



We object very strongly to this proposed housing development, primarily on environmental grounds. Linslade Woods is currently a County Wildlife Site, and has recently received a SANG designation, (Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space), which gives the area an additional environmental importance. The Woods have a large area of semi-ancient woodland, known primarily as Bluebell Wood, and a more recently planted area of largely native trees and scrub.

The fields on which the housing is proposed currently act as a buffer zone between the Woods and the noise, light and atmospheric pollution of the busy Soulbury Road, helping to minimise severe disturbance and also act as a wildlife refuge and grassland extension to the wooded area, with very active insect and flowering plant populations.

Many scientific papers deal with the negative effects of light pollution on many species, particularly **bats** and **birds**. Bird breeding cycles are disrupted by urban lighting causing them to sing at the wrong time, misusing vital energy that should be put to finding a mate and feeding young. Migrating birds are also affected: migratory species can mistake artificial light for longer periods of daylight, delay their migration and deplete vital resources.

Several species of the UK's heavily protected bats both inhabit and feed in the Woods – Brown long-eared, two pipistrelle species, Noctules. The Bat Conservation Trust can supply ample evidence that artificial light confuses bats – indeed many churches that used to be floodlit have now turned off their night-time lighting to help bats, as foraging in lit areas is unsuccessful. Light from the proposed buildings, especially taller flats which are placed at the back of the development, will reach into the farthest parts of the Woods.

There would also be domestic pets in these proposed dwelling, which would certainly find their way into the Woods and cause the death and damage to birds, small mammals, insects and small reptiles. There is likely to be an increase in soil pollution from dog faeces- and the result will be an increase in the plants that can tolerate such pollution (such as nettles) while the more sensitive plants (such as Wood Anemones) will diminish.

We all know that the UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in Europe; one of the crucial necessities in nature is a network of joined up corridors and areas of land, not a fragmented landscape. This is why the grassy fields are themselves a valuable environmental resource. A fifteen minute visit to the fields in mid July found many butterflies: 5 Marbled Whites, 4 Gatekeepers, 2 Meadow browns, 1 Small White, as well as numerous Cardinal beetles, hoverflies and other insects. We hear over and over about the loss of insects – well, there are a lot on these fields.

There were ant nests, molehills and rabbit droppings to be found, and there is also a Red Fox den. The fields on which the housing is proposed to take place are rich semi-improved grassland. A quick wander round the field shows plenty of Black Knapweed, Creeping Buttercup, Meadow Buttercup, Selfheal, Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil, Meadow Vetchling, Common Vetch, Smooth Tare and many other native plants essential to help pollinating insects and providing a background for small mammal routes.

The environmental value of grassland and meadowland is often overlooked. The UK's key botanical organisation, Plantlife, draws attention to the value of such grassland for carbon storage. "Grasslands that aren't agriculturally improved are able to store more soil organic carbon per hectare than the average 100 year old broadleaf woodland." These fields should remain grassland fields.

Our arguments are certainly not those of a "Nimby" - those of us involved in the Woods - as volunteers, wardens, walkers, nature lovers, care about the wildlife, and the wellbeing it underpins.

We are also concerned on the grounds of the utterly unsuitable road and traffic situation. The Soulbury Road is very busy, cars come fast up the road towards the 30 mph limit near the little roundabout, which leads to two primary schools, one in Derwent Road, and one in Bideford Green.

We, the Friends of Linslade Woods hope the Planning Department will take on board some of these arguments and give a resounding NO to this environmentally damaging and inappropriate development. We have fought developments before - and we shall continue to do so.

I write on behalf of the Friends of Linslade Woods, with the approval of their committee. (J B Knight, Membership Secretary)