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13 June 2022

By: email to Nikolas.Smith2@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk and by online submission

Dear Mr. Nikolas Smith,

Objection to Planning application CB/22/01804/OUT, dated 04 May 2022 (Greenwoods New Town)

I am writing to object to the above referenced Planning application (the “**Proposed Development**”). For completeness I have sent this to you by email in addition to filing a submission online.

Having reviewed the planning documents for the Proposed Development there are a significant number of reasons to object to the application, and I fully support the objections being submitted by Gravenhurst and neighbouring Parish Councils.

As a commuter and resident close to the High Road in Shillington, I am particularly concerned about likely traffic-flows on already congested main routes, and the risk of further cut-through traffic in surrounding villages including through the parish of Shillington.

Traffic congestion

Many residents reasonably need to commute for employment opportunities in local towns and I am concerned that the traffic predictions in the Transport Assessment materially understate the true traffic problems that the Proposed Development will cause.

We regularly travel into Hitchin (and on towards Welwyn and London) to commute for work, and the junctions into Hitchin (from Hexton on the A600) are already gridlocked during peak times. It would be easy to assume that with the uptake in homeworking, post-Covid, that these problems may not persist, but the traffic patterns appear to have returned to their pre-Covid levels. This is a key journey for employment, and I have serious concerns that the Proposed Development will have a very substantial adverse impact on this route. Without significant mitigations (for example, a ring-road around Hitchin taking traffic towards the A1 and Stevenage) that the Proposed Development cannot reasonably be considered sustainable. I have no doubt that other such bottlenecks exist along other routes towards Luton and Milton Keynes, and know from experience that these routes can already be extremely busy off-peak.

The delays that drivers will suffer at key junctions around the Proposed Development will cause them to divert through the villages of Gravenhurst and Shillington. This will be an

intolerable nuisance to people of Shillington, who, like me, live close to the road but enjoy rural Bedfordshire for its peace, tranquillity and safety.

I am concerned that our country and village roads will become more significant “rat runs” and dangerous, and I do not believe that the Transport Assessment has due regard to the reality of traffic flows to the east of the Proposed Development. There will be a significant impact on nearby villages which has been overlooked by the Traffic Assessment.

Road safety & loss of amenity

I am a founding member of Shillington’s Speed Watch group. Since inception we have witnessed a significant increase in traffic flow through the village, especially but not exclusively during peak times. This is a direct result of developments in Meppershall, Stondon, and the surrounding area, and the reasonable requirement that people travel to neighbouring towns such as Luton for employment.

Further such development is planned, and we expect traffic volume to increase markedly over time as a result. The Proposed Development will significantly increase through-traffic further, and in the opposite direction.

Our country roads and layout - winding, narrow in places, accommodating parked cars outside cottages resulting in one lane flow in village centres, and with a lack of clear visibility from most junctions - are simply not designed for such excessive use. Were the Proposed Development to be approved the long-term prognosis is our villages ravaged by excessive and dangerous vehicle movements.

Speeding is already prolific and serious interventions or mitigations have thus far not been funded by either Central Bedfordshire Council or Bedfordshire Police. The ratio of speeders to law-abiding drivers is too high already and is not reducing. Without significant mitigation throughout our surrounding villages, I am concerned that there is a significant risk of serious road traffic collisions occurring, including with walkers, cyclists, horses and their riders all of whom reasonably use our roads alongside vehicular traffic.

We regularly walk with our dog and cycle to and from Wrest Park and the Pegsdon Hills (and it is unavoidable to use the roads for at least some of the route). There is a legitimate expectation that our country roads are shared by cars, cyclists, walkers and horseback riders, but given the significant scale of the Proposed Development and predictably large through-traffic movement, our opportunity to safely do so for this purpose will be adversely impacted. This risks rural Bedfordshire being a deeply unattractive place to live, with increasingly limited safe rural amenity.

Yours,

Blake Stephenson