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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Common Land Team
Planning Inspectorate
3F Temple Quay House
Temple Quay
BRISTOL
BS1 6PN

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

3rd February 2021 (by email)

commonlandcaseowork@planninginspectorate.gov.uk

Dear Sir or Madam,

Commons Act 2006: Section 16.
Application ref: COM/3262817
Proposed Deregistration of Land on Woodcock Hill, Hertfordshire

I write in response to the report by Pegasus Group in respect of CPRE Hertfordshire's (CPREH) strong objection to the de-registration of Woodcock Hill as Common Land. I refer to our previous correspondence dated 17th July 2020 and 18th November 2020 from David Irving, and have undertaken a detailed review of the submission by Pegasus Group in January 2021 on behalf of Taylor Wimpey in response to objectors.

The Pegasus group submission does not address adequately the objections raised by both CPREH and other bodies and individuals. We would wish to maintain and re-emphasise our objection to the de-registration of this locally highly valued common land both in the terms of our former submissions as noted above, and for the following reasons:

1. The above Pegasus response again seeks to separate consideration of the deregistration of the land from Taylor Wimpey's intention to develop the site if it is deregistered. This denial of a link continues to be self-evidently disingenuous and in fact the consultant quotes the Taylor Wimpey website in para. 2.1 of their response:
"This consultation is not linked to any potential housing development at this site and is solely related to providing an enhanced Village Green for the local community. However, if this Application ...is successful then Taylor Wimpey intends to promote the Release land for residential allocation in the emerging Hertsmere Local Plan".
2. Issues relating to deregistration and potential future uses of the site would clearly be subject to different elements of the statutory planning process but these in no way diminish the concerns relating to the present status and functions of the Common

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CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

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

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Land which would be severely detrimentally affected by the applicant's proposals. We repeat that it is clear that Taylor Wimpey, and their predecessor in title, Laing Homes have always intended to use the section of village green now proposed for deregistration for residential development and have publicly stated the fact.

3. Similarly, the Pegasus comments regarding accessibility to both the existing Common Land and proposed alternative location are not germane and great play is made of challenging specific concerns raised by various local bodies referring to the 'Replacement' land. It is our view that these issues are not relevant to the matters under consideration which should remain to be the present uses and importance of the Common Land to the local community and beyond.
4. Concerns remain regarding the differences between the Common Land and 'Replacement' land in respect of biodiversity and general environmental matters and these are not satisfactorily addressed by the Pegasus Group submission. In our view the key issue is the present nature of the Common Land and we do not consider the Replacement land as "an environment comparable to that of the retained Village Green...".
5. Moreover, the suggestion that the Replacement land would provide increased opportunities for greater use than the Common Land for recreation purposes is irrelevant and misleading. The present use of the Common Land is valued highly by the local community and remarks concerning the potential installation of fencing maintaining "its open and rural state" and being in keeping with the character of the area are highly inappropriate.
6. The submission by Pegasus Group does not address the issue of local community maintenance and support for the Common Land, which continue to be key elements in the need to maintain the registration, as noted in previous submissions by CPREH and others. As noted previously, the submission of the Section 16 Notice suggested that the Common Land was only managed by "occasional volunteers". This is clearly not the case given the involvement of the Woodcock Hill Village Green Trust and CPREH urges Taylor Wimpey to gift the land in perpetuity to the Trust without conditions.
7. Further, the response does not address the matter of the Local Wildlife Site designation and the specific rural character of the Common Land. The previous



introduction of “enhancements”, since scaled back, indicate a lack of understanding of the nature of the land and its distinctive contribution to the character of the local area which would be lost in the event of development taking place.

In conclusion we would refer to the previous submissions made in respect of the deregistration as noted above, and urge the determination of this application in favour of the maintenance of the registration of Common Land.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager
CPRE Hertfordshire