



Hertfordshire & North Middlesex Area

The Ramblers' Association is a registered charity (England & Wales no 1093577) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England & Wales (no 4458492).
Registered Office: 1 Clink Street, 3rd Floor, London, SE1 9DG

2 St Stephens Avenue
St Albans
Herts
AL3 4AD

Email: [REDACTED]

Ms Sarah Smith
St Albans City and District Council
Civic Centre
St Peter's Street
St Albans
AL1 3JE

1 March 2021

Dear Ms Smith,

Planning Application 5/2020/3022- Burston Garden Centre New Retirement Community

The Ramblers is a national charity which works to protect the countryside and to safeguard and enhance the places where people walk.

The draft St Stephen's Neighbourhood Plan which was open for public consultation in October 2020 identified a need for a care home or retirement village (Policy S19) and proposed to exclude Land at Burston Garden Centre from the Green Belt and allocate it for a Retirement Village (Policies S1 and S20). As a result of the withdrawal of the Local Plan the parish council will have to remove these policies from the current Neighbourhood Plan but the requirement remains and it seems probable that, once the district has a new Local Plan, a future Neighbourhood Plan will reinstate these policies. Moreover it is likely that, in addition to Broad Locations for Development, the council will need to identify additional small sites in the Green Belt that will be allocated for development.

In this context the present application may be bringing forward proposals for a development which will in due course be consistent with local planning policy. We therefore take a neutral view of this application but ask the district council to take into account the following issue in its considerations of the balance between the very special circumstances and the harm to the Green Belt.

This proposal is offering two very valuable additions to the rights of way network which are of benefit to both residents and the general public.

- a. A safe crossing of the A405 between bridleway 3 (BR03) and BR03A
- b. A new bridleway along the southern boundary of the site linking the existing BR03 and Lye Lane.

The NPPF 2019 edition states at paragraph 98. *"Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails."*

The A405 is a substantial barrier for walkers, cyclists and equestrians between Chiswell Green and How Wood/Park Street. There is no safe, at grade crossing between the Park Street roundabout and the M25

junction. The footbridge at Tippetdell Lane is inconvenient for residents in the southern parts of Chiswell Green and may be difficult for wheel chair users. It is not available to equestrians. Bridleway BR03/03A is effectively severed by this road as few people are willing to risk crossing it on foot, on horseback or by cycle at this point.

The proposed signalized crossing would re-connect the two parts of this bridleway for all non-motorised users. It would open up the shopping area of How Wood to the residents of Chiswell Green and the convenience store and café at the nearby petrol station to the residents of How Wood and the retirement village including wheel chair users.

The unprotected at grade crossings of the A405 between Lye Lane and Noke Lane are notoriously hazardous. They are avoided by most people but are the only route to the bus stop near the Noke hotel for visitors and staff from the care homes in Lye Lane. The existing FP18 and this new crossing would give these people a safe route to the bus stops in Watford Road.

The new bridleway along the southern boundary would give them a safe route to the shops and railway station in How Wood. It also provides the only off road route between BR03 and Lye Lane for cyclists and equestrians and avoids the narrow footway beside the A405 for pedestrians.

If this application is approved we ask the council to ensure by condition or S106/278 agreements that the signalized crossing of the A405 is provided and that the new bridleway is dedicated as a public right of way preferably before the first unit is occupied. It will also be necessary to upgrade part of FP18 to bridleway status.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Escritt
Ramblers Association,
Footpaths Secretary for the St Albans District

Copies to: Julian Thornton, Access Officer, Herts County Council Rights of Way Service