



North Herts Council
Development and Conservation
North Hertfordshire District Council
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Our ref: 22408
Date: 24 September 2026

For the attention of: Linda Walker

Application ref: 26/01924/FP
Location: Former Big Cat Sanctuary Codicote Road Welwyn
Hertfordshire AL6 9TU

Proposal/Description: Erection of 109 residential dwellings with access, parking, hard and soft landscaping and public open space following demolition of all existing buildings and structures

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Full planning application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

1.0. Site Context

- 1.1. The Site is located to the north-west of Welwyn with access from Codicote Road which runs along the north-eastern site boundary. The Site contains a number of buildings, enclosures, paddocks, stables and grassland fields.
- 1.2. Dwellings on Old Nursery Way and Fulling Mill Lane form the southern site boundary, and a Catchpole Wood (priority habitat and ancient woodland) forms the northern boundary. The western site boundary is defined by a hedgerow which separated the site from the wider arable countryside.

2.0. Planning Policy Context

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (Adopted 2022)

- 2.1. Policies to be considered that are relevant to landscape include Policy ENV3, ENV5, NE1, NE2, NE6, NE7, NE8, SP5, SP9 and SP12. The Site is also located within the Green Belt and therefore Policy SP5 is relevant.

Codicote Neighbourhood Plan (Made September 2025)

- 2.2. Policies considered relevant include:



- COD 3 Designing for Flood Resilience
- COD 4 Designing for Biodiversity
- COD 14 Safe and Accessible Active Travel Routes
- COD 16 Landscape Character and Important Views
- COD 17 Biodiversity and Ecological Connectivity
- COD 18 Wildlife Corridors: Particularly WD4 'The River Mimran from St Albans Road, then NW through Catchpole Wood to First Spring' which runs along the western site boundary.
- COD 19 Climate Change Resilience

2.3. Under COD 18 (WD4) *"The River Mimram is an endangered chalk stream. Any development adjacent to the River Mimram should be designed with a naturalised buffer zone of at least 10m from the top of the bank to protect and enhance the conservation value of the watercourse and ensure access for flood defence maintenance."*

3.0. Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA):

- 3.1. An LVA has been undertaken by Arthian Ltd in July 2026 (Ref: 321775 Rev. 1.0) to accompany the application.
- 3.2. We are largely satisfied with the Methodology included within Appendix A and judge this broadly accords with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition (GLVIA3).

Landscape Character

- 3.3. Within the North Herts and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment, the application site is located within Landscape Character Area 133a 'Danesbury Settled Slopes'. Key characteristics of this LCA that are relevant to the site include: deeply incised dry valleys, south west facing slopes, parallel roads at right angles to contours, scattered residential settlement in large garden plots, variety of property styles and boundary treatments including ranch fencing to paddocks, areas of horsiculture.
- 3.4. Strategies and guidelines for this LCA include:
- utilize ancient hedge and field boundaries to locate the most appropriate location for the restoration of woodlands,
 - encourage the reversal of habitat fragmentation and the creation and improvement of habitat links to create eco corridors
 - ensure new planting is encouraged to maintain age diversity.
 - where hedgerow is deemed unavoidable, replacement planting should use locally native species of local provenance to maintain local distinctiveness
 - ensure that the surroundings of converted and new buildings are designed and maintained to be in keeping with their rural surroundings by ensuring that 'garden' details are screened from view where possible and native species are used for hedging and tree planting to the perimeter
 - enhance and restore hedgerows as characteristic field boundary patterns

- hard detailing should be kept to a minimum, with the emphasis on the use of natural materials, such as gravel for drives. Gates and entrance details should be sympathetic to historic, rural context and the use of engineering bricks and imposing metal work to be avoided

3.5. Table 2 provides a summary of the overall landscape effects judged. The table concludes that the Site (landscape characteristics and landscape character) is assessed as **medium** sensitivity, **medium** magnitude of change and an overall **moderate adverse** landscape effect. Overall, we do not disagree with this judgement.

Visual Amenity

- 3.6. Figure L1 provides the locations of the Viewpoints used within the visual assessment. We judge that the selected viewpoints are representative of the potential views towards the application site.
- 3.7. The viewpoint photography (Appendix B) was undertaken in May 2026 during spring when there was full leaf cover. Whilst this does not represent the worst-case scenario, this constraint is included within Para 3.2.4.
- 3.8. The submitted photography demonstrates that views into the site are largely perceptible from Coldicote Road on the north-eastern boundary. Views into the site are therefore limited to the very immediate site boundaries.
- 3.9. Effects on Coldicote Road are assessed as **minor moderate adverse** for road users, and up to **moderate-major adverse** for ground floor residents (Table 4). Whilst we do not disagree with these judgements, the pedestrians utilising the pavements on both sides of the roadway have not been considered within this assessment. We judge that the effects on the pedestrians in this location to be similar to the ground-floor residents.
- 3.10. The only other effects assessed are from Viewpoint 8, which represents the elevated PRoW 023 views from the south-west. Table 9 assesses that the effects on this receptor are **moderate adverse**. Whilst we do not disagree with this judgement, the effects evidence the importance of providing screening and mitigation to reduce the long-term effects of development within the site.

4.0. Review of the proposal/submitted information

- 4.1. From a landscape perspective, we have no objection to the principle of development within this site. The Site has a large number of buildings and paraphernalia which reduces the sensitivity to any development and is also considered a brownfield site. Located on the edge of Welwyn, there are also a number of other parcels of residential, where the proposed development would not be incongruous with its surroundings.
- 4.2. We have not previously been involved in the pre-application process or provided commentary on previous iterations of the design or layout.

- 4.3. Across the scheme, we consider there is a missed opportunity to front dwellings on to the perimeter hedgerows and trees which are important assets to a landscape-led scheme. At present, the current layout minimises public enjoyment of existing trees and hedgerows by fencing them within rear gardens.
- 4.4. Para 5.4 of the DAS also states that there are “*long distance views to the west though view corridors within the Site*”. However, these long-distance views are unlikely to be appreciated by residents from accessible areas given that most of this boundary is occupied by rear garden boundaries instead of POS.
- 4.5. We therefore judge that the scheme would benefit from houses fronting on to the western site boundary, with opportunities to provide a landscape buffer to the wider landscape, provide an enhanced transition to the countryside edge, provide a linear area of POS and also allow for enjoyment of these western long-distance views.
- 4.6. This would also creation a provision for a circular pedestrian link through the site, with connections along the western edge. At present, there are very limited pedestrian links or connections through the site, with most roads and walkways leading to dead ends.
- 4.7. The northern POS is not well overlooked by houses, where we have concerns regarding passive surveillance. We consider that Plots 16 to 24 would be better orientated to front on to the northern POS to provide an active frontage which overlooks the POS, providing passive surveillance and also enhancing the visual amenity of the POS. At present, the southern edge of the POS is defined by the rear garden fence panels of proposed dwellings. We advise readdressing the arrangement of the Plots in this area of the scheme to address Secured By Design concerns.
- 4.8. Following from the above and based on the Tree Protection Plan (Dwg no. TPP 01 Sheet 1 of 2), we assume the hedgerow between the proposed POS and Plots 16 to 24 is proposed (not currently existing). This will therefore result in close-board fencing forming the southern boundary of the POS until the hedgerow establishes. In the interest of visual amenity, and also passive surveillance, we therefore assess that the houses in Plots 16-24 would be better fronted on to the northern POS.
- 4.9. The northern edge of Old Nursery Way is currently defined by existing close-board fencing and a row of trees/hedgerow. We therefore consider that the rear garden boundary fence for Plots 95 to 109 could be removed, and the rear gardens extended to the outer boundary of the site. At present, the proposed parallel lines of close-board fencing create an unusable and unmaintainable space which should be removed through amendments to the boundary treatments.
- 4.10. This advice also applies to the Plots 25-33 and Plots 66-69 along the western boundary, where the existing vegetated boundary could be utilised and reinforced to form a softer rear garden boundary, instead of close board fencing. Notwithstanding this, we would still

prefer the arrangement of these Plots to be reorientated in accordance with the advice under 4.3-4.6 above.

- 4.11. It would also be useful if submitted plans indicated which of the trees and hedgerows are existing or proposed.
- 4.12. The density of the scheme poses some issues relating to usable and good design, which materialises in the relationships between Plots and their associated parking. For example, the plots in the south-east corner of the scheme feel overly dense, with the parking for Plot 94 located directly outside Plot 96, and the parking for Plot 90 located between Plots 91 and 92. Overall, we consider that the available space for the number of plots proposed to be quite constricted which has provided restrictive options for convenient layouts.
- 4.13. We concur with the retention of the northern parcel for public open space (POS) adjacent to Catchpole Wood, given the landscape is more complex with a higher quantity of landscape features and proximity to Catchpole Wood. However, given the arrangement of rear gardens enclosing this space, we consider it may not be well-used. The POS is also surrounded by woodland and vegetation, further contributing to its enclosure and lack of passive surveillance. In addition to previous advice regarding Plot reorientation, we also advise that the accessibility and connections to this space are enhanced.
- 4.14. Para 5.4 of the Design and Access Statement (DAS) states the inclusion of “*a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) with swales and ponds*”. However, SuDS do not appear in the submitted Coloured Site Layout (Dwg no. 25025 / C101B). We would expect SuDS to be integrated into the proposal, through basins within open spaces and swales alongside roadways. Details of this should be provided.
- 4.15. We do however welcome the extent of block paving across the scheme, which contributes to visual amenity, traffic calming, and potentially SuDS (if permeable).
- 4.16. We also welcome the intention to propose larger feature trees as focal points along roadways, as per item 10 on Section 5.9 of the Landscape Strategy (DAS). Based on the Coloured Site Layout, we consider there are additional opportunities to apply this approach throughout the scheme and would welcome other larger trees to be proposed along key vistas.
- 4.17. A play area has been identified on the Landscape Strategy (Section 5.9 of the DAS) although this is not present on the Coloured Site Layout. Whilst we recognise details are to be agreed; we consider there are opportunities for some more informal natural play-on-the-way features throughout the site or along the informal path as item 1 on the Landscape Strategy.
- 4.18. As part of a full application, we would have expected additional information regarding the proposed landscaping associated with the scheme. Whilst this information can be conditioned, we advise that the above comments and concerns are addressed prior.

5.0. Summary

- 5.1. From a landscape perspective, we do not disagree with the principle of development of this site, given its previous use and location, and judge that there is capacity for development.
- 5.2. However, we have concerns regarding the design and layout of the proposals. We consider that the scheme would benefit from the plot frontages to front on to the POS to the north, to provide passive surveillance of this otherwise enclosed and quiet area of the site which poses have safety concerns.
- 5.3. Further to the above, we also judge that the scheme would benefit from houses fronting on to the western boundary, to create a provision for a circular walking route around the site, reduce the extent of dead-ends, and celebrate existing green infrastructure as opposed to closing it off from most residents.
- 5.4. We also have other concerns and recommendations regarding the design of the scheme which should be addressed prior to recommendation of any conditions.

Please contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

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Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of North Herts Council.

Please note:

This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.

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