

Public Statement: Sophie Wicks

I would like to clarify a few comments made in the report produced for this meeting, which contained inaccuracies and discussed the financial implications at the start. Combined this could have potentially led readers to be less sympathetic to the issue.

The point around a discount received for purchasing houses around the substation is incorrect and irrelevant. I personally did not get a discount that I was informed of. I am aware of 1 discount that was offered (although there could have been more) but this was not given for the noise, rather for the way the substation looks in addition to the fact people were concerned with the potential harm from the radiation. Bloor Homes still confirmed there would be no sound due to the promised acoustic fence, discount or not.

It is also worth noting that many of those who live near the substation are in social housing. They had little choice when it came to moving due to a shortage in housing and may not have got a chance to view the house before moving.

The report also mentions 'several of the houses have been sold on to second owners', this is incorrect. Several of the houses elsewhere on the estate may have been sold on, but not those near the substation, there is only 1 house that has been sold that would be considered to be near.

Another comment I would like to address is that 'there has only been one such neighbour complainant'. This is incorrect, some of us have been in contact with Andy Bonham regarding the noise, 84 of us also signed a petition that was given to the council as well as many of us showing up to the meeting on 29th June 2023.

I purchased my house based on the fact I was assured multiple times through the buying process I would not be able to hear the substation. I accepted that I was going to be living opposite a large fence which had the substation behind it and was happy on the basis there would be no sound. If I knew I was going to be able to hear the substation at all, let alone to this degree I wouldn't have purchased a house on the estate, let alone opposite. We have been badly let down and whilst I do agree that Bloor Homes is to blame for that, so is the council. The planning condition was discharged which allowed Bloor to get away it.

Living with the noise every day is depressing. There is no opening of windows whilst trying to sleep or being able to relax in your garden. Visitors and delivery drivers often comment on the noise stating they would not be able to put up with it. We are left feeling embarrassed to show people our home and left stressed wondering if we would ever be able to sell. Being at home should be calm and relaxing and shouldn't have a negative impact on people's mental health.

I understand that it is a lot of money and people may think that only a few residents are affected, but this is not the case. Many residents from all over Saffron Walden come and use the children's playground, which is located next to the substation. There is also an appeal for an additional 12 houses to be built on the land between De Vigier Avenue and Mapletoft Avenue, if approved these houses will be able to

hear the substation. There are also 55 houses being built on the land in front of the Mortimers Gate site.

The council had opportunity to amend or dispute anything in the draft decision from the Ombudsman if they did not agree with the findings. This was not done and the final letter was distributed highlighting that the council should fund the works. If the Ombudsman's decision is not listened to and not carried through with, what is the point in the process, it makes light of their position and sets the tone that UDC feel thought they don't have to comply.

I appreciate the time councillors have taken to come and see the substation, those that have not, I welcome you to visit and see how bad it is for yourself.

I would like to finish by saying, I do appreciate it is a lot of money but had the planning department enforced adequate planning measures, it would have been Bloor Homes who paid for it.

Ms. Wicks – Mapletoft Avenue