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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Ruth Ambrose
Planning and Building Control
St. Albans City and District Council
St. Peter's Street
St. Albans
Herts AL1 3JE

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

19th November 2021 (by email)

Dear Ms Ambrose,

Application no. 5/2021/2730
Land off Orchard Drive, Park Street, St Albans
Construction of up to 30 dwellings with garages and associated parking etc

I write with reference to the above application which is to all intents and purposes the same proposal as has been submitted twice previously for the same site; once refused and a subsequent application withdrawn. The applicant is clear in their Planning Statement that the sole reason for the resubmission is the recent planning appeal decision at Bullens Green Lane, Colney Heath and that there are no material changes from the previous applications in the present submission.

CPRE Hertfordshire continues to object to this application due to its location in the London Metropolitan Green Belt for the reasons previously stated. The applicant acknowledges that the proposal represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt, but refers to the appeal decision cited above to constitute the 'very special circumstances' required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to enable a permission to be granted.

The recent appeal decision at Coney Heath relates only to the circumstances pertaining to that location and each application should be determined on its merits. CPRE Hertfordshire believes that there have been no material changes in circumstances since the previous refusal in 2018 and that the matter of housing land supply should not over-ride the guidance in paragraph 11 of the NPPF which enables a Local Planning Authority to take account of designated protected areas, including Green Belt, when making planning application decisions.

We suggest that, in the light of the forth-coming Planning Bill and amendments to technical guidance and the NPPF, which should clarify what are becoming inconsistencies in the interpretation of planning guidance with regard to the relationship between housing need and designated protected areas, a decision on this application would be premature. Previous cases established that the lack of a five year housing supply was only one consideration in the

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President: Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO
Chairman: Allan McNab

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determination of planning applications in the Green Belt, but recent decisions are challenging this position.

As an essential characteristic of the Green Belt is its permanence, it is appropriate to maintain the protection afforded by its designation and the site should be considered against the Green Belt policies in the adopted St Albans Local Plan. On this basis, the proposal represents inappropriate development which will cause harm to the openness, and other harm, to the Green Belt, and we urge the Council to maintain its previous position and refuse this application.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager