

Comments regarding: S62A/2023/0027 & UTT/23/2682/PINS

Application Summary

- Applicant name: Weston Homes PLC
- Site address: Land at Warish Hall Farm, North of Jacks Lane, Smiths Green Lane, Takeley, Essex
- Proposal: Erection of 40 no. dwellings, including open space landscaping and associated infrastructure
- Case Officer: [REDACTED]

Customer Details

- Name: Mr Richard Hughes
- Address: [REDACTED]

Comment Details

- Commenter Type: Neighbour
- Stance: Customer objects to the Planning Application
- Comment Reasons are given below:

General

This, together with the proposal S62A/2023/0027 are yet more proposals from Weston Homes to grub-up farmland around Warish Hall and in their place construct houses. Proposals to place houses on this part of the countryside have been made by Weston Homes previously and have been rejected, e.g. UTT/21/1987/FU, Appeal Dismissed on 09/08/2022 (reference: APP/C1570/W/22/3291524) and S62A/2023/0016 refused on 09/08/2023. These latest proposals should be similarly rejected.

In a response to a previous submission to develop 40 dwellings on this land I expressed the view that Weston Homes seem to be of the belief that if they keep making minor alterations to their plans and then re-submit them, then eventually some iteration will be accepted. Well, here we are again! This cynical approach should not be accepted now, or in the future.

Whether Takeley should, or should not, be the location for yet more dwellings erected on a dwindling stock of agricultural land is currently part of the Uttlesford Local Consultation Plan which is currently under consultation. Therefore, no relevance should be given to the proposals contained in that draft plan when considering this proposal. However, consideration should be given to the recent Designation of the Smiths Green Conservation Area, since this designation was made to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of this area: something that this latest Weston Homes proposal does not do.

The major change within this proposal is to modify the link via Byway 25 from the eastern side of the proposed Jacks Field site leading into Little Canfield. The modification is to add illumination and 'upgrade' this stretch of Byway 25 until it meets the first intersection at Burgattes Road – this for the use of pedestrians and cyclists, since the only other route available to them is to exit to the west onto the unlit Smiths Green Lane. This change in the proposal was introduced as a way of overcoming an objection made by the previous inspector when rejecting Weston Homes' earlier proposals. I will therefore restrict my comments to this change, since if it is found to be

unacceptable then the previous rejection by the inspector of the earlier proposals should apply to this one too.

Proposal to modify Byway 25

This Byway links the protected lane of Smiths Green and terminates at Bambers Green Road. This Byway is segmented multiple times along its path, cutting through Burgattes Road (part of the Little Canfield development) twice.

Currently the Byway is unlit along its entire length and is constructed of a permeable gravel path. If one walks along the gravel path it will be evident that on both sides there is scrubland (mainly grass/brambles and weeds) and then trees and in many places a ditch (in some places there are ditches on both sides). Even where it bisects the Little Canfield Development (which is lit) the Byway is unlit. Therefore, the proposal should not illuminate the Byway.

Also evident by walking this Byway is that the path is quite narrow. However, the plans submitted by Weston Homes (see, e.g. Jacks Parcel Boundary Strategy drawing) show the Byway to be rather wide, a width they fully intend to use in their proposal to replace the unlit, gravel, path with a lit surface of self-binding gravel (see Jacks Parcel Byway Sections drawing). While the people in the latter drawing are not in scale with the trees, neither are they to scale with the width of current walkable path. Weston Homes have produced multiple drawings that demonstrate various views of this Byway, but not one scale drawing that shows how ditches, trees, lighting and a pathway suitable for both pedestrians and cyclists (presumably both occupying the same pathway but safely traversing in opposite directions). Perhaps this is because there is simply not the required width to accommodate all these things that Weston Homes depict individually, but without any regard to scale?

The construction of a pathway with the drainage features depicted in the Jacks Parcel Byway Sections drawing would require the existing Byway to be made unavailable for many weeks. This would be a considerable disbenefit to those who use this Byway at the moment. If the construction is to be undertaken by mechanical diggers etc. then it is not clear how the work is to be undertaken without disturbing the school, nor residents in Jacks Lane, nor parts of Little Canfield.

Taking into account that the road Jacks Lane and the protected lane of Smiths Green are both unlit, it makes no sense to illuminate and widen this stretch of Byway 25. Obviously, the current farmland is also unlit, and so any new lighting (both the street lighting associated with the proposed dwellings and the proposed lighting of part of the Byway) will inevitably increase the ambient light levels, no matter whether the luminaires are selected and installed in accordance with British Standards or otherwise.

Note that the proposed changes to the Byway does not result in it being lit along the entire length from the proposed Jacks Field site to Burgattes Road in Little Canfield. This is because the Byway stops at Jacks Lane road, which is unlit along its length, and then re-starts once it has passed Jacks Green. This can be seen in the document "Jacks Green Off-site Footpath Sheet 1 of 2". Hence, if the desire is to illuminate the entire route from the proposed Jacks Field site to Little Canfield, this proposal fails. Also relevant here is the implication that Weston Homes wish to re-designate the path from its existing status of a Byway to become a Footpath: so surely, this development should not be approved until this change in designation has itself been approved?