

23 Robinson Avenue
Goffs Oak
Waltham Cross
Hertfordshire
EN7 5NY

5th August 2022

Dear Mr Wordsworth,

Re: Appeal APP/W1905/W/22/3300254

Further to my previous submissions to Broxbourne Council, I write in support of the decision by Broxbourne Council's Planning Committee to vote unanimously **against** the development of 58 dwellings on the Fairmead site off Cuffley Hill in Goffs Oak. I do so for the following reasons:

The proposed development and consultation on it

The plan presented by Countryside Properties, which was unanimously rejected by the Planning Committee of Broxbourne Council, is a determined attempt to over-develop the area. Residents have been consulted on **three** separate occasions (3rd April 2019, 19th December 2019 and 23rd August 2021) and each time it has been for 58 dwellings. I am opposed to any development on the site, but even in the Local Plan it is proposed that approximately 26 dwellings should be allocated to this site. That was endorsed by the independent inspector's report and appendix dated 14th April 2020. In no definition of the word 'approximately' can an allocation of 58 dwellings - more than double the suggested figure - be justified. 58 dwellings are not what Broxbourne Council originally proposed in the Local Plan and what is the point of a government inspector endorsing a number, for it simply to be ignored? More than that, in the letter of 23rd August 2021, the configuration of the 58 dwellings was as follows: 12 – 2 bedroom, 14 – 3 bedroom, 22 – 4 bedroom, 5 – 5 bedroom and 5 – 1 bedroom. By the time it came to the Planning Committee in January 2022, it had been changed to: 14 – 2 bedroom, 9 – 3 bedroom, 32 – 4 bedroom and 3 – 5 bedroom. This is a considerable change as the footprint of 32 four bedroomed houses is far greater than houses with a smaller number of bedrooms. The building of 58 dwellings on this site would negatively impact on those already living in Goffs Oak.

Traffic, parking and access for emergency and refuse vehicles

I am aware that Hertfordshire County Council has stated that the increase in traffic would not be an issue, but were this appeal to be successful and the plan to go ahead, it would mean considerable disturbance to the residents of Goffs Oak. Cuffley Hill and Goffs Lane do not have the capacity to cope, not only with the construction traffic during the development period, but with extra traffic that will result from the planned expansion. These roads are already heavily used and the planned development is likely to make them dangerous - previous applications for development on the site have been turned down for this very reason. In a letter that we have dated 26th April 1991 (copy attached), the Planning Inspectorate dismissed a developer's appeal and upheld the Council's decision to deny the development on the Fairmead site and it included the following: "... *the number of traffic*

movements into and out of the site, particularly during the peak periods, would unacceptably interrupt the free flow of traffic on Cuffley Hill which is already operating at or above capacity at times and this would create danger and inconvenience to other road users.” And that was 31 years ago... The Department of Transport has stated: *“There is no evidence to suggest that car ownership levels have reduced but rather, they are forecast to grow by 25% between 2001 and 2036”*. The research that was used in assessing the traffic impact, included some communities in Devon and Dorset which have absolutely no comparison to a village just a few miles north of the M25 and, in addition to that, some of the figures were well over a decade old. We have already seen the impact on the traffic that has resulted from other developments along Cuffley Hill and Goffs Lane. There are already times where the quickest route from Cuffley into Goffs Oak is via Newgate Street village and that cannot be right.

In this scheme, there is insufficient parking for the likely number of cars that would appear from the number of houses and given that the number of four bedroomed houses has increased, in Countryside’s most recent proposal, that is likely to further increase the number of cars on the site than was the case in previous plans. All this means that many cars would be parked on the road and they would be even more likely to encroach on the pavement. This would mean that emergency vehicles or refuse disposal vehicles would not be able to access the site properly. I have not seen any evidence that the Fire Service is in support of this plan. This volume of traffic also makes it more dangerous for children and vulnerable people.

Potential flooding

When there is any rain of note, there is moderate to severe flooding where the road dips towards Cuffley. The current drainage system is not fit for purpose and, therefore, it would not be able to cope with the addition of the planned new houses as well.

Land contamination

The Fairmead site is known to contain contaminated land which, if it were to be developed, would provide unacceptable health risks to current and future residents and insufficient investigation has been undertaken of the land.

Biodiversity

This plan does not give sufficient consideration to the impact on the current biodiversity of the Fairmead site: this development will destroy most, if not all, of the natural life that exists on the site. Since the original plan went out for consultation in August 2021, there have been two additional modifications submitted, without any explanation, by the developers. They simply appeared on the Council’s portal and they still do not sufficiently address the environmental issues.

Impact

The impact that this proposed over-development will have on the people, community and environment of Goffs Oak as a whole has to be considered. All the factors that I have outlined will ultimately impact negatively, directly and indirectly, on both the physical and mental health of residents and that must be considered and yet, at the same time, with the increased population of Goffs Oak, comes the significant risk of inadequate NHS and other services for the community. There is not the infrastructure to cope with this scale of

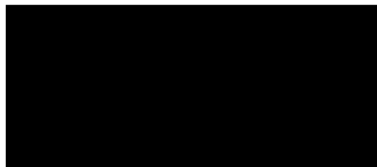
development. In a recent letter to those who are registered at Valley View Surgery, the Practice outlined how stretched they currently are with the patients that they have.

Conclusion

In January 2022, the Planning Committee of Broxbourne Council looked at this proposal and rejected it unanimously and they were right to do so. However, I have been particularly concerned about this proposed development of 58 dwellings since one local councillor described it, more than three years ago, as a “done deal”. Goffs Oak is a great community, but communities cannot thrive when they are subjected to this scale of over-development.

I strongly oppose this development and support the case that the Planning Committee’s decision to unanimously reject the proposed development on the Fairmead site be upheld.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Petty



Planning Inspectorate
Department of the Environment
Room 1404 Tollgate House Houlton Street Bristol BS2 9DJ

Telex 449321

Direct Line 0272-218927

Switchboard 0272-218811

GTN 1374

Mr N J Cook, BA, MRTPI.
Bellway plc
Horsley House
Regent Centre
Gosforth
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE3 3LU

Your Reference

Our Reference

T/APP/W1905/A/91/175132/P5

Date

26 APR 91

Sir

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990, SECTION 78 AND SCHEDULE 6
APPEAL BY BELLWAY HOMES LTD
APPLICATION NO: 7/248-90

1. I have been appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment to determine the above mentioned appeal against the decision of the Broxbourne Borough Council to refuse outline planning permission for residential development at Rosemead Nursery, Cuffley Hill, Goff's Oak. I have considered the written representations made by you and the Council and also those made by Welwyn Hatfield Council. I have also considered the representations made by interested persons, including those made at application stage. I inspected the site on 8th April 1991.

2. From my inspection of the site and its surroundings, and from the representations made, I consider that the main issues in this case are firstly, whether there are special circumstances sufficient to override the general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and secondly, whether the proposed development would result in danger to highway users.

3. The appeal site was formerly used as a nursery but there is little evidence of this past use, and the whole of the site is now covered with trees or undergrowth. At the rear of the site is natural woodland comprising oaks and other species whilst on other parts of the site there are densely planted nursery trees which have been left to grow, an old orchard and an area of mainly silver birch trees. To the east of the site is another disused nursery, to the south are houses, to the west a landscape contractors storage yard and workshop, beyond and behind which is a wooded area and open fields extending up to the rear of the appeal site. The site is on the western edge of the small settlement of Goff's Oak, to the north and east of which are substantial areas of glasshouses, many of which are now disused and in a derelict condition.

4. On the first issue, the site is within the approved Metropolitan Green Belt and the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1986 Review indicates the within the Green Belt permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for development for purposes other than that required for mineral extraction, agriculture, small scale facilities for participatory sport or recreation or other uses appropriate to a rural area. Suitable uses are defined in policy REL of the adopted Broxbourne District Plan and these include agriculture,

forestry and horticulture, outdoor recreation, community facilities which are needed locally and cannot be sited within urban areas or villages, and educational or institutional uses which retain the open character of the area. The District Plan also shows the site within an Agricultural Priority Area where planning permission will not normally be granted other than for purposes which are essential to agriculture or forestry. Housing, with the exception of that essential for agricultural workers, is not one of the uses listed in the Structure and Local Plan policies, or in PPG2, as being appropriate within the Green Belt.

5. You point out that, in approving the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1986 Review in May 1988, the Secretary of State for the Environment found that substantial areas of land between Flamstead End and Goff's Oak were in an unsatisfactory state and that alternative uses would need to be found. He concluded that these circumstances were exceptional enough to justify removing land from the Green Belt. The resulting Structure Plan Policy 54 states that "In the area between Flamstead End and Goff's Oak, a local plan will be prepared so as to guide the long term development of the area. Some land will be excluded from the Green Belt but existing stretches of open land penetrating the area will be retained." The Council prepared the West Cheshunt Study Discussion Paper in 1989, which covered land to the east and north of Goff's Oak and proposed the release of a number of sites for residential development. The consultation draft of the Review of the 1983 District Plan was published in December 1990 and this proposed additional sites for residential development, two of which lie outside the area between Flamstead End and Goff's Oak.

6. You suggest that the study area was intended to include all the nursery gardens within the vicinity of Goff's Oak but point out that the appeal site and the adjacent disused nursery were excluded and that it would be logical for the Green Belt boundary to run along the northern boundary of Fairmead Nursery, Rosemead Nursery and the adjoining landscape contractors depot, before turning south to follow the rear boundary of properties fronting Cuffley Hill. Whilst I accept that the study area included land which is not geographically sited between Flamstead End and Goff's Oak, it is land which is physically adjoined, has similar characteristics, and much of it contains unsightly, visually intrusive, derelict glasshouses. None of these characteristics apply to the appeal site and I can, therefore, see no justification for the release of this land from the Green Belt on the basis of Policy 54 of the Structure Plan.

7. With regard to your contention that there will be a shortfall of housing land available, I note that there is an undisputed 5 year supply at the present time, and that the Structure Plan Review Proposed Alterations 1991 and the draft District Plan Review are both at an early stage, and could be subject to amendment. In particular, the Council have raised objection to the housing requirement and the wording of the policy in relation to the glasshouses area. I therefore consider that little weight can be given to these proposed policies and, if any additional Green Belt land is required to be released, this should be done as part of the Structure and Local Plan process and not on an ad hoc basis.

8. You further contend that there had been a change in circumstances since the earlier appeal in that planning permission has been granted for car parking, storage of materials, oil storage tanks and a weighbridge on the adjoining landscape contractors site. However, I note that there were special considerations in this case in that the development related to an established use.


9. I conclude that there are no special circumstances in this case which would override the general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Whilst I note your view that there is little prospect of the nursery being brought back into use, the appeal site at present has an attractive wooded appearance, unlike other disused nurseries to which the proposed Horticultural Priority Area designation applies. Although the trees in the woodland area to the west are generally much larger and individually of better quality than those on the appeal site, it visually forms part of the wooded area, with the landscape contractors yard appearing as an intrusion into this, and as such it forms part of the rural area separating Goff's Oak and Cuffley. I consider that the development of this site would be an unacceptable encroachment into the countryside which would harm the rural character of the area and tend to undermine the objectives of the Green Belt.

10. On the second issue, Cuffley Hill is a heavily trafficked Local Distributor Road and a count carried out in August 1988 indicated that, during the peak period, the theoretical capacity of the road was being exceeded by 50 vehicles per hour. Access to the site would be from an existing service road, some 5.5m wide, which joins Cuffley Hill at two points, some 61m apart. Cuffley Hill is straight at this point and, although its vertical alignment restricts visibility in both directions, I am satisfied that adequate sight lines are available and, whilst the distance between the two accesses does not comply with the Highway Authority's standard of 90m, I consider that, if any problems arose as a result of this distance, these could be overcome by traffic management measures. However, I consider that the number of traffic movements into and out of the site, particularly during the peak periods, would unacceptably interrupt the free flow of traffic on Cuffley Hill which is already operating at or above capacity at times and this would create danger and inconvenience to other road users.

11. I have taken into account all other matters raised but none on these are of sufficient importance to outweigh the material considerations that have led me to my decision.

12. For the above reasons, and in exercise of the powers transferred to me I hereby dismiss this appeal.

I am Sir
Your obedient Servant



B A WHITBREAD DipTP MSocSci MRTPI
Inspector