

Development Management
Cheshire West and Chester Council
4 Civic Way
Ellesmere Port
CH65 0BE

Patron
Her Majesty The Queen
President
Emma Bridgewater CBE
Branch Chair
Peter Raynes

By email: planning@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

12th May 2022

Dear Development Management Team,

I am writing on behalf of CPRE Cheshire to **object** to planning application 22/00505/OUT.

CPRE

CPRE, The countryside charity, campaigns for a thriving, beautiful countryside, and greenspace for everyone, which unfortunately, are under threat – from pollution, litter, irresponsible development, and a host of other pressures.

You might remember us as ‘The Campaign to Protect Rural England’ and for nearly 90 years we have brought about countryside protection and we are proud of our achievements including the establishment of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt, Hedgerow Regulations, Quiet Lanes amongst other important planning policy tools.

At our heart we are advocates of a local development plan-led system, accepting the importance of democratic planning decisions and environmental goals. We help CPRE members and the public to better engage with planning matters and throughout 2021, with an increased understanding from the pandemic of just how vital access to greenspace is for our health and well-being we continued to have success.

Planning application 22/00505/OUT

The applicant wishes to develop two houses for market sale of four bedroomed size in the land adjacent to Hooton Hall, Hoofield Road in Huxley, CH3 9BL.

The land is currently in agriculture use for sheep grazing and is surrounded to the west by a hedgerow providing a habitat for flora and fauna and contributing to the rural landscape character.

I set out the material planning policy reasons for our objection below:

Contrary to the Development Plan

CPRE has considered the development plan and considers that there are a number of policy areas that the application does not align with. Specifically Local Plan Part 1 (2015) STRAT1 concerning the location of new development close to local amenities, and STRAT2 concerning the development hierarchy.

The area is also covered by a made Neighbourhood Plan, which forms part of the development plan and this is not mentioned in the Design and Access Statement at all. The application is contrary to policy H1 of the

Neighbourhood Plan. The Government has committed repeatedly to local decision making in the Localism Act 2011.

CPRE understands that there was an application in 2014 refused by the council, and again at appeal in 2015. The ground for refusal was that the site is not a sustainable location. CPRE does not believe the situation has changed. In fact, there are further reasons for refusal.

Green Belt harm

CPRE defends the Green Belt from unjustified development. We lobbied the Government to introduce it to stop urban sprawl and other harms.

The land is in designated Green Belt, which is of national importance for keeping land permanently open. When considering the paragraphs of Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework, it is clear that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts.

The site is small scale at 0.15 hectares. The site serves the Green Belt functions of keeping land permanently open and it has both spatial and visual qualities.

The development is inappropriate by definition. Therefore, very special circumstances must be demonstrated as it is not an exemption to being inappropriate.

There is no very special circumstance.

No need

When considering very special circumstances we are not persuaded the case exists for the large size family houses at this particular location.

In terms of housing delivery test, Cheshire West and Chester has performed exceptionally well with a performance of 340% in the past 3 years. A total of 5,387 houses were completed when only 1,586 houses were planned over the same period. CPRE questions the proposition that there is a need for these houses.

The houses do not respond to the aging population or the need for more affordable homes in rural areas.

Other harms

There are a number of harms arising:

Landscape and visual amenity harm

The magnitude of change to the landscape character changing from rural to urban needs to be fully assessed.

There are visual impacts as the development would incur the loss of hedgerows and this will change the character of the site. The landscape character would be impacted, and there would be an urbanising effect leading to an increased activity at the location.

Loss of farmland

CPRE believes farmland should be conserved and enhanced for the benefit of future generations and to support domestic food security, particularly given the impacts of Brexit, Covid and now sharp increase in prices due to inflation and the Russian illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The site is of value as it is from beef and sheep farming and this must be considered when weighing the balance in the decision taking.

Ecology

There would be ecological impacts with harm to the existing ecology and especially to farm bird species, which are understood to be in decline, some on the priority and 'red list' protected. It is important that Defra's

Magic maps are considered and that Cheshire Wildlife Trust and RSPB and other local environmental groups are consulted properly as they have local records and people who understand the local species.

Local opinion

It is important that the views of local people are considered when concluding on the merits and adverse consequence of the proposals. It is clear the application is not locally supported.

Access

CPRE considers there to be insurmountable access issues.

The Design and Access Statement shows a number of examples of people enjoying leisure and recreation in the rural area on foot, bike and horse, it does not provide evidence of people accessing local services, work, school the doctors. Photograph 4.3 in the Design and Access Statement shows dangerous overtaking of a cyclist with the DHL van facing oncoming traffic in the righthand land at a bend, which is dangerous. Adding further car users would not help this situation.

The bus services are not regular enough to constitute a reasonable and reliable means of accessing employment and other community services.

Particularly, as the Government has to limit greenhouse gas emissions in line with agreed international commitments to combat climate change, and the Climate Emergency declaration of the Council, which suggests there should be no requirement to create capacity for increased traffic volumes.

In reality if the houses are developed it would lead to further car dependency in a remote rural area, inducing additional car journeys on the rural road network.

Summary

For the reasons set out above CPRE Cheshire believes the harms to outweigh the benefits and respectfully asks that Cheshire West and Chester Council refuses permission for the abovementioned application.

Please contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Copley MRTPI MA BA (Hons)
Planning Manager