

**SAWB4 : Planning Application 3/18/2735/FUL
Land north of Sawbridgeworth
Response by Sawbridgeworth Town Council**

Introduction

Sawbridgeworth Town Council has grave concerns relating to this planning application.

These are echoed by the significant number of responses that have been received from members of the public

This formal response is separated into two sections:

1. A general commentary on the nature and impact of the proposal
2. An itemised response to the consideration of the adopted District Plan 2018

1. General Commentary

The District Plan, specifies “around 200 homes” on the site. The Inspector modified this to “at least 200 dwellings”. This has opened the floodgates. The current application enumerates 85 dwellings in Phase 1 and 99 dwellings in Phase 2. By extrapolation there would be 60 dwellings in Phase 3. Thus, a total of 264 dwellings on the site. This considerably in excess of the stated around 200 homes. The statement made to the town council by the applicant that the density of dwellings in Phase 3 will be considerably less than in the first two phases is not credible.

There have been many comments about the inappropriate layout of the scheme which in its current form would cause a number of existing properties to be overlooked.

There is no mention in the application of sustainability measures and there is no mention of the use of renewable technologies. The LPA can and should insist on compliance with Government guidelines for homes built after 2025 – and this project is stated to extend into 2027. EHDC’s statement in the District Plan 2018 para 17.3.6 states ‘East Herts Council aspires for all development to exceed national standards and Building Regulations where possible and developments will be expected to utilise the best available sustainable design and technology as possible.’

Further, the application is also at variance with Committee on Climate Change advice. As independent advisers to the Government, their report ‘UK Housing Fit for the Future?’ (21 February 2019) says that ‘New homes should be built to be low-carbon, energy and water efficient, and climate resilient... From 2025 at the latest, no new homes should be connected to the gas grid. They should be heated using low-carbon energy sources, have ultra-high levels of energy efficiency alongside appropriate ventilation, and be timber-framed where possible.’

The ongoing Future Homes Standard consultation (2.15) envisages that a new home ‘would have a heat pump, a waste water heat recovery system, triple glazing and minimum standards for walls, floors and roofs that significantly limit any heat loss’ and homes built to the Standard ‘will become net zero carbon over time with no need for further adaptations or changes, as they will not be reliant on fossil fuels for their heating’.

It is incumbent upon the LPA to take these into account, especially as the build period will take us beyond the critical date of 2025.

There has been reported discussions between the developer and the LPA concerning the establishment of a cycling and walking infrastructure, especially a continuous link between Bishops Stortford and Harlow. These discussions must be matured into a

planning condition that obliges the applicant to make it happen in the area of the development.

The provisions for archaeological investigation of the site do not appear to be comprehensive. Apart from the known history of the site dating back to times immemorial, local knowledge also can reflect more recent usage of part of the site as a disposal area for notifiable waste. This is of great concern as it may have an impact on the long-term health and safety of developments in the area when the land is disturbed.

As yet no discussions have taken place on the question of how s106 funding will benefit the local community. It is imperative that this is not delegated to an LPA officer but includes the active participation of the Town Council, who after all have a far better knowledge of the needs of the local community.

Part of local involvement in the site should include opportunities for the town's history to be reflected in the choice of street names. It is our understanding that the developers are open to having such a dialogue.

2. Specific response against provisions of the adopted District Plan 2018.

1. The principle of the development

(i.e. District Plan Development Strategy)

- **DPS1 – Housing, Employment and Retail Growth**
- **DPS2 – Development Strategy 2011-2033**
- **DPS3 – Housing Supply 2011-2033**
- **DPS4 – Infrastructure Requirements**

This response deals with a specific planning application which must be considered against the provisions and Policies of the new District Plan.

The Council has a duty to reflect public opinion and to ensure that the standards of the community are retained.

The relevant Policies in the plan are:

- DPS1 – Housing, Employment and Retail Growth
- DPS2 – Development Strategy 2011-2033
- DPS3 – Housing Supply 2011-2033
 - In principle, the town council understands the need for the District Plan to specify the need for new housing in the area. In the town council's view, the Plan is flawed in several respects especially in regards to the town of Sawbridgeworth.
- DPS4 – Infrastructure Requirements
 - Although the policy as stated in the District Plan identifies a number of requirements, this application raises a number of issues not covered by the policy. See section 13 *infra*.

2. Quality of layout and design; including, layout, integration, open space, permeability,

landscaping, built design quality, energy/wastewater efficiency etc.

- **SAWB1 – Development in Sawbridgeworth**
- **SAWB4 – Land to the north of Sawbridgeworth**
- **DES1 – Landscape Character**
- **DES3 – Design of the Development**

- SAWB1 – Development in Sawbridgeworth
 - The application will bring the cumulative number of dwellings in the Sawbridgeworth to a number in excess of the total proposed for the town.
 - Number in the District Plan is circa 500. With the additional dwellings already approved for SAWB2 (140); SAWB3 (200) the proposal for SAWB4 (264) gives a total for the town to 604, this excess of 20% is certainly not “around” the District Plan figure and stretches the Inspector’s “at least” modification beyond all reasonableness.
- SAWB4 – Land to the north of Sawbridgeworth
 - The site is in a poor position compared with the viable alternatives that have been suggested.
 - This application is poorly thought out and does not adequately address the concerns that have been expressed by members of the public during the consultation period.
- DES1 – Landscape Character
 - The site is located on good arable land.
 - The most recent submitted profile modifications are detrimental to the look and feel of the area.
 - The proposal does not conform to EHDC’s aspiration

that “all development to exceed national standards will be expected to utilise the best sustainable design and technology as possible”

- DES3 – Design of Development
 - Poor design, unimaginative and tending towards a potential ghetto.
 - Does not sit comfortably in the site area
 - The proposed design is contrary to the essentially rural ethic of the town
 - As the Conservation and Urban Design response has highlighted, there are significant inconsistencies in the application which must be addressed,

3. Housing mix, density and affordable housing provision

- **HOU1 – Type and Mix of Housing**
- **HOU3 – Affordable Housing**
- **HOU6 – Specialist Housing for Older and Vulnerable people**
- **HOU7 - Accessible and Adaptable Homes**

- HOU1 – Type and Mix of Housing
 - The provision of two and a half storey buildings will be intrusive to the surrounding neighbourhood
 - No provision for essential worker dwellings
- HOU3 – Affordable Housing
 - Important that the 40% proportion is monitored and maintained. There must be no ambiguity about this and no retrospective renegotiation of this proportion.
 -
- HOU6 – Specialist Housing for Older and Vulnerable people
 - There are no dwellings which are essential for an adequate mix of dwelling types which reflects the demographic of the area.
- HOU7 - Accessible and Adaptable Homes
 - There is no commitment for the provision of wheelchair user dwellings.

4. Highway impact, parking and mitigation;

- **TRA1 – Sustainable Transport**
- **TRA2 – Safe and Suitable Highways Access and Mitigation**
- **TRA3 – Vehicle Parking Provision**

- TRA1 – Sustainable Transport
 - No mention is made of the issues relating to connecting with public transport, especially the rail links
- TRA2 – Safe and Suitable Highways Access and Mitigation
 - There is no specific provision for access for the transport used by less able people
 - There is no plan for traffic management through the construction phase.
 - Mitigation must be seen to be in place before construction starts.
 - Traffic surveys carried out thus far are invalid as they were carried out in school holidays.
 - There is no circular route through the development.
 - Access roads are not wide enough for utility / emergency vehicles.
- TRA3 – Vehicle Parking Provision
 - The provision of 1.5 car parking spaces per dwelling is inadequate
 - Provision on the development of car park spaces for visitors is inadequate
 - If pavement parking is to be permitted, is the soil under-structure adequate.

5. Sustainable Transport

- **TRA1 – Sustainable Transport**

- TRA1 – Sustainable Transport
 - No cohesive plan for walking and cycling is present in the application.
 - No provision for electric charging points is shown.
 - No plan is in place for providing community transport, especially for connecting with the rail station.
 - The cumulative impact on transport from all proposed developments has not been explored.
 - The assumptions upon the numbers of future residents who will walk or cycle to destinations in the area are unrealistic.

6. Healthy and Safe communities

(Secure by design, amenity space, play space, recreation etc.)

- **DES1 - DES2 – Landscaping**
- **DES5 – Crime and Security**
- **CFLR1 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation**
- **CLFR7 – Community Facilities**

- DES2 – Landscaping
 - There is only one entrance / exit shown to the site, this is inadequate and unsafe.
 - The interface with the A1184 is unsatisfactory in respect of safety and amenity, as has been highlighted by Hertfordshire Highways.
- DES5 – Crime and Security
 - The comments made by Herts Constabulary Crime Prevention Design Advisor on 21 February 2019 and 03 April 2020 are noted.
- CFLR1 – Open Space, Sport and Recreation
 - Only one green space / play area is shown, this is inadequate for the size of the proposed development.
 - The proposal relies on the existing Eden's Mount play area to satisfy the need for play space. Local knowledge enables us to assert that this is inadequate and at an impractical distance from the development.
- CLFR7 – Community Facilities
 - No current recognition is made of the need to increase the provision of medical facilities such as a doctor's surgery, dental surgeries and pharmacies.

7. Sustainable Drainage

- **WAT1 – Flood Risk Management**
- **WAT5 – Sustainable Drainage**

- WAT1 – Flood Risk Management
 - Discharge into main river will increase flood risk downstream.
 - It is noted that the LLFA are not satisfied with the arrangements proposed for the management of flood risk
- WAT5 – Sustainable Drainage
 - The SuDS plan must be proved to be valid for all areas of the site and a governance requirement for providing ongoing maintenance.
 - No commitment has been made by Thames Water to cater for the additional waste water that will be generated.

8. Environmental impact

(contaminated land, noise and air quality impact etc.)

- **EQ2 - Noise Pollution**
- **EQ3 - Light Pollution**
- **EQ4 - Air Quality**

- EQ2 - Noise Pollution
 - This issue has not been addressed, there are no noise pollution reports.
 - Impact of construction vehicles must be assessed
- EQ3 - Light Pollution
 - This issue has not been addressed, there are no light pollution reports.
- EQ4 - Air Quality
 - This issue has not been addressed, there are no air quality reports.
 - Noted however that air quality monitoring in the area has ceased.

9. Impact on the natural environment

- **GBR1 – Green Belt**

- GBR1 – Green Belt
 - No provision is made for preserving ancient hedgerows
 - There is no tree survey report available
 - There must be an 8-metre buffer zone next to the water course
 - There must be a 5-metre hedge set back to provide a buffer zone.

10. Heritage impact, including archaeology;

- **HA1 – Designated Heritage Assets**
- **HA2 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets**
- **HA3 – Archaeology**

- HA1 – Designated Heritage Assets
 - There are some affected by this application, specifically Grade II listed farmhouses and outbuildings.
- HA2 – Non-Designated Heritage Assets
 - There may be some affected by this application
- HA3 – Archaeology
 - A geophysical survey and an archaeological investigation must be required on this ancient site prior to any disturbance.
 - Attention to be paid to the Domesday Book records of the area.
 - Attention must be paid to local knowledge which identifies more recent activity in the area which may affect the health and well-being of future occupants of

the developed area.

11. Neighbour impact;

- **DES4 – Design of Development**

- It is important to understand the impact of this proposal upon the neighbourhood, specifically:
 - The impact upon children walking to school
 - The effect of shifting population from Bishops Stortford South
- Design of Development
 - The application pays little attention to the desirable elements of this policy, in particular in relation to the provision of electric charging points, Wi-Fi etc.
 - There is no commitment to the installation of full fibre broadband (fibre-to-the-premises) to each new home.

12. Other matters (not covered above)

- No commitment has been made to a construction plan. This is vital if the neighbourhood is not to be disturbed.
- Commitment is needed to give priority to local people for social housing
- Schools admissions policy must also be geared to local people.
- Commitment must be given to providing key worker housing.
- There is no Sustainability and Energy Statement submitted as part of the planning application.

13. Infrastructure delivery, including s106 matters;

- **CLFR9 – Health and Wellbeing**
- **CLFR10 – Education**
- **DEL1 – Infrastructure and Service Delivery**
- **DEL2 – Planning Obligations**

- CLFR9 – Health and Wellbeing
 - s106 funding needed for essential expansion of medical services
- CLFR10 – Education
 - s106 funding needed for essential expansion of primary and secondary education facilities
 - school needs must be met and have not been addressed
- DEL1 – Infrastructure and Service Delivery
 - s106 and/or s278 funding needed for essential provision of road infrastructure to prevent escalation of existing congestion.
 - Ensure the provision of cycling and walking infrastructure is in place to facilitate the movement of residents to the town, schools and to travel hubs.
- DEL2 – Planning Obligations
 - s106 funding needed for delivering Planning Obligations, which must be put in place as part of this planning application process

14. Conclusion - consideration of the planning balance (positives and negatives) of all of the above issues to assess overall sustainability.

From the points summarised on the preceding pages it is clear that this application is contrary to a number of the Policies contained in the adopted District Plan.

The application does not acknowledge or take into account the consultations and advice given regarding future proofing of the development. It is incumbent upon the LPA to insist on the development conforming to the stated aspirations of EHDC as stated in the adopted District Plan 2018.

It is particularly noted that there is no Sustainability and Energy Statement submitted as part of the planning application. This is regarded as an essential aid to monitoring the quality and suitability of any construction.

It is clear from the numerous detailed comments made by many members of the public submitted independently to those gathered by the town council at the public consultations that have been held over the past months that there is considerable concern and unease at the nature and scale of this hybrid proposal.

In particular the cumulative impact on the neighbourhood of this application and the other applications that can be anticipated as a result of the District Plan will irrevocably damage the nature of the area.

Therefore, the town council **OBJECTS** to the submitted planning application.