

Tom Hawkes

From: Jez Downs [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 October 2025 16:19
To: Consultations; [REDACTED]
Subject: Local Plan consultation
Attachments: drainageOS.jpg; N32OS1872to1873.jpg

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--Email From External Account--

Jez Downs
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To whom it may concern:

N32 and N31

I am writing to state my objection to the proposed development of N32, the field to the West of Rattington Street in Chartham. I am broadly supportive of the development at N31, Chartham Paper Mill, but it will need to proceed in close consultation with the Parish Council and residents of Chartham.

N31 - Support with caveats

Access.

Any access to the site will need to be via the junction with the A28. There is history of heavy vehicles using this entrance to service the Paper Mill. Access should NOT be sought over the fields to the North of Cockerling Road. If this is the case then I will oppose all development. Arable land is needed for growing crops, not for building roads at a time of environmental and climate crisis. In addition, there are trees and hedgerows in the fields to the North of Cockerling Road which need protection and are of historical importance.

N32 - Oppose

Access.

The development at N32 should not be allowed as there is no feasible access to the site which would both support construction traffic, and the amount of residential traffic which would be generated.

The access path at the junction of The Crescent, Shalmsford Street and The Downs is far too narrow at approximately 5.8m. Government guidance in The Department for Transport Manual for Streets 2007 states that residential roads should be 4.8m for the carriageway, 1.5m for pavements. Other neighbouring residential access roads along Shalmsford Street and The Downs (such as Pomfret

Road and Linden Road) have a pavement either side, which would bring the required width to 7.8m. In addition, there are requirements for sight lines for safe pedestrian crossing which would not be possible to implement on this access road due to the position of neighbouring properties.

The access path at the other end of The Crescent between numbers 24 and 25 is also too narrow, and the owners of land needed to access it are unlikely to release it for this use.

Larkey View and Summer Piece Grove are small residential cul-de-sacs which border the proposed site. Both of these roads are narrow, and bordered on both sides by residential dwellings, which would be impacted adversely by increased construction and residential traffic. Any action to extend the roads through the boundary of the proposed site would take them beyond the capacity which they were designed and constructed for. The simple T junctions which lead into them would need to be enlarged, and this would go against the principle of limiting or reducing traffic through the village of Chartham. Emergency vehicle access, pedestrian and cycle routes could not coexist on streets of this size and layout. These principles are also laid out in government guidance in The Department for Transport Manual for Streets.

Any access sought off Baker's Lane, either via Summer Piece Grove or directly through the protected hedgerow and bank on Baker's Lane would necessitate an enlargement of the junction of Baker's Lane, Shalmesford Street and Brice Avenue. This is already a busy and dangerous junction for pedestrian and cycle access, particularly at school run times. As someone who regularly walks my children to school, I can testify just how difficult it is to get children across this very busy junction safely. Further traffic caused by development of the field would only make this worse. It is worth considering that the circular nature of Brice Avenue, Arnold Road, Baker's Lane and Shalmesford Street has created a huge problem at school times, and increased traffic at the Baker's Lane end will certainly exacerbate the problem at the Arnold Road end.

Increased traffic by access points along Rattington Street or Baker's Lane will increase traffic in both directions along Rattington Street, pushing traffic through the Chartham Conservation Area and medieval heart of the village, or back up Rattington Street through the narrow sunken lane. Any junction with a new road at Rattington Street and Rentain Court Farm would be in the Chartham Conservation Area, and should not be allowed for this reason. A junction to the south of Rentain Court Farm would not be in keeping with the Chartham Conservation Area, and would impinge on the sunken lane. The Rattington Street routes are already dangerous and unsuitable for pedestrian and cycle traffic due to the narrow roads without escape points. Construction and traffic and increased residential traffic would make these hazards far worse.

The volume of traffic for a large development of 170 houses would create congestion at any access point - any attempt to mitigate this by creating more than one access point would result in rat runs through the village - and there are no suitable access points in any case, due to environmental and heritage reasons laid out above.

Flooding, Drainage, Environment Risk.

The site of N32 is located on high ground to the South of the village. Please refer to attached image drainageOS.jpg

The image shows that the high point of the proposed site is at or above 60m, and drains into the marshy area and stream to the south of the Stour River and Mill site at around 15m. This is a big fall, and the volume and velocity of run-off is considerable. At the moment this is managed in part by drains running from under the hill into the marshy area and stream between the Mill and Rentain Road. The stream then runs under Rattington Street and rejoins the Stour to the East of the proposed

site N31. Putting 170 houses on the proposed site of N32 is likely to have several effects on surface run-off. Firstly, it will decrease the time lag at which run-off leaves the field - this is a well documented effect of development on watersheds. Therefore, a large volume of water will enter the stream in a shorter space of time. In addition, more water will bypass this functional system, and be diverted directly down Rattington Street. Due to its nature of a sunken lane, it already naturally channels surface water. An overload of the stream and Rattington Street is highly likely to cause floods in the medieval centre of the village. The border of the Shalmsford Street, Chartham and Thanington flood warning area is exactly at this point. It is worth pointing out that the proposed development of site N31 is exactly in the path of flooding likely to be caused by the development of site N32. It seems that for N31 to be viable, N32 should not go ahead. More episodes of high and sustained rainfall are predicted due to ongoing climate change.

Proposed developments such as N32 need to take into account their contribution to extreme climate events. The flood risk shown above is a prime example of this. However, the pressure of the climate emergency on arable land is also of primary importance. Removing prime agricultural land from use at this time will contribute to pressures on farmlands and soils, leading to increased use of fossil fuel intensive farming practices.

Heritage and environment

Please see attached file N32OS1872to1873.jpg, an Ordnance Survey map from 1872-73.

This map shows in detail hedgerows and trees which were in existence then, and remain as important protected hedgerows. This hedgerow is shown around the entire boundary of the proposed site N32. Any attempts to put access roads through along Baker's Lane, Rattington Street, or Summer Piece Grove would entail removal and damage to the hedgerow. The 1870's OS map also shows individual trees, some of which may still be in position and alive, or immense historical and environmental benefit.

Rattington Street is also shown. As a historic sunken lane, it could date back to the Iron Age or beyond. Development of or alterations to Rattington Street would be hugely destructive to its unique ecosystem, and to its historical value.

The 1870's OS map also shows that what is now the boundary of Summer Piece Grove and Pomfret Road was once an ancient field boundary. Recent excavations there, presumably prior to building on the land, unearthed artifacts from the Iron Age and earlier. There also remains a small area of woodland, which should be considered for adding to the adjacent area of ancient woodland.

The existing patch of ancient woodland is clearly already under threat and the stress it is under is quite visible. Firstly, the trees under the high tension power lines have been coppiced back, leading to a scar through the wood. Secondly, the woodland contained several ash trees, all of which are showing clear signs of Ash Dieback disease. The 1870's OS map shows that the ancient woodland was linked into the hedgerow system by two hedgerows, providing a wildlife corridor. That has now disappeared, meaning that wildlife and fauna is now isolated. There are signs of littering and dumping in the woodland. I have seen and heard tawny owls, buzzards, red kites, rooks, foxes and badgers using these woods. Large scale development of N32, with the surface run-off, noise and light pollution, increased traffic and human interference will have a hugely detrimental effect on the already threatened flora and fauna in these woods.

Overall, there is clear and visible evidence of historically and environmentally important features which make N32 an invaluable and unique asset to Chartham and the wider area. However, the area is already under stress and has been degraded to some extent since the publication of this map. Any attempts to develop the area and add damaging access roads will inevitably degrade it further, and should be avoided at all costs.

Yours faithfully,

Jez Downs