



Rebecca Elliott  
Development Management  
Stevenage Borough Council  
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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

12<sup>th</sup> October 2022 (by email)

Dear Rebecca Elliott,

**Applications no. 22/00781/RMM , 22/00806/RMM , 22/00808/RMM , 22/00810/RMM  
Land North of Stevenage**

**4 x Reserved matters Applications: Applications for approval of reserved matters (layout, landscaping, scale, and appearance) for residential development of 358 units comprising Phase 1 Parcels A-C and commercial unit (Use Class E) pursuant to Outline permission 17/00862/OPM**

I write with reference to the above reserved matters applications for residential development, including the Country Park, following the recent granting of outline planning permission. CPRE Hertfordshire has a long history of objection to the release of the Green Belt land known as 'Forster Country' for residential development, and continues to be concerned that the detailed proposals by developers are of insufficient quality and scope, given the significance of the area in landscape and heritage terms.

We believe there is a specific responsibility to achieve the highest possible quality of development when the land was previously designated as protected to preserve its rural character permanently. This responsibility is compounded by the environmental requirements of recent legislation, including Climate Change Acts, and given the length of time that has elapsed since the original application, it is appropriate to review key objectives and components of the proposed development at this reserved matters. Specific CPRE Hertfordshire concerns are as follows.

1. The provision of the proposed car-park (App no 22/00781) within the Green Belt identified for the County Park is hugely regrettable and an entirely inappropriate feature within land which should form an open countryside setting to Rooks Nest House and the St Nicholas Church and Rectory Lane Conservation Area. The provision of municipal type facilities in this area introduces alien features into this highly valued rural landscape, and runs counter to the intention of the Applicant which is stated as: "(restoration) as hay meadows to the approximate field patterns that would have existed historically" (Planning Statement, Savills, para 3.2)



2. The constant references in the Planning Statement to future management of the Country Park by Stevenage Borough Council and the proposed installation of infrastructure such as the toilet block, hard-standing, bins and tarmac are incompatible with the assertion by the Applicants that the proposals “provide for the creation of 38 ha of informal open space for use by the general public” (op cit para. 3.2). The proposed car-park and toilet building will degrade the open character of the countryside and if such facilities are to be provided, they should be incorporated into areas identified for development outside the Green Belt.
3. With regard to the reserved matters applications for the residential and other development, the primary concern is of a major opportunity lost with regard to the establishment of high quality and appropriate development on land that was originally designated to be protected from inappropriate development permanently. The Applicant’s Planning Statement relating to planning application number 22/00806 (RMA: Phase 1 Parcel D) notes the promotion of three ‘Character Areas’ for new housing.
4. The over-whelming impression of the plans submitted, both in terms of street layout and housing types, is of standard housing estates with scant attention paid to principles of good urban design, sustainable transport, or the development of a coherent neighbourhood and sense of place. The recently published ‘A Housing Audit for England (2020)’ undertaken by the Place Alliance and supported by CPRE, identified the lack of design quality in developments on 142 greenfield sites throughout the country, and the criteria utilised in that study would be likely to provide a similar assessment when applied to this application.
5. The lack of ambition with regard to the standard house types proposed together with inadequate landscaping and drainage treatments is most disappointing, when there is the opportunity to provide an exemplar development as part of an extension to Stevenage Old Town, demonstrating innovative design and provision which addresses the challenges of climate change in a sensitive and valued location. The increasing requirements to take account of environmental issues, as evidenced by the enactment of the Climate Change Acts and related legislation, should encourage innovation and higher standards.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry  
Planning Manager