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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Justin Booij
Planning and Building Control
North Herts Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6DW

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

17th December 2025 (by email)

Dear Justin Booij,

Application no. 17/00830/1

**Land South and North West of Cockernhoe and East of Wigmore (Stubbocks Walk),
Brick Kiln Lane, Cockernhoe**

**AMENDMENTS: Outline Planning Application with All Matters Reserved, for demolition of
existing buildings and construction of up to 1,400 new dwellings (C3 use) together with
retail, educational and community facilities (A1-A5, D1 and D2 uses) and associated roads,
open space, green infrastructure and ancillary infrastructure**

AND

Application no. 16/02014/1

Land West of Cockernhoe / Land East Of Copthorne, Cockernhoe

**AMENDMENTS: Outline Planning Application with All Matters Reserved for: Erection of up
to 660 dwellings (Class C3) (or equivalent - up to 100 bedspaces), 2 -form entry primary
school, and local community hub, together with associated public open space, landscaping ,
highways and drainage infrastructure works**

I write with regard to above amended and associated planning applications.

CPRE Hertfordshire has campaigned continually for many years against unnecessary and damaging development on statutorily protected land such as Green Belt and National Landscapes (formerly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty). We also support the preparation of Local Plans according to the processes of the Local Plan Regulations which include analysis, consultation and examination stages.

Accordingly, we accept that the sites in question have been allocated in the adopted North Herts Local Plan for residential development. We also note the Government's continued and renewed promotion of house-building through the revision of the "standard method" for the calculation of housing land supply in Local Plans, and the introduction of the concept of grey belt.

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: Peter Waine, OBE

Registered Charity 1162419

CPRE Patron: His Majesty The King

These together with other measures related to the planning system seek to remove what are considered to be constraints to the provision of housing and commercial development. Whereas this would suggest that the present amended applications should be approved, we wish to raise several issues, both in principle and specifically, which would challenge the justification for the proposed developments.

The context for development has changed significantly with the very considerable increase in planning applications in Hertfordshire in 2025, and to this may be added the specific circumstances relating to housing provision in both Luton and North Herts as well as Central Bedfordshire. Recent housing provision has been substantial, related to local conditions, and this obviates the need for extensive allocations of high quality open countryside.

The recently commenced Local Plan Review provides the opportunity to reassess Green Belt boundaries in the North Herts Local Plan and the need to allocate the large area covered by these associated applications. In addition, the following matters provide further weight to the necessity for such a review.

1. The revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December 2024 have, as clearly intended by the Government, had the immediate effect of increasing very considerably the number of planning applications for Green Belt land. This has occurred through the mechanism of declaring the site as grey belt which is thereby increasingly recognised as posing an existential threat to the principle of protection.
2. Research by CPRE, the Local Government Association and several other organisations indicates that up to 1.4 million housing units have received planning consents in the past three years that remain unimplemented. These units are presumably viable, and to that total may be added a further 800,000 units recently identified by CPRE in a national review which can be accommodated on brownfield land in towns and cities.
3. Recent research by CPRE Hertfordshire indicates that over 80% of Green Belt applications, comprising hundreds of hectares in the three local planning authorities in the County with the highest proportion of Green Belt, cite grey belt as justification. The vast majority of this land is highly valued open landscape and agricultural land which goes way beyond the Government's stated intention of using "low grade" and previously

developed land for development and threatens the integrity of the Green Belt as a whole.

CPRE Hertfordshire supports wholeheartedly the extensive work carried out by Offley Parish Council and local resident groups with regard to these associated applications, including challenging the necessity for the proposed developments. We further support the Parish Councils' and others' representations regarding the present associated applications and the detailed recommendations in the event of approval.

While supporting sustainable development in the right places, CPRE Hertfordshire remains opposed to the proposed developments in principle and will continue to campaign to protect countryside which is being lost unnecessarily. The significant increase in proposals for development as a result of recent Government actions is threatening the integrity of the Green Belt as a whole and the principle of protection of the countryside.

The NPPF maintains the importance of the five purposes of the Green Belt and there is growing awareness of the benefits of open space and countryside for reasons relating to physical and mental health and well-being, the amelioration of climate change and the maintenance and enhancement of nature and biodiversity. We urge the Council to review Green Belt boundaries as part of the Local Plan Review and refuse permission for these unnecessary and damaging proposals.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry

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