

Conservation and Urban Design Advice

Reference: 3/24/0966/OUT

Planning case officer: Steve Fraser-Lim

Site address: Land North Of A507, West Of A10 Buntingford

Date of consultation: 29/05/2024

Date of response: 26/07/2024

Heritage considerations: None

Recommendations:

- ☒ Objection
- ☐ No objection
- ☒ Further information and/or amendments required

Observations:

This is an Outline planning application for development of up to 600 dwellings (C3), elderly accommodation (C3), Mixed Use Local Centre (including flexible use E, F and Sui Generis), First School, informal and formal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from the A507 and pedestrian bridge over the A10, with all matters reserved except access.

Following such an assessment of the information provided, we have the following comments:

- 1. Masterplanning Process-** The proposed development, given its scale, is a 'significant development'. As required under Policy DES1 any significant developments should undergo a collaborative masterplanning process prior to a planning application being submitted. Such a masterplanning process should result in a collaboratively prepared masterplan framework and design coding information to define the vision for the site. While the applicant has undergone some degree of consultation, it does not appear that a policy compliant collaborative process has been undertaken.
- 2. Severance caused by the A10** – Buntingford town is located to the east of the A10, and the latter with its landscaped buffers either side currently forms a distinct edge to the town. With the proposed development as indicated to the west of the A10, the concern remains that the A10 will cause a distinct severance and

separation between the development and Buntingford town, thus severely limiting integration of the new development with the rest of Buntingford.

- 3. Sustainable travel** – The scheme proposes a major development on the fringe of Buntingford. There are no railway lines serving Buntingford, and the nearest existing bus route stops are to the east of the A10. While some potential proposals for public transport connections have been indicated including a new bus stop at the new local centre (which is subject to discussions with Arriva Group), this is not yet confirmed. Nevertheless, the concern remains that this is a fundamentally unsustainable development that relies on private car journeys to Buntingford centre and nearby towns for access to facilities such as doctor's surgeries, library, pharmacies, most shopping, employment areas, secondary schools etc.
- 4. Sustainable travel improvements to wider area-** Contributions through S106 agreements should be secured as part of this application in order to improve the wider infrastructure for sustainable travel (pedestrian/cyclist connections and public transport routes) including links to the town centre, in order to mitigate the impact of the proposed development on the wider infrastructure and to reduce reliance on cars.
- 5. Hilly site will need levelling of fields for playing fields-** Site sections through the development are not included in the submission package at this stage, however we note from the contours provided that the site is undulated and hilly at places. It is queried if there is sufficient level ground where the sports pitches are proposed to the west of the parcel. It is considered that relevening of the site at this location will be needed to achieve the required gradients for the sports pitches which will need careful consideration in term of sustainability, and impact on ground levels if the soil is displaced within site.
- 6. Size of local centre-** Evidence is needed on viability of the proposed local centre. With only 600 dwellings, it is unclear what type and scale of shops/offices etc are anticipated for the local centre to survive in this location. Further information and evidence studies to confirm viability of suitable provision are required.
- 7. Lack of information on Illustrative layout-** While it is appreciated that this application is made in outline form, and the illustrative layout provided as part of this application is indicative only, we need to assess this information to check whether the quantum of built form and development indicated along with the amount of open space and buffer landscapes proposed is achievable on the site, in a form that this is cumulatively acceptable in urban design terms. Currently the illustrative layout does not include outlines of property curtilages, sizes of gardens

and private amenity spaces, it also does not show parking areas. The layout is included as a page on the Design and Access Statement and does not include a scale bar which makes it difficult to check urban grain, and density within the development blocks, spaces between built forms, widths of roads etc. As such it is not possible to make an informed assessment on feasibility and character of development. We strongly recommend that these details should be included on the illustrative layout for further assessment and comments.

The further information and/or amendments requested above should be provided to the planning case officer within a timescale that would allow for the case to be determined within its deadline. The planning case officer should assess the request above and set a suitable timescale for this further submission. If the further information and/or amendments requested are not delivered or deliverable within this timescale, then this application should be withdrawn by the applicant. If it is not withdrawn, it should be determined on the basis of our objection as set out above.