

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Ross Herbert
Dacorum Borough Council
Development Management (Major Developments)
Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre, Marlows,
Hemel Hempstead
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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

6th March 2019 (by email)

Dear Mr Herbert,

4/03266/18/MFA | HYBRID PLANNING APPLICATION FOR MIXED USE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT WEST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, PURSUANT TO POLICY LA3 OF THE ADOPTED SITE ALLOCATIONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (2017) TO PROVIDE FOR UP TO 1100 DWELLINGS (WITH UP TO 40% AFFORDABLE HOUSING), COMPRISING FULL PLANNING PROPOSALS FOR 350 DWELLINGS AND OUTLINE PLANNING PROPOSALS (INCLUDING MEANS OF ACCESS) FOR 750 DWELLINGS. THE APPLICATION PROPOSING THE DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 1100 NEW DWELLINGS (INCLUDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING), LAND FOR UP TO SEVEN PITCH GYPSY TRAVELLER SITE, TOGETHER WITH LANDSCAPING, ROADS, FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS, ECOLOGICAL MITIGATION, SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS, EARTHWORKS, PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, ONE NEIGHBOURHOOD EQUIPPED AREA OF PLAY (NEAP), TWO LOCALLY EQUIPPED AREAS OF PLAY (LEAP) AND A COMMUNITY GAMES AREA (CGA). A SITE FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ASSOCIATED NURSERY WITH PLAYING FIELDS ON SITE OF UP TO 2.1 HECTARES (INC. CGA), SPECIALIST ACCOMMODATION FOR THE ELDERLY WITH UP TO 70 ROOMS (C2 OR C3), A CONVENIENCE STORE OF UP TO 450 SQ. M(A1), THREE RETAIL UNITS EACH OF WHICH WOULD BE UP TO 100 SQ.M (A1,A2,A3,A4 AND A5), A COMMUNITY FACILITY OF UP TO 175 SQ.M (D1), A MEDICAL FACILITY OR OTHER USE OF UP TO 100 SQ.M (A1,C3 AND D1), A CHILDRENS DAY NURSERY OF UP TO 450 SQ.M (D1), A SHARED CAR PARK. THE FULL APPLICATION DETAILS WHICH ARE SUBMITTED COMPRISE OF - A NEW VEHICULAR ACCESS TO LONG CHAUDEN, A NEW VEHICULAR ACCESS EXTENSION FROM THE AVENUE, EMERGENCY ACCESS TO CHAUDEN LANE, NEW VEHICULAR ACCESS FROM CHAUDEN LANE SERVING ONLY THE LAND FOR UP TO A SEVEN PITCH GYPSY AND TRAVELLER SITE AND ACCESS TO A FOUL DRAINAGE PUMPING STATION, A FOUL DRAINAGE PUMPING STATION TO CHAUDEN LANE AND THE ASSOCIATED CONNECTING SEWER, THE CREATION OF THE FIRST PHASE OF 350 NEW DWELLINGS AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING (INCLUDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING); TOGETHER WITH ASSOCIATED PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING, ROADS, FOOTPATHS AND CYCLEWAYS, ECOLOGICAL MITIGATION, SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS, EARTHWORKS, AND ONE ASSOCIATED LOCAL EQUIPPED AREA OF PLAY (LEAP) | LA3, LAND AT WEST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

General

CPRE Herts strongly objected to the removal of the LA3 site from the Green Belt and the loss of open countryside. CPRE Herts has not been party to discussions on the masterplanning of the site. The site is now allocated and a masterplan, prepared by the developer, was approved in July 2017. The masterplan is a material planning consideration. While CPRE Herts much regrets the allocation, given the fact of development it also considers the details of the design, layout and relationship to Hemel Hempstead,

CPRE is working nationally and locally for a beautiful and living countryside

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

President:
Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO
Chairman: Richard Bullen
Registered Charity 1162419

countryside and nearby villages to be extremely important. CPRE Herts seek for the development to be designed to include priorities of:

- Promoting access and enjoyment of the countryside by all
- Exploiting landscape views from within the site for the enjoyment of the countryside by all
- Delivering biodiversity gains and being sensitive to wider landscape impacts of development
- Promoting walking and cycling on greenways away from polluting and noisy traffic routes
- Achieving distinctive character and quality placemaking

Placemaking / Design Process

As a key principle the development has to integrate, as fully as possible with the existing settlement and its wider surroundings to enable access and enjoyment of the wider countryside. This accords with NPPF para 118 which says planning decisions should:

“encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains - such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside”

The application has not, it seems, been referred to the Herts Design Review Panel. This is regrettable and encouraged to provide an added level of design scrutiny. This is important for such a major and significant expansion of the town. The NPPF (para 129) also supports the use of Design Review.

The site is particularly steep and the design of the scheme should be making careful use of this topography and also ensure that routes and gradients work well for internal cycling and walking paths.

Future adaptability of the buildings for a fully integrated mix of uses should be developed into the details. It isn't clear to what degree individual buildings will be able to adapt in the future to accommodate a greater mix of uses, for instance at ground floor level on busier primary routes or at connecting nodes. The future vitality and sustainability of new neighbourhoods will depend on their adaptability and self-sufficiency in local service provision. This can take time to evolve and should be provided for within the design.

Pouchen End Lane and Chaulden Lane

CPRE Herts has seen the submission (attached) by Bourne End Village Association (BEVA) for “filtered permeability”. This would give priority to sustainable travel with partial closure of Pouchen End Lane and Chaulden Lane. This is a positive suggestion and its proposals are given full support by CPRE Herts. It would fully align with local and national policy direction. It accords with the local transport hierarchy of Herts CC Local Transport Plan 2017.

Policy 1: Transport User Hierarchy

To support the creation of built environments that encourage greater and safer use of sustainable transport modes, the county council will in the design of any scheme and development of any transport strategy consider in the following order:

- Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel
- Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists)
- Passenger transport user needs
- Powered two wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs
- Other motor vehicle user needs

The Dacorum Core Strategy 2013 sets out principles for LA3 which include:

- Impact on the local road network mitigated through the promotion of sustainable travel options, including improved pedestrian links with adjoining areas.
- No vehicular access from Pouchen End Lane.

The proposals of the Bourne End Village Association remove the hazards for pedestrians and cyclists as users of these narrow lanes, which are in any event quite popular for recreational use, but unsuited for two-way traffic especially at rush hours. Some inconvenience to commuting drivers may be experienced, but advantage is then given to sustainable modes and more will safely opt for walking and cycling as an option. The closures could link to the Chiltern Way which crosses the site. Routes can be extended to develop healthy walking and cycling activity between Potten End and Ashridge to the north and Hemel Hempstead Station and Town Centre to the south.

Examples of well-designed filtered permeability



Netherlands



Hackney, London

Filtered permeability has been applied in many urban situations to promote cycling and can also be in rural locations, see example from Netherlands. New development needs to promote access to the countryside and promote active travel for reasons of health, wellbeing, air quality, reduced congestion and to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions. The draft A414 Corridor Study promotes Hemel Hempstead as a Sustainable Travel Town. The Applicants Planning Statement (p31) aims to develop a network of pedestrian and cycling links but these are not carried through to routes that connect beyond the site boundaries. This is an advantage of the BEVA proposals.

The development should fully fund via a S106 obligation developing these walking and cycling routes and others beyond the site boundary. They are relatively low-cost measures that can deliver effective change directly related to the new development. If there were objections to the change then a trial period could easily be put in place to monitor the effects over a period of six to nine months to see what problems or adjustments need to be made. The routes should be integrated with the new development and route maps for new residents to show walking and cycling options shared in travel packs.

Other detailed comments

- The hybrid application provides for a circuitous route for bus use. This of itself is questioned if it makes bus journeys or bus operation less attractive.
- Open space in the development should come into full public use, preferably by public ownership and enjoyment for cyclists, joggers, dog walkers etc.
- The open spaces should be integral to movement through the scheme and link across and beyond the site to the countryside and surrounding neighbourhoods
- Key highway routes should be adopted to secure public access.
- A framework of Rights of Way through and around the site should be safeguarded and extended to integrate the area with its surroundings and promote access and enjoyment of the countryside.
- A full grid of connecting walking and cycling is required, not just occasional cross routes. The topography of the site should be used for distinctive design but also to enable walkers and cyclists to avoid unnecessary gradients. Routes that follow contours should be provided and attractive to use.

Summary

CPRE Herts strongly objected to this site's development within the Dacorum Local Plan and the loss of Green Belt. The Masterplan has been agreed. The CPRE Herts would encourage Design Review of the scheme given the need for external scrutiny and to raise the quality of any development encroaching the open countryside. The development needs to proactively promote access to the countryside and as part of this CPRE Herts support the proposals and the opportunity of creating new active travel and recreational quietways on the narrow lanes that adjoin the site as promoted by the Bourne End Village Association within an extended rights of way framework.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Hagyard
Planning Manager

Enc: Bourne End Village Association - Proposal for Safety and Environmental Improvements
cc Nick Gough, Herts County Council