

# Conservation and Urban Design Advice

Reference: 3/23/1447/OUT

Planning case officer: Amit Patel

Site address: Land East of The A10 Buntingford Hertfordshire

Date of consultation: 01/08/2023

Date of response: 18/10/2023

Heritage considerations: None

## **Recommendations:**

- Objection
- No objection
- Further information and/or amendments required

## **Observations:**

This is an Outline planning application for the development of upto 350 dwellings, with up to 4,400 sqm of commercial and services floorspace (Use Class E and B8) and up to 500 sqm of retail floorspace (Use Classes E) and other associated works including drainage, access into the site from the A10 and Luynes Rise (but not access within the site), allotments, public open space and landscaping.

This application follows a previous refused hybrid application (3/22/1551/FUL) on the same site.

While it is noted that this application is made in outline form, and the illustrative layout provided as part of this application is indicative only, we have assessed this application to check whether it can achieve the quantum of build form and development indicated, such that it is acceptable in urban design terms. Following such an assessment, we have the following comments:

- 1. Masterplanning Process-** The proposed development is a 'significant development' and it is therefore required that the applicant should undertake a masterplanning process as stated in Policy DES1 of the East Herts District Plan.
- 2. Sustainable travel** – The scheme proposes a major development on the fringe of Buntingford. There are no railway lines serving Buntingford, and the nearest bus route stops are along Station Road and Baldock Road which will be

potentially a significant walk for some of the new dwellings on the site. The transport assessment report indicates some small sustainable transport initiatives including a public transport pick up point for Hertslynx- on-demand bus service. However, it is not clear if this service can replace the full scope of a regular bus service, which will be required for a development of this scale. Advice on this should be sought from the Highways officers, however from an Urban Design perspective it is considered that- in the absence of a railway line in the area and the lack of better public transport, it is anticipated that the dependency on cars is likely to be high for people travelling to work/shopping/entertainment trips to nearby towns and this will have a detrimental impact on the character of the local area, and health and well-being of new and existing residents.

- 3. Sustainable travel improvements to wider area-** Contributions through S106 agreements should be secured as part of this application in order to improve the wider infrastructure for sustainable travel (pedestrian/cyclist connections and public transport routes) including links to the town centre, in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the wider infrastructure and to reduce reliance on cars.
- 4. Local centre location-** For the scale of development proposed, it is disappointing to see that the layout is missing a core destination within the heart of the application site. While the local centre, with possibly some local shops and amenities and a public open space, could have served this purpose, its off-centred location as currently shown is a hindrance to achieving this.
- 5. Urban Grain and density-** The Design and Access statement indicates that the residential element will have “up to 350 dwellings on 10.35ha”. This indicates a higher density within the new residential blocks than that in the immediate context to the site (Design and Access statement mentions on page 26 that ‘*Immediately adjacent to the site, the densities range broadly from 27 to 28dph...*’). The proposed houses and plots as shown on the illustrative plan on page 59 of the DAS are noted to form a denser urban grain compared to its immediate context. Bearing in mind that the site is on the fringe of the town, it is considered that the density should instead be lower, to provide a better transition to the landscaped context beyond the site. While it is acknowledged this is an outline application for ‘upto 350 dwellings’, it is considered that this number of dwellings , if permitted on the location, will present a density that is not suitable for this edge of town site, and therefore unacceptable.

6. **Proximity of sewage works-** it is considered that the existing Buntingford Sewage Treatment Works in close proximity to the site creates a rather unpleasant setting for the southern dwellings and landscaped amenity spaces.
7. **Green infrastructure** -A significant proportion of the green infrastructure is indicated to be located along the A10 and designed to perform as a buffer from the A10 noise. A substantial part this landscaped areas (especially the west of the bund) will therefore offer less opportunity for useable amenity space and active play. Additionally, as discussed in 6 above, the southern amenity spaces may be potentially less useable because of the proximity to the sewage treatment works and associated odour. Further landscaped areas should be provided within the interior of the parcel to serve as useable outdoor amenity space.
8. **Depths of private gardens:** As noted on the illustrative layout on page 59 of the Design and Access Statement, proposed dwellings and rear gardens along the north, east and south-east boundaries of the application site are shown to be located hard against existing residential rear gardens. These gardens are shown to be fairly shallow and will potentially result in an overbearing relationship with the existing dwellings. It is preferred that the design should allow for additional tree planting within a landscape buffer and/or in deep rear gardens for improved screening between the existing and proposed houses. While it is appreciated that this is an outline application and such details of layout may be addressed at RM stages, it is considered that the quantum of dwelling proposed may not be achieved once the landscaped buffer discussed above is factored in.
9. **Sustainable development:** The submitted energy statement discusses feasibility of a number of low carbon renewable energy systems for the site and concludes that solar photovoltaics and hot water heat pumps are two main technologies with significant potential for the development. It is noted however that a commitment for these measures is not provided yet in the application. Further details should be requested from the applicant along with a definite commitment for incorporation of these measures into the proposals.

### **Summary:**

The proposal in its current form is considered unacceptable and requires significant revisions to address the concerns raised above. Further information and/or amendments requested above should be provided to the planning case officer within a timescale that would allow for the case to be determined within its deadline. The

planning case officer should assess the request above and set a suitable timescale for this further submission. If the further information and/or amendments requested are not delivered or deliverable within this timescale, then this application should be withdrawn by the applicant. If it is not withdrawn, it should be determined on the basis of our objection as set out above.