



Application 6/2019/1370/MAJ

Land to the East of Firs Wood Close, Northaw

This objection to the above major development is submitted on behalf of Northaw and Cuffley Residents Association (NCRA).

This site is a 'standalone' remote development within the Green Belt. It is a site included in the 'Call for Sites 2019 Consultation' as RS1a and is part of a larger development site, RS1. These sites together could accommodate approximately 475 dwellings. Development of this site can therefore be seen as an 'outlier' and if planning permission is granted could encourage further development of the RS1 site. This would introduce an urban feel into what is currently an isolated rural area. As a standalone remote development, within the Green Belt, this application fails HELAA stage 1 as the development does not adjoin another settlement within the Green Belt.

We do not believe that there are any 'very special circumstances', as detailed in the NPPF 2019, that would justify this encroachment into the Green Belt. This development would totally change the character of this location. This site is adjacent to significant local wildlife sites which are home to a variety of animals, birds and insects – deer, weasels, red kites and nuthatches all make their homes here. Many of the trees have preservation orders. We do not accept that because the Council lacks a 5-year housing land supply, permission should be granted for this development as there are clear adverse impacts in accordance with NPPF paragraph 11 which will be detailed below. The NPPF also states that 'before concluding that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to the Green Belt boundaries, the strategic policy-making authority should be able to demonstrate that it has examined fully all other reasonable options for meeting its identified need for development'. The 'Call for Sites Consultation 2019' identified some 20 other sites in the Cuffley and Northaw area and more sites around Potters Bar. We would therefore argue that a decision should not be made on this application until the outcomes of this consultation are published.

This would certainly not be a sustainable development and is so far from any public transport links or basic amenities that it is not a suitable location for affordable housing. The nearest shops, services and station are miles away. It is a 12-minute walk to a bus service which is so limited it barely exists. Pedestrians would have difficulties walking along Coopers Lane Road as long stretches are without pavements or streetlights in both directions from the proposed site. The other alternatives are walking or cycling along designated bridleways through the woods. This would be totally unsuitable for prams or buggies. Moreover, as the

volume and speed of traffic on the road increases, the need for safe off-road riding becomes more important. British Horse Society statistics list over 2000 reports of road incidents involving horses in the last 5 years. Of these 36 caused rider deaths and 181 resulted in a horse dying from their injuries or being put to sleep. The bridleways around this site are used by riders from the Northaw area and are valued. It should therefore not be assumed that increased use of designated bridleways by cyclists is appropriate or acceptable. Once at Northaw there are few facilities or services, no station, shops, banks, post offices and a primary school which has an entry of only 13 pupils per year group and is currently full. The nearest state secondary school, Mount Grace is over 2.6 km away. This too is oversubscribed with some 211 applications for 122 places.

Car use would therefore be essential to access the nearest amenities and transport links which would be at either Cuffley or Potters Bar. However, Coopers Lane Road is narrow and ends at either the T junction joining Coopers Lane, a busy road that goes down to single file traffic in the direction of Northaw and is 3-way traffic light controlled. This creates long delays at peak periods. In the other direction Coopers Lane Road joins Cattlegate Road. Cattlegate Road becomes so congested at peak travel times that traffic regularly tails back to the M25 and beyond towards Crews Hill. Additional traffic would exacerbate the current issues especially with regard to the dangerous junction of Cattlegate Road and Northaw Road East. There have been several accidents at this junction, and it has already been flagged by the Highways Authority as being a congested junction of particular concern.

Any development of the Green Belt will have a detrimental effect on air quality in the Northaw/Cuffley area. Air Pollution is a well-documented threat to human health. Especially vulnerable are the young where it can stunt or deform natural development of the lungs, and the elderly who are at risk in terms of lung cancer and cardiovascular disease. With deaths from pollution estimated at 64,000 per year in the UK this is an extremely serious issue and one which Welwyn Hatfield Council recognise as they have declared a climate emergency and plan to have zero net carbon emissions by 2030. It should be noted that Air Pollution in Northaw and Cuffley is exceeding EU thresholds especially along Station Road. Coopers Lane and Cattlegate Road also have elevated levels of pollution. Monitoring of the air quality in 2016 at five lampposts in Station Road all revealed readings above 40 micrograms of nitrogen dioxide per cubic metre. It is worrying that nothing has been done about these excesses since. It is concerning that air quality will deteriorate dangerously with the building of more houses and the resulting increase in traffic congestion. There will also be increases in the levels of Water Pollution, Noise Pollution and Light Pollution.

Clearly the above adverse impacts would outweigh any benefits of residential development of this site. We therefore ask that this application be refused.

