular regard to matching or enhancing the immediate environment. Solar panels can be readily accommodated on the roof of a standard sized house, in which any batteries can be installed, so there is no need to build such huge garages for their accommodation.

The site is in an 'Area of Great Landscape Value' which is already threatened with the inordinate amount of development being permitted in Litmarsh, this development would only compromise it further by increasing light pollution in an area of Dark Skies and increasing vehicular use of the single track lane, which is already under stress from increasingly large farm machinery.

Litmarsh landscape has already been affected by clusters of houses being built and the new ones over-shadowing the original in size. But also the access demands vast splays and gateways for improved visibility and security. The original narrow rural lane is now a busy thorough fare with 2 local businesses requiring HGVs, and the farms using larger and larger tractors and trailers. Most household have at least 2 vehicles, as well as seemingly require daily delivery vans. The verges are being flattened and the ditches collapsed, destroying the drainage systems, leaving pot holes and dangerous ridges of tarmac.

The site is contrary to core strategy SD1, as the new development will prejudice the amenity of neighbouring residents, 6 residents (in original Litmarsh dwellings) overlook the site. All will be able to hear as well as see the development, which was previously an open meadow in an area designated of 'Great Landscape Value'.

The designation of this proposal as a 'self build' is curious. The Oaks has also been a 'self build', in that the owner has built it himself. Does 'self build' attract a greater likelihood of permission? It has to be remembered that this proposal is for an exceptionally large house and associated buildings, extending development even further outside the NDP and hamlet, than the original development, into what was open countryside of a meadow and a copse.

I object to this proposal. Many others in the hamlet objected to the first proposal in 2022, sadly most will have become fatalistic and disillusioned with the disregard to the 'local voice', and may not bother to object again. Yet once natural landscape is lost to human 'development', there is no going back.

Attachment:

Their contact details are as follows:

First name: Clare

Last name: Suart

Email: 

Postcode: HR1 3EX

Address: Kitten Gate, Marden, HR1 3EX

Infrastructure from section 106 to consider: To prevent any further destruction of the natural environment - felling of trees etc.

Link ID: https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/info/200142/planning_services/planning_application_search/details?id=241388

Form reference: FS-Case-626996548