

Development Management  
East Herts Council  
Wallfields  
Pegs Lane  
Hertford  
Hertfordshire

17<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Dear Sir/Madam

**Reference :** 3/25/0224/OUT

**Address :** Land West Of High Street Walkern Hertfordshire

**Proposal :** Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for access) comprising a retirement care village (Use Class C2), with associated communal facilities, vehicle and pedestrian access points from High Street, landscaping, amenity space, drainage and associated works

Thank you for allowing our Parish Council extra time to consider the above planning application and submit our comments.

The Parish Council conducted a resident survey to gather opinions on the planning application. Every household received the survey, which could be completed online or via a paper copy. This showed an overwhelming majority **96.6% opposed** the development.

**Main concerns expressed by residents:**

- a. Inappropriate development for the site and village: The scale, location and type of development are inappropriate and entirely out of keeping with the existing scale and character of the village.
- b. It would cause material harm to the landscape and character of the village.
- c. It would have an overbearing and detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
- d. Negative impact on existing transport and infrastructure
- e. Lack of village amenities and access to public transport
- f. Inappropriate use of prime agricultural land and negative impact on biodiversity.
- g. Negative impact on village community viability and cohesion
- h. Contrary to East Herts District Plan housing increase target, which has already been exceeded
- i. Negative impact on the Conservation Area and significance of designated heritage assets.
- j. Negative impact on village amenity during lengthy construction phase
- k. There is a lack of evidence of a quantified need for the development.

A copy of the survey form is attached in Appendix A, a detailed breakdown of responses is in Appendix B and all the individual, anonymised responses are at Appendix C.

**Having now considered the results of the householder survey and fully discussed the application the Parish Council are in unanimous objection to application 3/25/0224/OUT.**

The Parish Council consider the proposed development in this location is wholly unsustainable, unacceptable and contrary to the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan and the East Herts District Plan for the following reasons:

**Proposal is contrary to the East Herts District Plan**

Walkern, categorized as a Group 1 Village in the East Herts District Plan under Policy DPS3, was initially allocated a 10% housing stock increase (55 homes) from 2017 to 2033. However, circa **ninety-four** new homes have already been built meaning Walkern has already far exceeded its target. In addition, there are 3 further planning applications under consideration:

- 3/25/0371-FUL – 2 dwellings
- 3/25/0271/FUL – 4 dwellings
- 3/24/2050/VAR – 3 dwellings

and the Parish Council is aware of another pending application for up to thirteen houses at Bockings, Church End, Walkern.

The District Plan makes clear that all new development should:

- a. Relate well to the village in terms of location, layout and connectivity.
- b. Be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality.
- c. Be well designed and in keeping with the character of the village.
- d. Not represent the loss of a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the village.
- e. Not represent an extension of ribbon development or an addition to an isolated group of buildings.
- f. Not unacceptably block important views or vistas and/or detract from the openness of the countryside.
- g. Not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

The Parish Council considers that the proposed retirement care village is contrary to the District Plan development principles for the following reasons:

- Its location and scale disrupt the rural character, creating a prominent intrusion into the important countryside gap and harming the village's landscape and character. The

development's design lacks integration with the village and results in having a significant urbanising effect on the settlement edge.

- Combined with the recent 85-home development at Midsummer Vale, this proposal would increase the village size by 40%, greatly exceeding District Plan limits for Category 1 Villages.
- The site lies outside the village boundary in a valued rural area beyond the green belt governed by District Plan Policy GBR2, emphasizing openness and preservation of undeveloped nature.
- The design does not align with the village's character, creating an enclosed community which potentially 'ghettoises' those within it and prevents integration with the local community. It would be an isolated, separate extension to the village.
- The countryside and landscape of the Parish of Walkern are greatly valued by the local community and by visitors to the area. The area of the site forms part of the Important Countryside Gap between Walkern and Stevenage, vital for maintaining separation and landscape character. The recent housing development at Midsummer Vale can be seen from the edge of Stevenage and the development at Hazel Park on the edge of Stevenage is visible from Walkern thus eroding the visible and physical gap between the large town and the village. Further erosion of this gap would impact the identity of Walkern.
- The site of the proposed retirement care village will represent the loss of a significant open space or gap important to the form and setting of the village, block important views or vistas and detract from the openness of the countryside.
- The proposed development, by reason of its scale and siting, will have an overbearing and detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, particularly those properties which front the access road, as well as the general character and appearance of the area. The entrance road to the site runs between two listed buildings and section 66 of the Listed Buildings Act requires that special regard is made to the desirability of preserving the setting of a listed building.
- Such specialist housing should normally be located within settlements where there is easy access to a range of services e.g. shops, healthcare facilities, social facilities, and sustainable transport options. This is not the case here.

### **Proposal is contrary to the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan**

The Walkern Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and sets local policies to be used in determining planning applications. The Neighbourhood Plan has been developed by and for residents its stated purpose is to:

*“shape the evolution of Walkern by meeting the aspirations and needs of the local community. We are committed to preserving Walkern's historic character and strong rural identity by ensuring that development in the Parish is sustainable, protects valued natural features, strengthens a sense of community and enhances wellbeing of new and existing residents. We want to make sure Walkern Parish remains a great place to live.”*

The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the planning policies for Walkern for the period to 2033 which ties in with the end of the Plan period for the East Herts District Plan. It is considered that the planning application contravenes the policy and principles of the plan in a number of ways including:

- WLK1 Sustainable Development in particular that any new development in the Parish is sympathetic to the local landscape character and that the width of the Beane valley should not be reduced further on its western side than the existing development consent for Hazel Park (formally Gresley Park). **The Parish Council consider the proposed development outside the village boundary will have adverse landscape and visual impact and will reduce the width of the Beane Valley.**
- WLK2 Cherished Views, Vistas and Landscape Features in particular River Beane Valley is the primary landscape feature in the Parish and provides an important gap between Walkern and Stevenage. Within the area defined as Important Countryside Gap on the Policies Map, new development will only be permitted if it does not result in the physical or visual coalescence of Stevenage and Walkern and would not undermine the separate character, appearance and identity of Walkern. **The Parish Council consider the proposed development would encroach into the rural area and as a result would detract from the rural landscape harming the cherished views, vistas and landscape. The open landscape character of the site would be diminished resulting in the loss of the site's existing countryside landscape character.**
- WLK9 This covers Soils and Agricultural Land. Soil is identified as an important asset. In particular that land should be protected from development in the interests of the local farming infrastructure and its future viability. **The Parish Council are concerned about the loss of productive agricultural land where other brownfield or "grey belt" sites may be available.**
- WLK14: This sets out the criteria all new development must adhere to including the scale and design of all new development will reflect the character of Walkern, and its historic Conservation Area as detailed in the Walkern Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2016. **The Parish Council consider the scale and design of the proposed development would disrupt the distinctiveness of the village, detract from the conservation area and the setting of listed buildings.**

### Detailed reasons for objection

#### *Impact on highway network and access to public transport*

In Walkern, there are already major concerns about the effects of traffic, causing noise, air and light pollution and impacting on road safety particularly for pedestrians and cyclists. The Parish Council are of the view that the development will have an unacceptable effect on highway safety and the free flow of traffic by way of increased traffic generation. Walkern High Street currently suffers from severe congestion particularly at peak times. While the Transport assessment states that the highway impact of the scheme would be minimal the Parish Council consider the forecast numbers of vehicle trips have been significantly underestimated and required mitigation measures understated.

There is a concern that the main road into the village from Stevenage, the B1037, can accommodate the additional traffic generation given its limited width. It has already been impacted by the adjacent 600 home development at Hazel Park.

The Transport Assessment places a strong emphasis on sustainable travel through the implementation of various soft and hard measures stating that the inclusion of amenities within the site will also assist in reducing the overall needs. However, given the demographic of the retirement community older people are more likely to have difficulties with mobility and the emphasis on cycling, walking and public transport use is unrealistic. Given that public transport is not convenient, the closest pair of bus stops to the site are located approximately 600 metres to the south-west of the site's proposed vehicular access on Stevenage Road, means that older people with reduced walking capabilities are unlikely to want to use this service and will therefore be more car dependant. In addition, staff working on site will find it difficult and time consuming to use public transport to get to work – having a 20min+ walk from the nearest bus stop, so are far more likely to commute by car. A minibus or other on-demand transport service will be explored by the operator, which could be utilised by prospective residents, staff or visitors however we do not consider this to be a viable proposition.

The proposal states that vehicle ownership will be restricted to one vehicle per residence. The consequence of this is likely to be that residents with more than one vehicle park the additional vehicle(s) off site further aggravating an already difficult parking situation.

The East Herts policy on specialist housing for older people states that this should be in a suitable location where access to a choice of sustainable travel options is available. Walkern does not have a train station and has limited bus services. It is therefore likely that the proposed development will have a high car dependency, not only in terms of the residents leaving the site to access services but also for those people visiting or working at the site and this is contrary to policy which seeks to locate development in the most sustainable locations. It is also noted that the shop and health and wellbeing facilities will be available to the wider public, which could significantly increase trips to the Retirement Village. If this includes the leisure facilities then as the site is not served by sustainable transport options then it is likely many more people will travel to the site by car.

#### *Concerns around proposed access road*

There are a number of concerns regarding the proposed vehicle access road notably:

- it may not provide adequate visibility splays for the existing speed limit of the adjacent Highway network,
- it would harm the rural setting of the adjacent Dovehouse Lane,
- it would compromise and harm the significance of the adjacent listed buildings.

There is also a concern about the fact there is only one main vehicle access road onto the site. The proposal is that a secondary route onto the site for emergency vehicles should be via the adjacent

Dovehouse Lane track which at this point is an unclassified road used for accessing nearby farm buildings and is a popular and well used pedestrian path leading onto a designated public footpath of the same name. There is an application pending with the Rights of Way Team at Herts CC to have this unclassified road re classified as a public footpath. The section of lane which is being proposed to be used for emergency vehicles is in a very poor state of repair. It is very uneven and difficult to egress particularly after rain when it becomes very muddy. It is the view of the Parish Council that, in its current state, this is not a suitable alternative emergency access road.

The Parish Council are also concerned about the destruction of a former agricultural building on the site which was considered made a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Walkern Conservation Area. This NDHA was taken down in the early hours of a Sunday morning with the debris left on site. Further investigation is required to ascertain the circumstances of the building's removal.

#### *Lack of village amenities and impact on infrastructure*

The proposed development would place additional strain on already stretched local infrastructure, including healthcare facilities and road networks. There is a lack of amenities in the village e.g. there is no doctor's surgery and recently the last remaining public house has closed. Public services, including health provision, police and local sewage infrastructure, and general infrastructure are already under pressure. There is a lack of local shops and services and Walkern has scant amenities to support a retirement population.

Walkern suffers from the risk of flooding from both surface water run-off and river flooding associated with the floodplain of the River Beane. In particular, there are well documented problems in Walkern because of overloaded sewers with sewage flooding people's homes and streets and overflowing into the environmentally sensitive River Beane. The outdated sewer networks simply weren't built to handle the demand now being placed on them.

#### *Inappropriate use of agricultural land and negative impact on biodiversity.*

The Government has issued guidance aimed at protecting productive agricultural land and enhancing food security. The site under review, primarily managed as arable land and grassland, is classified as 93% grade 3b land—moderate quality capable of producing substantial cereal, grass, and wheat yields, often exceeding national averages. Though not the highest grade the potential for the continued use of the site for agricultural land would be lost to new housing and associated development under the proposal and the Parish Council consider that there would be a loss of agricultural productivity having an impact on maintaining food security.

The Parish Council accepts that the developer has submitted plans to mitigate some of the damage to wildlife populations including providing a wildlife buffer, additional tree planting and artificial bird and bat boxes. However, the Parish Council is of the opinion that these mitigation measures are not sufficient to make up for the harm which inevitably will be caused during the lengthy construction

period and the ongoing operation of the site, including lighting and vehicle movements, which may result in permanent loss of bat and other bird and animal communities on the site.

In particular the Parish Council are concerned about the impact the proposed development will have on the slow worm population which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The developer has acknowledged there is a “good” population of slow worms on site and have made proposals to protect them mainly through translocation. However, the slow worm population has already been depleted nearby when the Midsummer Vale development was under construction. We are concerned about the increased loss of habitat and the mitigation measures need to be monitored particularly during the construction phase otherwise the population may be lost completely.

The development site and surrounding fields are nature rich. Both the District Plan and Neighbourhood Plan seek to protect wildlife corridors and seek to avoid damage to, or adverse effects upon existing biodiversity. A large colony of fallow deer roam freely the fields around Walkern. Their habitat is under threat from development and this site only exacerbates this.

#### *Impact on village community viability and cohesion*

A development of up to 147 retirement care units imposed on the village would severely skew the overall age structure of the village and so damage its vitality. The siting of the development would create an isolated enclave whose occupants, especially those with mobility difficulties, would be unable to integrate socially with their wider surroundings. The consequence of this is that it would end up as a separate settlement and not relate visually, physically or functionally to the existing village.

There is a concern that the development would lead to an influx of senior citizens with more demanding and complex needs putting additional strain on local health care provision.

Last year the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government produced a report entitled “Housing that promotes wellbeing and community of an ageing population”. This comprehensive report stated that senior citizens’ health and wellbeing are dependent on where their home is situated within local communities. For example, senior citizens value being near friends and families and local amenities, so it concerns the proximity of housing to amenities including shops, doctor’s surgeries, public transport and so on. To be successful, age friendly communities must be attractive and affordable enough to encourage people to move and they need to be in well-connected areas with a mix of household types. The siting of the proposed development on the fringe of the village makes it an unsuitable location for social integration. There is only one shop in the village quite some distance away and difficult to access across a very busy main high street. There is not a doctor’s surgery, library or dentist in the village. There is almost a complete lack of public transport.

*Impact of a proposed development on the conservation area and on the significance of designated heritage assets.*

The access road sits within the Conservation Area and the rest of the site is located adjacent to it. Policy HA04 of the East Herts District Plan states that new developments will be permitted provided that they preserve or enhance the special interest, character and appearance of the area and that development proposals outside a Conservation Area which affect its setting will be considered likewise.

The access road would be of a very different character than the existing lane, would alter the historic layout of the conservation area and would erode the visual appearance at this end of the village. Likewise, the scale of the overall development, particularly the size and height of the buildings proposed, would be visually intrusive and out of character with the pattern of established development of the village and would therefore have a negative impact on the adjacent Conservation area.

Directly adjacent to the proposed new access road are several listed buildings namely.

- the Grade II\* circa-1700 Farmhouse at Manor Farm
- the Grade II\* circa-1700 Dovecote at Manor Farm
- the Grade II circa-1700 forecourt walls to Manor Farm
- the Grade II late-C17th 56 High Street

The proposed access route would run side-by-side with the existing Dovehouse Lane which would harm the rural setting of the Grade II\* circa-1700 Dovecote by introducing a large new vehicle access and would undoubtedly compromise these buildings and harm the significance of the designated heritage assets.

There are a number of other listed buildings nearby and running adjacent to the site. The size, scale and proximity of the new development would have an overbearing impact on the visual appeal of the area and the character of these buildings and create a sense of being overlooked or overshadowed, significantly impacting the quality of life for these neighbouring properties in terms of privacy and amenity.

*Proposed development does not meet an identified need.*

Policy HOU6 of the East Herts District Plan does encourage the provision of specialist housing for older people and sets an increase of at least 530 bedspaces in the district. It is understood 903 bedspaces have been created between April 2011 and March 2023 and that target has already been achieved. The Policy also states that new housing should:

- a. Be in a suitable location where access to a choice of sustainable travel options is available.
- b. Be within walking distance, on a safe and level route or within easy reach by passenger transport, to town centre shops and services.

- c. Be well integrated with existing communities through the sharing of space and public access to services where appropriate.

In the view of the Parish Council the proposed development does not meet the above criteria for the following reasons:

- The site is separate and isolated from the village and there are very limited sustainable travel options available. The nearest bus stop is some considerable walking distance away from the site and the service is extremely limited.
- The site is not in easy walking distance of the village centre. Access off the site is onto the very busy high street with parked cars and very busy traffic. The footpath is narrow, uneven and difficult to navigate.

The Parish Council does recognise that the country does have a growing older population and there is a need to create a range of housing options and opportunities to meet the housing needs of this group. However, there are already several new developments close to Walkern either recently opened or under construction very near to the planned site in Walkern. These include a new 80 bed care home currently under construction at Hazel Park adjacent to Walkern and in neighbouring Stevenage a new development opened in late 2024 at Brodie Court consisting of 88 one and two bed flats specifically for people age of 60 or over available for social and affordable rent.

#### *Impact on village amenity during lengthy construction phase*

The anticipated construction phase is projected to span nearly two years, during which time the impact on the village is expected to be significant and highly disruptive. A major concern revolves around the increased traffic flow, driven by construction workers commuting to the site and the transportation of construction materials. This surge in activity would likely lead to even more congested roads and heightened logistical and safety challenges.

Additionally, the construction process itself is anticipated to generate considerable levels of noise, dust, and pollution, which could affect the quality of life for village residents. Past experiences with similar construction projects have revealed recurring issues, such as delivery vehicles causing blockages on narrow village streets. These blockages often result in damage to roadside verges and the accumulation of mud on the roads, creating further inconveniences for the local community. Should the proposal be approved, efforts to mitigate these disruptions should be prioritized to minimize the adverse effects on the village during the construction phase.

#### **Conclusion**

The survey results make clear the very strong local opposition to the scheme and the Parish Council, as the representative body of the residents, consider that the proposed development is wholly unsustainable and unacceptable. Furthermore, while the Parish Council accept the need for some limited village expansion we do not, for the reasons outlined in this objection, consider this site is appropriate for any type of residential development.

However, in the event that the planning authority takes a different view and the application is approved then the Parish Council expect:

1. to have significant input into the S106 process with regards identifying what should be included in the agreement and how it should be spent
2. that a condition is put in place, and enforced, concerning providing satisfactory drainage and mitigating harmful additional sewage overflows, reducing flood risk and groundwater matters.
3. a condition is put in place, and enforced, to minimise the amount of mud, soil and other materials originating from the site being deposited on the highway. This should include that all vehicles leaving the development site during construction are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Measures should include cleaning the wheels of all construction vehicles leaving the site.
4. a condition is put in place, and enforced, that mitigates noise and disruption to adjoining or nearby neighbours including:
  - a. that workers are prevented from using adjoining roads as overflow parking away from the site during the construction phase.
  - b. that a Construction Traffic Management Plan is in place to ensure the impact of construction vehicles on the local road network is minimised
5. a condition is put in place, and enforced, concerning site preparation, demolition, construction and ancillary activities that working hours shall be restricted to 08:00 - 18:00 hours on Monday to Friday, 08:00 - 13:00 hours on Saturdays, and not at all on Sundays or Bank / Public Holidays. Vehicles arriving at and leaving the site must do so within these working hours
6. that the boundary is respected and that any trees or plants that are removed, die or are damaged be replaced as soon as is reasonably practicable with others of species, size and number as originally approved.

Yours faithfully  
*on behalf of Walkern Parish Council*

*A Brown*

Abi Brown  
Clerk to Walkern Parish Council

## Appendix A

### Walkern Retirement Care Village **HAVE YOUR SAY**

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As you may be aware Welbeck Strategic Land has submitted a planning application to build a Retirement Care Village on the land west of High Street and south of Dovehouse Lane for up to 147 units of specialist housing for older people.

The planning application can be viewed on the East Herts Planning portal at:  
<https://publicaccess.eastherts.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=SRK8P6GLL0300&activeTab=summary>.

The reference is *3/25/0224/OUT*

Walkern Parish Council is gathering residents' views on the Retirement Care Village to respond to the planning application. Please complete the survey form overleaf which is being delivered to all households, or fill it out electronically by scanning the QR Code or visiting our website



<https://walkernparishcouncil.gov.uk/retirement-care-village>.

Electronic completion would help us in assembling the results more efficiently. However, should you wish to complete the survey using the paper option please drop it in the box in Clarke's Garage, High Street, Walkern.

The Parish Council will include the results of the survey in our response to the planning application and make them available on our website. \*

While the Parish Council will submit a response based on the survey results, we also **encourage everyone** to review the planning application and communicate their support or opposition directly to East Herts planning, via the planning portal. The types of issues considered by the planning authority include overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy, adequate parking and servicing, the overbearing nature of the proposal, loss of trees, loss of ecological habitats, design and appearance, layout and density of buildings, impact on listed building(s) and conservation areas, access and highway safety, traffic generation, noise and disturbance from the scheme, public visual amenity (excluding loss of private individual views), and flood risk.

**Please respond to us by 04/04/2025** so that we will have time to collate your opinions.

\*In completing the survey your personal details will never be disclosed to a third party and will only be kept on file for the length of time necessary to complete this survey, after which they will be removed from the Parish Council records.

*Your name*

*Your address*

*Do you support or  
oppose the  
retirement  
community planning  
application*

I support the application

I oppose the application

*What is your main  
reason for  
supporting or  
opposing the  
proposal?*

*Please list other  
reasons you either  
support or oppose  
the proposal?*

## Appendix B – Summary of survey results

Walkern Parish Council conducted a household survey on the proposed retirement care village. 96.6% **opposed the retirement care village**; only 3 households (5 responses) supported it citing the need for more local specialist housing for older people.

Almost all, 88% of respondents, expressed severe concerns about the impact the development would have on the highway network both in terms of capacity, congestion and road safety and the effect increased traffic would have on noise and air pollution. Another major issue cited is the unsuitability of the proposed access road including that is the only main entrance, it opens on to a narrow busy stretch of the high street and is in the conservation area and between listed buildings. Amongst the other main concerns is the impact on village infrastructure, amenities, harm to nature and the landscape and flooding risks. People cited the already overstretched drainage system – sewage overflows are already a common issue in the village.

Respondents also specifically mention that the development is in breach of the East Herts District Plan and the local neighbourhood plan in a number of respects including:

1. **East Herts District Plan DPS3:** the village was allocated a 10% housing stock increase (55 homes) from 2017 to 2033. Even without this development this target has been far exceeded.
2. **Neighbourhood Plan policy WLK1:** development would not be sympathetic to local landscape character
3. **Neighbourhood Plan Policy WLK2:** would lead to the erosion of the countryside gap between Walkern and Stevenage and would undermine Walkern's identity
4. **Neighbourhood Plan Policy WLK9:** which aims to protect farmland from development in the interests of the local farming infrastructure and its future viability.
5. **Neighbourhood plan Policy WLK14:** the scale and design of the development is incompatible with Walkern's character, and its historic Conservation Area

A full breakdown of response can be summarised as follows:

### Traffic Impact

- Increased traffic on the already congested and hazardous High Street (B1037).
- Poor public transport and high car dependency.
- Unrealistic expectations regarding restrictions on car ownership and the policing thereof

### Unsustainable Location, Scale and Character

- Urbanisation inconsistent with the village's rural identity.
- Overbearing construction, privacy issues for neighbours, and noise disturbance.
- Significant noise during construction and from ongoing care home activities.
- large retirement care home is not in keeping with the scale and nature of the existing built environment and will negatively impact the village's ambience.
- Risks encouraging large-scale developments that undermine rural preservation policies.

### **Ecological Harm:**

- Habitat fragmentation affecting wildlife corridors and protected species, with inadequate mitigation.
- Insufficient screening for environmental contribution.
- The site serves as a **wildlife corridor**, connecting gardens along High Street to the countryside. This link supports protected species link bats, slow worms, nesting birds and mammals such as deer, badgers and foxes. The development would sever this connection, isolating green spaces and disrupting wildlife movement which is not addressed in the biodiversity statement

### **Infrastructure**

- Lack of robust transport links, services, and amenities for a development of this scale.

### **Sustainability Concerns**

- Lack of medical services, public transport, and community activities for older residents.

### **Access & Safety:**

- Narrow access points and increased traffic posing risks for all road users
- Access and egress to the proposed site is down a narrow track. This will prove challenging should any development go ahead for commercial vehicles. The entry/exit is right onto a chicane on the high street which will cause issues
- The proposed access road causes safety concerns particularly for emergency vehicles

### **Sewage**

- There is a pre-existing issue with the capacity of the sewage system in the village causing sewage overspill to enter residents' homes and the River Beane. The additional load from a development of this scale will significantly worsen the problem.

### **Healthcare**

- The healthcare services in the locality are already overloaded. The demands placed on them by a care home of this size will not be sustainable.

### **Flooding & Drainage Issues**

- Increased impermeable surfaces exacerbating flood risks.
- Additional pressure on the village's storm drains and increasing the risk of flash flooding in the High Street and residential areas further downhill and closer to the river

### **Agricultural land**

- Loss of open agricultural land, threat to food security and harm to village views.

### **Lack of local need**

- There are existing retirement complexes in the surrounding geographical area built in locations where services can be better provided.

- A private development which will be expensive and not provide affordable accommodation

#### **Heritage Harm**

- Negative impact on nearby listed buildings and the Conservation Area.
- Access issues affecting an Area of High Archaeological Potential.

A copy of each of the survey responses, anonymised, are attached in Appendix C.

# Appendix C

Walkern Parish Council

Planning application 3/25/0224/OUT retirement care village development

Residents' survey responses

Resident 1

Oppose

Over the past few years there has been considerable developments in Walker. Any further large development such as that which is being proposed would have significant implications for the infrastructure of the village. Also in the Village Plan which has been agreed and ratified by the County Council has a limit to the number of dwellings that can be built and the proposed development would greatly exceed this.

The High St in Walkern is extremely busy most of the days with both local and through traffic. This has increased considerably over the past five years due to housing development in nearby villages and towns. To increase traffic further into the High St will cause added congestion and pressure to an already busy and difficult situation. For most of its length the High St is reduced to a single lane as the residents on one side had no off street parking and have to park on the street.

There is a great concern that the only entry and exit to the village is onto the High St.

I believe that the proposal is to allow residents one car per unit but this is going to be impossible to police. Also elderly people are likely to have many friends and family visiting this increasing traffic difficulties.

There is also a concern around sufficient and adequate infrastructure including dealing with the likelihood of flooding, and adequate waste water removal.

Older people are likely to need greater medical services and the village has no surgery and services in nearby Stevenage are very stretched.

Resident 2

Oppose

The village does not have the infrastructure sufficient to support a development of 147 new household units.

Other Reasons: Some online supporting documents are 'unavailable at this time' so how can one make a considered judgement (date of attempt to view HABITAT CREATION MAP 29/3/2025).

The ecological impact shows that a huge ?? Is proposed for this development, this would change the villages make up and atmosphere totally. The whole of Walkern might then be classified as a retirement village. It is far to overwhelming.

Impact on wildlife would be immense going by the ecological documents.

### Resident 3

Oppose

Impact on traffic

High St is already very busy, especially at peak times. All parked cars make it almost a single lane. High St cannot cope with all the extra cars from this proposed development in terms of residents, visitors and staff. Car parking inadequate at the development so visitors will try and park on congested High St.

Location of entrance near the 'chicane' on to the High St is dangerous and unsuitable.

Local road network cannot cope with an increase in traffic

Other reasons: Oppose due to

Congestion on High St – the build itself with Lorrie's/deliveries/ workers will make it impossible to use the High St. The bin lorry creates havoc one a week additional Lorrie's will crest constant traffic jams.

Local transport network not suitable to sustain the additional residents.

The quota of housing in the village has already been reached and exceeded.

600 homes already being built on Gresley Way impacting on traffic already, turning Walkern into a 'rat run'. Impact on the natural environment loss of habitat and green spaces.

### Resident 4

Oppose

Poor access on to the already very congested road.

Getting through the village is already difficult due to volume of traffic.

We don't need any more.

### Resident 5

Oppose

The fact that the access road will be coming out into a narrow part of an already very busy high St and all the disruption and noise that will be caused to the houses in the High St during the construction of this development. Having lived in the High St for over 75 years I know just how much congestion there is.

Other Reasons: There have already been several large developments in Walker over the last few years and I do not consider we need any more.

Retirement village are more suited to towns that have far more facilities and better bus services.

There will not be enough parking spaces, as the retirement age gets older many people will still be working and will need two cars.

Resident 6

Oppose

At the end of the day we are a village. Yes we have to move with the times but not this.

People want somewhere to live. We cannot cope with the traffic up the High St, nobody will give way for you to pull in.

Other reasons: Putting 147 units in, people will have cars, not all. This is where the problem will come. How are they going to get out on to the road that is so busy anytime if the day.

Please don't say that transport will be put on, we all know that will not work.

Resident 7

Oppose

Don't think the transportation is suitable for elderly people as it is quite a distance from the main village.

Other reasons: The village no longer has a doctors surgery or a pub.

The road to be used to buildings is a footpath or bridle way with restricted use!

The exit is in a very dangerous position onto a main road.

The present sewage system is ancient and probably not suitable for more sewage and there is also a risk of flooding.

Resident 8

Oppose

Too much traffic already in the village.

Lorries thst should not be coming through.

How are they going to get out onto the road?

Not made for this sort of traffic.

Resident 9

I oppose the application

Main reason:

If permitted, this development will add to the Destruction of yet more vital green belt/agricultural land. This is a beautiful rural village, already being encroached by neighbouring Stevenage. We need

to protect this rural vista.

Other reasons:

1. Not needed in village, what is needed is affordable housing.
2. Village already overdeveloped to the tune of over 100 properties, when the 10 year plan only required less than 60.
3. Destruction of wildlife habitat, and likely to create so much noise and dust, the resident Kingfisher at the duck pond will likely disappear.
4. Already too much traffic and parking issues, this will increase it massively.
5. Existing infrastructure, such as sewers already can't cope and neighbours gardens regularly flood with raw sewage due to blockages.
6. Proposed properties far too expensive for this area.
7. No local doctors can cope with such an increase in patients.
8. Will ruin the vista of listed buildings next to development.
9. Poor public transport will mean more personal/staff traffic.
10. Already more than enough dedicated retirement housing in the local area.

Resident 10

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Other reasons:

My objections are based on the following:

- Increased Traffic and Congestion: Walkern's High Street is already subject to significant traffic during peak hours. The proposed development will undoubtedly generate a substantial increase in vehicle movements, including staff, deliveries, and visitor traffic. This will exacerbate existing congestion, posing a safety risk, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, and increase pollution.
- Access and Safety: The access point to the proposed site appears to be [Describe access point, e.g., narrow, near a bend]. This raises serious concerns about the safety of residents, staff, and other road users. Emergency vehicle access may also be compromised. The site's suitability for the anticipated volume of traffic is questionable.
- Noise and Disruption: The construction phase will inevitably cause significant noise and disruption to the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, the ongoing operation of a care home, with associated activities such as deliveries, staff shift changes, and visitor traffic, will contribute to increased noise levels, impacting the peaceful character of our village.
- Village Character: Walkern is a small, traditional village with a unique character. A large retirement care home is not in keeping with the scale and nature of the existing built environment and will negatively impact the village's ambience.

I urge the planning authority to consider these objections carefully and reject this application in the interest of preserving the safety, tranquility, and character of Walkern.

Resident 11

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I don't feel there is the transport infrastructure to support this many new residents. The high street already comes to a standstill at certain times of day multiple times a week. This will just be increased with this proposal.

I also found the comments around their being suitable footpaths & bridleways into the village as an alternative to using cars very worrying. Are they proposing that elderly residents of this project walk or cycle several miles across the fields to come and go?

Other reasons:

Lack of public transport to support the residents, staff & visitors of this facility.

Lack of a supermarket within the village. The shop is great, but it is too small & too expensive to be used as someone's weekly shop. Residents of the project will need to shop elsewhere.

Resident 12

I oppose the application

Main reason:

This proposed development would put extra pressure on flood and sewage infrastructure of the village we have seen first hand how after the recent village development there has been floods and sewage spills in people's gardens. Stevenage Road.

Having an entrance on The High Street would add to congestion and potentially be dangerous. This development would add more traffic to an already busy road. I would be very concerned about construction traffic coming through the village.

The Bean valley is full of natural beauty and supports lots of wildlife. The development of another piece of land within the village boundary would be detrimental to the existing residents.

Other reasons:

Resident 13

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I don't think it's a good idea. There is nothing left in the village and the high street won't take the traffic. We need to preserve the countryside not fill it with more bricks. The water system is awful and gets blocked and floods the Stevenage road often. It's just a NO from me.

Resident 14

Oppose

Walkern infrastructure won't handle the increased traffic.

Footpaths are too narrow and don't exist in some areas of the village as it is.

Other reasons: No other amenities in the village support what appears to be a huge number of

homes in the complex!

Resident 15

Oppose

Totally ridiculous, this village cannot cope with any more development. I grew up in this village that used to be a lovely village, which is now so spilt.

You cannot get through the village now, it used to be a well contained small village that is now getting ruined by all these people that are money grabbing and don't care about the village at all as long as they get their money and then move on.

We don't have a proper bus service, no facilities, nothing. It was always said when they built Finches End that it opened the flood gates for everyone else. It is disgusting this is the only village that has added houses for development. There are none in Cottered, Bennington, or Ardley and Cromer. Why do you want to continue to ruin our village I don't understand.

Whatever peoples views are you don't want to listen to, but where do you think you are bringing the road out to, directly on to the Hight St then up to Dovecote lane which is a bridle path and it will be impossible to walk up while building is being carried out. It's just like Bockings, which is a mud bath to try and walk along.

You should all be ashamed of yourselves for ruining this village.

We have no infrastructure here. Total ruin for what you are doing to a once beautiful village to live in.

Resident 16

Oppose

Oppose logistical reasons.

High Struggles with the volume of traffic v's parked cars. Not enough facilities to support the older generation . The infrastructure is not set up for such a development.  
Other reasons – Walkern's character will be lost. We are all for providing for our much loved, elderly generation but why in a village? Developments should be nearer to facilities which create opportunities and support wellbeing of older adults. Perhaps the 'Redrow' development is better suited?

Resident 17

Support

Support I would like to stay in the Village when I retire.

Resident 18

Oppose

Main reason – the village is already overrun with housing. Roads are badly congested as it is without another developments.

Other reasons : Wildlife are being pushed out from their habitat. They were here first and we have taken their land. So I say a definite NO.

Resident 19

Oppose

Sewage, sewage, sewage!! Since the Froghall Lane development, sewage has been coming up in the Stevenage Road dwellings gardens!!!

Other reasons: Traffic on main Walkern roads is already at capacity laundry lorries, catering lorries, visitors to village with motorised vehicles will bring the walker roads to a standstill. Another Route MUST be found.

Resident 20

Oppose

There will be too much traffic on the main road through the village.

Other reasons: The traffic contains too many commercial vehicles going through the village. Many are illegal, exceeding the weight restriction through the village. Traffic in a great number go to fast on this road. Village in parts suffer from sewage leaking.

Resident 21

Oppose

I oppose as this is the wrong location for such a development. Walkern does not require care home/village. So many around already within East Herts. Loss of agricultural land, that could be used still for growing our own food instead of importing it.

Other reasons: I oppose, one entrance/exit on to a narrow busy High Street. Further developments in this area already known e.g. Bocking, Winters Lane, The Orchard High St, large development of house and grounds don High Street.

Call for site has several large sites in Walkern. Walkern is not now a VILL 1 – no pbs, no doctors, ill timed and unreliable bus service. Walkern has very old infrastructure e.g. drainage. Constant floods of sewage since Midsummer View was built. Congestion of vehicles within High St. often tailing back and up Stevenage Road. Environment erosion yet again. No thought for the large herd of deer which roams across this area since Doomsday. Wildflowers, pollinators and concrete do not mix. Concern of flooding as has happened in this area, coming from Stevenage to the river Beane.

Resident 22

Oppose

No infrastructure i.e. gas, water, electrics and sewage. Wrong type of buildings for the village i.e. need bungalows.

Other Reasons: Too expensive for local people. No shops, transport. Too much traffic for roads in village i.e. the High Street. Dangerous, hazardous, to village and no benefits to the villagers whatsoever.

Resident 23

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The main reason for my opposition is that the High Street could not cope with the extra volume of traffic that this would create, not to mention the construction vehicles whilst such a large village was being built. I cannot believe that this development is even being considered without Walkern having a by-pass it ludicrous!

I can imagine that if the site were to go ahead that the elderly residents would be walking along the High Street up to the church etc and I can speak from experience on a number of occasions how dangerous that is with the current traffic, as I have nearly lost an arm, how would an elderly resident fair when a lorry goes thundering by! How long would it be before there is a fatality!!

Resident 24

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Too much traffic on the high street already as it's in the middle of Stevenage and other villages

Resident 25

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The amount of traffic this would generate on what is already a very congested High Street doesn't bare thinking about . I live on the High Street and often witness traffic problems from my kitchen window .

The construction traffic trying to make their way up and down the High Street as well as the usual farm traffic during summer months !!!!!

A retirement village like this should be on the fringes of a town , nearer to amenities , not in a village with challenging roads in all directions .

Resident 26

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The main reasons for opposition are :

The increased traffic travelling through the high street (which already struggles to cope).

The increased demand on the current infrastructure. With the development of Gresley way, any

further addition residents would massively increase the demand on the local doctors and dental surgeries, both of which are under immense pressure already.

## Resident 27

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The traffic in Walkern is getting worst and the roads are not getting bigger. Wild life would be affected as well.

## Resident 28

I oppose the application

Main reason:

1. 147 units are far too many in a village setting and would create a village within a village.
2. The existing population in Walkern sees a balance between young adults, families and maturer individuals. A retirement care facility will upset that balance.
3. There are already existing retirement complexes in the surrounding geographical area, built closer to towns providing all facilities. The proposed plan would see people living in a field away from a range of social, travel and medical amenities.
4. Walkern's infrastructure for water, drainage and sewage could not cope with more housing as has already been proved to councillors at East Herts Planning department by the building of the estate south of Froghall Lane.
5. Traffic through Walkern has grown temendously as a result of the town of Buntingford doubling, if not trebling, in size and gridlocks along the High Street are a regular occurence. 'Vehicle access points from the High Street' to the retirement village will just add chaos to an already dangerous situation.

Other reasons:

6. The parking of vehicles in Walkern, both along the High Street and Stevenage Road, has also increased adding to the problems facing motorists and the estate south of Froghall Lane has just worsened that situation for residents living close by.
7. As farmers throughout Hertfordshire face threats from developers to take possession of their land we all need to protect their rights to grow food to feed the nation, protect the natural habitat of our beautiful county from the threats faced by climate change and conserve the heritage of our ancient village from overbearing proposals such as a retirement care village of 147 units.

I SHALL BE SENDING A MORE DETAILED OBJECTION TO EAST HERTS PLANNING DEPT.

## Resident 29

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Driving around walkern is already chaos, with more buildings I don't think is taken in consideration how all this new buildings will impact to the village in a bad way

## Resident 30

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

The location is challenging in terms of vehicular access. The high street is already extremely congested and adding a retirement home with the number of residents envisaged will lead to even greater traffic flows on a road which is already in appalling condition. There are unrelated issues related to the congestion of both East Herts, Herts more broadly, The South East and the UK. Admittedly these are caused by national governments as well as international organisations but they exist nevertheless

### Other reasons:

There are areas in other locations, both in Hertford, Welwyn and Stevenage which have significantly great space and for which vehicular access is far more fluid. The construction here alone would cause significant dislocation locally.

## Resident 31

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

- 1) This is another large development for a village which has already been encroached by in-fill development. It will diminish what little village feel we have about Walkern and takes away arable land which up until recently was farmed regularly.
- 2) Access and egress to the proposed site is down a narrow track. This will prove challenging should any development go ahead for commercial vehicles. The entry/exit is right onto a chicane on the high street which will cause issues for villagers and commuters using the Walkern road as a thorough fare to schools and amenities in Baldock, Buntingford, Royston.
- 3) There will be an increased demand on the already highly congested roads into and out of Walkern. The current single lane main road can barely cope with daily traffic, especially during commuting time and school runs. Potential residents will most likely have cars and will add to the vehicle burden on a road which is struggling to support current demand.
- 4) There is a lack of infrastructure to support a development of this size for an older population:
  - there is no doctors surgery in the village. Any regular or emergency care would require the person to travel to Stevenage or another surgery.
  - there are no major community activities for residents to participate in. Unless residents are fit and enjoy walking or cycling, there is not much to keep them occupied. There are no longer any pubs open in Walkern and the Sports and Social club has limited offerings for entertainment or community activities.
  - Public transport in Walkern is extremely poor. The limited bus services or Herts Lynx do not operate on a regular enough basis to allow elderly residents to easily access neighbouring towns or amenities.
  - There is no major supermarket within walking distance.

5) The proposed site abutts numerous residencies which have had uninterrupted views / access to open countryside for many years. Myself and other friends in the village enjoy the peace the views/access to the fields affords us. The proposed development will disrupt what is a pleasant and enjoyable place to live.

Resident 32

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The main reasons

would be the increase in traffic within the village, especially the high street, as the high st, is extremely congested regularly with cars at a standstill.

The doctors surgery can hardly cope now with long waits for appointments, this will get worse once the new houses in Gresley way are completed.

Resident 33

I oppose the application

Main reason:

My main reason for opposing the development is that recent development in Walkern has already exceeded our allocation of 10% as a Category 1 village, by the 85 dwellings in the Mears development, Wallace Green Way and other smaller infill projects and the infrastructure is already stretched. I personally can recall instances of flooding from the fields earmarked for this retirement village, down into houses on the High Street. The proposed development by Welbeck is also largely outside the village boundary and partly in a Conservation Area. As a village, we felt very let down by East Herts Council Planning Department to allow the previous Mears development to go ahead, despite the many objections regarding scale, traffic, and environmental damage to countryside, to trees, ancient hedgerows, wildlife habitat and regular routes; essential for their survival. If this development goes ahead, it will appear that scant regard is paid to the voice of local residents and their genuine concerns. The overbearing nature of the project is very difficult to contemplate. It involves an area of beautiful countryside and footpaths much valued by the village, regularly walked by residents, with a positive impact on our physical and mental well-being.

We already are a Village, with a very good community spirit. We do not need a separate retirement village as an add-on. I personally visited almost every household in the Mears development to Welcome them to Walkern and take a pack with information about local organisations and events, but have only seen evidence of three households out of the 85 becoming involved in village activities. It is hard to see that a further development would be any different, in fact, the proposed community facilities could lead to them becoming even more self-contained.

Other reasons:

The second main concern is for the increased traffic that the development would bring. The proposed exit and entry to the 'village' is directly onto an area of traffic calming, already an area of regular congestion. To imply that cars would be limited to only one for each dwelling is completely unrealistic and un-enforceable. Many pensioners are still working, would require cars to get to work, look after grandchildren, and all the other activities supporting voluntary organisations that we

undertake. In addition to the normal, necessary agricultural traffic, there would be an increase in delivery vehicles and visitor traffic too. I have lived on Walkern High Street since 2009, and have seen the volume of traffic passing our house double in that time, as the large development in Buntingford has been built and occupied, with the accompanying increase in fumes. There are several residents who are now unable to walk down the High Street to the village shop because of the pollution and the effect on their breathing. The recent building of three houses in Bockings has resulted in huge disturbance to local traffic, and grass verges, resulted in constant mud on the roads and this will be greatly magnified in such a large development.

#### Resident 34

I oppose the application

##### Main reason:

We feel that the development is far too big for a small village like Walkern.

It should not impinge on any part of Walkern's conservation area.

The High Street is already very congested. Contractors vehicles during the building and residents, staff and visitors would significantly add to the congestion.

The loss of trees and ecological habitats should not be forgotten.

#### Resident 35

I support the application

##### Main reason:

We are both at an age when we may need this.

##### Other reasons:

We would also expect all aspects of the development to be properly considered before any work goes ahead.

#### Resident 36

I oppose the application

##### Main reason:

This is an inappropriate development in its scale and location. It conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan and is well outside the limits set in the District Policy on Category 1 Village expansion.

##### Other reasons:

It is out of keeping with the existing scale and character of the village.

Detrimental impact on the roads and infrastructure

Lack of village amenities and access to public transport

Inappropriate use of farmland

Erode the countryside gap between Stevenage and the village

Detrimental impact on biodiversity

## Resident 37

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

It's extremely disappointing this has appeared again- last time I believe it was for 107 homes now 150? As we all know there is not the infrastructure to support such a large development. The vast majority of these residents will own cars and most likely still be employed meaning even more traffic. Also, the loss of yet more Agricultural land. Totally in the wrong place and unsustainable.

### Other reasons:

## Resident 38

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

The village is already suffering from heavy traffic due the amount of cars parked down the High Street which causes congestion and it's worse at peak times. Construction vehicles would add to the chaos as large vehicles would struggle to get up and down the high street. In addition, once the care village is finished, the access amenities i.e. doctor's surgery, hospital and even a supermarket, they would have to drive. I acknowledge you could use a supermarket home delivery service but that would also add to further transport coming into the village. This care village is in addition to the 85 houses recently built off of Stevenage Road and with the addition of 147 homes the amount of traffic will be unstaible.

The care homes are going to be built on farm land which will not only affect the local habitat but the surrounding area of trees, bushes, bridal path that have been there for many years untouched.

## Resident 39

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

I oppose the application because, Access to the Retirement village if through the village of Walkern will cause further congestion on an already very busy small road! It will cause too much high traffic volume with all the building lorry's,delivery lorry's, visitors ect,it is already a nightmare trying to drive down the road with all the cars parked one side of it (as the New houses up Frog hill lane built in the village is causing lots more traffic on the road also !

### Other reasons:

Oppose! Unless you have another access and exit not going through the village it is a complete non starter!!! +the fact that it will cause pressure on the Sewage system in Walkern (eg ,when it rains heavily sewage runs down the road from the New houses, builders knew it was on a flood plane and built pipes underneath the houses as drainage but it didn't work !

#### PAPER RESPONSE:

I oppose, because there is already a high volume of traffic going through the village of Walker and if this proposal goes ahead it will be impossible to drive down the High Street with all the building lorries, visitors vehicles etc, the road will be gridlocked!!! Unless you have another access or exit not through the village it's a NON STARTER!!

Other reasons: OPPOSE This village is too small for a great big building that will spoil the countryside! The pressure on the sewage system . The new housing development in Froghall Lane has already caused flooding and sewage waste going into peoples houses. Builders were told it was a flood plain so they built pipes underneath houses as drainage but it didn't work. This will have a big impact on the open country side and the ecological habitats and the conservation area! It just doesn't fit into the lovely village of Walkern. So, go and find a grey site to build on and not spoil our lovely village!!

#### Resident 40

I oppose the application

##### Main reason:

A development like this will bring a significant influx of traffic. Not just the residents and their family members, but delivery drivers and service providers, staff etc. the high street is already unsuitable for the volume of traffic it receives and this will only make it more of a struggle. The only way I see this as feasible is to have a direct road from Great Ashby ins Stevenage, across the fields to the back of the development. Accessing it via the high street will cause a great deal of extra pollution and congestion within the village.

#### Resident 41

I oppose the application

##### Main reason:

Proposal too big for Walkern Village to sustain. It is actually a proposal for care home village to be built within a village. A immense and overbearing plan in a rural location taking away more natural habit for the wildlife and loss of flora and fauna so important for the balance of nature. The location and access of this site is not easily accessible via any highways to the location. The High Street would be continually congested with huge increase and volume of traffic, not only to build, but if built, sustaining visitors to and from the nursing home, deliveries to the site, increased volume of ambulances, doctors and complimentary therapies to all the elderly residents.

Our village has already had a local plan and with 65 extra houses built, plus infill building, so we have increased building obligation to a high percentage already.

Our High Street is so busy now and it would be dangerous to increase the volume of traffic and noise associated with this traffic by such enormity causing a health and safety risk to people and wildlife. The location does flood and a structure of such enormity would increase the flood risk.

A Care Home should be located in an areas where there is good highways to and from the site not in a village which has one main High Street affecting a whole village.

##### Other reasons:

A huge overbearing project in a village location.

Loss of habitat to wildlife and risk of more deaths to wildlife due to increased traffic.

Access difficult and dangerous to such a high velocity of traffic this would generate increasing risk to all other village residents.

Fear of increased traffic parking along the high street, visitors, over bearing amount of deliveries this project would require regularly, medical teams, fire engines etc.

Light from the site in a rural setting.

Resident 42

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I am vehemently opposed on account of 2 main factors.

#### 1.Saturation of existing infrastructure

The East Herts district plan set a target of 10% growth by 2033 for Walkern.I would like to think this target was based on an analysis of Walkern's infrastructure. The Mears development exceeded this target in 2022 and the infrastructure is struggling to cope.There have been instances of overflows of raw sewage. This proposed development, literally back to back with the Mears development, would cripple and paralyze Walkern's frail infrastructure.

#### 2.Impact on traffic in the High St

The impact on traffic has been completely underestimated by Pulsar. Assumptions have been based on "older residents no longer working".With the State pension age rising to 67, it is likely residents could be working.Public transport and amenities are so sparse in Walkern that travel by car is inevitable. Walkern High St is used as a "rat run" for access to the A507,A1 and A10.This has increased due to the recent Redrow development on the outskirts of the village and will increase as future phases are completed.Pulsar completed their survey before the Redrow development so this is not taken into account.

Access is planned at a narrow part of the High St close to a bottleneck, namely a chicane.Traffic tailbacked from the chicane already obstruct the land planned for access.The planned access is narrow for a 2 way access and is straddled by a public bridle way and a Grade 2 listed building with a Party Wall agreement. Another listed building,The Dovecote , is at Dovehouse Lane.The impact of construction ,commercial and residential traffic on the structure of these buildings should not be underestimated. The plan to use Dovehouse Lane as a pedestrian access is not viable.The surface of the lane is rough and uneven.The path is prone to be muddy and frequently has 4 deep puddles.The only way to navigate this is to climb on a cement ledge and shuffle along a wall.Too treacherous for the elderly.

The land is also home to numerous nesting birds,chiffchaffs,skylarks,whitethroats and linnets to name a few.

Resident 43

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Impact on the overall size of the village and therefore the knock on impact on traffic, parking and the environment for a development that you feel should be located nearer amenities rather than creating a 20-25% increase on a small village.

Other reasons:

Planning objection to Retirement Village

1. The size of the development appears to be a disproportionate increase when compared to the current, overall size of the village and obviously contravenes the agreed growth figures outlined in the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan. The 85 homes already built on Midsummer Meadow have more than satisfied the requirement for a Group 1 village.

2. There will inevitably be an impact on the traffic congestion in the village. It seems improbable that a 1 car maximum could be imposed or enforced for residents and any additional residents cars, or the knock on of staff parked cars not being able to be parked on the development, will likely result in more cars being parked on the High Street. The obvious initial place to park 'overflow' cars would be the stretch of road between Kitcheners Lane and the proposed new access entrance. Cars parked here create a blind bend for traffic driving north along the High Street risking accidents for traffic driving south, cars pulling out behind parked cars travelling north or cars turning out of the development or Manor Farm.

There is a chance that cars would feel minded to park in the entrance to Manor Farm as a convenient spot. Apart from being private land, this would pose a significant problem for farm traffic due to the current tight turning cycle from the High Street.

3. The Transport Plan states that barriers preventing use of sustainable transport should be removed and assumes an increase in the number of cyclists over the course of the development. As a regular leisure cyclist, I don't feel that I have seen more 'older' cyclists on the roads over the last 10 years therefore I think it unlikely that an upward trend of cyclists would apply to the development. As has been mentioned many times, a cycle path from Walkern to Stevenage has never been realised and would require a desire from the Council to make it happen. Cycling on the B1037 out of Walkern to Stevenage is not a pleasant experience with cars close to your rear wheel therefore would, I'm sure, put off many people from using that road either as part of their commute or as a way of routinely adopting a sustainable mode of transport from the development to the main amenities in Stevenage.

The intent to 'explore' on-demand mini buses does not exude confidence that this will be followed up in the future.

4. The disruption during construction of the development is likely to be huge and over a long period of time. Whether it be the mud trailed through the village, closed roads, restricted access to our property while services are connected and the general increase in number of vehicles. This impact on a small village for a development that should be sited closer to necessary amenities such as supermarkets, doctors, shops, transport links.

Resident 44

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The roads in walkern are not sufficient enough to handle the extra traffic from more residents and also the site traffic, there is nowhere near enough parking for the residents that already live in walkern. The land should be used for food production which is far more important right now.

Resident 45

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Both Gavin & I vehemently object to this development.

The proposed site is directly backing our property which we acquired on the basis of its rural location and surrounding quiet farmland and small village location.

Walkern is a very small village indeed - there are a huge number of local restrictions which render this 150 home proposal unfeasible and damaging to the existing local residents:

The Walkern High Street is single lane owing to the large number of residents cars which HAVE to park in the street. The street is already very congested which at times is dangerous. I have witnessed a cyclist being thrown from his bike due to cars needing to swerve in and out to progress through the street. The high street is the ONLY access route through into town where there are amenities and it cannot cope with the heavy vehicles during construction nor the additional weight of traffic once the homes are occupied. Leaving our homes and those around in Walkern and then trying to return home will become almost impossible at certain times of day.

The traffic backing up around areas where children and residents are walking is a huge issue - the Walkern pavements are narrow or non existent in places and additional traffic weight will make walking locally even more dangerous.

To propose that the new residents PLUS visitors / deliveries etc access the new site via the high street is simply ludicrous.

Local amenities: being such a small village there is no where near enough local infrastructure by way of shops and healthcare to support this new number of residents. Elderly residents by nature call upon local healthcare heavily and there is simply not enough doctor and dentist (etc) spaces to accommodate this.

The Local Plan is looking at 10% growth minimum 2017-2033 equivalent to 55 homes for Walkern - 150 Retirement homes blows this out of the water and is completely contrary to the Plan itself.

Local Plan 2018 states the following:

(a) Relate well to the village in terms of location, layout and connectivity; - THIS DEVELOPMENT

DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA

(b) Be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality; - THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA

(c) Be well designed and in keeping with the character of the village; THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA

(d) Not represent the loss of a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the village; THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA - ALL of the rural views backing many residents houses in Walkern including our own will be lost forever

(f) Not unacceptably block important views or vistas and/or detract from the openness of the countryside; THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA - see notes above regarding the absolute loss of vistas / views and openness of the countryside.

(g) Not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.- THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA

Referring to the Walkern Neighbourhood plan.

Point 5.44 "Limited infill housing development throughout the village should not exacerbate this situation and the impact of disruption caused by construction in the tight confines of the village streets must be assessed in any development proposal" 150 HOMES WILL CLEARLY CAUSE SIGNIFICANT STRESS TO THE EXISTING ROAD NETWORK.

An EIA MUST be carried out.

We know many people who live in surrounding villages who visit Walkern to exercise and walk their dogs - to visit local farms/farm shops etc who will NO LONGER do so if their journey time and the actual journey itself becomes longer and more congested.

The village will suffer greatly, its character will be damaged permanently by the additional traffic and the actual construction will cause huge disruption, noise, dirt etc.

Walkern residents already suffer greatly with increased air traffic noise related to Luton airport - the peace, tranquillity and rural life which we moved to Walkern to achieve will be lost forever.

People will suffer losses related to property values. Sales have ALREADY FALLEN THROUGH and will continue to be negatively impacted.

Residents MUST NOT be ignored and their lives and financial situation MUST NOT be negatively impacted to the great extent that this development will bring.

The council MUST NOT allow this damaging development to proceed.

There are other areas locally where access and amenities are not such an issue - there are already many vacant retirement flats and developments of flats where any potential buyers can locate to and this development is unnecessary / damaging / disruptive / not in character / not within scope of the local plan / not sustainable.

Other reasons:

Both Gavin & I vehemently object to this development.

The proposed site is directly backing our property which we acquired on the basis of its rural location and surrounding quiet farmland and small village location.

Walkern is a very small village indeed - there are a huge number of local restrictions which render this 150 home proposal unfeasible and damaging to the existing local residents:

The Walkern High Street is single lane owing to the large number of residents cars which HAVE to park in the street. The street is already very congested which at times is dangerous. I have witnessed a cyclist being thrown from his bike due to cars needing to swerve in and out to progress through the street. The high street is the ONLY access route through into town where there are amenities and it cannot cope with the heavy vehicles during construction nor the additional weight of traffic once the homes are occupied. Leaving our homes and those around in Walkern and then trying to return home will become almost impossible at certain times of day.

The traffic backing up around areas where children and residents are walking is a huge issue - the Walkern pavements are narrow or non existent in places and additional traffic weight will make walking locally even more dangerous.

To propose that the new residents PLUS visitors / deliveries etc access the new site via the high street is simply ludicrous.

Local amenities: being such a small village there is no where near enough local infrastructure by way of shops and healthcare to support this new number of residents. Elderly residents by nature call upon local healthcare heavily and there is simply not enough doctor and dentist (etc) spaces to accommodate this.

The Local Plan is looking at 10% growth minimum 2017-2033 equivalent to 55 homes for Walkern - 150 Retirement homes blows this out of the water and is completely contrary to the Plan itself.

Local Plan 2018 states the following:

- (a) Relate well to the village in terms of location, layout and connectivity; - THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA
- (b) Be of a scale appropriate to the size of the village having regard to the potential cumulative impact of development in the locality; - THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA
- (c) Be well designed and in keeping with the character of the village; THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA
- (d) Not represent the loss of a significant open space or gap important to the form and/or setting of the village; THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA - ALL of the rural views backing many residents houses in Walkern including our own will be lost forever
- (f) Not unacceptably block important views or vistas and/or detract from the openness of the countryside; THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA - see notes above regarding

the absolute loss of vistas / views and openness of the countryside.

(g) Not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.- THIS DEVELOPMENT DOES NOT FIT WITHIN THIS CRITERIA

Referring to the Walkern Neighbourhood plan.

Point 5.44 "Limited infill housing development throughout the village should not exacerbate this situation and the impact of disruption caused by construction in the tight confines of the village streets must be assessed in any development proposal" 150 HOMES WILL CLEARLY CAUSE SIGNIFICANT STRESS TO THE EXISTING ROAD NETWORK.

An EIA MUST be carried out.

We know many people who live in surrounding villages who visit Walkern to exercise and walk their dogs - to visit local farms/farm shops etc who will NO LONGER do so if their journey time and the actual journey itself becomes longer and more congested.

The village will suffer greatly, its character will be damaged permanently by the additional traffic and the actual construction will cause huge disruption, noise, dirt etc.

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Residents MUST NOT be ignored and their lives and financial situation MUST NOT be negatively impacted to the great extent that this development will bring.

The council MUST NOT allow this damaging development to proceed.

There are other areas locally where access and amenities are not such an issue - there are already many vacant retirement flats and developments of flats where any potential buyers can locate to and this development is unnecessary / damaging / disruptive / not in character / not within scope of the local plan / not sustainable.

Resident 46

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The sewer infrastructure in Walkern is not fit for purpose as it is without adding more residential housing and adding to the issue. In Stevenage Road we regularly have faeces and toilet paper in our gardens! And continue to report and complain but to no avail.

Plus traffic volumes in Walkern is already an issue..

Other reasons:

traffic issues

Resident 47

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I refer you to our local plan, the time and effort our parish council took to develop this was considerable, to have this whole village completely tarnished by these planning applications, I refer to CONSTRAINTS

WALKERN IS A GROUP 1 VILLAGE  
WALKERN IS IN A CONSERVATION AREA  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE  
OUT WITH AND BEYOND VILLAGE BOUNDARY  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN  
HERTS ECOLOGY CONSULTATION ZONE

Walkern High Street would be unable to manage 3-5 years of construction traffic, including trades, regardless of the input highways may determine it viable, it certainly wont be

147 care homes is the equivalent of another 147 cars on our high street daily completing multiple visits and that does not include the people in care they will also have cars, deliveries, carers

Important local vistas would be removed, beauty spot, local wildlife removed

this is a classless attempt to appease the local people who will suffer greatly over the period of this development

I object to this application

Resident 48

I oppose the application

Main reason:

My opposition to the development are for the following reasons:

- 1: The new development of some 140+ units will overload an already congested infrastructure once it is built
- 2: The building process will cause congestion and disruption to an already busy road network through the village
- 3: There is not a need for a development of this type within the village and was not identified within the neighbourhood plan that has been developed
- 4: As sated within point 2:17 of the planning statement "the site has no existing vehicular access points other than an informal farm track route via Dovehouse Lane, accessed from Manor

Farm". from this statement alone, the planning application should not have even been sent to the planning authority for consideration and should be rejected. How can planning be granted if there is presently no suitable access to the site

5: There will be added environmental concerns as a consequence of the construction phase and the additional units once built

Resident 49

I oppose the application

Main reason:

It will create more traffic on an already busy road, the village is not built to support the extra traffic and people it will bring

Resident 50

I support the application

Main reason:

We need more homes - homes for older people, homes for younger people, homes for people who can't afford to buy or to rent homes and every part of the country has to do it's bit. To paraphrase President Trump we need to "build baby build"!

Other reasons:

My kids have been priced out of Walkern and can't afford to live here, my mother has had to move away because she can't afford to be old here and despite having lived here for 30 years I too will eventually have to move.

There are other places that could be considered, some identified in the local plan but we have argued all my adult life the pros and cons of one field vv another. Please can we just get on and build some homes for the benefit of the generations who have made Walkern their home and more importantly for the generations to come who would like to too.

Resident 51

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I refer you to our local plan, the time and effort our parish council took to develop this was considerable, to have this whole village completely tarnished by these planning applications, I refer to CONSTRAINTS

WALKERN IS A GROUP 1 VILLAGE

WALKERN IS IN A CONSERVATION AREA

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

OUT WITH AND BEYOND VILLAGE BOUNDARY

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this is a classless attempt to appease the local people who will suffer greatly over the period of this development

I object to this application

Resident 52

I oppose the application

Main reason:

As a resident of the village I oppose this application. We have recently (in the last few years) seen a large development on the midsummer vale site, Hazel properties off Greasley Road and the bockings development. These are impacting the habitats of animals and their ability to comfortably roam across the green space in the village and surrounding areas.

Other reasons:

Additionally the new developments, despite claims to the contrary have not supported the local community. The 200 odd properties in midsummer vale did not support the saving of either of two pubs that have closed in the area. Finally I object on the grounds of traffic generation, the main road through walkern is already extremely busy and not able to cope with the traffic at peak times, particularly around the school and the shop. Adding 147 cars worth of cars to this will only make matters worse.

Resident 53

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The infrastructure of the village is at present overstretched ,and there is no way that a further development of this size should be allowed to take place.

In particular the traffic up and down the High St is at present very congested as it is in effect a single carriageway due to the number of cars continually parked on the West side of the High Street.

The surface water and foul drainage falls down hill to the junction with Stevenage Road, and flooding occurs with heavy rain. In addition the foul drains collect some of the surface water and they too can become blocked. The additional drainage from a new development of this size cannot be accommodated.

The existing pavement to the West Side of the High Street is at present a disgrace and is very narrow

and uneven, and will not be suitable for its use by the occupants of a further 147 homes. We therefore hope that this proposed development is refused.

Resident 54

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I object to this proposal on the grounds that there are no tangible benefits for the residents of Walkern.

The only people who will benefit from this proposal are the people who own/sell the land and the people who develop it. They stand to make substantial profits to the detriment of the residents, particularly those who live nearest to the site.

Other reasons:

Walkern has recently and rapidly grown in size with no increase in amenities or apparent concern for the impact of such development on village life, the natural environment and wildlife, the water supply, the sewerage system or Walkern residents.

This is yet another opportunistic development application on another piece of Walkern land and presented as though it doesn't matter. Villages have always changed throughout their history. Houses have been built and demolished but this has traditionally occurred over long periods of time. The changes that have been imposed on Walkern more recently have been both rapid and large scale. This is another such large scale development proposal.

If this was an application to develop a disused brownfield site it might be more acceptable, but it is not.

If it were an application to develop something like a community farm for the benefit of Walkern residents, to help them become self sufficient in food and to enhance wildlife and nature, it would be far more acceptable as the whole village community could potentially benefit, but it is not.

When successive governments urge us all to work towards 'net zero', to reduce our carbon footprint, to care for the planet and create a sustainable environment in which nature can thrive, how are developments such as this going to help to achieve those goals. This development is neither necessary nor desirable.

Whatever the developers do to attempt to mitigate the impact of this development on the village, to ensure their planning application is successful, at the end of the day they will walk away with huge profits and will not care if the sewerage system cannot cope, or that the high street is further congested with traffic. They will not care if those living nearest the site lose their privacy and are overlooked. They will not care if the value of their properties decreases. They will not care about the impact on our water supply. They will not care if the wildlife habitats are disturbed. They will not care because they have made their money and that is all that they are concerned about.

## Resident 55

I oppose the application

Main reason:

1. Damage to the countryside
2. Destroying habitat for animals and insects
3. Even more traffic for Walkern, even though the High Street can't cope with the existing traffic
4. Total disregard for Walkern residents

Other reasons:

It's very disappointing that this is even being considered, especially as there are limits to how many new properties can be built. I bet this is all about money and I would question the motives for the greedy property/building companies.

## Resident 56

I oppose the application

Main reason:

This is an entirely inappropriate development for this area. It is a high density housing area, ostensibly aimed at the elderly, which will have a significant impact on the traffic and congestion already experienced within Walkern. There are virtually no facilities within the village likely to be needed by residents of this development - no pubs, no doctor's surgery, only one general store, a barbers and a hairdresser. The tea rooms in the village already operates at full capacity - it is necessary to make a booking if you wish to visit. Due to the lack of available public transport (the bus service is intermittent and the bus stop a long way from this development - a problem for the elderly or those with reduced mobility) residents will be obliged to use their cars to access local towns to go about necessary functions such as shopping, entertainment, health appointments etc etc. The traffic situation in the village is currently very difficult, especially at peak travel times. This development will exacerbate it beyond endurance. and have a negative impact on air quality.

I accept that the ecological value of the arable land may currently be low, but it is important to note that it does provide space for the local herd of fallow deer to use as part of their range, for hares, for bats to hunt across and other wildlife. The continued nibbling at the edges of Walkern and Stevenage is having a cumulative effect on the open land available for wildlife to use. I also find it hard to accept that a development comprised mainly of high density housing with extensive car parking areas can provide greater ecological amenity than an open field with hedgerow boundaries, simply by adding a few token strips of wildflower grassland and planting some fruit trees. The noise of human activity, increased footfall, traffic and street lighting will discourage wildlife from using these areas.

I am concerned about the amount of hard surface present in the development, and the potential for increased run off, placing further pressure on the village's storm drains and increasing the risk of flash flooding in the High Street and residential areas further downhill and closer to the river. I also have concerns about the sewage from this development. There are already issues with drains being overwhelmed in heavy rain and sewage rising from the drains near to the river, notably in Finches

End. These potential problems do not seem to have been addressed. As the River Beane is a chalk stream, and currently in recovery from over-abstraction in the past, the threat of increased surface run off and potential inflow from sewage is of grave concern, not least because of the health risks to the local population. The river is used for recreation by children in the summer months.

This is yet another example of an off-site developer trying to impose an inappropriate development on a local area for their financial benefit. It will be of no value to the local community at all, and I imagine the price tags attached to the units will put them beyond the reach of the local elderly. It will place increased pressure on our roads, the limited local facilities currently available (such as the shop and post office), have potentially damaging impacts on local drainage patterns, sewage systems and water quality and further erode the countryside between Walkern and Stevenage. I can think of no single advantage that it will bring to the village. It is common sense for such developments to be located in areas where the elderly and ageing population they are targeted at have access to the facilities which they need without having to travel by car through narrow and congested country roads to reach them. I urge the Council to reject this proposal out of hand.

Other reasons:

This is not exclusively related to this proposal, and also would, I daresay, not have any impact on a planning application, but I wanted to share with you how weary I am - and I imagine very many others too - at having to defend our village against inappropriate development. It's relentless - the development at Wallace Green, the suggestion of more housing behind the three new homes in Bockings, the large scale solar development at Cromer, the vast development on the crest of the hill at Stevenage, and now this. The impact on the mental health of those living here is probably of no concern at all to greedy developers, or the planning department at ENH Council, Herts CC, or the government, but I do wish we could have a break from it.

Resident 57

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The whole of the New Village will only be accessed by people driving along the already VERY CONGESTED High Street. Building vehicles will be horrendous trundling along the busy High Street, whilst development takes place, but once the building is complete it will be even worse with the many new residents and their cars. Then those people who are non residents attending activities on site will be causing more traffic problems coming through the High Street from Stevenage and Beyond.

Other reasons:

At the entrance of the proposed new road from the High Street there is already an occurrence of flash flooding, which is of great concern now, let alone when the Development has been built. Who will be responsible when this occurs?

Infrastructure - water, gas, electricity, sewage and Internet will be joined to an already overworked system.

The new access road will have passing problems as people will park in it due to the number of new

residents in the new Village owning cars and lack of parking spaces provided. This will in turn lead to parking in the High Street.

Resident 58

I oppose the application

Main reason:

My main objection to this application is that Walkern is rapidly becoming a mini-town and losing its village status. Further development will accelerate this with even the possibility of losing its identity altogether and becoming part of Stevenage.

Further objections include the serious disruption that would be caused to the already restricted High Street by the volume of commercial traffic during construction and when completed the increase in domestic and public vehicles

Other reasons:

This application would also create an extra burden to the GP services that are currently overstretched with appointments at a premium.

Wildlife will be affected by this construction with another large area of open land being lost and the wildlife with it.

This application may also be a ploy to be rejected and re-surface as a normal housing development when all the above would be just as relevant with the extra burden on the infrastructure eg..schools and playgrounds etc.

Resident 59

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The high street won't be able to handle the traffic it's bad enough as it is

The sewer won't be able to handle it as the pumping station is at maximum capacity

Higher flood risk

I have heard all this planning rubbish before they promise everything just to get the planning and then it changes asbultly disusing

That's our appose thoughts please decline the planning

We appose it

## Resident 60

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Traffic generation in an already over populated village

Other reasons:

Yet again another loss of ecological habitats, trees and more green space. The scale of the proposed build is shocking and I cannot phantom how anyone with knowledge of the local area, or even just anyone who has drove down the high street can consider the village has the means to withstand such a huge build. It will become unbearable for anyone to leave their houses to have to drive up and down the high street which is already too busy.

## Resident 61

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The village already struggles with the level of traffic on a day to day basis. Adding construction traffic and, later traffic associated with the development will place further strain on the infrastructure of the village. Public transport links to the surrounding areas is poor, and so anyone residing in or visiting the development will have to use a car or other vehicle to access it. Road safety must also be considered; an elevated level of traffic will have an impact upon the road safety of the village, affecting the children and older population significantly. It will also impact upon the safety of the many walkers and cyclists who use the village as a part of their fitness and wellbeing regime.

Other reasons:

The loss of trees and ecological areas will be devastating for the local area. The route is frequently used by dog walkers and hikers alike, and is of great importance to all in the village. People live here for the tranquility and ease of access to green spaces; something that will be directly and negatively impacted by the proposed development.

## Resident 62

I oppose the application

Main reason:

- a clear lack of capacity for the village to absorb the magnitude of such development. Too many aspects of village life affected (traffic, noise, habitat, listed buildings).

Other reasons:

- increase in traffic, both during period of construction and after completion.
- loss of habitat
- impact on walking routes
- potential impact on property value in the village

## Resident 63

I support the application

### Main reason:

More homes are desperately needed and creating a Care Village for older people will free up other properties for younger people who are just starting out in life, starting families etc.

## Resident 64

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

The proposal does not align with the agreed Walkern Neighbourhood Plan. The village has already exceeded its allocation for residential development by the recent building of 85 houses on the Mears development at Froghall Lane.

### Other reasons:

1. The proposed development would amount to Planning Creep outside the village boundary, encroaching onto Green Belt and Conservation area. Farmland, open space and the natural beauty of the countryside would be affected.

In addition, the environmental impact affecting wildlife and biodiversity would be significant.

2. The proposed development would appear to be a commercial venture, not inkeeping with a rural village.

A high density Retirement Care Village would not fit with the characteristics of an English Country Village which makes Walkern such a desirable place to live.

3. A Retirement Care Village would not necessarily be for the requirement of the villagers. Few could afford to buy or rent the units, which would no doubt include a significant service and management charge.

4. Although the Government is wanting to see more homes being built, this development would not constitute affordable housing which is their main requirement.

5. The village has inadequate infrastructure to support this application.

There would be a strain on the existing drainage system which couldn't cope with more development, resulting in further flooding issues already experienced in the village. There is also insufficient public transport to handle an increase in local population.

There is no longer a doctor's surgery and the 3 village public houses which we have enjoyed over the years, have now all closed.

6. Walkern High Street already experiences a high volume of traffic with additional congestion arising from parked cars. The proposed development would only add to the danger and difficulty of getting through the village. There would also be an increase in noise and pollution to pedestrians and residents, especially from construction traffic, service vehicles and deliveries.

It is noted that the access to the proposed development from Dovecote Lane would be directly onto

the High Street where there are already traffic calming measures. This lane would be inadequate and dangerous as a proposed service road. There are also insufficient visibility splays onto the High Street.

7. The proposed development, especially during the construction period, would impact on the local heritage in the immediate area, including the Dovecote, Manor Farmhouse and the URC Church, all of which are listed buildings.

8. For once, East Hertfordshire DC should not ignore the views and comments of the residents of this village.

Resident 65

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The Walkern is not equipped with the extra flow of traffic down the high street and the village is getting to big - someone that was born the village we are losing all the lovely countryside area that the old people and families love in the village

Other reasons:

The village is being taken over by new builds

Resident 66

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Scale and size of the development is not in keeping with Walkern being a small village and the current infrastructure will not support the building of such a development or the village once the large number of new residents move in to it. The high street (which is the only road in and out and at places a single lane!) is already at max capacity with traffic, and more traffic will become dangerous and have a negative impact on all living in the village. No new services such as GPs are being built to accommodate new residents either, again having a negative impact on all that live here. It's unclear how current local NHS services would cope with such a development where residents will require use of these more as a retirement village. The development will also impact on the current residents access to the countryside by building on a significant portion of it. I moved to walkern because of its more rural village location and access to countryside and this development will negatively impact on my experience of this.

Other reasons:

I understand that such a development as been proposed in the past and I am unclear what has significantly changed in the newest planning application for it to be approved this time.

## Resident 67

I support the application

Main reason:

I think it is a lovely idea, Walkern is a lovely area to retire and it will create jobs. We do have some reservations about the infrastructure in Walkern. We live at the bottom of Moores ley and all drains pass by our property. Since the new housing estate was built we seem to have had a lot more problems with smelly drainage smells and blockages.

## Resident 68

I oppose the application

Main reason:

It would cause material harm to the landscape and character of the village.

Other reasons:

The proposed development in this location is wholly unsustainable and unacceptable for the following reasons:

- a. Inappropriate development for the site and village: The scale, location and type of development are inappropriate and entirely out of keeping with the existing scale and character of the village.
  - It would cause material harm to the landscape and character of the village.
  - It would have an overbearing and detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
- b. Impact on existing transport and infrastructure
- c. Lack of village amenities and access to public transport
- d. Inappropriate use of prime agricultural land and negative impact on biodiversity.
- e. Impact on village community viability and cohesion
- f. Impact of a proposed development on the Conservation Area and significance of designated heritage assets.
- g. Impact on village amenity during lengthy construction phase
- h. There is lack of quantified need.
- i. it would be well outside the limits set in the District Plan policy on Category 1 Village expansion,
- j. it would erode the important countryside gap between the village and Stevenage.
- k. that specialist types of retirement housing and specialist residential and nursing care accommodation should normally be located within settlements where there is easy access to a range of services e.g. shops, healthcare facilities, social facilities, and sustainable transport options this is not the case here.

## Resident 69

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Loss of countryside, trees and ecological habitats

Other reasons:

Access and highway safety.

Increased traffic through the village.

Visual disturbance to the countryside

Overlooking other properties.

Lack of amenities to support influx in population- bus service, GP, dentist, shops.

Resident 70

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Traffic congestion

Anyone who lives or visits Walkern at any time of day will know that the village suffers from traffic congestion already.

Both the High Street and Stevenage road cannot cope with the amount of cars ,vans, lorries, farm vehicles which pass through. Walkern is a rat run for major routes from Stevenage through to other A roads to the north and east.

If there is any problem on the A1, which happens frequently, the whole area becomes grid locked. I can leave my house and know instantly if the A1 or A602 is blocked. The narrow lanes are filled with traffic not used to such driving conditions.

A new development of the size proposed would, of it's very nature, create further congestion.

A development specifically for the elderly will often require emergency vehicles for ambulances and doctors. Their access would not be guaranteed.

Other reasons:

This development is proposed for land which is Green Belt.

In recent years, an increasing amount of farm land has been used for housing. This has a huge effect on the environment.

There is recent history of flooding in Walkern, both from the River Beane, which is a protected environment, and from over loaded drains. The recent development at Wallace Green Way, built on Green Belt, has caused major and ongoing drainage issues for sewerage.

Walkern is a small, friendly, countrified village. It must not become part of the metropolis.

Resident 71

I oppose the application

Main reason:

It's going to make the high street much busier. It's bad enough at the moment

## Resident 72

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

I oppose the application to build a Retirement Care Village in Walkern for 147 residents primarily on the grounds of the increase in the volume of traffic this will create through the village. As this is a retirement village, as distinct from a nursing home, the residents of such a development presumably will be those of retirement age, 65+, and therefore relatively mobile and active and each of them likely to be in possession of a car and needing to use it to engage fully in their lives, primarily outside of the village (eg. having children and grandchildren who live outside of the village; volunteering activities elsewhere; hospital appointments; having faith needs which are not met in the village etc). As a retirement village and not a nursing home, it is misleading for the developers to suggest that the residents will either stay at home or be happy to rely on communal minibuses provided by the development to take them out and about.

The only vehicular access into and out of the site is onto the High Street, located just by the traffic calming chicane. There is already another planning application open for 2 houses on the High Street opposite the proposed development adjacent to Manor View which would also open out onto the High Street at the chicane. In addition, there is the stalled development of 2 houses on the High Street at the top of Beecroft Lane also opening out onto the High Street just down from the chicane. The site of Manor Farm itself, adjacent to the proposed development, houses a number of properties and businesses also accessing the High Street in the middle of the chicane. Anyone who drives in or through Walkern regularly knows it is already subject to frequent incidences of queuing and gridlock regularly exacerbated by nearby road closures. The village is situated in such a way that there is only one main route to access Stevenage and associated major roads for onward journeys.

### Other reasons:

Given the number of multi-occupancy blocks forming the development, this high density housing would significantly increase the population of Walkern whilst it is worth noting that the facilities in the village are decreasing. When Walkern was originally categorised as a Group 1 village it had two pubs and a doctor's surgery. It now has none of these. If the residents of the development do have reduced mobility, then they would need to use a car just to get to the remaining social outlets in the village as both the tea rooms and the Sports and Community Centre are right at the other end of this linear village.

This large-scale retirement complex is proposed for an entirely unsuitable location with limited vehicle access onto an already overwhelmed main road through a relatively under-resourced village. The site itself is at the Northern end of the village, furthest away from the village's own amenities and at the wrong end for easy access to Stevenage and its many resources including shops and the hospital. Those of retirement age who prefer to move closer to useful amenities for their later years will not be attracted by this development which risks it becoming a white elephant. Those who don't think it through and move in risk becoming isolated or spending all their time sitting in traffic on the High Street trying to get somewhere.

As an additional point, I oppose the extension of the built environment of the village into the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt which would result from this development. This is a further example of the insidious creep outwards of the built environment into the countryside which has already been demonstrated by the large development off Froghall Lane and by the substantial development off

Gresley Way. With infill development seemingly becoming a perennial practice in the village, the numbers of housing units is always on the increase and already beyond the target set by the original planning framework. It seems to me that any further development should be limited and appropriate. This is neither.

Resident 73

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Too much traffic in the village, too many large delivery vans to the site, very detrimental to the rural countryside, our sewage and water resources will be massively overstretched, we already see daily water vehicles and drainage problems throughout the village, loss of nature's habitat, traffic noise, being the proprietors of the only livery yard in the village we are finding that the roads are becoming unsafe especially the Stevenage Road and High Street, horses are flight animals and can be easily spooked it is only a matter of time before the yard would have to be closed, this would be a massive loss to us.

Resident 74

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Walkern has grown considerably in the 25 years since I have lived here. As I appreciate houses have to be built, this small quiet village is no longer. The roads and infrastructure cannot cope with any more vehicles or people. The High Street struggles with the vast amount of vehicles driving through it on a daily basis. The road itself is not maintained and the pot holes are horrendous. Walkern as a village just cannot take another 147 units for housing. Another 147 residents in a care home along with their families visiting will mean an increase more vehicles, along with the fact that emergency vehicles will no doubt have to try and navigate their way through the High Street.

I'm sure there would be a more suitable place for a large care home, somewhere that has more facilities and structure to offer them.

Other reasons:

As a village we only now have one shop and one primary school.

The three pubs that made Walkern a village are no longer here.

Walkern does not need a care home. Walkern needs to be a village again.

Resident 75

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I oppose the proposal due to the volume of traffic already using the B1037 to exit from Stevenage. I have to use a farm track to enter and exit my property, to do so from my existing entrance would be suicidal!

Other reasons:

Walkern as a village is lacking too many amenities – Dr Surgery – Public Transport – Community Centers – most of all parking spaces.

Resident 76

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The swage system is not adequate for existing houses. In heavy rain some gardens are invaded by sewage and sometimes it rises in household lavatories. That is disgusting and extremely unhygienic. Traffic is already too heavy for the High Street. It serves several villages whose people are obliged to use it and there are many houses where cars have to be parked on the road. In consequence there are many holdups.

The proposed road will be between two listed buildings putting them both at risk from heavy building traffic.

It is wrong to build on agricultural land. We need to produce more food not less.

There is only one shop and there are no medical facilities.

More than 80 houses have recently been built here. The village is now big enough.

Resident 77

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Access and highway safety and traffic generation.

Other reasons:

The overbearing nature of the proposal, loss of trees, loss of ecological habitats

Resident 78

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Traffic congestion on high street

Destruction of wildlife/ environmental impact

Village does not need anymore houses

Resident 79

I oppose the application

Main reason:

1. The proposed development is sited within the area designated " Important Countryside Gap " as shown in the Walkern Neighborhood Plan dates 2021 > 2033

2. I genuinely believe that if outline planning is granted , the proposers will immediately re apply for private housing because

- there is no demand in the village for retirement homes anyway
- there is no network of community or medical services to support such a development
- there is no adequate road network to support such development
- there is already entirely inadequate and safe access through Walkern for emergency vehicles due to the restricted nature of the single route through the village

Other reasons:

It is in contravention of the Walkern Neighborhood Plan referred to above

The Beane valley is a beautiful and largely unspoilt and designated Green belt area

Resident 80

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The high street is already congested additional traffic would cause catastrophic problems in the high street unless a bypass for Walkern is considered the planning of the retirement homes is totally unsuitable

Resident 81

I oppose the application

Main reason:

This is yet another attempt to build on a site that is clearly unsuitable for housing development. The proposed development is entirely disproportionate to the size of Walkern and would significantly alter the character and scale of the village.

There has been no evidence provided to justify the necessity of such a development within Walkern. The need for a "care village" of this scale in our locality has not been demonstrated, raising concerns about whether this is truly being built to serve the existing community or simply to fulfil external commercial interests.

The impact on the size of Walkern is also highly concerning. The 2011 Census recorded approximately 642 properties in the village. Since then, developments such as Midsummer Vale have added around 100 more homes. The proposed 147-unit development would increase the number of properties and population by around 20%, which is an overwhelming and inappropriate expansion given the existing size and infrastructure of the village.

Additionally, the location of this development does not align with the needs of its intended residents. A facility for older people should be sited where they have convenient access to essential services, including shops and medical facilities. Walkern does not have the necessary infrastructure to support such a development, and a more suitable location would be within a town where these services are more readily available and accessible.

Traffic and access present another major issue. Walkern's high street is already heavily congested,

serving both local traffic and as a rat run between Stevenage and the A507 at Cottered. The proposed access point for this development is on a chicane along the high street, an area wholly unsuitable for such an influx of traffic. While developers may claim that few care home residents will own cars, it is evident that their visitors, staff, and service providers will require vehicles. Given the current road network, the only feasible way to accommodate such an increase in traffic would be the construction of a bypass along the Stevenage road to the west of Walkern.

From an ecological standpoint, this development also presents significant concerns. Increased construction will inevitably lead to environmental degradation, including the destruction of natural habitats and increased strain on local wildlife. The cumulative impact of continued development in and around Walkern is eroding the area's biodiversity and contributing to an unsustainable pattern of growth.

Furthermore, there is a strong likelihood that ongoing amendments to the planning application will see the development increasing in size and shifting away from being exclusively for older people. Where are the guarantees that this will not evolve into a broader housing development for all ages? Once planning permission is granted, it is often subject to modifications that incrementally change the nature of the project, potentially leading to an even greater impact on the village than initially proposed.

The proposed development offers absolutely no benefits to the current residents of Walkern. Instead, it will place additional strain on infrastructure, increase congestion, and negatively impact the environment without providing any tangible advantages to those already living in the village.

Other reasons:

1. Strain on Local Services – Walkern's existing services, including its small primary school (see 6 below), local GP services, and shops, are already stretched. The introduction of a large care village would create additional pressure on these services without any clear plan for how they will be expanded to accommodate new residents.
2. Flooding and Drainage Issues – The site in question may present significant drainage concerns, which need to be thoroughly assessed. Increasing impermeable surfaces through large-scale development can exacerbate flooding risks, an issue that has already been problematic in parts of Walkern.
3. Impact on Village Character – Walkern is a historic village with a distinct rural character. A development of this size would fundamentally alter the village's landscape, leading to urbanisation that is inconsistent with its traditional setting.
4. Sustainability Concerns – A development of this nature should be located in an area with robust transport links, amenities, and services that reduce reliance on cars. Walkern is not well connected by public transport, meaning this development would contribute to increased car usage and carbon emissions.
5. Precedent for Further Development – Approving this application risks setting a dangerous precedent for future large-scale developments in Walkern, undermining existing planning policies

that seek to preserve the rural nature of the village.

6. Lack of Guarantees on Future Changes – There is no binding assurance that this development will remain solely for older people. Developers frequently apply for modifications after initial approvals, often expanding the scope and altering the intended use of a project. This raises concerns that the development could evolve into a broader residential estate, further exacerbating infrastructure and service pressures on the village.

For all of these reasons, I strongly oppose the proposed 147-unit care village development in Walkern.

Resident 82

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Access to the site for construction is in a place that will cause additional traffic congestion on an already busy road. The high street regularly becomes almost grid locked at the usual busy times. The resultant increase in traffic to the site during construction and after wards adds to the the noise and pollution. Also added risk of more accidents with more large Lorries trying to make there way up and down the Hig Street. Yet more land will be concreted over causing more loss of ecological habitats. The village is in the Beane valley and the loss of land to soak up rainfall will lead to more potential flooding.

Resident 83

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Lack of infrastructure to cope with more development, certainly on this scale. This includes the services, such as sewer system etc, but also the High Street. The High Street struggles with the volume of traffic as it is. The developers are trying to address the concerns by suggesting the age demographic will avoid travel, transport will be laid of for staff etc. This clearly will not happen, it is just not practical or workable. Further, the occupants of the new units, even if retired, will regularly travel out of the village, help with school runs and grandchildren etc. Further, there is nothing to Police the age of the residents of the units going forward, so all age related arguments will be lost and will add to highway safety and congestion.. The local transport service is non existent, again pushing people into cars. It is also unsafe to use the road from Walkern to Stevenage via a bicycle or on foot, so these are not viable modes of transport. The size of the development is not proportionate to the size of the village and will have an adverse impact on the countryside and surrounding buildings.

Other reasons:

we would suggest the proposal has an adverse impact on all of the following:-

Overshadowing, overlooking and loss of privacy, adequate parking and servicing, the overbearing nature of the proposal, loss of trees, loss of ecological habitats, design and appearance, layout and

density of buildings, impact on listed building(s) and conservation areas, access and highway safety, traffic generation, noise and disturbance from the scheme, public visual amenity (excluding loss of private individual views), and flood risk.

Resident 84

I oppose the application

Resident 85

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The doctors surgeries for this area are already over subscribed, Walkern cannot support more elderly people. Also I don't think we should continue to build on green belt land and expand the village further.

The road through the village is already difficult to navigate, we really don't need more vehicles.

Will any of these places be social housing??

Resident 86

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The main reason for opposing is the extra amount of traffic which will be using the high street.

Resident 87

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Completely out of scale for a small village infrastructure.

It would need its own bypass around NW of site to keep another 250+ cars and HGV vehicles away from an already busy high street.

Better suited to outskirts of Stevenage.

Cynical ploy by developers to harness village life for their prospective clientele.

Resident 88

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I have two reasons for opposing this.

Our High St will be overwhelmed by the considerable extra demands created by residents' own cars, visiting cars, deliveries and so on. The works traffic for the duration of the project will create massive problems on our single route in and out of this village. We who actually live here see how heavy the use is already, a fact compounded by the single lane that has long been the norm in the first part of

the High St.

Secondly, a development of this size... essentially an additional village superimposed onto our village, represents a complete reinvention of what Walkern is... it is far more than an organic evolution, it is a disproportionate imposition which also puts even less space between ourselves and Stevenage's borders.

Resident 89

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The access to the proposed new development is totally unacceptable. I have lived in the village for over 30 years and trying to negotiate the High Street has become increasingly difficult year by year. It is now a real problem when there is an obstruction ie the dustbin lorry the High Street becomes impossible to use. The parked cars add to the problem.

I am not against the building of retirement homes for the elderly, but it cannot come with the horrendous affects that this development will cause to the residents of Walkern.

Resident 90

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Planning permission has been granted for a retirement home on Gresley way so why do we need another one here.

Also at a meeting last year a representative for welbeck dismissed any increase of traffic in the village. How are relatives and staff going to get to the retirement village fly as they said there will be no increase in traffic. And pensioners done drive apparently.

And what about the sewers, they can't cope now.

Other reasons:

We opposed the proposal because of increase in traffic and noise. Plus it will mean more raw sewage running down the paths and roads.

Resident 91

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Deterimental and unsupported impact on the infrastructure of the village.

Other reasons:

Heavy burden on through traffic. The village high street, which is already dangerous and overburdened would suffer further. The differeing needs of servicing to the site, would include further impact on village life.

The ecological habitats would also be severely impacted further on the nature of the development.

Resident 92

I oppose the application

Main reason:

It is far too big for the village, it will have a serious impact on the already busy high street. Where the access road will be is an area of build up of traffic as it is and this extra traffic will cause gridlock. It takes away the lovely fields that people walk their dogs/ walk with children and enjoy the countryside. What about the wildlife? Deers are in these fields, the ecological impact. Walkern won't be a nice quiet village anymore.

Other reasons:

Traffic

Noise

Aesthetic appearance

Far too big

Loss of conservation area

Flood risk

Resident 93

I oppose the application

Main reason:

My first opposition is that the High Street simply cannot handle the amount of traffic that already exists and to add a development of this size would be disastrous traffic wise.

Also, the proposed site is huge and will have to be overbearing and dramatically affect privacy for neighbouring properties.

I am also very concerned about the affect on wildlife and the environment.

Plus, as with previous schemes, will our services cope? Will there be a risk of flooding?

Resident 94

I oppose the application

Main reason:

1. Contravenes the neighbourhood plan's sustainable development policy
2. Contravenes the neighbourhood plan's natural environment policy
3. it would be build on green fields and the access road would destroy a huge natural habitat area for wildlife
4. Dovecote track would be severely affected which is a historic path running alongside two grade II\* buildings
5. The North Herts local plan (2011-2031) allocated 62 houses for Walkern. We have had over 100 built since its adoption!

6. Should permission be granted open ups the area to planning creep
7. Is in direct opposition to Walkerns English village characteristics
8. Is not affordable housing due to likely high costs of charges for facilities
9. Does not meet the government housing needs as many retirement homes are leased and have to be sold back to the owner.

Other reasons:

This large scale development contravenes The Walkern Neighbourhood Plan which states only sustainable development that aligns with the village's character should be permitted.

The NP highlights the importance of preserving the natural environment whilst managing development to maintain the village's rural character accommodating necessary growth in a sustainable manner.

The proposed development is in opposition with the above. It is large scale, does not preserve the rural/natural environment, would be built on green land and the proposed access road destroys a large area that is a natural habitat for wildlife.

Dovecote track would be severely affected as it runs directly alongside the historic Manor Farm's Dovecote and Manor Farm, both of which are listed Grade II\*.

List entry 1175945. Grade II\* Listed Building: Dovecote At Manor Farm

List entry 1348003. Grade II\* Listed Building: Farmhouse At Manor Farm

The North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031, specified by EHDC Planning was an allocation of 62 houses for Walkern. The Froghall Lane development was 84! There have also been several other infills increasing this number further. The village has taken more than its fair share.

There is a real danger that should the area in question be developed it would be susceptible to more planning creep as it opens up the strip of land running along the West and the field to the North.

It is interesting to note that new developments always carry a rural name, such as the words, meadow or village. This marketing tactic shows the importance of rural locations and what many people desire.

Walkern is in real danger of ceasing to become a village. The importance of which is outlined in the neighbourhood plan. The characterisation of an English Village is:

1. Small Size & Population
2. Historic architecture
3. Village Green or Common
4. Church & Parish Life

5. Post office or village store
6. Narrow Lanes & Country Roads
7. Sense of Community
8. Surrounding Countryside
9. Traditional events
10. Heritage and Folklore

The above list used to and still does apply to Walkern but the village has began to sprawl. A development of 150 'retirement' homes, built on a green field that has its access route created by destroying a large area of natural wildlife to create a road running by a historic footpath, destroys Walkern's English village characteristics.

The housing proposed is not affordable and does not accommodate the elderly population of Walkern. Many elderly residents cannot afford to pay service charges to maintain the proposed 'recreation facilities' and it would then quickly become another development that is not for elderly people.

Retirement villages tend to be commercial ventures, and there are already quite a few in Hertfordshire.

Selling a unit is generally not easy (leasehold etc) and then the occupier often has to offer it back first to the owner who is likely to suggest a low price, similar to mobile park home sales.

This is not affordable homes which the Government wants to see being built.

Lastly please note a resident at the Grange, High Street Walkern (a few hundred metres) from where this development is proposed, has had planning permission refused to erect a black wooden garage that nestled into the garden and is barely visible. Should the above development go ahead I would like to know why it is acceptable to build 150 dwellings and leisure centre in a green field but unacceptable to erect a wooden garage?

Resident 95

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Oppose:- Walkern is a quintessential English Village. To build a Retirement Care Village within the Walkern boundary would destroy the village fabric, its basic structure, together with all the customs and beliefs that make it work successfully. The village will be deeply damaged. A Retirement Care Village within Walkern boundaries would impact future decisions on the 'real Walkern village' so further damaging the 'Fabric of Walkern society.

Other reasons:

Oppose:-

Further traffic would approach the village from North, South East and West congregating on Walkern and the High street. Residents continually talk about the mayhem that is caused by current levels of traffic. The scale of traffic already impacts Walkern life. Another 147 houses with potentially a minimum of 147 cars navigating through Walkern would be catastrophic.

Further damage to an already broken infrastructure especially roads caused by large lorries and all other development vehicles navigating to the site would be catastrophic.

A retirement development would have complex medical needs and impact even further the Lister and A&E capability to deal with its current capacity which is widely advertised as being at breaking point already.

It can take a month to get an appointment at the doctors so this addition of an older generation would further exacerbate the surgeries ability to deliver what is currently a very basic service.

More cars will mean more accidents and more potential death of people.

More cars will mean more animals killed.

The wild life of which Walkern has an abundance in surrounding areas and within the village hares, rabbits, fallow deer, birds, badgers, ducks, squirrels, hedgehogs would all be impacted and thereby impact the wellbeing of the land too.

There are plans for a Solar farm which would add to the and exacerbate the issues highlighted above.

80 houses have recently been built within the village further exacerbating the already broken infrastructure.

The high street is continually congested with cars standing still and putting out toxic fumes in the countryside and straight into peoples houses and breathed in by people walking along the high street

Loss of trees

Loss of the different ecological habitats

Walkern has a neighbourhood plan which should stop further development

Resident 96

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The additional traffic burden on the village high street could be awful.

Other reasons:

Nobody is following or paying any attention to the neighbourhood plan. What's the point in it?

Recent developments mean the village has already provided far more new housing than it said it would or the government said we needed to by law in this neighborhood plan cycle. Why should the village start to exponentially grow in five years by the same amount as it has in the last 60 years?

Also, the village doesn't have the amenities to support the needs of retirement living. Amongst other things, public transport isn't good enough.

Resident 97

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The traffic will be far too much for the high street to handle especially in the mornings. Also there could be a problem with storm water and sewage. Are the pipes big enough for this many extra houses?

Resident 98

I oppose the application

Main reason:

It is entirely out of keeping with the existing scale and character of the village. The High Street is already seriously congested most of the time. This proposal would add significantly to the volume of traffic. The supporters of the scheme will no doubt say that, because the anticipated occupiers of the development would be elderly and not expected to have their own vehicles, the impact would be minimal, but this is disputable, and ignores the existence of the staff employed there, and presumably constant visitors calling to see their elderly relatives. The raised volume of traffic increases proportionately the risk of a serious accident.

Other reasons:

Lack of infrastructure such as sewers being unable to cope.

The use of prime farm land.

The fact that the proposal is against the Walkern Neighbourhood Development Plan.

The character of the village would be permanently altered for the worse.

There is no need for such a development.

Resident 99

I oppose the application

Main reason:

This will impact the traffic through the village which is already suffering. Traffic will be impacted from the new Hazel Park development so the new development will greatly add to this.

Other reasons:

Greatly impacts the countryside. Where does it stop?

Resident 100

I oppose the application

Main reason:

My main reason for opposing this proposal is the high street road will not be able to accommodate extra traffic. The traffic is already too busy after the new houses that were built and the through traffic coming from buntingford etc. Walkern will soon no longer be a village.

Other reasons:

TRAFFIC. DRAINAGE. VIEWS BEING TAKING AWAY. STAFF COMING AND GOING ALL HOURS. TAKING THE VILLAGES GREEN SPACE. NOISE AND TRAFFIC POLLUTION

Resident 101

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The village does not have the infrastructure to support this large development.

Other reasons:

The roads are busy enough. The farmers won't sell off their land to make the cycle route out of the village, which was paid for by Wallace Way. Development.

Increased traffic will make it more treacherous for the cycling commuter.

The GP surgery left the village many years ago and it is almost impossible to get an appointment at the Emperor's Head Surgery. A return of a GP surgery to the village would be advantageous should this development go ahead.

Resident 102

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The road is horrific and can't take anymore traffic. We have kingfishers by the dove cot pond and local deer.

Most applications evolve and we'll end up with a housing estate. Developers cannot be trusted.

Other reasons:

Developers amend applications once planning is accepted which feels like the application is a lie.

The road is horrific and can't take anymore traffic. We have kingfishers by the dove cot pond and local deer.

Resident 103

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The impact which the proposal will have on the character of the village is significant, most particularly when the village is still absorbing the effect of the recent development on the other side of Froghall Lane. It amounts to the compulsory urbanisation of what is still a relatively small rural community. This is made worse by the fact that, as we read the proposal, its operation as an integrated unit of more than a 140 households will make it difficult for the residents to be absorbed into the existing community

The transport infrastructure is not capable of supporting such a significant influx of new residents

and the travel plan submitted on behalf of the developers is positively misleading for a number of reasons. Two are particularly striking. The first is that the report wrongly describes the High street as a two lane carriageway which for all practical purposes is a complete misnomer and says that congestion is caused by on street parking which is the wrong way of looking at it. There has always been on-street parking and the congestion is caused by the increase in traffic which this development will make much worse. Furthermore, we are deeply sceptical that the figures on daily traffic movements are at all realistic, and even if they are, the High St has already reached saturation point in the busy times. As everyone accepts that the vast majority of traffic to and from the development will be coming from or going down the High Street, surely it is madness to add yet further pressure on the present intractable problems? Secondly, the travel report has a whole section on cycle use which is absurd in the conclusions it seeks to advance - it even suggests that residents of a retirement village might use the bridleway beside Manor Farm to cycle to Stevenage. It also misrepresents that there are two pubs within walking distance - this too is misleading as the Yew Tree has been closed for some time now.

Resident 104

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The village is already too busy. It is almost impossible to drive through the village at certain times. Because of this, vehicles race along the high street, often tailgating so they do not have to wait for on coming traffic.

Other reasons:

The planning application stating that retired people tend not drive or would go out at different times is complete nonsense. Along with staff and family visiting, the traffic would bring Walkern to a standstill.

The countryside around Walkern is meant to be protected. We have just had a huge development built off Froghall Lane and with the extension to Stevenage on Gresley Way, the beautiful countryside between us and Stevenage is going to disappear. This very countryside is home to a family of deer, the symbol of Hertfordshire, yet we are destroying their habitat.

When the high street becomes stationary, Stevenage Council will probably want to build a bypass behind us and make out that's a good thing.

People live here because it was a desirable village. We don't want it to become joined up to Stevenage or any other area.

Also, Stevenage are incapable of building anything with character.

Resident 105

I oppose the application

Main reason:

There will be a detrimental impact on local traffic. Increased vehicle movement will come not only from the retirement residents', but also their families and visitors.

Also from staff commuting daily and service vehicles such as deliveries, maintenance etc. This will lead to higher congestion, more dangerous conditions on the High Street where cars pull into gaps

and speed between passing places. This will affect the overall flow and safety of traffic in and around the village.

Other reasons:

Walkern has already changed and become a less desirable place to live as evidenced by the high levels of properties on the market. The traffic has increased exponentially in recent years.

An increase in littering and anti social behaviour has also occurred - as is typical in any area that markedly increases its population .

The bigger the 'village' the less community connection and respect for the surroundings and one another.

Resident 106

I oppose the application

Main reason:

My main reason for opposing this proposal is the ecological harm caused by habitat fragmentation, particularly the way it isolates existing gardens from the wider countryside, combined with significant concerns about surface water drainage and increased flood risk.

The development site currently forms a vital corridor and foraging ground connecting the gardens along High Street with the open countryside to the west. Wildlife, including protected species like bats, slow worms, a diverse population of nesting birds, and mammals including deer, badgers and foxes, currently move between these areas. Building a large, high-density development across this entire parcel will effectively sever the connection to a large area of green space, creating an impassable barrier, and this is not accounted for in the biodiversity assessment. The development will ecologically isolate a much wider area than just the site itself, reducing the value for wildlife, potentially trapping species, and disrupting established movement patterns. The proposed mitigation and landscaping within a busy development cannot adequately compensate for the loss of this open agricultural transition zone. If the development is to go ahead it should be modified to maintain a substantial natural corridor free of activity, noise and light pollution, to keep the green spaces ecologically connected.

Furthermore, the site's topography and geology combined with the significant increase in impermeable surfaces raise serious concerns about surface water runoff. There is a history of localised flooding issues downhill from the site, currently somewhat mitigated by a system of private land drainage and culverts, but the application does not sufficiently address the potential need for increased capacity to this. The proposed SuDS strategy may not adequately prevent increased runoff onto neighbouring properties or exacerbation of flooding downstream, potentially impacting the River Beane chalk stream.

Other reasons:

I also oppose the proposal for the following additional reasons:

Unsustainable Location & Traffic Impact: The site is poorly served by public transport and local amenities, guaranteeing high car dependency. The resulting traffic increase on the already congested and hazardous High Street (B1037) is unacceptable. It is hard to see how this can be

meaningfully mitigated within the current access plan. If cycling and public transport infrastructure were to be improved in the village this could help by reducing the number of other vehicles to compensate for the increase, but it may not be sufficient.

**Landscape & Visual Impact:** The development causes unacceptable harm through the loss of open agricultural land, severely impacting views and the landscape setting of the village. While the application includes a small screening area of woodland on one side, it would be preferable to extend this to all sides of the development, providing screening from the direction of the village as well as improved environmental contribution.

**Loss of Residential Amenity:** The development will be overbearing, cause loss of privacy for neighbours, and generate significant noise/disturbance during construction.

**Heritage Harm:** The proposal negatively impacts the setting of nearby Listed Buildings (including the Grade II\* Dovecote and Manor Farmhouse) and the Conservation Area, as acknowledged in the applicant's own reports. The access route also affects an Area of High Archaeological Potential.

Resident 107

I oppose the application

Main reason:

- Volume of traffic, increased congestion on local roads, increased pollution in local area as a result of increased traffic, impact on safety and well being of residents (particularly children) as a result.

Other reasons:

- Pressure on very limited local amenities
- Lack of existing amenities will not support significant increase in population (both pubs closed, only one small shop, no GP surgery, no other significant local amenities, particularly for those who are retired)
- further extends urban creep into rural areas and green belt
- proposal, if successful, would take Walkern way beyond the limit of housing development approved in the housing plan (which has already been surpassed)
- Negative impact on the aesthetic of the village

Resident 108

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Firstly, the scale of the development is disproportionate to the size of the village and incompatible with the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan. Walkern has already exceeded its allocated residential development with the 85 new homes at Froghall Lane. This proposal constitutes planning creep, extending beyond the village boundary and encroaching on Green Belt and Conservation areas.

Other reasons:

Walkern does not have essential amenities such as a GP surgery, a dentist, adequate shopping

facilities, and pubs. Public transport is minimal at best, and the nearest bus stop is a significant walk from the proposed development—an unrealistic option for elderly or infirm residents. Common sense says that developments for older populations should be located where residents can easily access essential services – there are none in Walkern.

Claims that the development "could include" amenities such as a gym, restaurant, shop, or minibus service for the wider community are worth nothing unless they are formally written into planning conditions and required as completed infrastructure before occupation.

This development is entirely unsuitable for Walkern and the application should be rejected in its entirety.

## Resident 109

I oppose the application

### Main reason:

Walkern lacks essential amenities such as a GP surgery, a dentist, adequate shopping facilities, and pubs. Public transport is minimal at best, and the nearest bus stop is a significant walk from the proposed development—an unrealistic option for elderly or infirm residents, further increasing reliance on cars. Common sense dictates that developments for older populations should be located where residents can easily access essential services without relying on cars or navigating congested, narrow country roads.

### Other reasons:

- While we acknowledge the need for specialist housing for retirees, Walkern is not a suitable location for such a development.
- The proposed development would increase the village population by 10-20%, according to the latest census data. If the accommodation is genuinely intended for retirees only (which must be legally covenanted in perpetuity), it would heavily skew the village's demographic balance.
- Retirees, whether still working part-time or leading active lifestyles, are highly likely to own vehicles. This development would conservatively add around 600 additional car movements per day to Walkern's already overburdened High Street, further worsening traffic congestion.
- The scale of the development is disproportionate to the size of the village and incompatible with the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan. Walkern has already exceeded its allocated residential development with the 85 new homes at Froghall Lane. This proposal constitutes planning creep, extending beyond the village boundary and encroaching on Green Belt and Conservation areas.
- The road between Walkern and Stevenage is unsafe for cycling or walking, making these modes of transport unviable.
- Claims that the development "could include" amenities such as a gym, restaurant, shop, or minibus service for the wider community are purely speculative unless they are formally written into planning conditions and required as completed infrastructure before occupation.

This development is entirely unsuitable for Walkern and the application should be rejected in its entirety.

## Resident 110

I oppose the application

Main reason:

Access to the site will be a major issue, both during construction and once built. The high street is already very dangerous, with two way traffic trying to squeeze through a single lane due to all the parked cars. Access to the site for all the residents, employees of the on-site services, emergency services, care workers, delivery drivers, etc, etc, etc will exacerbate this problem. On top of this, there is currently no way to access the site, meaning destruction of natural habitat will be required. Once built, people accessing the development will competing with both traffic on the high street and agricultural traffic trying to access Manor Farm.

The village cannot bear the weight of even more traffic.

Other reasons:

The village has already had to absorb a lot of new developments, with no opportunity to pause and acclimatise to the changes.

The village does not have the amenities (doctor's surgery, for instance) to cater for this development.

Previous developments have not provided the village with the amenities promised, e.g. no cycle path put in between Walkern and Stevenage.

These retirement villages are highly exploitative. They're sold at a significant mark up to equivalent open market houses, they charge high service charges and then take a percentage of sales every time a unit is sold. We should not be encouraging such a flagrantly abusive business model.

Resident 111

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The village is just not in a position to be able to sustain this size of development. With the huge development also happening in Stevenage it just adds to the pressure the village infrastructure is already facing.

The high street is constantly blocked with traffic and it is becoming a very dangerous place for people and children to walk. Access to the school in the mornings and afternoons is chaotic at best...adding more footfall to this just screams of an accident waiting to happen.

There is one local shop and one small petrol garage, the village is just not setup for this scale of development. We do not have the infrastructure in place. Flash floods are very common so tracking away more land will only increase this in the village causing even further disruption.

All medical support for the elderly will have to be supported by Lister Hospital which is already at capacity and will again cause further issues on the high street. The roads will become more and more ruined with the building works/footfall. Not to mention there is already a huge solar farm also being built the other side of the high street...

I genuinely feel purely down to the pressure applied on the infrastructure we will see accidents and car crashes if this development goes ahead. It just makes it unsafe and chaotic at best.

Resident 112

I oppose the application

Main reason:

I oppose the application because I think there's been too much disturbance to the village already. Building more houses will spoil that village feel. There were already too many houses built.

Where used to be beautiful fields and countryside, now stand lots of houses that are all crammed next to each other.

Don't think this village needs any more.

Traffic is already bad and parking is becoming a problem too.

This shouldn't happen in the village.

Resident 113

I oppose the application

Main reason:

There has been a lot of development in Walkern and the surrounding area in my lifetime, and this causes a lot of disruption to the residents.

We recently moved back to Walkern for more peaceful surroundings and a countryside/village lifestyle, in which to raise our family.

Further development in the village threatens to spoil this, and in my opinion is completely unnecessary.

Other reasons:

There are plenty of alternative areas in the East Herts for this development to take place.

Any further developments in Walkern threaten to spoil the essence of what makes this such a beautiful place to live. I would hate to see this happen to the village I love and grew up in, and now can once again call home.

Resident 114

I oppose the application

Main reason:

The loss of the green belt between Walkern and Stevenage. The village is in danger of losing its rural identity and of being subsumed into the town

Other reasons:

The infrastructure in the village, e.g. the roads and sewerage system, can't cope at the moment, so

adding more housing will only make it worse. We need to protect the river Beane as a chalk stream, not pump more waste into it.

Resident 115

I Oppose

Main Reason:

Huge development in lovely countryside, popular with walkers, dog exercising for many, over many years.

Destroying the peace totally of the area and only benefitting greedy land owners and developers.

Other Reasons:

The traffic from a tiny land on to a narrow very busy High Street. Residents, visitors, medics staff, maintenance, constructors unbearable.

Destruction of ancient trees, hedges and habitat.

What about the sewers, they can't cope now let alone hundreds more inhabitants.

There is another care home on the Gresley Way development less than a couple of miles away.

The long term and short term impact on the village I love out ways any possible benefit to what will mainly be total strangers