



26<sup>th</sup> April 2023

## **Saffron Walden Town Council Response Regarding the Green Mile POS**

This response sets out two issues raised by Saffron Walden Town Council relating to public open space (POS) which is adjacent to the proposed development site, this land is known locally as the Green Mile. **Both issues are different and should be considered independently from one another and are set out below:**

1. Due consideration to seek a S106 contribution for the ongoing maintenance of the Green Mile
2. Proposed shared cycleway and footpath linkages across the Green Mile

### **Point 1: S106 contribution for the ongoing maintenance of the Green Mile**

The Uttlesford Urban Design Officer response (included in the District Council response dated 30 March 2023) states *a contribution to the maintenance of the adjacent existing POS known as the 'green mile' should be obtained, given the increased pressure the development would place on this existing facility.*

SWTC supports this statement and agrees a community provision for POS maintenance should be sought in the S106. Should the application be approved for 170 dwellings this equates to potentially an additional 400+ residents frequenting and using the Green Mile. This will have an impact on this POS and thus it will require additional management and maintenance; mitigation for this is sought through the S106 agreement.

There is a world-renowned and acclaimed skate park within the Green Mile (Minet Skate Park) and it is one of the finest skate parks in the country. Whilst increased usage of the skate park is actively encouraged and supported by the Town Council, this additional usage results in increased maintenance and mitigation is therefore sought through the S106 agreement towards this increase.



## Point 2: Proposed cycle way and footpath linkages across the Green Mile

The application proposes installation of a footway to Tukes Way and shared footway and cycle way link to Peal Road both from the application site, illustrated in the Addendum Travel Assessment Appendix 15. (Extract below.)



These proposed linkages are not possible without being installed across the existing POS known as the Green Mile.

The Green Mile is owned by Uttlesford District Council however it is leased to the Town Council who maintain the land on a 99-year lease; this lease does not expire until 2107.

Given the Town Council's retained lease of the Green Mile and that the Town Council manages and maintains this POS and skate park from its own budget, it is disappointing at best that the Town Council was not involved in any formal discussions regarding the proposed foot/cycle routes. SWTC did not become informed on these specific proposals until 06.03.2023 during an informal discussion with the developer. During that discussion (given it was the first time SWTC had been made aware of the proposals), no commitment or support was given by the Town Council. The Town Council further notes that no specific community consultation has been carried out with residents and users of the Green Mile, other than the nature of this planning application where residents could respond.

SWTC is aware this POS is valued by local residents as a space to walk, play, relax and the addition of any formalised foot/cycle path would fundamentally change the use and perception of the area.



**SWTC objects to installation of paths across the Green Mile because it would subdivide this well-used POS.** Installation of a path across POS would change the nature of the area and users would have to be vigilant and aware pedestrians and cyclists who would use the path as a through route, the nature of the Green Mile therefore will no longer be publicly available amenity POS.

To that end should the inspector be minded to grant approval for the application, there must be due consideration for this proposed mitigation and how the application can be deemed sustainable.

Whilst SWTC understand sustainable transport methods are a requirement, this should not be at the cost of losing much needed POS in an adjacent area. The loss of POS when there is an existing deficit of POS in Saffron Walden would cause significant harm to residents and users.

Reasons for our objections with reference to planning policy is set out below, which should be given due weight as a material consideration.

SWTC Reason for objection	Policy reasoning
<p>Saffron Walden has an existing deficit of public open space.</p> <p>Installing a shared path 'on top of' the Green Mile would further reduce this deficit.</p> <p>Reducing the already limited available open space for residents fails to promote social and health wellbeing.</p>	<p><b>Policy ULP LC1</b> <i>Development will not be permitted if it would involve the loss of sports fields or other open space for recreation.</i></p> <p>Development of a footpath across existing open space therefore should not be permitted.</p> <p><b>SWNP 11.3.3</b> <i>Saffron Walden has a deficit of public open spaces estimated to be around 107ha.</i></p> <p>Reducing the open space deficit further would be detrimental for residents.</p>
<p>The green mile is well used by not only residents but sporting groups.</p> <p>Adding a cycle path within this space would reduce how it can be used effectively, in the instance of the runners running across would mean checking for traffic.</p> <p>No formal consultation has been carried out on this proposal (except for that of the planning application).</p>	<p><b>NPPF</b> <i>open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being;</i></p> <p>Building on the green mile would affect the social wellbeing of residents as less open space would be available to them.</p> <p><b>7.1 ULP</b> <i>To safeguard existing open space within towns and villages for either formal or informal recreation.</i></p>



SWTC Reason for objection	Policy reasoning
	Existing open space must be protected and this proposal seeks to change the usage of the Green Mile.
Subsequently the link would affect the existing residents who also have not been consulted on this proposal, affecting their views.	<p><b>NPPF</b> defines <i>Open space</i>: <i>All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity</i></p> <p>The NPPF defines open space as valuable and notes it can act as a visual amenity, which in this case the Green Mile is for existing residents and adding a cycle path would change that.</p>
Adding to footpaths across the green mile subdivides the land into separate parcels.	<p><b>SW17 5.</b> <i>Development land may not be divided into separate parcels so as to reduce the overall size of the development and reduce liability for provision for amenity space.</i></p> <p>Whilst this refers to development proposals, the policy is still relevant as it refers to prevention of reducing amenity space.</p>

**Notably the applicant has said the following in its documentation:**

Quotes from application documents	SWTC comment
<p>Page 34, section 4.7 of the Design Code (submitted March 2023):</p> <p><i>“The area of existing open space known as the Green Mile is located immediately to the north of the site, within close walking distance of the proposed dwellings. <b>Consequently, the proposed development must be very well connected to this area of existing open space, which can accommodate ball kicking, kite flying etc.”</b></i></p>	<p>The Green Mile is a well-used piece of public open space which currently passes the litmus test of the SWNP. This is acknowledged by the applicant and alludes to the open space being suitable and usable by the residents.</p> <p>Building on top of the Green Mile would reduce the open space available and therefore should not be built upon.</p>



Quotes from application documents	SWTC comment
<p>Initial transport assessment 3.5</p> <p><i>“To the north of the site is an area of <b>public open space</b> that is owned and maintained by UBC and is regularly used by residents of the adjoining residential estate to the north for recreational purposes.”</i></p>	<p><b>NPPF</b> defines <i>Open space: All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity</i></p> <p>The applicant call the Green Mile POS and the NPPF defines POS as important for sporting and recreation and can act as a visual amenity and therefore must be protected.</p>
<p>The addendum travel assessment 6.4 (submitted March 2023):</p> <p><i>“SWTC and UDC would support the delivery of a footpath across the green mile with a S106 contribution.”</i></p>	<p>We (SWTC) have not said as such; an initial brief conversation was had on 06.03.2023 and no decision was reached with the applicant.</p> <p>Should a pedestrian footpath or paths be implemented, the green mile POS would thereby be subdivided, breaching the SWNP, and would not provide the development with suitable POS.</p>

**Building on the Green Mile would therefore reduces the publicly available open space and changes its usage dramatically and for this reason SWTC objects to installing paths across it. The application therefore cannot demonstrate sustainability and connectivity and SWTC continues to object to the application.**