

From: Flitch Way Friends [REDACTED]

Sent: 03 May 2023 11:35

To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Subject: Section 62A Planning Application: S62A/2023/0017 - Land at Tilekiln Green, Stansted, Great Hallingbury

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As Trustee and Secretary, I am writing on behalf of the Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands. Our volunteers work for the benefit of the community to conserve, protect and improve the physical and natural environment of the Flitch Way and other sites throughout Essex under the guidance of Essex County Council (ECC) Park Rangers and Public Rights of Way teams.

The Flitch Way is a linear wildlife-rich trail comprising a range of habitats of around 25 km length following the former Braintree to Bishops Stortford Railway Line with a small gap at Great Dunmow. It forms a vital long wildlife corridor covering approximately a third of the breadth of Essex. It connects the four Essex Wildlife Trust Living Landscape Areas of Hatfield Forest, Pincey Valley, Upper Chelmer and Pods Brook Valley and the nature reserves and open spaces of Hatfield Forest, Honeysuckle and David Cock Community Woodland (Great Dunmow), Oak Meadow (Rayne), Great Notley Country Park and Hoppit Mead and John Ray Park (Braintree).

The Flitch Way provides an easily accessible multi-user path, with a well surfaced 2m wide granite dust path running along most of its length, giving people the freedom of access to learn about the wildlife and industrial heritage. The Flitch Way Country Park is already designated a Local Wildlife Site reference Ufd196 and has recently been designated a Local Nature Reserve by English Nature

see <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1481633&SiteName=flitch&countyCode=&responsiblePerson=&&&SeaArea=&IFCAArea=>.

It carries a bridleway along most of its length and is a popular and much loved greenway with over 70 access points, giving walkers, cyclists and equestrians access to the beautiful countryside of north west Essex.

Part of what makes the Flitch Way so special is the surrounding rural landscape. It is under increasing pressure from development, and proposals like this will change its character forever. In the last 2 years there have been applications to build around 6,000 houses or commercial development across 17 sites directly adjacent to the Flitch Way.

To give you some context, the Flitch Way forms the southern boundary of the proposed site. In our opinion planning should be refused due to the impact it would have on the character and appearance of the Flitch Way, wildflowers and wildlife. The application does not recognise the high impact the development will have on the Flitch Way LNR, instead only referring to Hatfield Forest NNR. Greenspaces in Uttlesford are in high demand and should be protected for the health and well-being of residents. The proposed development site as seen from the Flitch Way, has a rural character which would be lost if the site was developed.

I would draw your attention to two recent Planning Appeals. The first was to build 1500 houses on Land North and South of the Flitch Way in Braintree District, reference APP/Z1510/W/18/3197293. On 13 June 2019, the Secretary of State agreed with the Planning Inspector's conclusions and recommendation and dismissed the Appeal. One of the key reasons quoted was "that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area, including a residual effect of major-moderate significance in the wider Landscape Character Area

A12, and a substantial adverse effect arising from the loss of the appeal site itself. The Secretary of State further agrees with the Inspector that the loss of views and open outlook from the Flitch Way and the public footpaths crossing parcel B would both suffer a major adverse impact. Taken together, these harms attract considerable weight."

A second Planning Appeal nearby to build 135 houses on Land west of Canfield Road, reference APP/C1570/W/18/3213251 was dismissed on 8 August 2019. I ask you to look in particular at point 21 in the Character and Appearance section which was one of the main issues quoted in the statement. The inspector also highlights in points 24 and 25:

"24. In part this is due to a further defining feature, the Flitch Way, which lies immediately to the north of the site. The Flitch Way is clearly an important public right of way and I address the visual effects for users below, but in landscape terms it is a strong linear feature, which is not breached, other than in one specific instance, by settlement lining the B1256 between Bishops Stortford and Dunmow. While its historical association is with the railway, it is now a managed country park and local wildlife site and its informal surfacing, well-treed edge and, in many cases, countryside views, provide for an experience for those using it in marked contrast to the urban areas set along its northern edge.

25. I accept it is not an open countryside feature along its entire length, and in places there is development close to the northern edge, but it is an important refuge from the growing urban centres and provides easily accessible countryside experiences and access to important features such as Hatfield Forest."

For these reasons the Friends of the Flitch Way are objecting.

If however, the planning is successful, we ask for the following to be taken into account to lessen the damage and make a positive contribution to the local community:

1. Buffer zone alongside the Flitch Way - The preferred buffer zone between the Flitch Way and proposed development should be at least 20 metres wide and ideally be 100 metres wide. Currently the Design and Access Statement includes a buffer zone of existing trees but the depth is unclear. Any buffer zone should be landscaped sensitively and be attuned to the specific habitat of this section of the Flitch Way. Having a wide buffer zone next to the Flitch Way boundary along with the installation of secure boundary fencing would help to mitigate habitat damage. It is essential to maintain good light access to maintain as diverse a range of wildlife as possible. Any planting schemes should be agreed with Essex Country Park Rangers.

2. Pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian access - Currently the Flitch Way terminates onto Bedlars Green Road which means that there is a potential conflict between vehicles from the site and equestrians, cyclists and pedestrians which could be dangerous if site traffic uses the road in a southerly direction towards the Hallingburys. Road traffic measures should be in place to protect non-motorised users when they are using the lane.

3. The Transport Statement dated 28 January 2022, included with the planning application UTT/22/0267/FUL states "A large proportion of Bishops Stortford is, therefore, within cycling distance of the site as is the majority of Takeley. The latter can be accessed via the traffic free cycle, pedestrian and equestrian route of the Flitch Way, which can be accessed from Tile Kiln Green at a point approximately 120m south of the site. The Flitch Way route accommodates National Cycle Route 16 and connects the site with Braintree in the east via Takeley and Great Dunmow." THIS IS EASILY MISCONSTRUED. The Flitch Way currently terminates at Start Hill and is not connected to Bishops Stortford by a safe direct cycle route. Only Takeley can be accessed by a traffic free route. A safe route connecting the Flitch Way to Bishops Stortford could be created using the tunnel or bridge to cross the M11 to the south of the present site.

4. Flitch Way Visitor Car Parking - The Flitch Way is popular with many local residents across Uttlesford. If planning is approved we would also like to see visitor car parking included within the development so people, particularly vulnerable users such as children, inexperienced cyclists

and mobility users, can enjoy the Flitch Way safely. There is the potential for a new access path to be created to the south of the site providing the Flitch Way Park Rangers are in agreement.

5. S106 Contribution to the establishment of a non-motorised multi-user path into Bishops Stortford from the Flitch Way and a contribution to the ongoing maintenance of the Flitch Way.

Kind Regards

Sandra Reynolds
Trustee, Friends of the Flitch Way and Associated Woodlands


<https://www.friends-of-the-flitch-way.org.uk/>