

Dear Sir or Madam

Thorpe Arnold Proposed Developments

I am writing to you to register my concerns about the proposed developments at Thorpe Arnold as demonstrated to me at the Waltham on the Wolds drop-in meeting today 31st July 2017.

Background

My name is Charles Skelton. I am a tenant farmer at Wold House Farm, Thorpe Arnold. I farm in conjunction with John Skelton tenant of Home Farm, Thorpe Arnold. Our farms adjoin each other. They are the only two working farms remaining in the village. The Skelton family started farming in Thorpe Arnold in 1959. The farms and buildings adjoin the A607 and the land starts north of the Tesco store and adjoining Sports field and runs up north of the golf club towards Waltham on the western boundary of the A607. There are three fields to the east of the A607.

Our farming practices have adapted over the years to the economic and political policies governing our sector. Today we grow arable crops and grassland from which we produce beef cattle. We also have a Countryside Stewardship Agreement with Natural England. The yard and buildings are fundamental to the successful managing of our business. Access to the farmed land from the yard and buildings is gained via the A607 and from internal farm tracks and field access. Movement of livestock is crucial for good animal husbandry. Security for the livestock and the associated safety to road users is something we are very conscious about.

Melton Neighbourhood Plan

Sites THOR1 and THOR2 sit on pasture land within our agricultural tenancy at Wold House. The landlord is The Buckminster Estate. We have expressed our concerns to the landlord that the proposed sites will inflict damage on our ability to farm and to manage our business. The resultant risk of livestock worrying, litter, gates being removed/left open, complaints about smell and noise gives us great concern and we do not think you have given thought to this aspect of the development.

Distributor Road

The speed at which the Distributor Road development is moving is of greater concern. The installation of the road will effectively cut our farmed lands in to two separate blocks. The movement of livestock is essential. How will we access the northern side of the road from our yard and buildings? How will we move manure from the buildings to the land? What facilities will be provided for livestock movements from the south to the north and back again that will protect the safety of the livestock and the stockmen as well as of the road users? I have personally spoken with Mr Andy Jackson at Leicestershire County Council about the Road. I have contacted the landlord Estate office at Buckminster. I have spoken with the agent for the landlord at Home Farm (Mr Nigel Wild, Brown & Co, Melton Mowbray). Both offices have told me they know nothing of the Road scheme and yet Mr Jackson assures me they have been contacted in writing. Having believed my relationship with the landlords was mutually respectful I now face the recognition that is no longer a two way process and that they are having no thought for the future of our farming business.

You have told me that the landowners have requested permission to offer what I described as "in fill" within the curtilage of the proposed road on lands that we occupy and farm. I know nothing of this and object whole-heartedly and strongly not only to this suggestion but to the path of the road.

Our two families - myself and John - object very strongly to the development. Any houses on land farmed by us and any Distributor Roads cutting across our farmed lands will inevitably impact on our future business prosperity. The margins gained from farming the land are variable and low; our livelihood depends on the scale we enjoy at present. Any diminution of land area will be challenging. The installation of a road through the middle of the land will be catastrophic. Any threat to our businesses as a direct consequence of these developments cannot be underestimated at a time when jobs are so hard to come by.

At this stage I do not know what else to say to you to suitably demonstrate to you how I feel about the proposals. If you wish further details can be provided. I hope that you will consider the impact on our families and understand the impact on tenant farmers of such developments as this.

Yours faithfully,

Charles Skelton