

My submission via the portal:

I have submitted numerous responses over the years regarding GA2 on behalf of myself, my family and others. I will also send in an email to be attached to this submission with concerns from my previous submissions which all still stand as there is limited characters allowed via this form. The issues with infrastructure and the fact that Stevenage's infrastructure cannot cope with the pressures from new residents resulting from NHDC house building needs to be addressed. The strain on surgeries, lack of appointments and the hospital. GA2 would generate considerably more traffic resulting in further congestion through Great Ashby itself - those trying to get out of St Nicholas during rush hour due to Great Ashby Way, the impact on the A1M. The issues regarding green belt -the site for GA2 was given significant contribution in regards to green belt before this site was proposed and it was then removed from green belt. No site should be approved if given this level of green belt protection and yet it was. A new NPPF has succeeded the previous NPPF and I believe that NHDC should need to reassess the GA2 site in line with the new document before approval for this site is even considered as the site had this level of protection to protect from urban sprawl, to safeguard open countryside from encroachment and preserve its setting. During the local plan, the applicant Picture SRL questioned the need for a secondary school provision and suggested they could build another 100 homes; the reserve area for secondary school provision resulted in the site being extended and causing major issues regarding bio diversity. Herts CC are against a secondary school on the GA2 site and another proposed school in Stevenage was cancelled due to adequate places being available for the foreseeable future so why is this reserve area still in the plans? Businesses are still closing down and relocating from Stevenage, shops have shut and there aren't the jobs. The area of GA2 is used by thousands of residents from Ashby, Stevenage and Halls Green throughout the year for dog walking, jogging, family time and is important for both physical and mental health. By building all over this site, you are forcing people to use their vehicles to access open countryside further out, putting more strain on the roads and climate change and impacting on others' mental wellbeing. This area is also hugely important for our wildlife who have already been impacted upon with previous building. During the LP process, HERC advised that mistakes made with Great Ashby, should not be repeated and woodlands should not be encompassed on all sides, yet this is being ignored! There are numerous species of bats, badgers, skylarks and the rare hazel dormice which will be hugely impacted upon and I don't believe that even though certain mitigation has been put forward this will alleviate the harm GA2 will cause to the biodiversity and the woodlands including the ancient Brooches Wood.

In my previous submissions of 2016, 2020 and others I raised the issue with the wildlife in the proposed GA2 area and also the issue with the access road.

When the site was first proposed the ecological report was incomplete and incorrect and the issue with the access road was addressed during local plan hearings that many residents attended as they were objecting to the site being removed from the greenbelt. The Planning Inspector was concerned and arranged further hearings, buffers were widened to protect future sites but there were numerous issues that still haven't been resolved and alarmingly the word 'compensation' seems to keep cropping up.

In regards to the access road, NHDC was advise not to encompass a woodland on all sides like it had done previously with Hangbois Wood. The GA2 site will more or less totally encompass Brooches Wood, ancient woodland, Nine Acre Wood and when the applicant applies to build a further development north of the GA2 site during the next local plan which we feel is highly likely, it will also fully encompass Longdell Wood. This is going against what was advised. HERC and Natural England also advise the importance of connectivity. On looking at amendments, I have seen that planting has been promised and buffers have been incorporated in line with the LP which is brilliant, but there will be numerous dents into the buffers including a large dent into the 15m buffer that runs along ancient woodland and there are numerous hedgelines that will either be removed or fragmented which questions connectivity. 15m buffer is the minimum suggested by NE and the Woodland Trust and if there is to be an increase in pollution, noise etc then it should be extended, not reduced. The access road would result in this and we have not seen any mention of the impact that construction traffic would have on Brooches Wood either. When we raised this with other professionals at the start of the Local Plan process, we were told that ecologists didn't think that an access road could enter into the site along Brooches due to the ancient woodland on one side [REDACTED] (which Picture SRL had not even mentioned).

As a resident, I am well aware of the issues that can be caused by developments being built on wildlife. When Great Ashby was built, it had a huge impact on the badger population and this resulted in numerous rta's, a lack of foraging ground which caused issues to numerous residents who had to barricade their gardens. Our wildlife is so important. The wildlife in the area of GA2 has been their for years and although mitigation has been mentioned in the amendments, both myself and my family and others don't believe it's enough. We feel that the LPA need to become involved with this site in regards to certain issues and concerns and strengthen suggestions made by

other consultees in order to protect the wildlife within the area - the design should come second to this protection.

Our woodlands also cannot cope with the added pressures and since Great Ashby was built we have seen an increase in dumped rubbish at the edge of Brooches Wood and New Spring Wood, discarded dog faeces in bags thrown in woods and more recently numerous fires have been lit within them. When issues of the impact of residents was raised during the local plan process, Picture SRL stated they would ensure woodlands such as Nine Acre Wood would be fenced off and protected, but there has been no talk of protecting the woodlands going forward. New residents result in a large number of cats who cause devastation to birds and there are many birds in the GA2 area that are struggling within the UK and are on the rare species list and some of those inhabit the GA2 area.

We have noticed the concerns of the Herts & Middx Wildlife Trust, whom many of us are members and value their experience on such matters. They seem particularly concerned about Nine Acre Wood being totally encompassed and we know this is also a main concern of numerous wildlife groups. As well as badgers and bats and other mammals, hazel dormice used to inhabit the area but their numbers reduced significantly due to Great Ashby being built. How are the hazel dormice and their habitat going to be protected from noise pollution, pressures from domestic pets and such like? There seems to be so many unanswered questions.

I have already raised the issue of loss of countryside that many residents of Stevenage and surrounding areas currently access for mental health benefits as well as physical benefits. We are losing so much of our countryside that was protected when it was labelled as significant contribution green belt and we are going to end up with no countryside whatsoever. If NHDC was to look at original OS Maps as well as the original green belt maps and then look at updated maps, they would see the devastation. It won't be long before Stevenage is joined to Aston, Walkern, Weston, Graveley, character and open space will be lost forever. We would request that a new green belt assessment is made transparent and that this site is revisited in regards to the latest NPPF before being put forward for approval.

The access road will cause huge issues for those living in Great Ashby as well as impacting on residents of St Nicholas. There are already issues within Ashby in regards to narrow roads and parking. During the LP process, emphasis was put on the new sites

not using vehicles but using other transport - buses and bicycles. We all know this is ludicrous and the majority of residents of Great Ashby own and use vehicles every day. 640 homes multiply 2 vehicles per property is an extra 1200 vehicles trying to get in and out of GA2 via Mendip Way and the mini roundabout next to the primary school. It's absurd and traffic will also increase up Back Lane. A bus service through GA2 is also questionable and we have noted that in regards to GA1 which would be putting towards services, S106 is already being reduced and the applicant has asked for the allocation of affordable housing to be greatly reduced - with this in mind where will the funding be for infrastructure and other services for GA1 and GA2?

I have already mentioned lack of infrastructure and the pressure on the Lister Hospital and surgeries. It is all very well applicants and developers promising the earth, but the trouble is once a site is approved and they start building - the infrastructure gets forgotten. Before this site is put forward for approval, a surgery should be agreed with NHS England with all the necessary details put in place.

We are also concerned about the impact on not only our water but sewerage, there has already been suggestions that another development will make the situation uncopiable which would result in even more untreated sewerage ending up in our streams.

We all feel that even though measures and mitigations have been put in place and improvements noted, this site should never have been put forward in the first place, it should have been removed when all the issues were first raised and it is miles away from all the issues being looked at and resolved and until this happens, this site application should not be put forward for approval.

Nikki Hamilton

Final Addendum:

I would like to add that there has always been a huge objection to GA2 from local residents within Ashby, Stevenage and Weston. There have been a couple of petitions that went in to the Planning Inspector with one petition raising over a thousand signatures. One of the petitions received 46 signatures within a 2 hour window one day in January in the middle of the GA2 site - which shows how many people use the area

even on a freezing cold day in winter. We raised concerns that we found the LP policies not in line with the previous NPPF in regards to empowering local people and reflecting visions of the local community and I think the amount of people and organisations who have objected to GA2 shows this. Why are local people and residents being ignored?

In regards to green belt, I would just like to add what I submitted some years ago - I am rather concerned that the NHDC current green belt map does not give a true oversight in regards to the green belt surrounding our town and what we have already lost. It is every easy for an LPA to produce a current overview showing current green belt but failing to highlight areas that are currently green belt but are being removed by another authority or have already been removed and built upon; they will then do the same in another 5/10 years and people will assume just a small amount of green belt has been removed, but this is not the case. Our green belt is important for all of us and the wildlife in and around Stevenage and Great Ashby and Weston.

In regards to my comment re water, back in 2017 I wrote 'there are serious concerns with our water supply - Affinity Water reported that our groundwater resources remained below average for 2016/2017 and current levels are low and that is without a further 7,600 homes by Stevenage BC and the proposals EHDC and NHDC are trying to put through.' Here we are nearly 10 years on and the issues with water continue to increase.

In regards to my comment about lack of jobs, in 2017 I wrote 'there were 49,540 jobs in Stevenage in 2014 (as reported in the Functional Economic Market Area Study commissioned in 2015), 48,000 jobs a year later (as reported in nomis official market statistics) - a drop of over 1,500 in 12 months.' Job numbers have continued to decrease at an alarming rate. This also impacts on traffic and increases congestion on the motorway and A602 and finally, not only is there already added pressure on our NHS, but child services and mental health services are also over stretched. We simply cannot keep building on the edge of a large town with no infrastructure. Please ensure that certain measures are put in place in regards to the above before approving an application that is going to cause huge issues for current residents, future residents and our wildlife.