



# FELSTED

## PARISH COUNCIL

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2 April 2016

Dear Planning Policy Team

RE: Comments in respect of the accuracy of Uttlesford Call for Sites document (Felsted sites)

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to study the sites within the Parish of Felsted and submit comments on the factual accuracy of the information supplied by the landowners. The Council's comments are as follows:

### **General points:**

There are multiple references across the assessments to the physical proximity to roads, bus stops, the Doctor's surgery in Felsted and to Felsted schools. The inference from these references is to whether or not new housing at the location would benefit from road access and use of facilities.

However, this simple approach ignores important aspects, specifically:

- Felsted County Primary School is already at full capacity.
- An independent pre-school business in the village closed in July 2015.
- The only secondary school in the area is the fee-paying independent school in the village (fees are £21,585 per year).
- The nearest state secondary school is in Great Dunmow (5½ miles), at which the Year 7 entry for 2016 was oversubscribed. Other secondary students attend schools in Braintree (7 miles), Notley (7½ miles), Chelmsford (10 miles), Bishop's Stortford (16 miles) and Saffron Walden (18 miles).
- The need for new students to travel many miles from any Felsted housing development would clearly invalidate the 'sustainability' of the proposal.
- These broadly applicable schooling problems are recognised in the specific application (ref: UTT/16/278) for 55 houses which has already been submitted against area 13Fel15. The ECC submission in respect to 'Economic growth and Development' recognises that both primary and secondary schools in the Felsted area are forecast to be in deficit and, should the application be approved, then a Section 106 agreement would be required to support the costs of providing school places and transport. It further asks that the lack of provision of school places be sited as a reason for rejection, should that proposal be rejected.
- The bus services to the village, subsidised by Essex County Council and Stansted Airport, are to be reduced in April 2016.
- The PC is concerned about the level of complaints it currently receives from disappointed patients concerning extended waiting times, for non-emergency appointments, at the Felsted surgery of the John Tasker House GP partnership, currently reported to be 4 – 5 weeks. Although a separate analysis for this branch is not published in the National General Practice Profiles, for the practice as a whole the percentage of patients reporting a good overall

experience of making appointments has fallen to 59.1% (compared with 73.3% nationally), among the lowest in the country. The Felsted GP Surgery would be obliged to accept as new patients the residents of any new development, in addition to the potential 40-55 from the current development at Watch House Green and a further 45-60 from Hartford End. The additional pressure that new patients would impose on the practice's current limited capacity is of great concern to the PC.

- Many of the proposed locations would result in added traffic through Felsted village centre from commutes to work or school. Traffic congestion and air pollution in the village at morning and evening peak times are already unacceptable. Felsted is unique among the villages of Uttlesford because of its large private school, with many hundreds of day pupils arriving in cars which then turn around and leave via a single central road junction. Station Road, Chelmsford Road and Braintree Road are gridlocked at Felsted School's opening and closing times, which correspond with commuter peak times, albeit both earlier (in the morning) and later (in the evening) than conventional state school peak times.

During its very recent traffic survey (October 2015) the Felsted Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (FNPSG) recorded 775 vehicles passing through the village centre in a one-hour morning period; the slowest through transit time for the 1.4 miles from Mill Road to Watch House Green being recorded as 8.75 minutes, implying an average speed through the village centre of 9.6 mph. At these times Felsted is not a typical village but is more closely comparable to a medieval city centre.

### **Specific Points against individual sites**

#### **01Fel15**

Address: Is to West of Bury Farm not East. The Station Road bus stop adjoins the site

Comments: Flooding, mineral extraction, coalescence of Felsted and Flitch Green. Access on to already crowded road. Loss of good agricultural land.

#### **02Fel15**

The Milch Hill Lane bus stop referred to will not be served after April 2016. The site is NOT within 800m of public transport.

#### **04Fel15**

A typo in Distance from Registered Park and Garden: 1,00 m should be 1,000m.

Public transport note: The nearest regular bus service is at Watch House Green not Cressages Close.

School proximity: Is 410m SE of Felsted Primary School as crow flies or by road?

Access viable route: How could access to Cock Green Road (aka Gt Leighs Road) be provided as there are houses and farms in the way?

Bannister Green has no services since the former Three Horseshoes pub is now an occupied house.

#### **05Fel15 and 06Fel15**

Suitability Conclusions: Why consider smaller scale to the west? Surely this would be to the east and how would that prevent coalescence – it would be more ribbon development. The issues were considered at the recent Planning Appeal, including the parking for the school and the coalescence. The Planning Inspector rejected that Appeal.

#### **09Fel15**

This is good agricultural land

This site is north of a Listed house (Oxneys Farmhouse) and south of Listed Aylands Farm and Stores and therefore would have a major impact on them.

Public transport note: The nearest regular bus service is at Watch House Green not Cressages Close.

Access by passing Aylands Farm and Stores is via a very narrow and unmade driveway to existing houses to the north of Aylands Farm and Stores – this leads on to a busy road (Gt Leighs Road aka Cock Green Road and a nearby acute angle junction with Rayne Road. The junction is complex.

How could this be linked to 04Fel15 – there is a large area of farmland to the West of Aylands that would not be developed in either proposal?

#### **10Fel15**

The Chequers bus stop and surgery are within 800 metres if you use footpaths. By road the village centre bus stop is 950 metres and the surgery 1200 metres.

#### **12Fel15**

Site 12 is said to be free of rights of way. However, there are proposals to divert footpaths through this area.

#### **13Fel15**

A planning application (ref: UTT/16/278) has already been submitted for this site. Felsted Parish Council has objected to this application on a number of grounds. On the question of accuracy of the assessment document in respect to this specific site, the broadly applicable schooling problems detailed above are officially recognised in the ECC submission against UTT/16/278 in respect to 'Economic growth and Development'. It recognises that both primary and secondary schools in the Felsted area are forecast to be in deficit and, should the application be approved, then a Section 106 agreement would be required to support the costs of providing school places and transport. It further asks that the lack of provision of school places be sited as a reason for rejection, should the proposal be rejected.

#### **14Fel15**

Application states that this is land to the west of Chelmsford Road, it is actually to the east. It is west of the bridleway, Jollyboys Lane North and South.

This is good agricultural land and is adjacent to the playing fields of Felsted School and the Felsted Parish's own Playing Field and Playground.

#### **15Fel15**

Accessibility: The application fails to mention that of the two potential access points shown, one egresses onto a significant bend on a very narrow lane with poor sight line visibility and the other would necessitate the demolition of a relatively new detached property and the introduction of a new access road. This would have a significant negative impact on both the street scene (completely changing the characteristics of an established road which currently has no secondary roads turnings off it) and on the two adjoining properties. Causeway End Road is hazardous as there is no pavement.

Adopted Development Limits: Only one property is within ADL – the rest adjoins and is 'backland' behind rows of houses to the south and west.

There is evidence of wildlife use of this land (owls).

The nearest bus stop is not easily accessible on foot because of the road layout. It may be within 800m as the crow flies but not as people walk, especially with wheelchairs or prams as there is no paved footpath access.

It is good agricultural land.

#### **16Fel15**

This is good agricultural land.

Does not state Surrounding Land Uses.

Poor access competing with pre-school, primary school and development opposite entrance. The busy B1417 has a hazardous bridge over the Flitch Way at north end and a very busy Primary School at the south end. It is already congested.

#### **17Fel15**

Current described use is 'unused scrub land'. This is inaccurate because the land is graded mostly 3 with some 2 – it is good agricultural land that the landowner is under-using.

The proposed access to the B1417 is past an approved housing estate, currently being built, on to a busy road with a hazardous bridge to the north and a very busy Primary School to the south. This would exacerbate the existing congestion and danger at school drop off and pickup times. This access difficulty would also apply for a combined care home and residential use. There are already care homes in Felsted.

Bus stops in Watch House Green are difficult to access without proper footpaths which would further narrow the B1417. The buses are only hourly and do not come at rush hour and in the evening. Thus travel to work by bus is not viable.

#### **18Feb15**

Current described use is 'unused scrub land'. This is inaccurate because the land is graded mostly 3 with some 2 – it is good agricultural land that the landowner is under-using.

The proposed access to the B1417 is past an approved housing estate, currently being built, on to a busy road with a hazardous bridge to the north and a very busy Primary School to the south. This would exacerbate the existing congestion and danger at school drop-off and pickup times. Bus stops in Watch House Green are difficult to access without proper footpaths which would further narrow the B1417. The distance for walkers, wheelchair and pram users would be much more than stated as they would have to go around existing and approved properties. The buses are only hourly and do not come at rush hour and in the evening. Thus travel to work by bus is not viable.

#### **19Feb15**

Current use as good agricultural land would be lost, mostly graded 2, with some 3.

A rejected Appeal on nearby land concluded that coalescence between Felsted Centre and Watch House Green would not be avoided and this proposal is very similar to that rejected. Bus services through Watch House Green are less frequent than the Suitability Conclusions imply. They are only hourly and do not come at rush hour and in the evening. Thus travel to work by bus is not viable.

Site Criteria - notes "Will the site be located in an area noted for its high sensitivity to change (from Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment)? - Application states "It has a low to moderate sensitivity to change". But this application comprises part of the same parcel of land which was the subject of a previous planning application (ref: APP/C1570/A/14/2213863), which was dismissed on appeal (August 2014) by the Planning Inspectorate who stated "that the proposed development would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area".

#### **20Feb15**

Current use as good agricultural land would be lost mostly graded 2 with some 3.

School proximity: The car parking provision provided is unusable because it is separated from the school by the existing houses or would be accessible only by the farm road. This was dismissed in an adjoining site proposal at a recent Planning Appeal.

The rejected Appeal on nearby land also concluded that coalescence between Felsted Centre and Watch House Green would not be avoided and this proposal is very similar to that rejected.

Site Criteria - notes "Will the site be located in an area noted for its high sensitivity to change (from Uttlesford Landscape Character Assessment)? - Application states "It has low to moderate sensitivity to change". However, this application comprises part of the same parcel of land which was the subject of a previous planning application (ref: APP/C1570/A/14/2213863), which was dismissed on appeal (August 2014) by the Planning Inspectorate. They stated "that the proposed development would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area".

The document states that the map provided does not give sufficient detail to locate the site and for this reason suspends some judgements on suitability while making others that, in our view, equally demand the ability to locate the site!

Bus services through Watch House Green are less frequent than the Suitability Conclusions imply. They are only hourly and do not come at rush hour and in the evening. Thus travel to work by bus is not viable.

We trust that you will take into account these observations, made using our local knowledge, when considering the sites submitted within the Parish of Felsted.

Yours sincerely



Diane Smith Clerk to Felsted Parish Council