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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Susie Defoe
Development Control
East Hertfordshire District Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

27th May 2020 (by email)

Dear Ms. Defoe,

Application No 3/20/0717/FUL
Change of use of land from agricultural/equestrian to residential and erection of a new two
bedroom dwelling with associated parking
at Rooks Nest Paddock, Stevenage Road, Walkern, Hertfordshire

CPRE Hertfordshire object to this latest proposal for residential development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt. Previous application 3/18/2336/FUL was refused by the Council and application 3/19/1086/FUL was both refused by the Council and dismissed on appeal.

The applicant now moves the proposed development to a third location within the farm complex, but the principles which led to the appeal dismissal remain.

As with the previous applications, this proposal will insert a residential building and domestic curtilage into an agricultural area outside of the Walkern settlement boundary, contrary to District Plan Policies DES4, GBR2 and VILL1. Similarly, it does not comply with Policy 9 of the Walkern Neighbourhood Plan. The site was put forward for consideration in the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and rejected at that stage as unsuitable for residential development.

Paragraph 2.2 of the Planning Statement accompanying the application states that "*the proposed dwelling has been moved further to the east where it would replace a group of existing buildings/structures with a similar combined footprint.*"

However, from the information in the Application Form and the presented plans, that does not appear to be entirely correct. The existing buildings/structures shown on the plans consist of a chicken shed, two covered stores, two containers and a container lorry with, according to the Application Form, a combined footprint of 43 sq.m. (In our view the container lorry should be discounted as it is not a permanent structure). The footprint of the proposed dwelling is

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shown on the plans as being 87 sq.m. with a further 45 sq.m. of floor space on the first floor. That is hardly a 'similar combined footprint', it is more than double.

The existing structures, though of differing heights, are all low, with flat roofs. The proposed house is one and a half storeys with dormer windows in the roof. Consequently in both scale and mass it will have a significantly greater spatial and visual impact.

In his decision notice APP/J1915/W/19/3236656, the appeal inspector notes that in relation to the requirements of the District Plan policies "*on account of the location of the proposed dwelling, it does not fulfil these criteria. ... I do not appear to have any evidence that is indicative of the site being a Rural Exception Housing site. Furthermore, owing to the pattern of development in the vicinity, the scheme cannot be described as being an infill.*" (paras 4 & 5). He goes on to make the point that "*the proposed building would be sited on land that is notably higher than Stevenage Road. As a result, the proposed building would appear as a particularly prominent addition to the landscape. Given that this side of Stevenage Road can be characterised by the presence of fields and paddocks interspersed with smaller scale buildings associated with the use of the land, the proposed dwelling would appear to be incongruous.*" (para 9). On the design of the building he concludes "*Whilst I note efforts made by the appellant to design a dwelling informed by its rural context, such as by using wood cladding, I do not believe that this would overcome the harm arising from the bulk and massing of the development.*"

As all of these points would apply equally to the building in this application, it is difficult to justify arriving at a contrary planning balance. Consequently we urge the Council to reject this application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving