

xx High Street
Colney Heath
St. Albans
AL4 0xx

18th September 2023

Dear Mr Hayden,

Please accept my sincere apologies for being unable to attend the inquiry in person. As a teacher, it is difficult to take time off. I have written this statement as I feel very strongly that this green belt site is not a suitable location and that the village of Colney Heath is not a sustainable location for large scale development. I live in the village, 13 houses away from the house in which I was born, nearly 42 years ago. I have the local knowledge of education (I am a parent and a school governor, as well as a teacher), transport, healthcare, the chalk stream, etc. that is key to understanding the sustainability of the location.

A planning application for 100 houses on Bullens Green Lane, within the built up area of the village, has already been approved at appeal. One of the main access points for that development is Fellowes Lane, opposite the appeal site entrance. Hundreds of *new* residents in their cars, along with delivery and service vehicles will soon be accessing Tollgate Road at this junction every day. The junction is right at the start of the on-road parking on Tollgate Road, next to a number of cottages. Residents of the cottages and their visitors have no choice but to park on the road, making this section of Tollgate Road a single lane carriageway with a few passing place. There is inevitably congestion at peak times, as well as noise and air pollution caused by the queuing vehicles. I travel this route daily to get to and from work, and during rush hour have seen vehicles and cyclists have numerous near misses. I have witnessed several incidents of road rage and vehicles travelling towards the Coursers Road/High Street/Roestock Lane roundabout junction drive down the pavement to avoid waiting for oncoming traffic, or when the oncoming traffic blocks the road. Please note the very high number of serious accidents on the map below.



I have seen school children having to walk across the lawns of the houses on Tollgate to keep themselves out of the way of the cars, vans and lorries that mount the pavement. Last week, I saw a car that wouldn't wait being driven down the pavement. Not one wheel was on the road - one side of the car was on the pavement and the other was on the lawns of the houses. It drove the length of about four houses like this.

I feel very strongly about the education of our children and young people. Colney Heath School is more-or-less oversubscribed, depending on the usual demographic variations. When it is oversubscribed, villagers use private cars to drive their children to primary schools in neighbouring villages and towns. The extra pupils generated by the 100 home development in Bullens Green Lane will mean that Colney Heath School will be consistently oversubscribed. The children from the appeal site and any future developments will have to go to school outside of the village and, due to a lack of buses, this would be in private cars.

Similarly, the issue of private car use for secondary age pupils is not to be underestimated. Almost all walking and cycling routes to secondary schools are long and not safe - I see that you will visit the A1 motorway underpass on your visit. This underpass is the access to Hatfield that our children are expected to use. It was flooded for almost all of last winter and is well known for being the

site of drug dealing and robberies. Not somewhere you would want your 11 year old to walk or cycle through on their way to school. A limited few St Albans schools are serviced by a school hours bus service, although these schools are often oversubscribed (I will pick up on this later). Even in this situation, cars are still relied upon for pick up from any activities outside of school hours. All pupils are strongly encouraged by their schools to take part in extracurricular activities, e.g. sport training and fixtures, drama productions, etc. beyond just attending for lessons. After school clubs and fixtures give pupils opportunities and help build their social skills, resilience and wider experiences. There are no suitable bus services to enable pupils from the village to access these opportunities without relying on lifts in cars.

The two secondary schools listed by the developer as being suitably local and accessible are not actually suitable for most village children. Nicholas Breakspear Catholic School is a faith school where admission priority is given to practising Catholic children. The Links Academies at both Hatfield and St Albans are Pupil Referral Units for pupils with complex, individual social and emotional needs.

Data provided on 23rd August by the Admissions Team at Hertfordshire County Council shows that all ten of the nearest secondary schools were oversubscribed in 2023. Eight of the ten have been oversubscribed every single year for the past 5 years. I have attached the information provided by Herts County Council. The lack of school places creates considerable anxiety for families - village children have been given places in Stevenage and, worse still, even given no place at all on allocation day. The column listing the number of applicants vs. the number of students admitted makes scary reading. For example, the closest co-educational non-faith school is Beaumont. In 2023, it had 1269 applications for just 210 places. The prospect of village children getting a place there is already virtually nil and will be made worse by the addition of pupils from the new Bullens Green development and other developments in St Albans. Village children are going to be pushed to secondary schools further and further afield and it is inevitable that they will access them using private cars. They will not be walking, cycling or taking the bus and consequently the development at the appeal site cannot be classed as sustainable.

I note that you will begin your site visit in the “car park” next to the school. You should note that this is not a car park, rather the site of another planning application for a further 45 houses. There are more applications along

Roestock Lane, totalling hundreds of houses. Colney Heath is under siege by developers because St Albans' Local Plan is astonishingly out of date and because the Bullens Green Lane appeal set a precedent for building on green belt agricultural land, not because the village is a sustainable location.

There are, of course, many more reasons (healthcare is a particularly important one) which I'm sure will be covered by other residents and our Parish Council that will demonstrate this is an inappropriate development.

I would respectfully request that you listen carefully to local knowledge and consider our wealth experience when making your decision. I strongly urge you to dismiss this appeal.

Yours sincerely,

Corinne Doust