

HMS Victory, HMS Royal Sovereign, ships built from English Oak, defended our country at the Battle of Trafalgar. Since those historic times our woodlands have been decimated. We are the least wooded country in Europe. Is Priors Wood to follow?

This development places Priors Wood at great risk, irreplaceable ancient woodland and a haven for local wildlife and the centre of local environmental corridors. Once harmed the woods will not recover. Harm will come from the proximity of houses, roads, paths and increased human activity,

Ancient woodland supports our journey to net zero. Woodland performs an important and unique function sequestering carbon. Woodland supports varied wildlife including many species that are under threat.

NPPF, P 193 c.development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused,

P 195 The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site, including ancient woodland.

The LUC Landscape report commissioned by UDC, for the emerging local plan, which independent of any developers influence, considered that the landscape and ancient architecture around Smiths Green to be highly sensitive to development and change. Agrarian landscape is an important feature of the settings of the ancient monuments and the Smiths Green Conservation Area. The report further highlights the importance of the open landscape preventing coalescence between the settlements of Takeley and Priors Green.

LUC were commissioned in 2016 to conduct a review of policy S8 of the 2005 local plan, this review advised that little opportunity for development around Smiths Green existed. In 2024 to support the latest local plan this report was reviewed and updated by Hankinson Duckett & Associates who concluded that to protect settlement identity the land to the western side of Smiths Green must be retained as open space and to be included in the revised Countryside Protection Zone around Stansted Airport. This development will bring building form and all the paraphernalia of modern living into the current open setting, where currently none exists, all in direct conflict with current Policy S8 and emerging Core Policy 12.

Natural England advise that if this development is approved a new area will be required to provide the SANG requirement for the development around Takeley. These SANG proposals also include the Priors Wood extension.

Despite the footpaths across to Smiths Green being proposed as additional cycle and pedestrian access to the estate the S106 agreement fails to provide any upgrades to the proposed crossing for Dunmow Road. When walking I can not cross this road safely without using the traffic lights.

This development does NOT accord with the 2005 local plan, or the emerging local plan. I would urge you to support theses plans, the decisions made by previous inspectors and reject this application.