



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

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

11th March 2022 (by email)

Dear Case Officer,

Application no. 5/2022/0267

Land between Caravan Site and Watling Street, Park Street, St Albans

Outline application (access) - erection of up to 95 dwellings, including 40% affordable dwellings and 5% self-build and custom build dwellings, public open space, landscaping and associated infrastructure

I write with reference to the above planning application. CPRE Hertfordshire strongly objects to this speculative residential development proposal for the following reasons.

1. The site is located in the London Metropolitan Green Belt as defined in the adopted St Albans District Local Plan Review according to criteria identified in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Policy 1 indicates that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless Very Special Circumstances (VSC) can be demonstrated.
2. The Planning Statement prepared by consultants Maddox Planning seeks to justify the provision of inappropriate development in the Green Belt by quoting previous decisions by a Planning Inspector at Colney Heath, and by St Albans City District Council at Sewell Park and Orchard Drive, Park Street permitting development in the Green Belt. The consultants will be aware that decisions on planning permission are based on the circumstances of each case and do not follow precedent.
3. The Planning Inspector at Colney Heath was careful to indicate in her decision report that it did not provide a precedent for other sites where different circumstances would clearly apply. The justification for the decisions on the two applications to St Albans Council similarly quoted the inadequacy of housing land supply and CPRE Hertfordshire believes this arises from an incorrect interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Paragraph 11 (and footnotes).
4. This also clearly affects the issues relating to the determination of planning applications which require the demonstration of VSC. It is thus inappropriate to suggest that housing need, unconstrained by the policy requirements to protect designated land, should constitute VSC.



5. This position has been re-emphasised by the Minister for Housing in a recent Parliamentary response to Daisy Cooper MP for St Albans when he noted that: “Our commitment to the Green Belt is absolutely steadfast” (Hansard, Nov 21, 2021) and “Local authorities, through their planning policies and decisions, should show consideration of all relevant policies in the NPPF, including protection of the natural environment, irreplaceable habitats and valued landscapes” (op cit.).
6. The Applicant’s Planning Statement continues to suggest that the proposed site does not satisfy the purposes of the Green Belt as identified in the NPPF. CPRE Hertfordshire refutes entirely these assertions as the proposal constitutes a clear encroachment into open countryside with a significant effect on its openness and character in this location, and would lead to further urban sprawl in an area already subject to degradation of the Green Belt.
7. No significant attempt is made in the Planning Statement or elsewhere in the submission to demonstrate the VSC which should apply in this case. There is extensive discussion of the planning balance and the various weights which should be attached to the usual considerations for determination of a planning application.
8. This is not in any way equivalent to the treatment of issues with regard to designated protected land which places a very significant policy constraint on any proposed development. Thus, issues raised by the Applicant’s consultant, for example with regard to affordable housing, self-build and custom-build, biodiversity net gain and economic benefits are no more than necessary for policy compliance and would apply to any similar development proposal on unprotected land.
9. In conclusion, it is not appropriate for potential developers to argue that housing need overrides the requirements of protected land, and this has been reinforced by the recent appeal decision at Broke Hill, Sevenoaks. CPRE Hertfordshire urges the Council to take account of the requirements for protecting designated land indicated in the NPPF and refuse this damaging and speculative application.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager