

[REDACTED]

The Planning Inspectorate
3rd Floor
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol BS1 6PN

7 March 2023

Ref: S62A/2023/0015

Grange Paddock, Ickleton Road, Elmdon, CB11 4GR

Dear Sir,

I am writing to express significant concerns over this planning application. The proposed development:-

1. Will be built on countryside which lies outside the previously declared development limit
2. Will be unsuitable for a village which is unsustainable
3. Will be incompatible with the rural village environment and character

The application does admit to these issues but seeks to set them off against apparent advantages which are, in fact, non-existent. The documents which argue in favour of the proposal contain information which is either inaccurate or factually incorrect and, in some instances, is misleading.

I will briefly draw out some examples from the document entitled **Design and Access, Heritage, Landscape and Planning Statement**

1.6 There are no existing services in the village to which people might walk. The last public house closed in 2013. The Village Hall is too small for any significant community activity. The Church is only used once a month for the benefit of Elmdon and five nearby villages. This is one of the reasons why the village is deemed unsustainable for any future development.

4.5 The proposed development is to be on an elevated site and would have a very significant negative impact on the general character of the area in terms of openness and landscape. The drawing **005 Existing and Proposed Site Section** illustrates this. All the houses will dwarf the existing hedgerow.

4.11 The development will not, by any stretch of the imagination, “protect or enhance the appearance and particular characteristics of the countryside in which it is set”. The existing houses in Ickleton Road, some old (including two listed properties) and some built in the 20th century, blend well together to create an attractive rural street scene. A housing estate of this nature, built on rising open countryside and outside the previously defined development limit will destroy for ever one of the unique features of Essex countryside in the vicinity of the village conservation area.

4.38 - 4.39 It is true that the site is in easy walking distance of the village centre however there are no services at the centre (or indeed anywhere else in the village) that anyone would want to walk to. The only retail or leisure services within the area are at least 4 miles distant and require travel by car.

4.40 It is unreasonable to make comparison with Manuden which is larger and has a range of services including a school, a pub and a community centre.

4.41 - 4.49 These paragraphs summarise the Inspector's report following the appeal over the planning application at Manuden. They are nothing to do with this application and therefore irrelevant.

4.51 - 4.64 These paragraphs merely recite extracts from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where developments are proposed near heritage assets. They have no relevance to this application. Two prior cases are quoted with no detail but one appears to relate to a wind farm which cannot possibly have relevance in this case.

4.99 This paragraph talks loosely about the need for a 40% provision of affordable housing as required by planning policy. However in Section 18 of the main application form (**Outline Some Matters Application Form**) clearly states that all the properties will be Market Housing.

4.117 - 4.128 These paragraphs relate to an appeal in the case of 45 houses to the South of Henham. As with the comments about Manuden above the village is much larger, has existing services and also buses throughout the day linking Stansted Airport and Bishop's Stortford.

I now make comments about the document entitled **20221216-TS-Rev A-Grange Paddock Ickleton Road (Transport Statement)**.

3.3 There are no services in Elmdon. There is one bus stop/shelter but no buses. The pub has been closed since 2013. There is no registered childminder. All the other facilities at Great Chesterford, Ickleton and elsewhere require travel by car.

3.4 - 3.10 None of these bus services serves Elmdon apart from 444 which is a school bus. It only runs on weekdays during term time and makes only two trips per day, one out and one in. Access to rail services requires a car.

3.13 Ickleton Road, in the vicinity of the proposed development, does not have two marked lanes. The South side of the road is always occupied by parked vehicles. That leaves one narrow lane (3 metres) to be used by traffic in both directions. That traffic includes tractors, large agricultural equipment, large horse transport and heavy lorries delivering agricultural supplies.

3.24 Even though there are no designated cycle routes, Elmdon is very popular with, and much used by, cyclists.

5.1 - 5.4 This section on trip generation defies common sense. From Appendix H the 12 sites chosen for traffic data are all within major conurbations. Moreover they appear, from examination of online maps, to be within walking distance of public transport links and retail outlets. The suggestion that 18 family dwellings would only generate between 9 and 11 vehicle movements in the two peak hours of the day is unrealistic and misleading.

Finally I wish to draw your attention to the document entitled **Grange Paddock - Statement of Community Engagement**.

1.5 The applicant has not sought to involve local people in developing this planning application as the points following will demonstrate.

1.8 The local community is concerned about piecemeal development but by no stretch of the imagination has the applicant "enthusiastically sought to work with the residents of Elmdon..."

1.9 There is no evidence that the applicant has "listened to and taken note of feedback..." as that feedback has not been documented. There are no facts available.

1.10 The suggestion that the “proposed layout has a distinct character to reflect the general layout of dwellings in the village” makes no sense - it will be different in character, built form and layout in every respect.

2.1 - 2.3 There was one short exhibition of the site layout on the date mentioned, called at only 2 days notice. There was no advanced publicity. No other consultations or discussions have taken place.

3.1 Strong objections were voiced by most of those who managed to attend the exhibition but their comments were not documented. There is no record of those who attended.

3.2 There has been no change to the layout other than the re-siting of the main access road.

3.3 The concern about traffic speed and volume remains a major concern. The Transport Statement does nothing to address this issue (see above).

4.1 - 4.2 One brief exhibition in the late afternoon does not represent the applicant “seeking input”. Indeed it seems that the applicants have deliberately avoided any engagement with the community.

I therefore urge you to dismiss this wholly inappropriate planning application. I would further suggest that a personal visit to Elmdon and an inspection of the environment will convince you of this.

Yours faithfully

Graham Knight