

SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

S62A/2022/0014 - HEARING WORDS 28/04/2023

Hello, thank you for giving me the time to speak today regarding this application.

My name is Georgia Arnold, and I am the Committee Clerk for Saffron Walden Town Council and I am speaking on behalf of the Town Council.

As you will be aware from the written responses, the Town Council objects to the application.

Whilst I won't repeat our written responses, I will speak further to our primary concerns. These being: The proposed sustainable transport measures, the proposed Green Mile paths, loss of open space, locality and the proposed public open space.

1. Firstly, the proposed sustainable transport measures are not a certainty and deliverability has not been confirmed by Highways.

Should the application be approved, it would increase traffic, congestion and the existing AQMA in the town. To that end suitable sustainable transport measures are a must.

Whilst the application does propose a package of sustainable transport measures, there is no certainty in their deliverability. The Highways response dated 22nd March states *delivery cannot be assured at this stage* so it cannot be assumed the impact of the scheme can be mitigated because the measures might not be deliverable.

The application proposed a shared pedestrian and cycleway along Thaxted Road, again deliverability is not a certainty.

This aside, SWTC believes the footpath should be extended into the town centre along Peaslands Road. The proposed path will only get users to the north of the site and not into the town centre therefore it cannot be deemed to promote sustainable transport as beginner cyclists would typically prefer a full cycle route and not only to the end of their road.

For cycling mitigation measures to be adequate, we believe it is vital that cycle paths connect further past Peaslands Road.

Should the Planning Inspectorate be minded approve the application, prior to securing certainty on the sustainable transport measures, the S106 contribution should be to provide the schemes rather than simply a monetary value, this is to ensure the schemes are completed prior to the development taking place.

2. Secondly SWTC has several concerns with the proposed shared footpath and cycle path across the Green Mile

To begin it is worth noting SWTC was not party to a formal discussion regarding this subject other than one initial conversation with the applicant and a conclusion was not reached. Nor have members of the public been given the opportunity to respond to this particular proposal other than the initial planning application consultation.

Notably, SWTC is the leaseholder of the Green Mile and the district council is the landowner and the lease is not due to expire until 2107.

Whilst SWTC understands sustainable transport measures are vital to promote cycling and walking it should not be at the cost of losing public open space.

Saffron Walden has an existing deficit in public open space and the proposed cycle and footpaths would sub-divide the green mile into smaller parcels of amenity space, which is contrary to the neighbourhood plan policy SW17.

SWTC therefore objects to this proposal because the sustainable transport benefits do not outweigh the detrimental loss of public open space. Our full reasoning and reference to policy is detailed in our most recent written response.

3. Thirdly, it is worth mentioning the loss of open space and land is contrary to the Local Plan policies ENV1 and S1.

The neighbourhood plan acknowledges SWTC has a deficit of open space and the loss of this field would be detrimental, even with the tilted balance approach.

4. This brings us onto the site location.

The location does not contribute positively to its surroundings, breaching NPPF paragraph 130 noting proposals must be sympathetic to the area.

This application is unsympathetic to the surrounding area because:

- The access road is adjacent to the existing skate park which could affect the safety of users. Having public open space on a sloping piece of land or next to a road breaches the neighbourhood plan policy SW3.
- An additional 170 dwellings would not positively contribute to the existing open space neighbouring the site known as the green mile. Its upkeep and maintenance will increase, and this is supported by the comments made by the Urban Design Officer. Should the application be approved a maintenance contribution for this area should therefore be sought.

5. Finally the proposed public open space within the development is contrary to the neighbourhood plan.

Whilst the design and public open space element would be due for consideration at a reserved matters stage (should the application be approved) it is critical to set out the principle of what open space is suitable for the site at the earliest opportunity and this is reiterated in the neighbourhood plan paragraph 11.3.9.

SWTC objects to the applications proposed public open space because:

- It fails to meet the neighbourhood plan policy litmus test, which requires public open space to be suitable for several people to use at once for flying kites and playing catch with a dog.

- The POS is separated into individual smaller parcels which breaches policy SW17.
- And each parcel of open space is neighbouring the road or SUDS which again does not comply with policy SW17. To reiterate should the application be approved the SUDS should be built to the water authority's standard for their adoption and maintenance to relieve residents of a management charge.

To conclude therefore should the application be approved, it will have a detrimental impact on the community in terms of additional traffic due to the poor sustainable transport mitigations proposed and the proposed public open space does not comply with the neighbourhood plan. In summary the application does not demonstrate compliance with planning policy.

Many thanks for your time.