

PLANNING COMMENT FOR APPLICATION REF: 5/2020/3022

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Object to Proposal

The Burston development is a gross instance of overdevelopment within the green belt which will do significant harm to the setting of Burstone Manor, an important listed building. The assisted living complex will tend to be self-sufficient, serviced by its own staff and not necessarily integrated into the local community. Burstone Manor, a building going back to the 12th century, and listed Grade II* will be effectively isolated by it, cut off between this sprawl of new housing, the North Orbital Road and the adjacent garden centre. The Manor's setting will be degraded without the current open aspect to the rear, terminating in ancient woodland, thereby destroying its remaining rural setting once and for all. The open walks around How Wood to the rear, much valued during the current pandemic, will simply become little more than alleyways between different housing estates and the woodland adjacent to the development site will lose much of its amenity value as it becomes isolated and cut off by another new development.

There is nothing in this application which deserves to alter the previous judgement of the government's planning inspector in 2020 that the proposal (even as scaled down and amended) conflicts with local and national planning policy designed to check unrestricted sprawl between built up areas and to prevent settlements merging. The proposal causes major harm to the remaining countryside between St Albans and its satellite settlements, and to the setting of a heritage building of some importance. While there might be room for small-scale development on the site, adjacent to the garden centre, for example by allowing some limited development of social housing by integrating it fully into an enhanced rural setting with extended woodland planting for carbon capture, the present proposal for a retirement complex lacks merit and should be rejected.