

James Loudon

Councillor Tim Ball
B&NES Council

Ref: Planning Application Reference: 22/03938/FUL

Dear Councillor Ball

I am writing to you in your capacity as Cabinet Member for Planning and Licensing, concerning some very serious potential safety issues.

These relate to a proposed housing development in Peasedown St John by Curo with the above reference number. It is currently being considered by the Planning Department.

Local residents have raised several issues with the Planning Department during the consultation. However there is one of a particularly serious nature that is currently being overlooked and should be subject to a further internal enquiry.

The proposed site is on a very steep field which will require major earthworks to develop. It is situated directly above the 100 year old properties in Hillside View.

Residents are concerned about the stability of their homes, with good reason, given that these terraced cottages have no footings and are built directly onto clay ground.

As far as we can see the developer has failed to abide by proper procedure laid down in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Developer failed to carry out adequate geological surveys, risking landslide
Para 121, NPPF applies.

The developer undertook no geological site investigations to establish the ground conditions of the land. Given the challenging topography, in particular the significant difference in levels between the site and the existing houses in Hillside View, there is a risk of landslide.

Several factors can increase a slope's susceptibility to a landslide: land steeply sloping; additional static loading (such as new houses); additional dynamic loading (such as traffic during and after construction); removal of vertical vegetation; change in contours (such as during construction); and human interference with the way the land retains and drains water. All of these factors apply to this site.

Para 121 of the NPPF states that decision makers should ensure that the site is suitable for its new use, taking account of ground conditions and land instability.

The omission of a comprehensive geological site investigation for this proposal is a serious oversight and risks the safety of residents and their property.

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Not only is there an immediate threat to Hillside View due to the land mass being subject to additional static and dynamic load from above, there is an additional danger due to possible land shear. This could also affect the residents of the new houses.

The field is made predominantly of different types of clay. Building on top of this type of ground could result in the clay drying out over time thus increasing the risk of shear. We believe that this should be investigated as a matter of priority as inadequate safety in this respect will put lives at risk.

At a public meeting about the development, Curo insisted that they know what they are doing. However looking at all documents submitted to the Planning Office we can see no evidence of any geological survey, nor risk assessment nor method statement that would address any of the serious concerns raised above.

We are contacting you to ask you to discuss the matter further with planning officers to ensure that this does not remain overlooked before a decision is reached. (The Planning Department are aiming to reach a decision on this development by the 29th December.)

Thank you for your help in this matter.
Yours sincerely,