

**Residential development comprising up to 200 dwellings,
land 'to the east of Station Road, Elsenham'
Planning Inspectorate Reference: S62A/2022/0012
Uttlesford District Council Reference: UTT/22/2760/PINS**

Representations from: Elsenham Parish Council

By email to: section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

14 November 2022

Elsenham Parish Council has considered the documents relating to the above application, and wishes to make objections as below.

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1. Location

The site is in Henham parish, hard against the border with Elsenham, such that the Bloor Homes 'Phase 1' approved development of 350 dwellings is in Elsenham parish. It is generally recognised that development as proposed would have a considerable impact on Elsenham village and these representations by Elsenham Parish Council are made on that basis.

The address which has been given for the application, Land East of Station Road Elsenham, is very misleading. There is no access from Station Road to the land proposed for development, and it is impossible that there could be such an access, owing to the position of the railway.

2. Development in Elsenham

Uttlesford District Council is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and the Local Plan is currently stalled. It is claimed that the application will help to make good the deficit.

In referring to Elsenham, the applicants mention 'a modest amount of development evident now' (*Design and Access Statement*, 2.4). The statement is entirely inaccurate. The position is that, whatever the situation in Uttlesford as a whole, there is no deficit in recent or scheduled housing in Elsenham, as the following table of approved applications since 2012 makes clear:

Reference	Date of Approval	Description	Number	Status
UTT/2166/11/DFO	15 Aug 2012	Orchard Crescent	53	Complete
UTT/12/6116/FUL	7 Feb 2014 (appeal)	Old Goods Yard	10	Complete
UTT/13/2917/FUL	23 July 2014	Hailes Wood	32	Complete
UTT/15/1121/FUL	9 Dec 2015	Hailes Wood, additional	3	Complete
UTT/14/3279/DFO	1 May 2015	North of Stansted Road	155	Complete
UTT/15/2632/DFO	5 Feb 2016	South of Stansted Road	165	Complete
UTT/17/0335/DFO	6 July 2017	Elsenham Nurseries	42	Complete
UTT/17/2542/DFO	22 Dec 2017	North of Leigh Drive	20	Complete
UTT/19/0462/FUL	6 Nov 2019	West of Hall Road	130	S106 signed

UTT/19/0437/OP	4 Sep 2020 (appeal)	Rush Lane	40	Detailed application awaited
UTT/21/3269/DFO	1 June 2022	North-west of Henham Road	350	Commenced
UTT/19/2470/OP	31 Dec 2020 (appeal)	West of Isabel Drive	99	Detailed application lodged
Small schemes	Various	Various	36	
TOTAL			1,135	

The last four schemes in the table above are all committed developments, but none of them has reached the stage where any new homes have been occupied. Thus, at the time of writing, there are agreements that a further 619 new dwellings will be built in Elsenham. Clearly there is no shortage of committed new house-building in the village.

If all applications are considered strictly on their merits, there is no regard for the cumulative impact; but the point must be reached where it needs to be considered, and Elsenham has already got beyond that point.

The number of households in Elsenham is shown in the 2011 census as 980. The percentage increase since 2011 is thus 116%.

If this application was granted, the total increase since 2011 would be $1,135 + 200 = 1,335$, which would represent a total increase since 2011 of 136%.

Development already committed in Elsenham is wholly disproportionate, amenities in the village have not kept pace with the rapid expansion which has taken place, and road traffic access routes are already at, or beyond, capacity.

Notwithstanding all the new developments, Essex Highways have failed to invest in road improvements in the area, and there has been very little in the way of improved infrastructure. If, perchance, this application should be granted, the least which should be offered in the S106 agreement is a substantial contribution to the new Community Hall: see 10. below. It is badly needed, and contributions have been agreed with other local developers.

3. Road transport

Elsenham is very curiously situated from the point of view of transport links. It has a railway station, but the road access consists of little more than a series of country roads and narrow lanes. In particular, the main access route, via Stansted Mountfitchet, has long been acknowledged as unsatisfactory. Other routes into the village – Ugley Green

and Hall Road also present significant problems as regards access and traffic flow congestion.

Stansted Mountfitchet

The configuration at Grove Hill, Stansted Mountfitchet, is unique, and close study and several site visits are needed in order to understand the full nature of the problem. The applicants can claim no such familiarity, and rely on models rather than any first-hand observation.

The applicants describe Grove Hill as a 'signal controlled junction' (*Transport Assessment*, Part 1, 4.8.9, Table 4-11), or a 'signalised junction' (*Transport Assessment*, Appendix N, 5.1, Figure 3 (Part 7, pdf p. 190 of 213)) but that is incorrect. The signals control a narrow stretch of road, on a bend and on the hill, where one-way working is necessary. The proximity of the junction of Lower Street and Grove Hill, at an inconvenient angle, is a complicating factor, but the signals do not control the junction. If the configuration cannot be described accurately, it is unlikely that it will be analysed correctly.

A further complicating factor is the presence of permitted parking on the hill above the lights (towards Elsenham) and in close proximity to them, such that there is always a risk that vehicles approaching the lights from Elsenham will block the road for traffic travelling towards Elsenham. Gridlock indeed occurs on occasion, and is only prevented from being a regular occurrence through local knowledge and unwritten convention. The normal rule of the road is that, where there are parked cars on one side of the road, priority rests with the drivers on the other side of the road, whose progress is not impeded by the parked vehicles. If all drivers observed this rule consistently at all times on Grove Hill, gridlock and frustration would quickly ensue.

A driver approaching the lights from Elsenham must make a decision on approaching the first of the parked cars. If s/he is not certain of being able to clear all the parked cars without forming a queue of, roughly, more than four vehicles beyond the parked cars, then s/he must wait at a sufficient distance above the first parked car such that vehicles can proceed up the hill. Most of the time, this works well enough, but there are occasions when miscalculations occur, or some of the finer points of the conventions are not mutually agreed, leading to conflict, or a driver new to the route is simply unaware of what is needed. In any event, long queues build up, particularly at peak times, waiting to get through the bottleneck.

The consultants make a valiant attempt at a diagrammatic representation of the Grove Hill configuration (*Transport Assessment*, Appendix N, 5.8, Figure 5 (Part 7, pdf p. 193 of 213)), but the diagram is not easy to construe and is out of proportion. On the ground, there is usually space for four cars (not larger vehicles) to the south of the parked cars. The stretch of road where parking is permitted allows for up to 11 vehicles, over a length of perhaps 60 metres, and therefore the parked cars on the diagram do not occupy enough space.

Similarly, an attempt has been made at a diagrammatic representation of Chapel Hill, where a long stretch of permitted on-street parking makes for congestion, and again the diagram is inaccurate (*Transport Assessment*, Appendix N, 5.7, Figure 4 (Part 7, pdf p. 192 of 213)). In fact, there are four bays where parking is permitted, and the cars which can be accommodated, from the Elsenham direction, number 13, 3, 2 and 3. The excessive length of the first section of parked cars often makes it impossible to see from the bottom of the hill what is happening at the top; drivers proceed uphill hoping for the best, with the inevitable consequence that sometimes a blockage occurs which can only be resolved by vehicles downhill running along the pavement. At the top of the hill, a chicane effect is produced, with consequent confusion sometimes as to whether priority is to be ceded.

Generally, the diagrams and their descriptions illustrate what is wrong with the whole approach of attempting to reduce complex situations on the ground to models. The results are too mechanistic; perfect knowledge and perfect behaviour are assumed. There is no scope, for instance, for drivers waiting too far downhill at the top of Grove Hill, or buses meeting each other, or HGVs and other traffic mounting the pavement. The conventions themselves are not always entirely clear, which is only to be expected, since they are only conventions. The model shows how drivers behave in a simulation, not the complexity of actual behaviour on the ground.

It has been suggested above that the model is necessarily unreliable, but in some respects it worked rather too well for the comfort of the applicants:

A total of 20 simulation runs were conducted for each of the model scenarios. One simulation run in the AM peak (random seed 9) was excluded from the analysis as some of the driving behaviour observed during this run was deemed unrealistic due to modelling limitations. The main issue related to the way in which modelled vehicles are not reliably able to pre-empt the blocking of downstream sections of road. Local drivers were observed to consistently apply a courtesy behaviour to prevent gridlock from occurring in narrow areas of the network but vehicles in the model were not able to reliably do this due to their inability to predict outcomes before they've happened. Any runs where model limitations result in gridlock situations occurring have been excluded from the results analysis (*Transport Assessment*, Appendix N, 8.3 (Part 7, pdf p. 199 of 213)).

A total of 20 simulation runs were conducted for each of the model scenarios. Four simulation runs in the AM peak (random seed 3, 9, 12 and 17) and one simulation run in the PM peak (random seed 2) was excluded from the analysis as some of the driving behaviour observed during these runs was deemed unrealistic due to modelling limitations (*Transport Assessment*, Appendix N, 9.3 (Part 7, pdf pp. 205-06 of 213)).

The admission is truly extraordinary. The applicants construct a model, the purpose of which should be to determine, amongst other things, whether gridlock occurs. However, they have decided *a priori*, on wholly inadequate grounds, that gridlock does not occur,

and thus they remove instances of gridlock from their results. Exactly what purpose is served by running a model where the applicants feel able to discard results which they do not like is very difficult to say. In fact, as is shown by personal testimony, gridlock does occur and in this respect at least the model was accurate.

Also notable in the extract above is the statement, 'Local drivers were observed to consistently apply a courtesy behaviour to prevent gridlock from occurring in narrow areas of the network'. The corollary is 'Drivers unfamiliar with the unique configuration were unable to apply courtesy behaviour because they had no knowledge of what was needed, and gridlock occurred in narrow areas of the network'. As for the consistent courtesy of local drivers - any local driver will testify that there are exceptions.

An appeal against refusal of an application to build 800 dwellings to the north-east of Elsenham was dismissed by the Secretary of State in 2016, largely on grounds of the inadequacy of the road network:

Nevertheless, even if the increase in congestion would not amount to a severe impact, it remains the case that the scheme would bring significant volumes of additional traffic to a village at a significant distance from employment and services. It is unlikely that traffic could be accommodated on the surrounding roads, contrary to LP Policy GEN1. This also weighs heavily against a conclusion that the scheme would amount to sustainable development (UTT/13/0808/OP; APP/C1570/A/14/2219018, Decision by the Secretary of State of Communities and Local Government, 25 August 2016, report by the Planning Inspector, 15.99).

In the period since the dismissal of this appeal for 800 dwellings, applications have been agreed for a total of 619 new dwellings in Elsenham, as summarised in 1. above. The present application is for a further 200 dwellings. There is also a further application for 130 dwellings awaiting determination under the S62A procedure.

At the appeal inquiry into the application to build 99 new homes on two sites to the west of Elsenham in November 2020, Essex Highways's objection was withdrawn on the morning of the first day of the Inquiry when the applicants proposed a second detector at the top of Grove Hill, in order to reduce the queues from the Elsenham direction downhill into Stansted Mountfitchet (UTT/19/2470/OP; APP/C1570/W/20/3256109).

Three points are relevant:

- a proposal on the same lines was brought forward at the appeal relating to the application for 800 dwellings (UTT/13/0808/OP) referred to above, but withdrawn because it was concluded it would make little practical difference;
- the scheme has yet to be implemented, and remains untested;

- any success in reducing queue length downhill into Stansted Mountfitchet can only result in increased queues in Lower Street, which is of greater consequence since they will tend to back up to the mini-roundabout at the western end of Lower Street, resulting in delays to traffic, some of which is not bound for Grove Hill.

Grove Hill is the most difficult of the impediments facing drivers in Stansted Mountfitchet, but it is not the only one. The whole of the main route towards the south and west, via Grove Hill, Lower Street, Chapel Hill and the junction with Cambridge Road is difficult and subject to delays and congestion, such that some local residents avoid the route and seek longer alternatives.

Ugley Green

Due to the ever-growing problems of congestion and delays through the Grove Hill traffic signals and elsewhere in Stansted Mountfitchet, the use of the access route into the village via Station Road, Bedwell Road, Ugley Green, Snakes Lane and Pound Lane has increased significantly by both residents and other road users, particularly heavy lorries. The Ugley Green route is formed by a number of narrow country lanes with acute difficulties over forward visibility owing to parked vehicles at the Elsenham end, and with as many as eight sharp bends in a distance of little more than a mile. These restrictions notwithstanding, this route may now be regarded as Elsenham's second main access route into the village.

To further exacerbate the problems, the Ugley Green route has become the preferred access route for heavy lorries and HGVs as it avoids the use of Grove Hill and/or Hall Road. To date, no attempts - successful or otherwise - appear to have been made by the relevant highway authorities to enforce the 6'6" width restriction that currently exists along the entire length of this access route (that is, the Pound Lane junction with the B1383 through to the New Road junction adjacent to Elsenham station).

Hall Road

Hall Road is the designated access route into Elsenham for all HGVs and for heavy lorries delivering landfill to the defunct sand quarry (off Hall Road) on the southern outskirts of the village. Unfortunately, although designated as an HGV access route, the road nevertheless has insufficient width to allow two heavy lorries/HGVs to pass each other safely. This has led to these vehicles mounting the grass verges, which in turn has caused significant damage and created many dangerously deep, muddy depressions along the roadside. For cars and vans, these deep depressions present a major hazard to motorists.

Summary

The argument that some number of new dwellings will not make a material difference has been made several times. Even on the applicants' own results, the consequences of their development are not negligible. But the cumulative effect must be considered. If a single application had been made for the 619 already approved since 2019, plus the 200 which are the subject of the present application, a total of 819, there can be no doubt it

would have been rejected. The same outcome should befall an application which leads to a comparable cumulative effect.

The aspirations for modal shift away from the private motor vehicle are modest indeed, with a target reduction in journeys by car/van driver from 66% to 59% (*Framework Travel Plan*, 6.6.4, Table 6-4). But even if this should be realised (which is not inevitable) it remains the case that, if the application is granted, many journeys would be by private motor vehicle, increasing pressure on the inadequate local road network.

4. Road access into the development

A single point of road access is proposed, that is, via the access route for the approved development for 350 dwellings now known as 'Phase 1' to the south of the application site. The access road meets Henham Road at what is described as a 'T' junction - but as the junction is on the inside of a considerable bend, it resembles more of an arrowhead: ↑

Much concern was expressed about this proposal with regard to the outline application for 350 homes, UTT/17/3573/OP.

The junction has now been constructed, allowing an appraisal to be made on the ground, and concerns as to the safety of the junction are exacerbated rather than allayed. Most traffic leaving the site will turn right, towards Elsenham. To the left, full visibility is only obtained through looking through the rear nearside window, as well as the front nearside window; the pillar between front door and back is thus an obstruction as well as the pillar between windscreen and side window. A passenger would make for another obstacle. A van driver would find it very difficult, since there would be no rear side window. It is certainly necessary to turn through much more than a right angle. To the right, it is also necessary to turn through somewhat more than a right angle, and a rise in ground levels does not help.

Turning left out of the site is not ideal either, since the road to the right tends to curve round behind the driver.

The junction is in Elsenham parish, and Elsenham Parish Council is much concerned as to its safety. It is accepted that it has been approved for 350 dwellings, but the Parish Council is strongly of the view that it should not be approved for further development, particularly as no second access for road traffic is proposed.

5. Site layout

It is stated:

At this stage the dwelling mix, parking provision and site layout is unknown. These matters will be determined during the preparation of subsequent reserved matters application(s) (*Planning Statement*, 2.4).

The statement is unsatisfactory. The applicants need to show how 200 dwellings can be accommodated on the site, having due regard for parking to UDC standards (which require three spaces for dwellings with four or more bedrooms), gardens to the Essex Design Guide, and an appropriate limit on storey heights.

The application is for 'up to' 200 dwellings, which would seem to leave open the possibility of some lesser number being proposed with the detailed application. However, the Parish Council is well aware from previous experience that if an application stating a maximum number is approved in outline, the developer will take that as justification for cramming in that number, at whatever cost, when the detailed application is made.

In fact, the applicants do include a proposed dwelling mix, on the *Illustrative Site Layout* (although it has not been found elsewhere). This shows that it is proposed that the large number of 64 out of the 200 proposed dwellings would have four or five bedrooms. All of these houses would require at least three parking spaces in order to comply with UDC's parking standards, and they would need to take account of the general disapproval of triple-tandem parking.

The applicants also provide a document *Parameter Plan: Building Heights*. This shows that roughly 40% of the area given over to housing would be available for development up to three storeys high. The proposal is most alarming. Henham and Elsenham are rural villages, and Elsenham Parish Council has fought, with success, against proposals to construct three-storey dwellings on the grounds that they are completely inappropriate to the area. It is not acceptable for this proposal to be carried over into a detailed application.

A 'Concept Masterplan' is included (*Design and Access Statement*, 4.2). It includes '6. A circular leisure route through open space, along the Site's periphery, with opportunities for a trim trail or nature trail'. But the route is shown on the plan on the eastern and part of the northern boundaries only. It should be continued around the whole site.

It is strange that only one link is shown to the footpath and cycleway to the west of the site which is part of the agreed application for 350 homes. Residents of dwellings in the north of the application site would only be able to get to the station by first walking southwards. Clearly a link would be needed in the north-west of the site.

To conclude this section, there are several reasons why the applicants have failed to show that 200 dwellings can comfortably be accommodated on the site. Due regard for parking and gardens standards needs to be shown; building heights of three storeys are unacceptable, particularly to the considerable extent proposed; the 'circular leisure route' needs to be completed; better access to the railway station is required.

6. Station car park

The Figure illustrating the 'Conclusions and Benefits' includes 'Land safeguarded for a potential extension to Elsenham Station car park' (*Design and Access Statement*, 8.1, Fig 36). The undertaking has not been noted elsewhere in the application documents. Such provision would certainly be needed.

The present station car park is close to capacity. Roughly three-quarters of the provision in the car park is reserved for season-ticket holders. The remaining quarter is available on a pay-and-display basis. At any time during normal working hours, the number of spare spaces in the pay-and-display section is typically restricted to a single-digit number.

The large number of houses scheduled in Elsenham but not yet occupied, plus this proposed development, gives a total of 819 more dwellings, with further approvals in Henham village. Many new residents no doubt will walk to the station, including those from the proposal now under consideration, should it be approved. However, not all the new dwellings approved but not completed are in close proximity to the station, and there will be further pressure on car parking spaces, both in the form of season tickets and daily tickets when time runs short in the morning. The car park will need to be expanded at some time in the fairly near future.

On the *Illustrative Site Layout*, the western end of the northern boundary is hard up against the southern boundary of a long rectangle which is in fact the station car park, meaning that expansion of the car park to the south would be impossible. To the east, there is a jink in the proposed boundary, severely limiting any expansion in that direction.

It is very clear that the perimeter of the proposed development must be adjusted to allow for further expansion of the station car park; the area available for housing would thereby be reduced.

7. Surface water attenuation

Proposed new dwellings in the north-west of the site are annotated, 'Housing overlooking a surface water attenuation feature' (*Design and Access Statement*, 5.3, Fig 28, 6.), and a large expanse of open water is shown. The applicants for Bloor Phase 2 should talk to the proponents of Bloor Phase 1 - if they did, they would learn that expanses of open water are not permitted owing to the proximity of Stansted Airport and the consequent risk of bird strikes. The proposed surface water strategy is flawed.

8. Hailes Wood

The applicants state,

A pedestrian and cycle connection to the residential development located to the east of Hailes Wood will also be considered in order to improve the permeability of the Site (*Transport Assessment*, 4.5.36).

Here again, Bloor Phase 2 need to talk to Bloor Phase 1. If they did, they would learn that there is no prospect of such a link being established, and it has been agreed that the presence or possibility of a link will not be included in sales material.

The consequence is that the times for pedestrian access to the school and the pub are much increased to the point that they would be regarded as excessive by many residents. The available routes would be either through the road access off Henham Road, or via the footway to Elsenham Station, which would involve lengthy delays when the level crossing is closed - the footbridge would not be viable if taking small children to Elsenham Primary School.

9. Village amenities

The *Design and Access Statement* includes the following by way of Preface:

A variety of village events are held each year: a village fete; the Flower Show Society's Annual Show; an Arts & Craft Fair and a firework display in the autumn; and Santa and Gift Galore in December. Elsenham also has a number of small clubs as well as tennis courts, a bowling green, a cricket field, a youth football club and 2 pool teams. The village has a number of small businesses, a pub and a primary school.

This is out of date in several respects. The firework display, Arts & Crafts Fair and Gift Galore have not been held for very many years. The cricket field is no longer in use. The two pool teams are unknown to present residents.

More fundamentally, however, the statement betrays an easy assumption that residents from a substantial new development can readily be accommodated within Elsenham, without regard for the increased pressure on facilities and amenities. The village is in fact at bursting point. The following are badly needed:

- A cemetery. There are no spaces remaining in the village cemetery beyond those already reserved. Undoubtedly demand for cemetery space will grow in keeping with the increased size of the village. The provision of a new cemetery is problematic due to the lack of suitable burial land, which has already been occupied by the new housing developments within the village.
- Employment. There is nowhere near sufficient local employment opportunities and the resultant need to travel outside the village is a leading reason for the road congestion which is itself a leading reason why further housing development is unsustainable.

- Shops. There is a small general store and three other outlets in the centre of the village and another outlet functioning mostly as a small cafe next to the station. The increased population in the village could support more shopping amenities.
- Surgery. Elsenham surgery is considerably over-subscribed, with long waits for appointments.
- Sporting facilities. The demand on the playing field in the centre of the village is such that ancillary provision is now an urgent requirement.
- Public meeting rooms. Those rooms which are available are normally booked solidly, such that one-off bookings are difficult to arrange.

The piecemeal development to which the village has been remorselessly subjected has not been accompanied by a concomitant increase in facilities.

10. Community Hall

One of the very few facilities which has been promised in Elsenham is a new community hall. In 2012/13, applications were made for three large new housing developments in Elsenham. After some adjustment of numbers, these became 175 north of Stansted Road (UTT/0142/12, UTT/14/3279/DFO; UTT/15/3090/OP, UTT/17/2542/DFO), 165 south of Stansted Road (UTT/13/1790/OP, UTT/15/2632/DFO) and 130 west of Hall Road (UTT/19/0462/FUL). A suitable plot of land adjacent to the playing field was made available for a new community hall, and a total amount of £1,020,000 was agreed to be contributed by the three developers, pro rata the number of homes on each site. The first two developments went ahead and are now complete; the third ran into problems but has now been approved and the S106 agreement was signed very recently. There was no provision for the contributions to be index-linked, and it has become evident that the total amount will be insufficient to meet the village's requirements.

Uttlesford District Council's *Statement of Community Involvement* has included the following for some years:

Prior to submission or during determination of an application, discussions will be held between planning officers, and applicants and representative of the parish council to discuss issues such as infrastructure, amenities and matters subject to any S106 (6.8).

Unfortunately, despite many representations, until very recently UDC has shown little inclination to abide by its own policy and the Parish Council was not involved in drawing up the S106 agreement for several developments.

A new community hall would be of great benefit to the whole village, including the residents of this development, should it be approved. The village is desperately short of

communal space. There is no hall of sufficient size to accommodate large events. The shortage of meeting rooms is acute - the limited facilities which are available tend to be taken by block bookings, such that one-off meetings are very difficult to arrange. An office for the Parish Clerk is much needed. The land made available for a new community hall is adjacent to the playing field, which means that much-needed changing rooms could be included.

Bloor Homes have made no contribution with regard to the agreed 'Phase 1' approved application for 350 homes, despite the Parish Council's suggestion that they should consider a donation. The contribution for the recently agreed 130 homes on the Bovis Homes site west of Hall Road is £310,000, a sum which was fixed back in 2012. The Parish Council now suggests that a minimum contribution for the application under consideration should be based on that figure plus 25% for inflation, that is, $(£310,000 / 130 \times 200) + 25\% = £596,154$.

This request is made with the knowledge and agreement of Henham Parish Council.

The Parish Council has made progress in defining the requirements. The Appendices include the following documents:

A draft and incomplete Business Plan;
Whitworth 01. Proposed Sketch Plans;
Whitworth 03 Proposed Visualisations.

Elsenham Parish Council requests, without prejudice to other representations, that provision for a new Community Hall as outlined above should be included in any Section 106 agreement attached to this proposal.

11. Conclusion

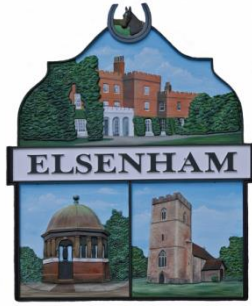
The applicants note as follows:

Paragraph 111 of the NPPF states that "development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe" (*Planning Statement*, 3.16).

It has been shown above that there are both considerable concerns as to highway safety and that cumulative impacts on the road network must now be rated as severe (4, 3). Cumulative impact is a major concern, in view of the vast amount of recent approved housing applications in the village (2, 9). It has not been demonstrated adequately that as many as 200 dwellings could be accommodated on the site (5, 6). The surface water scheme is not viable (7), and the suggested access via Hailes Wood is not available (8).

Creeping incremental development has to stop somewhere. It should have stopped in Elsenham before now. Elsenham Parish Council is firmly of the view that the proposal should be rejected.

**Appendix 1.
Community Hall:
Draft and incomplete Business Plan**



ELTENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

New Community Hall

Business Plan

(DRAFT)

Document Control

Approved on behalf of the Parish Council	
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Change History

Version:	Date:	Reason for change:
DRAFT A	January 2021	
DRAFT A2	March 2021	New sections 2.2.4, 4.2, 4.3, 5, 7

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[To be completed]

1. Summary

[To follow]

2. Identifying the need

2.1 Current situation

Elsenham at present has two community halls; the Village Hall and the Memorial Hall, each of which currently offer a range of facilities and services to the village and its community.

2.1.1 Village Hall

The existing Village Hall was built in 1984/85 and is now approximately 36 years old; the hall forms a part of the Elsenham Church of England Primary School, which is located at the eastern end of the High Street, directly opposite to the entrance to Hailes Wood.

The hall is a joint-use hall and the facilities are shared by three parties; the Primary School, the Elsenham Village Hall Charity (the Village Hall Management Committee, VHMC) and the Incumbent and Church Wardens of Elsenham (Elsenham Church). Because of this sharing arrangement, each of the parties has exclusive access to and use of the hall at different times of the week and/or day.

The current hall facilities that are available to users/hirers is the main hall (17m x 9m), a small upstairs meeting room, male, female and disabled toilets, a small, cupboard-based kitchen and good off-road parking facilities adjacent to the hall. The main hall has a capacity of up to 200 people.

The hall is used predominantly by the Primary School, during school hours, Monday to Friday. The Village Hall Management Committee has use of the hall during the weekday evenings and Sunday from 5.30pm and all day on Saturday. Elsenham Church has access and use of the hall during the daytime on Sunday for the holding of church services.

In recent years, Essex Education Authority and the Primary School have introduced a number of alterations to the hall facilities that have changed its use and its availability to the other joint-users. This in turn, has led to the hall becoming more limited in its suitability for use by village-based organisations, activities and social events.

2.1.2 ECA Memorial Hall

The Memorial Hall is located on an area of land within Elsenham Playing Field, adjacent to Elsenham Bowls Club and the tennis courts at the south-eastern corner of the Field. The building was built in 1987 and is now approximately 33 years old.

The hall is owned and managed by Elsenham Community Association (ECA), a registered charity; and although of a limited size, offers rooms and facilities to a wide range of local organisations and businesses. The building provides a main hall (11m x 6.5m), small meeting room, kitchen and servery, male, female and disabled toilets, storage cupboards and an extensive parking area next to the hall. The maximum capacity of the hall is up to 80 people maximum.

The Memorial Hall hosts many of the village organisations and activities, both during the daytime and in the evening, particularly during weekdays. It is also used by various commercial hirers for health-related activities (yoga, keep fit, dance, etc.).

Due to the form and the type of construction used, future expansion of the existing hall is limited and constrained. It is likely that should extensive expansion of the hall be considered, demolition of the existing hall may be necessary to allow a new, larger building to be erected. There are no plans at this time by the ECA to enlarge the hall and add to its facilities.

2.2 Challenges and Limitations

Due to the increasing number and size of new residential developments built within Elsenham over the last 10 years, the size of the village and its population has increased significantly. Over the last 7 years, it is true to say that the village has grown from under 1,000 residential homes to over 1,500 homes in 2021 and this number of dwellings is due to increase further with the addition of further planned new developments.

With the significant rise in the population of the village and the increased demand for community facilities and services that are generated, the ability and suitability of today's Village and Memorial halls to meet these growing demands is becoming more difficult to achieve and sustain.

2.2.1 The Village Hall

The village hall may be regarded as offering limited benefit to the village. However, the following constraints apply:

- Only weekday evenings, all-day Saturday and Sunday evenings are available for public use and hirings.
- The cupboard-kitchen offers very limited/basic catering facilities and space to users and hirers.
- Very little / limited storage facilities for regular hall users/hirers.
- The ongoing requirements and demands of the Primary School/Education Authority can dictate changes to the ongoing usage of the hall.
- It is possible and/or probable that at some point in the foreseeable future, the overall ownership/management of the Village Hall will revert to the Primary School/Essex Education Authority. Should this occur, the continued availability and use of the hall for hire by others (i.e. village organisations, commercial organisations and individuals) is uncertain.

2.2.2 The Memorial Hall

The Memorial Hall is available for use and hire, all-day, 7-days a week and is used by many of the village's organisations, groups, commercial hirers and individuals. However, the following constraints apply:

- The hall and its facilities are limited in size, restricting accommodation for up to 80 persons maximum.
- Limited size of kitchen and its facilities. Kitchen cupboard space shared between regular hall users.
- Adequate internal cupboard storage space; 3 walk-in cupboards off the main hall, but this is heavily in demand by regular hall hirers.
- Meaningful expansion to the size of the existing hall restricted due to structural design and construction-method used for the hall.

2.2.3 Other 'Village Hall' Facilities in other venues

One other building / facility exists in the village that has been used (occasionally) to host certain village activities; this is the Elsenham Bowls Clubhouse, located on Elsenham Playing Field, close to the Memorial Hall. The following constraints apply to its facilities:

- The Clubhouse exists primarily for use for bowling and social purposes by Bowls Club members; there are occasions when the Club committee allows the clubhouse to be used / hired by other, outside organisations and individuals.
- Secondary use of the clubhouse is restricted by the Club committee and only very occasionally allowed.
- Building and site layout has been designed to function as a bowls club, i.e. changing rooms and toilets, a main hall with bar and kitchen (for match lunches, club social activities, etc.) and an external bowling green adjacent to the building.
- The clubhouse is of limited size, similar in size to the Memorial Hall, and therefore space and accommodation is restricted, typically up to 80 people.
- The site of the bowls club and its location close to other buildings and facilities on the Playing Field, effectively limits, or even prevents, any further meaningful expansion of the existing building.

2.2.4 Meeting rooms

In addition to a large new hall, there is also a need for additional meeting rooms. The Village Hall is used very occasionally for large meetings and for events which demand the maximum amount of available space. The Memorial Hall is used routinely for monthly meetings of the Parish Council and for meetings of committees of the Parish Council and meetings of other bodies. Before the pandemic, it was usual for the Hall to be booked solidly through block bookings, making for great difficulties in arranging either further such bookings or for occasional, one-off, meetings.

The only other available meeting rooms are:

- i. 'Old Frank's', in the High Street, nearly opposite to the school. These are the office premises of the Church of England for the combined parishes of Elsenham, Henham and Ugley. The upstairs room can accommodate a meeting of up to eight persons, with space for about another twenty members of the public. The room is subject to availability, with priority obviously being given to church purposes.
- ii. Village Hall, upstairs meeting room. Access is via a narrow winding staircase, with space for no more than six participants. The room is only available outside school hours, and is unacceptably noisy if there are activities in the hall below.

2.3 Future Community Facilities going forward

The aim of the New Community Hall project is to create and build a fit-for-purpose, self-sustaining, multi-user Community Hall that includes rooms and spaces of various sizes for community uses ranging from Parish Council meetings, community meetings, out-of-school groups, village clubs, societies and organisations, exercise, keep-fit and dance classes, through to larger events, including birthday parties, weddings and community fundraising events. In addition, it is proposed that the new hall also incorporate a dedicated Parish Council office, together with team changing facilities to support the Playing Field's sports facilities. A good provision of storage space within the hall is considered essential. Overall, the new community hall will provide a major part of the facilities needed to support and sustain an ever-growing and diverse village community.

In order to provide sustainability to the new hall, it is proposed, where possible and practicable, to incorporate the latest energy and cost-saving technologies into the design, construction and ongoing maintenance of the building. These goals will include:

- Reduce energy consumption
- Reduce maintenance costs
- Reduce cleaning costs
- Minimise on-site supervision costs, using a combination of technology and trusted-key partners.

3. Validating the Need

Elsenham has grown substantially over recent years with no commensurate improvement, or extension to, its existing community facilities. All of the recent emerging Local Plan strategies have categorised Elsenham as one of the Key Villages within Uttlesford and, as such, it is seen as a major focus for development in the rural areas, with a role as a provider of services to a wide rural area.

In order for Elsenham to be able to achieve this role, the provision of a wide range of community services and facilities is necessary. Good indoor community meeting space is therefore an essential part of achieving this, together with a need to ensure its ongoing sustainability.

3.1 Characteristics for community facilities

A number of characteristics may be used for indoor community facilities in Key Villages such as Elsenham, these being:

- i) A Key Village should feature at least one large facility which offers extended access to all community groups at competitive rates and should also be available for use throughout the day, seven-days-a-week.
- ii). The village should have at least one high quality main hall space suitable for a variety of uses, potentially including club sport and physical activity; theatrical rehearsals/performances and social functions, ideally in a central and accessible location in the community. The facility should also offer smaller, separate meeting spaces and significant storage.
- iii) All facilities, including toilets, should be fully accessible, or retro-fitted to ensure compliance with Disability Discrimination Act legislation wherever possible. Additional facilities, for example changing rooms, should be fit for purpose and compliant with design best practice (for example Sport England).
- iv) Facilities should include a sizable kitchen/catering area (potentially professionally equipped) for the preparation of food and drink. It is desirable that the hall be licensed, with a personal licence holder, to permit a larger number of events. The facility may also require employed staff.
- v) All new-build facilities should be designed with significant energy-efficiency measures in place. This includes energy efficient lighting (including timers and automatic sensors); double/triple glazing; draught proofing; insulation; appropriate central heating etc. Additional measures, such as the capture and use of grey water, photovoltaic cells, Combined Heat and Power (CHP), should also be explored.
- vi) All current facilities should be upgraded where appropriate and feasible to ensure that management / revenue costs are kept to a minimum.

3.2 Other criteria

Apart from the required facilities, key location criteria also need to be considered, i.e.:

- i) Location within the village centre for easy walking distance for most village residents.
- ii) Site should provide secure parking facilities for those further afield in the parish, or less mobile.
- iii) Potential to integrate and safeguard multiple users, improving utilisation and reducing costs.
- iv) Distance/orientation relative to neighbouring residences to minimise noise disturbance.

Elsenham has only limited “village hall” facilities in other venues:

- i) Elsenham Village Hall – a joint-use hall, large main hall, limited availability and facilities, good parking, but future availability questionable.

- ii) Elsenham Memorial Hall – small hall with good facilities, available 7-days-a-week; good parking and moderate hiring fees.
- iii) Elsenham Bowls Club – private clubhouse, with good facilities but a small main room. Occasional hirings allowed at discretion of the Club Committee.

3.3 Evidence of community consultation and support

A presentation was given at the Elsenham Annual Parish Meeting held remotely via Zoom on 22 April 2021, in order to introduce the idea of the new Community Hall to the residents of the village, and gauge support for the concept. It was explained that funding would be provided via Section 106 agreements with developers, but that it was likely that there would be a deficiency which would be made good through a loan from the Public Works Loan Board, to be financed through an increased precept. A show of hands was asked for on the question as to whether residents would be prepared to agree to an increase in the precept of, for example, 50p/week over 25 years. The result was 17 in favour and 3 against. The degree of support is regarded as promising.

4. Researching possible solutions

4.1 Reviewing design and location criteria

The new facility must meet a number of design and location criteria:

Criteria	Requirement	Approach	Nearest comparator
Size	Concurrent safe use of separate spaces from 30m ² to 200m ²	Flexible spaces capable of being used separately for a variety of purposes	Memorial Hall
Accessibility	Disability-friendly	Disabled toilets for each main space with additional “changing place” for future-proof accessibility	Village Hall Memorial Hall
Noise	Neighbour- friendly	Separation from neighbours to minimise noise disturbance	Village Hall Memorial Hall
Drop-in meeting spaces	Community group and small-business friendly - allowing drop-in WiFi-enabled meeting or work spaces throughout the day and evening	Drop-in business /community group meeting spaces available throughout the day and evening	Memorial Hall No WiFi
Safeguarding	Protecting vulnerable elderly and young	Spaces capable of being “locked-down” when occupied by vulnerable groups	Memorial Hall
Car-parking	Adequate not to exclude residents from within parish but outside village	Adequate parking space to enable concurrent use of the adjacent playing field	Village Hall Memorial Hall
Cycle storage	Adequate to encourage use by all village residents	Per UDC policy ??	None

Centrality	Within village central area to maximise walking	Site is within 800 metre walking distance of the village centre	Village Hall Memorial Hall
Control	Building under Community or Parish Council control	Parish Council favoured	Memorial Hall
Location	Proximity to Elsenham Primary School to provide safe “one-stop” drop-off and pick-up	Site adjacent to existing Elsenham Playing Field	Village Hall
Height	Below that of the immediate environment	Barley House 3-storey flats nearby	????
Style	Imaginative and original so as to extend and renew the distinctive character and traditions of Elsenham built environment	Two-storey pavilion-style within village development framework.	None

4.2 Community Hall location

In 2012 Uttlesford District Council took note of the three large housing applications in Elsenham, and made the decision that provision should be made for a new Community Hall through the Section 106 agreement relating to application UTT/0142/12/OP, whereby an area of land measuring approximately 72.5m X 26.5m would be made available.

The land is situated immediately to the west of the playing field, which is in the ownership of the Parish Council, with access either from Leigh Drive or from Isabel Drive/Southfield Close. The location is such that it is believed that all the criteria included in the table above can be satisfied.

The area is intended to include sufficient car parking space. It is adjacent to the ‘top’ playing field car park and thus car parking could be used in common by both areas, but it is assumed that the Hall will need to include sufficient car parking space for its own purposes.

The transfer of the land to the Parish Council should be achieved shortly, having been delayed through legal complexities.

4.3 Planning implications

The site is within the development limits of Elsenham, on a site which was made available through the aegis of Uttlesford District Council. Provision for the connection of services has been made in Southfield Close. It is therefore considered that there should be no major obstacles to obtaining outline planning approval.

5. Design evolution

Initial analysis showed that several requirements needed to be met:

- A large main hall.
- Kitchen.
- One large and one small meeting room.
- Ample storage space for the several groups expected to use the hall.
- An office for the Parish Council. At present, the clerk to the Parish Council uses a dedicated room at her own property, an unsatisfactory arrangement which cannot be guaranteed to continue indefinitely. Sufficient space is needed for the possible future accommodation of a second office employee, and for meetings of committees of the Parish Council.

- Changing rooms. As stated above, the designated location of the hall is adjacent to the playing field, which is much used by Elsenham Youth Football Club.

In summary, the requirements are:

ROOM	SIZE (metres)	AREA	COMMENTS
MAIN BUILDING			
Main Hall	10.0 x 20.0	200	Must be larger than existing village hall
Kitchen / food Preparation	8.0 x 5.5	44	
Servery / Bar Area	4.0 x 2.7	10.8	Adjacent to kitchen
Meeting Room 1	8.0 x 5.0	40	
Meeting Room 2	3.0 x 3.0	9	
Foyer / Entrance Area	6.0 x 3.0	18	Typical size, could be larger
Toilets (female)	4.0 x 2.7	10.8	
Toilets (male)	4.0 x 2.7	10.8	
Toilet (disabled)	2.7 x 1.5	4	
Storage Room 1	6.0 x 3.5	21	Tables and chairs
Storage Room 2	7.0 x 2.5	17.5	Regular Hall users?
Storage Room 3	7.0 x 2.5	17.5	Regular Hall users?
Storage Room 4	4.5 x 2.5	11.25	Regular Hall users?
Storage Room 5	3.0 x 2.5	7.5	Hall cleaning equipment / maintenance
Parish Council Office/Meeting Space	10.0 x 5.0	50	External access to/from PC office
Parish Council Storage / Toilet / Misc.	3.0 x 2.7	8	Room to adjoin PC office
Plant / Electrical Room	3.5 x 3.0	10.5	
SPORTS CHANGING FACILITIES			
Team Changing Room 1 incl. toilets	6.0 x 4.5	27	
Team Changing Room 2 incl. toilets	6.0 x 4.5	27	
Officials Changing Room 1 (+toilet)	4.0 x 2.5	10	
Officials Changing Room 2 (+toilet)	4.0 x 2.5	10	
EXTERNAL FACILITIES			
Disabled Toilet	2.2 x 1.5	3.3	Access from outside of building
Toilet (female)	2.2 x 1.5	3.3	Access from outside of building
Toilet (male)	2.2 x 1.5	3.3	Access from outside of building
TOTAL		574.55	

6. The future Community Hall

[Details to follow later]

7. Capital Finance

In 2011/12, Uttlesford District Council made provision for the financing of the Community Hall through contributions from three large development proposals which were under consideration. Two were approved and are now completed. The third ran into difficulties at the detailed application stage and was eventually replaced by a full application, which has been approved and awaits completion of the Section 106 agreement. An extended period of time has now elapsed since the original S106 agreements were concluded, but there was no provision for any of the contributions to be index-linked.

The three developments are:

Outline application	Detailed application	Dwellings	Status	Amount
UTT/0124/12/OP	UTT/14/3279/DFO	155	Complete	£380,000
UTT/15/3090/OP	UTT/17/2542/DFO	20	Complete	
UTT/13/1790/OP	UTT/15/2632/DFO	165	Complete	£330,000
UTT/19/0462/FUL		130	S106 pending	£310,000
Total		470		£1,020,000

Costings have been obtained from reputable undertakings, and the estimates currently available put the total cost of the new hall variously as £1,681,770, and £2,659,600 excluding VAT (which the Parish Council is able to claim back). The figures exclude the costs of fitting out. These figures are of course estimates, and it remains to be seen what quotations are forthcoming when the project eventually goes out to tender.

Several recent applications have been made for further housing developments in Elsenham, some of which have been approved. The Parish Council hopes that further contributions will be available for the Community Hall, although Uttlesford District Council has not proved helpful in securing such provision.

It is suggested that where such funds are made available, the amount should be calculated from the most recent S106 agreement, that is, UTT/19/0472/FUL, on a *pro rata* basis. The calculation would thus be £310,000 / 130 per dwelling.

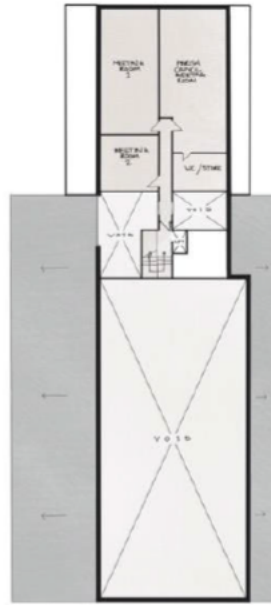
The Parish Council intends to make good the deficiency through a loan from the Public Works Loan Board, to be financed through an increased precept. Preliminary investigations suggest the requisite amount could be secured through an increase in the parish precept of about £30 pa per Band D household over a period of 25 years. It is understood that such an increase would need to be confirmed through a parish referendum.

Appendix 2.
Community Hall:
Whitworth 01. Proposed Sketch Plans



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE
0 1 2 3 4



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

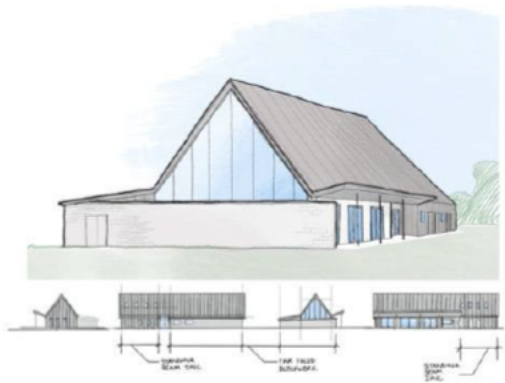
Elsenham Community Hall
Sketch Scheme, Proposed Plans.
Job No: 6337 Drawing No: 02 Drawn By: JPH

whitworth

Chartered Architects & Chartered Building Surveyors

NOTE: Do not scale from this drawing. Confirm all dimensions on site. Refer any discrepancies to the architect before work is put in hand. Read this drawing in conjunction with the relevant sections of the specification, schedule of works and other drawings. This drawing is copyright of whitworth.

**Appendix 3.
Community Hall:
Whitworth 03. Proposed Visualisations**



Concept 1.

Utilising a modern palette of materials, zinc, glass and fairfaced block work to form modern, bright and inviting spaces built to endure and designed to be a community hub for the local area.

Finished face white block work with light grey mortar to wrap around the building horizontally, enclosing the main hall and storage.

High level glazing to gable allowing light into main hall area.

Double height hall to create open inviting and bright main activity area also allowing sports, eg. badminton.

Standing seam zinc to roof and to wrap down walls to sports changing areas and WCs.

Large aspect doors open onto playing fields and terraces.

Canopy shades high level sun and rain.



Concept 2.

Utilising a traditional palette of materials, brickwork and timber cladding.

A wrap around canopy provides cover and shade to the terrace with oak posts.

Pane the roof to match with local buildings.

Soft red brickwork with projecting plinth.

**Elsenham Community Hall
Sketch Scheme, Proposed Visualisation**

Job No: 6337 Drawing No: 022 Drawn By: JH



Chartered Architects & Chartered Building Surveyors

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