

WELSHWOOD PARK RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

WelshwoodParkRA@outlook.com



Dear Resident

Your association committee has been working hard to assess the impact on the community that the new proposed Colchester City Council Local Plan will have.

The current proposal is to build **two thousand houses** on the fields between Welshwood and Shaw's Farm and the fields next to Bullock Wood behind St John's.

We accept that there are government targets for the building of houses, but we feel that this land is completely unsuitable for this, for a number of significant and sound reasons. These include:

1. There is no infrastructure plan accompanying these proposals:

- 2,000 houses will generate a very large amount of traffic, causing an unacceptable degree of harm in terms of worsening congestion. The Bromley Road is a country lane, already impacted by the Bellway development and will be further impacted by the new Garden Community of 7,000 houses. The Harwich Road is already at capacity, often with huge tailbacks.
- There is no plan whatsoever for new GP surgeries or schools, and the General hospital is already at 95% capacity.

2. This land provides a valuable amenity for many people, particularly Welshwood residents, and this would be lost. This is our nearest green space and is highly valued by many for exercise and well-being.

3. It is a red risk for being a green field site, which means the environmental impact of building will be very significant. It will have a great detrimental impact on wildlife, and Welshwood itself will be isolated and become sterile. We have sky larks nesting in the fields and buzzards, with swans, geese and ducks using Salary Brook as a route from Ardleigh Reservoir to the River Colne.

4. It is a red risk for coalescence with the new large Garden Community, resulting in urban sprawl, through from Elmstead Market and Wivenhoe to Highwoods with no green buffer between communities.

5. The current land is used as farmland, producing food, and contributing to our food security. We are already losing a large amount of agricultural land with the building of the new Garden Community.

6. It is a red risk for mineral safeguarding and we need expert advice on this.

These are very significant objections and once lost, the land is lost forever.

In the shorter term, it will have a huge detrimental effect on all of our lives.

- Noise, dust, pollution and disruption for years.
- Severe traffic congestion, making any journey difficult. There is a pinch point at the Harwich Road roundabout, that cannot be improved.
- There will be a fall in house values for the area.
- There will be a loss of amenity with the nearest large green space being Highwoods Country Park.

We feel that there is an argument to increase the density of housing at the new Garden Community so that there are more, smaller, affordable houses there. The infrastructure is already planned for that, with a new link road, schools and GP surgeries.

We have the strong support of our three local councillors to oppose these plans.

As a community, we need to fight these proposals. We need to have strong arguments that defend the land, and we need professional help with this. We know this is an uphill struggle and consultations may seem like a bureaucratic exercise but we cannot let this huge development go unopposed. At the very least, we would hope to influence the outcome.

There was an open planning meeting in February to discuss the plan, and the planning committee councillors voted against the local plan, 6-5. The reasons it was voted down were the lack of infrastructure planning, and the plan was not due to be reconsidered until November. However, we now know that there is another meeting on 7 May to consider the plan again, allegedly in the light of new information. There is none. It is likely, with coercion, that it will be voted through this time, and if that happens, we will only have six weeks to lodge our objections. As a consequence, we need to move quickly to get our arguments lined up.

The Committee has agreed that an expert planning survey and report is essential to give us the best chance of stopping this development. We have identified a planning consultant who is well qualified in this area and would provide the detailed report on the plan, taking it through the various stages.

The Committee needs to raise funds to pay for this. The consultant we are hoping to instruct is VRG Planning and the quote for this is £9,500 - £10,000 + VAT. This fee would include the whole journey through to any final decision.

Given the lack of time, we cannot do any fundraising, so we are asking each household to contribute to the fighting fund. We suggest £200 per household, but all contributions are very welcome.

**If you are able to support this venture, here are the bank details for Welshwood Park Residents Association: Sort code: 20-22-67 Account number: 10944866
As reference for your payment, please enter your house number and road (eg 17 Glade, 25 Woodlands etc). Cheques should be made out to Welshwood Park Residents Association.**

If anybody has any relevant knowledge or expertise in terms of planning, protection of trees, wildlife, bird life, we would love to hear from you and have your help.

Lastly, some positive news that shows we can make a difference. Due to the efforts of Jenny and Bob Fisher, enough evidence has been gathered to register an application for the land behind Woodlands to be officially recognized as a public footpath. The powers that be take a long time to consider such an application, but we are over the first hurdle. Thank you to Jenny and Bob, and the local folk that filled in the forms.

We sincerely hope you can support us in our efforts to protect our lovely area.

The Welshwood Park Residents Association Committee.