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To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Application Reference number S62A/2023/0018

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31st May 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiries and Major Casework Team

Proposed Development at Land East of Pines Hill Stansted Mountfitchet CM24 8EY

I write in connection with the above planning application. I am strongly opposed to this development for a number of reasons. These were all considered as strong opposition when the planning application was submitted originally.

1. Metropolitan Green Belt

This site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and should not be a priority for development within Uttlesford.

The most recent Uttlesford Green Belt review (ARUP – 2016) recommends that no sites are released from the Green Belt. It recommends that the north part of the Green Belt plays an important role in preventing the sprawl of Stansted Mountfitchet and Bishops Stortford. It recommends that any alterations to this on local plans only be given in “exceptional circumstances”. Given that there are brownfield sites proposed for development in the call for sites in the new Local Plan, there is no justification whatsoever for sites within the Green Belt to be released for housing development. The housing requirements for Uttlesford should be established through the new Local Plan process, and should be met without developing on Green Belt land.

It is recognised that the developer has proposed increasing social housing provision at the site from 40% to 48% to ensure that the plan to build on Green Belt land has a set of very special circumstances to justify the development of this site within the Green Belt. How is providing two or three more social housing units (depending on how you calculate it) a very special circumstance for the Planning Inspectorate to even consider? How has this planning application been appealed to national level (at taxpayer expense) by adding two or three social housing units?

The developer has also identified the First Homes scheme to provide a set of VSC, which is topical and obviously designed to gain attention. The applicant draws attention to a supposedly comparable scheme in Colney Heath. This is not comparable that scheme is for 100 units where a change from 40 to 48% would provide an additional 8 units of social housing. Are two or three extra social housing units seriously supposed to constitute a very special circumstance to justify the development on this Green Belt site?

We expect The Planning Inspectorate to consider the superficial approach and consider whether these reach critical thresholds that are actually considered to constitute a very special circumstance that could justify building on the Green Belt. The very small number of social houses provided by this development do not justify building on Green Belt, even with a higher threshold % provided. The consultation documents do not even acknowledge or mention that the site is Green Belt, further highlighting the developer’s blatant attempt to create a false impression of the site’s planning status. As Uttlesford did not consider for these reasons, how could the Planning Inspectorate possibly consider allowing development on Green Belt land for three social houses? This would be a neglect of duty for the local community if considered.

Planning applications should be considered in a holistic approach, based on an approved Local Plan, not an opportunistic approach by a developer to develop in the Green Belt in the absence of a new Local Plan.

2. Local Plan and Questionable Deliverability?

It is questionable whether the developer can deliver this within the timeframe set out, given the significant amount of ecological and highways work that would need to be done in the extraordinary event that The Planning Inspectorate do consider development on Green Belt land. The ecological impacts and highways impacts in particular are not considered in enough depth within the planning application.

Uttlesford Council does not have an up to date Local Plan, and it appears will not have one until 2024. This site has been put forward in the latest call for sites. In my view, the developer is blatantly exploiting this situation and I urge you to not allow this blatant abuse of circumstance. I believe it would be premature for The Planning Inspectorate to grant permission for this site, until the full range of sites are considered that have been put forward as part of the Council's new call for sites, including the brownfield sites which should be considered first for meeting the demands for new housing that Uttlesford Council is expected to provide.

The reasons it would be extraordinary are:

- The site has already previously been refused planning consent for housing
- It is in a designated Metropolitan Green Belt
- It will have known ecological impacts (such as protected doormice, slow worms, great crested newts, bats, owls, deers, badgers and the like). The biodiversity "checklist" provided with the application is woefully inadequate for a site that contains so many species of ecological interest.
- The area contains important woodland, which is defined in the Local Plan, particularly where proposed access to the site is mapped.
- According to the Stansted Mountfitchet Neighbourhood plan to 2033, the land in question contains multiple Tree Preservation Orders and Statutory Designations
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- The known highways issues around the site which include a road known for regular accidents, pathways and verges which are dangerous for pedestrians. Pines Hill is specifically cited in many local planning applications as unsustainable for transport to the

local area, in the volume it is used. Building on it and providing access via it, especially when other larger scale developments and projects actually require it, would be detrimental.

Given all of the issues with this site that the developer needs to consider, it is requested that The Planning Inspectorate reject this application on the basis that any development of this site should be considered through the process of the preparation of the Council's new Local plan, alongside a full range of options for the local area. The proposed development of this size does not support the immediate requirements that the Council is required to provide before the plan is produced, and given the sensitivity of the site from an ecological perspective I suggest other sites in the area, which are being promoted for development, would be much more suitable in the local area. I am not opposed to development, but given the priorities within the local area it should be considered through the proper process, alongside a full range of other possible sites.

3. Previous Planning Rejection

The proposed development is in the same location as a previous planning application which was rejected by the District Council (UTT/14/0151/OP – 2014). The reasons for objection still stand and hence it is nonsensical for this application to be considered. The previous decision was presumably also not appealed because of the clear and obvious reasons for rejection. The reasons for rejection were:

1. The site lies within the Green Belt – inappropriate development
2. There are protected species such as badgers, reptiles and bats
3. The increased pressure on local education and health facilities

Points 1 and 2 very clearly still stand.

Whilst the applicant now proposes a smaller scheme, a development of 31 new homes would still give rise to increasing pressures on local highways, education and healthcare. The applicant has failed to provide sufficient information (or in fact any community benefit) on how they will seek to address these impacts on local services. There is NO benefit to the community or residents of Stansted Mountfitchet of this development.

4. Highways and Traffic

The development is proposed on one of the most dangerous stretches of road in Stansted. Worse still, the developer is proposing access from a road which is already highlighted in many local planning applications as unsustainable, dangerous and an accident hotspot. There are already issues with people walking on the limited pathway on that stretch of road so it would be negligent to even consider that narrow and busy stretch of road as suitable for increased pedestrian usage. The footpath is totally inadequate and dangerous.

As residents we all drive around Old Bell Close to avoid turning out directly on the brow of the hill onto the B1383 where there is poor visibility and regular accidents, including one very serious collision (26th August 2020 – 0138). It is notorious for high volume traffic, speeding vehicles and high numbers of HGV and construction vehicles, supporting development to the north of Stansted.

The roads around Stansted are already severely congested, and this development will put more traffic onto these local roads.

I believe the site also needs to address BAA Safeguarding measures, which is not addressed at all in the application.

5. Extensive Development in the local area

Since 2001, extensive development has been added to Stansted Mountfitchet and the population has increased by over 60%. The village has had to cope with a large influx of new residents. Whilst the government policy is for more housing, it has to be in the right place. This is not the right place.

In addition, there are severe drainage and water issues in Old Bell Close whereby sewage and flood waters are impacting properties because the drainage system is unable to cope. The plan filters into this drainage and would create further damage, smell and unhygienic living conditions for these residents who have literally faced

human excrement on their properties, with the current drainage system unable to cope.

6. Proper Public Consultation

The developer has sent letters to a small number of residents in Old Bell Close and Stoney Common Road in the guise of a “public consultation” in August 2022, when most people are on holiday, especially this year as families have sought to make up holidays with their children because of the pandemic. This is viewed by many Stansted residents as wholly inadequate, especially given the sensitivities associated with this particular site. It should be noted that the consultation documentation lacked professionalism with grammatical errors, clearly produced in a hurry and further exemplifies the developer’s rush to exploit the local residents, community and Uttlesford Council.

We expect The Planning Inspectorate to stick to their policies and principles and reject this planning application AGAIN on the clear grounds outlined above. It is a blatant attempt to gain planning consent by exploiting the delay to the new Local Plan, however the site remains in the Green Belt, and the NPPF makes it clear that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate development which should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It is insulting to suggest that any very special circumstances have been provided for the development of this Green Belt site. The developer is showing no regard for the due planning process, and is simply seeking to exploit our community

Yours Sincerely

Nicholas Miller