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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Kate Poyser
Planning and Building Control
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Herts SG6 3JF

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

22nd January 2020 (by email)

Dear Ms. Poyser,

Application No. 19/02939/FP
Change of use from agricultural land to dog exercise park.
Land west of Chantry Lane, Little Wymondley

CPRE Hertfordshire has concerns regarding this proposal for a change of use to a sui generis non-agricultural business use in the Green Belt. There is no policy which covers this sort of use in the North Herts Local Plan, and, in general, dog exercising is not an area covered in most Local Plans.

While no new built development is proposed, it is clear from the Design and Access Statement that the proposed use is an extension of an existing dog walking business. This raises some issues which are not adequately addressed by the documents accompanying the application.

While, in theory, it is inarguable that dog owners need safe places where they can take their dogs to run freely, such areas need to be properly supervised, with strict policies and rules of use and a comprehensive plan for running the park effectively. None of these are included in, or even referred to, in the application. The Council should satisfy itself on such points before permitting the use.

In terms of built structures, the application merely refers to the erection of 2m high fencing around the site, necessitated by the use and potentially unsightly and urbanising by its appearance. However the Design and Access Statement says that 10 - 15 staff will be employed to ensure the dogs are supervised at all times. There is no reference to facilities (toilets, catering, etc) to support these staff as required under Welfare at Work legislation. Similarly there are references to equipment to be used in conjunction with the park, but no mention of where these will be stored. It is also the intention to run social and educational events, again with no indication as to where these will be held. The Council should clarify with the applicant their intended ways of dealing with these points and, if future structures are

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CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

President: Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO
Chairman: Richard Bullen

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intended to be provided, that they will be subject to separate planning applications as they will impact on the openness of the Green Belt

The Design and Access Statement states that the site will be in use from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. It therefore follows that during the winter months lighting will be necessary to ensure safe use of the area. The application makes no mention of any lighting. This point also needs to be clarified before approval is considered as the provision of lighting would have a detrimental impact on the Green Belt.

The application makes passing references to the disposal of waste, but there is insufficient detail as to the arrangements being made for the ongoing maintenance of the land, the storage of mowing equipment or the frequency of the work. These are also points on which the Council must satisfy itself before granting approval.

We would be concerned if the Council were to grant approval on the basis of the information provided with the application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving