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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Eilis Edmonds
Development Management
Neighbourhood Services
East Hertfordshire District Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

18th November 2020 (by email)

Dear Eilis Edmonds,

Application No 3/20/2034/FUL
Construction of 1 detached dwelling with 2 off-street car parking spaces.
Land Adjacent To 2 Church Cottages, Church End, Albury, Hertfordshire SG11 2JQ

CPRE Hertfordshire object to this proposal for residential development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt which will adversely impact the setting of three adjoining listed buildings contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and the East Herts District Plan.

Unfortunately, aspects of the documentation accompanying the application are inadequate and do not address the issues raised. Annex 1 of the Design and Access Statement intended to cover the Planning Policy aspects of the application merely quotes verbatim paragraphs and policies from the East Herts District Plan without providing any demonstration of how this development complies with those policies or how the planning balance would be affected by them. There is no mention whatsoever of the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Similarly, the Heritage Statement makes no reference to the NPPF, focuses solely on the adjoining Grade II listed cottages and completely ignores the Grade II* St Mary's Church. The bulk of the Heritage Statement is a regurgitation of the Design and Access Statement attempting to demonstrate that the design of the new building takes cues from the cottages. There is no recognition that impact on the setting of listed buildings is also a material point. As the Court judgement in *Forge Field Society v Sevenoaks District Council* [EWHC 1895 (Admin)] held: *"When an authority finds that a proposed development would harm the setting of a listed building it must give that harm considerable importance and weight."*

As we have mentioned, both Church Cottages are Grade II listed and St Mary's Church is Grade II*, making it one of the most significant churches in the District from a heritage point of view. This site is under 50m from the door of the church and 20m from the churchyard.

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

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This proposed development therefore needs to be considered under the provisions of paragraphs 190 - 195 of the National Planning Policy Framework. These require the Council to assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal and to take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on that heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

This building sits on land which is stated to be part of the curtilage of No. 2 Church Cottages (though we note that one respondent questions this and it does not appear to be so on the ground.) Consequently, it will have a direct impact on the setting of its listed neighbour through sheer proximity. The Heritage Statement seems to miss this point as its summary says: "The impact on the heritage assets of the Listed Building will be minimal given that the proposed project is situated on the land adjacent to 2 Church Cottages."

Part of the distinction of St Mary's Church is that it forms a landmark on top of a hill. Probably the best view of the church is that coming up the hill from Clapgate. That view would be completely obliterated by this development, inexorably damaging the church's setting. This is contrary to District Plan Policy HA7 which seeks to sustain and enhance the significance of listed buildings and states that proposals that affect the setting of a listed building will only be permitted where the setting of the building is preserved, and Policy VILL3 which requires development not to unacceptably block important views or vistas.

Throughout the Design and Access Statement it is asserted that the new building has been designed to take into account the ridge and eaves heights of the adjoining listed cottages and that "the rhythm of the windows on cottages 1 and 2 are replicated in the new house design." They are not. The windows in the cottages are small in size, with varying sill heights, different sizes and with leaded fenestration. Those in the proposed building are full height, floor to ceiling, single pane windows, the complete opposite of those in the cottages. The existing cottages are thatched. The new building has a slate tiled roof with roof lights, again the complete opposite of the cottages. In terms of its overall design it is quite unlike any other building in the settlement and will introduce an incongruous element. This is contrary to Policy GBR2 which requires development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt to be compatible with the character and appearance of the rural area and Policy VILL3 which requires development in category 3 villages to be in keeping with the character of the village.

District Plan Policy GBR2 allows for the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed sites (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings) in sustainable locations, where appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the site and/or surrounding area. As we have noted above, there is some doubt as to whether this site can be considered as brownfield land. While it may be in the same ownership, it is separated from no. 2 Church Cottages by a mature hedge and has its



own gated access from the road. It is currently under cultivation. On the ground it does not appear to be part of the curtilage of the cottage. We have already pointed out that the appearance of the proposed dwelling is not in character with the surrounding area and that its siting will harm the setting of the adjoining listed buildings.

In terms of sustainability, Albury is essentially a loose conglomeration of hamlets. Apart from the village hall and primary school, facilities are extremely limited. The nearest settlement with a range of social, educational, retail and health facilities is Bishops Stortford 6km away. Consequently, the residents of this property will be car dependent and the site is not in a sustainable location as required by policy GBR2.

In our view this proposal is inappropriately located, damaging to heritage assets and their setting and out of character with the village and we urge the Council to reject it.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving
Senior Planning Volunteer
CPRE Hertfordshire