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David Rusling  
Planning & Regulation  
Stevenage Borough Council  
Daneshill House  
Danestree  
Stevenage  
SG1 1HN

*Dear Mr Rusling,*

**RE: Planning Application 17/00862/OPM Land to the North of Stevenage**

I wish to make known my objection to the above planning application and write to you today to request that Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) dismiss the application at this, the initial consultation stage. I am extremely concerned at the detrimental impact the proposed development will have on our local environment and heritage, as well as the families in the vicinity. I do not believe that the proposed development is aligned to guidance on approved developments, as set out in the February 2019 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Particularly with regards to the building on precious Green Belt land and the permanent loss of the vital ecosystems which are sustained there.

This development will place huge pressure on the surrounding local services, particularly with regard to roads infrastructure and health provision. The developers confirmed in their Transport and Access Statement that 'highway access to the proposed development site will be provided solely from North Road.' This is, in my opinion, a clear and blatant breach of national planning policy, with Chapter 9.108 of the NPPF saying that it should be ensured that 'any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in capacity and congestion) or on highway safety can be...mitigated to an acceptable degree.' In their Transport Assessment, the developers provide mitigation in the form of re-timing traffic signals and providing new signals at roundabouts, but no new roads infrastructure on an already gridlocked area.



The NPPF, Chapter 9.109, states that developments should be refused if 'the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.' I remain extremely concerned that there has been little consideration given to the impact of several hundred new vehicles accessing and exiting the site along a single carriageway road. Several local residents in their objections have already cited this issue, and I stand shoulder to shoulder with them as they are already well aware of the impacts of increased traffic on this road.

I am also concerned at the impact this development would have on health services within Stevenage. Once again, several residents have already registered their objections on these grounds. In their review of the proposed development, the East and North Herts NHS Trust calculate that around 1,920 new patients will be registered and that it will stretch the two closest GP surgeries, although they state correctly that no new patient will be turned away, they conclude that the development 'will have an impact on primary healthcare provisions and its implications...would be unsustainable' if left unmitigated by the developers. Chapter 3.34 of the NPPF states that plans, if wishing to be successful, should 'set out the contributions expected from the development....such as that needed for education, health, transport'. There is no evidence that there is any provision for primary health services in the development, particularly as the concerns raised by the local NHS Trust are as recent as last month. It is not in line with national policy, has been flagged with potential concern by the local NHS Trust, and is yet another reason why this project is unsustainable.

I have previously made known my concerns regarding the affordable housing provided by these large developments in line with local and national policy. In Stevenage Borough Council's own Local Plan 2011 – 2031 they state from Policy SP7 that 'at least 20% of all new homes...to be Affordable Housing with an aspiration to deliver up to 40%...where viability permits.' The developers state in their proposals that affordable housing will amount to 30% of the development; a total of only 240 homes. I believe that this is not in line with national planning policy, with Chapter 5.61 of the NPPF stating that the types of housing 'needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning.' The Council's own Local Plan states that 'there is a lack of affordable homes.' The provision of only 240 more does nothing to alleviate the increasing gap that Stevenage Borough Council claims to exist. Sadly, Stevenage Borough Council are again willing to approve a development that contravenes not only national policy but ignores their own mission statement with regard to providing more affordable housing for local people.

Locally the area is known as Forster Country and is the last remaining farmland within the Borough of Stevenage. It was once home to the Edwardian author E.M Forster and was the inspiration for his 1910 novel *Howard's End* with his home, Rooks Nest House, still in the conservation area. This area is celebrated and promoted by the Friends of Forster Country group who have been preserving the area, arguably a heritage asset as the site of a former home of one of Britain's most well-known authors,



since 1988. This is without consideration of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century church of St Nicholas and historic sections of Stevenage's early medieval villages. Chapter 16.184 of the NPPF states that heritage assets must be 'conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution...to future generations.' In the subsequent subchapter the NPPF goes on to advise that 'plans should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment' of such assets. Historic England, the national body tasked with caring for and protecting England's historic environment, share my concerns as they have similarly objected to this development saying that the development will considerably erode or destroy the open character of the landscape. It will disrupt the long distance views and diminish the sense of open space, and therefore either weaken or eradicate the ability to appreciate the listed buildings and conservation area within their setting.' I agree wholeheartedly with the above objection that the application, if successful, would irreversibly disrupt the character of the historic site and permanently damage the area's unique and beautiful heritage.

I have repeatedly joined local residents in opposing development of the Green Belt and was horrified that Stevenage Borough Council ignored the concerns of residents who to this day remain determined to preserve the local environment. The Council's reassurances that Green Belt within Stevenage would be protected are clearly only lip service, as they actively destroy our local environment.

I ask the local authority to consider the objections of local people carefully and to consider Chapter 12.128 of the NPPF which states that 'applicants should work closely with those affected...[and]...take account the views of the community.' Housing needs must be met through Stevenage Borough Council ensuring other developments are built on brownfield sites in Stevenage. Thousands of homes already have planning permissions, but they are not being built. I ask that this application be dismissed outright and Stevenage Borough Council works on ensuring actual homes are built that already have planning permission, instead of destroying our local environment.

Yours sincerely,



Stephen McPartland  
Conservative Candidate for Stevenage