

Unit 3A
Smallford Works
Smallford Lane
St Albans
AL4 0SA

10th March 2021

Dear Sirs,

I write to you in respect of Planning Application 5/2019/3022 relating to the change of use and development of the Smallford Works site for housing. I understand that this application was refused but the applicant has now requested a public appeal.

I am the Managing Director and Registered Manager of MET Medical Ltd an independent ambulance service based in St Albans and regulated by the Care Quality Commission.

We provide both 999 emergency response and non-emergency transport on behalf of East of England NHS Ambulance Service. We are contracted to respond to 999 calls in St Albans, Welwyn and the surrounding area. We also provide interhospital transport for the region covering the footprint of Herts Valleys CCG and East & North Herts CCG this includes transport between Watford General Hospital, St Albans City Hospital, Lister Hospital Stevenage and those who live in the region. This amounts to hundreds of ambulance 999 calls each month and thousands of non-emergency journeys for patients requiring transport for example for renal dialysis or hospital discharge.

We operate from two sites in St Albans: one in London Road and one at Smallford Works. We spent over 12 months trying to find a commercial space with enough parking to accommodate ambulances. We eventually were lucky enough to find Smallford Works and took the Unit without a thought in October 2020. We had been advised at the time that planning applications had been made in the past but we were not made fully aware that a public appeal was underway, other commercial residents have suggested Stackbourne Ltd could have been more transparent with its intentions at the time.

Not only is our Smallford site now under threat, but our London Road site has also been purchased by a residential home developer. This raises serious concerns to the amount of commercial land left available in St Albans as it is gradually disappearing. Sites like Smallford Works are essential to businesses of certain categories where external space is critical.

As an ambulance service we simply will not be able to reach the sickest patients within the national targets if we are forced to locate miles away. Furthermore, the site where East of England NHS Trust Operates their own rapid response vehicle from next door us on London Road is also due to be turned into a housing development. This could leave St Albans with no 999 ambulance provision at all, with the next nearest full ambulance station either in Hemel Hempstead or Welwyn. Should the council feel this development should go ahead, it should without a doubt insist that the developer makes adequate space for a suitably sized ambulance station with parking for Paramedics.

Prior to occupying the property there was heavy rain and our property Unit 3A was flooded. It has since flooded again. We have installed good protection but having discussed the area with our insurer they have stated that the wider area is at risk of flooding. I believe the council needs to be assured that the site is suitable for housing and that adequate consideration has been given to the impact should they carry out major development. In Stackbournes Ltd's appeal paragraph 4.11 they state that risk of flooding is a reason for not developing brownfield sites. Clearly the Smallford Works site meets this clause.

Furthermore, Stackbournes Ltd's appeal states around 350 jobs would be created by developing this land for housing. However, the appeal does not consider the huge job losses should the businesses on Smallford Works lose their premises. MET Medical alone would be well over 100 jobs and there a number of other sizeable businesses employing far greater numbers than those owned by Stackbournes Ltd. Many of those are local workers whose employers provide services to St Albans and the surrounding areas. In these challenging times surely creating further unemployment in sectors which cannot relocate is more damaging. Putting 'Health & Social Care' jobs at risk during a global pandemic is also likely to cause public distrust without even considering the impact of lost services.

Since moving into Smallford Works there has been substantial changes to the road layout for the access to the Smallford Lane, this has improved traffic flow for low volumes of traffic during lockdown. However, adding substantial numbers of houses would without a doubt overload this access road and cause further delays on the A414 which is currently already under pressure and sees substantial traffic congestion during peak travel hours.


Stackbournes Ltd also mentioned that the current properties have low environmental value. This could easily be achieved by making improvements to the existing site and building, something I feel may be a relatively new concept to the firm. I am sure the council and members of the public will agree that we do not need to build a housing estate in order to achieve this. In fact, as a tenant if we were to be given assurance that the current site would remain as it is, we would without a doubt consider substantial further improvements to our building and surrounding external space in line with our regulators and commissioners requirements for Environment



Strategy and Planning. Whilst we are yet to make those plans due to the fact that we have already spent thousands improving the place and still do not know if it is going to be in situ in 12 months time or whether it will be a building site. Our intention would be focussed on reducing carbon footprint, building efficiency and encouraging healthy living among those who work on the site.

I honestly urge everyone involved in this appeal to consider the impact on this area. Simply put - this is not good for the people of Smallford, St Albans and the surrounding villages and could cost lives. If your family member was having a heart attack, would you want to be waiting on an ambulance from Welwyn?

Yours sincerely,


Dave Hawkins

For and on behalf of MET Medical Ltd