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Huntingdonshire District Council
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Dear Lewis

ERECTION OF FOUR DWELLINGS & ASSOCIATED WORKS LAND AT OLD DAIRY NURSERY, LUKE STREET, EYNESBURY, ST NEOTS, CAMBS HDC REF 25-0596FUL

I write with reference to the above application and having now had the chance to read the report being presented to the forthcoming DMC meeting write to you as the third Case Officer to handle the application. Ahead of responding to the report to be presented to members, I would again repeat the invitation made to the previous Case Officer to visit the site in person, with my strong belief being that anyone seeking to comment upon proposals can only do so properly having visited the site and been able to appreciate relationships with neighbouring properties and the wider locality.

I'm obviously disappointed about the recommendation, particularly given that the comments made by the Council's Urban Design team largely relate to matters already addressed in amended plans submitted to the previous Case Officer (ahead of the UD comments being shared and many weeks in advance of the report being published) but seemingly not passed-on. However, and as explained to the previous Case Officer, given we're talking about matters of landscaping / surfacing and materials, these could all be addressed by suitably worded conditions without requiring any changes to the siting, scale, mass, bulk, character or nature of properties proposed.

However, it is not these drawings that cause the most immediate concern, but more the fact that the drawings submitted following initial UD comments, for which an Extension of Time to allow re-consultation was agreed and which are referenced in the responses outlined within the report from HDC UD & Conservation and the Town Council are not those shown with the report. As such, anyone reading the report is not seeing the plans the consultees have made the responses upon, let alone the further amendments submitted which go on to also address the subsequent comments made by UD.

Just to be clear, the drawings attached to the report **are not those** to which consultees have responded and for which an Extension of Time for the handling of the application was granted to the previous / second Case Officer. As such, I would ask you to consider very carefully whether you think it would be either appropriate or reasonable for the application to be considered by members at the forthcoming DMC.

I would also suggest that with the UD comments re the potential for introducing more soft-planting and reducing and breaking-up the area of hard-surfacing already submitted to and discussed with the previous Case Officer, together with the potential for either the specification of alternate materials or minor changes to roof form being easily achieved that it would make sense to defer consideration of the application until these matters can be explored and members and the public can be presented with the correct plans and information. I will address the UD comments re the amended plans, together with other comments on the report in more detail below:

- At Paras 4.1 to 4.7 the previous formal planning applications at the site are listed, but not the (at least) three formal pre-application processes we have been through with officers, and each confirmed the redevelopment potential of the site. However, with matters of design and detailing being largely subjective, you will be aware that both courtyard and linear arrangements of properties have been supported by officers at pre-app stage with changes in personnel meaning someone with a different opinion was subsequently charged with making a decision. Although history cannot be re-written, I feel it is important that it is acknowledged that every reasonable effort have been made to discuss matters with officers at both pre-application and post-submission stages. You may not also be aware / have a note on file, but the last time the redevelopment of the site was considered by members, there was a general consensus that with the numbers of units proposed having come down from an initial eleven to (then) six that 'we were almost there'

and that the long-awaited redevelopment of the site should be achievable if 'both sides' would just talk to each other.

- I obviously welcome the confirmation within the report that the site is an appropriately and sustainably located parcel of land with no identified flood risk, such that residential redevelopment would accord with the thrust of relevant local planning policy and national guidance.
- With the proposals as commented upon by consultees (rather than as per the drawings included within the DMC report) responding to the Council's Urban Design team by reducing the footprint of Plot 1 as requested, the subsequent additional request to revisit the contextual appearance of the car-barn element of the property could easily be addressed by either changes to materials or a minor tweak of roof design. Again, this is set out in earlier e-mail correspondence with the then Case Officer included with the letter for ease of reference.
- Not only was the scheme designed with close liaison with the Local Highways Authority to ensure appropriate on-site parking & turning for vehicles, but also allows for access alterations which not only improve the geometry and achievable visibility into the highways, but also shows a visually-screened bin collection point adjacent to the electricity sub-station and confirmed on the submitted drawings as conforming with the appropriate Carry Distances as specified within the Building Regs. As such, the proposals would be one of the very few properties in Luke Street with off-street parking and bin collection. I would suggest that this is an aspect of 'variance form local character' that should be acknowledged as 'good design' in having been achieved.
- In summary, the report demonstrates how the engagement with stakeholders at design and review stages helped inform and shape the proposals; with recommendations of **APPROVAL** / 'no objections' from the Town Council, County Highways & Archaeology, HDC Trees, Landscaping, Env Health and statutory undertakers. As you may not know, recent direct liaison with UK Power Networks has seen the replacement sub-station and new cabling installed to allow for the redevelopment of the site as proposed.
- As such, the proposals, which raise no concerns regarding the principle of residential redevelopment, the sustainability of the site, the nature or quantum of development proposed, Biodiversity, Trees, Flood Risk, Adaptability or water efficiency should be considered as according with the aims and requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework, HDC

Local Plan, Design Guide and Neighbourhood Plan and also to represent **Good Design**.

- I would suggest that in terms of the benefits of the proposals you outline within the DMC report, you should also include the weight to be given to the improvements to access layout and visibility into Luke Street; which would benefit both highways safety and the free-flow of traffic, but also pedestrian safety for anyone using the footway. Together with the avoidance of any impacts upon residential amenity, the demonstration of **appreciation of context** and **good design** should also to be given considerable weight

As such I am happy that any previous concerns have been addressed and there is now plenty of scope for you to agree with the Town Council, most neighbours, statutory undertakers, CCC Highways together with various colleagues within HDC and approve the scheme as before you, although as previously suggested do not feel this coming DMC is the appropriate place to do so. I have also included the most recent e-mail submission to the previous Case Officer, so you will be able to see how arguments addressing (almost?) all the issues raised within the report were made well in advance of the DMC being published.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss any aspects of the proposals or should you feel you require any additional details, and I look forward to discussing this letter and the application with you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely



Simon Richardson
GamPlan Associates