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Issue Two: Effect on living conditions

10. The Council's concern is that vehicle manoeuvring and parking would lead to an unacceptable increase in noise and disturbance, over and above existing levels. At present, whilst such disturbance is largely confined to the frontages, cars use the existing access. Having regard to the likely level of usage, my view is that additional activity on the access over and above present levels, would be unlikely to impact significantly on the occupiers of No 22 High Street. On the other hand, vehicular activity further down the site would be likely to lead to a significant increase in disturbance, over and above existing levels, which would severely impact on the enjoyment of rear gardens of neighbouring houses. The area of rear garden close to the house is where seclusion and privacy is often most valued. Furthermore, occupiers of neighbouring properties would be likely to be affected by headlight glare as cars manoeuvre in and out of the proposed garages after dark.
11. On balance, whilst I find that increased vehicular use of the access would be unlikely to lead to a significant increase in noise and disturbance for occupiers of the adjoining house, manoeuvring and garaging of cars further down the site would, in my judgement, be seriously harmful to the living conditions of nearby residents. I have concluded on the second issue that the proposed development would harm the living conditions of existing residents. That would be contrary to national advice, which is reflected in draft Policy H4 of the emerging Local Plan.

Issue Three: Effect on Safety.

12. The appeal proposal would be likely to generate more than 12 additional vehicular movements each day in addition to traffic currently generated by Nos 22 and 24 High Street. The access width varies between 2.2m and 3.8m, which is inadequate for larger vehicles wishing to negotiate a way through the narrow archway but cars would be able to go in and out in a forward direction and would be unlikely to reverse over the footpath. I am concerned at the lack of space to allow cars and pedestrians to pass safely, which would increase danger to all users of the existing access. The houses would be some 60m from a refuse collection point, which would add to potential conflict as residents negotiate the access to put out refuse for collection.
13. As I saw, the access is incapable of satisfactorily accommodating safe traffic movements, partly due to its alignment and the position of buildings. Even a small increase in vehicular activity would cause unacceptable conflict with pedestrians. I have therefore concluded that increased vehicular activity on the access would be seriously detrimental to the safety of users. That is contrary to national advice, which is reflected, in part, in draft Policy T12 of the emerging Plan. In reaching this conclusion I have had regard to the Appellant's view that the access would function satisfactorily as it is no different to other similarly restricted accesses off High Street, which function perfectly satisfactorily. I do not share that view. Restricted accesses elsewhere is not a justification for permitting a proposal that would significantly increase vehicular movements on an inadequate access lane, harmful to the safety of users.

Issue Four: Landscaping

14. The Council is concerned that there is neither an Arboriculture Report nor details of the method of protecting two mature ash trees on the site and an off-site sycamore, which