

# Weston Parish Council response to GA2 Hybrid Application Reference: 25/03080/HYA

Weston Parish Council objects to the planning application for the following reasons.

## Emergency Access

The applicants make it clear that use of the emergency access route onto the site from Warrengreen Lane and will be restricted to emergencies, and that its purpose is to provide an *“alternative route for emergency vehicles coming from the fire stations in Stevenage or Baldock”*.

Unfortunately, the intentions of one generation are not always adhered to by their successors, and there are plenty of examples within the North Herts region where previous planning conditions have been set aside when they subsequently become inconvenient.

**Recommendation:** In the same way as the North Herts Planning Committee agreed to devise a legal mechanism to protect the ‘emergency access only’ criteria on the link between Back Lane and Haybluff Drive in the GA1 development, we ask that they do the same in this case to ensure that the ‘emergency access only’ status of this route onto the site is preserved in perpetuity.

## Traffic Volumes along Back Lane

Page 47 of the document ‘GA2 Planning Statement v6’ includes the following statement:

*“The Proposed Development will not create traffic flows from the development along Back Lane.”*

As anyone who has lived in Weston for any length of time knows, the development and expansion of Great Ashby has contributed significantly to the growth in traffic volumes along Back Lane, through both Weston and Graveley. This development will add a further 640 homes to Great Ashby, with virtually all of the resultant vehicle movements passing along Great Ashby Way past the junction with Orwell Avenue – the access point to Calder Way and Back Lane.

It is therefore inevitable that at least some of the newly created traffic volume will realise that taking Back Lane through Weston avoids congestion along Martins Way in Stevenage when travelling north to the A1 or to destinations such as Baldock, Royston, Cambridge, or Stansted Airport. Moreover, the use of Back Lane as a preferred route will increase during busy periods, when most satnav systems will direct vehicles through Graveley or Weston.

**Recommendation:** That a proper traffic survey be conducted to assess the realistic impact the development is likely to have on traffic volumes through the Green Belt along Back Lane.

## Construction traffic

Although the documentation does not include a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) at this stage, it is worth noting that the applicants must be made aware that Back Lane is totally unsuitable for construction traffic and should be barred from use.

**Recommendation:** That North Herts Planning make it clear to the applicants that no site construction traffic should pass through the Green Belt.

## Location Boundary

We note that the applicants have extended the site boundary beyond the area identified as the GA2 site in the Local Plan 2011-2031. These additional areas are highlighted in yellow on the aerial photograph to the right.

These additional areas differ significantly from the rest of the site in that they are beyond the scope of the land identified for development in the Local Plan and, as such, remain within the Green Belt. We therefore regard it as misleading to identify those areas as being within the site boundary.



**Recommendation:** These areas should be recognised as being beyond the site boundary and referred to as such in all documentation to ensure that any use of that land is compatible with its Green Belt status.

## Protection of the Green Belt

One of the difficulties created by the removal of the GA2 site from the Green Belt is that the new boundary of the Green Belt is simply a line on the map. Now that the site is to be developed, we would therefore expect North Herts Council to require the developers to include measures to reinforce the boundary so that it is physically delineated.

**Recommendation:** Indigenous trees and hedgerows should be planted along the full length of the boundary between the site and the Green Belt at the start of Phase 1 with appropriate legislative protection applied by NHC.

## Biodiversity Net Gain

There appears to be confusion within the documentation concerning the objective the applicants have for the additional field included in the proposal to the north of the site (highlighted in yellow on the image above).

The Planning Statement variously refers to this field as helping in the achievement of the Biodiversity Net Gain, while Figure 6.2 labels it a 'Habitat Creation Area', and elsewhere it states that it will *"provide additional informal recreational opportunities"*.

**Recommendation:** Since this extension into the Green Belt is being justified on the basis of meeting the BNG target, and since biodiversity and habitat creation are generally best achieved in the absence of humans, we recommend that NHC seek far greater clarification as to the applicants plans for this area.