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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

James Langsmead
Development Control
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

26th February 2020 (by email)

Dear Mr. Langsmead,

Application No. 3/20/0269/FUL

Erection of 4 two bedroomed affordable dwellings, 2 three bedroomed dwellings and 2 four bedroomed dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping on land at Old Station Yard, Millers View, Much Hadham, Hertfordshire

CPRE Hertfordshire object to this proposal as inappropriate development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

This application is the latest iteration of a succession of applications for development on this site, which have been refused by the Council, rejected on appeal or else withdrawn by the applicant. While the number of units has fluctuated, this application reverts to eight units, originally proposed in application 3/16/2321/FUL, which was dismissed on appeal.

The arguments against development remain the same, but we make no apology for repeating them again here.

Much Hadham is a Group 1 village in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt and the proposed development site is located outside of the village boundary. Consequently its development would be contrary to policies GBR2 and VILL 1 in the recently adopted East Herts District Plan. The negative impact on the Rural Area Beyond The Green Belt would remain.

The purpose of Policy GBR2 is to maintain the openness and character of the countryside beyond the Green Belt. That countryside is recognised in the Local Plan as being “*a considerable and significant countryside resource, which Policy GBR2 seeks to maintain by concentrating development within existing settlements.*” This proposed development is outside of the village boundary as shown on the District Plan Policies maps.

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



To quote the Inspector (Appeal Ref App/J1915/W/17/1): *“ The layout of the appeal scheme would create built form that would protrude substantially further to the north and west. This existing area marks a change from the main built up area of Much Hadham to an open and spacious countryside location beyond. The appeal site adds to this open and spacious character in its undeveloped state. The addition of further dwellings would increase the amount of built development intruding further into the countryside in an ad hoc manner on the edge of the settlement.”*

The Applicant argues that the site is previously developed land. The National Planning Policy Framework specifically excludes from the definition of previously developed land *“land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.”* This site is part of the former Hadham Station which closed in 1964 and the station buildings demolished in 1976. In the intervening four decades the sidings have been absorbed into the landscape and the site is covered in mature secondary woodland.

The arguments made in the Design, Access and Planning Statement accompanying the application are essentially those which the applicant used in their appeal submission and which were rejected by the Inspector, with the additional inclusion of references to modifications to the emerging Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan. In the Applicant’s view those modifications would exclude the provision of affordable housing sites in the village except through windfall and consequently the provision of 4 affordable units on this site is sufficient justification to allow its development. However this is speculation on the part of the applicant. The Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan is still in gestation and has not been adopted, consequently it can only be afforded limited weight.

We see nothing in the present application which alters the planning balance and consider that the Council should similarly refuse this application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving