

20th September 2024
Our ref: 2024-456

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Dear Melissa,

Site: Node Court, Drivers End Lane, Codicote, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 8TR

Planning Applications: 23/00407/FP and 23/00408/LBC

Client: Mr Edward Westwick

Newsteer Real Estate Advisers ('Newsteer') have been instructed by Mr Edward Westwick (our 'Client') who lives directly opposite Node Court, Drivers End Lane, Codicote, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 8TR (the 'Site').

This letter relates to planning applications made by the applicant for the above mentioned Site which have been given planning references 23/00407/FP and 23/00408/LBC. The full planning and listed building consent applications were submitted on, and made valid on 20th February 2023 and are yet to be determined.

Our client submitted objections to the applications on 31st May 2023 via Howard Kennedy LLP (attached for ease as Appendix 1). In summary these objections were on focused on the following issues:

1. The proposed development not being in accordance with Section 13 of the NPPF
2. The proposed development being inappropriate development in the Green Belt and is not in accordance with paragraph 148 of the NPPF
3. The proposed development does not demonstrate 'very special circumstances' and is not in accordance with paragraph 147 of the NPPF
4. The proposed development is not in accordance with Policy SP5 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan
5. The proposed development (new build homes) seeks to distract from the historic listing and it is not considered public benefits outweigh the harm
6. Viability issues not being demonstrated or justified
7. The proposed development fails to provide any affordable housing
8. The proposed development (6 new homes) fail to meet the nationally described space standards
9. The proposed development is poorly served by public transport, and there is no footpath for a safe route for residents or visitors and as such is not in accordance with Local Plan policy T1 (e)

10. The proposed development does not provide visitor parking in accordance with Local Plan policy
11. Insufficient information submitted on Biodiversity Net Gain
12. Insufficient information related to Bat Surveys

Since the submission of the applications Newsteer have been monitoring these and have been engaging with the Council for any updates. Our Client was sent a letter dated 2nd September 2024 from the Council that highlighted amendments have been made (dated 30th August 2024) to the applications and that there is a 30 day period to submit any further comments (i.e. by 2nd October 2024).

On behalf of the Client, Newsteer now comment on the amendments made.

It appears that there has been no detailed document submitted by the applicant which sets out exactly what the changes are, however these are understood to be related to just the full planning application 23/00407/FP, and there are no changes to the application 23/00408/LBC. The changes are understood to be as follows:

- Change to the formal description of development
- Removal from the proposed scheme of the 2 x proposed gate lodge (houses positioned either side of the entrance to the site)
- Reduction of car parking of 4 x spaces (related to the 2 x houses removed from the proposed scheme)

The change in description of development is from;

"Conversion of Node Court to 8no. dwellings. Conversion of Midden building to residential and the erection of 6no. terraced dwelling-houses and 2no. detached dwelling houses as development to facilitate the restoration of Node Court together with associated car parking, landscaping, boundary treatment and ancillary works."

Amended to:

"Conversion of Node Court to 8no. dwellings. Conversion of Midden building to residential and the erection of 6no. terraced dwelling-houses as development to facilitate the restoration of Node Court together with associated car parking, landscaping, boundary treatment and ancillary works (Amended Plans received 30 August 2024)"

As such, the only alteration made to the planning application is the removal of the 2 x detached dwelling houses which were proposed as part of 8 new build dwellings to facilitate in the restoration of Node Court, which in itself is being converted to 8 dwellings. These 2 x detached dwellings now deleted from the proposal were identical and were to be located either side of the entrance to the site off Drivers End Lane. These houses were designed to provide accommodation over part lower ground, ground and 1st floor and were both 2-3 bed houses each with 2 car parking spaces associated with them, alongside the associated paraphernalia that goes with any new dwelling.

Given that there are no other changes made to the planning application, our Client maintains the objections as submitted on the 31st May 2023.

The removal of the 2 no. detached dwellings does not diminish the impact of the proposed facilitating new build development in the Green Belt and still fails to demonstrate Very Special Circumstances and as such the development is not in accordance with National or Local planning policy.

Our Client maintains the view that Node Court needs to be refurbished and brought back into active use, but the level of facilitating residential development (6 no. new build 2 storey 2b3p houses) is still not conducive with the Green Belt location. As such, the proposed development fails to maintain the openness and permanence of the Green Belt, and as such the proposal of the 6no. new build homes (which still fail to meet the NDSS) remains as inappropriate development in the Green Belt for which no very special circumstances have been demonstrated, and as such there would be an unacceptable intensification of the Site.

Sitting alongside this matter, there still remains a lack of information submitted by the applicant that demonstrates any visibility on the viability information that justifies why the level of development proposed is required relative to the renovation costs.

Furthermore, there has been no change to the access or egress to the site and its location and position and poor accessibility to public transport and no footpaths remains. It appears that matters on biodiversity net gain have not been addressed and further bat surveys are required.

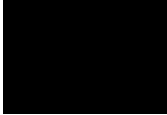
In addition to the above, our Client advises that there has been no engagement from the applicant with either immediate neighbours, the Parish Council or Ward Councillors which, whilst not a reason for objection demonstrates a lack of willingness to engage and work within the community within which the Site is located.

As such this goes against the NPPF and the aims of Paragraph 39 of the NPPF which refers to pre-application engagement between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF which highlights the need for effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process and paragraph 137 is particularly pertinent as this states *"Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot"*. As such it is our clients position that there hasn't been engagement and therefore alongside all the other matters raised in this and the previous objection leads to why this proposal should be refused.

To summarise, our Client maintain his objection to the planning application as submitted in 2023 and associated Listed Building Consent applications as referenced and urges the Council to refuse the applications on the basis of inappropriate development in the Green Belt for which there are no mitigating circumstances and no Very Special Circumstances demonstrated.

Our client would be able to support a revised proposal that saw the conversion and refurbishment of Node Court to the 8 dwellings as submitted and conversion of the Midden building to 1 no. home only.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Manning

Director

