

Comments on Planning Application UTT/23/1583/PINS

Access to/from Parsonage Road between Weston Group Business Centre and Innovation Centre buildings leading to:: 96 dwellings on Bulls Field, south of Prior's Wood, including associated parking, landscaping, public open space, land for the expansion of Roseacres Primary School, pedestrian and cycle routes to Smiths Green Lane together with associated infrastructure | Land Known As Bull Field, Warish Hall Farm Smiths Green Takeley

I would like to register my strong opposition to the above proposal for the reasons stated below. There have been numerous planning applications in this area of Takeley, some of which have been successful and others not. The infrastructure of Takeley is inadequate to support further development and an increase in population with the excessive destruction and loss of natural green spaces, no local medical provision, poor public transport, excessive traffic problems and flyparking, etc. The population of Takeley has almost doubled in the last 10 years and the environment has become urbanised with houses but with little consideration for the impact upon the local community which has become disparate and unsupported. The ability for residents to walk freely within the natural environment is almost non-existent and there is air pollution from the increase in traffic (especially when there are problems with the A120 causing traffic to divert through the village) and the A120 itself which has increased noise pollution. A planning application for further houses will only exacerbate this.

In relation to this specific application and having regard for veracious supporting and associated documents, my comments are: -

The Transport Assessment states (point 3.6) highlights that Smiths Green is not equipped with footways, however, it goes on to say (point 3.20) that Smiths Green will be the access point to the site by foot or by cyclists. Smiths Green Lane is a Protected Lane and therefore cannot be developed to accommodate pedestrians, etc.

The recent refusal of planning for Warish Hall Farm ((S62A/2023/0016)) stated "However the protected lane/nondesigned heritage asset and village green status of Smiths Green Lane and its verges mean that it is not feasible nor desirable in the interests of its character and historic interest to upgrade the road nor verges to safely accommodate pedestrians". In the same decision notice, it was also highlighted that other local non-vehicle routes were not suitable to accommodate, pedestrians, cyclists, etc for a number of reasons stated. Therefore, how can the Transport Assessment cite this as an access point.

Point 1.3 states that the site currently benefits from an existing vehicle access point but this is not the case. Planning permission has been granted for the erection of 4 industrial buildings at the rear of the current Weston Homes premises on Parsonage Road (UTT/22/2744/FUL known as 7 Acres Warish Hall Farm) but this includes vehicle access to buildings on this site only and not beyond. The access to this proposed development will be from Parsonage Road though it is not clear exactly where this will be and if it is to be through the rear of Weston Homes, this will be through a significant pinch point and across a public right of way which is very narrow and could not accommodate a two-way traffic system without having to cut back into the ancient woodland of Priors Wood and would not be able to accommodate the required buffer zone to protect this woodland. Additionally, the Woodland Management Plan of application UTT/22/3126/FUL sets out the access point to the woodland at this same pinch point across a public footpath and the proposed vehicle

access so woodland access and vehicle access would conflict with each other and would be unsafe.

The Heritage Assessment submitted as part of the UTT/22/2744 application (section 5.1) highlights the fact that the Inspector found as part of the appeal for a former wider application (UTT/21/1987/FUL) that harm to the relevant heritage assets was in relation to the development of the Bull Field parcel of land, the area that is subject to this application. As this appeal was dismissed with this as a consideration, this is wholly relevant to this application and should be a reason for refusal.

There would be a significant increase of vehicle use on Parsonage Road with the developments that have been approved/pending approval on the last couple of years. This includes the development of 124 car parking spaces (UTT/22/2134/FUL), the building of 110 dwellings on the West side of Parsonage Road UTT/22/0152/DFO, the proposed building of a 66 bed care home (UTT/23/0062/DFO, UTT/19/0394/OP), the building of 88 dwellings UTT/21/2488 amongst others. The traffic surveys that have been done for all the approved and pending developments along Parsonage Road only include the impact of that particular development in line with the current situation and do not look at the collective impact of additional traffic and road use.

Essex County Council Highways has criticised the parking arrangements contained within the application for the care home as being wholly inadequate and as such oppose the application. The parking provision is well below the Essex Parking Standards of 1 space per full time equivalent staff and 1 visitor space per 3 beds. Many roads in Takeley including Parsonage Road suffer significantly from excessive fly parking with the cost of parking at Stansted airport being the highest in the country. Any new developments should include restrictions on parking for residents to reduce the number of fly parked cars but do not. If there is inadequate parking for care home staff and visitors, this is likely to result in cars being parked on road sides and residential areas exacerbating the already dire situation with fly parkers causing hazards, obstructions and a potentially unsafe environment for all users of this road. This road is also the main route through the village for buses that serve and use the airport as a connection point. Emphasis has been put on encouraging pedestrian and cycle use, but there is currently no street lighting along this road rendering it unsafe after nightfall. There were also 3 fatalities along this road in 2022 alone.

Most, if not all, of the proposed developments including this one are using the 2011 Census for the calculation of activities/movements, baseline travel patterns, etc. and these are wholly unrepresentative of the current population of the parish. The 2021 Census gives 5,103 residents whereas the 2011 gives around 3,425 residents, an increase of @50%. It is also the case that there are significant issues with parking on local roads, with residents having to park on these thereby restricting clear access for vehicles. With more houses, this situation is only going to exacerbated.

Whilst the Travel Plan to be developed as part of the erection of 4 industrial buildings refers to encouraging cycle and pedestrian use, this is impractical for buildings that are designed for commercial use and which will primarily attract commercial vehicles, including some HGV's, etc.

Planning permission (S62A/2023/0016) has been refused as recently as 9th August 2023 relating to another area which was part of a much larger development site including Bull Field for which an appeal was dismissed in August 2022. Whilst the area (Warish Hall Farm) within that permission stands slightly apart from Bull Field, the reasons for refusal are very pertinent to this application and Bull Field. The appeal decision (page 8) clearly states that Bull Field provides a positive contribution to the significance of this protected area and

development would fail to preserve the settings of listed buildings, detracting from their significance.

I note that the Inspector in considering the appeal scheme identified that the land opposite the site (Bull Field, Maggots Field and Priors Wood) particularly gives the setting of Hollow Elm Cottage a sense of tranquility which overall makes a positive contribution to its significance. Consequently he/she found that development there would fail to preserve its setting. It was also concluded that development in this area would be harmful to trees in Priors Wood and harmful to the character and appearance of the area and reduce the open character of the CPZ. As planning is proposed in this area, these conclusions remain very pertinent and should be sufficient to refuse this application. Priors Wood is used extensively by local residents, dog walkers, children, etc. and has been done so for many years and the visual impact of a housing development alongside the woods houses will significantly adversely affect the enjoyment of such activities which promote the health and well being of locals. One side of Priors Wood is already suffering an adverse visual impact with the building of the commercial units close to the boundary of the woods and the further building in this area will urbanise the destroy the environment and impact adversely on the local wildlife, etc. A 15 meter buffer zone will not adequately sustain the current natural beauty of this area and would reduce the views of the woodland, something which is extremely important with local residents. There are less and less areas of natural environment which lend themselves to outside activities in Takeley and the historic elements such as the scheduled monument, moated site, and protected woodland are much enjoyed and would be seriously missed.

Linda Steer

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