

**BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION: ADDRESS TO INQUIRY
TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER 2021**

APPEAL BY CASTLEOAK CARE DEVELOPMENTS: LAND TO REAR OF
BURSTON GARDEN CENTRE, CHISWELL GREEN, ST ALBANS AL2 3DS

GOOD MORNING. MY NAME IS DIANAH ELLIS AND I REPRESENT THE BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION AS ONE OF ITS COMMITTEE MEMBERS. I AM ALSO ITS REPRESENTATIVE ON THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP FOR ST STEPHEN. I HAVE LIVED IN BRICKET WOOD FOR 40 YEARS, AND BELONG, AS A WORKING VOLUNTEER, TO THE FRIENDS OF HANSTEAD WOOD – A BRICKET WOOD COMMUNITY WOODLAND - AND TO THE BRICKET WOOD SOCIETY, CONCERNED WITH PRESERVING AND RESEARCHING THE HERITAGE OF THE VILLAGE.

HAVING WORKED ON ST STEPHEN'S NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOR SEVEN YEARS (IT IS NOW AT REGULATION 16) I AM FAMILIAR WITH THE NATIONAL AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY ISSUES WHICH ACCOMPANY THE APPLICATION FOR THE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY ON THIS SITE. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN, UNDER POLICY S20, SUPPORTS PROPOSALS FOR A CARE HOME OR RETIREMENT VILLAGE WITHIN ST STEPHEN SUBJECT TO MEETING ALL POLICY CRITERIA.

HOWEVER, AS CLLR YATES WILL ADDRESS THESE AND OTHER ISSUES, I WANT TO TELL YOU WHY THE BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION STRONGLY SUPPORTS BURSTON'S PROPOSED RETIREMENT COMMUNITY AND WHY IT MATTERS SO MUCH TO OUR RESIDENTS. THIS ADDRESS WILL ADD TO OUR PREVIOUS RESPONSES TO SADC DETAILING OUR STRONG SUPPORT FOR IT, TO THE MANY POSITIVE SUPPORTING COMMENTS SENT BY LOCAL RESIDENTS TO SADC AND TO ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE ASSOCIATION'S MAGAZINE 'THE VOICE'.

TO UNDERSTAND WHY OUR RESIDENTS FEEL SO STRONGLY ABOUT THE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY AND WHY WE WANT AND NEED THE APPEAL TO BE ALLOWED, IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND BRICKET WOOD. TO

PURISTS IT MIGHT NOT APPEAR TO BE A TRADITIONAL ENGLISH VILLAGE BUT TO THOSE WHO LIVE THERE IT IS EXACTLY THAT.

IT'S A CLOSE-KNIT, MULTI-GENERATIONAL COMMUNITY LIVING IN AN HISTORIC SEMI-RURAL ' ISLAND' (IF I CAN CALL IT THAT) THAT PEOPLE ASPIRE TO MOVE TO.

AND WHEN THEY DO ARRIVE, THEY TEND TO STAY.

FOR MANY VILLAGERS IT'S FOR EVER.

AND BY PUTTING DOWN LASTING ROOTS THEY FORGE AN UNBREAKABLE BOND WITH THE PEOPLE AND ETHOS OF BRICKET WOOD AND PLAY A FUNDAMENTAL ROLE IN THE VILLAGE'S EVOLUTION.

MANY OF THE EARLIEST RESIDENTS ARRIVED IN THE LATE 1950S WHEN THE M1 AT BRICKET WOOD WAS OPENED.

THEY BOUGHT HOMES ON OFTEN HUGE PLOTS. NOW, SIXTY AND SEVENTY YEARS ON, THESE HOMES ARE TOO BIG FOR THEM, AND THE LARGE GARDENS TOO DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN.

MANY OF THESE OLDER RESIDENTS BELONG TO THE BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION WITH ITS NEAR 1400 MEMBERS

AND WE ALL KNOW THAT INCREASING NUMBERS OF THEM – BOTH SINGLE AND IN COUPLES – WOULD LIKE TO DOWNSIZE TO MORE USER-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION AND THEREBY RELEASE MUCH-NEEDED PROPERTIES TO THE IN-DEMAND HOUSING MARKET.

RESIDENTS' RESPONSES TO SSNP'S NP COMMUNITY SURVEY PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF THIS NEED, AND IS TAKEN FORWARD IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ITSELF.

BECAUSE OF THE WAY BRICKET WOOD HAS BEEN SETTLED SINCE THE MID-20TH CENTURY THERE ARE, DISPROPORTIONATELY, A LOT OF OLDER PEOPLE WHO, INCREASINGLY YEARN FOR SMALLER, MANAGEABLE HOMES, MORE HELP AND GREATER PERSONAL SUPPORT AS THEY BECOME LESS ABLE TO MANAGE.

BUT CRITICAL IN THEIR THINKING IS THE FACT THAT THEY DO **NOT** WANT TO MOVE FAR FROM THE VILLAGE COMMUNITY THEY HAVE BEEN PART OF, AND HELPED SHAPE, FOR MAYBE EVEN HALF A CENTURY. TO EXILE THEMSELVES FROM A PLACE THEY KNOW AND LOVE AND WHERE THEIR CHILDREN, AND EVEN GRANDCHILDREN STILL LIVE.

FOR WHATEVER REASON – AND THE BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION BELIEVES THAT IT IS BECAUSE OF THAT REASSURING COMMUNITY BOND – MANY CHILDREN BROUGHT UP IN THE VILLAGE LATER RETURN TO LIVE THERE AND BRING UP THEIR FAMILIES.

THERE ARE COUNTLESS EXAMPLES OF CROSS-GENERATIONAL FAMILIES....SOME LIVING JUST DOORS AWAY.

SO THE RETIREMENT VILLAGE COMPLEX AT BURSTONS WOULD BE A BLESSING TO THOSE ELDERLY RESIDENTS RELUCTANT TO SEVER THE LIFE-ENHANCING LINKS THEY HAVE WITH BRICKET WOOD, WITH THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS, DOCTORS, CHURCHES, SOCIAL GROUPS, U3A AND SOCIETIES.

BUT AGE AND DIMINISHING CAPABILITIES BRING THE STARK REALITY OF KNOWING THEY **MUST** MOVE TO A MORE PRACTICAL HOME WITH ACCESS TO INCREASING SUPPORT.

BUT HOW AND WHERE TO?

THERE ARE **NO** COMPARABLE RETIREMENT VILLAGES TO THAT PLANNED AT BURSTONS NEAR TO BRICKET WOOD, IN EXISTENCE OR PLANNED. OR INDEED IN THE ST ALBANS DISTRICT.

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT A RESIDENT IN BRICKET WOOD, OVER 70, CARING FOR AN UNCLE IN HIS LATE 80S.

RECENTLY WIDOWED, LIVING ON HIS OWN , BECOMING FRAIL AND WANTING TO DOWNSIZE, HE WANTED TO STILL LIVE INDEPENDENTLY IN THE BRICKET WOOD AREA, IN HIS OWN HOME, BUT WITH PERSONAL AND DOMESTIC HELP AVAILABLE, WITH ACCESS TO A GARDEN WHICH HE COULD TEND, WITH TREES AND FOOTPATHS WHERE HE COULD WALK , AND USE HIS

BUGGY, WHERE HE COULD ENJOY OTHER PEOPLE'S COMPANY AND WASN'T SHUT AWAY FROM THE ODD SHOP OR EVEN A BUS INTO TOWN.

IN SHORT, HE WANTED TO LIVE IN A RETIREMENT VILLAGE – AND CLOSE TO BRICKET WOOD.

BUT THERE WASN'T ONE, AND ISN'T ONE – YET – IN BRICKET WOOD, OR EVEN ST ALBANS: THE CLOSEST ONE HIS NIECE FOUND WAS AT NORTHAMPTON – 50 MILES FROM BRICKET WOOD. SO HE MOVED THERE, AND LIVED HIS LAST YEARS ENJOYING ALL THE FACILITIES AND SUPPORT WHICH THAT RETIREMENT VILLAGE PROVIDED.

– BUT HE COULDN'T LIVE CLOSE TO HIS NIECE IN BRICKET WOOD SO SHE WENT TO NORTHAMPTON EVERY WEEKEND TO SEE HIM AND GIVE HIM FAMILY CONTACT.

ALL THOSE MILESAND NOW THERE'S CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NEED TO REDUCE CAR JOURNEYS. IF ONLY SADC HAD APPROVED CASTLEOAK'S PLANNING APPLICATION FOR BURSTON'S RETIREMENT VILLAGE! WITHOUT DOUBT, AND WITH EVIDENCE SUCH AS THIS, IT WOULD ENRICH THE LIVES OF OUR ELDERLY RESIDENTS SO KEEN TO DOWNSIZE BECAUSE IT WILL OFFER THEM WHAT THEY WANT, WHERE THEY WANT AND WHEN THEY NEED IT MOST.

ONE OF THE BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION'S INVIOABLE OBJECTIVES IS TO PROTECT OUR 'TRUE' PRECIOUS GREEN BELT AROUND THE VILLAGE. BUT IT WOULD ARGUE THAT THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITE AT BURSTONS IS NEITHER 'TRUE', NOR PRECIOUS, NOR GREEN. MUCH OF IT IS DERELICT, PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED, LOW GRADE 'GREEN' BELT – UNSIGHTLY, UNUSED AND OF NO PUBLIC BENEFIT.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT, ALTHOUGH ON THE FRINGE OF BRICKET WOOD, BURSTONS IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF BRICKET WOOD LIFE AS A MUCH-VALUED FACILITY: VISIT THE CAFÉ AND YOU WILL SEE GROUPS OF LOCAL PEOPLE, ENJOYING A COFFEE OR A MEAL TOGETHER, U3A GROUPS

DISCUSSING, LOCAL BUSINESS PEOPLE MEETING, AND KEEN GARDENERS PONDERING OVER PRECIOUS PLANTS FOR THEIR GARDENS.

IT IS VITAL TO THE OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY AS A PLACE OF WORK. VITAL TO THE 120 PEOPLE WHO WORK THERE – 150 IN HIGH SEASON . MANY OF THEM LIVE IN BRICKET WOOD AND CERTAINLY THE MAJORITY LIVE IN ST STEPHEN PARISH. BURSTON IS THE LARGEST EMPLOYER IN THE PARISH, AND ITS LONG-TERM COMMERCIAL FUTURE IS CRITICAL TO THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR COMMUNITY. THEREFORE, UNSURPRISINGLY, IT IS IRREVOCABLY TIED UP WITH THE PROPOSED RETIREMENT VILLAGE AND WOULD BE A GREAT ASSET TO THE RESIDENTS LIVING THERE .

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, THE BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION, ON BEHALF OF ITS VILLAGERS, URGES YOU MOST STRONGLY TO ALLOW THE APPEAL SO THAT THIS VITAL RETIREMENT VILLAGE CAN BE BUILT.

(IT WOULD BRING TELLING AND COMPASSIONATE ADVANTAGES TO THE ELDERLY IN OUR COMMUNITY WHO FEAR THE DESPAIR OF DISPLACEMENT AND LONELINESS IF TORN AWAY FROM THE ONE PLACE THAT HAS ENRICHED AND PROBABLY FASHIONED THEIR LIVES. THOSE LIFE-GIVING FAMILY TIES FACE BEING IRREVOCABLY BROKEN,, AND AS A RESULT THE COMMUNITY WEAKENED.)

AS YOU CONSIDER THE ISSUES RELATING TO BURSTON MANOR, AND THE GREEN BELT, PLEASE BALANCE THE NEED TO PROTECT HISTORIC BUT HIDDEN BUILDINGS, AND A GREEN BELT SITE THAT IS DERELICT, UNSIGHTLY AND OF NO PUBLIC BENEFIT AGAINST ALL THE BENEFITS THE CARE VILLAGE WILL BRING AND GIVE ALL POSSIBLE WEIGHT TO

- **THE URGENT AND GROWING CARE NEEDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE**
- **THE NEED TO PROTECT LOCAL PEOPLE IN LOCAL JOBS**
- **THE INCREASED BIODIVERSITY FROM THE PROPOSED LANDSCAPING, EXTENSIVE TREE AND SHRUB PLANTING, THE COMMUNITY ORCHARD AND GARDENS, PONDS, FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAY**
- **THE INTEGRATION OF BURSTON MANOR'S HISTORY INTO THE CARE VILLAGE'S DESIGN,**
- **THE RESTRUCTUING OF THE ACCESS ROAD WITH THE PEGASUS CROSSING ON THE A405 , BRINGING VITAL SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS TO BENEFIT ALL LOCAL RESIDENTS.**

FINALLY, THE ASSOCIATION ASKS ONE KEY QUESTION. IS THE GREEN BELT SO UNTOUCHABLE, ITS USE SO HIDEBOUND BY RULES INITIALLY DRAWN UP 65 YEARS AGO, SO CUSHIONED AGAINST MODERN DAY REALITIES AND DEMANDS THAT EVEN WHEN IT IS SO BLIGHTED, COMPROMISED AND VISUALLY ANATHEMA TO ITS FOUNDING PRINCIPLES (AS THE GREEN BELT LAND YOU WILL SEE THIS AFTERNOON) THAT A WIDELY- WELCOMED PLAN TO RESTORE THOSE OUT OF BOUND ACRES TO CREATE AN IMPROVED LIFESTYLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANY MUST BE REJECTED BECAUSE OF A PLANNING SYSTEM WHICH MANY SEE AS BEING INCAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO PEOPLE'S REAL HOUSING NEEDS AND PROBLEMS?

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, I ASK, URGE YOU MOST STRONGLY ON BEHALF OF BRICKET WOOD RESIDENTS TO ALLOW THIS APPEAL.

THANK YOU.