

OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION – 37/24/00099 - Welcome Break Services Limited

We submit our objection to the latest planning application for Welcome Break Services at Junction 24, North Petherton, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6.

We wish to register our **OBJECTION** to this planning application. We are submitting this objection as residents of the Hamlet of Huntworth and owner of a Grade II Listed building.

SUMMARY

This application is described as a 'motorway service area' but in all reality it is something quite different. It is a large service area with ancillary uses within the open countryside. It will be detrimental on many levels to our hamlet, communities, landscape and wildlife and would urge a measured approach and consideration of necessity when making your decision. Our grounds for objection are as follows:

1. The absence of up to date or adequate **biodiversity and protected species reports** the applicant has failed to demonstrate that the application will not cause significant harm to biodiversity and protected species.
2. Inadequate and out of date information has been put forward by the applicant on **road safety mitigation**. No independent road safety audit (either stage 1 or stage 2) to consider the safety aspects of the proposals.
3. **Litter from the Motorway Services** if not managed or controlled and will impact the surrounding wildlife and residential properties. Compliance with Keep Britain Tidy report and how sustained litter management is to be actioned.
4. **Night sky & Light Pollution – cprsomerset.org.uk** - Light pollution introduced by motorway services limit views of dark skies.
5. There is **no demonstrable need** for a Motorway Service Area in this location and the detriment caused by development to the adjacent open countryside and residential properties.
6. **Increase in opportunities for crime**, the fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.

1.DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON WILDLIFE

We are concerned with the limited information and study detail for the impact on local wildlife. The area has many species of birds, mammals and amphibians some of which are protected. We have a pair of buzzards who frequent our property alongside many species of birds. There is no detailed information published in relation to: (a) bat surveys conducted in alignment with their protections, (b) no information on field mice which are a protected species; and (c) lack of detailed landscaping plans; and (d) lack of full biodiversity metric.

This site is rich in wildlife and biodiversity and there must be provision for an updated ecology report which will show the results of any surveys and appropriate mitigation measures to ensure that legally protected species are not harmed or displaced by the proposed development. At this time, limited information on these protected species and the environment is inadequate.

2.ROAD SAFETY

Inadequate and out of date information has been put forward by the applicant and therefore we are objecting on highways safety grounds. Our concerns are as follows:

1. We are most concerned that there is no independent road safety audit (either stage 1 or stage 2) to consider the safety aspects of the proposals. We are particularly concerned about vulnerable road users – pedestrians and cyclists – including those in Huntworth who would have to navigate the

increased traffic volumes, multiuser new road structure and accompanying roundabout – both of which have lanes to and from the fast-moving M5 to the proposed services and adjacent business park.

2. As the owners of a Grade II listed building the increased traffic volumes are causing us increasing concern as to the vibration damage over time which will likely impact our property. This property was built in 1780 and is a significant Georgian era property. We have observed large lorries utilising the road which are prohibited as indicated on the signposting at the junction of the M5 leading to Huntworth which is clearly being ignored by some. Our property is one of multiple Grade II in the area.
3. In this location, the demographic of Huntworth varies between very young person's or relatives through to older generations. The development would therefore attract additional traffic usage as a connection between the motorway and the roads leading to the centre of Bridgwater. This is a current issue which will be exacerbated by the increased traffic volumes who will utilise the services and adjacent proposed business park. The infrastructure of the hamlet roads is already busy at peak times, for the purpose stated above and the lack of sustained maintenance and construction of the narrow roads causes congestion where two vehicles need to safely pass one another.
4. The application is not appropriate for the development proposed, and would result in an increase in vehicular usage, leading to extra traffic, safety risk and environmental harm. The lack of pavements and the narrow roads already present a hazard to the many who utilise Huntworth Lane. At present the current services on the Bridgwater side of the motorway handles the traffic from the services on the designed road network, if the services were approved, traffic would then increase on the Huntworth side of the motorway which will naturally attract traffic to use the Huntworth roads to get into Bridgwater, therefore exponentially increasing traffic volumes and risk to residents.

3.LITTER

Litter from the Motorway Services if not managed or controlled and will impact the surrounding wildlife and residential properties. We are concerned about the impact of the litter in our surrounding areas including on the Bridgwater Canal system and associated drainage, which is only 0.5km away from the site and hosts fish and birdlife in particular unmarked mute swans which are still protected by the Crown.

In 2019 a government commissioned survey carried out by Keep Britain Tidy found that Service Areas packaging accounts for half of the litter in England. The planning application does not sufficiently detail or demonstrate its seriousness on tackling litter pollution and how it will sustain levels of litter management. Management of litter must encapsulate areas beyond the services and be expanded to tackle litter from all businesses, vehicles attending the sites, vehicles using Huntworth Lane and any buildup of litter on local roads, roadside verges, hedgerows, drainage systems and natural growth areas around the site.

The applicant must provide serious proposals for how it intends to address littering rather than simply expect local authorities, parishes and residents.

4. NIGHT SKY & LIGHT POLLUTION

Starry skies are one of the most magical sights the countryside. Light pollution introduced by motorway services will not only limit our views of dark skies, but also disrupt wildlife's natural patterns.

Cprsomerset.org.uk work to reclaim our dark skies and gather data about light levels across the country. The proposal would harm the sustainability of dark skies in our local community unless sufficient provisions are implemented for minimising light pollution. This also applies to the industrial estate which has been approved.

5. NO DEMONSTRATED NEED

The applicant claims; *“there is a need for a Motorway Service Area on this stretch of the M5”*. This is disputed with two large services already in place at Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor. Junction 23 at Dunball has large main branded services a short distance from the motorway and junction 24 already has facilities on the Bridgwater side. In addition to all of these facilities, the main town of Bridgwater is able to provide a plethora of retail and food services. Why is there a need for another services?

Opening of an additional 24 hour motorway services, will likely generate increased activity, noise, and disturbance in a small rural hamlet at all times of the day/night. Due to the proximity of neighbouring residential properties this would be harmful to the living conditions of those residents and their properties which are attractive, safe, rural and healthy environments. Promoting additional access to services including petrol and diesel, will extend and increase more vehicles, escalating fumes in that area affecting the nearby properties air and noise quality. E.g the use of the fuel pumps and fuel pump noise, vehicle movements, car stereos, movement of people around the site and increased traffic. The garage opening 24 hours is not in character with the attractive quiet rural small hamlet. The motorway itself formed a barrier between the industrial north side and the rural south side however, with these planning proposals this will effectively breach that barrier.

6.CRIME & ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR RISK

We raise concern that the proposal of a new Motorway Services increases opportunities for crime, the fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour with unregulated gathering of large groups within the parking area of the proposed site. Affecting how safe local residents, dog walkers, etc. feel in the area.

For all of these reasons we urge the Council to refuse this application.

Submitted by Mr K & Mrs D WHEWELL-CLARKE, The Hayes Huntworth.