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To John Chapman
Planning Control Officer
NHDC Planning Department
Gernon Road
Letchworth
HERTS

Planning Application ~West Whitwell – Ref 15/02555/1

Dear Mr Chapman

1 Original response to planning application ref 15/02555/1 ~ summarised as

- 1.1 The application will lead to the loss of a large, open and natural area leaving permanent damage to the landscape and appearance of the area. It is part of the Mimram Valley which provides a valued landscape contributing to the rural setting of Whitwell village
- 1.2 It will not protect and enhance the natural environment and will have a demonstrable and unacceptable impact on the natural environment to the detriment of residents and those who use the area as a place of leisure including walkers and cyclists
- 1.3 The scheme is disconnected from Whitwell village creating a housing estate that is isolated, excluded and not integrated into the natural, built or historic environment of Whitwell village
- 1.4 The site is known to have significant flood risks. The Herts County Council as the lead flood authority objected to the original proposals and the subsequent solution proposed by the developers is inadequate. This will be dealt with below

2 Response relating to Flooding/drainage/sewage issues

- 2.1 The NPPF states that a sequential approach to site selection and flood risk must be undertaken. This has not happened so it is contended that planning permission should be refused on this basis regardless of the strength of the following factors
- 2.2 The solution involves the construction of two giant holes in the ground. One of over 3,700 cubic metres collects water from the hill/valley flow from Bendish before it passes above the site (for comparison an Olympic swimming pool has a 2500 cubic metre capacity). The second hole of 1,100 cubic metres collects water from the actual site. The scheme is based on two pools naturally dispersing the water through the underlying soil

- 2.3 This dramatic solution emerged because the site is identified as high risk through surface flooding (flooding affected the adjacent road of Cresswick in April 2014). The original solution using pumps was rejected by Herts County Council
- 2.4 As outlined above two massive pools are proposed. The one above the site is more than 55 metres long. In its own right this should have been the subject of a proper consultation exercise
- 2.5 No evidence has been made available regarding its safety and operation and there is no similar arrangement in Hertfordshire. No relevant soil tests have been undertaken and withdrawal of the objection by the County Council has been based on data provided by the developers
- 2.6 Indeed they also told the Parish Council that the drainage/flooding solution was acceptable within the confines of the developer's realistic budget for the site. This brings into question whether they see it as the ideal solution They were also not able to model the 2014 flood as a way of considering the effectiveness of this unusual two pool proposal. The recognition that the site is of a bespoke nature is also relevant
- 2.7 The provision of an underground sewage tank requiring off peak pumping may provide a significant risk to good water and the iconic water cress beds
- 2.8 The proposed development of 41 homes together with earthworks required to create both a 3700 and 1100 cubic hole will result in significant harm to the character and beauty of the countryside particularly when viewed from the Chiltern Way

(Covering note to councillors and members of the Planning Committee)

West Whitwell Development (ref 15/02555/1)

Please read this further to the papers circulated to you by NHDC and by St Pauls Walden Parish Council on this proposed development. As you are well aware the Planning Control Committee is meeting on July 21 to consider the application made by Pigeon

Our submission was provisionally confirmed by the Parish Council at its meeting on the evening of July 6. However we needed it to take account of issues that emerged when a representative from the County Council attended to discuss the flooding/drainage/sewage risks associated with the Developer's revised proposals

The representative was totally objective in the way the various issues were considered. However new additional concerns arose and they needed to be assimilated within our formal response. This explains the slight delay. However the Parish Council had been left with the impression that providing delivery was made on July 7 our response would be included in the report from the appropriate Planning Officer

The purpose in sending you the attached is twofold. Firstly to provide the backdrop to our original submission and secondly to stress our significant concerns relating to the way the developers propose to deal with the flooding/drainage/sewage issues.

As you see our initial doubts have been reinforced by what we heard at the Parish Council meeting on Wednesday July 6.

We thank you for your consideration

Yours sincerely

Clerk to St Paul's Walden Parish Council

