

There are four in front of us. And the first one is the outline application for demolition of existing buildings and the building of up to 330 discounted affordable homes at Saint Stephen's Green Farm. Chisel Green officers. Can we have the presentation, please? Thank you, Chair. Like a this slide shows the application sites which is outlined in red and it includes the main field and also a number of sites for proposed highway works going up to Watford Road. This slide shows a series of photographs taken from the application submission showing various views of the perimeter of the site, which show the generally vegetated boundaries adjacent to the highways and paths around the perimeter of the site. And this slide shows further photographs from the application submission showing views from within the site, showing the generally open interior of the site and the vegetated boundaries from inside. Finally, we have aerial photo showing the whole of the site, whole of the main field part of the site. There's a few items to update members with. Since the publication of the report, there has been a representative representation received from the group Keep Chiswell Green, which was sent to members and copied to officers with a link to an executive summary of their formal response. Officers would note that the formal response was referenced in the report in section 5.2. 19 and no further comment from officers is here required. There have been late representations also from the applicant's agent raising concern with the reporting of the point of objection that the application team appeared to be attempting to strong arm the council into recommending approval and that this was damaging to the agent's reputation. The phrase strong arm is in quotation marks in the objection referred to and where it is recorded in the report, its 5.2. 19 and with a response at 8.3. 17. It is also in quotation marks and it has been understood by all officers to have been meant figuratively. It was therefore not considered necessary to amend the report. But officers can here clarify that there has been no physical violence or threat of physical violence towards council officers from the application team. In this regard, the agent has also raised a number of points querying the Section 106 contributions requested by County Council and by the District Council's community services team. These points have been passed to the relevant consultees and the Section 106 process is ongoing. However, it remains the case that there is no completed and signed Section 106 legal agreement or other suitable mechanism to secure mitigation of impacts on social and physical infrastructure and the officer recommendation to include drafted reason for refusal Number two remains sound. There has also been a representation from the agents sent to members and copied to officers, which makes the case that the housing for key workers as presented should be approved. That the greenbelt study cannot be relied upon at appeal that reported performance measures of the development management team's performance are out of date and that it would be harmful for the authority to lose an appeal. Officers in response would note that the issues raised where they relate to material planning considerations are addressed in the officer's report that very substantial positive weight is given to the provision of the housing proposed, but that in the planning balance this does not clearly outweigh the harm resulting from the proposal. In the assessment of officers, the performance measures would be discussed in a later item on this agenda, but the appeal performance wouldn't be a material planning consideration that could carry any weight in and of itself in the determination of this application. And so therefore, taking the report and the plans as read, it's recommended to refuse for the reasons set out in section 11 on pages 74 and 75. Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Wright. Okay, so we have a speaker against the application. And Mr.. Griffiths from 17 40in or green? Mr. Griffiths, if you would like to come to the podium and you have three minutes from when you turn the microphone on, if you press the button in the middle, the red light comes on. You'll be timed from then. Okay. All right. Present teachers will green on the 98% of local residents who object to this application or refer members to our comprehensive report, which was placed on the portal. In my three minutes, however, I'll focus on two main issues as we see them. The first is the policy context. As has been pointed out, for the purposes of this decision, the plan consists of the local Plan review 1994 and the Saint Stephen's Neighbourhood Plan made by the Council in July. In the absence of a new local plan, reference also has to be made to the NPF. In our view, there is a gaping void in policy between the national and the local level, which used to be filled

by the Hertfordshire County structure plan. We note that this will be addressed by the Southwest Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan, which we believe will provide a context for the five local plans, including Cinnamon's. There's no mention of the joint plan in your officer's report, despite it being at a more advanced stage than your local plan with no up to date local plan development is already happening in an uncoordinated and hazardous fashion, with the unnecessary loss of greenbelt. Pressures around total green are well illustrated by the map on page 11 of our report. Development cannot be permitted at the whim of call for sites, speculative planning, applications and appeal decisions. Housing provision must truly reflect local needs based on the latest demographic information. My second issue is Greenbelt. Here we firmly support the analysis and the recommendation of the case officer. The essential characteristic of the greenbelt is its openness. Photographs in our report show without doubt the open nature of the application site and its relationship to the surrounding countryside, including Parkwood Ancient Woodland. The development is clearly contrary to two of the five purposes of the greenbelt as set out in the NPF. First, it would encroach severely into the area of unspoilt countryside to the west of green. Second, it would impinge on the gap between the edge of Chiswell Green and Hemel Hempstead. This is underplayed in the officer's report. The possibility of the gap is investigated by the map on page ten of our report. This also highlights the encroachment from the committed area of Garden Communities programme. In their submission, the applicants have referred to the Roundhouse Farm and other appeal decisions. We submit that the characteristics of that site are entirely different. Each application falls to be determined on its own merits. In summary, it's our firm view that the future housing needs and land allocation should be addressed by the forthcoming South West Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Plan and the Cinnamon's Local Plan. In consultation with three minutes, the residents of Chisel Green urged members of the committee to to refuse this application and to keep Chisel green. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Griffiths. Can I invite Mr. Brian Parker to speak for the application? I believe Mr. Parker is joining us virtually. Good evening, Chair Councillors. Every time an application for a major housing scheme on the greenbelt has been submitted. Residents and councillors alike have complained that the houses won't be affordable for local people. So whilst I expected some opposition to this scheme, I thought it would enjoy a better reception than most. I couldn't have been more wrong. As the officer report makes clear, a scheme to deliver discounted affordable homes for local nurses, local teachers, local police officers, local firefighters and local care workers is actually less welcome than schemes where the majority of the houses will have no discounts and no local connection requirements and so can be bought by companies, private landlords, second home owners or wealthy couples moving here from London or abroad. And for the life of me, I can't work out why. Last Wednesday on NEWSNIGHT, Daisy Cooper, our local MP, once again made the case for more social housing. And it's a case that needs making. But surely she knows, as you know, that most key worker households earn too much to qualify for social housing in Saint Albans, but not enough to buy their own homes in one of the most expensive parts of the country. And that's where Addison Park comes in, making home ownership more affordable to essential local workers by discounting them by at least a third. In my view, that's precisely what positive community based planning is about and what progressive politicians in all parties are asking for. So I urge you to be positive and be progressive and to agree that very special circumstances exist for this unique scheme to help some of the most valuable members of our community. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Parker. Okay. We now have two elected representatives to address the committee. First of all, Carlos Parish, Councillor Hilton to come to the podium. Councillor Hilton, You know the procedure. You have five minutes to address the committee. Thank you. Thank you, Chair. Hello, Councillors. The need for new homes is a fact. We do need to find ways of accommodating all sectors of society in suitable housing, especially those who are unable to access the housing readily provided by developers across the country. In my capacity as a district councillor, I sit on the local plan advisory group where we are really working hard to formalise the process of determining what is actually needed, not just across in Auburn's but across South West Hearts. Our needs are not new. What is new is that the councils of South West Hearts are working together to

plan housing where it will be best located. And society is now aware of the need to balance this human activity with climate change and protecting the planet. We need to protect our own futures and not jumping the gun with opportunistic developers. Sustainability is the most important philosophy going forward. The vision for the next local plan is to create a thriving, inclusive and sustainable community, which is a great place to live and work and has a vibrant economy. Is that what we are being offered here? This application is inappropriate development in Greenbelt. The developer asserts there are special circumstances to override the greenbelt protection in providing this affordable housing, but there are. The benefits of affordable housing outweigh the harm to the greenbelt. Is this development even affordable, and does it meet the vision and the needs of the future? Lack of local employment. Few local amenities, mostly a car journey away. A quiet village with significantly elderly population, overstretched health services, a lack of secondary school education places. It really doesn't sound like it. Add to this the road modifications proposed, which will remove car parking space and from the much loved front of the sub post office and probably lead to its closure. This means further reducing local amenities and destroying the lifeline of many local residents. Imposing a new community of at least a third of the size of the existing population will not promote inclusivity, especially when the new population is effectively a car based dormitory. Community of time, poor parents commuting and shifts to nearby towns. These new residents will not be able to open their windows at night. If anyone's been down there, the road noise coming from the surrounding M1, M25 and the A41 for which is just going to get busier. Imagine that in a hot summer's day. This location is also unsustainable. In transport terms, it has poor pedestrian linkages, poor access to the bus network and serious highway safety and capacity concerns arising from the significant increases in traffic. The short term incentive to encourage the use of public transport will not produce a real change in travel behaviour. Bus stops are more than 500m uphill away a one way ticket at the moment for a two and a half mile journey from chiswell Green costs for pounds ten. Limited public transport links from east to west across South Harts cycle tracks that have been shoehorned in into paper plans but are impractical, unsafe and with cyclists on the carriageway actually travelling against traffic carriageways that are going to plan to be narrowed beyond the Hart's County Council Council guidance for roads carrying buses. From a transport perspective perspective, this development is completely contrary to the local and national policies that seek to create a safe, attractive and sustainable communities. Throwing money at supposed solutions will not resolve this. These concerns must override any benefits that might arise from provision of housing in this area. Affordable housing? Yes, it's needed, but this development is poorly thought out. It's not in the right location and again, not sustainable. The average joint salary of 60 will give a couple a mortgage of about 246%. But even at a discount, purchasers will need 400,000 to afford one of these. As councillors, we have to make the decision we believe is right, not the decision borne out of fear of the costs of possible appeal by the developer or their attempts at emotional manipulations. It's the thin end of the wedge. Your vote today will really set a precedent if we allow this development because it offers affordable housing, why not fill all the greenbelt with affordable housing? Does this development constitute special circumstances that justify concrete in the greenbelt? Is this development sustainable? Does it contribute a sustainable future? The answer to these questions is unequivocally been no. The local plan. We need to focus on the local plan, which will incorporate the Saint Stephen's Neighbourhood Plan to also guide us to make the right decisions benefiting us all. Please don't jump the gun. I urge you. Council. So members leave this area of Greenbelt for the benefit of all. Please refuse this application. Thank you for your time. Thank you. Councillor Hylton, can I now call District Councillor Frye to the podium? Council Frey, you have five minutes from when you start. Thank you. Good evening everyone. Good evening Councillors. Good evening. Concerned local residents as well, those watching both virtually and physically. This outline application is for the demolition of existing buildings and the building of up to 330 discounted affordable key homes for key workers, including military personnel and the creation of open space. I was elected back in May 22nd and the biggest issue on the doorstep with residents was about this particular concern. At that same election, and with the absence of a formal local plan,

the ward of Saint Stephen held a referendum and the Saint Stephen Neighbourhood Plan was voted through with a massive majority and this document was then ratified in July 22nd. My job as a councillor is to represent the community in matters such as this and with the total amount of objections that have been logged on the website, the community of Saint Stephen is actually making a very clear message of saying no to this particular development. We're fortunate enough to live in the city and district, especially in the Saint Stephen area, where over 80% of our land is classified as greenbelt. So it opens and it's surrounding towns and villages are also ranked in the top five locations in the UK to live and bring up families. This, of course sets up a situation where housing is scarce and expensive. It's a model where demand outstrip supply and any entity which owns land stands to make a considerable financial gain if planning is granted. To be blunt, this development is purely a commercial gain for the developer, even though this is not a material circumstance, But the greenbelt has to be protected. This application hinges on special circumstances. So let's be clear The ridiculous and dated method by which housing targets are set by governments hell bent on delivery cannot be at the destruction of our local community, which they hold dear and has done so for many centuries. I'm very mindful that new housing is required, but at the same time I'm also involved in other strategic projects such as Garden City, where they will be, in effect able to deliver several thousand houses of the affordable nature to people in that particular area. I'll now turn my attention to the national planning framework, and the Government is obviously trying to protect the green belt, but actually I refer to paragraphs 147, 148 and 149. Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the greenbelt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the greenbelt. Very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the greenbelt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposal is clearly outweighed by other considerations. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings. In this respect, there should be consideration for any buildings of agriculture provision of appropriate facilities such as outdoor sport, the extension and alteration of other buildings or the replacement of buildings. But in this instance, limiting the infilling of villages not have a greater impact on the openness of the greenbelt than existing development and not cause substantial harm to the existence of the openness of the green belt. The Saint Stephen's Neighbourhood Plan, Paragraph 3.2, sets out several visions for Saint Stephen's protecting the green belt from inappropriate development, putting green and open spaces, trees and woodlands at the heart of planning, ensuring any development is sustainable and minimises the use of extra resources. A 330 house development would produce in excess of between 5 and 600 cars, and the smaller roads of which could be extended would be an absolute nightmare. And the Watford Road would grind to a halt, let alone the gas and electricity consumption used by these particular houses. And the reports that mentioned concerns around water supply and sewage in section 4.2, much of Saint Stephen's parish lies within the green belt, and it's particularly important that development is directed to appropriate locations and that the sprawl and village to village coalescence are avoided. It also states that the average property price and bearing in mind this report was written in 2018, was £550,000 for the average house in Chiswell Green, this rises to £590,000. And if you were to take into effect the cost of living of today, the average price of a household would be around about £766,000. I don't think that would be affordable homes for people. Granting this application would also cause friction between the older communities and the communities that would come into that particular area. We must be mindful that the granting of this application would also clear the way for other nearby developments, which may total some 1500 new houses. We simply cannot afford to set this precedent where the greenbelt is destroyed forever. I respect the work and experience of the offices that lead this project and. It has been refused. The community has also sent a very clear message which is fully supported by material circumstance. My strong recommended recommendation in this particular week of U-turns is not to U-turn and to refuse this application. Thank you, Councillor Froy. Okay, Councillors, you have heard the presentation, you've heard the speakers. We now move to questions. Can I just remind you that this is an outline application? So

really we're debating the question of whether we, the principle of, of this development, not the detailed layout and the actual site layout, etcetera. So it's really whether we think it is suitable for the principle is suitable for development. So are there any questions for officers at this point? Councillor Mostyn. Thank you, Chair. Just following on from your last comments, does the fact that this is an outline application mean that in effect the committee will get a second bite of the cherry if in the event that the committee were to decide to approve the principle of the application, the actual specifics of the detailed application is likely to come before this committee again in the future. Just ahead of us. Absolutely. If we did give this outline approval, then in future we would have the reserved matters come forward to us, which is actually where the houses actually go. The shape of them, the layout, etcetera, etcetera. But officers can explain that probably better than I can. You are mute, Andrew. Sorry. Yes, the outline permission would be the in-principle approval, so it would be approving 330 homes of up to 330 homes on this site. And then it's the detailed matters. If it was approved, that would be for consideration that reserved matters stage. So so it is it is the approval of the proposed development in principle that is up for up for assessment here. Thank you, Andrew. Any other questions for officers? Councillor Needham. And then. Just because the application says that it's partly to do with the destruction of current buildings. What is the percentage of the site that is fully green belt and what has previously been developed? Please. It's a very high percentage that's open. There's two buildings on the site. It's they're very small buildings. I could refer to my previous photograph that was that was shared of the aerial photograph. Sorry. When that appears on the screen. So there's there's two small, well, relatively small buildings relative to the scale of the field that would be would be removed as part of the the application. So a very small percentage. There is description in sorry, that there is description that three section three on page eight. Thank you. Of the scale. Counsel, Kirby. Councillor Dyson. I can't see your. Sorry. Your, uh. My question. My question is that, um, this. You've referred to the Section 106 agreement, and nothing's been signed so far. Is there any agreement that was made and was nothing been signed? The process is ongoing. If members were minded to find it acceptable in other regards, it could be that it was approved subject to completion of a Section 106, which is which is sometimes the case. Um, but it's often takes a long time to, to iron out a section 106. It did take there was some delay in, in moving it forward initially. There is a draft. So the process is ongoing in the assumption that it's likely to be appealed if refused. Those discussions would be ongoing because that matter would have to be addressed to some degree if an agreement could be reached, if it goes to appeal. That's just it was quite a long list of items and I wondered how close to any of achieving any of those was an agreement. Um, yes. As summarised verbally this week. And the agent has challenged the figures from county and from our own community services team seeking further justifications for the for the figures. So there is there's agreement that the the mitigation needs to happen with contributions, but the amounts of the contributions and the types of the contributions are being challenged by the by the applicant's agents. Thank you, Andrew. Councillor Jessica. Well, thank you, Chair. So given we have almost three pages of the objections from the local residents. Substantial part of the green. How much weight has it been given to the decision? Well, the point is through you, chair. Yes, the points raised and there are very many points of objection that have been raised, which is the following section. They are what officers would take into account. The weight of numbers wouldn't in and of itself carry weight in the assessment of the material planning considerations from officers. It's the points raised that would would carry the weight. Thank you, Chair. Thank you. Any more questions for officers? Councillor Lythgoe. When I listen to the submissions and go through the report, it really all looks pretty clear cut to me in terms of inappropriate green belt development. Is that some risk that I'm not getting in all of this, a risk of appeal that we need to be considering? Is there something I'm missing from all of this, or is it as clearcut as it sounds? If I can respond on that, the authority is judged on two on a number of criteria, speed of decision making and quality of decision making, but that is absolutely not a material planning consideration. And that's something we can discuss in item seven of the report. So please disregard any consideration of that, that there is a chance of appeal and officers believe that there would be sound planning reasons to refuse this

and to defend the Authority's decision at appeal. Equally, if members were minded to go a different way and grant permission, there's always a possibility of challenge in the High Court in the event of an approval. So disregard those considerations for your mind and focus on the material planning considerations is my advice. Thank you, Miss Ashton. Councillor Webb. I noticed in your report that the bullies Lane got mentioned as a precedent, and 1 or 2 others have been referred to as precedents. If this committee were to give approval, would that then become a precedent? Because there are a lot of very similar applications coming in all the way around the district to give you a bigger context. There's a sort of methodology that Roundhouse Farm has established, which is about looking at the greenbelt purposes and considering the application of each site in terms of its impact on the green belt purposes and on openness. And that approach was then carried forward into the subsequent application for a different site off of Harpenden Road in to the north of Saint Albans. We are taking a similar approach to look at each site on its own merits, taking into account the methodology established. But yes, there is a potential of precedent in terms of opening a door to sites with other similar characteristics. Officers do not feel that this site is similar enough to any of the other sites that have been granted permission to justify an approval. Thank you, Miss Ashton. Any other questions? Okay. If there's no other questions, then can we move into debate the officer's recommendations in front of you? You read the report. So what do we think, Councillor Mitchell? Thank you, Chair. Um, I feel that this. What? I support the officer's assessment. I think it is different from Berlin's Lane and Harpenden Road. It doesn't have the same criteria, and I think this should be refused. I think it's very important that the work of the local plan and the Green Belt review that should be available to us soon is the driving force behind anything that we actually build on the green belt. In an ideal world, we wouldn't use any of our green belt. But if we have to meet our housing needs targets, then that may be what we have to do. One of the things that did concern me, though, about some of what some of the speakers said was that they refer to the Hemel Gardens community as if it was a done deal. It's not a done deal. Far from it. It's 11,500 houses on prime agricultural land, all in green belt, and half of it is in Red Bourne Ward, which is my ward. So 5500 houses were being red. One ward filling in the gap very much between Hemel and Red Bourne. And there are a lot of other issues too. I don't want to go into the Garden community, but I do object to this site being considered to be unsuitable because the Hemel Gardens community is being built because that is not the case. So I just want to make sure that everyone's aware that is the situation. Having said that, I do actually think this site should be refused. Thank you. Thank you, Councillor Mitchell. And thank you for making that clear. Anybody else like to contribute? Council of jurisdiction? Well, being a local district councillor for Steven, I totally agree with what my colleague said as arguments. I probably couldn't put it better. I think this is an opportunistic grab of land which was never designed as a building site. It's always been greenbelt and the special circumstances are not present. So this is my objection against this. So support the officer recommendation. There's a council. Councillor Needham. I think this is severely overdevelopment of that site, but one of my main concerns would be the level of traffic generated by the additional houses. Anybody who's ever tried to go in or out of Jerseyville Green will know that it's virtually impossible morning and evening to do anything within a very short period of time. So I do think the traffic implications would be horrendous. Thank you, Councillor Needham. Councillor Heritage. Thank you, Chair. Um, despite being a harmed and councillor, um, it's an area that I know quite well. I used to visit the Rose Society place quite well. I was quite amazed visiting on yesterday morning how the road had actually deteriorated and become overgrown as you drive down it towards now Rose Farm. Um, it certainly was never like I remember and I realised that the developer would have to pay substantial amounts to make that road anywhere near available for any kind of traffic down. I mean, even yesterday morning I had to pull onto the verge twice to let vehicles go down. This was a 9:00 on a Sunday morning. So what it would be like with 330 houses, I dread to think. Completely inappropriate site. Sadly, I know one of the speakers mentioned earlier that it's only one of several sites in the in that area from around the neck and the old butterfly world and what have you that are seemingly up for grabs. And developers are just jumping on the fact that we

haven't got a tight local plan. This is quite sad really. I think without that local plan, sadly, we're going to get lots and lots of these applications throughout the district, so I hope the local plan is hurried along. Thank you. Thank you, Councillor Heritage. We're certainly putting a lot more resource into the local plan, but it's unfortunate it's the government timetable. It's not just ours, so it will take some time to get into place I think. Anybody else want to ask Councillor Dyson? I just also in agreement with the case officers in this case, based on the the fact that it's quite an introverted development, speculative, speculative, and it's not connecting well with surrounding areas. It's all focussed internally without any diversity or inclusion and no street hierarchy, no integration in those senses. It also doesn't seem to have sufficient contributions to the surrounding area and links to public transport, which is why I totally agree with, among other reasons for the greenbelt with the case of the recommendation to refute. Thank you. Council Dyson. Council and then Councillor Webb. Likewise. I would support the officer's recommendations on this. I think it's clear cut to me it's inappropriate development on the green belt. And as we know, we're going to have to do to make some development on the green belt to meet our housing targets. But now's the not not the right time to be doing that. When we're undertaking the Green Belt review and working on the local plan. So I would say definitely reject this application at the current point in time. Thank you. Councillor Linlithgow. Councillor Webb. I join with most of the other councillors in supporting the recommendation of the planning officers. I think they put a very good case and I, from living very close to the site, feel very strongly to that. The traffic situation and particularly Bridges or Green Lane would be really very, very bad and Watford Road and that the pressure that 330 houses would put on midway surgery on schools in the area, the that we're all struggling with trying to accommodate all the needs that we have at the moment. And if the developers are challenging all the so 106 contributions, they're going to try and drive it down so that we won't get the support that we need to actually support an area development like that. I also agree totally that affordable There was quite an emotive presentation from the the the gentleman who was representing the developer and I don't think that many of the people that he outlined would be in a position to afford these, especially now that we're going to live in a much higher interest rate world, which is a big change from when this proposal was first put forward. Thank you. Thank you. Councillor Webb from the Chair. I certainly agree with the the Planning officers analysis. They've weighed the significant benefit of 330 affordable housing units, which we do need against the harm of the green belt. And they found out that it does. It is inappropriate in the green belt, but they have done a fair analysis of the costs and the benefits. So I would agree with that. So I'm not hearing anybody is against this proposal unless anyone wants to speak up now. In which case, if no one else wants to contribute, I will move to the vote. The officer's recommendation is to refuse planning permission. All those in favour of the officer's recommendation. And that is unanimous. So the application is refused. Thank you very much, everybody. I'm going to adjourn the meeting while the audience leaves us and I think a new one comes along. So thank you very much for everyone's contribution. Welcome back, everybody. We're moving back to agenda item six two on your pack. This is the retention of the existing public house and garden and provision of four flats with access for Morris Way at the White Horse Public House in London Colony. Can we have the presentation, please?