

Niki Champion



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Inquiries and Major Casework Team
The Planning Inspectorate
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Reference: S62A/2024/0032 - Land to the West of Mill Lane, Hatfield Heath

I would like to open by requesting that a decision on the above mentioned planning application is taken via a hearing. This section of land in Hatfield Heath has been the subject of numerous planning applications since 2016 and involves one way in/one way out access to the location via a single track road created initially for farm and POW camp access. As a result the situation is complex with many facets to consider, many of which cannot be correctly assessed without a site visit or discussion with the neighbouring residents.

As a direct neighbour of the site in question, if a hearing was granted I would like to nominate myself as a speaker.

Hereby follows my objections to the planning application in question.

Previous application refusals

Numerous planning applications have been refused due to poor access provided by Mill Lane:

- DUN/433/71
- UTT/1175/96/FUL
- UTT/032/97/FUL

More recent applications have been withdrawn/refused at District Council Planning Committee level and/or Dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate:

- UTT/22/1261/FUL – refused due to inappropriate development within Green Belt
- UTT/17/2499/FUL - refused at District Council level and subsequently dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate on Appeal due to harming the Green Belt and Heritage
- UTT/16/3697/FUL – application withdraw as Essex County Council Highways rejected the plan on safety grounds

Presentation of obsolete analytics

All of the documentation/data/surveys and analytics submitted with this application were gathered/created in 2016 when the initial planning application by the current owner and developer was lodged.

According to industry standards, data is identified as being “outdated” and no longer relevant/reliable after 5 years. The data presented on this occasion is 8 years old and does NOT recognise the addition of 2 new family sized dwellings, the increased capacity of the care home, The Haven, on the corner of Mill Lane and the A1060, the introduction of Invictus Motors, used car dealership, to the northern end of Mill Lane nor recognises that Greenways Eggs, an egg packing business also at the northern end of Mill Lane will remain in operation. A previous application lodged involved the departure of Greenways Eggs from Mill Lane, however, on this occasion they will remain and it is important to note that they also have a pending planning application in play which will see an increase in capacity and therefore traffic movements.

Also following COVID many more households take advantage of home deliveries.

I suggest it is impossible to simply apply “normal traffic growth” uplift to the data of 2016.

In reality, 2 new dwellings, a significant increase in home deliveries and Invictus Motors, plus the addition of 4 new residential dwellings 8 holiday lets would result in a MINIMUM of 32 extra vehicle movements per day based on the assumption that only 50% of the holiday lets are occupied at any one time. This doesn't include the number of trips generated by Invictus Motors nor does it include the potential uplift of vehicle movements associated with planning application UTT/23/1688/FUL which is currently under consideration.

An additional 32 trips per day is **900%** percent more than the 3 claimed by the applicant.

2 new houses since 2016 = 6 trips
4 new additional homes = 12 trips
home deliveries = 6 trips
50% occupancy of the 8 holiday lets = 8 trips

900% increase in traffic does not align with **section 105 of the NPPF** which states:

“traffic planning systems should help reduce congestion and emissions!!”

Nor does it meet **section 107's** objectives:

“to consider the accessibility of the development”

which will be impossible to achieve due to the congestion generated by the pinch point at the southern end of Mill Lane.

In February 2017, Essex Highways responded to planning application UTT/16/3697/FUL with concerns over the access to the development site via a bridleway, intensification of traffic from Mill Lane onto the A1060 and concerns over geometric layout and visibility which could give rise to conflict between vehicles/pedestrians, vehicles/vehicles and vehicles

other non-motorised users particularly at the Southern end of Mill Lane. NONE of these issues have been mitigated or resolved and they remain factual as of today.

In May 2018, after consultations with the developer, Essex Highways amended their view and agreed that they would support an application on the basis that the traffic would be 'broadly in line with the existing lawful use' of the existing traffic based on data gathered in 2016 and the assumption that Greenways Eggs would close its operation in Mill Lane.

On this occasion there will be no removal or replacement of traffic movement purely additional movements.

The collision history period used is 2016 to 2021. There have been 4 major traffic incidents involving the attendance of emergency services and road closures in 2022/2023. The latest incident happening in August 2023 involving a vehicle attempting to turn right from the A1060 into Mill Lane, a second vehicle attempted an illegal overtake but had to leave the carriageway to avoid collision and ended up hitting the boundary of The Haven at the mouth of Mill Lane. Damage to the property can be seen in the photograph enclosed. Recent collision history should be considered.

Road Layout

Mill Lane is single track and unable to take two way traffic with NO possibility of widening at the southern end of the highway which meets the A1060. From this junction continuing up to 3 Mill Lane, the Highway boundary is lined with private properties which cannot be utilised for the purposes of widening. This section also houses a pinch point which is only 3.1m wide and offers a blind bend with no sight line to oncoming vehicles.

The developer is suggesting a widening of the road but fails to indicate exactly where and how this widening will proceed.

Drawing number **ITB11347-GA-012** vaguely suggests two sections which are either along a section which is lined by private properties or at the widest point of the highway opposite The Chapmans. The first being impossible to achieve as noted above and the second would make no material difference to the problems at the Southern end of Mill Lane.

Essex County Council (ECC) following a site visit indicated previously indicated "Tightening of the south eastern radius at Mill Lane / Stortford Road junction to bring effective footway into the first section of Mill Lane" was required. The developer has not addressed this point aside from the improving the footpath which rounds the bend at the mouth of the highway, approx. 5 foot in length, which will offer no benefit to wishing to access the first 11 dwellings or choosing to walk the length of Mill Lane.

The application documentation also states that intervisibility on the approach to 'the gentle bend' is 25m and that the 'Sight Stopping Distance' is 22m, so an approach of 18mph is acceptable. However, if read in detail the speed survey submitted by the developer states that traffic travelled at 15.7mph northbound and 15.9 southbound, a closing speed of 31.6mph or 13.4m/s between the two vehicles. That means the 25m closing distance will be covered in 1.9 seconds which will cause chaos at the 3.1m wide pinch point.

To test this calculation an independent review of the Highway was commissioned details of which can be reviewed in the additional letter attached provided by EAS.

A **Road Safety Audit**, commissioned by the applicant, highlights minor safety issues and totally overlooks the significant safety issues residents face currently without the increase in traffic movements.

The site visit, as stated in the audit report, was undertaken between “13:30 and 14:30. The weather was raining and cold, the road surface was wet. Traffic was minimal and the level of pedestrians passing the site was minimal. No cyclists were observed during the visit”.

A 1 hour slot, outside of peak hours, on a wet cold day produces realistic data on traffic and pedestrian movements. Traffic is heavier during peak hours and minimal pedestrians will be out walking in the rain. The data would be significantly different if conducted on a warm, dry day in spring between 8 and 9am or 3 and 4pm.

In reality the highway is not a safe place.

Mill Lane is used by a plethora of vehicles – family cars, delivery vans, emergency vehicles, refuse lorries, 5 ton delivery lorries and articulated lorries which require escorting in and out of Mill Lane. That coupled with pedestrians of all ages, dog walkers, cyclists and horses, Mill Lane is an extremely busy and well used single track road.

Our reality every day is as follows:

..... pedestrians using Mill Lane to access the bus stop, the school bus arrives causing overtaking on the A1060, an emergency vehicle or an articulated lorry is blocking the entrance to Mill Lane, a resident is turning right in to Mill Lane, a resident is turning left into Mill Lane which requires crossing on to the nearside of Mill Lane and towards oncoming traffic. All of this causes congestion on the A1060 and queuing in Mill Lane.

This is a reality especially at 8am EVERY weekday.

Also as stated in the **Essex County Council’s Essex Design Guide**

“the walking distance between any dwelling and a bus stop should be in the order of 400 metres.”

The bus stops for Bishop Stortford/Chelmsford is located just left of the junction with Mill Lane and the A1060 which would be more than 400 metres away if the proposed footpath route was taken by current residents of Mill Lane. Mill Lane also provides the 400 metre route for many residents living in Broomfields, therefore, Mill Lane needs to be safe for all pedestrians along its entire length and not just at the point the new development and for the new residents.

The mouth of Mill Lane is also the designated stopping location for the school bus which generates pedestrian usage by minors twice per day during term time.

Classification of the land

The last application made on this site was rejected due to the land being classified as Greenbelt which the Inspectorate also insighted as its reasons for dismissing a previous

application reviewed on appeal. All other previous applications on this site have also been refused on the grounds that the land is Greenbelt.

The land cannot be classified as “pre developed” land as the current structures are by definition “temporary” due to them housing Prisoners of War by the MOD who returned the land to the farmer for agricultural use once the Camp was no longer required. The fact that the land owner never removed the structures does not automatically alter land classification.

This current application does not satisfy as an exception site under NPPF section **16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment**

As agreed by Uttlesford District Council’s Planning Committee upon its refusal of application UTT/22/1261/FUL which is identical to this application, the application does not fully restore the structures and preserve the historical nature of the site which is listed on Uttlesford’s Heritage list due to its unique nature and it being the only POW Camp of its design left in the south of the country.

Also **section 16.202 of the NPPF**

“Where there is evidence of deliberate neglect of, or damage to, a heritage asset, the deteriorated state of the heritage asset should not be taken into account in any decision.”

should be invoked as the site has deliberately been closed off to the public and left to deteriorate since its purchase.

Destruction of important historical site

POW Camp 116 is a unique site as it is the only remaining camp of its kind left in the South of the UK which should be retained for generations to come.

There is a strong connection between the community and POW Camp 116. The prisoners contributed to the community and continued to do so upon release, with some choosing to make Hatfield Heath and surrounding areas their homes. This I believe has helped sustain the communities interest in the site.

Before the current land owner purchased the site it was frequently accessed by local schools using the location as an educational tool.

The site is listed on **Uttlesford District Council’s Local Heritage List** and this should be taken into consideration when reviewing this application.

Over development

Precedence has been set by the District Council in its rejection of alternative development plans within Hatfield Heath due to the proposed site being on green belt land and outside the village envelope. This proposal is also outside the village envelope.

Over development in a village which does not have the infrastructure to accommodate such an increase in population - three week waiting list for non-emergency doctor appointments currently, school at full capacity and strain on public parking in the village etc.

This application would add to the over development of a country lane which has already seen an 80% increase in residential properties in the last 14 years.

Unlawful usage of a designated Bridleway

The proposal to utilise a designated Bridleway as access to the proposed development. The law states that no motorised vehicle should utilise a Bridleway. Therefore, accessing the new development would be unlawful use of a designated Bridleway.

Waste Water risk

Since the erection of 7 additional dwellings in Mill Lane over the last 10 years, there has been a marked increase in the blockages to the waste water infrastructure which runs under #'s one, two and three Mill Lane. Nasty smells are coming from the waste water infrastructure and 1 Mill Lane experiences frequent blockages which require the attention of a professional drainage expert. This was not a problem before the additional development in Mill Lane. The significant increase in properties that the developer intends to link to the current ancient waste water infrastructure will be disastrous for the current residents of Mill Lane.

This is a serious risk to public health and should be reassessed.

To close, Mill Lane does NOT provide suitable access to a 12 property development, the suggestion is simply DANGEROUS and a total disregard for villagers safety. I therefore, wholeheartedly object to this planning application.

Yours sincerely,

Niki Champion

Enc. Photographs of congestion
Photograph of RTA property damage
EAS Letter









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