

ASHWELL PARISH COUNCIL

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Clerk: Jane Porter Deputy Clerk: Laura Brooks-Payne
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Ms Naomi Reynard
Planning and Environment
North Herts District Council
Letchworth SG6 3JF

10th September 2020

BY EMAIL

Dear Ms Reynard

Re Land (known as Hunts Close) north of Ashwell Street and south of Lucas Lane between Hunts Ridge and East Lodge, 22 Lucas Lane.

Full Planning Permission: Erection of 24 dwellings including creation of vehicular access off Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated public open space and landscaping (as amended by plans received 17.08.20).

Thank you for your consultation on the amendments to this application. The Parish Council would also like to reiterate the objections made in February.

The Parish Council considered its response at a site meeting of the Planning Committee; 17 members of the public and the applicant's agent attended. They resolved that a recommendation be made to you that permission be REFUSED based on the objections below.

Please also see the objections raised by local residents at the meeting.

1. Objections from the Parish Council.

(i) Vehicular access onto Ashwell Street. Conflict with the right of way; the unmade track known as the Ruddery, BOAT Ashwell Byway 16. Exacerbation of existing safety issues at the Kingsland Way junction. *See points 2 (i) and (ii) below.*

(ii) Harm to a Heritage Asset; Local Plan Policy HE1 and NPPF. The pre-application advice from NHDC to the applicant stated that the benefits of the development would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

(iii) Sustainable development. Para 8 of the NPPF sets out criteria for this but the proposed development conflicts on the following:

- Education capacity -need for primary age children to travel out of the village,
- Medical facility capacity -need to travel out of the village,
- Failure to protect the natural and the built historic environment,
- Access to other facilities and employment – need to travel, eg to the station 2 miles from the village.

(iv) Adverse impact on important views both into and out of the site.

This conflicts with the District Local Plan: Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement July 2019, KeyView23. *See also point 2 (iii) below.*

Also the proposed layout puts the taller houses at the top of the slope further impacting on the views across the site.

(v) Conflict with the emerging Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. Community views are in favour of small developments of ten houses or less.

(vi) Drainage and flood risk. *See also 2 (iv) below.* Despite the further information provided by the applicant to the flood authority, concerns remain particularly in the light of recent flooding events to properties in Ashwell. The impact of heavy rainfall on the movement of debris from unmade roads and surfaces on significantly sloping land had not been taken into account. In other parts of the village this had frequently led to blockage and failure of drainage systems. Concerns were expressed about the use of a SUDS system for dealing with surface water given that the proposed development had vehicular access via an unmade road. This would introduce soil and other solid matter that could clog the drainage 'pores' that the SUDS system relied on to provide drainage into the underlying ground. Once the SUDS paving was clogged the water would stay on the surface and run downhill towards Lucas Lane properties. The proposals for this site needed to address these issues before any development is given approval.

2. Objections from members of the public at the meeting.

(i) Adverse impact of the proposed vehicular access onto Ashwell Street (unmade track known as the Ruddy; BOAT Ashwell Byway 16).

Objections on safety, environmental and historic grounds. This was a single track, unmade road used regularly by pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders etc and was also an important walking route to the school from the Station Road area of the village. It was an important 'green route' with valued trees and other vegetation and formed part of the historic Icknield Way, a long-distance walking route. Concerns existed that vehicles would, despite measures to discourage this, use it as a short cut when travelling east towards the station, Royston and Cambridge, and to avoid traffic in the High Street.

It was noted that the Highways Development Manager had also raised concerns and the HCC Footpaths Officer had recommended refusal of the application based on this.

(ii) Adverse impact of increased traffic on the Kingsland Way/Ashwell Street junction.

Safety issues already existed at this junction; poor sight lines for vehicles and pedestrians, no footways for pedestrians although a key route to the school, excess speed of traffic. These had been highlighted when the Broadchalke Close development was given planning permission but the safety proposals made at that time were never implemented. No permission should be granted for this application unless safety measures were implemented.

(iii) Loss of significant views (District Local Plan: Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement July 2019.). The view from the top of the site across the open landscape from the existing field gate had been noted as being of significance and will be lost (the applicant's agent acknowledged that fact). The two new access points would not replace this.

(iv) Exacerbation of existing drainage and flooding issues in the village. The applicant's representative reported that the concerns raised by the HCC Lead Local Flood Authority had been considered and addressed to their satisfaction. Concerns were raised as to what testing had been done and over what period; if during the recent months of drought the data would be meaningless. It was agreed that full details be sought.

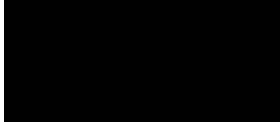
(v) Adverse impact on an archaeologically important site. It was noted that evidence of a Roman period temple and other artefacts had been found. The field was also the

site of a WWII air crash. The view was expressed that if permission was given for development, the whole field should be properly excavated.

(vi) Loss of native vegetation. The applicant's representative reported that the landscaping plan included new planting with native species to mitigate loss. The plan was publicly available and comments would be listened to.

Please contact me if any clarification is required.

Yours sincerely,



Jane Porter (Mrs), Clerk
Ashwell Parish Council

Cc District Councillor Tom Tyson