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Dear Inspectors

UTT/23/0246/PINS Consultation on S62A/2023/0015 Application for outline planning permission for the erection of 18 dwellings including provision of access road, car parking and residential amenity space, a drainage pond, and communal open space, with all matters reserved for subsequent approval except for means of access and layout

Grange Paddock Ickleton Road Elmdon Essex

We, William Ridley and Jules Ridley, object to this planning application as it will have a direct impact on our residence, The Hoops, a grade II listed property, situated immediately opposite Grange Paddock. The rural setting and outlook from our property will be forever impacted.

We also take the opportunity to comment on the whole application, as we believe it will have material heritage, countryside and environmental harm on the village of Elmdon and the wider parish.

These harms significantly outweigh the benefit of this proposal for a major development to build 18 houses on greenfield land beyond the village development limits. Fundamentally:

- Elmdon is not a sustainable settlement
- Grange Paddock is not a sustainable development

The application provides the following key issues for us as immediate neighbours:

- Material concerns over highways safety
- Poor site accessibility
- Lacks a sewage strategy.

In preparing it the applicant has ignored the Village Design Statement and executed extremely weak community involvement.

The only benefit that this application addresses is the issue of housing supply in Uttlesford District Council, which Elmdon has been contributing to and will no doubt continue to contribute to. A total of 9 houses have been approved, 7 houses built since March 2016, via sensitive minor development on infill and brownfield sites.

Elmdon is relatively isolated despite its proximity to larger centres of population and transport links. It still retains its rural characteristics, almost having a 'lost world' feel. In the main it is a quintessentially attractive English village of considerable charm. Trees and hedgerows play an important part in contributing to the quality of the area and the views into the settlement along the three main routes are the most important. Open spaces and gaps between houses contribute to the feel of the village. The churchyard and two small greens, one centrally located and the other on Ickleton Road to the east of the church, together with water features in the Elmdonbury area, represent landscape features that materially contribute to the village's character and appearance.

If allowed to proceed, this proposed development of greenfield land will most likely set a precedence for further applications to develop greenfield sites around the village, materially changing the protected character and appearance for ever.

We don't believe there are enough sites for Elmdon to ever become a sustainable settlement. There are villages and towns in Uttlesford that are higher up the Settlement Hierarchy that are far better suited for such major development, and as such this proposal and any future greenfield development proposals around Elmdon should be refused.

If the Uttlesford Local Plan was up to date, and the Council as Local Planning Authority could meet the 5 year housing land supply (which it is only just shy of) we do not believe this application would have been put forward. This is a clear case of a developer cynically seizing the opportunity to try it on whilst the system is in Special Measures.

Elmdon is not a sustainable settlement

Elmdon is not sustainable for development, as it is not a sustainable settlement.

It has been identified as a 'Tier B Village' in the 'Settlement Hierarchy' being used to inform the emerging Local Plan spatial awareness strategy. It is the fourth and final tier, characterised by having a population of less than 450, no primary school and limited services. A Type A village, by contrast

will have a primary school, limited services such as a public hall, public house or post office. And a population of 450-3,183.

Services

We refute the applicant's statements relating to provision of services in Elmdon and the wider District. This includes a lack of public transport, lack of infrastructure, and complete reliance on private transportation. The applicants Design and Access Statement document is misleading as it clearly states Elmdon has facilities which make the village sustainable for development.

The current services in Elmdon are:

- a small village hall - operates intermittently not on a day-to-day basis
- and the Church – operates intermittently not on a day-to-day basis
- a phone box functioning as a book exchange
- and a barrow selling eggs from outside a house
- The pub has been closed for many years (since 2012) and needs extensive investment

The nearest manned convenience shop is at Ickleton, 2.9 miles along a national speed limit road with no footway, or there is a shop in a shed at The Red Cow, Chrishall 1.3 miles by national road and or byway or footpath. Grocery shopping is undertaken by most residents at Saffron Walden, which is the nearest town, at approximately 6.8 miles distant.

The wider social infrastructure supporting Elmdon is extremely limited:

Schooling:

- Primary School – oversubscribed at Chrishall as demonstrated in the application to retain a temporary classroom (UTT/22/1654/FUL)
- Secondary School – Newport; Saffron Walden (oversubscribed)

Healthcare:

- The nearest doctor is at Great Chesterford (oversubscribed), approximately 5 miles distant,
- Addenbrookes hospital is more than 13 miles;
- Securing Doctors and dentists appointment is currently very challenged

Transport infrastructure

The Applicants Transport Statement implies the village is serviced by a multitude of bus routes. This is inaccurate.

The only bus that serves Elmdon is the 444. Bus route 444 runs Monday to Friday (school days and term time only) between 07:30–16:25 with one bus in the morning and one in the afternoon. The service provides access to Barley, Heydon, Chrishall, Littlebury, Newport and Saffron Walden.

All other routes need to be accessed by walking to Chrishall (1.3 miles) or Ickleton (3.3 miles) along a national highway with no pavement or combination of highway/byway/footpath. Or access by car.

Good rail connectivity is available but all are only accessible by car or potentially bike: Great Chesterford (2.9miles), Whittlesford (4.8miles), Audley End (3.8miles)

Population

Settlements with larger populations attract and require a wider range and amount of jobs, transport infrastructure, open spaces etc. They also have a greater capacity to accommodate development than smaller settlements, whose character, infrastructure and services may be overwhelmed by a similar amount of development.

The Village Design Statement published in 2019 found that the parish of Elmdon contains a number of population centres. Elmdon is the largest village containing approximately 150 households with Duddenhoe End including the hamlets surrounding it having just under 100.

In the recent March 2022, UDC Settlement Hierarchy paper, Elmdon Parish has been estimated to have population of 643 residents as at 2019 (Source: UDC Settlement Hierarchy paper), and 280 households (average 2.3 residents per household). This was a minor increase from 2011 census, where the parish was found to have 610 residents in 269 households.

Assuming 60% of households are in Elmdon, and an average residents per household of 2.3, it can therefore be estimated that the Elmdon village population is c. 386. This is well short of the minimum number of residents to become a Type A village.

The proposed development will in our opinion overwhelm the character, infrastructure and services of the village.

Form of settlement

Elmdon is effectively a linear settlement, comprised of two main roads: the High Street running roughly North/South joined at the village green by Ickleton Road running East/West with which it forms a “T” adjacent to St. Nicholas Church. Both are through roads. The Ickleton Road runs down a small valley (Don in old English) where most of the houses are located. There are “outlying” houses, the occupiers of which regard themselves as being part of the village.

The heart of the village around the church and green, forms the conservation area, which runs halfway down Ickleton Road, and does not include the Grade II listed The Hoops.

Major development can probably only be undertaken on the fringes of the settlement, but this results in urban sprawl and the loss of agricultural land, with the development sited at the furthest point from any services at the centre of the village – should any be supportable.

There remains scope and opportunity for small scale infill development on brownfield sites as identified by the Village Design Statement, which found “limited support for building on green sites and for infill or backland development. Opinion suggests that new building should be on previously developed sites. The re-use of traditional buildings is supported, with 90% supporting the idea of converting redundant buildings into houses. New buildings should not impact on the rural setting nor on the views of surrounding farmland. The overwhelming message from the community was to consider building what was needed and residents see this as being small 2 or 3 bed homes (74%). The residents feel strongly that only smaller houses will contribute to maintaining the diverse age range needed for enhancing the community feel”.

Since the Village Design Statement was launched in March 2016 and prepared using supporting questionnaire which identified a need for approximately 5 houses. Since, 9 houses have been developed or proposed in Elmdon, along with further housing built in the wider parish, all contributing to the UDC housing supply.

- September 2020 - UTT/20/2486/FUL | Proposed 2 no. semi-detached dwellings (3 beds) | North Of Laburnham View High Street Elmdon Essex

- September 2020 - UTT/20/2294/FUL | Demolition of 2 no outbuildings and erection of 1 no dwelling.(4 beds | Serenity High Street Elmdon CB11 4NL.
- June 2018 - UTT/18/1061/FUL | Conversion of outbuildings to form 2 two bedroom dwellings. (2 beds)| Church Farm Ickleton Road Elmdon CB11 4LT
- June 2017 - UTT/17/0415/FUL | Proposed new dwelling (2 beds) | Adj. 6 The Glebe Ickleton Road Elmdon CB11 4LY
- September 2016 - UTT/16/1101/FUL | Conversion of barn to 2 no. dwellings (3 bed & 2 bed)| Barn 4 At Elmdonbury Bury Lane Elmdon Saffron Walden Essex CB11 4NF
- May 2016 - UTT/16/0747/FUL | Residential conversion of barn to 4+ bed house | Barn At Elmdonbury Bury Lane Elmdon Essex CB11 4NF

We continue to support minor development on infuill/brownfield sites in Elmdon that will contribute to housing supply.

Will Elmdon ever become a sustainable settlement?

The application includes as appendices to the Design Statement, appeals allowed at Manuden and Henham (population 1,200 in 2011 census).

Both of these villages have substantial existing infrastructure including schools, community centres, shops, employment, restaurants and cafes. Elmdon has none of these, and we would suggest has nothing in common with these two case studies. Manuden has had significant investment in infrastructure, and this has resulted in correspondingly significant levels of development.

We have also compared Elmdon to Barley, where there is currently a development for 12 houses (Drayton Close) underway on the site of the Drayton’s Garage. It has a population of c. 662 (2011 census) and similar levels of infrastructure to Manuden.

	Manuden (UDC)	Barley (North Herts)	Elmdon
Population (2011 census)	677	622	386
Households	c. 290	c. 270	c. 168
Distance to Major Town	3.5 miles to Bishops Stortford	3.5 miles to Royston	6.8 miles to Saffron Walden
Road Network for Access	B-road, roads, lanes	B-road, roads and lanes	Narrow protected lanes
Local Services	Primary School, Nursery, 2 pubs, shops, employment, restaurants and cafes, church	Primary School, 2 Pubs, Shop and PO, Coachworks, Care home, Church, Village hall, GP Surgery, Horse riding school	Village hall, church

Based on the comparison to Manuden and Barley, to truly become a sustainable settlement, Elmdon would arguably need to double in size, requiring at least 100-150 further households not 18, or 36, as this applicant had previously proposed.

This would require material greenfield development at multiple sites around the village – many of which are likely to be disregarded as within a conservation area or contain ancient monuments - and significant investment in infrastructure improvement – road widening, waste water treatment plant upgrade, electricity cabled underground, public transport etc.

Clearly such major development would have to be shown to meet the objective of sustainable development, which we believe would be difficult, and as a result we do not believe Elmdon can ever become a sustainable settlement.

Grange Paddock is not a sustainable development

The objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs:

An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.

No medium/long term economic benefit: In our view, this development will only provide short-term economic benefit to those working in the construction of the site, none of whom will be Elmdon residents or local, and the applicants. It will not impact the Elmdon economy in any way, as there are no services that the construction workers will be able to use. There is no medium to long term economic benefit, because the scale of the development is not large enough to support local services. It will likely be an additional 42 residents, bringing the population of Elmdon to c. 420, still not large enough to become a Type A village capable of supporting local services such as shops, schools or pubs.

A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

Affordable Housing: We agree that this development would provide some social benefit in the form of housing supply in an area that is close to an established settlement. We also agree that it will also provide social benefit in the form of affordable housing.

However, we have concerns about the consistency of the applicant's approach in this regard and believe the applicant will be seeking to simply make a section 106 payaway for affordable housing elsewhere in the district which would not achieve the delivery of 7 affordable homes in Elmdon.

From the Applicants Design, Access, Heritage and Landscape Statement: *"In this case, the applicant is willing to provide seven dwellings as affordable properties to be managed by one of the Council's preferred Registered Providers (40% of 18 = 7.2, rounded down). This could be secured by way of a Section 106 agreement."*

This appears to align with the 'Application for Outline Planning' form, which only details 18 Market Houses in the Proposed Housing sections, with no allocation to Social rented, Intermediate or Key Worker.

The UDC Housing Response to the Application dated 21 February 2023, details what the affordable requirement will be, but does not clearly state whether they will need to be delivered at the site. *“The affordable housing provision on this site will attract the 40% policy requirement as the site is for up to 18 properties. This amounts to 7 affordable housing units and it is expected that these properties will be delivered by one of the Council’s preferred Registered Providers. The specific tenure split and mix for the affordable housing provision can be agreed later if the application is approved, but I recommend 5 for affordable rent and 2 First Homes. The First Homes will need to be delivered at or below a price cap of £250,000 after a 30% developer contribution has been applied.”*

We note that the Case Officer, Bruce O’Brien records that *“the applicant is prepared to provide an appropriate amount of affordable housing, secured by way of legal agreement. This provision is satisfactory and weighs in favour of the scheme.”*

We contend that the applicant must be held to actual delivery of affordable homes on this site to provide social benefit to Elmdon. This will match the housing need identified in the Village Design Statement. This was represented to Villagers at the Pre-Application Consultation, and it is what is expected by the very limited 5% of Elmdon residents in favour of this proposal. If they understood there was to be no affordable on the site there would be almost 100% opposition.

Amenity: We see no social benefit in the provision of a community area or playground. Children of playground age are typically at Chrishall Primary, and benefit from the playground on the neighbouring Chrishall recreation ground after school. Most Elmdon children have grown up playing in the extensive natural landscape that surrounds us in Elmdon, creating dens in the ancient bluebell woods, riding their bikes through the village and on the multiple by-ways/footpaths, and playing football, cricket or frisbee on one of the highest and most beautiful cricket fields in Essex, arguably England. The playground cannot be directly accessed by the residents of the estate, and as such we have concerns over the ongoing maintenance of the playground, which we understand is to be serviced via an Estate charge/ground rent. Why would Grange Paddock residents pay for the village playground?

An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy’.

The greenfield development of Grade 2 agricultural land outside of the village development limits, even if it has been put over to pasture, cannot be deemed to meet the environmental objective set out above. It is destructive, and permanent.

Alternative options available: We believe there is opportunity for sustainable development elsewhere within Elmdon – such as Freewood Farm, Elmdon, or the site of the derelict heritage asset of Pigots, Elmdon - and beyond in the wider district that. Indeed there are probably far more suitable greenfield sites in Elmdon itself in terms of highways safety and accessibility etc. We do not believe the applicant has sought to consider these opportunities and is therefore in clear conflict with Local Plan policy ENV5 (Protection of Agricultural land).

Reducing biodiversity: We do not believe the removal of hedgerow and trees required to access the site and develop the estate is compatible with Local Plan policy E4, despite the landscaping that is proposed, including the development of a holding pond. It will lead to biodiversity net loss.

We are concerned that the applicant has stated that there will be no adverse impact to protected species. As neighbours to the site who view it from our bedroom window, we are aware European Protected Species (Bats) and Nationally Protected Species (Barn Owls) hunt/forage over and on the site. A clear conservation plan will be required to protect habitats and maintain biodiversity.

This site is one of the few remaining 'important green gaps' in the built environment in Elmdon.

Destruction of natural & historic environment: The vista across the field from Freewood Lane, on the route of the ancient Icknield Way Trail (Bridleway 5 Elmdon), and Bridleway 7 Elmdon, include the rural scene of horses and ponies grazing, and provides residents with the rural village ambience so beloved of this area. On a clear day you can see through to the spires of churches or colleges in Cambridge, and to Ely Cathedral in the far distance. The compulsion to fill up important green spaces is anathema to local people. We move to rural locations to live in the countryside. We do not want to live in housing estates. Important green gaps enable residents to continue to feel part of the rural life and all that entails. That the Agent admits to a 'limited degree of harm' relating to landscape character impact is notable, given developers attitudes of exaggerating the benefits and minimising the negatives of applications.

No efforts made to mitigate or adapt to climate change: The applicant has not put forwards any sustainability credentials for the houses or estate to mitigate and adapt to climate change – simply stated at the meeting that the houses would be 'eco.' There would be an opportunity to develop net zero carbon houses, consider an estate or even district heating system, perhaps even using the pond or ground as a heat exchanger. This could have been an opportunity to win over community members, particularly if consideration had been given to creating a sustainable future for the village by way of a district heating system. We suspect this would have involved too much effort for such a speculative application.

Key issues to us as neighbours

Highways – there are material safety concerns

Policy GEN1 requires that new development must have safe access to the main road network. We contest this.

The site access is not safe.

The road access to the site has been situated at the eastern end of the site c. 120m from national speed limit sign/30mph sign marking the eastern boundary of the village, where traffic is expected to slow down from national speed limit to 30mph heading westbound into the village.

The junction is complicated by the regular presence of on street parked cars on the south side of Ickleton Road opposite the site access, and the fact that the access is offset, and diagonally opposite the junction with Hollow Road. This is also the site of the school bus stop at peak times.

As you exit the site, looking east you are blind to oncoming westbound traffic beyond approximately 40m. By the same token, the site access is blind to westbound road users until you are within 40m, at which point you are potentially distracted by Hollow Road junction, although they may be slowed down by parked cars on the south side of Ickleton Road.

We routinely observe the applicant pulling into the path of eastbound traffic, particularly cycles, as a result of the fact that they are so focussed on the risk of fast-moving traffic coming westbound into

the village round the blind corner they forget to check west. At certain times of the year, this is further complicated by the sun setting straight down Ickleton Road.

Fast moving traffic is a very real consideration at this location on the edge of the village. The Transport Statement found that the 85th percentile speed of vehicles travelling eastbound was 33.3mph, and the 85th percentile speed of vehicles travelling westbound was 40.1mph. This means that for traffic entering the village around this blind corner they are routinely doing so well in excess of the prescribed limit of 30mph. We do not believe traffic calming signs or visibility splays are going to help in this regard and would urge the applicant to consider an alternative access. The splays and signage will have a detrimental urbanising impact on the village.

The road network accessing Elmdon is not safe for materially more traffic.

Whilst CrashMap () website highlights there have not been any accidents in close proximity to the site over the last 5 to 10 years, it does highlight that the wider 'protected narrow lane' network used to access the village is dangerous, and will become more so with the increased traffic associated with this development: residents, delivery drivers and service vehicles.

Drivers are often caught out by the narrowness of these access roads, particularly where they narrow to 1 car width from 1.5/2 car width without no warning on bends and over ditch bridges, as well as within the village itself (outside Pump Cottage). In winter the roads become more hazardous due to more challenging driving conditions and as result of pot-holes that undermine the road edges, often at the pinch points as a result of vehicles mounting the verge to allow oncoming vehicles to pass.

Most incidents occur at two nearby crossroads: i) Royston Lane/Quickset Road; ii) Strehall Road/Royston Lane east of the village heading to Ickleton or Saffron Walden; and on Elmdon Hill, heading south to the B1039.

In or approaching Elmdon over the last 7 years to year end 2021, 5 serious incidents have been recorded involving seven casualties. It should be noted that CrashMap has not recorded 2 further serious incidents at the Royston Lane/Quickset Road crossroads in 2022. This contrasts with the road network around nearby villages of Heydon and Chrishall, where most incidents are 'slight'.

Planning Condition: On the assumption that this 'greenfield' application IF approved will precede other applications for more housing in scale, then we would like due consideration to be made to adequate Section 106 contributions for this site, to ensure all Elmdon approach roads are adequately widened and upgraded from 'protected narrow lanes'.

Site accessibility is poor

(reference para 4.35-4.50 Design Statement Design and Access, Heritage, Landscape and Planning Statement)

The applicant contends that the site is within easy walking distance of the village centre, providing 'inclusive access' and 'facilitating the use of alternative means of transport for access to local services, and encouraging the access of services by foot or bike.'

We contest this statement and would argue the site access is poor and dangerous.

Referencing Proposed Site Plan BRD/22/014/002, pedestrian access to the estate appears to be only via the shared eastern road access from Ickleton Road, the furthest point possible from the village

centre c. 800m. We have serious concerns for pedestrian safety in having to share the access with vehicles whilst having to access the pavement on the south side of Ickleton Road. For pedestrians as for cars, you are blind to traffic coming into the village fast from the east as you exit the site.

Whilst the site has a further footpath at the western end, this is only for the purposes of accessing a 'community area' and 'childrens play area', neither of which will be directly accessible from the estate itself.

As previously stated the centre of the village only contains two local services, which are not accessible day-to-day: a church and an inadequate village hall, and so it is unclear why anyone would want to access the centre of the village anyhow.

The applicant makes a statement (para 4.42) that the houses will be capable of being occupied by persons of varying mobility and provide for inclusive access (para 4.46). We would contend that both the site and the wider pavement infrastructure or lack of it along Ickleton Road and beyond in Elmdon, does not allow for inclusive access.

As a result of the raised site location relative to Ickleton Road, there will be a steep incline down to Ickleton Road. Whilst the site itself will have gentle ground level changes, the pedestrian access from it will not be.

The pavement along the south side of Ickleton Road is narrow, with pinch points outside Pump Cottage and the Old Post Office and very uneven, particularly outside the western end Manor Row. It is just about navigable with a pram, but not wheelchair accessible. The poor levels, quality and maintenance of the pavement make it a hazard for those with mobility challenges.

The applicant seeks to draw comparison to a recent appeal decision in Manuden where the inspector noted that Manuden has a comparatively good range of day-to-day services: community centre, primary school, church, 2 public houses and a range of sporting facilities – pavilion, football pitch, tennis courts. This does not compare to Elmdon's two intermittent local services as previously set-out.

Indeed, as a result of material pavement infrastructure improvements, Manuden does not require for pedestrians to cross a main road and is well suited to inclusive access throughout most of the village, and certainly for the accessing of the services.

Planning Condition: Again, on the assumption that this 'greenfield' application IF approved will precede other applications for more housing in scale, then we would like due consideration to be made to adequate Section 106 contributions for this site, to ensure all Elmdon pavements are of the quality required to enable inclusive access to the centre of the village. This assumes that with material greenfield development further services beyond a church and village hall could potentially be sustained.

Lacking a sewage strategy

The applicant has not provided a sewage strategy for the site – marking 'unknown' on the application form and referencing an Anglian Water plan in the Design Statement. This is entirely unacceptable for a major development proposal of this size.

We are unable to consider whether there will be strain on the existing mains sewerage. We understand from those that are on mains sewerage on Hollow Road that at peak times – Christmas holidays - the mains can be prone to backing up, so we have a concern over capacity,

We have no clarity as to where the site will access the main sewage system, albeit we note from the Anglian Water Plan that the nearest point for access is under the private access road at Elm Court. The Elm Court residents already suffer from drains backing up on this extension to the mains sewer, so a further 18 houses will overload this system. It is unlikely they will give permission.

If they cannot access at Elm Court, one assumes there would be a need for a spur and significant trenching down Hollow Road, or perhaps to the water treatment works itself.

If the strategy is to be off-mains, then we assume some form of estate sized Klargestor or similar would be used. We would have significant concerns about overflow from this system, and/or system breakdown, which will lead to effluent release into a ditch which does not flow downhill from the site, and opposite The Hoops. Off-mains sewage system is therefore not a suitable solution for this site.

The applicant should be encouraged to detail their sewage strategy as soon as practicable.

Existing Planning Guidance has been ignored: Local Plan and Village Design Statement

There is no up-to-date Local Plan for Uttlesford, which has resulted in the UDC being put into Special Measures. The last adopted Uttlesford Local Plan, adopted in 2005, stated that “The rural nature of the District is recognised for its intrinsic character and beauty, its value for agricultural production and its biodiversity. The strategy is to conserve and enhance the local district versus a historic character of the rural settlements and support this character and the thriving communities within it”

An Elmdon, Duddenhoe End and Wendens Lofts Village Design Statement (VDS) was prepared between March 2016 and approved by Uttlesford District Council in June 2019. A questionnaire was used to obtain the views and opinions of the residents. The response was much higher than anticipated with over 150 responses from a total of 269 households. The results were analysed in detail by a steering group and the results were presented to the villagers at two well attended exhibitions; one in Elmdon and one in Duddenhoe End.

This application has not acknowledged or referenced the VDS guidelines, nor the previously adopted Local Plan. In the absence of a Local Plan, and having undertaken extremely weak ‘Pre-Application Community Engagement’, it would seem that the most appropriate planning guidance would come from the approved VDS. Certainly it would steer the applicant as to the opinions of the community.

The following guidelines for development were proposed by the VDS, and we list below where this application has failed to address them:

VDS Guidelines for Development

Where this application fails to meet VDS Guidelines:

- Conserve the rural character of the area
- Ensure that any new development responds to historic settlement pattern, especially scale and density, and that use of materials, and especially colour, is appropriate to the local

landscape character; such development should be well integrated with the surrounding landscape.

- Small scale development should be carefully sited in relation to existing buildings
- Maintain the low-density character of the villages and favour small 2 or 3 bed family homes.
- Future development of more than one dwelling should prioritise previously developed sites and not be on new greenfield sites.
- Development of redundant rural buildings is supported.
- Development should be sympathetic to the rural nature of the villages.
- New dwellings should not impact on the views of the countryside from the rear or between dwellings
- New development should seek to avoid harm to historic buildings and their setting.
- Protect the open landscape and landscape views around the villages. Development should be sympathetic to the rural nature of the villages.
- The rural nature of the villages should be kept by protecting, retaining and maintaining green spaces, ditches, verges, footpaths, bridleways, mature woodland areas and native hedgerows.
- Work with Essex County Council to reduce the speeding in the villages in response to the increasing volume of traffic.
- Ensure approach roads to the villages have signage marking the entrance. Further road signage and street lighting should be kept to a minimum.
- New pavements are not necessary and do not add to the rural feel.
- Street lighting and external lighting should be kept to a minimum.
- Do not allow development to diminish the countryside surrounding the village and the features which form the rural character of the landscape.
- Protect the open landscape and landscape views around the villages.
- Development should be sympathetic to the rural nature of the villages.
- Development should consider the limitations of the narrow road network
- Local businesses providing service to the community should be encouraged.
- Conserve the narrow winding lanes
- Maintain the conservation area in Elmdon and the open spaces in Elmdon and Duddenhoe End.

Where this Outline Application has sought to meet guidelines, however the detail on exact design and layout is quite limited to be able to judge effectively:

- Encourage the appropriate use of colour as well as tree planting to mitigate the visually intrusive effects of large modern buildings.
- Any future development should include the provision for adequate off- road parking to ensure roads are kept clear
- New housing of 2 bedrooms or more should include the provision for adequate off-road parking based on two cars per household in accordance with the Uttlesford Residential Car Parking Standards (February 2013).
- Building materials used should be compatible with the range of materials seen throughout the villages.
- Extensions should be consistent in scale to the existing plot and should not dominate.
- Existing hedges should be retained wherever possible. High boundary walls, the unsympathetic use of close board fencing in front gardens and tall railings and gates are more urban in origin and do not reflect the essentially rural character of the villages. Fences and gates should be of traditional materials

Extremely weak community involvement

Much has been made by the applicant and the case officer about the due process that the applicant has apparently followed as far as engaging with the community.

As a householder of a Listed Property immediately opposite the site, I can confirm I have had no communication or correspondence with the applicants at any point about the site.

My wife did manage to attend the community 'event' Friday 17th June 2022, and we have the following feedback:

- It was poorly advertised by way of a couple of A4 posters attached to telegraph poles in the village
- There was very limited notice – c. 2 days notice
- It was held at an inconvenient time for many – 16:30 - 19:30 on a Friday evening
- It was not clearly advertised as a Pre-Application Consultation, rather entitled: "OPPORTUNITY TO PREVIEW A PLAN FOR INCREASING VILLAGE AMENITY AND HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ELMDON"
- Had it been advertised as "Pre-Application Consultation on Proposal or major Development of 18 Homes", the attendance would have been materially greater.
- No display boards were provided, rather a single print-out of the site was laid out on a table, meaning people had to crowd round and were unable to see the detail.
- No advisors or professionals were on hand to answer any questions
- Very few of the questions asked were capable of being responded to
- No records were taken as far as the attendees were concerned, and no meeting minutes were published.

Given the applicants background in this space, it was a serious disappointment, and resulted in an immediate and overwhelmingly negative response from Elmdon residents.

This was followed up by a survey of residents undertaken by the Elmdon Community Group where more than half of the residents of the village responded, with a 92% rejection of the proposal. The results were shared with the applicants. They appear to have ignored the opinion of the community wholeheartedly.

In the light of the Village Design Statement which provided a clear steer as to the desire of the local community when it comes to (major) development, to approach the Pre-Application Consultation in such an unprofessional fashion, leads one to conclude that this applicant is brazenly taking a speculative punt on this application, hoping to take advantage of the Special Measures status of UDC, and bully the community into accepting this application on the basis that we will have no right of appeal, by directly applying to the Planning Inspectorate.

This seems to us a deeply unjust situation. We hope the Planning Inspectorate will see this for what it is and refuse this application.

Yours sincerely

Will and Jules Ridley

6.03.2023