

# WYMONDLEY PARISH COUNCIL

16 Cedar Avenue, Ickleford, SG5 3XU  
Tel: 07733 853263  
clerk@wymondley-pc.gov.uk

By Email to:  
Planning Control  
North Herts Council

Dear Sirs

**Ref application number 25/00949/FP Land between Shangri-la and Todds Corner Todds Green. Erection of two detached dwellings with private gardens including landscaping and parking**

Wymondley Parish Council has considered the application and all the accompanying papers, as well as considering the basis of the initial application advice given by the Council's planning officers.

We believe there are significant grounds for concern at the principles of the application, so we are formally objecting to the development

The basis of our objection is on the following issues

- Green Belt
- Openness of land
- Point of principle of development in a hamlet
- Other applications
- Impact upon adjoining owners

Considering each of these below

## **Green Belt**

Todds Green lays with in the London Metropolitan Green Belt. Policy SP5 of the Local Plan states

### *Countryside and Green Belt*

*We support the principles of the Green Belt and recognise the intrinsic value of the countryside. Green Belt and Rural Areas Beyond the Green Belt are shown on the Policies Map. We:*

*a) Have conducted a comprehensive review of the Green Belt. Land has been removed from the Green Belt to: i. enable strategic development at the locations referred to in Policies SP8 and SP3; ii. enable local development around a number of the District's towns and villages; and iii. define boundaries for villages referred*

*to in Policy SP2 which fall within the Green Belt but were previously ‘washed over’ by this designation*

*b) Have provided new Green Belt to cover, in general terms, the area bounded by the Metropolitan Green Belt to the east, the Luton Green Belt to the west and the A505 Offley bypass to the north;*

*c) Will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated;*

We strongly believe that this development would constitute inappropriate development and that no special circumstances exist

### **Openness**

This tract of land is of significant importance to the hamlet as it provides the main countryside views and visual connection to the surrounding countryside.

The photos show that this is not merely a small infill but key part of the hamlet’s character that provides views across open county to the south towards Lower Titmore Green and the countryside beyond. A further important aspect of this is that the view will remain in perpetuity as it will not be disturbed even by future development on the safeguarded land of Stevenage West



Given the recent development close to Todds Green in Stevenage including the notorious wall maintaining this link to the countryside becomes all the more important.

It is this openness that makes this site most important.

From what we can see no special circumstances have been offered by the

applicant other than the fact that the NHDC has not got sufficient homes in its current Local Plan to meet the governments new targets.

To suggest a random development of Green Belt is the solution to this is, we argue, absolutely not the right solution and we were surprised that the planning officer even suggested this in his pre-application advice. The answer lays in the local Plan review that will

consider and decide democratically on most appropriate sites which should in the first instance be on brownfield locations and in towns then on the newly designated grey belt which this land is most certainly not. Allowing development on Green Belt should not be an option at any point.

We note that the exceptions are given in the NPPF for Green belt development including under section 155 e of the revised NPPF allowing limited infilling in villages. this clearly restricts such development to villages not hamlets or other rural areas

### **Hamlet v Village**

In an attempt to justify the development under this section of the plan the planners have suggested in their pre planning advice that Todds Green is in fact a village. We would clearly state that it is not and indeed we are appalled that the planners have even suggested such to the applicant.

The Local Plan clearly states in section 13.358

*As well as the villages of Great and Little Wymondley the parish includes the hamlets of Titmore Green, Redcoats Green and Todds Green. The parish also includes the surrounding rural area, stretching from the edges of Hitchin in the north to the edges of Stevenage in the south.*

*In the south of the parish is part of the West of Stevenage site. This land is safeguarded for long-term potential development by Policy SP8. The remainder of the parish is classed as Green Belt.*

It is not for planning officers to randomly change the Local Plan at a whim. There is guidance within public inquiry's as to the correct definition of a hamlet as opposed to a village which we quote below

### **Critical distinction between hamlet and village**

*Being aware that para 145 of the NPPF (now para 155) states that "a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt", exceptions to this include, at para 145 e), "limited infilling in villages". In a recent appeal (decided on 25 January 2019) against the refusal of planning permission for two houses amongst a group of 18 dwellings in Staffordshire, however, the main parties disputed whether the group was a village or a hamlet.*

*The Inspector explained that this had consequences in terms of whether the scheme accorded with Framework para 145 e). He noted that "the Oxford Dictionary defines a village as a group of houses and associated buildings, larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town, situated in a rural area. It defines a hamlet as a small settlement, generally one smaller than a village, and strictly (in Britain) one without a Church."*

*The Inspector observed that while a church may have once existed in the group of dwellings, there was no church there now as it had been replaced by a dwelling.*

*There were also no other associated buildings that would, in his judgement, mean that the group was anything more than a hamlet. He concluded that the proposals did not accord with the exception in Framework para 145 e).*

This clear guidance confirms the view that this is a hamlet as it has no church or hall and has always historically been considered as a hamlet within the area.

We contend that this provides clear reason for this application to be refused. It is also a very important point that if allowed could create a dangerous precedent across North Herts to the detriment of the intrinsic nature of the district.

We would further point out that the Applicant's planning consultant has attempted to justify the village definition by reference to the Franklin Park development and the industrial area.

We would make very clear that neither of these are within Todds Green. The Stevenage sign is very clear before you reach even the entrance to the ex-farm yard.

If further evidence is needed note that the Sec 106 benefits in relation to Franklins Park all went to Stevenage including facilities and maintenance of Fishers Green. They are for the avoidance of doubt in Stevenage and hence their argument to change the definition to a village is flawed.



### **Other applications in Todds Green**

We would just reference two other applications that have been considered by NHDC within Todds Green in recent years.

The first is the one quoted in the pre application advice. This site is however totally different for two key reasons:

- It is a triangular shape with other properties all bordering it so no open views were gained from the road or elsewhere in the hamlet.
- The applicant sought planning permission 20 years ago or so and was refused. He then left the site in a poor state including a derelict caravan so ensuring that over the years it would become an eyesore in the community in stark contrast to the site now under consideration. This does not mean that the Parish Council were happy with what they considered was an oversized house for the site but the situation had reached a point that one could almost argue that the land could now have constituted grey belt! We discount this as a positive comparison to justify the current application.

The other application more recently was for a standalone annex to be built in Woodside House the Parish Council objected on Green Belt and closeness to the road and neighbours. The application was dismissed by the officers on the grounds that:

*The proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt by definition, and would cause further harms through loss of openness and non-compliance with the Council's annexe policies. The proposal does not comply with Policy SP5 of the Local Plan and Section 13 of the NPPF*

*Full details can be reviewed on the planning portal*

Case number **24/02850/FPH** Erection of detached ancillary annexe Woodside House  
Todds Green Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 2JE

The applicant also references two other applications. Courtlands riding stables and land off Chantry Lane

Both are outside the core hamlet of Todds Green. Courtlands was blighted by the Wymondley Bypass many years ago and so development on this site adjoining the bypass could potentially justify the definition of Grey Belt in a way that the application site certainly cannot.

The other site also within Stevenage is a great loss but in contrast to this site has not far-reaching views and does not alter the essence of the character of the village

### **Neighbour consultations**

The Parish Council have consulted with neighbouring property owners and have had direct feedback from around eight who have expressed dismay at the proposals which restrict their open countryside views and would result in being overlooked as in the case of the adjoining Todds End, where the annex windows would be overlooked.

The house opposite the site would lose its views of the distant countryside and the Grade 2 thatched cottage would have its setting detrimentally effected.

It is regrettable that this opposition may not result in the NHDC receiving objection letters as a number of the owners have spoken to us anonymously as they fear repercussions from the applicant if they speak out against the proposal.

This is worrying for democracy and the local community so we ask that you take the Parish Council's democratic representation as being on their behalf.



## **The houses**

We have nevertheless considered the plans for the properties. We accept that they are in keeping to the area and we note access is retained between the homes to the field behind.

We would however make the following observations

- There are no garages which seems wrong for houses of this size. The parking spaces for plot one are down the side close to the adjoining property and for plot two they are in the front disturbing the street scape
- There is the potential for the windows to the side of plot one to overlook the adjoining Todds Corner annex, though we note they are only stairway windows
- The applicants' planners argue that the houses are needed to meet local need. In fact, there are a good number of 5 bed plus homes at over a £1m on the market. What is needed are affordable and social housing in North Herts which this application does nothing to support.

So, in summary the Parish Council objects to the application on the grounds that

- The land is Green Belt.
- No very special circumstances have been demonstrated to allow the development
- No infilling is allowed as it is a hamlet not a village
- The particular land allows through views which provide the hamlet with wide open and distant country views
- Approval based on re designation as a village would be a very dangerous precedent across the district
- The local residents are opposed as the houses would block their views of the countryside an intrinsic aspect of the hamlet.
- There is some risk of adjoining properties being overlooked and the streetscape being diminished with parked cars

For these reasons with preservation of Green Belt and the hamlets character at the fore we strongly object to the application and urge the officers to recommend refusal

Yours Faithfully

*Sandra Weir*

**Sandra Weir**  
**Clerk to Wymondley Parish Council**