

The Saffron Walden Weekly News is your truly local newspaper for the town and surrounding villages. We pride ourselves on producing publications for the community and about the community and aim to provide the very best service for readers and advertisers alike. At the same time, we are constantly looking to improve our titles and are always happy to hear from you with suggestions and comments. If you have any feedback for us then please contact the relevant person or people listed below.

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Letters

Send your letters to: The Editor, Saffron Walden Weekly News, 46 High Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1EE or by email to editorial@saffronwaldenweeklynews.co.uk

Views might change if housing became threat

Sir, I am writing in response to Mr Robertson's letter published last week in which he accuses WAR and Save our Villages of being 'nimbies' with 'disregard' for the demand on local housing. As an Elsenham resident I am disgusted to read such drivel. Elsenham has recently taken on approval for nearly 500 houses, a growth of almost 40%, so don't accuse Save our Villages of being blind to the need for more housing. I notice with interest that Mr Robertson lives in Arkesden, which to my knowledge has not taken on any large-scale housing developments, maybe if you were to have the threat of thousands of houses thrown at you, you'd think differently?

Rory Gleeson
 Oziars
 Elsenham

Make Saffron Walden a cycle friendly town

Sir, Access Walden's criticism of Saffron Walden Town Council's decision to install only four of the 12 cycle racks that were available to the council absolutely free of charge is rooted in a forward-looking vision for the town and its people. One in which the increased provision of accessible, secure cycle parking in the centre of the town would encourage residents and visitors to leave their cars behind, easing pressure on our increasingly congested roads and car parking, as well as having benefits for the environment. Furthermore, at a time of increasing fuel poverty the council should be making a greater effort to provide facilities that enable individuals and families to make normal journeys into and out of town – getting to work, shopping, accessing local services – using the bike as their everyday mode of transport. Of course we welcome the fact there will be parking space for eight more bikes. However for a town of 15,000+ residents, four racks barely scratches the surface. With the cycle racks being offered to them free of charge, and the site locations identified and assessed for them, all the council had to do was say 'yes please', and they would have been off to a great start on cementing the Tour de France legacy they seek. There is still time. So come on SWTC – show some ambition and vision, let's act to secure that legacy, and make Saffron Walden a cycle-friendly town!

James Savage
 Access Walden

Concerned residents should protest

Sir, It is likely that the next application for 300 homes to the east of Saffron Walden will come to the Planning Committee for approval next week. This will make around 1,000 homes currently nearing completion or planned to the east of town with a total lack of vision for the infrastructure required to accommodate it. UDC have said that a link road is necessary for their ludicrous highways strategy; and yet there is even no realistic plan for such a link road. The 1,000 homes will produce further damaging air pollution which is already damaging our health. Also worrying is that Essex County Council Education have written to UDC to say that because of a total lack of a plan for education, they should halt further approvals until provision for a junior school has been provided. It rather appears that UDC are about to ignore this advice and press ahead with further applications whilst totally ignoring the infrastructure needed. If the houses are approved, we will not have the necessary school capacity in Saffron Walden town. All concerned residents should look at the UDC website and turn out at the planning meeting on December 11 to protest should UDC persist with their reckless intents.

John Lodge
 Essex County Councillor for
 Saffron Walden

Donations to charity would be doubled

Sir, I am writing to inform your readers that older people's charity Royal Voluntary Service has been invited to take part in the Garfield Weston Foundation Christmas challenge over December 5, 6, and 7. For three days only, any donation made to Royal Voluntary Service will be doubled by the foundation and you won't have to spend an extra penny. For many, Christmas is a time for celebrating with loved ones but it can also be a lonely time for older people, with research from the charity finding over 300,000 older people will be spending Christmas Day alone this year. This is a one-off opportunity to make your gift go even further. So please, if you are thinking of making a donation to Royal Voluntary Service, do your Christmas deed early and double

your donation by giving on December 5, 6 or 7 through the Big Give site: www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/biggive

Debbi Fair
 Head of operations for the East and South East, Royal Voluntary Service

We must stop arguing and work together

Sir, There needs to be a constructive relationship between the various housing campaign groups and the Conservatives at Uttlesford in order for us to have any success in getting the right result for the community overall. The housing argument has descended into a row between various councillors and groups and as a result nothing is being achieved to actually get the housing numbers reduced and that's what we really need. We need a body made up of district councillors, town and parish councillors, members of the campaign groups from the towns and villages around the district and our Member of Parliament. This should also be done in partnership with neighbouring districts who are all going through this same painful process. The sole objective of this group should be to lobby the relevant Ministers to allow councils to both decide their own housing numbers/need and to be able to restart and review their local plans and without the threat of mass development going ahead as a result of the delay. The council has recently been criticised by local campaign groups and the Liberal Democrats (who already resigned from the housing debate some time ago at Uttlesford) for allocating the majority of the additional homes to a single site in Elsenham. This is something many of the same people had previously been supporting (in fact a much larger settlement). We need to stop arguing over the sites and the plan and start working together constructively to get the numbers reduced to levels we believe will be sustainable for Uttlesford. If these homes weren't allocated to a single site in Elsenham, they will go to the bigger settlements such as Saffron Walden. Presently

simply saying "no" to new housing is not an option for any of us.

Cllr David-James Sadler
 Uttlesford District & Saffron Walden Town Council

We need people who are transparent

Sir, As a parent and having previously taught in schools that supported significant numbers of families in need, I've become very interested in the debate on appropriate housing provision in the town. I am concerned that those families in housing need will get lost in the political arguments for and against mass development as a whole. UDC have constantly referred to the number of 1,600 on the housing waiting lists in Uttlesford as a reason to green light more housing as a whole, when the truth is that there are half the number. The actual figure on the list is 754 families in band A-D, i.e. those who are not adequately housed, and of those, 638 have an Uttlesford connection. UDC haven't provided the details of those specific settlements that are most in need, which is surely essential to make sure that we build the right houses in the right places! This all proves both the frailty and the futility of the Local Plan – affordable housing that supports our local families that are most in need, must be strategically targeted to the areas that specifically require it. Furthermore, I am disappointed that UDC have appeared to mislead residents with incorrect numbers and worse still, appear to be using housing need as a tool for political leverage in order to justify generic mass development. Now is the time to make sure that as a community, we have representatives that are transparent with all the information, that support the actual housing needs of local families and have the strength to demand the best deal possible from developers and landowners.

Jen Beaton
 families spokesperson
 weareresidents.org
 Finchams Close
 Linton

LETTERS POLICY

Letters should arrive by noon on the Monday before publication. Full name and address must be supplied and details will be withheld only in exceptional circumstances. Letters should be no longer than 250 words and may be edited. Send your letters to editorial@saffronwaldenweeklynews.co.uk, or write to The Editor, Saffron Walden Weekly News, 46 High Street, Saffron Walden CB10 1EE.

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