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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

James Gardner
Planning and Development
Dacorum Borough Council
Civic Centre
Marlowe
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire HP1 1HH

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

23rd April 2021 (by email)

Dear Mr. Gardner,

Application No. 21/01238/FUL
Plot 1, Upper Bourne End Lane, Hemel Hempstead
Change of use from agricultural land to Sui Generis for the purpose of facilitating a health sanatorium.

I write with reference to the above application to express a number of concerns regarding the proposed change of use and its potential impact on the Green Belt as follows.

1. The land identified for this proposed change of use is located within the London Metropolitan Green Belt as identified in the Dacorum Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as revised in February 2019 requires land designated as Green Belt to be kept "permanently open" (para. 133) and "inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances" (para. 143).
2. The proposed use in this case; "Sui Generis for the purposes of facilitating a health sanatorium" is regarded by the applicant as a limited and appropriate recreational use for the Green Belt, utilising, as noted in their Planning Statement, the open nature of the proposal site and low intensity and impacts of the activity proposed. The site area comprises a limited area, tightly bounding a site for a proposed temporary structure, and the narrow track leading to the site.
3. The use proposed, according to the Planning Statement, relates to personal health and well-being, utilising "open-air" and "green space", and the applicant notes that "it's important to have a rural and countryside environment for patients". Whereas such uses may be seen as compatible with a Green Belt location, no limits are identified for the number or type of "patients" anticipated.
4. CPRE Hertfordshire concerns relate to the incomplete nature of the application, specifically in relation to the building identified in the applicant's Accompanying Statement, and the provision of services and facilities for the operation of a health sanatorium. The usual definition of a sanatorium is a residential convalescent facility,

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

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and reference is made to pre-application advice from the Council, but there is no record of the content or result of those discussions in the posted application documentation.

5. The proposed temporary building, which is not included in this application and notwithstanding its relatively isolated position, would impact on the openness of the Green Belt in this location and introduce an additional built element into this open landscape. No indication is provided of any boundary treatment or planting which would mitigate this impact and we suggest that, if permission is granted, such provision should be conditioned.
6. No indication is provided of mains utilities services, specifically of water and electricity supply, which may be regarded as essential provisions for a health facility. Reference is made in the Planning Statement to a package sewage treatment solution and that waste generated is anticipated to be of a domestic nature and removed by the operator.
7. The Council should seek further information on the provision of utilities including water and electricity supplies and sewage disposal which would be likely to require further works and increase the impact of the proposal on the open countryside. If permission is to be granted, planning conditions should be imposed to limit the intensity of use or activity beyond the domestic scale presently proposed.
8. The area surrounding the application site has been the subject of many applications for a variety of uses which have a cumulative effect on the quality and openness of the countryside. The Council needs to satisfy itself that these cumulative effects, which would be exacerbated by this application, do not jeopardise the functions of the Green Belt in maintaining open countryside in line with local and national planning policy.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager