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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Ms Marie Laidler
Planning and Development
Borough of Broxbourne
Bishop's College
Churchgate
Cheshunt
EN8 9XQ

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

3rd February 2021 (by email)

Dear Ms Laidler,

Application: 07/20/1171/O
Darnicle Hill Nursery, Darnicle Hill, Cheshunt, EN7 5TB
Demolition of existing buildings and provision of 29 residential custom-build plots.
Associated roads, landscaping and boundary fences.

This application is one of a number of similar applications for former nursery and horticultural establishments which are being promoted for housing use in this area. Darnicle Hill Nursery is subject to the protections afforded by the Green Belt in the relevant planning legislation and we object to this proposal for the following reasons:

1. The site is not allocated for development in the adopted Broxbourne Local Plan which identifies the specific circumstances of the glass house industry in Chapter 26 and Policy GB2: Residential Development on Derelict Glass House Sites. Policy GB2 envisages self-build and custom build housing for derelict glass house sites in the Green Belt and where permitted, the Council would seek to 'prevent urban sprawl', and low densities in sustainable locations while maintaining the openness of the Green Belt.
2. Notwithstanding the clear intention of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to maintain protection of the Green Belt, the Council's adopted Local Plan permits the development of derelict glass houses but places significant constraints on any proposed development. It is our view that these have not been met in this application.
3. The Planning Statement notes that the proposal covers 5.8 hectares of which only 2.8 hectares are occupied by glass houses that accommodate a specific lettuce growing system and that the activity has developed to include more commercial and industrial processes to include cleaning, sorting and packing processes, albeit within low rise sheds. The applicant notes the changes in the horticultural sector in the UK as making the present businesses on the site unviable, but the glass houses are not derelict and

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activity is still taking place and we support the Council's pre-application advice of March 2020.

4. No evidence has been submitted regarding economic viability other than generalised statements, and this is a requirement of Policy GB2. The only apparent reference to the 'full viability' mentioned in the Planning Statement is a single page plan of phases of a building programme. On a more general point, there is reason to consider whether the economic circumstances surrounding home grown produce may not change in the future, and this should be encouraged.
5. The essence of the English Domestic Revival movement, quoted at length by the applicants as a guiding set of principles, was the use of a rich palette of architectural techniques within a high quality environmental setting. Proposed Government advice issued recently for consultation emphasises the importance of good housing design, particularly in the countryside. The promotion of a maximum of eight standard house types is entirely inappropriate and at odds with the ethos of the English Domestic Revival movement, and the proposed minimal design code appears primarily as a promotional aid rather than a serious attempt to achieve high quality design.
6. The proposed layout constitutes a gross intrusion into the Green Belt with an excessive number of housing units providing a major extension of the built-up area in contravention of both local and national policy.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager