

Sawbridgeworth Town Council

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East Hertfordshire District Council District Plan Hearing in Public

Hearing Statement by Sawbridgeworth Town Council

PART 2 **Chapter 8 – Sawbridgeworth**

1. Introduction

Sawbridgeworth Town Council is the first tier local government body that serves a local population of around 10,500.

Sawbridgeworth is a small, mainly residential, town and also a civil parish in Hertfordshire, England. The local influences also cover the ecclesiastical parish which includes the communities of High Wych and Lower Sheering.

Sawbridgeworth borders Harlow and is four miles south of Bishop's Stortford, twelve miles east of Hertford and nine miles north of Epping. It lies on the A1184 and has a railway station that links to Liverpool Street station in London. The River Stort flows through the east of the town, past the Maltings.

The character of the town is based upon its medieval heritage and retains its own independence despite its juxta positioning with the larger urban conurbations to the north and south.

The opinions expressed in this briefing have been gathered from extensive consultations with the local population and have been considered and ratified by their elected representatives, the Members of the town council, at an Extraordinary meeting of the council held on 06 October 2017.

2. Chapter 8 – Sawbridgeworth – Policies SAWB1 – SAWB5

2.1. Point 2. Is the site selection methodology robust and transparent?

2.1.1. Sawbridgeworth Town Council does not wish to debate the stated methodology used in creation of the Plan, just that the selections arrived at are in need of questioning.

2.2. Point 3. How does the Plan contribute towards the employment needs of the District and those in Sawbridgeworth?

2.2.1. Sawbridgeworth Town Council has come to the conclusion that the Plan makes no contribution to local employment.

2.2.2. The plan makes no contribution to extra facilities for the town and its environment.

2.2.3. There is no perceivable added value by the Plan to the town as a whole.

2.2.4. The Plan replicates the existing recent profile of the town and adds burden to the existing infrastructure.

2.3. Point 4. Is the Plan sound in its choice of sites to be removed from the Green Belt?

2.3.1. Sawbridgeworth Town Council observes that there is no natural boundary to the area and that the Plan is an impermissible intrusion into the Green Belt.

2.3.2. The site south of West Road (SAWB3) is not optimal and would create urban sprawl outside the natural curtilage of the town.

2.3.3. Site SAWB3 in particular protrudes into the Green Belt being surrounded on three sides by farmland.

2.3.4. The Plan as proposed provides no natural screening to mitigate the impact of the developments.

2.3.5. Access to the sites SAWB2 and SAWB3 is via West Road. This is a country road incapable of significant improvement.

2.3.6. The sites comprise an artificial extension that does not complement the topography of the town.

2.4. Point 5 SAWB5 - is a sports facility necessary and is there a realistic prospect of delivery?

2.4.1. Sawbridgeworth Town Council is in general agreement with the assessment for additional facilities proposed in SAWB5.

2.5. Point 6. Are the allocated sites appropriate and deliverable, having regards for the provision of the necessary infrastructure and facilities, and taking into account environmental constraints?

2.5.1. London Road (A1184) is an existing air quality black spot which will be impacted negatively by additional traffic.

2.5.2. The new junction 7a on the M11 will cause increased traffic between the major conurbations of Harlow and Bishops Stortford – all of which will funnel through Sawbridgeworth on the A1184, further exacerbating the air quality issue.

2.5.3. Increased traffic into the West Road junction will cause increased pollution at mini roundabout site. Proposals to mitigate the congestion by the installation of traffic lights will cause vehicle to spend additional time stationary

2.5.4. As a consequence traffic, to avoid the increased congestion, will be forced onto country lanes and create additional “rat-runs”

2.5.5. Development if made in accordance with the proposed Plan will cause future issues within the town infrastructure

2.5.6. What is a certain conclusion from the consultations undertaken is that the Plan is positively detrimental to the community

2.5.7. Isolation of the development sites with no planned safe walking routes into town will naturally lead to increased vehicular traffic.

2.5.8. The cumulative effect of all three developments (SAWB2, SAWB3 and SAWB4) would be to exacerbate the above concerns to such a degree that the town of Sawbridgeworth would be unsustainable.

3. Summary

Sawbridgeworth Town Council makes no observation about the assumptions made to arrive at a figure of 500 houses to meet local need.

The key issues to be debated are:

3.1. The distribution of those houses to minimise any adverse impact upon the town and

3.2. The questionable logic that has been applied in relation to Policies GBR1 (Green Belt) and GBR2 (Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt)