

Hazell & Jefferies - Public Inquiry to be held on 23rd May 2023 at 10:30am

Comments by Ian Reynolds, a local resident of Goring Heath:

Notice of a Public Inquiry to be held on 23rd May 10:30am at the Crown Plaza, Reading, RG1 8BD, by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner - in relation to Hazell & Jefferies Ltd Application to vary Vehicle Operator's Licence OH0206566.

In early 2021 the roads contractor Hazell & Jefferies applied to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) to vary their operator's licence. The contractor who is based in Coombe End, Whitchurch Hill planned to add a further twenty heavy goods vehicles and four trailers to an existing operating centre at Woodcote Saw Mill and a further fifteen vehicles to a new site in Penny Royal, Goring Heath. Hazell & Jefferies currently has four licenced Operating Centres, which are regulated by the OTC, and they currently hold a licence which includes for forty-five vehicles and five trailers. This licence is renewable every five years and was up for renewal in February 2022.

During 2021 there were significant numbers of representations, objections and complaints from local residents, parish councils and the district council. To the extent that a hold was put on the variation application, and plans for the Public Inquiry, at that time, were put in abeyance. Many of the representations, objections and complaints were generally made on the grounds of the environmental impact arising from increased vehicular movements on small rural unclassified roads, together with noise and disturbance. See this Press Release from April 2021:

<https://www.henleystandard.co.uk/news/public-notice/161445/road-repairs-boss-denies-expanding-his-lorry-fleet.html>

In the above article from the Henley Standard published online on 27th April 2021, Mr Richard Hazell for the contractor stated "I can promise, categorically, that we're not going to run a single extra lorry and everything we've got will stay where it has always been kept."

Hazell & Jefferies have a Standard National Licence issued by the Office of the Traffic Commissioner for 45 vehicles and 4 trailers which are located at 4 Operating Centres. They want to add 20 vehicles and 4 trailers to the Woodcote Saw Mill site and a further 15 vehicles at a new proposed Operation Centre at Penny Royal. The revised total of vehicles would be 80 vehicles and 8 trailers yet Mr Hazell categorically denied that he was increasing the size of their fleet. This was just not correct and a detailed rebuttal of the Hazell & Jefferies statement was sent to the Henley Standard and published the following week.

The Public Inquiry was supposed to happen in 2022 but this was cancelled by the OTC for reasons that are not apparent. Many representations, objections and complaints have subsequently been deemed invalid by the OTC, largely on 'technical' or procedural grounds. Mine, because I did not copy Hazell & Jefferies with my complaint - I had erroneously assumed that the OTC would copy the applicant with my complaint. Other local residents were fearful of intimidation and made submissions that were anonymous - they too have been deemed invalid. I have been invited to attend the Public Inquiry as an 'Observer' but expressly forbidden from making any contribution: "...you will not be permitted to present your case at the Inquiry, or address the Inquiry in any way". I expect many others will have had the exact same response - it is a Public Inquiry, but the public and concerned parties, have been effectively gagged.

I am just a local resident and member of the public. I am certainly not trying to stop Hazell and Jefferies business. I personally would be happy simply if some restrictions on operating hours were put in place. For example, at the Woodcote Saw Mill site. With regard the 'new' proposed site at Penny Royal, Goring Heath, my hope would be that someone with an ounce of sense would have a look at the site and deem it unsuitable on safety grounds. Whilst I cannot speak at the Public Inquiry, I have given them some points for consideration.

Ian Reynolds

pumps100@fastmail.co.uk

Goring Heath

15th May 2023