

Application Reference 6/2019/1370/MAJ

Proposed development at Land to the east of Firs Wood Close, Northaw

Proposal Erection of 26 dwellings and associated access

The site is designated as Green Belt and should not be developed unless there are very special circumstances. In the case of the development where I live, the developer was only allowed to build where there were buildings before. There have never been any buildings on the site in question previously.

The site fails the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) Stage 1 because it is not adjoining another settlement within the Green Belt.

The proposed development comprises 26 social housing units.

follows that some of the residents may not be able to afford to buy their own cars. Having lived here

I can state categorically and unequivocally that the site is totally unsuitable for people who are dependent on public transport. The nearest bus stop is in the village of Northaw, which is only accessible via a muddy bridleway through woods along Hook Lane. It would be very frightening for women and children to use this bridleway during the long hours of darkness in Winter, and in any event, there are only about six buses a day. The Hertford branch railway line is running at capacity and so is the line running through Potters Bar. After the timetable fiasco in May 2018, the new timetable has never been implemented and there are still frequent delays and cancellations.

There are no local shops, and the nearest health centre is in Cuffley, which is only accessible by car, and is oversubscribed.

Firs Wood Close is not adopted by the Council. The existing development in Firs Wood Close is not connected to the main sewer. We have a private sewage treatment plant, which is owned by the Management Company, not the site owner. The lighting along Firs Wood Close is paid for by the residents via their contributions to the Management Company. There is an electricity substation in Firs Wood Close. When we first moved here we experienced frequent power cuts. We also experienced a loss of gas pressure a few years ago which took several days for British Gas to sort out. The message from all of this is that the infrastructure is woefully inadequate for a development of this size, and there would have to be a gigantic investment to improve the infrastructure to make it work for a development of this size. The residents in Firs Wood Close pay service charges each month. I am not at all sure of the legality of making service charges to social housing tenants, which would mean that the existing residents would have to bear the costs associated with the new tenants. Besides, the sewage treatment plant is running at capacity and has already been replaced once, and could not accommodate the demand from 26 more housing units.

An Environmental Survey has discovered the presence of great crested newts in one of the nearby ponds, which means that a special licence would have to be granted, but only if the developer could give a method statement demonstrating how the great crested newts would be protected during the course of development. It is also near the Firs Wood Nature Reserve, which contains many rare species, and is already severely affected by its close proximity to the M25.

A resident of Firs Wood Close previously made enquiries of the Council about the construction of a single dwelling in January 2014. The advice he was given by a Planning Officer in a letter dated 9th January 2014, that this would be refused. Circumstances have not changed since then, so to be consistent with that advice the Council should refuse this application.

