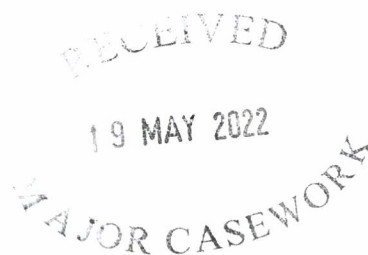


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17 May 2022

Dear Mr Masters

APPEAL REF: APP/C1570/W/22/3296426
APPLICATION: UTT21/2509/OP

This letter is written to expand on the comments I made on the original application, in my letter of 6 February 2022. Please take account of the points made here in considering the current appeal.

I support the refusal of the application by Uttlesford District Council.

It is clear from the Council's decision letter that the infrastructure within Saffron Walden and its surrounding villages cannot support this new housing development. Their reasons for refusal are fully justified. Indeed I consider that no housing development in this location could meet the tests of sustainability because of existing pressures on the town's road network, air quality including carbon emissions, schooling, and other community services including medical facilities.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Michael Gove, spoke trenchantly on Radio 4's *Today* programme on 11 May, with his comments repeated on BBC News the same day and in *The Times* of 12 May. Asked about the Conservative Government's manifesto pledge to build 300,000 houses a year, he said:

"It's no kind of success simply to hit a target, if the homes that are built are shoddy, in the wrong place, don't have the infrastructure required and are not contributing to beautiful communities."

The White Paper published on 11 May also recognises the need for residents to be given power to influence the extent of development in their neighbourhoods.

These pertinent comments from the Government Minister with responsibility for the housing programme should be given weight in deciding the current appeal: for they relate closely to the arguments which have been put forward in the objections and in Uttlesford's decision.

I do not seek to comment on the quality of the housing itself: as this is an outline planning application, the details of the proposed housing are not yet matters for consideration. Mr Gove's other comments, however, are very relevant here.

- **These houses would be in the wrong place.** As Uttlesford have recognised in their decision letter, they would be too reliant on car transport and would clog up the traffic in and into the town which is already heavily congested, with multiple junctions between the site and the town centre.

They are in the wrong place, as Uttlesford have recognised, because a development here would exacerbate the pressures on the road system into town and to Cambridge and Audley End Station: and constrict existing traffic coming into town from the villages in the east. They are in the wrong place because the development would effectively end the historic separation between the town of Saffron Walden and the small village of Swards End, swamping the rural character of that village. They are in the wrong place because the development, which is outside the District Council's settlement area, would further upset the coherence and character of Saffron Walden itself which, far from remaining a historic and attractive market town with modest growth around its core, has already become a historic town with extensive lop-sided development to its east. This development, effectively the size of a new village in itself, would change the settlement pattern irreparably and detrimentally.

- **The infrastructure cannot support them.** The only secondary school in the town has already severely restricted its catchment area because of previous new developments: it is no longer able to offer places to many young people from Saffron Walden itself, let alone to the surrounding villages. Where are pupils from the new development meant to go - without expensive, time-consuming, and environmentally wasteful journeys to other towns, 6 miles away or more? Doctors' surgeries are overstretched. Finding a dentist is difficult. The road network is insufficient, as is the air quality in the town centre, and could not be improved in the town without serious adverse effects on the historic town centre - the jewel in the crown of North West Essex with its conservation area and many listed buildings.
- **The development would not contribute to beautiful communities.** The special quality of this part of North-West Essex is the relationship and balance between the historic market towns and smaller villages: a relationship which has existed for centuries, with significant numbers of families who have lived in the area for generations. Size of the communities, and separation between the areas to maintain their individual character and collective identity, is a vital part of this relationship - and builds the social fabric which forms so many communities living in places which **do** things together and support each other, from village Fetes to neighbour support to collections for Ukraine. A large amorphous development of over 200 new houses destroying the boundaries between Swards End and Saffron Walden, and destroying the historic rural landscape between them, would be the source of communal mourning. Indeed, I would even say that it would adversely affect the mental health of the inhabitants of both communities.

Mr Gove also proposed the idea of neighbourhood referenda to decide on new developments. You will note from the many representations from residents of Swards End that any such referendum on this proposal would be likely to gain short shrift.

For all these reasons, and those in my previous representation letter to Uttlesford District Council of 6 February, I urge the Inspector to **REFUSE** the appeal.

Yours sincerely



Paula Griffiths