

Robert Brigden
Principal Planning Officer
Development Management
Community and Place Delivery
St Albans City and District Council
District Council Offices
St Peter's Street
St Albans
Herts AL1 3JE

Grebe House
St Michael's Street
St Albans
AL3 4SN

01727 858 901
info@hmwt.org
hertswildlifetrust.org.uk

Email: planning.applications@stalbens.gov.uk

30 July 2025

Dear Mr Brigden

Application number: 5/2024/2271

Location: Land off Sandridgebury Lane and between the railway and Harpenden Road, St Albans

Proposal: Hybrid planning application including outline planning application for the construction of up to 1,000 new homes etc, known as 'Woollam Park'.

Due to long-term sick leave and limited capacity, I apologise that we were not able to reply within the online consultation period, but I hope that you will be able to take these brief comments into account.

The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust **objects** to this planning application due to its impact on the Long Spring and Soothouse Wood Local Wildlife Site and Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland.

We write in support of the detailed objection made by the Woodland Trust, which also objects on the grounds of the deterioration of veteran oak tree T14 and deterioration of Heartwood Forest.

The application proposes a 15 metre buffer to Long Spring Wood 'to avoid any detrimental impacts that development may cause'. As the Woodland Trust notes, this is a reference to the minimum 15 metre buffer in guidance by Natural England and Defra.

The guidance states that indirect effects of development can also cause the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees by a number of means, including:

- Increasing the amount of dust, light, water, air and soil pollution
- Increasing disturbance to wildlife, such as noise from additional people and traffic
- Increasing damage to habitat, for example trampling of plants and erosion of soil by people accessing the woodland or tree root protection areas
- Increasing damaging activities like fly-tipping and the impacts of domestic pets

All these factors are likely to occur as a result of the proposed development, which will become sandwiched between residential development to the north and the existing industrial development to the south.

The guidance goes on to note the importance of buffer zones, which may vary depending on the scale and type of development and its effect on ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees.

'Larger buffer zones are more likely to be needed if the surrounding area is:

- Less densely wooded
- Close to residential areas
- Steeply sloped'

'For ancient woodlands, the proposal should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres from the boundary of the woodland to avoid root damage (known as the root protection area). Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, the proposal is likely to need to larger buffer zone ...'

We conclude, and agree with the Woodland Trust, that a 15 metre buffer zone is inadequate in this instance, so close to a residential area. The effectiveness of a buffer zone is also linked to whether Public Open Space elsewhere on the site is of sufficient quality to draw people away from the ancient woodland, and we are not convinced that this is the case.

Please contact me if you wish to discuss any of these issues in further detail. I would be grateful for notification of the outcome of the planning application.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon Marsh". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Simon" and the last name "Marsh" clearly distinguishable.

Simon Marsh MBE BA MA MSc MRTPI
Planning and Policy Manager