

Ashley Ransome
Development Management
East Herts District Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8EQ

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

21st May 2025 (by email)

Dear Ashley Ransome,

Planning application no. 3/25/0224/OUT
Land West of High Street, Walkern

Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for access) comprising a retirement care village (Use Class C2), with associated communal facilities, vehicle and pedestrian access points from High Street, landscaping, amenity space, drainage and associated works

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 identified as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt according to Policy GBR2 in the adopted East Herts District Plan. Policy GBR2 seeks to maintain the rural character of the area and identifies limited potential development which may be acceptable.
2. The present proposal is clearly inappropriate in this location, comprising a major extension of the village of Walkern outside the existing built-up area. Whereas Walkern is identified in the adopted East Herts District Plan as a Group 1 village where development may be appropriate, this proposal is of such a scale and nature that it would have a major detrimental impact on the village's character and surroundings.
3. The applicant's consultant's Planning Statement seeks to justify the proposed development on the basis of the general need for housing and specifically for older people in the District. The Planning Statement provides no specific justification for the proposed development in this location.
4. Very significant development has already taken place in Walkern in recent years. The District Plan allocates no further housing sites in the village and the proposal would have significant and damaging visual and amenity impacts, considerably affecting its rural character.

5. The appropriate means for considering housing provision is the East Herts District Plan Review which has commenced and should provide the analysis and justification for additional substantial development where appropriate. The Walkern Neighbourhood Plan does not allocate this site for development
6. CPRE Hertfordshire is particularly concerned by the impact of the proposed development on the River Beane valley, effectively reducing valley width. The River Beane is an intrinsic element in the internationally significant system of chalk streams which provide unique ecological conditions and habitats and any adverse impacts should be avoided.
7. The unsustainability of the proposed location, especially in the light of the demographic characteristics of the proposed residents, is indicated by the excessive level of car-parking envisaged. Public transport provision is limited and this is likely to affect accessibility for the proposed residents.
8. This proposal is particularly inappropriate due to its immediate proximity to the Walkern Conservation Area which is a key determinant in determining the rural nature of the village and its surroundings. The illustrative layouts accompanying the application indicate an over-powering amount of development in relation to the existing village.
9. The promotion of the development as a “retirement care village” is highly questionable in respect of its limited demographic profile and suitability in terms of proximity to personal services and facilities and public transport provision. CPRE Hertfordshire supports fully the stated concerns of Walkern Parish Council and local residents with regard to this application.
10. The open countryside in Hertfordshire is under continuous and unrelenting pressure for development for residential and other uses which is jeopardising seriously the rural character of the County. Substantial development of the nature proposed should only take place as a result of rigorous planning within the Local Plan process and with the full participation of the local communities affected.
11. Large-scale speculative development is in danger of bringing the statutory planning system into disrepute and we urge the Council to refuse permission for this highly inappropriate development.



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.