



WELLS FARM PLANNING APPLICATION – REFERENCE 6/2020/3451/MAJ – MAJOR OBJECTION

Introduction

We have objected to this proposed development from the time of the first application. We were therefore pleased when that was refused at the first hearing. We were appalled that this decision was withdrawn and replaced at a second hearing with approval. There were no reasons given by the Council why so many Councillors changed their mind between the two hearings to produce a totally different voting result.

We were very pleased that a resident was so concerned that a Judicial Review was launched. That has been concluded with the result that there is now to be a third hearing.

The following objection is substantially the same as our original objection because little has changed. **The most noteworthy is that traffic congestion has become significantly worse.** Much of this additional traffic has been created by traffic associated with large developments being under construction in Goffs Oak. Once those have been completed there will be increased traffic caused by the residents of those same developments.

Major Objections

Development of this site would break up the run of Green Belt between Cuffley and Northaw and be an encroachment on the open countryside. It would add to the urban feel of this semi-rural area. We believe that there are no **'very special circumstances'**, as detailed in the NPPF 2019, that would justify this development within the Green Belt. The site has no natural northern boundary which is another requirement in the rules. It is remote from Cuffley and the walk into the village to access the shops and other services on offer is such that **car use would be encouraged**. The bus service is so infrequent it barely exists, and the nearest secondary schools are some miles away at Potters Bar or Cheshunt and the nearest primary school is full. **Development of this site would have a detrimental impact on the rural gap between Northaw and Cuffley and would encourage the urban sprawl that the Green Belt was created to prevent. We therefore feel strongly that this site is unsuitable.**

Development of this site would mean an increase in traffic in an area which is already congested. This site is near to the dangerous 'T' junction of Cattlegate Road and Northaw

Road East. There have been several accidents at this junction as traffic turns onto the B156 from Cattlegate Road. Cattlegate Road becomes so congested at peak travel times that traffic regularly tails back to the M25 and beyond towards Crews Hill. This junction has been flagged by the Highways Authority as being of particular concern. It has been identified as a congested junction with acceptance that added development traffic would exacerbate current issues. The B156 linking Potters Bar, Northaw, Cuffley, Goffs Oak and Cheshunt is already totally inadequate for existing traffic. **The Inspector dealing with the emerging Local Plan has stated that further development in Cuffley should be delayed until a solution is implemented to the traffic issues. It should also be noted that water drains off the fields to the East onto the B156. This causes frequent localised flooding just to the West of the site which restricts traffic movement in both directions to the middle of the road.**

We believe that **there is already a disproportional allocation of sites in the emerging Local Plan.** This is in an area which is basically served by B roads and the amenities of two villages. These sites, together with sites identified in neighbouring areas such as Goffs Oak, Crews Hill and Potters Bar, will certainly have an impact on the already stretched infrastructure of the village. The issues facing the village are as follows.

Schools

Cuffley primary school is full and the closest other schools at Northaw and Newgate Street each take a cohort of only 13 children per year. The nearest secondary schools at Potters Bar and Cheshunt are not only full but massively over-subscribed.

Health Care

It is already extremely difficult to get an appointment at the Doctor's surgery. As an example, one patient re-dialled over 100 times to get through to reception to make an appointment. Unless it is claimed to be Urgent the appointment you are offered can be in excess of two weeks ahead.

Transport

The train service through Cuffley links only to Hertford (with some to Stevenage) or Enfield and London. **There are no direct transport links with either Hatfield or Welwyn Garden City.** The roads going through Cuffley towards Northaw and Potters Bar and towards Goffs Oak and Cheshunt are only B roads and inadequate for the current volume of traffic. Traffic queues from Station Road up Cuffley Hill to the Goffs Oak War Memorial and almost to Goffs Academy are a feature of every week-day morning with queues forming up Cattlegate Road and through the village on the return journey every night. A Vehicle Count Report for the B156 at Cuffley Hill, for the week beginning 23 April 2018, measured a 5-day average of 9351 vehicles travelling west through Cuffley village. Peak times were 7.00 (1084) and 8.00 (987). The peak time for the return was 17.00 (1001) but the road was also extremely busy between 15.00 and 18.00 and indeed busy throughout the day. If there is an accident on the nearby M25 then the roads around Cuffley become gridlocked. Furthermore, given the hilly nature of the villages, the width of the roads, the number of potholes, drain covers and

similar hazards, not to mention the sheer volume of motorised traffic, **cycling is not a sensible option for commuters or anyone other than very keen cycling club members.**

The Green Belt

The Green Belt around Cuffley and between Cuffley and Northaw and Northaw and Potters Bar is an area of local beauty which is valued by residents and visitors alike. The countryside is popular with walkers and used by schools and youth organisations to practise Duke of Edinburgh expeditions and camping. Those attending the many organised leisure activities such as the Point to Point, the Camel Racing, the concerts and car boot sales also enjoy the views across the Northaw Valley. This is all under threat. However, it is the beauty of the surrounding countryside which makes Cuffley such an attractive place to live. **We feel strongly that the Green Belt should be protected so that these open rural spaces can be enjoyed today and by future generations.**

We fully support and endorse the Green Gap Assessment Aug 2019 analysis and its conclusion "Although there is a clear physical gap of rural character between the two settlements of Cuffley and Northaw, the area between the settlements is open and even relatively modest amounts of development would be visually prominent.

Conclusion

It is for the above reasons that we believe **this site is totally unsuitable for development.**