

3/08/2054/OP – Residential development, community uses (doctors surgery, Early Years Centre and associated parking) at Land to south of Station Road, Watton-At-Stone for Hertfordshire County Council

Date of Receipt: 05.12.08

Type: Outline

Parish: WATTON-AT-STONE

Ward: WATTON-AT-STONE

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That subject to the applicant entering into a legal obligation pursuant to s.106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to cover the following matters:
1. The provision of financial contributions of £625 per 1 bed residential unit, £750 per two bed residential unit, £1125 per three bed residential unit, and £1500 per four bedroom house, index linked by SPON from the date of grant of planning permission, which shall be payable upon commencement of the development towards sustainable transport schemes and measures in the vicinity of the site.
 2. In respect of the community uses, the provision of financial contributions of £55,000 index linked by SPON from the date of grant of planning permission, which shall be payable upon commencement of the development towards sustainable transport schemes and measures in the vicinity of the site, to include the provision of measures to reduce the speed of vehicles on Station Road.
 3. No development shall take place on the area of land shown to be allocated for an Early Years Centre and doctors surgery, and associated land, until the land allocated as Public Open Space to the south of the site has been transferred to the District Council.
 4. Not to permit the occupation of more than 75% of the free market dwellings until the freehold of the Public Open Space has been transferred to the Council and the open space contribution has been paid in full to the District Council.
 5. The provision of primary education, youth service and library contributions, in accordance with the HCC Planning Obligations Contributions Table.
 6. The provision of fire hydrants in accordance with the current HCC Planning Obligations Contributions Table.

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7. The provision of 40% affordable housing comprising 75% rented and 25% intermediate market housing.
 8. The provision of 15% of the dwellings to be built to 'Lifetime Homes' standards and scaled drawings to be submitted at reserved matters stage of internal layout and external spaces for these dwellings.
 9. The provision of a public right of way through the development connecting public routes at Station Road, Church Lane and Glebe Close.
 10. The provision of off site open space contributions for the full amount of open space provision required in respect of the residential element of the proposal in accordance with the East Herts SPD, Planning Obligations 2008.
 11. The provision of commuted sums for the maintenance of open space in accordance with the East Herts SPD, Planning Obligations 2008.
 12. The provision and retention of a minimum of 0.53 hectares of publicly accessible open space to the south of the allocated housing site as shown on the indicative layout.
 13. The provision and retention by Herts County Council of 0.40 hectares of open space to the south east of the site as shown on the indicative layout.
 14. The provision of recycling contributions, in accordance with the East Herts SPD, Planning Obligations 2008.
 15. The provision of a Green Travel Plan including measures to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport.
- (b) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to **GRANT** outline permission subject to the following conditions:
1. Outline permission time limit (1T03)
 2. Each use (residential development, early years centre and doctors surgery) of the development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in accordance with detailed plans and drawings relating to that use showing the siting, design and external appearance of the buildings, and landscaping of the site, which shall have been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before any development is commenced.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Article 3(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995.

3. No development shall take place on each use (residential development, early years centre and doctors surgery) of development hereby permitted the until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work for that use in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To secure the protection of and proper provision for any archaeological remains, in accordance with Government advice set out in PPG16 'Archaeology and Planning' and in accordance with policy BH2 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

4. Wheel washing facilities (3V25)
5. Existing access closure (3V05)
6. Construction parking and storage (3V22)
7. Prior to any site works being commenced, concurrent with the construction of the access, visibility splays of 2.4 metres x 90 metres eastbound and 4.5 metres x 90 metres westbound shall be provided and permanently maintained in each direction within which there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 600 mm and 2 metres above the carriageway.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

8. If, during development of any part of the site, any contamination not previously identified is found to be present, no further development shall be carried out until further details of the remediation strategy have been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent pollution to groundwater.

9. Prior to the commencement of each use (residential development, early years centre and doctors surgery) of the development hereby permitted the development hereby approved, details of a scheme to incorporate a sustainable surface water drainage scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained in accordance with the timing/phasing arrangements embodied within

the scheme, or other period to be agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To prevent flooding by ensuring the satisfactory storage of and disposal of surface water from the site.

10. Prior to the commencement of any part of the development hereby approved, further surveys of the site, shall be carried out in respect of the impact upon badgers, nesting birds, reptiles and slow worms and details including an assessment of the impact of the proposed development and any appropriate measures to alleviate such impact, shall be submitted concurrently with the submission of site layout drawings, for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with those approved details.

Reason: To enable proper consideration of the effect of the development on the contribution of nature conservation interests to the amenity of the area, in accordance with the Policy ENV16 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

11. The noise control measures identified in the submitted assessment shall be completed before any part of the development is occupied.
Reason: In order to ensure an adequate level of amenity for residents of the new dwellings in accordance with Policy ENV29 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review.

_____ (205408FP.LP)

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is located to the west of the village of Watton-At-Stone, as shown on the attached OS extract. The site is bounded to the north by Station Road; to the south by Church Lane; to the east by the rear gardens of properties of Glebe Close; and to the west by the railway line beyond which lie open fields.
- 1.2 The site comprises a parcel of land of approximately 3.82 hectares in area with a 130 metre frontage onto Station Road and 195 metres frontage onto Church Lane. The site currently is an open field sown to oil seed rape with land immediately adjacent to the Watton-at-Stone primary school site being open grassland. The site falls gently from the west to the east.

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- 1.3 The surrounding area is characterised by late 20th Century residential properties; to the east are the two storey properties of Glebe Close; to the north east the properties of Hazeldell, with the higher density 1980's residential development to the north of Morrymead Close.
- 1.4 The application has been submitted in outline with all detailed matters reserved except for access. The application proposes residential and related uses (indicated on plan to be a development up to 91 units); public open space; and community facilities to include an early years centre and doctors surgery. The indicative layout proposes an early years centre of 361 square metres and 40 car parking spaces and a doctors surgery with a floor area of 378.7 square metres and 21 car parking spaces. The proposed access for the site is a single access point from Station Road, located towards the north-east corner.
- 1.5 Within the adopted Local Plan the western part of the site lies within an allocated housing site, whilst the eastern part lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and land allocated as a sport and recreation facility.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 There have been pre-application discussions for the re-development of the site for the uses specified. Whilst officers are generally receptive to the principle of residential development at this site, justification was sought in respect of the very special circumstances necessary to allow development for that part of the site within the Metropolitan Green Belt and also within an area designated as a 'sport and recreation facilities'.

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 County Highways have commented that they raise no objection to the means of access to the site but object to the principle of the proposed school parking. They comment that:-

'The planning application includes for the provision of increased car parking to serve the adjoining Watton at Stone Primary School. The application does not result in any increase in student/staff numbers nor alteration to the school building. The material change is the increase number of car parking spaces. This school experiences traffic issues and congestion like any other schools in the county. However there is no guarantee that the provision of extra spaces will solve this problem. Whilst residents in existing areas may suffer from school traffic, it is highly likely that the provision of extra parking will make travel by car more attractive, exacerbating the current situation. This development also provides for new residential homes, following which new residents will likely be subject to similar circumstances of school traffic

that currently exist in nearby residential streets. No information is given in relation to the current school parking provision or facilities. The level of parking that is required for the school should be further considered in relation to standards set out in the EH SPD.

In relation to other uses of the site there are no objections to the principle of residential development, early years centre and doctors surgery, although again parking measures outlined in the TA appear to be above EH SPD standards. In relation to parking the TA states:

- Doctors Surgery – 13 parking spaces – Confirmation of number of consulting rooms would be required.*
- 24 place Early Learning Centre – 24 parking spaces – Following EH standards a maximum of 6 spaces should be provided.*
- Watton at Stone Primary School – 40 spaces – see comments above.*

In view of the above reasons the highway authority recommends the planning application to be refused’.

They state that if the District Council is minded to approve the application, then a number of conditions and financial contributions will be sought. In particular they comment that it is welcomed that the applicant is proposing a speed reducing gateway feature in conjunction with the proposals, however further traffic calming will be required to reduce overall speed along Station Road and further initiatives could be investigated to aid crossing of Station Road. Such initiatives should be financed from s106 obligations.

- 3.2 The Environment Agency have commented that they raise no objections to the proposal subject to conditions in respect of surface water drainage and soil contamination and remediation.
- 3.3 The County Planning Obligations Unit have commented stating that they seek financial contributions towards primary education and youth and library services. They also state that fire hydrant provision is required.
- 3.4 The Council’s Planning Policy Section have commented that there is no objection to the full open space provision, required by the residential element of the scheme, being met through the provision of a financial contribution for off site open space. In respect of the doctors surgery and early years being sited on the Green Belt and LRC1 land they comment that they have no objection and state that on-going discussions have taken place in this respect. Indeed the Local Plan at paragraph 17.4.9 states that ‘the development of this housing allocation site will facilitate access to adjacent school land which has been identified for community facilities, including a replacement doctors surgery and an Early Years Centre’.

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- 3.5 Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre have commented that the development will have a detrimental impact on badgers, nesting birds and reptiles. They comment that the reserved matters application should not be determined until a full impact assessment of the development on these species, together with mitigation proposals has been addressed.
- 3.6 The Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust have commented in respect of slow worms, reptiles, badgers and birds on the site and consider that any permission shall include appropriate conditions for their protection. They provide further comments in respect of conditions for landscaping and lighting which are recommended to be imposed prior to any development commencing.
- 3.7 Natural England considers that the issues regarding bats and badgers have been adequately addressed. They object to the application however in terms of insufficient survey information to demonstrate whether the development would have an adverse impact upon slow worms.
- 3.8 The County Archaeological Section have commented with the following:-

'The application site is partly within Area of Archaeological Significance 126 and adjacent to Area of Archaeological Significance 275. Cropmarks visible on aerial photographs suggest that the line of the Roman road (Historic Environment Record (HER) 7660) which linked Verulamium (St Albans) and Colchester runs through the south end of the site, and Roman coins (HER 1553) have been found to the east. There is also very substantial evidence of Roman occupation to the south east near the parish church, and cropmarks to the south of the road marking the southern boundary of the site indicate the remains of medieval cultivation. AAS 275, to the west of the railway, contains numerous cropmarks, including those of at least two prehistoric ring ditches (plough-raised burial mounds, HER 7663, 7667), and cropmarks indicating the continuation of the line of the Roman road (HER 7664).

In 2008, the two fields that form the study site were the subject of an archaeological desk-based survey and an archaeological geophysical survey. This assessment was followed by a programme of archaeological evaluation via trial trenching, of limited extent due to the presence of protected species. The western edge of the western field was excluded because of badger setts present on the railway embankment, and the entire eastern field, which contains the cropmarks of the Roman road, because reptiles were present.

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The results of this partial investigation were largely negative. However, as previously stated, the eastern part of the prospective development site was not assessed, and this may retain significant archaeological potential, particularly since it has not been subject to cultivation in recent years'.

The County Archaeological Section are not requesting further information prior to the determination of this application, but rather consider that subject to the imposition of a condition requiring further investigation and recording of the site prior to the development commencing is adequate.

- 3.9 Thames Water have commented that they have no objection to the planning application in terms of sewerage infrastructure and comment that with regards to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of the developer to make adequate provision.
- 3.10 The Hertfordshire Constabulary Crime Reduction Unit has commented with no objections to the proposal but comment that they would wish to see the development built to a 'Secured by Design' level.
- 3.11 The Council's Environmental Health Section have recommended that any permission should include a number of conditions relating to noise, construction hours of working, bonfires, external lighting and refuse facilities. They further draw attention to noise during demolition and construction.
- 3.12 The County Development Unit have outlined relevant policies that relate to the encouragement of re-use of unavoidable waste where possible and the use of recycled materials where appropriate to the construction.
- 3.13 CPRE have responded with no comment.
- 3.14 No comments have been received from the Councils Landscape Section, Health and Housing Section or Waste Section. Additionally no comments have been received from Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue, the East Herts Footpath Society, The Ramblers Association or EDF Energy Networks.

4.0 Parish Council Representations

- 4.1 Watton-At-Stone Parish Council makes the following comments:-

"The Parish Council has no objection in principal to the proposed plans but are concerned that the extra traffic generated from the proposed site would add to the existing traffic problems in Station Road.

The Parish Council would have liked to have seen a mini roundabout installed on Station Road at the junction to the proposed development, however, in discussions with the applicant this has been refused by Hertfordshire Highways on safety grounds.

Councillors would like to see, as one of the conditions for approving these plans, some form of traffic calming measures in Station Road.

The Parish Council requests that consideration is given to a pelican crossing on Station Road, not only would this slow down the speeding traffic on this stretch of road but would also assist in children and adults crossing this road to visit the school and the proposed new doctors surgery.”

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The application has been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 8 neighbour letters have received raising comments as follows:-

- No objection with proposal as it provides needed doctors surgery
- Existing Children Centre is inadequate. Proposal needs to be immediately adjacent to school
- Benefit of providing permanent early years centre and doctors near to school
- Will overcome existing parking problems in Rectory Lane and Glebe Close
- Concern of volume and speed of traffic on Station Road – proposal will increase traffic and highway safety concerns
- Concerns of ground level and potential overlooking, outlook and impact from noise
- Too many properties and no need for them
- Open space would be preferred to Station Road side
- Increased pressure on nursery and primary school
- Query whether there is sufficient parking for residents, visitors and the surgery and early years centre. Could result in parking on surrounding roads
- Environmentally hazardous construction materials (concrete) and implication for flooding

6.0 Policy

6.1 When considering the application a number of policies contained in the Adopted Local Plan must be taken into account. These include GBC1: Appropriate Development in the Green Belt, OSV1: Category 1 Villages, OSV4: Housing Allocation – Category 1 Villages, SD1: Making Development More Sustainable, SD2: Settlement Hierarchy, SD3: Renewable Energy, HSG3: Affordable Housing, HSG4: Affordable Housing Criteria, HSG6: Lifetime Homes, TR1: Traffic Reduction in New Developments, TR2: Access to New Developments, TR3: Traffic Assessments, TR4: Travel Plans, TR7: Car Parking Standards, ENV1: Design and Environmental Quality, ENV2: Landscaping, ENV3: Planning Out Crime – New Developments, ENV4: Access for the disabled, ENV11: Protection of Existing Hedgerows and Trees, ENV16: Protected Species, ENV25: Noise Sensitive Developments, ENV27: Air Quality, LRC1: Sport and Recreation Facilities and LRC3: Recreational Requirements in New Residential developments.

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main considerations in the determination of this application relate to:-

- the principle of development at the site;
- the appropriateness of the access and highway implications;
- landscape, archaeological and ecological considerations

Principle of development at the site

7.2 The site proposes development on 2.76 hectares of land within an allocated housing site and 1.06 hectares on land within the Metropolitan Green Belt and land designated as a sport and recreational facility. The proposed housing element is indicated to be entirely sited on the designated housing site identified in Policy OSV4 of the East Herts Local Plan (to the south of Station Road and west and south west of the properties in Glebe Close) and as such there is no policy objection to this.

7.3 Whilst the application is in outline form (in which residential forms one of the uses), the indicative layout shows a layout of 91 dwellings, with the majority of the public open space sited to the south of the site. The layout indicates that such a number of dwellings can be satisfactorily accommodated on the allocated site, and the proposed density is also acceptable. In respect of open space provision, in accordance with Local Plan Policies and the SPD Planning Obligations and draft SPD Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 0.77 hectares would be required for this amount of residential development.

The applicants have indicated that a total of 0.53ha is proposed on the land to the south of the proposed housing and that the deficiency in open space provision for the dwellings therefore equates to 0.24 hectares. They have confirmed that this deficit will be met through an off site planning contribution for parks and gardens, outdoor sports facilities, amenity green space and children and young people, as well as maintenance sums. It is further argued that there is ample open space provision within close proximity, in particular the cricket ground, tennis courts and playground sited a distance of 235 metres to the east of the residential element of the site, being accessible by a public footpath without the need to cross any main roads.

- 7.4 However, the applicants have also indicated that the same 0.53ha of open space to the south of the site is intended to compensate for the loss of open land on the adjoining part of the site (lost as a result of the early years centre and doctors surgery). Officers consider that this is in effect “double counting” the benefit of this area and that this is not acceptable.
- 7.5 The early years centre and doctors surgery are not only proposed to be sited on land within the Metropolitan Green Belt, but are also on land designated as a sport and recreational facility where policy LRC1 of the Local Plan is relevant. This policy states that proposals which result in the loss of public or private, indoor or outdoor, sports, recreation and open space facilities, or school playing fields, will be refused unless: a) suitable alternative facilities are provided on site or in the locality, which are at least equivalent in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility to the ones that would be lost: or b) that it can be demonstrated that the facility is no longer needed and that there is no viable demand for an alternative facility.
- 7.6 As mentioned above, the applicants are proposing that the LRC1 land lost, as a result of the early years centre and the doctors surgery, would be replaced by the public open space provision to the south of the allocated housing site. However, in these circumstances it is considered that the applicants should then make a financial contribution in respect of the entire non-provision of open space for the residential element of the scheme, amounting to the required 0.77 hectares (or equivalent, depending on the exact number of proposed dwellings). To clarify, the open space of 0.53 hectares on the land zoned as residential cannot be considered to be the provision required for the residential dwellings as well as the compensatory open space for the loss of the LRC1 land. However, with a financial contribution for this shortfall of open space, it is considered that on balance with suitable provision within the locality, it would be acceptable.

7.7 In respect of the proposed early years centre and doctors surgery, these are proposed to be located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The uses do not fall within the allowed exceptions of development in the Green Belt and therefore constitute “inappropriate development”. Policy GBC1 states that, within the Metropolitan Green Belt planning permission will not be granted for inappropriate development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm. The very special circumstances put forward by the applicant are that the development is needed to:-

- Provide a permanent home in the early years centre for the preschool currently in a temporary double mobile that is located in the green belt and for which planning permission is unlikely to be renewed
- Provide bespoke accommodation for the Beane Valley Children’s Centre that will meet the long-term needs of the Early Years Service
- Provide a Doctors Surgery that is currently located in a listed building that does not meet legislative requirements in respect of access and that is also subject to a lease due for renewal in 2011
- Provide a school car park to alleviate traffic congestion and car parking problems in Rectory Lane and Glebe Close, and to provide a coach turning facility to avoid the need for reversing vehicles up Rectory Lane.

7.7 The applicant has considered whether there are more potentially suitable sites for the development, and comment:-

- The Early Years Centre has a locational requirement to be next to or part of the school site in order to create the opportunity for educational integration with the foundation stage. This could not be achieved if the building were to be located on the land that is allocated for housing and there are no other large enough sites in the school buildings complex next to the school (i.e. on land that is not in the green belt) that would accommodate the new Early Years Centre and in any event the immediate areas around the school building need to be retained for the potential future expansion of the school.
- The Doctors Surgery would benefit from close proximity to the children’s centre in order to provide opportunities for the staff working in the children’s centre to work closely with health staff.
- A sequential appraisal has been undertaken looking for other sites within the urban area which has concluded that there are no other suitable sites in the High Street; consideration has also been given to the former highways depot but this site is not deliverable in the short term and has abnormal development costs.

- The school car parking has to be located as close to the school as possible in order to ensure that it is properly used by parents dropping off/picking up children.
- Given the ongoing daily traffic flows that are generated from a Doctors Surgery it should be located away from residential areas to avoid any adverse impact on residential amenity.

7.8 I turn now to comment as to whether this justification put forward amounts to the very special circumstances necessary to allow development in the Green Belt. In terms of the justification put forward for the siting of the early years centre, it is acknowledged that the development would provide a permanent and bespoke early years centre for the preschool; (currently located on the school site but within a temporary mobile), a provision which can be seen to be socially beneficial. It is further noted that the Early Years Centre has a locational requirement to be next to or part of the school site in order to create educational integration with the foundation stage, and that such integration could not be achieved if the building were to be located on the allocated housing site. Furthermore, it is noted that there are no other large enough sites in the school complex or next to the school that would accommodate the new Early Years Centre and in any event this area is also designated Green Belt. The siting of the proposed development would also provide a school car park intended to alleviate traffic congestion and car parking problems in Rectory Lane and Glebe Close, and would provide a coach turning facility to avoid the current situation of vehicles reversing up Rectory Lane. It is therefore considered by Officers that there are very special circumstances in this case to allow the Early Years Centre and some school parking and coach turning facilities to be sited on Green Belt land. The precise amount of parking would need to be considered in any subsequent Reserved Matters application.

7.9 In respect of the justification put forward for the siting of the doctors surgery, the applicants have outlined that the existing doctors surgery does have a legislative access constraint by virtue of being a listed building. The building has internal constraints and problems with access and it is further noted that, due to land levels, the parking provision is also not ideal for inclusive access. The applicants have investigated the works necessary to bring only the ground floor of the building in line with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) and comment that the estimated cost of upgrading the listed building would be £40k (This was a 2004 estimate and so is likely to be higher today). Many of these changes to upgrade facilities would bring about quite drastic changes to the historical and architectural features of the listed building. The existing building is also considered to be unsuitable for a modern general practice surgery with an attached dispensary, with inadequate space in each consulting and treatment room and general other size constraints.

- 7.10 A new purpose built doctors surgery, in contrast, would enable access for all into the building and although the site is slightly further out of the town centre, it is accessible for pedestrians and can provide level parking provision close to the surgery. In further justifying the doctors surgery on this land, a sequential appraisal has been undertaken to look for other sites within the urban area (including the former highways depot). This concludes that no other suitable sites are available within the High Street and that many of the properties within the centre of Watton-at-Stone raise similar constraints in terms of size and accessibility as does the existing building.
- 7.11 It is therefore considered that, on balance, the justification as set out in paragraph 7.6 for the Early Years centre and discussed here for the doctors surgery; do amount to very special circumstances sufficient to allow development within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Furthermore, the location of these facilities is proposed to be sited immediately to the south of residential areas and within the same building line of the existing school building and proposed residential development. The indicated open space and landscape buffer to the south of the application site will ensure permanent openness of land in a prominent area, a continuation of the Green Belt south of Church Lane, and compensates for the loss of LRC1 land. The exact design and siting of the buildings would be a reserved matter and again will need to be designed to minimise the impact of the development on the Green Belt.
- 7.12 The site area that would be lost to the Early Years and Doctors Surgery development amounts to 0.66 hectares. The open space provision to the south of the proposed residential element, would balance this loss, but would still result in a deficit of 0.27hectares. It is noted however that the existing facility is enclosed by fencing and is not currently accessible to the public. The proposed compensatory space to the south of the residential element, by contrast, will be accessible to all and this is to be secured through the Section 106. Additionally as discussed in paragraph 7.4 there is a large quantity, of what is considered by Officers as high quality outdoor open space provision nearby. Therefore in conclusion the alternative facility is considered to be roughly equivalent in terms of quantity; at least equivalent in terms of quality; and improved in terms of accessibility. This would therefore comply with Policy LRC1.
- 7.13 It is therefore considered that the very special circumstances put forward in this case would outweigh the harm caused by the proposal in terms of inappropriateness and any other harm, and that the alternative open space and recreational facility proposed within the site is of equivalent value to the lost provision. Additional financial contributions will be required, however, to provide for the full open space needs of the new residential development and this can be adequately secured via a s.106 agreement.

Access and highway implications

- 7.14 The centre point of the proposed Station Road access is sited 24 metres from the North West corner of the site. This is the sole point of access for the proposed residential dwellings, Early Years Centre and doctors surgery. Hertfordshire Highways have confirmed that there is no objection to the means of access to the site.
- 7.15 Highways have however raised concerns with the proposal in terms of the school parking justification and general parking provision. They state that the application does not result in any increase in student or staff numbers nor alteration to the school building, and that whilst residents in existing areas may suffer from school traffic, it is highly likely that the provision of extra parking will make travel by car more attractive, exacerbating the current situation with no guarantee that the provision of extra spaces will solve this problem. They further comment that the parking spaces for the school, doctors and surgery exceed the Councils maximum standards.
- 7.16 In respect of these concerns however, it is noted that these relate to details of the indicative layout of the site which are reserved matters for consideration at a later stage. The application is in outline only seeking permission for the principle of development for residential and community facilities and for the access details. Although I share some similar concerns in terms of the total amount of parking provision shown on the indicative layout, it is important to note that the particular layout and total amount of parking across the site would be a matter to be fully considered on a reserved matters application and it is considered therefore that this is a matter that could be further discussed with the applicants prior to the submission of reserved matters.
- 7.17 It is therefore considered that, subject to a legal agreement; a number of conditions and a financial contribution towards sustainable transport schemes and measures in the vicinity of the site, the development will create no adverse impact in terms of highway safety or the surrounding highway network.

Landscape, archaeological and ecological considerations

- 7.18 Officers consider that there would be no adverse impact on existing trees or landscaping on the site. Further hard and soft landscaping of the site would be a requirement on any reserved matters application in any event.
- 7.19 In respect of archaeology at the site, as outlined in paragraph 3.8, it is considered both reasonable and necessary to provide properly for the likely archaeological implications of this development proposal. As such a

condition for the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation has been imposed.

- 7.20 In respect of the impact of the development upon ecology on the site, mainly in respect of bats, badgers and slow worms, it is considered that subject to adequate surveys being carried out and mitigation measures undertaken, there would be no unacceptable impact upon these species. Such conditions are recommended to be imposed on this outline approval.

Other matters

- 7.21 In respect of affordable housing, a total of 40% of the dwellings are proposed as affordable and 15% of all the dwellings on site are to be constructed to lifetime home standards, in accordance with Local Plan Policies HSG3, HSG4 and HSG6. These matters are to be secured through the suggested 106 agreements.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 The residential development on the allocated housing site is acceptable in principle and, subject to a s.106 agreement and conditions; no objection is raised to the development or the proposed means of access to it.
- 8.2 The early years centre and doctors surgery however are proposed on Metropolitan Green Belt land and an area designated for outdoor sport and recreation. These proposals therefore constitute inappropriate development and should only be permitted if the very special circumstances put forward clearly outweigh the harm that would be caused to the Green Belt.
- 8.3 The buildings would clearly have an impact on the openness of the Green Belt but, provided that a substantial landscaped area is retained to the south of the buildings, this impact would be reduced. Officers are satisfied, in these circumstances, that the very special circumstances put forward would outweigh this level of harm to the Green Belt.
- 8.4 Furthermore, the loss of some open recreation land adjacent to the school (for the early years centre and doctors surgery) is acceptable provided that the land to the south of the housing allocation site is provided as compensatory open space/recreation land. The applicants are willing to enter into a s.106 agreement to cover this matter. This would, however, mean that no open space provision is made for the proposed new houses and accordingly financial contributions will also be required towards the entire open space provision for the new residential development. As there is sufficient open space in the vicinity of the site, Officers consider that this contribution is both reasonable and necessary in this case.

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8.5 Subject to the applicant entering into a Section 106 obligation and a number of conditions, it is therefore recommended that outline planning permission should be granted.