

16<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**PINS ref: S62A/2024/0032**

**LOCATION: Land to the West of Mill Lane Hatfield Heath**

We are strongly opposed to the above planning application for several reasons. Namely the unsuitability of Mill Lane as an access road, the development of Green Belt land and the loss of an historic site.

**TRAFFIC**

Mill Lane is a single track road which currently accommodates 14 homes, two businesses and driveway access to a residential care home. As residents we already live with the traffic generated by Greenway Eggs which relies on large vehicles such as articulated lorries and HGVs. *(please see photos)* Invictus Motors is a car showroom and, as such, uses low loaders, parts delivery vans and, of course, people undertaking test drives. *(please see photos)* Ambulances regularly park at the entrance to the care home which is situated just a few metres from the corner of Mill lane and the A1060 Stortford Rd. *(please see photos)* The driveway is too small to accommodate them and, due to the nature of their visit, they are often in this position for a considerable length of time. *(please see photos)* The lane is used by dog walkers, horse riders, families as well as residents. Children from the Broomfield estate use the lane to access the school bus stop sited at the junction of the A1060 Stortford Rd and Mill Lane. The lack of footpath and narrow road width require all users to be alert to oncoming traffic but many of us are elderly and cannot easily take evasive action from an oncoming car. Mill Lane has a pinch point of 3m between No.1 and the corner of the care home and this already causes congestion when oncoming vehicles cannot pass, especially as the sight lines are so poor. It cannot be stated too strongly that there are NO passing places, which is why some residents have their fences hit and driveways ruined. Drivers unfamiliar with the lane or on a deadline cannot be relied upon to drive with due care and attention.

Highways appear to consider that the recently revised plans for minor changes to the lane now address all issues of traffic congestion and pedestrian safety. Unless Mill Lane were to be widened along its full length, which we all acknowledge as an impossibility, it cannot accommodate two way traffic of any type. No amount of widening in other areas would allow for the passing of an articulated lorry with any other vehicle. Or indeed the safe passage of a pedestrian or cyclist. It is our believe that the requirements outlined in paragraph 110-112 of the NPPF have not been met in this instance. The majority of homes in Mill Lane lie to the south of the footpath access to Broomfield, therefore it is not safer to take this route from the lane, especially if an artic is having to negotiate the tight and tricky dog leg at the entrance to the proposed development. This plan does not meet with the NPPF.

It has been stated by the applicant that the four permanent homes and 8 'holiday lets' will each only generate 1 vehicle movement per day. This statement is totally unrealistic and without foundation. The four bedroom homes will be occupied by families with at least two cars, making trips for shopping business, pleasure and school runs. People renting holiday homes will go out and about visiting the local area. All the properties will be using delivery services, either for goods, takeaways, or supermarket

shopping. We also have grave concerns regarding the inclusion of 8 'holiday lets'. The secluded wooded setting may well attract stag or hen parties which would be an unwelcome addition to the neighbourhood. It is less likely to attract genuine holiday makers as Hatfield Heath would not generally be considered as a holiday destination. Our fear is that, should the 'holiday lets' prove unsuccessful in business terms the applicant will apply for a change of use to permanent homes. The lay out of the scheme and the type and size of the accommodation would certainly lead one to this conclusion.

Accessing Mill Lane from the A1060, Bishop's Stortford direction requires the driver to make the turn on the wrong side of the lane, virtually completely blind due to the corner of the care home. This is hazardous at any time but even more so if there is an ambulance parked at the entrance to the home as is quite often the case. Any vehicle entering Mill lane from this direction and encountering either a stationary ambulance and/or oncoming traffic exiting the lane will be left unable to fully exit the busy A1060 and leaving them in a precarious position from vehicles

Criterion A of Uttlesford District council's Local plan (2005) Policy Gen 1 states:

*"Development will only be permitted if it meets all the following criteria:*

- a) *Access to the main road network must be capable of carrying the traffic generated by the development safely."*

It is evident that the access onto the main road network is not capable of safely carrying the traffic already on this road. Currently road users are already being placed in unsafe and uncomfortable positions due to the presence of goods vehicles on the road, limited visibility and the frequent need to reverse and manoeuvre vehicles on the road.

Criterion D of Policy GEN 1 states:

*"Development will only be permitted if it meets all of the following criteria:*

- d) *The design of the site must not compromise road safety and must take account of the needs of cyclists, pedestrians, public transport users, horse riders and people whose mobility is impaired."*

Road safety, especially for pedestrians and cyclists, is clearly compromised by these arrangements and as such it is clear that the current arrangement, not accounting for the proposed development along Mill Lane, already poses a substantial safety risk in highway terms.

In essence Mill Lane is still not much more than the farm track it once was and increased traffic would prove intolerable for residents, with gridlock and driver disputes a regular occurrence. *(please see photo)*

## **GREEN BELT**

The proposed development is both outside the village envelope and on land allocated as Green Belt Meaning Policy S6 of the adopted Local Plan applicable. It states that only 'infilling, limited development or redevelopment compatible with the character of the settlement and its setting' will be permitted within Hatfield Heath. It is our understanding that Local planners must 'ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.' A critical consideration is whether 'Very Special Circumstances' exist, relevant only if any harm resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In our view the proposal does not meet the criteria for 'Very Special Circumstances' to apply.

The proposed large and sprawling homes, together with 'holiday lets', do nothing to positively contribute to the character of the village. Neither does the scheme contribute any affordable housing and so will not address local housing needs. Green Belt land is a precious village commodity and any further erosion should be considered unacceptable.

