

Planning Application 6/2023/2418/OUTLINE

Former Hook Estate and Kennels, Coopers Lane Road / Firs Wood Close, Northaw

OBJECTIONS TO APPLICATION

1/ The proposed development is located on land designated as Metropolitan Green Belt and would constitute inappropriate development with harm to the purposes and openness to the Green Belt and I believe any development also fails to comply with many existing policies and guidance both locally and nationally.

I would also challenge any concept that the development area could be considered as previously developed by reference to random fence enclosures and insignificant minor hardstanding.

I am of the understanding that the current Firs Wood Close properties were only granted planning approval by being clearly on the footprint of previous permanent buildings and any further development was rejected as not meeting these criteria and nothing has changed in this respect.

2/ Due to the location and remoteness from existing services and facilities I believe this is contrary to the settlement strategy of the council and constitutes an environmentally unsustainable development again failing to comply with a number of relevant local and national policies.

Access to the site is exclusively through the existing Firs Wood Close with no secondary vehicle access available for emergencies or residents, if needed, and any further development of Firs Wood Close cannot address or satisfy this crucial issue with the added dangers of significant increased vehicle movements.

All current residents of Firs Wood Close are totally reliant on private motor vehicles to access public transport and all other essential facilities in both Potters Bar and Cuffley via Coopers Lane Road. The addition of extensive further pathways or improvements to Coopers Lane Road, to merely satisfy any new development, would have greater negative impacts on the adjacent well-established flora and fauna by the necessary removal of mature trees and the creation of further light pollution with very little impact if any on reducing motor vehicle usage.

The potential addition of 200 - 300 plus new residents, staff, visitors, deliveries and service vehicles would severely impact on the welfare and safety of the existing residents together with the added dangers when both entering and using Coopers Lane Road.

The suggestion that the use of an 8-seater minibus would adequately serve the size of the anticipated new retirement community including staff to minimize journeys is somewhat fanciful at best – the requirement for some 150 plus parking spaces reflects the true impact and numbers of additional private motor vehicles and movements anticipated.

The application clearly states that 20 current parking spaces would be re-located for existing residents but these are not defined or apparent on the submitted plan and fail to fully take account of the existing 20 plus parking spaces being removed to create the access road into the development site leaving a nett reduction to the present parking numbers available for existing residents. The existing bin storage facility serving Firs Wood Close also appears to have been removed again without any clear new structure being identified.

3/ The scale and layout of the proposal does not provide any improvement to the quality or character of the area again failing to comply with both local and national policies with no enhancement or conservation to the surrounding area.


4/ The whole concept of the proposal brings into question both the viability of this development and the sustainability of any form of development on this land. Firs Wood Close by the very nature of the contours of the land has a well-established infrastructure of surface water drainage which would be directly impacted by further development with the amount of additional hard surfacing created by buildings, roadways and parking areas all ultimately discharging into the bottom of the valley with potential flood risks created elsewhere. As there is no mains drainage to the area all foul water from the Firs Wood Close and Hook Lane properties is currently fed into a private treatment plant, run and paid for directly by the existing residents. This treatment plant is now fully encompassed into the new development area with no information as to how this will impact on the existing properties or exactly what provision will be made for the new development again with a large increase of potential residents. Once again, I believe the proposal fails to meet both local and national policies.

With regards to the viability the figures quoted for the construction of the development seem somewhat inadequate given the scale of the proposals with all the facilities indicated and the extensive infrastructure works needed to provide basic mains services of electricity, water and telecom plus the added lack of mains drainage requiring a substantial treatment works to enable subsequent discharge into the nearby stream system.

One should also question if there is actually a demand for this type of development especially bearing in mind the inevitable high costs involved not only in the initial home purchase but in the significant long term annual costs falling on residents which would be needed to support such a venture. This location away from any existing services and facilities surely again impact on the viability and sustainability of this application.

5/ The ecology impact by the creation of any form of development would also be significant given the nature of the location which, despite the recent widespread destruction of habitats already carried out in the development area, is still home and throughfare to a wide variety of animal and bird species and the supporting plant life. Again, local and national policies would be compromised.

6/ I believe any further development of Firs Wood Close would fail to comply with many existing local and national policies and guidance and to approve this application given the lack of viability and sustainability would open the door to further planning applications for alternative schemes which one could suspect is the main objective.

 - January 2024