

LONDON COLNEY RESPONSE TO HERTSMERE BC LOCAL PLAN VISION

London Colney Parish Council object to the proposals for the development of a garden village on the boundary of Hertsmere and St Albans District Councils. The reasons for our objection include, but are not limited to the following:

We consider that the “area of search” for this option is poorly-defined on the map and there is evident concern at a number of the infrastructure implications, most notably for roads within the community of London Colney. There is no mention of the road infrastructure needed to support a development of this type and scale within Hertsmere’s local plan vision.

The proposed site is not integrated into the rail infrastructure, and is heavily reliant on car use, and specifically on the M25. The nearby access to the M25 (Junction 22) is already regularly a source of congestion. The M25 itself was not designed to be used for local journeys and is often congested which has significant implications to traffic flow into St Albans via London Colney both the High Street and the bypass (A1081), which links to the A414 and the road access to the strategic rail freight site, less than half a mile to the north of the village.

The proposed site straddles the M25. The Parish Council considers that the siting of the motorway presents a significant barrier to the cohesion of any community and the provision of services within that community. In addition, there are clear noise and air pollution implications which would be very difficult to overcome, given the raised position of the motorway above the surrounding ground level. We consider that these issues in relation to noise and air quality are likely to be significantly harder to mitigate in this location, in turn meaning that there would be loss of green belt land to create ‘boundary areas’. The proposal suggests that residents of the garden village will be encouraged to use green transport mechanisms such as bicycles, which we consider is totally unrealistic as any bicycle journey would have to negotiate the M25 motorway junction in order to access basic facilities. The infrastructure to allow bicycle journeys would be prohibitively expensive and developers would be unlikely to fund the necessary infrastructure to overcome this obstacle. Additionally it is unrealistic to expect residents of the proposed development to rely either solely or significantly on the local bus network or on green transport options.

The proposed site for development is in very busy area close to M25 interchange and gravel extraction facilities. Any proposed junction on Coursers Lane would have to take into consideration the anaerobic digester at Coursers Farm which has a daily traffic movement in excess of 54 lorry movements. The siting of the proposed garden village would also be affected by this existing facility and by its sister facility at Redwell Wood Farm. Environmental complaints including noise and odour pollution have been received and are ongoing from these facilities. This would affect any proposed development of a garden village in the vicinity.

Junction 22 of the M25 lies equidistant between A1(M) and M1 motorway junctions and is already one of the most congested sections of the M25. The Parish Council notes St Albans District Council’s assessment that a new motorway junction would be required in order to accommodate the additional traffic. The introduction of an additional junction on the M25 would increase the amount of noise and air pollution and reduce the area available for development. This would have to be funded centrally by The Highways Agency and we believe this funding is unlikely to be forthcoming. We strongly believe that there would be a temptation for the residents of the proposed garden village to use the motorway for short journeys thus increasing traffic on an already overloaded local network. It should not be forgotten that the strategic rail freight terminal, which has already received planning permission, lies less than a mile from the area, which will have a significant detrimental impact on the road infrastructure of the area.

The Parish Council are quite well aware of the aims to plan for more affordable homes, in line with St Albans' DLP but Hertsmere will suffer the same as St Albans District with residents moving out of London to take advantage of the 'lower' house prices, which will assist in continuing to price existing local residents out of the housing market in this area. There is no difference between the district boundaries in relation to house prices.

The Parish Council considers that the development of a garden village between the existing settlements of London Colney and Colney Heath will lead to coalescence. At the current time, these two villages have distinct and separate identities and these identities will be destroyed by any proposed development of this scale between the two villages. It is noted that the Hertsmere policy is to avoid coalescence between its communities and we consider it is therefore unreasonable in seeking to avoid coalescence within Hertsmere, to create it within St Albans.

The Parish Council is very concerned about the loss of Metropolitan Green Belt within the local area. The proposals seem to concentrate the majority of the development away from existing Hertsmere settlements thus providing least detrimental impact on Hertsmere residents while ignoring the impact on neighbouring communities. The Parish Council considers this to be unreasonable as any development to meet housing need should be distributed evenly within the Hertsmere area, just as St Albans District Council is doing to ensure that no one existing community is disproportionately disadvantaged. The removal of this section of Green Belt increases the urban feel of existing communities and will damage the ability of local residents to access green space. When the Green Belt was created, it was intended to provide a barrier between London and the surrounding areas and also to provide access to green space for recreational and leisure purposes. Building on this area, removes valuable access not only for London Colney residents but for residents of the wider community. The Green Belt boundary should only be amended when a local authority can demonstrate that they have examined fully all other reasonable options for example,

- making effective use of suitable brownfield sites...;
- the potential offered by land which is currently underused, including surplus public sector land where appropriate;
- optimising the proposed density of development; and
- exploring whether other authorities can help to meet some of the identified development requirement.

London Colney Parish Council does not consider that Hertsmere BC have demonstrated that they have fully examined all other options before proposing the development of Green Belt.

The Parish Council notes the need for appropriate infrastructure to be provided in the event of the development progressing, however, we also note St Albans District Councils assessment of the proposal which suggests that the infrastructure planned would not be sufficient and that additional strain would be placed on existing facilities such as GP provision, schools, libraries and shops. It should be noted that the associated S106 levy would be delivered to Hertsmere BC rather than St Albans who would be bearing the brunt of the impact of the development. This is clearly grossly inequitable.

The Parish Council notes that there is no mention within the proposal of the Duty to Cooperate and wonders why this crucial element is not discussed.

The housing need figures within the proposal are too low and the time period of the plan (up to 2024) is inadequate bearing in mind the length of time that development of this size and all the associated infrastructure would take to implement.

In summary, London Colney Parish Council recognises that population growth will require the additional building of homes within Hertfordshire. However, we do not accept that it is reasonable for Hertsmere BC to deliver the significant majority of their new housing need at this location to the detriment of existing London Colney residents who will see no tangible benefit and stand to lose access to green space, services, increased congestion on our local roads. We therefore object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal and request that Hertsmere BC reconsiders both the size and the location of the proposed development of a garden village.