

From: colin smith [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 26, 2024 5:44 PM
To: Section 62A Applications <section62a@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FORMAL OBJECTION TO SECOND PLANNING APPLICATION BY CHASE HOMES Ref: UTT/22/1732/PINS

My name is Colin Smith and i am writing to you on behalf of my Mother, Mrs Elizabeth Smith who is a resident and home owner at [REDACTED] a property which backs onto this proposed development.

I would like to register in her name a full rejection of this scheme and all planning regarding it.

Mrs Smith has lived in her house since 1977 and has enjoyed living on the edge of the town with the open landscape it affords her, the views in the early years were a key factor in finally buying the property from the Council. Whilst she has since seen the creation of the strip between the rear of her house and the farm fields, the view has not drastically changed.

Mrs Smith has serious concerns regarding the development for more housing on the land behind her house on fields once owned by Brickiln Farm. I will break down these points for your consideration. It was therefore a great comfort to hear that the planning application by Chase Homes for 168 properties to be built on fields behind her house was initially rejected, however this soon turned to frustration again as it became aware that the application has been resubmitted and that Mrs Smith would again have to register her objection to this plan.

From looking at the proposal from Chase Homes, its still remains unclear if they are willing to tackle the issues raised and are simply pushing ahead with the plan as before or if they have addressed some of the concerns.

These concerns were and still remain as follows:

Thaxted Road - There is already three main access junctions in place on this road from the mini roundabout up to the speed limit signs marking the entry into the town. Only one of these is traffic light controlled. Provision for a fourth junction would create addition strain onto a road structure that was not built with it in consideration. Adding the bicycle route/lane would further complicate matters. The present setup of Thaxted Road is unsuitable for further additional traffic volumes to cope with it.

- Flooding - The Environment Agency now places the Lord Butler Leisure Centre on land liable to flood. This was not the case a few years ago and even as recent as 2023 we have seen Thaxted Road flooding at the point alongside the Centre. The watercourse here is part of the Slade tributary system and much of it was culverted, however there are still open sections running behind houses on Thaxted Road towards the town centre and alongside the Leisure Centre. The culverted section in between was not designed to handle the volumes of water we now experience, and

this causes it to back up in the open sections, hence the flooding in Thaxted Road by the Centre. If the watercourse is followed back out of the town to the field where the new houses are proposed, two major streams that at present help drain these fields connect with the main one coming from the farm. The plan shows that a pond is planned for this area however this will be a serious problem as it will NOT stop flooding occurring further along, simply hold water for long until it cannot cope. Also the plan eliminates the field streams which is a lesson that should have been learnt when the strip was created along the back of Peal Road/Tukes Way because a watercourse was infilled and the water found a new path via the back gardens of all the properties along its edge.

- Amenities - The town is already short of GP Surgeries, Dentists, Schools and does not even have a full working hospital or Full Police Station, even the Fire Station is placed in a difficult position in the town centre which often impacts on their effectiveness. With new housing already under construction from Tesco's to Thaxted Road, this alone is going to create an incredible strain on existing resources in a town which also has a high elderly population.
- Property Value - As already mentioned, a key reason behind the purchasing of her home was influenced by the countryside views from the house. If the proposed building of 168 houses goes ahead, the view will change from fields to first floor windows and rooftops. At present the property at [REDACTED] can expect to reach a near national average for similar houses in the road with the view being a big selling point. Any building work that effects this view could seriously undervalue her property, this could have potentially serious consequences if Mrs Smith decides to sell up and move away. Since its very unlikely she would ever be compensated for this loss it would therefore be a financial hit to hit, someone who worked all her life to achieve home ownership and has been a registered voter within the Saffron Walden constituency since 1977.
- Congestion - Given its medieval town plan, Saffron Walden town centre cannot expand or change to accommodate more traffic. Much of the town centre is protected and buildings are listed, and whilst this very much steers itself towards the tourist it is not always helpful to the residents. The implications of a town which is hampered by constraints but needing to evolve is not just a Saffron Walden problem but certainly any further development on the fringes of the town is a problem. The additional traffic volumes trying to cope with roads that were never originally intended to handle it often leads to towns taking a different step and that is ring roads or by-passes. One way to make sure you get such roads is to encourage development of housing around the edges of the town that requires access to a main route into the town. Pretty soon these developments all link up. The main B184, B1052 and B1053 all converge on the narrow streets of the town centre in Saffron Walden, and even though not A class roads nearly all, specifically the B1052 from Newport and B184 from Cambridge are key connection routes with the B1052 also being the indicated HGV route into the town. However, once in the town everything is funnelled down the narrow one-way system meaning deliveries to Tesco or the other retail sites have to follow these roads as well. How tempting will it be to continue building houses beyond Debden Road to Newport Road and link it all up with a shiny new by-pass? More housing, more cars, more problems.

- Brownfield sites/Disused buildings - Before building on virgin ground, why not look into offering available brownfield sites or disused buildings for new plots or regeneration. Application for Levelling up funds from Central Government to bring buildings back to life or make use of areas of waste-ground in the town. Greenfield and green belt land should always be a last resort for new building projects.

Further to these already discussed concerns, I wish to highlight the flood risk potential in particular. As stated above we have already witnessed past instances of water ingress in the gardens of properties in Peal Road and also more recently along Thaxted Road itself. So that the Council is fully aware of the extent of the potential flood issue, I have attached a map of the area to highlight areas of concern for which I believe the current plan does little or nothing to address. If you open the attached map, you will see I have added in the main courses of the field drains/streams that exist at present and then given a reference letter each one. I will now explain these references.

A = The watercourse that originally ran along what was the field boundary before the creation of the exercise "strip" and the building of the houses on this side of Peal Road. This watercourse can still be seen in the treeline between Tukes Way and the strip although it no longer appears to run with water. The main reason for this was back when Fairview built the houses in Peal Road, they infilled this watercourse but did not provide any unground works to divert the water and when a further grassed extension cut off the upper section as Churchfields was being built, the led to water a culminating at the top of the hill in one small ditch until it would overrun and form a new stream down the strip. Most of the water continued down this all the way to Thaxted Road however some of it tried to follow the old natural course along the property boundaries where it did indeed breach through into these gardens, in particular the properties at 29, 27 and 25 Peal Road, resulting in water running through the gardens and making its way down under the houses. This led to the flooding of the side passages of 29 and 25 and to subsidence of the concrete pathway in the side passage of 27. The situation was finally resolved after a new sub-surface drain was installed down the strip to take this surface water away. The evidence for this can be seen in the series of manhole covers down the length of the strip.

B = This is a main watercourse which feeds from the top of the hill down to Thaxted Road. At times of heavy rain and in the winter months it can often have water in it and is also quite fast flowing due to the elevation of the land. There are no indications on the plan so far that Chase Homes intends to retain this as a feature of the housing application. If this watercourse is simply filled in then any rainfall on this land will naturally seek to run off elsewhere which will most likely be into the new housing estate's drain network, which in turn will again run into Thaxted Road, a system which is already seeing water run-off from the existing Fairview Homes estate on this side, but also from the new housing and commercial developments along the road as well. This will exasperate a situation along Thaxted Road which has already shown that it is now prone to flooding along the section by the Leisure Centre quite recently last year.

C = This is the main channel that eventually runs all the way down to The Slade , meeting it near the Common. This channel is partially culverted along Thaxted Road before becoming open again alongside the Leisure Centre and then culverted again under Peasland Road near

the mini roundabout, before once again running as an open channel behind properties along Thaxted Road until doing another culverted section to reach The Slade. This carries the bulk of the water from the area of the proposed housing and beyond as well, with other watercourses feeding in from near Brickiln Farm and also from across Thaxted Road to the East. It is this sheer volume of water which overloaded the culvert entrance near the mini roundabout causing the water to back-up and flood the road and Leisure Centre, not helped by debris being carried along in the flow which added to the blocking of the culvert. If the homes go ahead, some of this water will be displaced and there is a distinct possibility that with Climate Change and the fact we could experience much more flooding or heavier periods of rainfall in the future, any plan not accommodating in some way to help alleviate this risk should be considered short sighted. The artist impression Chase Homes provided of the development showed a pond on it however the plan does not show this, and indeed the most recent one seen at the time of writing on their website shows further housing in this area which was not there before.

D = This secondary channel, like the one marked B, also flows from the top of the hill down as far as The Slade channel. This also runs alongside at bottom end of its length with the boundary of the proposed development. Again, there is no mention on the proposal about what intentions Chase Homes have for this watercourse, whether they intend to cap it off at the point it meets the boundary and culvert it or if they intend to leave it. Once again, the question of the so-called pond on the artist impression comes into play here as this watercourse would join The Slade one and both would have fed into this pond. Surely if a pond is built then something must also be put in place to prevent overflow otherwise the weight of the watercourse flow and pond water would continue down the rest of the channel towards The Slade, adding further density to the problem. If Chase Homes have realised this and intend to culvert the entire length, then surely this too pushes the flooding issue further back upstream where these two channels meet, even placing these new builds at potential risk. There is also potential for run off from the upper half to be more concentrated towards the land owned by Herberts Farm at least leading to waterlogging or possible flooding to arable fields which were once able to drain off down the network of channels towards Thaxted Road.

Dotted Lines = These represent watercourses and ditches which have either already been lost, filled or partly filled in or are off the proposed site. Some of these have been discussed above but it is important to see where they are in context to the application by Chase Homes and the impact previous development has already had in the area.

On the issue of congestion, I have also added two attachments regarding a way to try to ease some traffic issues in the town given that a number of new homes is to be built east of Thaxted Road and that it would seem these will link up with other developments along Radwinter Road. The first attachment shows a general idea for managing traffic flow through Saffron Walden. The idea is that along with the housing to the east of Thaxted Road, an arterial link road is constructed which will become the B1053, this immediately has the effect of diverting traffic away from the congested Radwinter Road and gives the opportunity to add a link road into Shire Hill Industrial Estate that does not involve going through a housing estate at present. This new road would meet the Thaxted Road (B184) which would become the primary route and then head towards the mini roundabout near

the Leisure Centre, it would then use Peasland Road and Mount Pleasant Road up to the traffic lights on Debden Road (Optional signage will allow traffic to use Borough Lane if Newport and Audley End are required otherwise all other routes stay on B184), then turn towards the town down Debden Road to meet with the High Street/London Road mini roundabout and the B1052. The B184 remains the primary route but then at the turn for Castle Street, the B1052 will be signed for Linton/Hadstock and Ashdon. The B184 continues out of Saffron Walden as it does at present. This re-routing will take a lot of traffic away from the traffic lights on Thaxted Road/Radwinter Road and relieve the one-way system. At present we do not appear to be making much better use of our existing infrastructure and continued reliance on junctions which cannot be further improved due to space constraints means that the congestion levels along Thaxted Road and Radwinter Road will only get worse with an increase in housing.

The second attachment is focused on the immediate town centre. Here there are several things that can be done to help the situation in Saffron Walden's historic central area and most are already in place in terms of one way roads, but a simple re-organisation of some of the others would allow for a better use of these roads and a much more pleasant environment for visitors and inhabitants all together. A quick breakdown of this map is as follows:

- **RED ROUTES** - This is the B184 following its existing route via the High Street, but it now also includes the B1052, which it originally did up as far as George Street but on my revision, the B1052 now uses Castle Street and Church Street in their respective directions. Because the B1052 is not as heavily used along the section towards Linton as it is towards Newport, there should be very little in the way of traffic increase along these roads.
- **GREEN ROUTES** - These are mainly already designated C roads or under my revision, previous B roads demoted to C roads. These are all two-way roads as well, including Audley Road, which under this revision will be reinstated as two way its entire length, again to remove pressure on the one-way system in the town centre. Two short section of two way road are shown as part of Hill Street and Common Hill, the first is to give access for the Fire Station, the latter is for access only to the Common Car park and the other one opposite it.
- **BLUE ROUTES** - One way roads, mostly retaining the same function as at present although in the case of Fairycroft Road and East Street these are mainly now for access to car parks
- **ORANGE ROUTES** - These are pedestrianised roads. Most are existing roads which see a partial closure on Market Days, however this revision would see a full pedestrianisation of these streets along with a substantial length of Hill Street from Cates Corner to the Fire Station although this could also be considered as access for Buses and Taxis only. Access would also still be allowed for delivery vehicles and emergency vehicles.
- **PINK ROUTE** - The only one on the revision map and its a section of Common Hill from the Common Car Park entrance up as far as the mini roundabout with Castle Hill/Ashdon Road/Church Street. This would effectively become Bus and Taxi only and would be a central drop-off & pick-up point for all Bus services, effectively a Bus Station but much more open plan. Access to houses along Common Hill would still

be granted to residents. The main effect of relocation of the Buses is to remove the stops in the High Street since these do cause some congestion and are quite close to the traffic lights. It is also a shorter distance to get from Common Hill into the Market Square for those who don't drive or those who rely on Bus services like the elderly or disabled.

If you have any issues opening these attachments, then please let me know and I can send them under a different format.

As I believe the new closing date for this second application is the 31st of August 2024, I would therefore like this statement of objection on behalf of Mrs Elizabeth Smith to the plans listed under Application UTT/22/1732/PINS to be registered with yourself and with Uttlesford District Council. Please notify me of receipt of this.

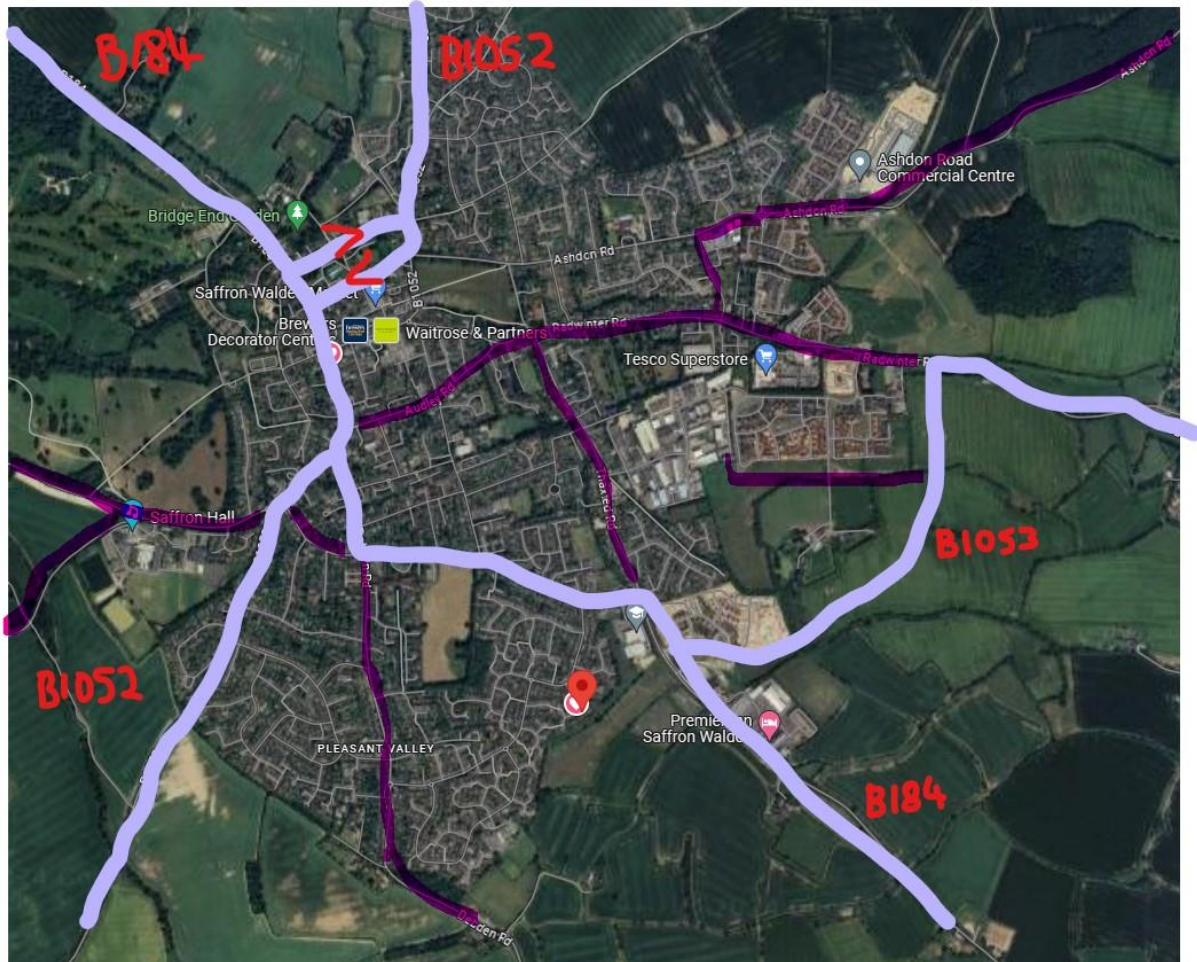
With Regards,

COLIN SMITH

Proposed Land Watercourses



SW Revised Traffic Flow and Routing



SW Central Plan Traffic Flow Revised

