

My name is Peter Marsden, I'm a Chartered Engineer and I'd like to explain in some six minutes, an area of concern with this development, that could have consequences. In instances of professional approval, you tend to develop an alarm system that goes off if you come across something that doesn't seem quite right, and I'm afraid mine went off at the first planning meeting for this project.

But it is all becoming reminiscent of a kind of a Grenville Tower event. "Oh, not the cladding issue again. Of course it's fire proof, and in this instance, "oh, not that Oakhurst access again. We've been assured that it's perfectly safe".

I'd spoken to people from Oakhurst Rise and they were amazed that their cul-de-sac had been chosen as the access to this development as they know that because of the gradients, in icy conditions it becomes unusable and even ambulances and refuse collection vehicles can't get up it ..... and they, the residents, park their cars on the roads at the bottom because these steep slopes are dangerous.

But their concerns appeared to have been ignored, because at the first planning meeting, the developer was positive because the access had been approved by the Gloucester Highways Department. Two representatives from there attended that meeting and explained that there had been no recorded road accidents on Oakhurst Rise and as it is classed as part of the road network, it was approved. However, they acknowledged that they had not visited the site so had no idea about inclines and issues. It all seemed a bit like an optician prescribing spectacles without an eye test.

Further, the traffic flow into a quiet cul-de-sac is very different when it becomes a through road. At the subsequent appeal, a detailed professional analysis and report of the proposed access was tabled which indicates that the access width and inclines do not meet standards or protocols and suggests that access should never have even been considered. I downloaded it from the Council website but can no longer find it on the site. But I will send a copy to the Planning Inspector.

A further issue was the developer's consultants advising the Council that "Proposed access is compliant with relevant policies in the NPFF". (National Policy Planning Framework). This refers to new developments.

However Page 32 110(d) of that document says "Allow for efficient delivery of goods and access by service and emergency vehicles."

But how can that be true when Oakhurst Rise is unusable for periods when it snows or is icy and cannot even be accessed by ambulances?

As a chartered engineer, as part of our legal training we were told that if you ever had doubts about a project, you should imagine what the coroner's

summation would be after a fatality. What follows is an example based on Oakhurst Rise. To make sure it is realistic, it has been checked by our MP Alex Chalk who is a barrister and a Justice Minister in the current government and who also opposes this project. It reads as follows.

**“The death of this housewife and her two children on the access from the new estate at Oakhurst Rise is a tragedy and I’m mindful of the representations made here today. In making the initial authorisation of access to the site through Oakhurst Rise, the Gloucester Transport Department made it clear at the first planning meeting that this was because the drive is a part of the road network and there have been no recorded accidents there. They explained that they had not visited the site. Access safety considerations would presumably be a local issue.**

**At this and subsequent planning appeals, warnings were given by local people and Councillors and it was made clear that the proposed access was considered dangerous and “not fit for purpose”. A professional report outlining the space limitations and the gradients involved was presented and is part of the official record. This outlined the points made today.**

**That this tragedy was “an accident waiting to happen” was stressed many times. It seems remarkable that despite this, the development was recommended by the Cheltenham Borough Council Planning Department.**

**It has been made clear today that the Developers, The Council’s Chief Executive, The Planning and the Legal Department and Government Inspectors, were all made aware of the warnings but chose to ignore them and we all now know the consequences of that. In consideration to the family of the deceased and those residents still residing on the estate, I would insist that there be a full enquiry and possibly a judicial review regarding the process and actions of those responsible for an outcome that could and should have been avoided. “**

So that’s where I’m coming from. I would like to be assured that the Inspector has seen that critical report on the access. That access, if approved, could be there for the next 50 years and could prove very costly.