

COPY OF LETTER OF OBJECTION TO DEVELOPMENT AT Wagtails, Southampton Road

Following an episode of environmental vandalism there is now yet another entirely inappropriate planning application for this site.

Alderbury has been identified by WC as a village which features trees as a major attraction for residents.

Recently this has been severely challenged with many trees being destroyed. The loss of the trees on this site are a significant part of this destruction.

The way this was done was shabby in the extreme. A team of persons armed with chainsaws arrived one evening and ring barked all the trees on the site. This meant that they would certainly die. A programme of felling then continued for several months. Loopholes in the law allowed this to take place despite vigorous objections from neighbours and regulatory bodies. There was probably an offence committed under the Wildlife and Countryside Act as this work continued into the bird nesting season. There is photographic evidence for this.

At a time when the Government is planning a considerable tree planting initiative and the huge contribution which trees make to our well being is recognised, this should not be allowed to happen in a civilised country. Our laws and planning system do not seem to be capable of protecting the environment. It is not surprising that UK lies at number 189 out of 214 countries worldwide for its biodiversity. This does not fit well with a declaration of climate emergency.

The loss of so many trees will have serious consequences for atmospheric pollution, water retention and wildlife loss. The woodland was always looked upon as a nature reserve and was home to the numerous species associated with such a habitat.

Over the four years since these trees were destroyed there has been constant noise from mechanical plant, dust and a series of waste fires producing acrid fumes which have caused acute distress to the village. These fires have been reported to the appropriate authorities on numerous occasions but despite this they have continued. Some fires have been left to smoulder for days with fumes blanketing the local primary school and large areas of the village. This antisocial behaviour echoes activity at a previous site in which this developer was involved on the opposite side of Southampton Road (The Heathers). If this land is as claimed as a garden has an application for change of use been applied for? It would be considered very unfortunate if you were landed with such a neighbour who did not look after his garden in an appropriate manner and caused you to be unable to enjoy your property in a quiet and peaceful manner.

). The following authorities have been involved in reports from the site or have made visits:

Police – visited following fires and aggressive behaviour of developer when challenged

Fire Brigade – attended following fires causing acrid fumes

Environmental Health Department – attended at neighbouring house filled with smoke

Environment Agency - At least 6 reports of treatment of waste on land – these were logged, and letters were sent to the developer.

Wiltshire Tree Officer – tried to stop the felling but the trees had been ringbarked the evening before his visit and he was not able to act

Planning Enforcement – reports made

Forestry Commission – asked for advice

There is a large and very intrusive sign at the entrance to the site. This contravenes the regulations for signs of this type being far too large and having been in place for too long.

A security camera was installed to the North of the site – a complaint was made that this was placed covering neighbouring properties – contravening the Data Protection Act.

Some unauthorised drainage work was carried out on the road to the Northwest of the site

Included in previous applications were several very silly wildlife and biodiversity enhancement measures – how does a camera encourage biodiversity? Bat boxes for what bats and was a bat survey carried out? – hedgehog boxes, when they were displaced and ended up squashed on Southampton Road – swift boxes, where did they come from? **The only way to encourage the wildlife and to encourage biodiversity is to replant or allow regeneration of the trees.** A myriad of species was destroyed when the trees were cut down – they will slowly recover if the habitat is restored.

The high density of the houses proposed is immediately apparent from the plan view. It is totally out of proportion to the neighbouring properties. The amount of impermeable surface created would considerably increase the water runoff from the site – we are already seeing the effect of extra impermeable surface on Southampton Road and the flooding which is now a regular occurrence.

The site contains a number of springs and lately pools of water have appeared on the site. There is also flooding down Southampton Road to the West of the site and to the East the footpath which runs down to the school becomes a stream during heavy rainfall with a large pool forming at the school gates. The trees along the footpath have been destabilised by the water run off from the site and several have fallen.

The drainage plans submitted are very sketchy indeed and as the site is on a slope and there are no trees to hold and transpire the water from the surface and from the springs, we are looking at a significant risk to those downslope. Just to replace transpiration alone we could be looking at having to shift 50000 litres or more each day. We also seem to have broken another law here – that of gravity - as it seems that the drainage is directed uphill.

Highways department do not seem to have been consistent in their views. At one time the view was that access to Southampton Road should not be allowed for more than 5 houses. Then a view was given that over thirty was acceptable. Some clarity is needed here as the exit will be close to three other access points with associated accident risks. The increase in traffic posed by these developments is likely to cause even more delays on the A36 into Salisbury. This is a well-recognised bottleneck and makes access from Alderbury very difficult at times. There is also a problem with bus services which are rarely able to operate on time. There is the potential for a right old tangle on site when waste collection, delivery vans and cars parked on the very narrow roads meet up.

A previous application included a single EV charging point on the site - this could have started car wars.

Much play is made of another application in Firs Road near to this site which was approved despite fierce local opposition. (There are already issues with this development This includes Health and Safety issues involving working around the local school premises, felling of trees and hedges during bird nesting season, dust and noise, streams of overweight muck away lorries damaging the roads)

The two sites are very different. Havoc has been reaped on this site by the removal of a local wildlife sanctuary. In view of other discussions which are taking place involving development it is more important than ever that this land is replanted or better still regenerated. Regeneration has been well underway since the vandalism, but the developer clears the ground whenever this becomes established.

There are no planting or environmental enhancement schemes associated with either of these sites. At present we are beginning to see the heat island effect throughout the village associated with loss of vegetation. This will only get considerable worse if more of these closely packed developments are built.

The style of housing does not conform to the Government policy of 'building back better' and the Environment Act 2021 which requires enhancement of biodiversity. On the Firs Road site there has already been a substitution of an original plan with one of distinctly inferior quality. These densely packed properties have been described as the 'slums of the future' and in many cases the main aim of the inhabitants is to buy and move on as quickly as possible.

The gas heating systems will emit a considerable amount of pollutants and any attempts to change to other means of heating, such as air or ground source heat pumps will not be possible because of insufficient garden space.

A comment is made about the habitation boundaries being out of date. But they are there to protect areas such as this – and who's opinion is this? They are there for good reason and the Parish Council are the best judge of this as they strive to prevent a massive increase in housebuilding which cannot be sustained. This is a site too far and is certainly not infill.

The developer bemoans the lack of 5-bedroom sites – is this really where the money lies? Has a housing needs survey identified this as a problem? This is a rather odd observation.

The trees which have been destroyed were a source of oxygen and a sink for carbon dioxide which enhances the local atmosphere. They absorb pollutants which arise from traffic both local and on the A36 (which is often at a standstill). They provide a balancing effect on the local temperature. This prevents the 'heat Island effect' in Summer and provides shelter from the cold Northerly and Easterly winds in Winter. As stated above they remove enormous amounts of water by transpiration and hold the soil in place preventing the silting up of drainage channels. They are home to huge variety of wildlife which is rapidly being brought to extinction. They also provide corridors for the movement of organisms which is prevented in built up areas. The complex underground mycorrhizal structures which connect the trees are very important for the retention of water.

All in all this is a very bad plan for Alderbury and a very bad precedent for the future of the village. If we cannot stand up to this aggressive development by people who do not care about the environment, the neighbours, or the consequences of their actions then we will continue to despoil our land and have to pass on an appalling legacy to future generations.

The Pictures below show some of the aspects of the site history

There are several more if required



The original woodland at Land East of Wagtails. Some trees already removed. All ringbarked



Showing waste before burning



More waste before burning – some imported material



Tree ringbarked and left in a dangerous state near to Southampton Road