

WESTON PARISH COUNCIL

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24/02889/FP: Residential development of 281 dwellings and associated roads, parking, realignment of Back Lane, drainage, landscaping, open space, servicing facilities and associated works (as amended).

Following the amendments notified to this Council by North Herts Council (NHC) on 11th June 2025 and set out in the documents submitted by the applicants referred to on the NHC planning portal as:

- Cover letter including summary of amendments - redacted 3.6.25
- Transport Technical Note - Monitor and Manage

Weston Parish Council (WPC) request that the following comments be taken into account:

1. Monitor and manage. A condition of the Monitor and Manage approach in the NPPF is that the conditions must be clear and unambiguous, allowing for effective monitoring and enforcement by the local planning authority. It is our view that the Transport Technical Note - Monitor and Manage document fails to provide sufficient detail to meet this criteria, or to even provide information on how and when sufficiently detailed information will be provided. In particular we would highlight the following shortcomings:

- a. A robust approach needs to be taken to providing the pre-development baseline data for traffic flows. We do not believe that the current figures supplied in Transport Assessment or the new Technical Note document provide this, as they appear to rely on a single survey from May 2022 that has then been factored using the National Traffic Model to provide estimated figures for 2026.

Given the woeful inadequacy of the road network around the GA1 site, this shortcoming is totally unacceptable and should not be overlooked by Highways or NHC Planning.

It is our view that a robust survey should be conducted over at least a fortnight (24-hours per day) during a period that is outside of school and national holidays. Only in this way will it be possible to establish a sound baseline that eliminate the risk of avoids the risk that unusual circumstances (such as an accident on the A1 or a traffic problem in Weston) might corrupt to data.

- b. The applicant suggests a methodology by which monitoring surveys could be conducted although there appears to be very little information regarding what will be monitored above and beyond vehicle movements.

For vehicle movements, we believe that the ANPR approach should be adopted as it enables the process to be conducted over longer and more sustained periods, **AND** that this same approach should be used for gathering the base-line data referred to above.

- c. For the local authority to be capable of monitoring the enforcement of the Monitor and Manage approach, it is necessary that accurate data comparisons can take place throughout the project from pre- to post-development. This will only be possible if the data is organised in such a way as to facilitate this with suitable 'triggers' agreed from the outset. We therefore believe it essential that the applicants submit and gain approval for the database model that will be used throughout the project as a prerequisite for planning permission. This model will

need to account for the complexities that will occur later in separating current traffic flows from those attributable to GA1, and later from those attributable to anticipated developments such as GA2.

- d. **Prevention vs Reaction.** The Monitor and Manage approach implies that mitigation will only take place once the impact of the development can be assessed. In reality, the impact on traffic flows along Back Lane through Weston and Graveley will begin as soon as the first construction vehicles begin to access the site. Since much of the impact of this development is anticipatable, we believe that some mitigating measures should be implemented at the start of the development, so as to ensure that residents in Weston, Graveley and Great Ashby are not adversely impacted during the period when traffic volumes are increasing.
2. **Emergency Access.** The traffic figures presented so far, and whatever data modelling emerges hereafter, all presuppose that there is no possibility of any traffic passing ever accessing Back Lane from the GA1 estate from the Haybluff Drive entrance or v.v.

We would therefore like to remind both Highways and NHC of our concern that a means be found to **legally prevent** the emergency access described in the Transport Assessment document from ever being used for any vehicular purpose other than that proposed.

We know that you will respond that it will be a set out as a planning condition, but we would point out that there are plenty of examples of where planning conditions are later dropped or where the local authority cannot justify the cost of enforcement.

Our suggestion is that a ransom strip be created and placed in the ownership of NHC with a suitable covenant ensuring that it can never be sold or let and that its use can never be changed.
3. **Back Lane passing places.** The applicant has suggested that passing places could be introduced along Back Lane. While this would improve traffic flows and lessen the erosion of the verges, they will have a negative impact on both Weston and Graveley by increasing the attractiveness the road to vehicles traveling to the north and west along Back Lane and adding to the urbanisation of a rural lane.

If Highways are minded to introduce passing places, we believe that sections of the road should formally be regarded as a single-track road with passing places with appropriate edging and signage to prevent the continual erosion of verges as occurs at present.
4. **Vehicle restrictions.** The applicant suggest that Highways might be minded to impose restrictions on larger vehicles using Calder Way. WPC would be wholly supportive of such a move provided the same restriction applied to the whole length of Back Lane between Weston and Graveley.
5. **Construction traffic.** One of the major challenges of the GA1 site is that none of the access roads are suitable for construction traffic, and there is nowhere for construction workers to park other than on the GA1 site. Moreover, as the development will require construction vehicles to be using Calder Way for a time and repeatedly crossing Back Lane during most of the development period, the disruption to local residents and users of Back Lane will be significant.

As a significant number of pupils at Weston primary school live in Great Ashby, it should be a condition of the development that construction traffic be banned from using or crossing Calder Way or Back Lane during school term times for at least 30 minutes before and after school start and end times.

We would also note that we have previously been assured that no construction traffic will use the approaches to the site along Back Lane between GA1 and Graveley or GA1 and Weston. Suitable signage will need to be in place at the site entrances and exits to ensure that drivers adhere to these requirements and a commitment to this needs to be contained in the Construction Management Plan. Similar signage would be needed on the approach roads off the Graveley Road, B507 at Clothall and the bottom of Hatch Lane in Baldock to prevent vehicles approaching along Back Lane via Weston or Graveley.

6. Construction Management Plan. Given the complexities of accessing the GA1 site during the construction phase, the severe lack of parking in the area surrounding the site and the fact that Back Lane will be relocated as part of the plan, we believe that it is essential that the Construction Management Plan is produced and agreed **BEFORE** any planning consent is given.

Such an approach would improve transparency and ensure that local residents have the opportunity to comment on planned arrangements.

7. S106 estimate. The covering letter suggests that Highway officers have indicated that a pot of £400k '*...would be adequate to cater for any such fall-back intervention that may be pursued*'. Given the inadequacy of local roads to support the construction traffic, the fact that roadside parking spaces will be lost to facilitate the construction, the disruption that the rerouting of Back Lane will cause, the huge impact adding 96 dwellings along Back Lane will have on traffic flows through Weston and Graveley and along a road that was deliberately designed to deter traffic (Calder Way), and the mitigation measures suggested in the Transport Technical Note, we believe that the estimate of £400k to be woefully inadequate.

Furthermore, the Monitor and Manage approach means that whatever sum is agreed at this stage needs to account for inflation from now to the end of the Monitor and Manage period, usually 5 years following the completion of the development phase. In assessing the current costs to include in our s106 claim, Highways advised us that they allow for annual cost increases of 5% per annum.

Monitor and Manage also implies that many mitigation costs would be back-end loaded, when the impact of compound inflation will have an even greater impact on the actual cost.

8. Solar panels. We note that the proposal now includes solar panels on a number of the buildings. It is our view that these should be included along with battery storage in all buildings.