



TAKELEY PARISH COUNCIL

S62A/2023/0016 Warish Hall Farm, Smiths Green Lane, Takeley, Essex

Hearing 25th July 2023 – Cllr Backus speech (5 mins).

My name is Cllr Jim Backus and I am speaking on behalf of Takeley Parish Council in objection to the application.

The Parish Council believes that the harm to the setting of designated and undesignated heritage assets, the harm to the countryside and openness of the CPZ would be significant. There is no safe vehicular access to the site and no safe walking or cycling route to amenities. For these reasons, the development is unsustainable.

The recent appeal dismissal of the wider scheme of Land at Warish Hall Farm gave UDC policies S7 (the countryside) and S8 (countryside protection zone) moderate weight.

Background information has been submitted on the latest review of the Uttlesford Countryside Protection Zone Policy S8, which is in the evidence base for the new Local Plan. It is worth noting that the Uttlesford Policy originates from the 1981 to 1984 London Airports Planning Inquiry which considered the expansion of Stansted Airport and the further development of Heathrow. Sir Graham Eyre QC acted as Inspector at the Inquiry and the Government accepted his report and recommendations, which included the requirement for a Countryside Protection Zone. In a recent survey for our Neighbourhood Plan, 98% of respondents felt that the CPZ is important and should be retained.



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The August 2022 appeal decision on Land at Warish Hall Farm found that the overall heritage harm significantly outweighed the benefits of the larger scheme, which had included employment units and a health centre.

To further protect the historic hamlet of Smiths Green, we have since commissioned a Conservation Area Appraisal, which is out for public consultation from 31st July. Details in this document give a baseline for the harm proposed by this development on the historically important setting of Smiths Green.

The previous appeal considered the Village Green status of the verges and how the Secretary of State would be required to give consent for any loss of verge and/or existing hedgerow.

Essex Highways has recently provided a list of conditions which could enable a safe road access for the development to go ahead. However, if changes to the Village Green are refused by the Secretary of State, can houses be built in this location?

We would like further information on condition 2 – access and condition 4 – Jacks Lane. Safe road access depends on an application to the Secretary of State, to consider:

- **the exact area of Village Green to be lost for access widening and**
- **the exact area of hedgerow to be lost in the 43m of clearance each side of the entrance.**



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The Parish Council requests that these areas are quantified at today's hearing and we have two further questions, on the proposed byway improvements for condition 4, Jacks Lane,

- **Can Essex Highways confirm that the byway improvements will have a surface suitable for horses, as Jacks Lane is also a bridleway?**
- **Will the byway improvements involve loss of trees and hedging?**

We have noted that the consultee for ecology has questioned whether tree and hedge removal would be required along the byway and, if so, how that would impact on wildlife.

We have read that the developer's tree specialist says,

'The proposed works are to improve the existing Byway. The proposed works are relatively light touch with only the existing wearing course being disturbed. The formation layers beneath the wearing course will be left in situ.'

The Parish Council has local knowledge that trees and hedges might need to be removed for drainage purposes because we received a response from the landowner on 17th January 2023 in reply to our request to rectify surface water flooding in Jacks Lane. The reply was:

'we were able to find a ditch expert to look at it last week. His assessment was that because there is no obvious place where the water can run and the area is very overgrown it would take a huge excavation, including a lot of trees having to be removed to try to solve the problem.'



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It is important for these details to be clarified so that we can understand the change to the character of the area resulting from clearance along the protected lane and the byway. These changes could worsen harm to heritage, ecology and the countryside.

The byway which runs through Priors Green has not been altered other than where it crosses roads in the estate. It is unlit and there is clearly no intention to extend Priors Green to the north or east, as there is a densely planted earth bund separating the two distinct areas. This proposal is for a suburban development, completely out of character in this rural area and we urge the inspector to refuse the application.