

## **Objection to Planning Application S62A/2023/0019**

**Land to the North of Roseacres between Parsonage Road and Smith's Green Lane, Takeley, Essex CM22 6NZ (Land know as Bull Field, Warish Hall Farm, Takeley, Essex**

My name is Patricia Barber. I have lived in Smith's Green for over fifty years. I object to this application very strongly. It is particularly disappointing that this site has been brought back so soon, having been dismissed on appeal last year.

I am very concerned about the effect the development will have on Priors Wood, which is ancient woodland. The west side of the wood already has 4 large warehouses being built in the adjacent field.

Putting a large development on the southern side of the wood will further damage its viability. A buffer zone of only 15 metres has been proposed. The Woodland Trust, the experts on ancient woodland that I would turn to for advice on how to look after this valuable asset has said that a buffer zone should be at least 30 metres. A planners' manual for 'Ancient Woodland and veteran trees', published in 2019 by the Woodland Trust, says that the preferred approach for a buffer is to create new habitat around existing ancient woodland – hence the need for a wider buffer. The Woodland Trust has given more information on this in its objection to the application. The buffer zone proposed here has a footpath and cycleway on it. It will need to have a surface suitable for cyclists and possibly some lighting. Therefore, can it really qualify as a buffer zone?

In this application there is a row of houses facing into the wood. At the present time there no light in or close to Priors Wood at night. If this development happens, it is inevitable that light from the house windows and security lights and possibly lighting on the cycleway will shine directly into the wood. Not very good for the wildlife!

The entrance into the development site has a pinch-point on the southwest corner of the wood. It is hard to see how this can be wide enough for a two-car width road, cycleway and footpath without causing damage to the tree canopy or the roots of the trees on the corner of the wood.

Although there is no public footpath through the wood (it is a private wood) it is walked by members of the public, mainly dogwalkers. The proposed development would result in many more people accessing the wood, in numbers which may cause damage.

Priors Wood has a history going back to the Domesday Book. It was owned by St. Valery's Priory, the site of Warish Hall until 1379 and then given to New College, Oxford, which owned it for over 500 years. There is evidence in the wood of medieval earthworks, known as woodbanks which Oliver Rackham - an acknowledged authority on the countryside and its history - talks about in his book *The Last Forest – the story of Hatfield Forest* - published in 1989. Rackham mentions Priors Wood several times in this book and calls it 'a massively embanked sub-wood.' The Priory kept its pigs in the wood. The woodbanks have not been mentioned anywhere in the documents submitted for this Hearing which is worrying. They should be preserved.

Bull Field is outside village development limits. The development site is adjacent to the Conservation Area of Smith's Green, which UDC has resolved to designate. This is a special and unique part of Takeley. Most of the houses in Smith's Green are Grade 2 listed. Going through the Green into Warish Hall Road/Smith's Green Lane the view opens up to an agrarian landscape across Bull Field to Priors Wood. Smith's Green Lane is a protected lane of high calibre which is bordered by registered village green. Although the developer has changed its earlier proposal slightly and removed a few of the houses closest to the protected lane, the development will still be seen from the road and our Conservation area. Development here will completely change the character and ambience of this unique area and will affect the integrity of the conservation area.

This application goes against UDC Policy S7 and NPPF Paragraph 174, both of which says that development should only take place if its appearance protects or enhances the countryside within which it is set. It clearly does not do this. It also goes against UDC policy S8, the Countryside Protection Zone, which was introduced in the 1995 UDC Local Plan to stop coalescence of Stansted Airport with the surrounding villages

In view of the above I ask that this application is refused.

Patricia Barber