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2<sup>nd</sup> December 2023

Dear Sir,

**Section 62A Planning Application Number: S62A/2023/0025  
Land to the North of Eldridge Close, Clavering, Essex**

Please accept this letter as my **objection** to this 28 house development proposal.

It comes hard on the heels of an Appeal to the Planning Inspectorate (Appeal Ref: APP/C1570/W/23/3331461) against a refusal by Uttlesford District Council of an application for 32 houses on the same site (UDC Ref: UTT/22/1578/OP).

I raised objections to the 32 house application that are set out at the bottom of this letter. **Those objections still stand** because the present 28 house proposal is not significantly different from the previous 32 house proposal. While it may offer slightly fewer houses resulting in slightly bigger gaps between the houses and slightly more green space, the design is essentially the same and it occupies the entire site, as before.

It is, in fact, so similar to the 32 house application that it smacks of an abuse of the planning system and should be struck down on this account alone. If the Inspectorate does not agree, then in order not to waste public time and money, it should be considered at the same time as the Appeal against the 32 house application or, at the very least, by the same Inspector.

The other relevant issue here is that at the time Uttlesford District Council considered the 32 house application, it did not have a 5 year supply of housing land and yet, despite this, the Council still refused that application. Not only is this application more or less the same as the previous one but, with the passage of time, UDC now has a 5 year supply of housing land that reduces significantly, the operation of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and reinforces Local Plan policies.

For these reasons, the application should be **REFUSED**.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Walters

**Objections to the 32 house development that apply equally to the current application**

**Planning history**

1. The previous officer's report for just 9 houses concluded that it was an inappropriate form of development in the countryside, would have an encroaching and urbanising effect that would be out of context with the existing pattern of development and harmful to the setting and character of the rural location and out of character with the site, street scene and surrounding area. A more damning indictment is hard to imagine. If that was the case with just 9 houses, how much more inappropriate and harmful will 32 houses be?

2. The Planning Committee agreed with the officer's report and refused to grant planning permission.
3. The Appeal Inspector turned down the Appeal. However, while he criticised the under-use of such a large site with just 9 houses, **the applicant has taken this comment out of context** and assumed it gave the applicant the green light to come back with a revised scheme for 32 houses.
4. While the Inspector criticised the under-use of the site, this was because of a greater concern that if this pattern of development was repeated elsewhere in the district it would only result in more agricultural land being lost to housing than would be the case with higher density projects.
5. In fact, the Inspector turned down the previous scheme, not for its profligate use of land, but for the harm that it would cause to the countryside. That harm will only be exacerbated by increasing the number of houses on the site from 9 to 32.

### **The landscape harm the development will cause**

1. This is a site that is highly visible on the landscape from numerous footpaths viewpoints. While in the summer, the line of trees along the western boundary provide a degree of screening, this will not be sufficient to hide 32 houses and will not hide them at all for around half the year after leaf fall.
2. The northern boundary of the site has a large unscreened gap in it and when approaching the site from the footpath 19 to the north, the entire estate will be clearly visible, altering the view from that footpath from a rural one to an urban one.
3. The view from the section of that footpath that currently runs through the site will also be transformed from one that is essentially rural to one that is essentially urban.
4. Modern housing estates tend not to mellow with time, and their dense built form remains highly visible, which is exactly what has happened with the existing Eldridge Close estate, as can be seen from the numerous viewpoints along footpaths to the north and to the west of the application site, especially after leaf fall.
5. There is no guarantee that, once outline planning permission has been granted, the applicant will not fell many of the trees on the western boundary of the development, none of which have Tree Preservation Orders to protect them (and some of which are already doomed by the applicant as diseased) and, equally, no guarantee that the owners of the properties whose gardens will back onto that boundary will not do the same in an endeavour to secure better views across the open countryside. Originally, the western boundary of the Eldridge Close site had significantly more trees than is now the case and the stark difference between this boundary and the foliage on the western boundary of the application site is there for all to see.
6. However the applicant might seek to belittle the impact of the development on the rural countryside landscape, any inspection will reveal the extent of the harmful impact the development will actually have.
7. The application site in fact forms part of a much larger field separated only by foliage on the western boundary of the application site and the two areas are farmed as part and parcel of the same field. Pretending that, somehow, the application site is a separate and enclosed area does not reflect what exists on the ground. Both the site and the rest of the field of which it forms part are integral parts of the same landscape vista.
8. The application site falls within the Langley Chalk Uplands Landscape Character Assessment that is sensitive to even small village extensions such as the development proposed.

9. The existing Eldridge Close already forms a highly visible block of housing that can be clearly seen from numerous footpath viewpoints. Adding a further 32 houses will more than double this housing block, rendering the harm to the landscape even more acute. The proposed development is already larger than any other estate-type grouping of houses in Clavering and the combined effect of this with the existing Eldridge Close will create a block of housing completely at odds with the overall characteristics of the village.

### **Poor development design**

1. Somewhat astonishingly, the applicant seeks to run the argument that just because the proposed access road to the estate will have houses either side of it, this turns a housing estate into a linear street arrangement like Arkesden Road. If this were the case, then every housing estate in the country with houses either side of an estate road could be classified as a linear arrangement. This appears not to have been thought through properly.
2. Disappointingly, it seems the applicant is proposing a tree-lined access road. However, in the main, trees are only shown on one side of the road whereas the usual definition of the expression "tree-lined" means trees on both sides of the road.
3. A development of this size with the usual postage stamp gardens will contrast harshly with the larger and more spaced out properties in Arkesden Road onto whose more reasonably-sized gardens the estate will directly back. Accordingly, the development will not reflect the scale form and appearance of surrounding buildings.
4. The public open space areas are far too small to have any value except as minor street decoration, more at home in an urban environment than a rural one. Describing these as a haven for wildflowers places hope above reality.
5. Describing the apartment block in terms of a farmstead arrangement, again places hope above reality.
6. The long downhill estate road will encourage the build up of traffic speeds, peaking at the double bend before reaching the existing Eldridge Close, and will be dangerous for pedestrians.
7. The proposed pond is far too small to contribute any tangible wildlife benefit located as it is in a very publicly accessible area. It is a decorative feature only with no significantly greater benefit than, say, a water fountain. In any event, as the pond will not be spring-fed, it will simply dry out in the summer and at times of heavy rain during the winter months, it runs the risk of overflowing into other areas of the estate.
8. While the applicant's expressed desire to create, in its house design, a modern take on a rural characteristic this does not shine through in the house designs proposed. They are, instead, more akin to a modern take on an urban characteristic.

### **Loss of good quality agricultural land**

1. The application site is good quality agricultural land, as opposed to the site of the present Eldridge Close estate that was granted planning permission mainly on the back of the fact that it was brownfield land. Accordingly, Eldridge Close presents no precedent on which the proposed development should be relying.
2. Recent international events have demonstrated the importance of being able to produce our own food that is being recognised at the highest levels of government. Converting the application site into housing is, in the light of this, an irresponsible act.

### **Storm water running down Eldridge Close**

The sewerage and drainage problems at Eldridge Close are well known and well documented. At times of heavy rainfall, water just cascades down Eldridge Close, including out of the drain covers at the bottom of the road and accumulates in Stickling Green Road. Adding a further 32 houses on a rising site above Eldridge Close will only add to this problem.

### **The site lies outside the village boundary**

The application site not only falls outside the village boundary, its sheer size and position renders it an illogical extension to the village.

### **Refusal under 2015 Call for Sites**

The application site was proposed under the 2015 Call for Sites but rejected due to the harmful impact on the Langley Chalk Upland Landscape and as being too far from the main village facilities. Nothing has changed since then.

### **Road and pedestrian safety**

1. Eldridge Close is narrow, with cars often parked there and existing access for service vehicles is difficult. Running through it all the traffic from an additional 32 houses will increase these dangers considerably.
2. As a result of adding 32 more houses to the existing Eldridge Close estate, and on the basis of 2 cars per house and just one journey in and out of the estate each day, this will mean an additional 128 car movements each day, plus, of course visits by delivery and service vehicles. The point at which Eldridge Close access road joins Stickling Green Road is located quite close to a bend with limited visibility and this additional traffic will create an extra traffic hazard along a lane that is already regularly used by farm vehicles as well as traffic serving existing residents not just in Stickling Green but in outlying villages and hamlets.
3. The applicant's Transport Statement fails to mention that both footways and carriageway in Eldridge Close are narrow and that the footpaths leading down the High Street into the main Clavering facilities are bumpy and narrow (around 2 feet at one point). This presents a pedestrian hazard, particularly for those with prams or buggies.
4. The applicant's Transport Statement makes references to bus stops and improvements to their associated facilities. There are no bus stops in Clavering, simply because there are no scheduled publicly available buses. The so-called bus stops are just places where school buses (that are not available to the general public) happen to stop to pick up schoolchildren.
5. Cycling is not a safe option having regard to the busy nature of local roads beyond Stickling Green Road and often fast traffic speeds (particularly when cars are rushing to get to train stations on time).
6. Difficulties already exist over manoeuvring large service vehicles on the existing access road to Eldridge Close with vehicles having to reverse back into Stickling Green Road and the addition of another 32 houses will only add to this already unsatisfactory and dangerous situation.

### **No need for more affordable housing**

Local need for affordable housing has been assessed by a Parish Council recent survey and this need will be met more than twice over by the housing development behind the school for which there is now planning permission. As a result. The proposal for 13 more affordable houses resulting from the development will result in local over-provision.

### **Housing benefit versus development harm**

While 32 houses will be of some benefit as regards the district's housing supply, this is far outweighed by the much greater harm that the houses will cause to the countryside for the reasons given above.

### **Not sustainable development**

1. There are insufficient jobs in the village of the type that would be required for most of those in the houses proposed.
2. The site is too far from the main village facilities, which will mean an increase in car use.
3. There is no guarantee that building work will be shared out among local builders and building tradespeople. Experience elsewhere in the village reveals that often, outsiders are brought in.
4. There are no public transport facilities in the village.
5. Cycling is not a feasible option.
6. The development will have an adverse impact on the countryside.

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