

'Over to You'

Woodham Infrastructure Group - Update

We would like to thank all the residents of SWF who have and are continuing to support our efforts to persuade Essex County and Chelmsford City Councils to provide a proper and adequate highway infrastructure that can cope with increased demand before the new development commences. An adequate infrastructure is the foundation of a thriving community - and this encompasses vital components such as healthcare, education and emergency services.

With regard to the 'Over to You' letter in the last edition of Focus, we recognised from the outset that thousands of Dengie residents have to use their vehicles to commute via SWF and will suffer from the gridlock caused by the proposals to turn the B1012, Burnham Road into an urban street by adding another roundabout and six pedestrian crossings. We contacted every Parish Council in the Dengie and all District Councillors and are in constant communication with them. Without exception they have supported our efforts and many lobbied CCC at the Masterplan/Disasterplan stage. Two have donated three figure sums to the crowd-funding and one Dengie resident made a substantial early contribution as he recognised that his business would suffer if these plans are approved. We have currently reached 86% of the target.

The reader's letter suggested that the decision to build new houses should be challenged. That decision has already been made so this would be a fruitless campaign at this late stage. As the Group's title suggests, we are concentrating on raising awareness of impending problems and trying to ensure that the infrastructure associated with the new development meets the needs of present and future residents and businesses.

Your support has allowed us to engage the services of a recommended Planning, Transport and Infrastructure Consultancy to give us an initial opinion on where best to target our efforts and to advise us once the traffic assessments are published by the developers at the planning application stage.

If ECC's attempts to remodel the Sainsbury roundabout, retaining the narrow lanes unchanged and its tardy approach to repairing our potholes and cracked pavements are indicative of their approach to highway planning, there must be serious doubt they will be interested in providing funds to create viable infrastructure once the development starts. What is more, it has now been reported that ECC is seeking to share 50% of profits with the developers from houses built on the land it owns. This doesn't inspire confidence.

There are currently rumours circulating that there are plans to renege on the commitment to open a new primary school within the development which, if true, will result in young children, their parents and younger siblings having to cross the busy B1012 to reach Woodville or Collingwood Schools or have their parents drive them.

Motorists from SWF and the Dengie experience the peak hour issues daily. However, we acknowledge the need for independent professional advice to strengthen our arguments and supply strong evidence if we are to overcome the stranglehold the developers have over those in the ivory towers known as County Hall and the Civic Centre.

A united approach is required if the views and concerns of the residents are to be heard.

We will keep you updated.

W. I. G