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(Objects)

26/00006/FP

Erection of 50no. residential dwellings (including affordable) with public open space, associated parking, landscaping and access

The proposed development of 50 residential dwellings, including affordable housing, aims to address the pressing need for accommodation in the area. While the design demonstrates sensitivity to the local context, **serious concerns regarding site boundaries, traffic management, environmental impact, and compliance with planning policies** raise significant doubts about its viability. The points below highlight shortcomings in the proposal with local and national planning requirements, highlighting critical issues that must be addressed before any recommendation for approval can be considered.

1.0 Site

There seem to be site boundary lines missing from the proposal. The planning proposal should not have been validated without these boundaries and makes knowing where the proposal starts and ends very difficult.

1.1 The red line / site boundary missing

There seems to be a purposeful omission of the site / red line boundary from drawings from a number of drawings. This seems to be due to the complicated overlap of the development, existing cul-de-sac artery off Stevenage Road and the school access. This is further exemplified in the traffic section below.

2.0 Traffic

The proposal sets one entrance through a small cul-de-sac road off Stevenage Road. This is a main access for the neighbouring Kingshott School drop-off and pick-up, which has not been addressed.

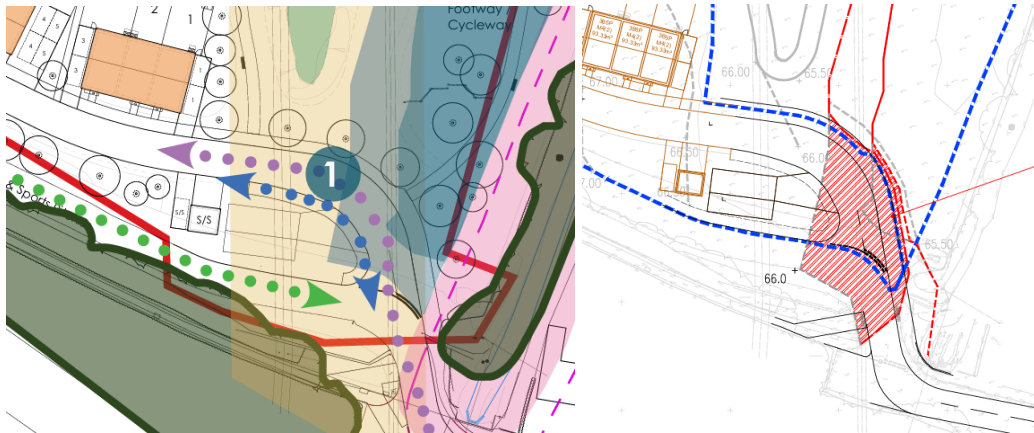
Any increase in traffic or access of refuse and emergency vehicles has not been covered during peak times, nor has the school traffic been addressed during construction.

These issues are not highlighted in the proposal or by the consultants which shows an access road to the school as being open and a through road rather than a dead-end road. This entrance is currently gated and is open only during drop-off, pick-up, and ad-hoc events held at the school. This creates traffic back-up onto a small road which is currently not fit for this purpose, especially when there are any vehicles parked on the road. Any development will exacerbate the existing traffic stress which is detailed in the traffic plan.

2.1 Site boundary

There are a number of inconsistencies with the site boundary in the traffic analysis. It is missing on many of the drawings and in some images it is showing the access road as a through road when it is not. It is unclear if the proposed red line boundary does or does not

include the area between the existing access road and entrance to the development. This is the **ONLY** access to the proposal and it should be clear who and to what owner this space belongs to and if it is part of this application or not.



Red line boundary unclear and green arrow showing through traffic

2.2 Through Traffic

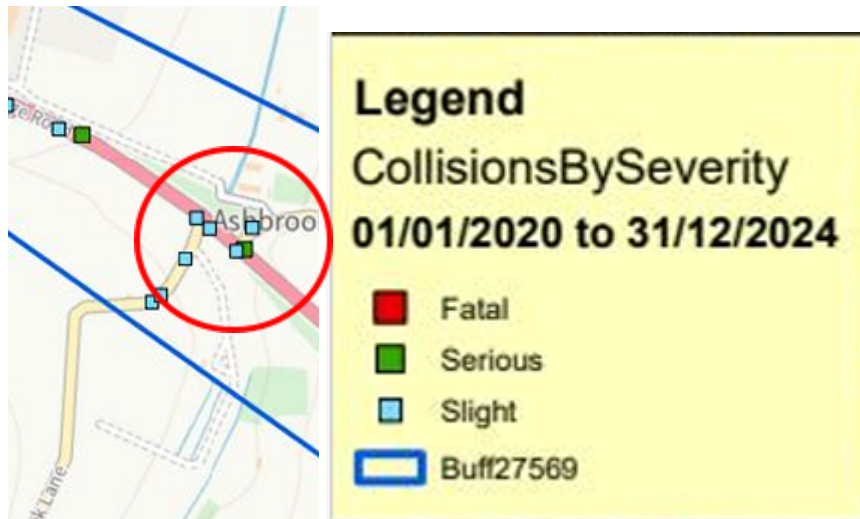
The current access is not a through road and does not seem to be created in the proposal although some of the plans do show it as a through road. This is unclear in the proposal if one of these entrances will be incorporated into the site or if the school will move the gate past the proposal. The location of this gate is key for refuge and fire access, highlighted in point



Current access shown on proposal as an open road

2.3 Current Traffic Collisions

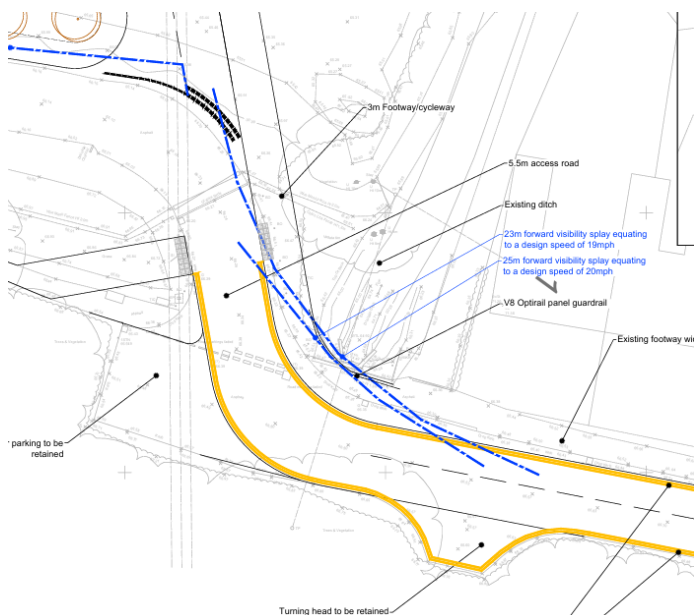
The travel plan highlights the current issues with traffic collisions at this junction. Just at the direct access to the site and the two junctions to get to it, there have been 5 collisions in the years 2020-2024. This is due to the speed and general bad design of the junctions which would only be exacerbated by the proposal rather than remedied.



Crashes highlighted in the traffic plan

2.4 Poor visibility

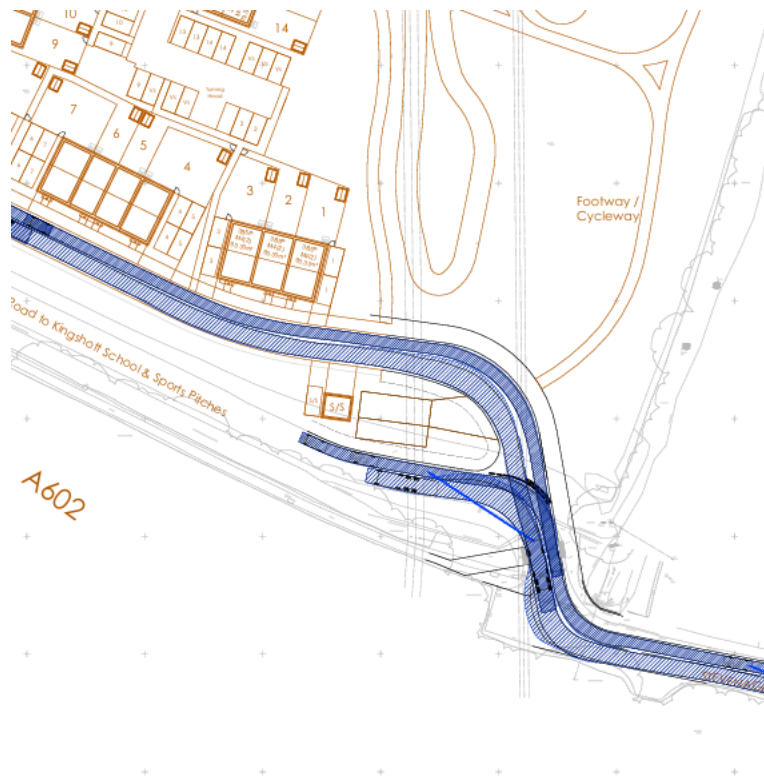
The traffic consultant highlights the poor visibility of the junction where visibility splays would not work at 20mph unless the council maintain the brook vegetation. They instead suggest acceptable visibility splays at 19mph which is not a possible speed limit.



Traffic plan showing poor visibility at the access to the site and not showing a red line boundary

2.5 Refuse and Emergency Access

No analysis of refuse and emergency vehicles access during school drop-off and pick-up times has been undertaken. There are already problems on refuse pick-up days when up to 3 lorries around 8am clash with residents and school drop-off and this would be exacerbated with the new development.



Screenshot from traffic analysis not showing the site boundary and showing use of school access road for refuse and emergency manoeuvres

2.6 Current and increase in traffic

The small cul-de-sac road off Stevenage Road has two difficult junctions with the current traffic levels and does not take into account increase in traffic or the current school drop-off and pick-up traffic.



Cars waiting to exit the school due to the narrow street



Entrance to private road too narrow for two cars



Tailback of cars onto the cul-de-sac leading to Stevenage Road during drop-off

2.7 Ash Brook

There is no consideration to the current constraints of Ash Brook and the current bridge / culvert weight restrictions for construction vehicles, refuse collection, emergency access and increase in vehicular traffic.



Existing cul-de-sac off Stevenage Road and only access to proposal

2.8 Access Road Width

The current road access is a maximum of 5.5m for its entirety onto the site, which is narrower than what is required from new planning developments.

2.9 Vehicular traffic within the development

There are a number of instances within the development itself which do not have a 5.5m - 6m manoeuvre space out of parking spaces.

2.10 Summary

If the school were to re-design their entrance and exit to create a through route, this proposal may have dual access rather than single access through a very small 5.5m road and could be viable. As it stands, the access does not take into account the current traffic stress during drop-off and pick-up times or during current refuse collection times.

3.0 Environmental

There are a number of environmental issues which have not been addressed in the proposal.

3.1 Overhead cables and distance to the dwellings

Whilst there are no planning recommendations of distances to housing to overhead cables, there are recommendations and this has not been addressed in the proposal on construction plan.



Overhead cables on site

3.2 Trees being proposed near overhead cables

Trees have been used in the proposal to create a boundary to overhead cables but due to the height of the cables, this does not seem like the most appropriate landscaping choice.

3.3 Noise to the new dwellings

Noise analysis does not take into account the added traffic noise during pick-up and drop-off.

4.0 Grey Belt

The site is on the Green Belt and the proposal does not meet Grey Belt requirements as detailed below.

4.1 Agricultural Land

The land survey highlights the use of the site as agricultural land going back to 1881.

Table 2.1: History of the Site and Surrounding Land		
Date	Site History	Surrounding Land History
1881 (1:2,500) 1884 (1:10,560) 1898 (1:2,500) 1899 (1:10,560)	The site is shown to have comprised undeveloped agricultural land or pasture intersected by a path and surrounded by field boundaries, tracks or roads. Ash Brook shown to have formed the eastern site boundary at this time, flowing in a northerly direction.	The site is shown to have been surrounded by agricultural land or pasture in all directions. It is bound by a road to the south-west. A small settlement at Ashbrook is located approximately 100–250m E, and Ippollitts is around 800m SW. A railway line is present approximately 500m NE. Off-site features include gravel pits (500m, 700m, and 900m NW), a chalk pit (900m NW), a gravel pit (800m SE), and an iron foundry (900m SW).
1924 (1:2,500) 1924 (1:10,560) 1924-25 (1:10,560)	No notable changes identified at the site. The track that bounds to the southwest is called Hambridge Way.	A pumping house is shown 250m NW. No notable changes are identified in the surrounding area.
1946 (1:10,560) 1947-50 (1:10,560)	No notable changes identified at the site.	No notable changes identified in the surrounding area.
1960 (1:10,000) 1964 (1:10,000) 1965 (1:2,500) 1966-81 (1:2,500) 1976 (1:10,000) 1981-82 (1:10,000) 1984 (1:2,500) 1986 (1:2,500)	No notable changes identified at the site.	The pumping house previously identified approximately 250m NW is labelled as "Kingshott." By the time of the 1981–1982 mapping edition, a large area from around 500m NW had been developed with residential housing, and a school had been constructed approximately 150m to the NW. A sewage works was present about 250m S. The gravel pit located 500m SE had expanded during the early 1960s but was recorded as disused by 1981–1982.

Land survey included in the application

4.2 Merging Towns

This site sits between two main populations, Hitchin and Little Wymondley. Any increased development in this area will narrow the distance between these two settlements and increase to the merging of Hitchin town and Little Wymondley village.

The site does not have good pedestrian or cycle access to either Hitchin town centre or the nearby villages of Great Wymondley and Little Wymondley. The proposal increases the car stress to the area and connection between the town and the two villages.

4.3 Contribution to Green Belt purposes

The site is a green field on a public path which currently contributes to the Green Belt. It is not an industrial site and never has been.

4.4 Community benefits

The proposal provides affordable housing but the green infrastructure will only be accessible to its users and not the wider community.

5.0 Conclusion

Recommendation Against Approval for Proposal 26/00006/FP

While the proposed development of 50 residential dwellings, including affordable housing, offers much-needed accommodation and is designed sympathetically to the local area, **fundamental planning and practical concerns render the proposal unsuitable for approval in its current form.**

Key Issues

1. Site Boundaries and Clarity

- The omission of clear red line site boundaries in multiple drawings creates ambiguity about the development's extent and ownership, particularly around the critical access road shared with the adjacent school. This lack of clarity is unacceptable for a planning application.

2. Traffic and Access

- The proposal relies on a single, narrow (5.5m) access road via a cul-de-sac off Stevenage Road, which is already strained by school traffic during peak times. No analysis addresses the impact of increased traffic, refuse collection, or emergency vehicle access.
- The traffic plan fails to resolve existing issues, such as poor visibility at junctions, a history of collisions, and the impracticality of maintaining visibility splays at unrealistic speeds (19mph).
- The development exacerbates current traffic stress and does not account for the constraints of Ash Brook's bridge/culvert weight restrictions.

3. Environmental and Policy Concerns

- The site is located on Green Belt land and does not meet Grey Belt requirements. The proposal does not justify the loss of agricultural land (in use since 1881) or the merging of Hitchin and Little Wymondley, which would further urbanise the area.
- Overhead cables and noise from increased traffic during school hours are not adequately addressed, impacting the livability of the new dwellings.
- The green infrastructure is limited to residents, offering no broader community benefit.

4. Design and Practicality

- The development's internal roads lack the required 5.5m–6m maneuvering space for vehicles.
- The landscaping plan, including trees near overhead cables, is impractical and does not align with best practices.