

SAWB2 Land north of West road, Sawbridgeworth

3/18/1760/FUL

Thank you Chairman for allowing me to speak as a Sawbridgeworth Ward member on behalf of residents prior to the committee making its decision on this planning application.

First I would like to place on record that Sawbridgeworth is not happy with these choice of sites, this being the first of three, and were of the opinion that other more appropriate options were preferable. However, these are the sites in the District Plan and as such we are asking that the views of our residents as expressed through the Master Planning process are respected and incorporated into the final design for the sites.

Secondly I would like to draw Member's attention to the Council's corporate priorities namely – Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities; enhance the quality of people's lives and enable a flourishing local economy.

These are the values we have all signed up to and I would strongly urge you, as Members of the DMC to have the courage to hold fast to the original numbers planned for this site, namely 125 and not the 140 now before you. If we are to put into action our declared priorities for the residents of East Herts.

In saying this I would point out that Hertfordshire County Council predicated their agreement to the provision for a 2 form entry for Mandeville School on the basis of 500 houses not the proposed additional nearly 13% number. Going forward the school will already be over-subscribed as are all the schools in Sawbridgeworth. I chaired School Appeals for 20 years and know the heart break for parents when their children cannot be accommodated in their preferred school. As it is, the proposed site space for the extra form has already been reduced. What we are seeing is a creeping incremental drift upwards in housing numbers and there are still two more sites to consider with possibly a third.

I would like to make the following points on the plan itself:

Site lay out

Is not in keeping with a small country town and is unduly urbanised in appearance. The proposed houses do not bear any resemblance to the style and character of the surrounding properties and are frankly out of keeping with the rest of Sawbridgeworth housing stock. One of the strongest points made at the Master Planning meetings concerned cycle lanes and access to public transport i.e. the Sawbo bus service. In the first instance the road layout makes it impossible to service all the properties on the site. The whole ethos of community transport is to make it as accessible as possible so that people do not resort to using cars. To achieve this it will require a realignment of the road through the estate plus importantly sustainable funding to keep the bus service in operation for the community.

The visitor car parking at only 9 spaces is grossly inadequate and as a consequence more people will probably park on the road or pavement. Again this is not the desired outcome from the plan. Is it?

Flooding. The summary in MLM Consulting Engineers report relies on the fact that since the site is in Flood Zone 1 building is appropriate. Hertfordshire County Council, as Local Lead Flood Authority, relies on this report and its required mitigation for their own conclusion.

However this does not address the problems which are currently experienced by inadequate culverts and which will be exacerbated by this proposed development.

During the Master Planning meetings attention was drawn to the lack of suitable housing for older people and for those with mobility problems. From the plans now laid before you it is clear that absolutely no recognition was given to this group of people. Older people are being encouraged to down size in order to benefit growing families, however, older people do not all want to live on the ground floor of blocks of flats. The ONS population forecast shows in East Herts there will be an 87.5% increase in older people with the largest group being those over 85. How is the developer going to amend the plans to address this issue?

I fully support and endorse all that the Sawbridgeworth Town Clerk has said on behalf of the Town Council together with the detailed presentation by my colleague Cllr. Buckmaster

Finally, I urge members

- to have the courage to reduce the number of houses back to the original 125
- to use that space to increase the green play areas,
- to insist on a rethink of the road layout to enable Sawbo bus to negotiate a circular route round the estate plus identifying ongoing funds for the bus,
- to ensure better provision for housing for older people and people with mobility problems,
- to increase the visitor parking spaces
- to make sure that “blue light” services can safely access the site at all times
- to ensure Sawbridgeworth Town Council has a continuing monitoring role within the Shaping Sawbridgeworth Steering group as the development progresses to ensure all conditions and obligations are observed and, if necessary, enforced for the benefit of all existing and future residents.

Thank you