

15/8/2024

Dear Sir - or Madam

Regarding Ref 2024-0607 -

I spoke to a really nice lady in your
Dept on Tuesday 13/8/24 at 4.20 -

I am not opposed to any company making
progress, but regards to the Application for
a Plumbing Company wishing to use the
site of what was Walnut Hill nursery
at Hark Bank Lane -

In the local paper someone from the
company states we have 9 lorries and
several vans that may use the site
but the drivers all have sleeper cabs
and won't return to the site -

[REDACTED]

I hope not as access to this site
is by a single track road with no
passing spaces, also a very steep
hill either side of which an employee
at the water works got killed while
cycling to work by crashing head on
into a lorry some 30 years ago -

Exit from this site up Nash Bank Lane
to the A227 - is onto an A Road with
a blind bend both ways plus a 50mph
speed limit - plus on a hill -

Its dangerous in a car - I dread to
~~think~~ think what it will be like
in a 20 - or even a 44 Ton lorry -

Access from Longfield Hill is
Yes - on a narrow lane - plus
Downs Road with a school and two
horse riding stables - is not good
either -

If you have managed to read this
letter - I am not against progress
I am ~~viewing~~ viewing this from
a road safety point of view -



Clockwise from main image: A lorry taking up the whole country lane in Walnut Hill Road, Istead Rise; the entrance to First4Drains; the planning application for the change of use

Villagers upset that lorries will destroy quiet life

By Keely Greenwood
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Concerns have been raised that a drainage firm's bid to convert a former plant nursery could set cyclists and children on a collision course with large lorries.

Residents fear plans to re-purpose the former Walnut Hill nursery, Istead Rise, near Gravesend, are "industrial" in nature and have branded it "an accident waiting to happen".

They claim they constantly get stuck on narrow country lanes near the site when huge lorries come the other way and fear the proposals would see an even larger number of HGVs accessing the site.

According to proposals put forward to Gravesend council, First4Drains, which recently purchased the site in Walnut Hill Road, is applying to use it as an office, which would be open between 8am and 5pm from Monday to Friday.

The company's application says it operates 24/7 and owns around 60 vehicles. Despite this, the applicant insists "no operational development" will go ahead as part of this application and there will be "very little vehicle use associated with the site", and even less than when it was previously used as a plant nursery.

But residents claim since the company took over, the number of lorries seen rumbling down quiet country lanes has increased, along with the number of vans.

They fear for the safety of cyclists, dog-walkers and horse-riders who regularly use the narrow thoroughfare.

"If you meet a lorry coming the other way there is nowhere

to go," one long-standing resident said.

"If you are riding a horse you have to turn around and go all the way back down the hill, and that's if your horse does not get too spooked by the noise and size of the lorry."

Many said they are already anxious of leaving the house and meeting one of the HGVs head-on.

"They never reverse," another resident added. "You could sit and wait for ages but eventually you have to reverse all the way back to the start of the lane."

He added: "These country lanes are just not suitable for HGVs. There are steep hills, blind corners, no passing points and no pathways."

One resident expressed her concern that Nash Road is often inaccessible due to fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles and if this was the case the HGVs would need to be diverted along Downs Road and Arcadia Road into Walnut Hill Road.

The resident added: "This would be highly dangerous for the local residents and the children attending nearby Istead Rise Primary School. It will only be a matter of time before there is an accident."

The owners of nearby New Barn Stables fear for the riders along the narrow road where there is no pathway.

"Young children go out on their ponies," the owner said. "If they meet a lorry they have nowhere to go for safety."

The owner, who did not want to be named, also fears it will affect her business as riders may decide to use alternative stables rather than risk their safety.

One woman, who has kept horses at the stables for the past 30 years, says she is worried what will happen when it comes to winter.

"These roads are not gritted so a lorry could very easily end up losing control and hitting a horse or a child."

Other opposers to the plans cited the noise and pollution as added factors.

One said: "This is an outrageous plan for a beautiful country lane. This is a very rural area which is not suitable for large HGV vehicles."

"Our peaceful environment has been shattered. This is not the nice country area we moved to."

Another added: "This is a green belt area. It's not an industrial site."

"This is the wrong area for that sort of business."

But a spokesman for First4Drains hit back at the claims and sought to assure neighbours.

They said: "We intend to use the site as an office for around 15 staff. There will be very little vehicle use associated with the site, and certainly less so than the previous nursery that operated from here."

"All of our staff operate remotely in their vans and rarely return to the office. We currently have 14 lorries and have no plans to expand this fleet."

"Our lorries are required in connection with flood management and control and the jobs that they attend generally take weeks or months to complete."

"The lorries stay on the site of the jobs and are equipped with sleeper cabs so it makes no sense for them to return to this site."