

LAND AT MOUNT AVENUE, CHALDON CR3 5BB

PLANNING APPEAL ENQUIRY

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION – TIM & YVONNE HILL, IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURS

INTRODUCTION

We live at Foxes Acre, Birchwood Lane, Chaldon, CR3 5DQ. Our property is immediately adjacent to the green belt land now under appeal for development by Sigma Homes Ltd.

We overlook the land in question and daily witness the importance of it in the context of its current Green Belt classification and believe that the case made by Sigma Homes for it be reclassified as Grey Belt is seriously flawed and that their proposals are in direct contradiction of the recently adopted Neighbourhood plan.

As such we would like to bring the following points to the Inspector's attention for his consideration. As a retired Architect I would suggest that I am familiar with the issues involved.

THE CATERHAM, CHALDON AND WHYTELEAFE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan referendum took place on **May 7, 2026**. Voters overwhelmingly passed a 'Yes' vote to adopt the revised plan, which sets local guidelines for development, housing, infrastructure, and green space protection.

The Plan sets out 6 primary Objectives;

Objective 1: To define and protect neighbourhood character areas and promote development within them that respects their integrity.

Objective 2: To support sustainable housing development with a range of design and size that will provide for the whole community, primarily located on brownfield sites.

Objective 3: To preserve and enhance green spaces and corridors, keeping them accessible, while improving biodiversity and the protection of endangered species.

Objective 4: To encourage the development of infrastructure and services which will support existing and new development: including a range of community, leisure, cultural and educational facilities in locations that are accessible to the population.

Objective 5: To help promote reliable and regular public transport that serves all areas of the community

Objective 6: To promote quality employment through the encouragement of flexible business, retail and service centres, including the provision of attractive public spaces.

The formal adoption of this Plan by referendum means that it cannot be ignored in assessing the validity of the Appeal.

OBJECTIVE 1: To define and protect neighbourhood character areas and promote development within them that respects their integrity.

Chaldon village is essentially a rural village, with a typical low density, low rise village housing stock. It contains a large proportion of open farmed land supporting both livestock and agricultural farming, includes considerable areas of protected woodland and is adjacent to, and provides access to, protected areas comprising the Pilgrims Way/North Downs Way. In short it is an important typical rural village outside the much higher densely populated areas of Caterham on the Hill and Caterham Town.

The proposal is for a much higher density development typical of much larger towns and cities which is completely contrary to the nature of Chaldon village. It comprises a packed development of single and multi-occupational houses totalling 30 dwelling units, containing 75 bedrooms, i.e. a likely population of at least 75 up to a possible total of 140 adults and children packed into this small 1.45 hectare site.

This is a very significant density, many times higher than anywhere else in the village or nearby surrounding town areas. It will, inevitably, set a precedent for similar types of development within the village area, eroding the farming land stock and destroying green belt amenity land and woodland, with all the consequential damage to wildlife habitats and changing the nature of the area from rural village to urban townscape.

Further, Chaldon is an old historic village and still retains important historic elements related to its location on the pilgrim's way and the associated St Peter's and St. Paul's church which is of Saxon Foundation and is recorded in the Charter of Frithwald, dated 727 AD. As such it has an important rural historic character that needs to be respected.

In short, the layout and density of proposed buildings is absolutely **not** in keeping with the surrounding village.

OBJECTIVE 2: To support sustainable housing development with a range of design and size that will provide for the whole community, primarily located on brownfield sites.

The detail of the adopted Neighbourhood Plan emphasises that the development of Green Belt Land should only be permitted as a last resort, i.e. when no other suitably classified or brownfield land exists within the Plan area.

Further, the Government Guidance related to development on so called Grey belt land, states that such development should only be considered once all available non-green belt land and brownfield sites in the larger region have been exhausted. The Neighbourhood Plan supports this policy, so surely, it can't be right for this application to be approved.

Further, the emphasis in the Neighbourhood Plan is strongly placed on sustainability and the village does not possess sufficient community and amenity facilities to support a significantly increased population.

OBJECTIVE 3: To preserve and enhance green spaces and corridors, keeping them accessible, while improving biodiversity and the protection of endangered species.

To put this development application into context, it is the case that there are six live Green Belt development planning applications in the village which, in total, amount to and additional 129 dwellings – proportionally, a very significant increase to the existing population of the village.

The stated primary purpose of designated Green Belt land is to preserve open amenity space and prevent urban sprawl.

The Developer's proposals are all focused on trying to make the case that the site might be regarded as Grey Belt – a concept we would strongly challenge on a number of fronts.

The site in question is an important and busy green belt **wildlife corridor**. We witness daily movements of foxes, deer and occasional badgers moving to and from the Pilgrims Way/Willey Farm lane fields and woodland, via Tim's Wood, to the fields and woodlands adjacent to the Surrey National Golf course and onward towards Happy Valley and Farthing Down.

Dormice are an **endangered species**, yet the dormouse boxes that used to be located in the hedge between the site and the lane were removed by the developer, presumably so that they couldn't have a bearing on the environmental impact study. Further there was a fox family residing close to the horse shelter in the field until the developers disturbed them too.

The Outline Planning studies are predominantly desktop studies and suggest that there will be very little impact to wildlife. We overlook the field and witness every day that this is, clearly, not correct – the site is a very important green belt wildlife corridor/link through the village and supports rare and endangered species.

OBJECTIVE 4: To encourage the development of infrastructure and services which will support existing and new development: including a range of community, leisure, cultural and educational facilities in locations that are accessible to the population.

Chaldon is a village that has few community amenities and none of the six live Green Belt planning applications provide or improve any new or existing amenities. As noted above in Objective 1 this proposed development will produce a significant increase to the existing village population, putting more stress on the few amenities that do currently exist.

The local road system comprises Rook Lane as the main road through the village, with a number of typically narrow country lanes serving residences in the village. Rook Lane is a B road (B2031) with little scope for widening or improvement whilst the lanes are predominately single track with passing places. None of the village roads are capable of handling a significant increase in traffic volumes.

Mount Avenue discharges directly onto Rook Lane with no special traffic control measures in place to mitigate congestion or improve safety.

OBJECTIVE 5: To help promote reliable and regular public transport that serves all areas of the community.

The application assumes considerable reliance on public transport and cycling but the site is served only by infrequent buses and Caterham railway station is a long walk away in Caterham Valley involving a very substantial hill climb up Church Road which only the most fit and able should attempt to take on.

As such, residents will largely have to rely on private cars to move about, which will, inevitably, result in a large number of vehicles to be parked somewhere. For the 30 units, one would expect at least 50 vehicles to be accommodated.

The application is very light on car parking information. There doesn't appear to be a dedicated parking area which would seem to be essential given the densely packed nature of the site and consequently it is probable that car parking will have to overflow into neighbouring areas such as Mount Avenue, Rook Lane and Chaldon Common Road.

OBJECTIVE 6: To promote quality employment through the encouragement of flexible business, retail and service centres, including the provision of attractive public spaces.

Chaldon village has no business, retail or service centre infrastructure. Villagers have to travel to Caterham, Coulsdon or further afield to find these elements.

There are no specifically allocated public spaces either apart from the amenity provided by the Green Belt with its public pathways and bridle paths.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Overlooking, overshadowing and loss of privacy

The proposed development comprises 30 closely packed double story units across the site with the outer ring located close to the site boundaries.

Two story houses with high pitched roofs are proposed throughout the development proposals, some located close to Foxes Acre and Field View, which will allow occupants of the new houses to have uninterrupted views directly into the living areas, bedrooms and garden of Foxes Acre and Field View with the consequential unacceptable loss of privacy and overlooking to the long established residents of these properties.

Both Foxes Acre and Field View are low rise chalet bungalows which the proposed higher double story properties will overshadow and tower over. The proposed double story houses are out of character with the adjacent established houses.

Noise, construction traffic, dust and disturbance during the construction process and in use

The proposals involve extensive civil and construction activities over many months. The level of disturbance and noise generation to adjacent properties and the surrounding area will be significant with heavy traffic disruption to residential road access. Foxes Acre and Field View are located down-wind of the proposed development which means they will suffer considerable noise and dust contamination.

Birchwood lane is a very narrow country lane – as such it is at particular risk of being blocked by construction traffic while Mount Avenue and Rook Lane will become heavily congested with works vehicles.

Once occupied, the high density nature of the new estate will generate considerable noise and nuisance to adjacent properties with associated traffic congestion.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed development is completely out of place in Chaldon village and in direct conflict with the objectives of the recently adopted, by referendum, Neighbourhood Plan.

Further, should it be approved, it will set a precedent for 5 other live Green Belt applications currently under consideration, resulting in an overall increase of 129 dwellings – proportionally, a very significant and unsustainable increase to the existing population of the village.

During the Planning review process, many concerns have been expressed by village residents to this application, including;

- Inappropriate Green Belt reclassification
- Irreversible damage to wildlife access and movement corridors
- Density and layout of the proposed buildings are not in keeping with their surroundings
- Traffic generation, highway safety and parking issues have not been properly addressed
- Lack of amenities and services in the village sufficient to support the influx of new residents
- Poor and insufficient public transport availability with pedestrian and cyclist access to Caterham railway station impractical due to the steepness of Church Hill
- Noise and disturbance to adjoining properties resulting from occupation of the high density estate
- Overlooking and loss of privacy to Foxes Acre, Field View and other adjacent properties
- Overshadowing of low rise adjacent properties by new two story houses in close proximity
- Considerable disruption to local residents for many months during the construction process with associated noise, dust and traffic congestion.

We trust this document is clear and is a helpful contribution to the enquiry process. We are available and happy to attend and participate in the process in the hope that it will clarify the unsuitable nature of the proposed development in the context of the Green Belt and its composition and impact on the rural village of Chaldon.



Timothy Hill
26th May 2026