

Response to the Local Plan consultation from Great Ashby Community Council

Great Ashby Community Council acknowledges the need for a large number of new homes in the North Herts District Council area over the coming years.

It welcomes that the NPPF stresses the importance of sustainable development and that the District Council has endeavoured to consider this in the Local Plan proposal.

It is also noted and welcomed that significant developments will require masterplans and this includes GA2 & NS1 of particular relevance to Great Ashby residents.

Policy SP2: Settlement Hierachy – Stevenage(Great Ashby) is one of the six major development areas. Great Ashby is seen as part of Stevenage and therefore part of a town. The stated aim is to focus new development on existing towns so to make maximum use of existing infrastructure and maximise opportunities to deliver new infrastructure.

This is not the case for the GA1 & GA2 sites which will in effect nearly double the size of Great Ashby.

With particular reference to GA1 & GA2, the main causes for concern and OBJECTION to the current proposals are on the grounds of lack of adequate infrastructure with regard to road access, education and health facilities.

Link to policy SP6 (b) & (d) – Sustainable Transport – the current and proposed access routes for both GA1 and GA2 are both inadequate for new provision and detrimental to existing housing. Travel to access education, health facilities, leisure facilities and major road and rail routes is already problematic with additional cars on the road, it will be MUCH worse. Proposed access routes are unsuitable for large vehicles like buses and emergency vehicles.

The Community Council would like to challenge the Transport Assessment that has been carried out with regard to GA1. The description of the roads (Back Lane and Weston Road) are inaccurate and misleading (Calder Way).

The vehicle trip distribution is flawed as is the modelling carried out at junctions (please see attached letter from consultant). The additional flow of traffic will place severe pressure on junctions within Great Ashby and Graveley that are already busy at peak travel times. Such pressure causes frustration and potential dangerous driving.

Policy T1a) states that development would not adversely impact on highway safety. The proposals as they are will do just that.

Policy SP6d suggests the early implementation of a sustainable travel infrastructure, this would be most welcome and essential but it is difficult to see how it would work

With reference to **parking standards (referred to in 4.71)**, one of the biggest issues with the Great Ashby development as it is now is the parking. Both the GA1 & GA2 development proposals require access through a residential area via Mendip way.

This additional traffic will have a negative impact on existing residents who suffer from the previous planning policy of only 1.5 car parking allocation per house.

Great Ashby currently suffers from a lack of adequate infrastructure. **Policy SP7** – Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions states that the developer is required to provide, finance or contribute towards provision. This is most welcome but again provision needs to be provided in advance of new houses being built as existing facilities are already inadequate, without this an unacceptable burden is being placed on existing residents in the area.

It is noted that for GA2 a 2FE school is planned and this is welcomed. However the current lack of primary school places in Great Ashby is of concern to us as residents have to travel usually by car to get their children to school. It is noted that some current primary schools will be expanded but again this means additional car journeys.

SP10:Healthy Communities – states that NHDC will work the NHS Trust, Clinical Commissioning Groups and other relevant providers to ensure appropriate coverage of healthcare facilities across the district. Currently Great Ashby suffers from a lack of GP provision. There is great concern about lack of health facilities in the future with the additional housing and again the issue of access to it via sustainable transport.

In policy SP18 – it cites the principal access to GA2 being Mendip Way, a road already fraught with traffic and parking issues. It also mentions the provision of a green infrastructure corridor using the route of pylons.

A **suggestion** is that the route of the pylons be used to create a better access road to the new developments.

Or **alternatively** a new road is created running to Chesfield and on to Gravelly.

The Green Belt incursion is regrettable and plans to designate alternative sites as Green Belt to compensate does not help those communities who will lose existing Green Belt to housing.

Alternative proposal to NS1, GA1 & GA2. It is noted that the land west of Stevenage which was proposed for development some time ago is being reserved for post 2031 (ref. 4.104). It has been identified as a sustainable location and if it were to be considered for the period 2011-2031, would provide substantial numbers of houses and appropriate infrastructure with much less of an impact on existing residential areas in both North Herts and Stevenage.

With reference to the expansion of Baldock, whilst this area is not so close to Great Ashby, it is noted that Baldock has good road and rail links and would be better able to cope with the extra housing than some other areas.

A large development as proposed would stimulate the town economy and revive its flagging high street.