



September 28 2022

## **Harpenden Society response to Legal & General group's 'North-West Harpenden' housing development proposals.**

*By way of introduction, many of the Harpenden Society's 900-plus members have been critical of the short notice given to those wanting to comment on the plans – only a week after the public exhibition in the town's Eric Morecambe Centre.*

As a Society, we welcomed the opportunity to study the outline plans. Though they offered plenty of detail, principally on the proposed housing, there are a number of vital issues which it is felt have not been sufficiently addressed:

1. In terms of traffic impact, the proposed 500-plus new dwellings would likely generate up to a thousand more cars on Harpenden roads, with implications for racking up, to unacceptable levels, the already serious traffic congestion at peak periods and at weekends, moving in and out of the town on the A1081, and which would be further exacerbated by the limited ingress/egress of the new housing estate. Such an increase in the car population would inevitably add to the already formidable parking problems in the town, along with a highly negative effect on local air quality.
2. The density of the non-retirement housing as proposed is substantially higher than the surrounding area, and the plan is silent on how the maintenance of the extensive green space will be funded.
3. Drainage along the adjacent Luton Road is often overwhelmed by surface water and agricultural land run-off, but the plan is silent on how this will be mitigated.

Suggestions that residents of the new dwelling should travel in and out of the town **in all weathers** by alternative means, i.e. by walking, cycling or by bus, are quite impractical. Given the traditional layout of the town along – or close to – the narrow Luton Road (A1081), including the obstructive archway bridge at Park Hill, the provision of a safe cycle route along the main roadway is totally unrealistic. Furthermore, in discussion with L&G representatives at the presentation, it became obvious that the alternative cycle route quoted, along Ambrose Lane, had not been investigated at all. It came as a surprise to your colleagues that Tennyson Road was in fact a very narrow road with parking on both sides.

4. Sacrifice of Green Belt. At a time when environmental concerns are ever more prominent on the ‘public agenda’, the loss of 62 acres of countryside so close to Harpenden would bring an intolerable level of environmental degradation, to the detriment of the character of the town.
5. Infrastructure. The L&G group proposals make minimal reference to the need for supporting infrastructure, by way of health facilities in particular. Harpenden’s three main GP surgeries are already fully stretched in handling the health issues of the existing population. In addition, deletion from the plans of the initially proposed primary school in the development remains controversial, and the town is already seeing pressure on the availability of Year 7 places.

While acknowledging the nationwide need for more housing, the Harpenden Society contends that the L&G group’s proposed ‘North-West Harpenden’ development, notwithstanding its planned mix of large and smaller ‘affordable’ homes, would bring minimal benefit to the town’s housing shortage, as those ‘affordable’ units in practice, and in today’s property market, will be quite unaffordable to first-time buyers in the immediate area.

Jeff Phillips

Chair

The Harpenden Society