

**Witness statement from local resident of Farley Road- Mr Andrew Pitt.**

**Sir, my name is Andrew Pitt and I live at Keepers Cottage, Farley Road near Oakamoor.**

**I have come today to present my evidence as a witness on behalf of the Churnet Valley Conservation Society to assist your consideration of this appeal and which I hope will prove useful to you in assessing the problems which we have locally with the current impact of traffic congestion, noise, continual accidents and road safety issues near my home and the surrounding road network.**

**Keepers cottage is a traditional, stone built, small holding which lies next to and almost midway along the northern side of Farley Road, between the villages of Farley and Oakamoor, and has been my family's home for the past 47 years .**

**As I have lived there all my adult life, I have an excellent recollection of the many changes I have seen and how over the years this once quiet, little lane has radically altered in more recent times with increasing amounts of traffic using it on a daily basis, principally as a short cut to and from Alton Towers.**

**It is called Farley road and was once the traditional main route from Oakamoor to Farley before the B5417 replaced it. Originally the road was a narrow, winding dirt track, about the width of a cart or carriage, that wandered around the perimeter of the Bolton Estate at Moorcourt, and would have linked it and the village of Oakamoor, with the Farley Hall Estate beyond, and eventually to the Earl of Shrewsbury's family seat and estate at Alton Towers.**

**It was later tarmacked, but no other improvements to its original, meandering course and dimensions were added.**

**Nowadays though, it is classed more as a lane, because of its very narrow, single carriageway, hemmed in by a tree lined and stone walled boundary on both sides.**

**Today it remains very much as it was, with no footpath and just the occasional widening that permits cars to squeeze past with great difficulty. Often there is no choice when two opposing vehicles meet but for one to reverse back, until a slightly wider area allows passage. When delivery vans or tractors and trailers use the lane it can result in more congestion, due to their size.**

Farley Road also has the added problem of some very large, mature oak trees lining its edge for most of its length and sometimes these are so big and so close to the road, that they obscure the view ahead where the road is narrowest and winding.

Add in the deep hollow way type features of a sunken roadway bounded by thick hedges and stone walls, as well as blind corners, some of which are sharp and sudden with no road signs to inform of their nature, and you'll get a vivid impression of what the road is like in its physical attributes.

It is in fact a very beautiful lane to walk along as it is so picturesque,

However, I would not always recommend it as often it can be like playing Russian roulette, due to the speed people drive.

I use it on a daily basis and I am aware of its hazards, I always drive with caution. However because of its awkward nature and narrowness, even that local knowledge or road sense is not enough to avoid collisions, or close shaves, as the accident records we collected from the neighbourhood including car to car , car to wall or tree impacts and even a complete turnover have been recently recalled in the survey that was carried in readiness for the appeal.

Over my lifetime I have seen the yearly growth of problems linked to increasing traffic using this route as Alton Towers has become more and more popular as a major tourist and theme park resort.

Local employees who know the area and want to get to work, and then home quicker after their shifts can be seen, heard, or met head on travelling along Farley Road at inadvisable speeds and often without due care and control.

Accidents happen on this insignificant little road for a number of avoidable reasons; bad driving skills, too much speed, unfamiliarity with the road conditions and poor anticipation of the likely hazards which makes it something of a black spot, for the number of accidents occurring being well above the average for a road of this sort.

We know that statistically it is the smaller country roads that kill more people or cause life changing injuries to be inflicted.

On the day Mr Walters visited to ask if I would take part today, I told him there had been three accidents in ten days outside my house, one of which resulted in a vehicle being written off because of the severity of damage caused.

The sheer volume of traffic generated by the attraction that is Alton Towers concentrated upon roads that were never intended to be used for that number and size of vehicles causes numerous incidents, and the possibility of a second attraction in close proximity would only intensify the problem.

Other problems are caused by people being directed by their Sat Nav's to cut the corner and avoid the longer route up the hill from Oakamoor to Cotton via the B5417 and then on to Farley Lane, or the other way round when people are leaving Alton Towers and on their way home. No amount of brown information signage pointing along the B5417 to Alton Towers or sign's saying dangerous / narrow road seem to stop them following the Sat Nav's voice.

Laver Leisure have applied to open this attraction so that it will benefit from people using it as a base to visit Alton Towers. Upon leaving Alton Towers if their sat nav's are using the fastest route, it will direct them along Farley Lane then left onto the B5417, or if using the shortest route it will direct them down Farley Road and again on to the B5417 and then right through Oakamoor. At this moment in time most of the visitor traffic using Oakamoor passes straight through on the B5417. This planned attraction will funnel unwanted traffic on the road through the centre of the village which is constricted because of resident's parked cars, and then leaving the village up the extremely steep Carr bank and on to the narrow and winding Eaves Lane.

Now occasionally, in the course of my work, I use the road from Whiston to Oakamoor via Carr bank and Eaves lane.

It is very quiet and reminiscent in so many ways of the road where I live. It has the same problems of narrowness and difficult bends and of course a very steep hill on Carr Bank itself.

It has the beauty of tree lined verges and stone walls that characterise the networks of lanes around the local villages. And of course it has hardly any traffic.

That was just how Farley Road used to be.

However, I'm here today because I have my grave doubts that the road from Oakamoor to Whiston will continue to survive unchanged, if this development is permitted. It will experience the same if not worse number of accidents due to the severity of its route.

The same difficulties that I experience on a daily basis, as do my neighbours and anyone else using Farley Road, will descend upon the residents of Oakamoor village, and the problems we have with Alton Towers traffic will be increased even more, as both lanes experience the joys of being a rural rat run, and also a route for so many vehicles intent upon linking to the two sites.

Sir, they say too many cooks spoil the broth; we 'd say, two large attractions in close proximity will spoil the valley..... in terms of traffic.

Our adage may be cumbersome, and doesn't fit so well because of too many words, but that is just how too much traffic won't fit the lanes either.

However, I sincerely hope that the lasting image of the acute traffic impact that I've described to you today, will help your decision, so that in future, Eaves lane, Carr bank and Oakamoor itself will be spared a similar fate .

Thank you .

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