

1. Introduction

This is the response from the Little Waltham Parish Council (LWPC).

Throughout the Local Plan process we have consistently made representations about the development sites that are in our parish.

Sixty percent of SGS6 is in the Little Waltham Parish and 40% in Broomfield Parish.

We are pleased to note that through the Local Plan consultation process the number of proposed dwellings has decreased from 800 to 450 dwellings.

We have attended a number of meetings with Bloor Homes and Broomfield Parish Council during the consultation phase to discuss and give our input into the development. We also have a Memorandum of Understanding that was agreed with Broomfield Parish Council, which the City Council has a copy of.

2. Background

We fully understand that there needs to be new houses built, and as such they need to go somewhere. However there are justifiable concerns that the small village of Little Waltham is becoming swamped by developments and that it is losing its identity. We are also concerned that the urban sprawl of Chelmsford will subsume the village. The gap between Broomfield and Little Waltham will now be lost with this development and it will one continuous ribbon development. The countryside and natural break between Broomfield and Little Waltham will be lost and one will flow into the other.

2.1 Minerals Extraction

We were under the impression that there are minerals on the site that can be economically extracted. We are concerned to hear from Bloor that this is not the case and they are not being required to extract the minerals before any development.

3. Infrastructure

3.1 Traffic

The basis for the inclusion of this site in the Local Plan is the provision of a new access to Broomfield Hospital. The B1008 according to CCC's own research is currently running at 96% of capacity. The addition of 450 additional dwellings will take this road over capacity. Apart from a roundabout to facilitate the entrance to SGS6 we do not see what other measures are being considered for mitigating the traffic that will inevitably be generated by the SGS6. The traffic driving through Little Waltham has over the past few years increased dramatically. It is a small village with narrow roads and a lot of on-street parking which cannot cope with the increasing levels of traffic – to say nothing of

the pollution. Little Waltham is suffering as it is being used as a “rat-run” from the new developments at Channels, and it will suffer again from this type of traffic from SGS6.

3.2 Cycle and Bus Lanes

Much has been made in the Masterplan Framework of increasing cycle lanes, and improving their connectivity, however some of the most congested roads around SGS6 will not be able to accommodate these improvements due to fact that there is no space to increase the road width e.g. B1008. We are also not sure as to the connectivity issue as there are no dedicated cycle lanes in the vicinity of SGS6. The use of bus lanes is also problematic for the same reasons.

3.3 Junction with B1008

We see this as crucial in linking-up the new development with the village of Little Waltham. The residents will need to travel to Little Waltham to access services such as primary school and doctors surgery. Therefore it is vitally important that there is a controlled crossing allowing pedestrians to safely cross the B1008. It will also be important in encouraging residents of SGS6 to use public transport, as B1008 is a very busy fast-moving road, which can be difficult to cross.

3.4 Woodhouse Lane

We agree that something urgently needs to be done about Woodhouse Lane. It is not suitable for the amount of traffic that is now using it either in size or volume. There are a number of comments on the planning portal about Woodhouse Lane from current residents of the Lane. Simply closing off Woodhouse Lane at Blasford Hill may seem the easy solution, but residents have concerns about larger vehicles being able to access their properties (i.e. refuse lorries, gas and oil deliveries etc) as they would have to come down the Lane and pass a tight bend, which we understand is problematic for such large vehicles. On that basis we feel no firm decision should be made without liaison with the resident so the Lane.

We also feel that some of the existing houses in Woodhouse Lane need to have more screening in the form of a wooded area from the development on the eastern boundary of the site.

4. Access Road to the Hospital

The main driver for this site, and its whole justification in the Local Plan is the new access road to the hospital that the developer will provide. It therefore came as a great surprise to us at the Examination in Public of the Local Plan to hear for the first time that the road will only be used by employees of the hospital. This is completely unacceptable, and this needs to be clarified before any work starts on SGS6. If the road does not link up to the hospital (a distinct possibility as the hospital have not engaged in any meaningful way with the contractor and profess to have no money to link the spine road to their road network), we would be left with yet more houses, and more cars disgorging onto the B1008, and inevitably rat-running through the village of Little

Waltham to avoid the regular tailbacks on the B1008 into Chelmsford at busy times, leaving us in a much worse situation.

As it stands the Masterplan does not deliver the spine road to connect with the hospital campus. The road is badly needed to take hospital traffic away from the B1008, Blasford Hill and Hospital Approach, which are gridlocked at peak times. As a matter of Public Policy we do not think it is acceptable that in effect the community should pay for a road by accepting a development for that road to only be an access to the hospital for the employees of the hospital. If a facility is being provided to the community by a developer as a quid pro quo as it were, it should be available to all the community – not just part of it. Therefore our position is that the connection of the spine road to the hospital campus needs to be agreed before any work on SGS6 starts and should be for all road users.

5. Construction Timetable

We are concerned to note that the total construction time for 450 houses is 10 years. This is completely unacceptable. It will be 10 years of misery and disruption for those around the site. The construction should be much quicker than that. The Masterplan also notes that only in year 7-10 will the spine road (whatever its status) be completed. Again this is unacceptable. The spine road should be completed within the first year of the development with access for all to the hospital campus. Leaving it to the end of the development construction will again mean that traffic on the B1008 will be unacceptable, and heavily congested with the allied rat-running through the village of Little Waltham.

6. Neighbourhood Centre

The location of the proposed Neighbourhood Centre is in the Little Waltham section of the site. Along with Broomfield Parish we have had discussions with the developer about this facility. We are concerned that the new centre could impact on the facilities that are currently available in Little Waltham. In the village there are two halls (Memorial Hall and Sports and Social Club), two churches (United Reform and Church of England), playing fields and a public house. We question whether a development of 450 houses can sustain a Neighbourhood Centre and if it did would it be to the detriment of the current facilities in Little Waltham. We are also concerned as to how the Neighbourhood Centre would operate once it had been handed over from the developer. Would the Parish Council become responsible for its upkeep, running and organisation? How would that be funded? A better idea might be to have a financial contribution from the developer for the existing facilities in Little Waltham.

7. Mix of Dwellings

In due course this will be the subject of a detailed planning application, however in terms of the provision of housing we see the greater need to be for 1 to 3 bedroom

houses. We also feel that the affordable housing element should be mixed with some affordable rentable properties, and some co-ownership. We feel there is a need for affordable housing as many residents of Little Waltham feel they need to leave to either down-size or start out in their first house as the cost of properties in the Parish is high. The average price is in the mid £300,000. On that basis we feel that affordable housing should prioritise those people with a connection to Little Waltham or Broomfield.