Dear Chorley Council,

I am writing to you as a local resident to object to the application 0/00377/FULMAJ for the development of 115 dwellings with associated parking, landscaping, drainage, pump station, layout of roads and footways and other associated works at land adjoining Cuerden Residential Park Nell Lane Cuerden.

The access to the development and failure to take into account biodiversity, recreational or safety issues is of great concern.

There was a previous similar planning application by Redrow Homes that was refused by the Council in July 2019 due to insurmountable traffic safety issues arising from construction traffic on Nell Lane. I disagree with the information contained in the planning application concerning public footpath access. Nell Lane is very narrow, with ancient Oak trees on both sides. It is not possible for two cars to pass; one has to squeeze up against the side to allow on coming vehicles to safely pass. There is no footpath.

The lane is very popular recreational access to Cuerden Valley Park and is increasingly used by horse riders, pedestrians and cyclists. During the pandemic this use has increased dramatically.

Some years ago consideration was given to making this lane a ‘green road’ but sadly the grant funding was curtailed. This would have recognised the rural and recreational nature of the lane. Cuerden Valley Park was planned by the New Town Commission as the key ‘green lung’ for this area. It was envisaged that development would eventually surround the park but keeping safe access for users would seem important, not everyone travels by car.

* There is a cumulative impact of this proposed development and recently completed residential development, of +700 dwellings. The capacity of the local road network is over capacity, in addition to other local infrastructure such as schools and health facilities.
* The applicant ought to provide at least 26 affordable homes in line with the policies of the adopted Core Strategy, which in Policy 7 stipulates a requirement of 30%. The National Planning Policy Framework, Paragraph 64, has a minimum of +10% affordable housing contribution. Developers are required to deliver housing types and tenures specified in Local Development Plans. The legal judgment in case of [2018] EWHC 991 (Admin) established that land value must be informed by policy, and consequently, it is not acceptable for the Council to grant permission for an application that is deficient in developer contribution.
* The design of the scheme is not of sufficiently high quality as set out in the Council’s Supplementary Planning Guidance titled the Design Guide. This sets out that a key objective of the Council is to raise the level and quality of design of new buildings in the built environment and in doing so reinforce its unique character.
* There are a number of trees that are the subject of Tree Preservation Orders.
* Hedgerows Regulations were introduced in 1997. These Regulations provide a statutory duty to local planning authorities to afford legal protection for important hedgerows. Broadly, a hedgerow is considered important if it is over 20 metres long, at least 30 years old and is home to a certain number of plant or animal species, including birds, mammals and insects. Its historical significance and whether it contains features like a hedge bank, ditch or tree are also taken into account. I consider the hedgerow in this case to be important under the regulations cited.
* Linked to the above points The 25 Year Environment Plan set out a desire to leave nature in a better condition than we found it, meaning development should by Environment +, and the Government Guidance was for +10% Biodiversity Net Gain. The site is located within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone. The development would incur the loss of 3 hectares of grassland. The trees also provide habitat for bats, and birds which must be properly surveyed. The site also provides a wildlife corridor to and from Cuerden Valley Park; such corridors are vital in supporting biodiversity (as set out in the Lawton Report, “Making Space for Nature”). It is important that Chorley and neighbouring authorities in Central Lancashire decide planning applications in accordance with best practice. The area is rich in biodiversity and this should be protected and enhanced in the future. It is clear from the understory that these trees are remnants of a more ancient woodland, sustaining bluebells. As residents we are fully aware of the range of bird species in the trees, particularly owls.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]