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6<sup>th</sup> September 2023

**Re: Proposed Development at Warish Hall Farm and surrounding land ref S62A/2023/0019**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a resident of Smiths Green in Takeley, I am a member of the Neighbourhood Planning Group and Vice-chairman of Takeley Parish Council. I object to this development on a number of grounds, which I will detail below. Some of these are general issues and some affect me directly as my property backs onto Bulls Field.

**Issue 1: Loss of Countryside and productive farmland, and erosion of the Countryside Protection Zone.**

The open farmland surrounding the villages around Stansted Airport is important to prevent coalescence of the villages both with each other and with the airport itself.

In public surveys carried out recently in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan 98% of the 600+ respondents saw protection of the CPZ as being important.

It also provides a natural environment enjoyed by the residents of those villages and during the pandemic provided an area of natural beauty where those residents were able to exercise and improve both their physical and mental health. As the pandemic has receded many residents have continued to walk the footpaths and enjoy the benefits of the unspoilt countryside. Whilst the proposal includes the retention of some open space this will be organised parkland rather than natural open space and will be much smaller and confined.

In addition to the above there will be a loss of productive farmland. At a time where a large proportion of the UK's food is imported with the affect that has on the environment and global warming, we should be taking every step to retain productive farmland and reduce "food miles". There is also the issue that as the world population continues to increase other countries need to feed their own populations may mean, in the future, that they will be less able/willing to export produce, leading to shortages in the UK. This was evidenced recently when the extreme weather in India affected their rice crop to such an extent that they stopped exports.

The current government have stated that there is sufficient "brown field land" to meet their house building targets without the need to build on green field sites (see Boris Johnson PMQ's March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021).

Robert Jenrick, writing in the Telegraph, talked about the government's plans to reform the planning process and how important it is to retain Green Belt and other protected countryside areas. Mr Gove recently supported this standpoint.

## **Issue 2: Loss of Habitat for Birds and Wildlife**

The woods and open countryside provide a home to much wildlife: deer, foxes, owls, bats, mice, frogs, newts, and birds such as wood peckers, yellow hammers, blackbirds, thrush, robin, jay, magpie, and many others.

Unfortunately, by destroying much of the hedgerow around the fields of this proposed development in 2021 the likely hood is that any survey of birds and wildlife will be much reduced.



Photo shows destruction of hedges 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021

## **Issue 3: Traffic/Pollution/Noise/Light and Air**

Any surveys that have been undertaken during the pandemic will not be accurate to the situation that exists normally. Road traffic, particularly along the A120 and B1256 was much reduced during the pandemic and is only now starting to increase.

It is proposed to access this development from Parsonage Road, a road that is already seeing an increase in traffic from the building of 3 new developments totalling around 300 houses, all of which will use Parsonage Road. This road has seen 3 fatalities over the last year or so and further increases in traffic levels, unless there are major improvements and traffic calming, are likely to increase the risk of further accidents and potential fatalities.

Having passed through Weston Homes HQ and the industrial units currently being built behind, the proposed road to this development enters Bulls field through the North West corner of the field where it will be within the 15 metre buffer zone.

Stansted Airport has barely operated during the day throughout the pandemic, so any noise and pollution surveys relating to the airport will be highly inaccurate.

It is also likely that there will be increased light pollution at night, particularly from the housing, but also from the lighting of the proposed upgraded path to the south of the development, which will run along the rear of my property and the small coppice adjacent, which will affect not just my property, but also the wildlife, including bats and owls that lives in the small coppice.

#### **Issue 4: Heritage**

A heritage report completed for Uttlesford District Council at the time of the Priors Green development remarked on the large number of listed properties in and around Smiths Green and the adverse effect that any development would have on such properties. (this document can be found on UDC website)

In his findings following Weston Homes previous, larger proposal for this and other adjacent sites, the inspector referred to the ancient woodland at Priors Wood, and the importance of the views across open fields from the listed properties on Warish Hall Road (also known as Smiths Green Lane). Whilst this new proposal removes those properties that were planned along the east boundary of the field fronting Warish Hall road and replaces them with a "Hay Field" (basically a strip of grassland that could be developed at a later date), the new proposed housing will still obscure the majority of the wood and will result in an urban landscape which is inappropriate in this ancient setting.

#### **Issue 5: Issues with Water Pressure and Water Supply**

Takeley has long suffered from issues of low water pressure and, more recently are being encouraged by the water supplier to reduce water usage in order to protect endangered chalk streams. Any further development would increase the strain on water supply and have a detrimental affect to both the village and the chalk streams.

#### **Issue 6: Local infrastructure and facilities**

A recent questionnaire for the Neighbourhood Plan, completed by over 600 of the 2000 or so households in Takeley, showed that lack of facilities is a major concern.

The proposal promises additional land for the local school.

The provision of school places is decided by the local education department, not the developer. When Priors Green was built a new school was built, but it was no bigger than the school it replaced in the village and the education department were forced to reopen the old school. This does not fill us with any confidence about the future provision of school places that may be required by any further development.

The proposal makes little, if any, suggestions for how it might improve other infrastructure for the village.

The reason that we moved to Takeley 24 years ago was not for the facilities and infrastructure that it provided, but rather for the peace and tranquillity provided by the surrounding countryside. This has been steadily eroded over time. We are not against progress, or development, but it should be proportionate and supportive of communities, not ripping the heart out of the countryside in order to line the pockets of developers.

In summary, this is the wrong development in the wrong place. It isn't needed (according to UDC councillors there is already more than 5 years of potential building land – although this will not be made public until some time in October), it isn't wanted ( the recent Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire responses show that 69% of respondents want less than a 5% increase in local in the next 15 years and a further 20% want to see less than 10%) and clearly flies in the face of emerging government policy. It is opportunistic as it is clearly timed so as to be before any emerging district and neighbourhood plans for the area can be completed, or indeed the conservation area status for Smiths Green, which is currently out for public consultation.

This proposed development is in contravention of Uttlesford District Council policies ENV3, ENV7, ENV8, ENV9, S7 and S8.

For all the reasons above I strongly object to this development.

Yours Faithfully

Phillip Bodsworth