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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Adam Ralton
Development Management
Three Rivers District Council
Three Rivers House
Northway, Rickmansworth
Herts. WD3 1RL

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

26th April 2024 (by email)

Dear Adam Ralton,

Application no. 24/0476/OUT

**Land East of Green Street and North of Orchard Drive, Green Street, Chorleywood
Demolition of the existing farm building and comprehensive development of the site,
delivering up to 300 no. residential dwellings (Use Class C3), associated access, and
supporting amenity space, landscaping, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage
systems**

AND

Application no. 24/0538/OUT

**Land East of Green Street and North of Orchard Drive, Green Street, Chorleywood
Demolition of the existing farm building and comprehensive development of the site,
delivering up to 675 no. residential dwellings (Use Class C3), a new two-form entry primary
school, associated access, and supporting amenity space, landscaping, green infrastructure
and sustainable drainage systems**

I write with regard to the above applications to which CPRE Hertfordshire objects strongly for the reasons noted below. This follows a previous consultation response to applications 20/0898/OUT and 20/0882/OUT, which were for the same linked sites, submitted by CPRE Hertfordshire on 3rd July 2020.

The present applications are effectively a re-submission of the previous proposals which were refused planning permission on 28th March 2023 and reference may be made to our previous comprehensive submission as noted above. The Planning Statements for each application are effectively identical, as they were in 2020, varying only in this submission in the slightly reduced number of units and the proposed provision of a two-form entry primary school in application no. 24/0538/OUT.

CPRE Hertfordshire believes that there has been no effective change in conditions or the circumstances affecting the sites. We remain firmly opposed to the present applications, support fully the Council's previous decisions with regard to these very similar proposals and re-iterate our concerns as follows.

CPRE is working nationally and locally for a beautiful and living countryside

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

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

Registered Charity 1162419



1. CPRE Hertfordshire objects to these applications for inappropriate development in the Green Belt and the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly AONB), contrary to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the current Three Rivers Development Plan and the Chilterns AONB Management Plan.
2. The sites are currently open farmland on the eastern side of Green Street, outside the Chorleywood settlement boundary and not included in either the adopted Three Rivers Site Allocation Local Development Document, nor the emerging Three Rivers Local Plan. The sites lie entirely within the Green Belt and the Chilterns National Landscape (formerly AONB) where, under the provisions of the NPPF and the Three Rivers Development Plan, the applicant has to demonstrate very special circumstances sufficient to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt caused by inappropriate development.
3. In these cases, there is the additional harm caused to the Chilterns National Landscape whose significant is such that there continues to be consideration of its designation as a National Park and further extension in area. We noted previously the findings of the Final Report of the Landscapes Review of National Parks and AONBs commissioned by the Government and published in September 2019, with regard to the then Chilterns AONB: "In the south east of England, in particular, the pressure of development is immense and may only get greater. Some national landscapes, the Chilterns for instance, risk changing very fast as a result and mostly not for the better. We shouldn't just accept this as sadly unavoidable."
4. The Final Report continues to state: "The 'exceptional circumstances' provision in the National Planning Policy Framework, which was intended to limit development in national landscapes, is being used to argue for major development instead, on the grounds that no other sites outside AONBs are available. We believe strongly that this is in contravention of the purpose of designation."(pages 102 and 107). CPRE Hertfordshire believes that the circumstances affecting the Chilterns National Landscape have become even more relevant in the last five years due to the continuing development affecting open countryside throughout the County.
5. The documentation accompanying both applications is, as previously, extensive but the essential decision remains with the planning balance as indicated in the NPPF paragraph. 11(d) (Presumption in favour of sustainable development) and footnote 7, and Sections 13 (Protecting Green Belt land) and 15 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment). Our previous submission (03.07.20) outlines the legal



interpretation of the relevant sections of the NPPF and debate continues with regard to the significance of future housing need and provision in designated Green Belt.

6. What is not in doubt is the clear position stated in Section 15 of the NPPF regarding National Landscapes (formerly AONB) which states in paragraph 163: “When considering applications for development within... Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now ‘National Landscapes’), permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances.”
7. The Applicant attempts to argue that in the cases of both the Green Belt and Chilterns National Landscape, these designations do not provide clear enough reasons for refusing the proposed developments. CPRE Hertfordshire profoundly disagrees with these assertions with regard to both the purposes of the Green Belt as noted in Section 13 of the NPPF, and the value and critical importance of National Landscapes as identified in Section 15.
8. With regard to Green Belt purposes, the Applicant accepts that the proposed development is on the urban fringes of Chorleywood but suggests that this is not “unrestricted sprawl” which is clearly wrong. Green Belt policy is precisely aimed at preventing sprawl and the magnitude of these proposals comprises an egregious example of inappropriate development and encroachment into open countryside, as is accepted by the Applicant.
9. We disagree profoundly that “the proposed development will not result in significant landscape or visual effects on the wider area, including the Chilterns AONB (sic)”. A proposed development of up to 675 units within the Chilterns National Landscape will self-evidently have a substantial impact on the surrounding open countryside.
10. The Applicant asserts that “the majority of the reasons (*for the previous refusals of planning permission*) related to the absence of a section 106 agreement to secure required obligations (seq)”. This is a deeply misleading statement.
11. Reasons 1, 2 and 3 refer to the undoubted harm which would be caused to the Green Belt, Chilterns National Landscape and the wider rural character and appearance of the area by the proposed major development. These are well supported, robust and policy based reasons for refusal and the remaining seven reasons for refusal relate to planning obligations and requirements which may or may not be satisfied by subsequent negotiations between the Council and Applicant.
12. The list of obligations are little more than would be expected of any development of the magnitude proposed, including educational provision. The “very special circumstances”



required to be demonstrated by the NPPF should relate to specific conditions and circumstances of the site and not a general lack of housing, services and facilities which can be provided in a wide variety of more suitable locations.

13. In summary, we maintain our strong opposition to these proposed developments, as initially expressed in July 2020, and fully support the local community concerns and previous Council decisions. We urge the Council to continue to refuse permission for these speculative and inappropriate developments.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager

NOTE: We would request that this letter is published on the Council's website as a document relating to this application and should be grateful if you would notify us of the date of the appropriate meeting if it is to be determined by planning committee.