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Mr T Collins
Collins Coward
Westwood Park
London Road
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Dear Mr Collins

Land at Pines Hill, Stansted Mountfichet

I refer to your letter dated 31 October 2012 and our meeting on 22 November 2012 and apologise for the delay in responding. I confirm that I have been asked by Uttlesford District Council to respond to your request for pre-application advice and enclose my response.

Proposal: The proposed area for development comprises some 2.535 hectares and at this stage it is intended that the development would be in excess of some 60 dwellings.

Planning site constraints: The land is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and outside the development limits of Stansted Mountfichet. Land identified as Important Woodland on the Proposals Map to the Local Plan is located within the site.

Relevant policies:

Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005):

Policy S1 – Development limits for Main Urban Areas,

Policy S6 - Metropolitan Green Belt

Policy S7 - Countryside

Policy GEN1 – Access

Policy GEN2 – Design

Policy GEN7 – Nature Conservation

Policy GEN8 – Vehicle Parking

Policy ENV8 – Other Landscape Elements of Importance for Nature Conservation

Policy ENV15 – Renewable Energy,

Policy H1 – Housing Development,

Policy H3 – New Houses within Development Limits,

H9 – Affordable Housing,
Policy H10 – Housing Mix,
Supplementary Planning Documents:
Accessible Homes and Playspace (November 2005)
ECC Parking Standards (September 2009)
Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (October 2007)

Relevant issues:

Principle:

The subject site forms a parcel of land on the southern edge of Stansted Mountfichet and was formerly used for the growing of Christmas trees. It contains a large detached dwelling located towards the western boundary and some storage/industrial buildings near to the railway line. The main Cambridge to London railway line runs along the eastern boundary of the site and Pines Hill, the B1383 extends along the western boundary.

The land is not within the development limits of the settlement and is covered by Green Belt designation. As a consequence, residential development of this site would be contrary to the policies contained within the Uttlesford Local Plan 2005 and to the NPPF. The District Council is currently preparing its replacement Local Plan and published the Consultation on Proposals for a Draft Local Plan in June 2012. The draft document sets out those sites which the Council currently considers would be suitable and available for development. However, the Council does not propose to take the subject site out of the Green Belt and it does not form one of those sites identified for future development. Residential development represents inappropriate development and would harm the openness of this part of the Green Belt. The development of this site is therefore contrary to Policies S1, S6 and S7 of the adopted Local Plan and with emerging policy.

As discussed at our meeting, the District Council acknowledges that it cannot demonstrate a five year land supply and this is confirmed in the Annual Monitoring Report 2012. Whilst the Council has granted planning permission for residential development on some unallocated sites that are outside development limits, these have been where it has been considered that the benefits of bringing forward housing on the site has outweighed the policy presumption against such development. It is not accepted that this would be the case with regard to the land at Pines Hill. Only a small area of Uttlesford District is covered by Green Belt designation and there is no need to release green belt land to meet the 5 year housing land supply. The June 2012 consultation document demonstrates that adequate land can be provided on none Green Belt land elsewhere in the district and it is not considered that the current 5 year supply position represents the very special circumstances required to justify the grant of planning permission of inappropriate and therefore harmful development within the Green Belt. I would therefore advise you that should an application be submitted it is likely to be refused for the reasons set out above.

Matters of Detail

You advised that, whilst you appreciated the policy objection, you are currently seeking to remove the site from the Green Belt through the Local Plan process and that you wished to discuss the detail of any development in the event that the Inspector considered that the site was suitable for excluding from the Green Belt. On that basis, I would provide the following comments on your draft layout.

Affordable Housing

Local Plan Policy H9 seeks 40% affordable housing on sites and I confirm that 40% would be required on this site. The properties would need to be delivered by one of the Council's Registered Provider partners, which would need to be agreed with the strategic housing section. Should you wish to discuss this matter further, I would suggest that you contact the Council's Housing Enabling and Development Officer to establish the mix and tenure split of the units.

Layout

In general terms the illustrative layout appears acceptable subject to achieving a suitable mix of dwellings in accordance with Policy H10 of the Local Plan and to the provision of open space/play space.

Highways;

It is noted that access is proposed from Pines Hill and that the estate road would allow traffic to divert through the development rather than use the Stony Common Road junction with Pines Hill. This would be similar to the arrangement with Old Bell Close. The Local Highway Authority has been consulted on an informal basis and has commented that Pines Hill is a Main Distributor on the route hierarchy and that, as the site is outside the development limits there would be a presumption against direct access unless there were exceptional circumstances. The Highway Authority would normally advise access off a lower category road if possible but in this case the junction of Stony Common Road (private street) with Pines Hill does not have good visibility. The site is located where the speed limit changes from 30 to 40mph and visibility requirements would be 2.4 metres x 90 metres (30mph) or 120 metres (40 mph) in both directions.

As far as the layout goes, this should comply with the Essex Design Guide and Parking Standards and a planning application would require a Transport Assessment. The main highway issue therefore, would be the principle of an access on to a main distributor outside the development limits.

Design and Amenity

Policy GEN2 of the local plan seeks, amongst other things, that any development should be compatible with the surrounding area, reduce crime, energy reduction, protecting the environment and amenity.

In terms of amenity, the site is adjacent to the railway line and there is potential for noise and disturbance from the railway, particularly for the dwellings that are closest. An application would need to be accompanied by a noise assessment which also sets out any necessary noise attenuation measures.

It is not considered that the site is at risk of flooding but a sustainable drainage statement would need to be submitted with any planning application.

In accordance with Policy ENV15 – Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (October 2007) and the NPPF, renewable energy and a 10% energy efficiency will be sought.

Ecology and Landscaping;

The land is primarily agricultural with a substantial cover of trees and therefore wildlife could be present. A Phase 1 Ecological Assessment would need to be provided with any planning application submission together with any further mitigation reports in the event that protected species are found on the site.

A tree survey would also be required together with an Arboricultural Impact Assessment detailing the trees to be retained and those to be removed to facilitate the development.

Education

You will need to establish the capacity of the existing schools within Stansted Mountfichet. I would therefore suggest that you contact the Local Education Authority at an early stage to establish the education requirement for the site.

What is required to submit a planning application:

If you are submitting a planning application for this proposal you should be aware that the government have introduced standardised application forms, and the Council has adopted its own validation checklists. These are designed to assist you in submitting an application with all necessary information.

An application of this nature must include:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement including designing out crime

- Plans should incorporate roof plans, existing and proposed site sections and finished floor and site levels; an area for storage of refuse facilities; parking and other accessibility details to meet Lifetime Homes standards; details of sustainable construction; details of the existing or proposed drainage system
- Details of materials, type, colour, manufacturer and sample name should be specified
- Utilities Statement (providing information of the services and routes to the premises)
- appropriate protected species surveys
- Arboricultural Survey
- Contamination Survey (Phase 1)-may be required for part of site only
- Transport assessment
- Details of refuse/recycling facilities
- Sustainable Drainage Statement
- Energy Efficiency and BREAM Statement

Please note that this list is not exhaustive and it is the applicants/agents duty to ensure that all relevant documents are submitted with the proposal.

Further guidance and the appropriate forms are available via the 'planning' section of the Council's website (www.uttlesford.gov.uk) as well as for full viewing of local plan policies.

Summary:

The principle of the scheme is not considered to be acceptable due to the location of the site within the Green Belt. It is not accepted that the current lack of 5 year supply of housing land within the district represents the very special circumstances that would need to be demonstrated to overcome the objections to this harmful development within the Green Belt and it is therefore likely that planning permission would be refused if an application was submitted.

Should you wish to proceed with an application, I have listed above the additional information and documents that are likely to be needed to support any application. It would also be necessary to enter into a Section 106 Agreement relating to the provision of affordable housing, open space and future maintenance and for any education contribution that may be required.

I trust the above is of help however should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

You will appreciate that the views expressed in this letter are those of an Officer/Consultant which will be in no way binding upon the Council or any of its Committees when considering any formal application.

Yours sincerely,



ALISON HUTCHINSON

Partner

Email:

