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Dear Louise

North Hertfordshire Local Plan – Air Quality Hearing Statements

Further to the invitation of the Inspector to forward a submission regarding Air Quality North Hertfordshire Local Plan, I would like to state that to make NHDC Local Plan safe on pollution AS1 should be removed and the three identified sites, two of which are Brownfield and one specifically allocated for the elderly all of which are within walking distance to the village amenities. These are also included in the Emerging Neighbourhood Plan and identified in documentation submitted to NHDC Planning Department.

Pollution from vehicles

As the topography of the proposed development AS1 is some 60 metres above the village and as the site is classified as being for fit able people and the pedestrian access into the village is arduous and dangerous, having to navigate four flights of concrete steps and the steep gradients cars/taxis would be used. to gain access to the village amenities. These short trips on steep terrain would increase the volume of pollutants greater than the pollutant model used by NHDC. It is well known that Ashwell is nearly grid locked with parked cars making the roads virtually one-way. Any additional cars and parking gaining access to the village amenities would make matters worse, and could cause local shops to close because they cannot attract passing trade and the local shoppers will not carry their shopping. I attach a letter from the owner of the general store who has written a letter to the Parish Council for urgent action to help her with the viability of her trade because of parking.

Local Railway Station

The Local Railway Station is some 2.5 miles away from AS1 site with little parking, therefore necessitating the majority of the people using taxis or incurring return journeys via a second driver. I believe that this has not been included in the calculations (Traffic/Trip Model) as they assume there is one journey and one return journey when in fact there are four journeys.

Shopping

As in any village the cost of goods and services are more expensive than in towns, but due to the 40% affordable/low cost housing proposed on AS1, it is likely that to reduce costs they will shop in the nearest town, which is approximately 4 miles away in Baldock. The journey time into Baldock would not equate to the trip/model used by NHDC as it is proposed that 2,500 dwellings are to be built en-route to the town increasing travel time and causing even greater pollution. I understand that NHDC Highways have carried out a Traffic Statement of Baldock, but they have not carried it forward to include Ashwell, making their predictions on pollution not credible. This could be compounded by traffic from the Bygrave/Baldock development using the shortest and quickest route to Cambridge through Ashwell/Steeple Morden. Although AS1 is not directly affected it will however increase the pollution in Ashwell generally.

School

As the local School is technically full except for Reception Class for the next 5 to 6 years and possibly beyond the children from the dwellings on AS1 would have to be bused to schools in Baldock or Royston increasing car/bus journeys and pollution. Again, this has not been included in NHDC's Traffic Model for trips or pollution.

Conclusion

To try and mitigate the increase in pollution NHDC would probably suggest the use of low energy by solar panels to lower the energy need of AS1. This is not permissible as NHDCs own advisers have stated that solar panels cannot be used if they are in view from the Schedule Monument, Arbury Banks. I assume this would also apply to wind power

The proposed development of AS1 will increase local traffic, parking, and could result in local amenities closing making the proposed development of AS1 being "UN SOUND", "UNSUSTAINABLE" on pollution grounds

Kind Regards

John Hare