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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

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

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

19th February 2025 (by email)

Dear Case Officer,

Planning application no. 5/2025/0068
Land at Colne Spring Villa, Coursers Road, Colney Heath
Section 62a designation - Erection of eco-village comprising 9 dwellings and community hub
with associated access, parking and landscaping

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

1. The land identified for this proposed development is designated as London Metropolitan Green Belt in the adopted St Albans District Local Plan Review where development is stated 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 site is beyond the built-up area of Roestock, Colney Heath and constitutes a clear encroachment on the countryside in this location, north of the area known as Frederick's Wood. Colney Heath and the surrounding area has been subject to unrelenting pressure for unplanned residential and other development which is bringing the planning system into disrepute.
3. The applicant's Planning Statement (PS) seeks to argue that the site is 'grey belt' within the definition introduced in paragraph 155 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and therefore development in the Green Belt is not inappropriate. Further, the PS in the table following paragraph 6.1.20 asserts that the proposed development does not constitute urban sprawl as identified in purpose a) for the Green Belt (NPPF paragraph 143).
4. CPRE Hertfordshire refutes utterly this assertion in stating that the proposed development is a prime example of urban sprawl, thus providing the strong reason for refusing this application in the Green Belt. The assertion of the site as 'grey belt' is also

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clearly entirely unacceptable as it is not previously developed land and so it makes a contribution to two of the five purposes of the Green Belt, as noted above.

5. It is damaging to introduce the concept of 'grey belt' until robust and consistent criteria are formulated at the appropriate level and the already widespread application of the term in recent development proposals in Hertfordshire jeopardises the survival of the Green Belt in many locations. The site is clearly not grey belt, demonstrating the semi-rural character which is typical of the area, and highly valued by local communities.
6. This site is not included in the emerging St Albans Draft Local Plan and the Council is proceeding at an accelerated pace towards Examination in Public and adoption of the Local Plan. The small number of units proposed would make a negligible contribution to the housing stock in St Albans and the proliferation of speculative and unplanned developments is causing very significant harm to the Green Belt in southern Hertfordshire, to the extent of jeopardising its integrity and viability.

We urge the Council to refuse this inappropriate application.

Yours faithfully,

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.