

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL RULE 6 PARTY
OPENING STATEMENT

19th September 2023



LAND TO THE REAR OF 42-100 TOLLGATE ROAD& 42 TOLLGATE ROAD,
COLNEY HEATH

Ref : APP/B1930/W/23/3323099

Appointed to represent the Colney Heath Parish Council
Parish Councillors John Clemow and Tony Burns
Mike Rawlins Neighborhood Plan Project Officer
Ian Skelt for Flooding Round Table session

- 1 Colney Heath village is not a suitable or sustainable location for another even larger residential development represented by this appeal scheme.
- 2 We trust that our local knowledge and direct experience of life in the village will assist you in forming your judgement.
- 3 I wish to state that the Parish Council was not consulted on the agreed Main Statement of Common Ground, and it contains various matters that we do not agree with.
- 4 Many residents in Colney Heath consider the village is under siege from a number of developer's planning applications on the green spaces abutting the settlement boundary.
- 5 Over 450 objections were made to the planning application for the Appellant's proposal. Virtually no support in favour has been expressed.
- 6 The analysis in the Planning Officer's report of objections submitted show the number of topics relating to the Green Belt *per se* were about 10% of the total. The majority of issues raised related to the school places, the environment and physical infrastructure, and traffic congestion and dangers – fundamentally the issues of real concern from everyday experience of life in our village.
- 7 The appeal site is not allocated for development in the LPA's regulation 18 draft Local Plan and, being at the bottom end of the settlement hierarchy, it would not be. The site allocations proposed in the draft Local Plan are accessible to reasonable public transport services. The draft Local Plan does not allocate any sites in the village. This recognizes the conclusions of the 2023 Green Belt Review by Arup.

- 8 Specific to the appeal site the Arup Green Belt Review concludes the developed edge of appeal site has very strong connections and relationship with the wider landscape.
- 9 The appeal site is clearly part of the wider open landscape surrounding the settlement edge, both physically and experientially. The proposed development would jut out prominently into the open landscape. It is not filling in a gap between adjacent parts of the existing settlement.
- 10 We consider the appeal site is not previously developed land and has several disadvantages with flooding resulting in a low density development. This is inefficient use of Green Belt land. The site has an inadequate single point of access. We are concerned about the potential increase of flooding downstream in the village.
- 11 We will show that the traffic impact from the proposed development is underestimated. Further, the width of the roads and the necessity of on-street parking results in a single lane for traffic creating congestion and dangerous conditions for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.
- 12 Our assessment of walking routes within the village and cycling routes through and beyond the village all fail to meet acceptability criteria. This cannot be fixed due to the reality of the constraints.
- 13 Combined with a very poor public transport system residents are dependent on their cars for all their needs other than recreation in the village.
- 14 The detailed consent for the Roundhouse Farm Bullens Green Lane development provides an average of 2.4 parking spaces per dwelling excluding spaces for visitors. This is a recognition of the reality of this car dependent location.
- 15 Our main point regarding affordability is that we consider the village is not a suitable location for this scale of development for low income key workers. They generally do not need to work from home or have "9 to 5" jobs. Each individual will need to run a car to access jobs that may be at some distance.
- 16 The affordable element will be not realistic for individuals with a low income, and owning and running a car would severely strain the stretched budget of two people even with both working fulltime – a fragile position. It will not assist in meeting St Albans' housing needs.
- 17 The facilities in Colney Heath are what one expects in a village – a church, a little school, a pub, a village hall, a social club, a small shop and post office, a hairdresser and an Indian takeaway.
- 18 These do not support the day-to-day needs of employment, education, most food needs, and healthcare services.

- 19 The train stations in the area are too far to walk to, and cycle routes are unsuitable. Only St Albans train station is accessible by bus but the last bus to Colney Heath departs at 5.26pm.
- 20 The bus services for day to day needs are totally inadequate. There is a bus route providing 5 services at 2 hourly intervals to St Albans City, Monday to Saturday, the last leaving the City centre at 5.20pm
- 21 There are few jobs in the village most of which are part-time. Most residents in employment access their work by private car.
- 22 The village primary school is periodically oversubscribed depending on demographic fluctuations and families have to drive their children to other locations.

Securing a secondary place is a major and stressful issue for village families. The village is outside the catchment area for many schools. Parents don't select their preferred school as their first choice because they know they are unlikely to get it. All 10 of the nearest secondary schools were over subscribed in 2023 and that eight out of the ten have been oversubscribed every single year for the past 5 years.

Places are allocated in schools that are not accessible within reasonable walking distances or by acceptable cycling routes. Most children have to be driven to and from school. Large increases in the population would add further stress.

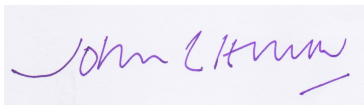
- 23 The village convenience store is small. It provides some, but not all, "top up" shopping needs and is not open when the proprietor is on holiday, indisposed, or just recently when the shop was closed after a break in.
- 24 Supermarkets are beyond acceptable walking distances and cycle routes are unacceptable. By bicycle, for many the weekly shop would need to be done several times a week. Bus services to most supermarkets are once only on one day per week, and then during the day only - not suitable for the employed or those unable to carry several bags of shopping.
- 25 GP surgeries, dentists and hospitals are also beyond acceptable walking distances and via unacceptable cycle routes. Going by bus requires that excessive time must be allowed to attend an appointment due to the infrequency in the timetable and the need to change from one bus to another en route.
- 26 While energy efficient buildings can be constructed, development in a car dependent location would permanently embed carbon emissions from access requirements.
- 27 The Appellant quotes Inspector Master's appeal decision regarding accessibility

by alternatives to the use of private cars.

The Inspector's decision was based on the evidence presented, and they relied on HCC Highway's advice regarding cycling as a reasonable alternative for which no evidence was provided.

We will present assessments of walking and cycling routes, bus services for day to day needs, and the impact of on street parking, that was not previously available.

- 28 We don't contest the need for housing in the District, nor the need for genuinely realistically priced housing to rent or buy. We question the real need given the LPA's statement that the data baseline for the need calculation is in their words illegitimate.
- 29 The proposed development would cause harm to the Green Belt and other harms both environmental and social. We are concerned that the regular flooding of the site would present a serious risk to occupants, especially children.
- 30 Our case is simple. The appeal site and proposal are unsuitable and inappropriate development in an unsustainable location. We will detail this in our evidence.
- 31 To conclude, we consider the harm to the Green Belt, and the other harms resulting from the proposal, are not clearly outweighed by the District's housing need, so very special circumstances do not exist. We will ask you to refuse this appeal.



John Clemow
Vice Chair, Colney Heath Parish Council