

Statement to Appeal Hearing: Tuesday 6th September

Good Morning; my name is Hazel Mack and I am here to present a statement written in collaboration with my colleague, Kathleen Hutchinson. Together, we represent local residents in Swards End and also in Saffron Walden.

1. As Kathleen made clear in her presentation to Uttlesford's Planning Committee when they originally considered this planning application in March 2022, our main objections to this proposal are:

- a) Over 100 letters of representation were received by Uttlesford, all opposing the development
- b) Loss of rural environment/wildlife habitat
- c) Increased traffic and congestion – on small rural roads, as well as on the town's roads, which are already under severe pressure
- d) Detrimental impact to air quality, highway issues and increase to flooding risk
- e) Coalescence of town and village - to the detriment of both the town of Saffron Walden and the village of Swards End
- f) Finite resources – school places (both primary and secondary)/doctors/dentists etc

2. Statement submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 22/5/2022 by KH and HM

a) Re-iterated the objections put forward by SWTC and SEPC (and echoes those in KH's presentation above):

- loss of rural environment, agricultural land and wildlife habitat
- increased traffic and congestion on local roads and the knock-on detrimental effects to air quality and road safety
- numerous highway concerns including the site's access via a narrow 'B' road
- concerns about flooding and drainage - the B1053 floods regularly in winter and this will only get worse with additional building on the farm land
- the large scale of the development

b) During the last 10-15 years, there have been several large scale developments with more under construction:

- 1287 units built or currently under construction
- 227 units planned
- overall 1514 new dwellings

NB Article in Walden Local on 6/7/2022

Quote:

"Uncontrolled" new builds sees Uttlesford increase by 18.2% - second highest in the UK", Second only to Tower Hamlets.

So, there can be no argument that there has been a lack of development – this small, rural, market town has had its fair share already.

- c) Population increase of 21% in 20 years - higher than any other town of comparable distance from London with the exception of Colchester (a much larger town, which has better transport links and infrastructure - with roads and infrastructure undertaken before major housing projects)
- d) Current resources stretched to breaking point - schools/doctors/dentists - all under resourced and struggling to cope with the additional demand. There is no 'spare' capacity in the town's schools – both primary and secondary.
- e) Need to cross through Saffron Walden to gain access to the M11, Audley End station, and Cambridge which is where so many people work - but the narrow roads cannot take the strain of any further traffic. At peak times, the town is gridlocked already - further expansion to the east of the town will be disastrous.

3. Petition - results submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 28/6/2022 by KH and HM

- a) Almost 600 signatures received - all opposing the development - representing 80% of the population of Swards End
- b) Not a **single** person in favour
- c) Comments made reflect the points made above

4. Consultation re traffic lights at the junction of Church Street and High Street and the proposed western pedestrian/cycle link - comments sent to the lawyers on 5/8/2022 and copied to the Planning Inspectorate

a) General - Insufficient time given to consider and comment - and documentation deliberately confusing and unclear, therefore not a valid consultation in our opinion

b) Traffic lights:

- has not been thought through properly or modelled accurately
- roads are already at capacity
- will cause complete gridlock in the town
- has not been surveyed yet
- conservation area

b) Pedestrian/cycle link

- poorly communicated
- no positive impact on the overall development or the people who will live there
- situated over land that is not currently available to the developer

5. Other

a) Potential destruction of a beautiful medieval town

b) There should be no further large-scale building projects until the road network and other infrastructure has been sorted out - and this does not mean a mish-mash of routing traffic down other roads in Saffron Walden which are themselves already congested. It needs some

clear, joined-up thinking and serious investment to get it right - and developers should be expected to pay a portion of the costs

c) There is a desperate need in the town for additional schools/school places (both primary and secondary), medical facilities (doctors and dentists - and possibly also additional surgeries), leisure facilities for our youngsters. Councils/local government have to take action and responsibility without further delay to implement plans to action this - and developers should be told they need to contribute to the costs or future planning permission for even more housing developments will be refused.

d) Lockdown was (hopefully) a once in a lifetime occurrence. However, in many ways the effects were positive and quite amazing:

- air quality was much improved
 - traffic - volumes and noise reduced to almost zero
 - wildlife - deer sauntering along the main road from Swards End into Saffron Walden
- Of course, it is unrealistic to continue in this vein, but it does show what a huge impact traffic and the subsequent noise and pollutions has on all our lives.

e) If we have to continue to expand in this area, why do we not consider building a completely new village in a new but carefully selected location - but with the following caveats:

- Proper planning and consultation
- Infrastructure to be sorted out first before any house building – planned as a whole
- Mix of homes - social/retirement/family etc
- Shop(s) to be included - plus a pub or cafe
- Local school
- Leisure facilities

A real community hub could be created if this was thought through and planned correctly

We accept that more homes are required throughout the UK and we are not against building developments in this area per se. However, any further larger developments need to be sympathetic to the local area and its community. They should not simply be yet more new houses to make massive profits for landowners and developers. They **MUST** provide additional services and facilities for the good of the local community - otherwise they should be rejected. As a society we cannot afford to see our countryside being destroyed by massive building projects which do not provide any long-term benefit to the local community or assist in helping to alleviate the very real problems facing our country in the provision of health, educational and recreational facilities for our entire communities.

Please refuse this proposed development.

Hazel Mack & Kathleen Hutchinson