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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Peter Bull
Planning and Building Control
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Herts SG6 3JF

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

8th December 2021 (by email)

Dear Mr Bull,

Application 21/03122/FP
Land between Gragil and 29 Danesbury Park Road, Welwyn
Erection of four detached buildings to facilitate sustainable vertical farm
including cold storage area for distribution and farm shop

I write with regard to the above planning application to raise issues relating to the present and a possible past application on this site. The Planning Statement by Parker Barry consultants for the present application notes that there is no planning history, but we have a record of an application no. 17/00320/1 for 4 detached dwellings and a wildlife garden, which appears to occupy the same site. This application was refused and dismissed at appeal.

As the consultants note, the site lies in the London Metropolitan Green Belt and the argument is made that the proposed development is acceptable by virtue of being an agricultural use which is appropriate in this location. The proposed development is also promoted as agricultural barn-style buildings which are suitable for this semi-rural setting.

It is clear that the proposal is for four modern detached buildings placed centrally in a large field which will encroach on open countryside and have the greatest possible visual impact in the area. There is no attempt to locate the buildings in conjunction with any other development or to reduce their impact on the countryside and this appears to be a lost opportunity.

CPRE Hertfordshire supports appropriate agricultural activities and encourages rural vitality wherever possible and present definitions of agricultural use as applied to Green Belt locations are likely to make it difficult to object to this application in principle. We would urge the Council, however, to seek a more sensitive solution which reduces the undeniable impact of these substantial buildings and associated service area in an important Green Belt location.

It may be said that the proposed development is more akin to an industrial installation than an agricultural use compatible with the requirements of the Green Belt. This use could be

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placed anywhere with the appropriate services and facilities and does not require an open countryside location.

We also note that there seems to be significantly insufficient provision, including parking, for the proposed farm shop use and in any case this may be inappropriate in this location due to inadequate access and other related issues.

If permission is to be granted, we would ask the Council to place stringent conditions to ameliorate the impact of this development as much as possible. This could be achieved by significant landscaping and the possible relocation of the buildings away from the centre of the site where it will inflict the most harm.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager