



ASHWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Office at Bear Farm 6A Back Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Herts, SG7 5PE
Mon-Thurs 08.30 -13.00 ☎ 01462 743706 ✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk
Clerk: Jane Porter, Deputy Clerk: Annie Clifford
Chairman: Mark White ☎ 07977 099951

Ms Joanne Cousins
North Herts District Council
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City SG6 3JF
BY EMAIL

25th July 2017

Dear Ms Cousins

**Re NHDC Case Ref No: 17/01406/1. Land Development Off, Station Road, Ashwell
Full Planning Permission: Residential development of 46 no. dwellings, children's
play area, two new sports pitches, pavilion building and associated infrastructure.**

This application was considered at a meeting of the Planning Committee held on Wednesday 19th July 2017.

A proposal was made to convey to the NHDC Planning Officer the Parish Council's objections to the proposed development and the recommendation that the application be REFUSED.

Specific objections include:

- The site is outside the settlement boundary (both current and in the emerging Local Plan); the community benefit does not outweigh the presumption against development.
- The proposals do not address the housing needs identified by the Neighbourhood Plan.
- The design is contrary to the *Ashwell Village Design Statement* (Supplementary Planning Guidance) re density. There are concerns re the layout; access to the sports facilities is through residential areas.
- Sustainability/Infrastructure. The village centre is some distance; this will encourage car use and exacerbate existing problems of traffic, highway safety and parking. Transport links are not good. The school is already oversubscribed.

Please see below the extract from the draft minutes giving fuller details:-

Standing orders were suspended for members of the public present to contribute.

The applicant's agent was asked to clarify and respond to some matters. Questions/matters of concern raised by members of the public included:

- (i) The need for the numbers of new dwellings identified by the new District Local Plan was disputed.
- (ii) This site was outside the settlement boundary; sites within the boundary should take precedence.
- (iii) This would be a very large development outside the village boundary.
- (iv) The existing infrastructure was inadequate and could not cope.
- (v) The village school was already oversubscribed.
- (vi) The site had been proposed some years ago for the village garage and had been deemed unsuitable.
- (vii) The location was too far from the village centre for easy walking access so traffic and parking problems would be exacerbated.
- (viii) The large number of houses proposed would result in a significant increase in traffic in Station Road; this was already a problem for access and pedestrian safety.

- (ix) The applicant had stressed the inclusion of smaller houses to meet identified local needs but the proposals also included four and five-bedroom houses.
- (x) Existing sports facilities were sufficient.
- (xi) Who would be responsible for the proposed sports facilities.
- (xii) The site layout was unsuitable; access to the sports facilities was through the residential areas.
- (xiii) The proposals would have an adverse impact on wildlife particularly badgers.
- (xiv) The applicant's Planning Obligation/Section 106 proposals were insufficient; a request for greater detail, particularly those relating to Herts County Council, was noted.

Standing orders reinstated (members of the public remained present but did not contribute).

A proposal was made to convey to the NHDC Planning Officer the Parish Council's objections to the proposed development for the following reasons:

1. The application contravenes Policy 6 of the NHDC Local Plan as the site is outside the village boundary. No valid reasons have been given for granting an exception to this policy. What is proposed is almost a separate hamlet adjacent to the village.
2. The proposed density of the development is considered by the developers to be low. However, although the houses on Station Road are fairly close to each other they have long gardens thus reducing the density and creating a feeling of space. The houses in the proposed development have small gardens and appear to be tightly packed.
3. The application does not address the identified housing needs for Ashwell. Most of the proposed houses are 4/5 bedrooms. In a housing survey taken in 2015 in the preparation of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan the need for smaller units was identified. One, two and three-bedroom dwellings are required for those who wish to downsize and to provide for elderly people and for those who are less able. Housing for the elderly and less able needs to be in the centre of the village near the shops and services.
4. The Neighbourhood Plan Housing Survey also identified that the people of Ashwell wanted to see housing developments of not more than ten houses. The proposed development greatly exceeds this.
5. The proposed development is not sustainable; residents would choose to use cars to access the shops and facilities such as the surgery and school. This would increase the already problematic traffic and parking situation.
6. The developer has suggested that there are buses which can be used. Other than the taxibus which caters for those going to the station in the mornings and returning in the evenings there are only one or two buses a day serving the village. The feasibility of residents using public transport to access village facilities is questionable.
7. Part of the proposal is for two football pitches to be given to the village. Ashwell has need of further sporting facilities as it has some very active clubs. However, the proposal only looks to assist one area and does not address other sporting needs, eg new cricket facilities.
8. Access to the two football pitches would be through the estate. This could be a danger to children playing in the area. Matches are played most Sundays against visiting teams; the parking is not adequate.

The Parish's Council objections are probably best summed up in the report of the NHDC Planning Officer following his pre-application discussions with the applicant, 'I would be unlikely to conclude, even in the best case for *social* and *economic* benefits being made, that

[any] positives would be so telling in the planning balance such that they would not be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the identified and substantial *environmental* harm – harm associated with extending the village with an estate style scheme in-depth off a road out of the village which is effectively only one dwelling deep at its southern extremity’

Please contact me if any clarification is required.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jane Porter', written in a cursive style.

Jane Porter (Mrs), Clerk
Ashwell Parish Council

Cc District Councillor Janine Paterson