

Pines Hill Application: S62a/2023/0018

Recommendation for response

OBJECT

There have been two planning applications refused by UDC - from 2014 UTT/14/0151/OP and 2021 UTT/21/2730/OP. We attach the refusal decisions to our response and the parish council's comments for the latter(1), for reference. In 'tilted balance' terms, the reasons for refusal are strong and demonstrate the benefits do not outweigh the harm.

Located in the metropolitan greenbelt, and outside development limits, the provision of 31 units provides no improvements to footways/walking routes to local facilities, including schools. There are no **special circumstances** for this development to be here.

This is a highly unpopular development, around 40 wrote in to object previously.

Unfortunately, the s62A process does not allow us to know how many have objected on this occasion.

1. **Greenbelt/Outside Development Limits** (Paragraph 11(d) (i) of the NPPF) – This development would create creeping coalescence with Birchanger and Bishop's Stortford. The function of greenbelt is to prevent this. The site is not identified in Stansted Mountfitchet's draft neighbourhood development plan. The parish council recognises the requirement to accept housing but has also identified the most suitable locations for it. This site does not meet the criteria to be included in our plan. We include the development chapter of the NDP with this objection for your reference(2).
2. **Development Access** – The application states Highways and UDC have not objected to access arrangements. This was for the previous applications. There have been changes since the last application. **A neighbouring property, Ostra Brama, (with a right of way along the private track, that will now be dissected by the access road of this proposed development) has recently had a new vehicular access approved onto B1383 (Pines Hill) immediately to the south of the proposed access for the new development. The site layout plan does not show this, and this needs to be taken into account. Planning application UTT/23/0632/HHF refers.**
3. **Traffic** – The B1383 is a major route through the district and serves as an alternative route when the M11, A120 are closed. Traffic can be heavy and slow moving at peak hours, or fast moving and regular at other times. Please refer to the statistics submitted by a member of the community's speedwatch team (Mr Ray Woodcock), documents listed below:
 - a. **Stansted Mountfitchet Speed Watch reports dated 31st January. 2023; 2nd March 2023; 21st March 2023 and 3rd April 2023.** All of these reports have been sent to our Police Coordinator and verified and accepted by them.
 - b. **ECC Highways B1383 Silver Street traffic counts during 4th to 10th July 2022.** This report shows the average daily number of vehicles of 16,457 during this period. The report also shows that 38.9 % of the vehicles exceed the

30mph speed limit. The report was commissioned by ECC Highways and conducted by their main contractor Ringway Jacobs.

- c. **Road Traffic through Stansted Mountfitchet an Overview as at February 2020** - updated July 2020.
4. **Accessibility** (Policy GEN1) – This is not a sustainable location for a development of this size, providing nothing to the village apart from more congestion on the B1383 and Chapel Hill, and an additional dangerous access point, The development is unsustainable encouraging all movements to be by car. Distance is not the only consideration, as footway provision is poor and the busy road is an unhealthy and unpleasant environment for walking or cycling. The accessibility and condition of the walking and cycling routes are along narrow, poorly maintained or non-existent footways/roads.
 - a. **School walking routes** – to St Mary’s primary on Foresthall Park, along Stoney Common (an unadopted road, with a narrow single track bridge across the railway); to Magna Carta primary in St John’s Road, along the B1383 (a narrow footway, poorly maintained by Essex Highways) which by the Old Bell Hotel narrows to just 30cm [see photos attached of these routes(3)]
 - b. **Disability** – it does not meet the needs of people with disabilities/mobility issues.
 - c. **Cycling routes** – similarly, there are no safe cycling routes from this location.
5. **Environment** - The loss of wildlife habitat is significant and the loss of foraging and commuting opportunities for wildlife will not be offset by the provision of a few nesting boxes. The brook and this type of undeveloped land provide an important habitat for wildlife and is something we should hold on to rather than throw away.
6. **Open spaces** – There is no provision for open space on the development. For play areas, again distance is not the only consideration. The nearest play areas for children are on Mountfitchet Green or Foresthall Park, both of which would require walking along the same unsuitable routes outlined above.
7. **Benefits** - Should this application be successful, then what benefits would this community receive? Looking at the draft S.106 agreement, there will be none:
 - Contribution to Educational needs will go to E.C.C.
 - Contribution to outdoor and indoor sport will go to UDC.
 - Library Contribution will go to E.C.C.
 - Contribution to Employment Strategy will no doubt go to U.D.C. - Is that necessary in view of the development of the London, Stansted, Cambridge Business Growth Corridor?
 - Contribution to Biodiversity (the BNG) will go to E Herts C.C.

What is the BNG planning condition?

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a new legal requirement that most developments are going to have to comply with from November 2023, regardless of size. It requires developments to leave the natural environment in a measurably better condition by insisting that all sites give back a 10% biodiversity uplift.

Surely the BNG condition is supposed to benefit the **local** community so the question is why it is EHDC that is benefiting from this and not the people of

Stansted, as there is adjacent land which could have enhanced biodiversity and would be of benefit to the development and the local community.

It therefore appears that higher Local Government Strata have added their weight to recommend this development.

Conclusion - No local benefits will be forthcoming from this development.

8. **Housing delivery** - The National Planning Policy Framework requires all local planning authorities to identify a supply of specific deliverable sites to provide five years' new housing supply against their requirements, as calculated under national policies. A housing trajectory is used by councils to calculate their 5-year housing land supply (5 YLS) and demonstrate whether anticipated housing delivery will meet or exceed those housing requirements.

Uttlesford's housing trajectory and 5-year housing land supply calculation has now been reviewed and updated. It represents the housing land supply position as of 1st April 2022 and demonstrates that the district has **4.89 years** of housing supply for the 2022-2027 five-year period.

The 5 YLS statement is updated annually. The information is correct in respect of the time period it covers, as of 1 April, but due to the nature of housing supply and delivery it is subject to change over the year.

However, we believe that it is proposed that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will not be pursuing housing targets, or 5 year housing land supply.

9. **Public engagement** – The applicant states no response from District ward councillors. This is because one of the district councillors was an alternate member of the planning committee and thus not permitted to liaise with applicants/developers, the other district councillor was also a parish councillor and thus any feedback/input was included through parish council meetings rather than direct.

The parish council is unaware of any consultation exercise carried out by the applicant for this current proposal, and due to the nature of this application process, no neighbour considerations have been factored into this response (exception being the traffic statistics).

10. **Conclusion**

The application site being located within the Metropolitan Greenbelt, paragraph 11(d) (i) of the NPPF applies

- There are no special circumstances for this development to be built on this land.
- There are no benefits to the community of Stansted Mountfitchet.

11. **S106 Agreement**

- a. We would ask, if you are minded to approve the application, for conditions that the footway (pavement) is improved along the B1383 in both directions from Forest Hall Road to the south to Old Bell Close to the north. This would exclude the 30cm wide stretch of footway outside the Old Bell, which cannot be widened.
- b. Improvements to the footway along Stoney Common to West Road, and improved road surface to Stoney Common

Both the above conditions would improve walking access to facilities/services around the village, and in particular accommodate disability access.

- c. We would expect a management company to be established, with the road to be adopted, and appropriate LED street lighting to be included.

Appendices

1. Refusal decisions from previous applications and parish council's comments
2. Development chapter of SMPC NDP
3. Photos of footway of Pines Hill, outside Old Bell and Stoney Common bridge