



James Gardner  
Planning & Development  
Dacorum Borough Council  
The Forum, Marlowes  
Hemel Hempstead  
Herts. HP1 1DN

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

5<sup>th</sup> April 2024 (by email)

Dear James Gardner,

**Application no. 24/00330/MFA**  
**Haresfoot Farm, Chesham Road, Berkhamsted, HP4 2SU**  
**Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide 86 residential units (market and affordable), construction of a community hub building, together with associated landscaping, open space, parking, and highway improvement**

I write with regard to the above application to which CPRE Hertfordshire objects strongly for the following reasons.

1. The land identified for this proposed development is designated as London Metropolitan Green Belt in the adopted Dacorum Core Strategy where development is seen as inappropriate unless very special circumstances are identified which clearly outweigh the harms caused, according to criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
2. The Planning Statement prepared by consultants for the Applicant seeks to suggest that the site is "previously developed" and "adjacent to a defined settlement" (reference page 12 Planning Policy). It is clearly not adjacent to a settlement, being outside the built-up area of Berkhamsted, entirely surrounded by open countryside, most of which is proposed as Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) in an associated application.
3. The varied and extensive planning history affecting the site indicates a gradual build-up of various uses of both commercial and equestrian activities which have changed the nature of the original agricultural use to some extent by adding low-rise shed type buildings and hard-standings. Specific reference is made to the appeal decision (APP/A1910/C/20/3249358) permitting new buildings and allowing some intensification of existing uses.



4. The appeal decision was however partial and significant attention was paid by the Inspector to Green Belt issues, and specifically the effect on openness of existing and proposed buildings. It is clear from the Inspector's decision that the generally rural character of both the existing development and surrounding area is significant and should be maintained.
5. It is therefore not appropriate to suggest that the introduction of a completely different use, that is, a residential housing estate, should be permitted on the basis of consents granted for the intensification of uses which have been seen previously as compatible with a Green Belt location. The total redevelopment of the site marks a considerable departure from the previous planning history which is made up of numerous consents and refusals of permission for a wide variety of relatively low intensity uses over a period of many years.
6. The proposed site is an unsustainable location for a residential development of 86 units with personal and community services such as schools and medical facilities requiring private vehicle use or a significant walk or cycle journey. For example, the location of Ashlyns School, which is presently significantly over-subscribed, is noted as being accessible "within a 15 to 20 minute walk" with the use of the road network, and there is no indication of local primary or other school or community provision, other than a small "community hub building".
7. Public transport is almost entirely lacking in the area and the quantum of development proposed, while causing landscape and visual impacts, will not be sufficient to support special or even additional provision from the existing limited bus services. The local limited network of small country lanes surrounding the site will be detrimentally affected by the inevitable increased car usage from over 80 dwellings and over 200 car-parking spaces.
8. There is evidence of significant deterioration of the lanes in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development. Further increased usage will affect existing local users, rural residents and businesses which are already impacted by lack of maintenance and inadequate road capacity.
9. The proposed total redevelopment envisages the demolition of the existing original farm buildings as well as the more modern additions. There will be significant impacts on the rural character of the area caused by the demolition of extensive farm buildings which also contribute to the heritage context.
10. Notwithstanding the promotion of the previously developed nature of the site as justification for the proposed development, which we challenge as above, 'very special



circumstances' are also promoted in terms of a range of benefits. According to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), these need to clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt which we believe will be detrimentally affected by the total redevelopment of the site, affecting both the visual and landscape characteristics of the area.

11. The very special circumstances identified relate primarily to the provision of housing of various types, highway and environmental provision, and economic benefits, all of which would be anticipated from any similar development of this size and nature. We believe that very special circumstances should be related to the specific conditions of the site and surrounding area.
12. We support local community concerns relating to local services, facilities and the gradual deterioration of the farm and buildings due in part to unauthorised development over a period of years. A significant development south of the A41 and well outside the built-up area of Berkhamsted would comprise a significant encroachment into the Green Belt, and we urge the Council to refuse permission for this unsustainable and inappropriate proposal.

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.