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Our Ref: P01234250

3rd September 2020

Dear Naomi Reynard

**T&CP (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015
& Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990**

**Land North Of Ashwell Street And South Of Lucas Lane Between Huntsridge
And East Lodge, 22 Lucas Lane, Ashwell, Hertfordshire**

Application No. 20/00126/FP

Thank you for your letter regarding the above application for planning permission. Due to current restrictions we have been unable to visit the site but, on the basis of the information available to date, we offer the following advice to assist your authority in determining the application.

Historic England Advice

The Site

The site is an attractive area of open land on a sloping valley side leading down to the springs at the bottom of the valley, which may of given Ashwell its name. The elevated location of the top of the site facing Ashwell Street gives far reaching views across the landscape showing clearly how Ashwell village is nestled at the bottom of a valley and associated closely with the stream. This patch of open ground is probably the only location from which this view, mostly undisturbed by recent development, can be appreciated.

Ashwell Street is also a medieval trackway and being situated on higher ground than the village, the site represents an important link between the understanding of the routeway and the growth of the village. Historic maps indicate that Ashwell grew up to respect the historic trackway of Ashwell Street with gardens and agricultural land associated with the village bordering it. The thin strips of almost burgage plot style dwellings stop at Ashwell Street and wider agricultural land continues to the south of it. This indicates its continued importance as a route serving the land around the village. The maps indicate that this land has always been open, undeveloped and with open views across to the wider landscape. Ashwell Street is, for the most part an unpaved road and retains its tree lined edges giving it the feel of a Holloway.

Ashwell is a conservation area and the land in question is noted as key view 23 in the conservation area appraisal. The site is situated within the conservation area boundary.

The Impacts of the Scheme

The houses forming this development will be dominant in the street scene and will be visible from within the Conservation Area. They would dominate the valley side at this point and obliterate the link that Ashwell currently has to surrounding landscape up the valley sides. Lucas Lane is currently characterised by bungalows on its southern edge and the provision of any form of housing on this field would be highly damaging to the sense of space experienced through gaps between them and over the ridgelines.

The impact upon key view 23 would also be damaging as it would be completely lost. The view over the green space to Lucas Lane and countryside beyond would be dominated by housing and the provision of view corridors would not overcome this harm.

The development would therefore cause less than substantial harm on the high end of the scale to the character and significance of the Ashwell Conservation Area.

Notwithstanding this, the design of the proposed scheme would not be consistent with the linear grain of development that dominates Ashwell Village. Although there are pockets of more recent development that contain sinuous street designs, for the most part the development respects the straight line road pattern and is regularly spaced.

Policy Context

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation.

Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.

Paragraph 196 states where development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

Paragraph 200 states that local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas, and within the setting of heritage assets to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Historic England's Position

Historic England considers that the proposed scheme would cause less than substantial harm, on the high end of the scale to the significance of the Ashwell Conservation Area.

We consider that any development in this location would be dominant from Lucas Lane and would obliterate the key view mentioned as number 23 within the conservation area appraisal.

We therefore consider that the principle of development within this site would be harmful and that it should be resisted.

Recommendation

Historic England objects to the application on heritage grounds. We consider that the site is important to the significance of the conservation area and it should be retained as open space.

We consider that the application does not meet the requirements of the NPPF, in particular paragraph numbers 193,194,196 and 200

In determining this application you should bear in mind the statutory duty of section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Your authority should take these representations into account in determining the application. If you propose to determine the application in its current form, please inform us of the date of the committee and send us a copy of your report at the earliest opportunity.

Please contact me if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Lynette Fawkes

Inspector of Historic Buildings and Areas

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