20/00594/FUL  Proposed hybrid application: Full planning for food storage and distribution facility and associated parking, logistics yard and offices. Outline planning to comprise further B8 distribution warehouses and offices.  Land adjoining Ipswich Road/Wick Lane Ardleigh CO7 7QL

The Parish Council strongly objects to this application and wishes to express concerns about apparent procedural irregularities in the handling of the application including the delay between the application being received and validated (12 May) and uploaded to the TDC web site, meaning that the opportunity to discuss at our June meeting and to alert residents via the July edition of the Ardleigh Advertiser were lost.

We understand that most affected residents and the farmer who is a tenant on the land only found out about the application in July. Public consultation has been wholly inadequate. Furthermore, there has been no direct communication from the applicants to the Parish Council. We would ask that the application be withdrawn pending proper local consultation.

We consider that the application is deliberately vague re future phases - these need to be detailed so that we can understand the overall impact of this proposal on the area

We understand that Surya Foods applied to TDC to extend the working hours to 24/7 at their Harwich site. Following complaints from residents and a petition signed by residents TDC refused it due to the harmful impact on residents through noise and disturbance.   Why should Ardleigh have this when it was refused for Harwich?

We also wish to place on record that a business is already operating from the site, in a new building which was erected, as far as we can tell, without planning permission.

Objections and specific areas of concern include

1. The scale of the development is unacceptably large, the proposed buildings are 19 metres high! This is against planning policy QL9 – Design of new development states “*All new development should make a positive contribution to the quality of the local environment and protect or enhance local character.”*  Planning permission will only be granted if certain criteria are met and one of these is “*new buildings… are well designed and should maintain or enhance local character and distinctiveness*” and another “*the development respects or enhances views, skylines….*.”.   There is no way that the proposed industrial development could enhance the local character and it would completely destroy views and dominate the local skyline. We understand that earlier applications on this site were refused due to the size of the proposed buildings- which were not nearly as large as those now proposed.
2. Unacceptable noise and light pollution of a 24 hour operation in what is essentially a rural location on the outskirts of the village - albeit close to the A12. The only lighting at night in this area of Ardleigh is from Palletways. The proposed site will light up the sky, with lighting from the warehouse & its loading bays, car park and traffic in Phase 1 and then additionally with further units, traffic & parking and the lighting of internal roads to the other units in Phase 2.  This light pollution will not only impact those living locally but also nocturnal wildlife which we know is present. Noise travels a long way in the countryside especially at night and therefore the noise from vehicles arriving/departing, loading/unloading, reversing, refrigerated trailers, plus fork lift trucks and the noise associated with the freezer units in the building will impact all those that live in the vicinity.
3. The site is high grade irrigated agricultural land which is currently actively cultivated. Contrary to the information provided in the application form, it was farmed this year (it was harvested recently) and previously oil seed rape, sugar beet and potatoes have been grown there. This farmland needs to be retained for food production. The loss of land for food production would be totally unacceptable, the government has now put far greater emphasis on food production: this land is needed for food crops more than ever.
4. The field is currently mainly farmland and therefore home or a place to feed for numerous mammals, birds, insects.    It has been identified that badgers use the site and that it is highly likely that bats do also.  Many birds and insects live or feed there.  We cannot continue to keep concreting over farmland and either expecting the wildlife to survive or not caring if they don’t.
5. Traffic implications including safety and local road networks
   1. Firstly additional traffic along Wick Lane, until recently a Protected Lane, which is single track and with weight restrictions in place.  There are well founded concerns about safety on this road already, never mind with increased traffic. Wick Lane and neighbouring Harts Lane will see increased traffic because of the proposed development from employees and visitors who do not access the site from the A12, A120 or Colchester.  These are country lanes wide enough for one vehicle with limited passing places, they are currently enjoyed by walkers, cyclists, horse riders and people walking their dogs as safe places to exercise.  Any increase in traffic will severely limit this activity and adversely impact those that live in the lanes.
   2. Secondly, increased HGV traffic along Old Ipswich Road and at the Crown interchange. Although routing information is missing from the application it is inevitable that traffic (including significant numbers of large HGVs) would come off and on to the A12 and would need to use the Old Ipswich Road.  This would necessitate use of the slip road- which, we understand, is not suitable for the weight and number of vehicles. There is insufficient width for large lorries to pass on Old Ipswich Road- particularly when there are parked vehicles. Previous applications on this site were rejected- partly because of inadequate turning and visibility.
   3. The volumes of lorries and additional traffic will have an impact on the village and surrounding areas. There are concerns about how villagers get safely out on to and from the A12. The site will inevitably generate additional traffic through the village and its rural lanes.
   4. Pedestrians and cyclists. The application claims that workers may cycle from Colchester Train station which is unrealistic.  Cycling or walking to the site would be unsafe- without improvements in local infrastructure. There is no public transport serving the site. Any development needs to follow improvement to our infrastructure. We need better facilities to allow people to walk, cycle and use public transport.
   5. There is no viable public transport.  The transport report says that guidance generally recognises that walking distances to access bus services should be between 400m and 800m, the nearest bus stop at Balkerne Gate is 1800m!!   That 1800m is along unlit roads with poor footpath provision and also includes having to cross the major Crown Interchange roundabout at 3 points (2 of those points are not controlled by traffic lights making it extremely dangerous).  The transport report advises that it would take 30 minutes to walk between the proposed site and the bus stop. It should be noted that the stop at Balkerne Gate has a limited number of buses serving it
   6. The additional HGVs and extra cars using Jubilee slip road from the A12 will pass directly past, and very close to, two listed buildings.  The slip road off the A12 has a very tight bend and the sightline/visibility when joining Old Ipswich Road from that slip road is poor especially when looking in the Colchester direction.
   7. The additional HGVs and the extra cars accessing the site from the Crown Interchange Old Ipswich Road junction will have to turn right crossing the 60mph southbound lane of Old Ipswich Road at the t-junction at the Crown Public House.   The major increase in slow moving HGVs, as they pull across the junction, will be an accident waiting to happen when mixed with the additional HGVs and cars travelling southbound.
   8. Old Ipswich Road is a 60mph road, the HGVs drawing out of the proposed site will need to pull across the road in order to turn in a southerly direction (the only direction they are permitted to go as north leads a dead end and to Harts Lane which has a weight restriction).   Palletways lorries have to swing into the oncoming traffic to exit their site, so Surya Foods (and those from Phase 2 of the development) will also have to do this.    The proposed HGV point of entry/exit to the site is nearer to the blind corner on Old Ipswich Road than Palletways, this will be extremely dangerous when considering that traffic could be approaching from Colchester direction at 60mph.  Therefore serious concerns over access to and egress from the site by slow moving HGV's on a blind bend where cars generally move at quick speeds
6. Drainage and water
   1. We understand that Anglian Water were unaware of the application – this needs to be rectified without delay so that proper consideration can be given to the serious implications.
   2. The site is close to the northern arm of Ardleigh reservoir and there are serious concerns about the impact on water courses.    The drainage report states that the site will have a low risk of pluvial flooding (flooding caused by heavy rain).  That may be the case for the site, but it cannot be ignored that the site will cause pluvial flooding to neighbouring land due to the proposed means of removing all “water” from the site.   It is proposed that 16.5 litres of “water” a second will be discharged/pumped from a pond at the northern boundary into the existing watercourse (a ditch that eventually feeds into Ardleigh reservoir).    The watercourse will not be able to cope with that volume of “water”!
   3. The fields adjacent to the “pond” already flood in wet weather, the farmer of the adjacent farmland cannot get on his field in wet weather due to the amount of water that lays there.      Another cause of concern is that the “water” that will be pumped into the tributary is not just surface/rain water (which will be a higher volume that reaches the ditch at the moment because at present it soaks into the ground) but also treated effluent water generated by the 150+ employees in Phase 1 plus more in Phase 2.  No figure has been given for the amount of treated effluent expected to be discharged but one can only assume that it will be more than the rainfall, due to the number of employees at the 24/7 operation all this eventually ending up in the Ardleigh Reservoir.
   4. The application states the volume of treated water that the development will be discharging by the minute into the local water system. There is no sewage pipework in the area. The water from the surface and from the buildings (treated sewerage water) will be discharged into the local water system. Such water will then enter the system and for example will fill agricultural reservoirs on Harts Lane, where the water is used to irrigate crops such as celery - the water entering the irrigation reservoirs will be treated sewage water, which will then contaminate the crop
   5. The level of water detailed to be discharged into the streams and ditches will completely flood the capability of the system -and with treated water. The local system cannot even cope with general rainfall - and more than average rainfall results in flooding on Harts Lane and on Old Ipswich Road opposite the Jubilee cafe. The Old Ipswich Road floods even when lorries are pressure washed as the drains are blocked and broken
   6. We know that for the winter months, Harts Lane is flooded even with average rainfall - the proposal to discharge substantial amounts of additional water into the system will result in permanent floods on Harts Lane and all adjacent fields being flooded throughout the year. There has been no consideration given to the significant impact on the local watercourses and fields by the discharge from the development. There needs to be cnsideration for the impact that the water discharge will have on watercourses and agricultural land - local fields are already unable to be used with just rainfall, the proposed development will render significant acres of productive agricultural land incapable of use
   7. The applicant has failed to note that Anglian Water has a major pipe laid under the field that they intend to concrete and build over - this pipe is designed to bring water from areas of greater rainfall to us where we has insufficient rainfall, to keep our reservoirs topped up. Such pipes cannot be built over and have a safety spread of 3metres either side to enable access to the pipes
7. **Climate change.**

In August 2019 Tendring District Council declared a Climate Emergency.  This application is against the ethos in so many ways:-

* 1. Concreting/tarmacing over 44 acres of what is mainly farmland – resulting in loss of food production, loss of wildlife habit, loss of natural water drainage into the soil
  2. Lack of public transport in the area will result in a massive increase in traffic for employees & visitors (see more detailed point about public transport and local road network).   The planning statement states that there will be parking spaces for 180-216 for Phase 1, that is 360-432 additional car movements a day.  Phase 2 will bring even more.
  3. HGVs are amongst the most un-environmentally friendly vehicles, yet this application is proposing to take away 44 acres of farmland and instead have lorries accessing the site on a 24/7 basis with parking for 50+ HGVs in Phase 1 and goodness knows how many in Phase 2.    Any refrigerated HGVs will need to be “plugged in” whilst parked, adding to the environmental impact.
  4. Freezer units. The proposal includes freezers in the front of the warehouse which will also add to the carbon footprint of this development.

1. Listed and other historic buildings. The application will materially affect setting of at least one listed building, plus impact negatively on a number of historic and listed buildings in the immediate area- several residents have already expressed their concerns. The buildings are listed partly because they are out in the countryside which would no longer be the case.
2. We note a complete lack of co-ordinated approach to development in the area around Old Ipswich Road and there has already been significant development of this area with no sign of a masterplan. The site borders Colchester, we would welcome a joint approach to plans for the area. There are other sites designated for this type of development and consider that there must be alternatives with better infrastructure along the A12 or A120. Furthermore, the application is deliberately vague re the potential other FTG interests. Agreement could be reached with the current applicant only for other interests make further proposals, to the detriment of the area. The application needs to come clean and declare future plans otherwise this application, if approved, could totally commercialise that area both sides of the A12
3. The application claims that there is significant demand for B1 uses in the area. They have not provided any proof - and the development on the former driving range will more than provide sufficient B1 premises. There is no need for any more. The applicant should justify the claim that there is significant demand.
4. Ardleigh has the lowest hierarchy settlement status which at least offers us some first line of defence protection against unsustainable residential development. We wish to allow our village to continue as a village rather than being swallowed piecemeal by commercial and industrial development followed by residential to satisfy this.

In conclusion, the Parish Council are alarmed at the potential negative implications of this application and concerned about procedural irregularities in the handling of the application thus far. We fear that the application could be pushed through to gain extra /avoid losing business rates income within Tendring District. Ardleigh as a village, simply cannot absorb the increased activity, traffic and industrial scale development this proposal would bring. The sheer scale of this development would add to already heavy vehicle usage of our surrounding lanes and roads and bring potential unwanted further development.

We hope that Tendring District Council will do the right thing and refuse this application.