

**20/02064/OUT**

**Strategic Growth Site North Of Woodhouse Lane – application for outline  
planning permission**

**Little Waltham Parish Council response**

Little Waltham Parish Council wishes to **OBJECT** to the application on the following grounds

**Introduction**

The Parish Council has been in consultation with Bloor Homes (in conjunction with Broomfield Parish Council) for 18 months, have attended numerous meetings and encouraged the community to engage with them as part of the planning process. All through that process the Parish Council has been led to believe that the number of houses was 450. After all that time and engagement to be told when they submitted their application just before Christmas that it was now 550 was a complete surprise. That Bloor engaged but did not discuss the increase in houses with us is frankly disappointing and from which we can only deduce that all along they were planning the increase, but for nefarious reasons did not tell us. It is extremely disappointing that they have chosen to act in such an underhand way.

**Number of houses**

The application relates to strategic growth site 8 identified in the newly adopted Chelmsford City Council Local plan. When the draft plan was considered by the inspector consideration was given to the appropriate number of houses for the site with reference to the impact such housing would have upon the area and the local plan identifies the amount of development on that site to be 'around 450 new homes of mixed size and type'.

The current application is for 550 new homes. Bloor Homes seeks to justify this amount by stating that the number of homes in the local plan is a minimum.

This is clearly not the case with reference to the wording of the local plan. The amount of 550 new homes is not 'around 450' but a figure 22% higher than the amount considered appropriate for the site within the local plan document. It is thus a substantially higher figure and the Parish Council contends that the extra number of houses is both contrary to the criteria of the Local Plan and not sustainable as it would have a detrimental impact upon local services and roads in the community.

**Road infrastructure**

The Parish Council contends that the proposed housing will have a detrimental impact upon infrastructure and in particular the local road network. It is noted that Bloor Homes provide a traffic analysis within the documentation submitted. It provides that the number of journeys starting and ending in the area are low and as a result contends that the impact upon local roads will not be severe.

This appears to ignore the number of through journeys in the immediate area as the Blasford Hill B1008 is a well-used route both out of and into Chelmsford. In addition, it has been noted in recent traffic surveys that there is a substantial amount of 'rat

running' through the village centre to access Essex Regiment Way and the Park and Ride facility, especially if that road is busy. It has been shown from previous traffic surveys carried out in connection with the response of the Parish Council to the Local Plan that the B1008 is running in excess of 90% capacity and increased development is only increasing the traffic in the area.

The most direct route for vehicles travelling from the proposed site to Essex Regiment Way will be via Little Waltham village centre. The village centre is predominantly in a Conservation area with narrow roads and heritage properties and the impact of such extra traffic will be highly detrimental to those living in the area.

### **Impact upon other infrastructure and services**

It is noted that Bloor Homes propose that they will alleviate traffic with reference to a car sharing club and by the use of cycleways and free bus passes. The Parish Council considers that clearly it is not possible for all journeys to be undertaken by bicycle or bus and such schemes, although desirable, will be of only limited impact in alleviating the impact of additional journeys in the area and will not substantially reduce the impact of traffic in the area to such an extent as to consider the application sustainable.

It is noted that the application makes reference to the use of local services particularly within the village of Little Waltham with mention of the primary school, the GP surgery and the White Hart pub. The Parish Council is concerned about the impact of these additional houses upon already stretched local services and facilities.

In addition, it is noted that there is reference to the use of public rights of way to access the village centre and those services. The public rights of way leading from Blasford Hill into the village have been identified by Essex County Council as being in need of maintenance and repair at a cost of thirty thousand pounds. It was recently requested that the Parish Council contribute to such costs which it was unable to do thus the work remains outstanding. It is this right of way that which is identified in the application as an access route into the village. Although there is reference to Bloor Homes improving some footways in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development there is no reference to any improvements to the public rights of way which would be used by more people as a result of such proposed development and it is considered that if the City Council were to consider granting the application then developer contributions should be required by the City Council to that right of way failing which the substantially increased use would have an adverse impact in that a right of way already requiring repair will deteriorate further.

### **Timeframe for construction**

Within the application Bloor Homes propose that the construction of the 550 homes will take 6 years to complete and that any link road into the hospital will not be constructed until year 6. First of all, the Parish Council considers that it is unacceptable to drag out the construction of the site for a period of 6 years in view of the inconvenience and detrimental impact of the construction of the site to both adjacent residents and on the local area as a whole. Bearing in mind the

construction phases of other local developments the Parish Council considers that Bloor Homes should be able to finish construction in a far swifter time than 6 years.

By delaying the link road for a further 6 years will mean a longer period of congested traffic in the area. The Parish Council considers that the link road into the hospital should be constructed at an early phase of development.

### **Issues surrounding the construction of the Link Road**

It is noted with concern by the Parish Council that the current planning application does not include the joining of the main spine road in the development to a road within the Broomfield Hospital estate but that the spine road will end with a junction at Woodhouse Lane. It is not known as to when negotiations with the Hospital will be concluded and an agreement reached as to a link into the hospital site if at all.

Thus, for the time being the main access into the site would be from Blasford Hill with no relief provided in relation to traffic travelling to the Hospital site. The predominant ethos for the suitability of the site within the local plan was to provide a link road to the Hospital thus relieving traffic congestion in the area and the current application does not provide for such a relief road. No definitive answer can be provided as to when or indeed if such a road would be brought forward thus any benefit considered when including this site in the local plan will be lost and the area blighted by even more congested traffic.

It is noted in the application documents that Bloor Homes state that in the event that they do not physically construct a link road into the hospital estate they would provide a commuted sum to enable such construction to be carried out. The Parish Council is concerned that if that money were to be paid direct to the Hospital Trust it would merely be lost in the running costs of the hospital leading to a situation where the Hospital area is unable to fund the road. In the event that such a sum were to be paid the Parish Council considers that it should be held in escrow by the City Council to make sure it is ring fenced for such a project.

The Parish Council also objects to the suggestion in a memorandum of understanding that the link road into the hospital estate is only used by hospital employees and those using the school playing fields. The Parish Council and the residents have never been consulted on this restriction. It was presented as a fait accompli at the examination in public of the Local Plan in front of the Inspector. It came as a complete surprise to the Parish Council. We had been led to believe that in effect that by agreeing to the new houses the 'benefit' to the local community would be the access road into the hospital, to then find that for some reason that access road was to be restricted to hospital employees and those using the playing fields of a selective school (we do not understand the logic of that exception) is grossly unfair to the local community. As the City Council are only too well aware the hospital has a very poor record of complying with its obligations, indeed one such obligation has been outstanding for over 8 years! On that basis the Parish Council and the local community have no faith that the hospital will comply with any further obligations. In terms of planning the hospital should be treated as any other enterprise and should not be given any privileged status within the system, not least as their previous

performance has been woeful and the City Council seem to be unable or unwilling to enforce against them, a procedure that would have been used had they been any other employer. If the road is to effectively alleviate congestion in the area then it should be accessible by all motorists.

### **Road junction and crossing point**

Bloor Homes propose a roundabout junction to access the proposed area of development. The Parish Council is concerned as to the issue of road safety for people crossing the road. There has been a recent serious accident in the area when a person was hit by a car when attempting to cross the road. Residents have complained about restricted sight line along the road. Thus, a busy roundabout would need to be supported by an appropriate safe crossing point at the Blasford Hill failing which there would be a substantial concern for the safety of people crossing the road from both existing houses as well as the new proposed development.

There is also a concern that there is a current planning application for the development of ten houses next to Montpellier Villa which, if granted, would mean that there would be another access onto Blasford Hill in very close vicinity to the new proposed roundabout thus leading to potential traffic conflict in the area.

### **Neighbourhood Centre**

It is noted that the application includes provision for a local centre. The Parish Council considers that it is not suitable for a local centre to be housed in the development. There would not be sufficient call for such a facility in the vicinity even with additional housing on site. Indeed, such a centre could draw away the use of existing facilities within the Parish of Little Waltham and thus have a detrimental impact as opposed to providing useful services. There is a lack of clarity as to who would be responsible for such a centre and the cost thereof and a concern that such a centre would be a drain on local resources. There are two thriving village halls within the village centre which could be adversely impacted. It is considered that a developer contribution to existing facilities or proposed facilities in the village centre would be more beneficial for the community. It is also a concern that the GP practice may be encouraged to move to such a facility when it is such a valued resource within the community. There is a substantial older population in the village centre and the loss of the GP practice would be severely detrimental for those residents.

### **Maintenance of common and Landscaped areas**

The Parish Council also wishes to raise the issue of the maintenance of common areas and landscaping within the proposed development. The Parish Council has been extremely concerned in relation to such issues elsewhere in the Parish. For example, in the Channels development the common areas are the responsibility of a management company with all residents being required to pay a service charge.

There have been many complaints regarding the fact that the management company is not maintaining common areas to required standards or at all with residents feeling hard done by in that they are paying both Council Tax and service charge yet not receiving a maintenance provision to their area from either public bodies or the management company. The Parish Council would therefore consider that in the

event that the City Council grant permission for the development it would be better for any common areas to be adopted and maintained by a public authority, to make sure that the area can be suitably maintained going forward into the long-term future.