

## Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Residents Association

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11<sup>th</sup> April 2013

The Head of Planning Services  
Basildon Borough Council  
The Basildon Centre  
St. Martin's Square  
Basildon  
Essex SS14 1DL

Dear Head of Planning,

**Re: Little Chalvedon Hall Farm**  
**Planning Application Reference 13/00140/OUT**

The Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Residents' Association was formed specifically to vigorously oppose plans to build on Little Chalvedon Hall Farm. The management committee was formally elected originally to represent the 768 households in the parish. However, as anxiety and anger over the proposed development has increased, so too has the area we embody. We believe that we represent almost 1000 households and therefore our voice is strong in lodging our objection against the outline planning application

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is all about sustainability. There is nothing sustainable about a planning application to destroy a working farm that is already sustainable in its own right. Conversely our objection will demonstrate that the proposed development is not sustainable.

Paragraph 79 of the NPPF states that the government attaches great importance to green belts. The proposed site was not included in any of the three options within Basildon Borough Council's core strategy, the subject of public consultation in February 2012. There were very few objections to the Council's core strategy.

Paragraph 80 of the NPPF states that the green belt serves five purposes, these are to:

1. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
2. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into each other;
3. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns (and so presumably villages too); and
5. Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The proposed development contravenes all of the above.

1. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas

If you look at a map you will see a thin green corridor between South Benfleet and Pitsea. The villages of Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet are situated in this green corridor – two villages united as one parish and in the fight against this development. The proposed development would further narrow the gap between Pitsea and the parish. The green corridor has already been eroded by the new A130. Far from checking the urban sprawl the new development would increase the urban onset.

2. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet are two separate villages – united in its historic ties and social network. The new development would separate the two villages by merging them both with Pitsea, and destroy its green environment and unique culture. The proposed new dwellings would be out of character with the established villages.

3. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

The new development would encroach on the countryside and devastate the wildlife habitat thereon. Since the RSPB has taken over the Bowers and Canvey marshes residents have noticed a sharp increase in the local wildlife. The developer admits that there are protected species such as badger, greater crested newts and adders. In addition, we have photos of bats and there have been sightings of barn owl and red squirrel. The developer states that he will ensure wildlife corridors will continue in and around the new development, but he also admits that he would increase the number of dwellings if he had the opportunity. It is unlikely that the wildlife would survive the 5 years of on-going building of 750 dwellings, let alone the increase in population disturbing its habitat. Little Chalvedon Hall is a beautiful piece of countryside – once destroyed the scenery and the wildlife can never be replaced.

4. Preserve the setting and character of historic towns (and villages)

Bures (Bowers) and Baemfloet (Benfleet) are two ancient villages the history of which predates the Domesday Book (see Battle of Baemfloet 984 AD). Some of the current properties are mentioned in the Domesday Book, for example Bradfields Farm (Birds Field Farm) and Bures (Bowers) Manor. The villages have several timber framed buildings dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and there are a number of dwellings which have no foundations. The villages are also home to many travellers with their prefabricated dwellings and horses which graze on the roadsides. It is difficult to understand how the new development (blot) would fit into the current country landscape.

5. Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

As already stated, Little Chalvedon Hall is already a working farm. If the farm buildings are becoming derelict it is because the developer and the owner are deliberately making them so. Prior to the present owner taking possession all five of the properties on the farm were occupied. Local people have recently tried to buy the farm and let that and the land behind it but the owner has refused to let local people preserve the farm building and some of its land. However, the main part of the area proposed for development is grazing land – not derelict or urban in any way.

Let us discuss sustainability, or more appropriately the lack of it if the proposed development goes ahead:

### Employment

There is no new employment in the area. Some large local businesses have either moved or closed e.g. First Data Resources, Visteon and the offices/factories on their old sites flattened – in other words there are no plans to re-build on those sites.

### Transport

Local roads are minor roads and lanes and are not built to cope with the increased volume of traffic which the new development will bring. Furthermore, Pound Lane and Burnt Mills Road often flood.

The new development will divert Pound Lane around the 750 dwellings. This will increase the journey for all people using Pound Lane and increase vehicle emissions and petrol costs. The increased number of cars, at least 1000, will further increase vehicle emissions in the area and noise levels. Pound Lane is already noisy during commuter time and even in the centre of Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet traffic can be heard from the A127 and the A13 in the rush hour. The new road would cause noise levels to increase along Pound Lane, Page Road, Clarence Road and Westlake Avenue. Noise from the proposed new school might also cause a problem for Page Road, Westlake Avenue and Pound Lane. Traffic headlights would cause significant intrusion to those properties on Pound Lane between Clarence Road and Page Road and possibly Westlake, Clarence and Page too. Street Lighting might also cause a problem to some properties in those same locations and would certainly cause a problem to some species of wildlife e.g. bats, owl.

### Flooding

Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet are built on clay soil which holds water for a long time after it rains. In the 1950s there was a programme about Bowers Gifford on BBC. It was entitled the Village on the Marshes. Regrettably the recording cannot now be found but it showed the bungalows being built up off the ground. The Anglo-Saxon word for Benfleet is Baemfloet which literally means floating wood - in other words it was a swamp. The name Pitsea speaks for itself.

The developer states that the water authorities see no problems with his plans. Local people believe otherwise. We see our gardens flooded after just one day's rain. Soakaways do not work after a while because once dug and filled with water the water does not run away. 750 dwellings, driveways and a new school with a parking area will all create hard areas where rainwater cannot drain – that water has to go somewhere. We are the local people who live here and we do not believe that the ditches and lagoons planned by the developer will work. We, the local people believe that there is a real risk of the new development causing serious floods elsewhere in the villages.

### View

Those of us who chose to live in Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet chose to do so because, apart from rush hour it is a quiet rural location. If we wished to live in a built up area we would have chosen to live elsewhere. The developer has no right to steal the outlook from our properties.

### Environment

The current green environment could not continue with 750 new dwellings. Our pleasant views and relative quiet would disappear as would our wildlife.

Westlake Park has a history of vandalism and drug taking at night although it is believed that it is not local people who have caused this problem. About 20 years ago after a spate of burglaries on the uneven side of Westlake Avenue, the boundary between Westlake Park and Little Chalvedon Hall

Farm was strengthened. It is now a secure area but the developer wants to open this up as a walkway from the new development to Westlake Park. If this happens, the vandalism which was stopped 20 years ago will start again and may be more pronounced.

### Social

Contrary to the opinion of the developer, Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet has a strong social network and a real heart. The Benbow Club and Westlake Park were left to the people of the two villages by Hilda Westlake. The Benbow Club hosts ladies and gents darts teams; pool tournaments; senior citizen bingo and bingo for all; cabaret nights; quiz nights; and there is an activity room for children so families are welcome. The Benbow also hosts the Residents Association and Bowers Gifford University of the Third Age (U3A) monthly meetings. Within the two villages U3A hosts several groups including Local History; Water Colour and sketching; Spanish; and Wine Tasting. Members from outside the area host other groups e.g. Walking, Dining, Discovery, Crafts etc. The three local churches also host a number of activities including Coffee Mornings, Art and Bible Study. St. Margaret's School hosts a Summer Fete and Christmas Bazaar. As part of the village tradition a summer fete was held each year, the tradition lapsed for a while but for the past two years has been resurrected by the Parish Council and Benbow Club.

There is a strong social network and many people who live here now with their families went to school and grew up here.

In summary the Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet Residents Association does not believe that the new development meets the criteria in the NPPF and far from providing a sustainable infrastructure, it would destroy all that is already here. We do not believe that the lives of the people who live here and in surrounding areas should be ruined to make a developer and a land owner from outside the area rich.

Please find appended other detailed objections and concerns regarding the proposed development.

Yours faithfully,

On behalf of the Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Residents' Association

Rose Griffin  
Chairman