

My name is Robert Tongue and I'm Chairman of the De Vigier Residents' Group. I wish to talk about the proposed housing allocation for 14 dwellings at De Vigier Avenue.

We first learnt of UDC intention of selling this land to Ridgeons in 2014.

Local residents value this wildlife haven enormously. So much so that they stopped workmen going on to this land to clear it. This led to the formation of the Residents Group

In 2014, representatives of the group had a meeting with Cllr Rolfe in which we made it plain the whole wildlife area should be saved.

In 2017, 3 of the group attended a meeting with Councillor Rolfe and Mr. Harborough at which Cllr Rolfe made emphasis on the alleged rat problems on this land. We corrected him as any problems were minor and dealt with by the residents myself included. The pest control they sent to deal with rats only caught mice which its self shows what rats were to be minimal and no different to the rest of the country.

We were informed that the land would be sold to Ridgeons, but that they would leave a buffer strip of land between us and the new development which they offered to give to every house that backs on to the site for free.

We told them that we would only be happy if the strip up to the top of the hill was left so at least we could save some area for the wildlife that lives on all the land.

On the 25th of May at the Cabinet meeting this land was on the agenda for sale. Cllr Rolfe opened this debate and again stated that there has been rat problems with this land. But not a thing mentioned re the wild life, our past objection, or the petition that we collected and handed into a council meeting in 2014. It was put to vote and surprise, surprise it was agreed to sell.

Councillor Light did raise an objection to the sale of land on behalf of all residents of Saffron Walden that the wildlife area should be kept as it is. Comment was made by the chairman doubting most of the residents even knew the land exists. The press action we took in 2014 brought welcome support from all residents from not only SW but a far greater area so I would say a large number indeed know about it

Councillors, you don't need this site to make up your housing requirement. It is simply opportunist money-making. Let me refer you to Policy EN8 in your draft plan. It's called 'Protecting the Natural Environment' and it states "The Council will seek to optimise conditions for wildlife and habitats to improve biodiversity and tackle habitat loss and fragmentation."

I urge you to practice what you preach in that policy and take this unnecessary housing allocation out of the local plan.

Thank you for your time.