

21 February 2025

Naomi Reynard
Planning Department
North Herts Council
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3JF

Dear Naomi,

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| Land At Roundwood Back Lane Graveley Hertfordshire

Thank you for consulting with Great Ashby Community Council on the above full planning application.

GACC discussed this planning application at a meeting of the Full Council on 20 February 2025 and approved the attached representation provided by our Planning Consultants Harwood Savin as our response. This response details the reasons for our objection to the current application for development at Roundwood, predominantly based on access to the site, transport and infrastructure.

In addition, as requested as part of the S106 process, please find our submission for contributions/obligations below:

Project - Great Ashby Community Centre Maintenance & Improvement

A contribution is sought to maintain and improve the Great Ashby Community centre.

The Great Ashby Community Centre plays a crucial role in fostering social cohesion, promoting well-being, and providing a space for community activities. It is the hub of the Great Ashby Community.

The Great Ashby Community Centre Management Association (GACCMA) runs the service at the Community Centre, and the Great Ashby Community Council has supported improvements to the provision through the Community Council grant process. GACCMA has a programme of renovation and improvement for which funding is required, including replacement of flooring and bathroom facilities, and an increase in demand will place further strain on the resource.

NHC Policy SP7 a(i) requires developers ensure appropriate provision of facilities and infrastructure for new residents and that any development would avoid placing unreasonable additional burdens on the existing community or existing infrastructure.

This policy condition has not been met with regards to the provision of community facilities as proposed within the above application submitted for development at the Roundwood.

NHC Policy SP10 Healthy Communities reaffirms National Policy that the planning system plays a role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Community and

recreation facilities together with green spaces can play an important role in the life of local people enabling people not only to participate in physical activities but also in cultural pastimes, all of which can help to enhance physical, spiritual and mental well being. Community, leisure, recreation and cultural facilities can include village halls, community centres, sports halls, theatres, museums, libraries, places of worship, doctors and dental surgeries and schools.

The proposal for development at Roundwood fails to deliver these facilities and new residents would be reliant on the existing facilities within Great Ashby Community Centre, which run at capacity.

A contribution of £1000 per dwelling, totalling £281,000, is sought to towards the maintenance and improvement of the Community Centre. This figure has been calculated through research of contributions paid through other recently approved developments.

The proposed contributions will support the Community Centre in continuing to offer high-quality services and facilities to both new residents of the Roundwood development, and to existing residents of Great Ashby.

Project - Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre Car Park Purchase & Maintenance

If this development proceeds, GACC request that NHC is provided with reasonable s106 contributions to support several much needed local initiatives including the purchase and repair of the Great Ashby Neighbourhood Car Park. We view this as a reasonable request to safeguard the centre for residents in accordance with paragraph 4.49 of the adopted NHC Local Plan, which states:

The Council wants to improve and protect the District's centres [including Great Ashby], reduce the need for unnecessary travel to alternative facilities and ensure that the proportion of expenditure going outside the District does not increase.

The Great Ashby Neighbourhood Centre Car Park is currently in need of repair including lighting issues and pothole repairs. Unfortunately, as this car park was owned by a private company which is no longer trading and has reverted to the Crown Estate, it is left without plans in place for maintaining it.

Great Ashby Community Council, North Herts Council and Hertfordshire County Councillor, Steve Jarvis, have liaised over a substantial period of time regarding this important facility within Great Ashby. This is a complex issue but the car park is an enabler for community services at the Community Centre and for access to local businesses and a developer contribution could help to secure the Neighbourhood Centre for the benefit of new and existing residents.

The costs are currently unknown but it is hoped that more detailed information will be forthcoming in the near future.

Project – Provision of Allotments/ Community Orchard

Great Ashby Community Council has a statutory obligation to provide allotments and has demonstrated that there is a local need but no suitable land within the area to facilitate this. We are aware that there are s106 funds available in principle for this purpose, although it would be preferable for allotments or a community orchard to be provided on site.

This provision would benefit new residents of the Roundwood development and enable community cohesion with the existing community within Great Ashby.

Further this project would support the developer in meeting NHC Policy SP10 Healthy Communities, which we feel are currently unmet.

Below is a previous cost estimate from 2016 which the NHC Green Space Management Team developed with Great Ashby Community Council. Contract, administration and set up costs are omitted from this estimate. Adjusting the total of £185,464.07 to account for inflationary increases using the calculator provided by the Bank of England, provides a revised total of £249,477.89, and allowing for omitted items above, the total project estimate would exceed £250,000.

GREAT ASHBY COST ESTIMATE 03-Sep-16				
	quantity	unit	rate	cost
Access road				
farm entrance area	57	m2	£90.00	£5,130.00
breedon gravel track and parking area	670	m2	£27.00	£18,090.00
mesh reinforcement to track and parking area	670	m2	£20.00	£13,400.00
clearance of hedge for visibility splay	1	unit	£500.00	£500.00
main access to allotment plots - breedon gravel	554	m2	£27.00	£14,958.00
Rabbit proof fencing around allotments 0.9m high	355	lm	£16.75	£5,946.25
gate at entrance area	1	no	£650.00	£650.00
compost area using sleepers	1	no	£1,250.00	£1,250.00
information board	1	no	£750.00	£750.00
prep for allotments - deep plough/rip, cultivate	4500	m2	£7.10	£31,950.00
install pegs to demarcate plots - 6 per plot	300	no	£7.50	£2,250.00
timber edging	1750	lm	£7.75	£13,562.50 alternative
community events area - prep and grass seed	2500	m2	£8.60	£21,500.00
breedon gravel footpath 1.8m wide	110	lm	£48.00	£5,280.00
seating	3	no	£750.00	£2,250.00
feature boulders	6	no	£450.00	£2,700.00
feature planting	150	m2	£38.60	£5,790.00
supply of water	1	no	£2,000.00	£2,000.00
sub total				£134,394.25
contractors preliminaries @10%				£13,439.43
contingencies @5%				£6,719.71
total				£154,553.39
plus VAT @ 20%				£185,464.07
S278 costs				£0.00
planning application?				£0.00

GACC requests a contribution of £250,000 towards the provision of allotments or a community orchard.

Project – Support for Green Spaces

The proposed development at Roundwood will place increased pressure on the existing Great Ashby Green Spaces including the Great Ashby District Park and Woodlands, and the local play provision.

The new development will increase the footfall and use of the services provided within these areas such as play equipment, waste collection (including dog waste) and land maintenance.

A developer contribution is justified through NHC Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, biodiversity and landscape to in way compensate for the loss of green and open space. Further justification is provided to maintain and enhance Green Space through NHC Policy SP10 Healthy Communities and through National Policy, that the planning system plays a role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities. Community and recreation facilities together with green spaces can play an important role in the life of local people and their well-being.

New residents would benefit from the pleasant environment which currently exists, which can be further enhanced and maintained with a S106 contribution.

Great Ashby Community Council requests a contribution of £20,000 to support the maintenance of play areas it manages, to facilitate the increased dog waste collection anticipated as a result of more use within the local area and small green projects in the locality. This figure is based on recent expenditure on play equipment.

NHC manage the District Park and Woodlands and would be able to advise of their requirements separately.

Project – Improvement to the Right of Way Network and the safe crossing of Great Ashby Way

The proposed housing development will place increased pressure on the Great Ashby road infrastructure.

Great Ashby residents and local people using sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and horse riding, currently experience delays crossing Great Ashby Way.

Future residents of Roundwood using sustainable methods of travel will all encounter this issue on route to the Neighbourhood Centre, local parks, Round Diamond School or to schools within Stevenage.

GACC requests that appropriate pegasus/toucan crossings are put in place at these 2 locations to increase safety and promote the use of sustainable transport modes as per the requirement of NHC Policy SP6: Sustainable transport.

The estimated cost of a standard Toucan crossing is £140,000 (online source: Wiltshire County Council) and we anticipate that a Pegasus crossing is more. Our estimate for this project for 2 crossings is therefore gauged at £300,000.

We have not yet had the opportunity to discuss this further with the HCC Rights of Way team.

Project – Connection to the sustainable travel network

The use of sustainable travel is well documented as a key enabler throughout the applicant's proposal.

There is a need for connectivity of the existing cycle route within Great Ashby to the Stevenage cycle network along a stretch of Great Ashby Way within the Stevenage Borough Council area.

A contribution to improving this connection would enable new residents of the Roundwood development and existing Great Ashby residents to enjoy safer sustainable travel to services and amenities within Stevenage, such as the station, medical facilities and schools.

Justification for this request is provided under Policy SP6: Sustainable transport, to

- a. Encourage development in locations which enable sustainable journeys to be made to key services and facilities;
- b. ensure that a range of sustainable transport options are available to all potential occupants or users. This may involve new or improved pedestrian, cycle and passenger transport (including rail and/or bus) links and routes;

- c. demonstrate the safety and sustainability of their proposals;

Further justification is provided through Policy Policy SP7: Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions

- a. Require developers to provide, finance and / or contribute towards provision which is fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, including:
 - i. On-site and/or off-site improvements and infrastructure necessary as a result of the development in order to:
 - ensure appropriate provision of facilities and infrastructure for new residents;

GACC estimates the cost for this project to be in the region of £700,000 but requests that HCC Highways provide support with a site specific costing estimate for this project.

Project - Recycling Initiatives

GACC requests NHC is provided with a contribution to enhance and promote recycling within Great Ashby.

This could take the form of the replacement of litter bins to encourage recycling or segregating waste. This may be of benefit across the area to promote sustainable living including within the new development and across public areas such as the District Park, at bus stops and the Neighbourhood Centre.

Additionally, funding would benefit the provision of education to new/existing residents which would enable them to recycle more effectively.

Kind regards,

Great Ashby Community Council