

Chilton Orchard - Planning Application

Submission by Local Ward Councillor – Frank Lawrenson

-

Dear Committee members. Apologies for submitting this late. I have just been informed that I am unable to use my fellow ward member's time and as such I now find myself unable to deliver the contents of my speech in the extremely limited time allocated.

Opening Statement

The first point to make, as the committee is doubtless aware, is that this planning application is primarily governed by policy CS4 – Chilton Woods. In that respect, it is important to remember that this is a Chilton Woods application and therefore in planning terms, there is no distinction between this application and the application already lodged by SCC.

Secondly, please remember that the applicant was invited to be part of the larger SCC application, but they made the decision not to. Because of that decision, the applicant appears to be trying to circumvent a number of crucial requirements of policy CS4 and hence refusal is necessary.

Finally, I would like to make the following important point. By refusing this application, we are NOT rejecting 130 houses. We are simply telling the landowner to come back with an amended application. Which I feel sure they will.

One of the key problems for this applicant is that by not applying for planning permission with SCC, it has created access problems for itself. Either they have to wait until SCC build an access road or build an access road themselves. But remember, this was the applicant's choice and it is not something that the community should have to pay for with potentially dangerous roads, damage to our fabulous heritage (which cannot speak for itself) or poorly considered S106 agreements.

Moving on, these are the reasons why I believe the application should be refused.

Roads

At almost every PC meeting, I hear from our residents both at Great Waldingfield and Chilton about problems along this road. How residents walking along the footpath have had to jump into a ditch to avoid being hit by a car. Had near misses or in the worst case, actual accidents. I myself, have been forced off the road and onto the pavement, at this very spot, by a large lorry coming off the lorry park on Chilton Airfield. Whatever Suffolk Highways say, the community believe that this road is unsafe. Just recently, two teenagers lost their lives alongside the airfield. Suffolk highways, as you will be aware, do make mistakes and in my opinion, this is probably one of them.

This mistake is all the more surprising given that every consultation ever taken on Chilton Woods, has rejected access onto the Waldingfield road. Even a roundabout was considered...and rejected.

In fact, access for this part of the development was NEVER going to be onto the B1115, it was always going to be via other roads on the Chilton development. One only needs to look at the maps to see the junctions and realise that this was never the intention. With good reason!

However, the problem for the applicant is that in not joining with SCC, they would now have to wait for an access road to be built, especially given that St Mary's Close is no longer an option (because the development is too big) or pay for it themselves. But again, this was their choice.

Policy CS4

Policy CS4 is a well thought out document that has been built on over a considerable number of years, with input from all quarters. Doubtless some of you have been part of that process. It is therefore extraordinary that we would even consider trying to circumvent it. Especially when it isn't necessary.

- CS4 requires a Green Impact Assessment – This has not been done.
- CS4 requires there NOT be a piecemeal approach – This is one
- Policy CS4 states that there will be approximately 1,050 houses.
 - As you will recall, SCC's application was for 1,150 houses, a 10% increase on the 1,050. This 10% increase was considered "just" acceptable at the time.
 - This application will raise the number of houses on the site to 1,280.
 - If 10% was only just acceptable, I'm not sure what the committee would call 24%?
 - Of course, had the applicant chosen to join SCC's application, they wouldn't be in this position. But this is where we are.

Harm to Heritage Assets

I don't want to bang on about this one too much because you know how I feel. Suffolk is a beautiful space, full of fabulous countryside and beautiful buildings. There are lots of places where we can build houses, either to fit in with our countryside or where harm will not be caused. Every piece of documentation that you have in front of you, says that HARM WILL BE DONE TO HERITAGE ASSETS. Therefore, the only reason we can grant permission on this development is if it's NECESSARY.

Well, it ISN'T NECESSARY and I believe that this is a demonstrable fact.

THIS DEVELOPMENT COULD STILL GO AHEAD WITHOUT CAUSING HARM.

All that needs to happen, is for access to be...guess where...where it was always intended to be...Aubrey Drive. Where harm will be avoided and where the community will feel safe.

So once again, please let me be clear, rejecting this application is NOT rejecting the development. It is simply telling the applicant to go back and follow our policies.

Failure to Co-operate

A requirement of the localism act (as the committee will know), is a duty to consult with the Parish Council. The applicant has NOT done this. This is extraordinary behaviour.

In my personal opinion, failing to consult with the locally elected community leaders cannot be allowed under any circumstances.

What message does that send to every parish council in the district?

To my mind the message is clear, this application is deeply flawed and that is why consultation failed to take place..

We need to send a message that this is not how Babergh does business and that Babergh values the feedback it receives from its local communities.

S106 Agreements

Lastly, I want to talk about Section 106 agreements. You will see from the list that there are lots of things on the application to reduce Suffolk County Council's Costs and there are also a number of things on there to reduce Babergh's costs. But I have been informed that there is NOTHING, on there for the local community.

Perhaps it's because the duty to consult never happened? This is OBVIOUSLY and CLEARLY wrong.

SUMMATION

Let's be realistic. We are nearing the end of any developments around Sudbury. I think we all know it... My understanding 6 months ago, was that including the planned 1050 houses for Chilton Woods, our infrastructure and by that I primarily mean roads, could only take a further 500 houses before the system became "unsustainable". In addition to other housing already agreed, this development will reduce that number to around 200 houses. In other words, this is possibly pretty much it.

Furthermore, when all these planning applications are completed, Sudbury will have grown by about another 30%. Most people in our community think the traffic is already bad around Sudbury. One wonders what they are going to think when all these developments are build out.

So, if this is one of the last major planning applications that Babergh can approve in the Sudbury area, let's PLEASE all make sure that we don't compound the very real problems we already face.

Therefore, on behalf of the community, on behalf of all the residents in this region, this is what I would like to suggest...

SUBMISSION

Firstly, Please reject the Application...

1. Reject this application as it is not in accordance with Policy CS4
2. Reject this application because Harm to Heritage assets is NOT necessary for the development to proceed
3. Reject this application because the applicant failed in their duty to co-operate
4. Reject this application because the community unanimously considers this road to be more dangerous than SCC realise.
5. Finally, reject this application because almost all the external consultations in this application were carried out PRIOR to SCC receiving outline planning permission for their section of the Chilton Woods project. Apart from using up the entire allocation, this is a significant and material change. With such a massive divergence from the policy, the consultation process should at least have been carried out properly or at the extreme end, needs to be repeated again.

Secondly, Ask the applicant to apply again...

1. Ask them to apply with access off Aubrey drive and NOT Waldingfield Road
2. Instruct them to consult with Chilton Parish Council
3. Instruct officers to negotiate the S106 agreement, but ask them to:
 - a. Consult on it with Chilton Parish Council as well
 - b. Bring the S106 agreement back to planning committee for approval, so as to avoid past mistakes.
4. **Finally and this is very important, impose a condition that there will be NO ACCESS whatsoever from any other part of the Chilton Woods Development onto Waldingfield Road.**

By that, in the unlikely event that there ever was an access onto Waldingfield road, make it 100% clear that there can never be access from the rest of Chilton Woods which would provide a rat run for another 2000 cars!

Many thanks

Frank Lawrenson