

# Accident black-spot risk for Ockley Lane

- **New Report highlights risks of rear-end ‘shunts’ at Access Road site in to new estate**
- **School’s proposed location in the wrong place - should be nearer to Hassocks**
- **Emergency vehicles won’t be able to reach School, Medical Centre or 500 houses in the event of a road accident**
- **Bus stop from the South to the estate needs passengers to cross then re-cross the lane**
- **Developer hasn’t done enough to ensure road safety in narrow Ockley Lane**
- **MSDC at risk of turning a blind eye to serious safety flaws**

An independent report that looked in to the plans prepared by Gleeson Strategic Land for the building of 500 houses off Ockley Lane has found there is a high risk of ‘shunt’ type accidents in the lane during busy periods.

Shunt accidents happen when traffic queues form close to a hill or bend, so fast moving traffic comes around the bend or down the hill and encounters stationary traffic.

Gleeson are planning to build 500 or more houses in a new housing estate joined to Ockley Lane by a single access road, sited between two existing houses.

The report, a Road Safety Audit produced by The Safety Forum sets out that Ockley Lane is quite narrow and has one northbound and one southbound lane, with no evidence in the planning application for a filter lane for traffic travelling south from Burgess Hill intending to turn right in to the new development.

The report’s conclusion is “this may increase the risk of southbound shunt type collisions should queues build up toward the unlit downhill approach to the north of the junction, where queues may not be expected and stopping may be more difficult due to the downhill approach. Also, there is a concern that drivers of vehicles waiting to turn right may feel pressurised (by traffic building behind them) to accept gaps in opposing traffic and therefore



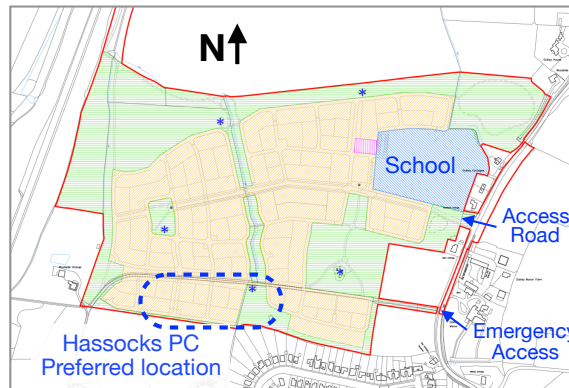
make poor decisions in turning right leading to a risk of right turn collisions”.

The report recommends that if the junction is to remain in its proposed location, then alternative measures are needed to protect right turning traffic from behind and the opposite carriageway.

The planning application submitted by Gleeson to Mid Sussex District Council includes a 2-form entry primary school for up to 400 children. The school has been sited at the Northern-most point of the development. Hassocks Parish Council in their response to MSDC has welcomed the school’s inclusion but believes it should be located at the Southern end of the development so it is as close as possible to Hassocks, and “would make best use of the existing and proposed pedestrian accesses and would substantially reduce the traffic burden created by school traffic. As the UK Government has declared a Climate Emergency we are duty-bound to minimise unnecessary journeys that add to climate heating. By requiring physically able school- children to walk to school, it will also keep them fitter”..

In a further twist, by siting the school at the Northern edge of the development, the school will be as close to Burgess Hill as it is to Hassocks and the concern is

*The school at the Northern end of the development, is as close to Burgess Hill as the centre of Hassocks.*



this will attract many children to travel in by car from Burgess Hill. It has been suggested that 100 or more children may be driven in to school from the North daily.

With so many cars waiting to turn right across the heavy morning commuter traffic heading towards Burgess Hill between 8.30 and 8.45 in the morning, local residents are worried there will be a build up of high numbers of cars queuing, waiting to turn right as more cars travel at speed down Ockley Lane from the narrow section just North of the Access Road junction.

This will lead to a considerable risk of shunt accidents at this location each week-day morning.

*Recent car accidents in Ockley Lane caused by cars coming fast down the hill and round the bend from the North*





Of greatest worry to the residents of the Ockley Hamlet is that right in front of their eyes, young children's lives could be put at risk from the shunt accidents that have been predicted at this junction.

The accident risk is made worse by the proximity of the estate's single access road on to Ockley Lane to a local resident's drive. The owners of Hawthorn Cottage maintain their driveway sits **under 20 feet** from the new road, and their driveway's curved edge actually crosses over with the curve from the new Access Road. West Sussex County Council have been consulted by Mid Sussex District Council over the highways layout, and have stated that they see no problem with siting a new road so close to an existing drive. This is despite WSCC's own guidance not permitting new driveways to be built within 15m of a road, The big concern is that a car, van or delivery lorry could be pulling out of the private drive as cars attempt to exit the Access Road from the estate.

The Safety Forum's report on its Road Safety Audit commented "There may be poor awareness from vehicles approaching Ockley Lane on both the access junction and driveway of traffic on the other approach. This could result in vehicles exiting simultaneously and crossing into one another on Ockley Lane. There may also be hesitation or confusion as to what other vehicles are doing as a result of the proximity of the accesses and difficulty in anticipating movements of other vehicles. This could also result in emerging / turning or shunt conflicts".

The single access road sits in a piece of land **only 20m wide** between the two properties to each side. Ockley Lane is a bus route and during the 10-year house building programme, very large vehicles up to 18.5m long and 2.5m wide will be accessing the site daily. The Lane has a width restriction of less than 2m.

If an accident comes about at the entrance to the access road through this narrow opening, the size of the vehicles involved would most likely completely block Ockley Lane and the access road. Given the shunt risks identified and the closeness of the access road to the driveway for Hawthorn Cottage, this is a **significant and tangible risk**.

With the Lane and access road closed, there will be no ability for vehicles to access in to the estate.

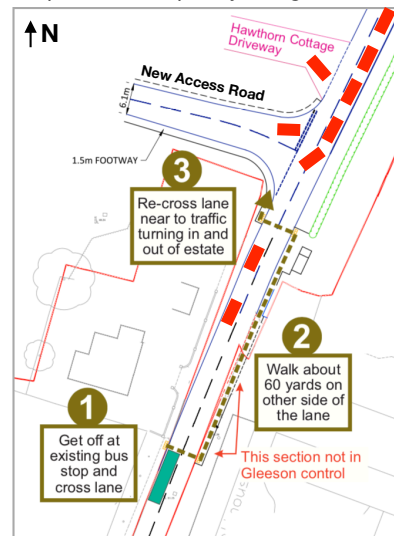
**Emergency Vehicles** would not be able to reach the 500 houses, the primary school or the planned medical centre in the estate.

Gleeson's transport report claims the footpath / lane between the fields on the West side of Ockley Lane that belong to Ockley Manor will be made up in to a bridle way, which will enable it to act as some sort of emergency access in to the estate. However, that would require a permanently locked gate at the entrance to the path. Gleeson have claimed to MSDC that they have control of the path, but have so far failed to disclose that there are two houses with rights of way over the footpath / lane to access their lands: Woodside Grange has a right dating back to 1896 and Ockley Manor has a long held right of way as the only means of access to its two fields.

If the current access road plans make it through planning there is no provision for emergency vehicles to be able to get access to the 500 houses, the school or the medical centre if there is an accident blocking the junction between the Access Road and Ockley Lane.

This is a very serious safety concern for this development.

Meanwhile, Gleeson's plans are so poorly designed that they show passengers arriving by bus from the South will exit the bus on the same side as the estate, then have to cross Ockley Lane, walk a distance on the other side of the road (along the grass verge owned privately by the house there, so not under Gleeson's control) then re-cross the road to arrive at the estate!



## How YOU can make a difference

**Make an objection to this planning application  
BY 22nd September 2019**

**Easiest Way:** go to [www.savehassocks.co.uk](http://www.savehassocks.co.uk) and follow the link to the MSDC website for where you need to write your objection. Hover your phone camera over the code below for instant connection.

Alternatively, write to:

**Planning Services Division  
Mid Sussex District Council  
Oaklands Road  
Haywards Heath  
RH16 1SS**

**Quote Reference DM/18/4979**

**Hover your phone camera over  
this code for a link to  
Save Hassocks**



**On this important matter of Safety  
YOUR local opinion will count !!**