Planning Policy Team

Planning Policy Observations

To:	Development Management
From:	Laura Guy
Date:	21/10/25
Ref:	3/24/1255/OUT

Land south of A507 and West of A10, Buntingford

Outline planning application for development of employment land (flexible use B2, B8, E(c) and E(g)), informal open space, associated works and infrastructure including a new access from A507, with all matters reserved except for access.

Proposal:

1.1 This is an outline application for up to 4.71 hectares (up to 27,420 sqm) of employment uses and 6.31 hectares of informal open space alongside associated works and infrastructure. All matters are reserved except for access.

Location:

1.2 The site comprises approximately 11 hectares of agricultural land to the south of the A507 and to the west of the A10. It is adjacent to the town's settlement boundary, although separated by the A10, and located within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt.

Relevant Policy and Observations:

Previous advice

1.3 Previous comments on this application were submitted in February 2025, but further information has now been submitted. This response should be considered in conjunction with the previous comments.

Principle of development

1.4 Having reviewed the additional information in the planning statement addendum, the planning policy team maintain their objection to the proposal as set out in our original response. This proposal for significant employment and open space constitutes an urban extension to the west of the town, which represents a clear departure from the development strategy set out in Policy DPS2 and BUNT3 of the adopted District Plan, 2018. Concerns remain that the location is disconnected from the town and will result in high dependency on cars, with a detrimental impact on the local road network.

1.5 As set out previously, the Buntingford employment study (2025) identifies that the commercial property market is relatively self-contained. Over 92% of local businesses are microbusinesses (companies employing under nine employees) and these types of businesses will continue to drive demand for floorspace in Buntingford. Whilst there is a need to provide choice to accommodate a range of potential occupiers and unit sizes, and to support the potential growth requirements of local businesses, most demand is anticipated in the 0-250 sqm bracket for E(g) uses and 0-1,000 sqm for B class uses.

1.6 The Study identifies that local agent feedback suggested that there could be some potential for warehousing and storage uses in Buntingford, given transport improvements such as the Little Hadham bypass improving access to Bishop's Stortford, Stansted Airport and the M11. However, larger industrial and logistics uses would be expected to come forward in locations with superior access to the strategic road network, such as Bishop's Stortford. Conversely, despite limited spare capacity, there was viewed to be more limited demand for office space in Buntingford due to the impact of Covid-19 on demand, and this type of employment being concentrated in the larger settlements such as Bishop's Stortford and Hertford.

1.7 The additional information submitted does not address concern that the proposal is a strategic employment park, which focuses on serving wider district needs, rather than employment land needed to meet local employment demand in the town. There is no clarity at this stage that the scale, and type of units will be designed to meet the needs of the local market, as opposed to more strategic employment. Therefore, it is considered that the scale of this proposal is more appropriate for the employment markets in the larger towns in the district, where there is better access to the strategic road network and public transport.

1.8 These issues emphasise the need for employment development of this scale to be considered strategically through the new District Plan, when the impacts of development can be assessed more holistically, informed by evidence on the wider employment, housing and infrastructure needs across the district. Key up-to-date economic evidence, including district job requirements and local employment assessments of the other four towns in East Herts (which are currently being commissioned), is needed to fully understand the most sustainable location for strategic employment development within East Herts.

1.9 In conclusion the planning policy team maintain the objection to this application set out in the February 2025 response.