

APPEAL BY VISTRY HOMES LIMITED AGAINST THE REFUSAL OF ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL, AS LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY, TO GRANT OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 150 DWELLINGS, ALL MATTERS RESERVED EXCEPT ACCESS AT LAND REAR OF 42 - 100 TOLLGATE ROAD, COLNEY HEATH, HERTS, AL4 0PY

PLANNING INSPECTORATE REF: APP/B1930/W/23/3323099
LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY REF: 5/2022/1988

Summary Proof of Evidence – Ian Dimbylow

JNY11289-10
Ian Dimbylow Summary
Version -
22 August 2023

1 SUMMARY PROOF OF EVIDENCE

- 1.1 My name is Ian Dimbylow and I am a Director of RPS Transport.
- 1.2 This document is a summary of my Proof of Evidence, Core Document CD 9.4.
- 1.3 I have a Master of Engineering Degree with Honours in Civil Engineering Design and Management. I am a Chartered Engineer. I am a Member of the Institution Civil Engineers (ICE) and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT).
- 1.4 I have been actively involved in providing highway and transportation advice relating to the development planning process since 2002 for a wide variety of clients in both the public and private sectors. My experience ranges from initial accessibility studies and concept design to traffic impact analysis. I have also prepared the detailed design of highway schemes for technical approval and undertaken site supervision of construction work.
- 1.5 I have provided expert witness advice for a number of planning appeals. The projects I have worked on have been located throughout the UK and have included residential developments, mixed use urban extensions, government facilities, commercial developments, transport infrastructure and public realm.
- 1.6 My evidence for this appeal has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institutions and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.
- 1.7 I am fully familiar with the appeal proposal and the surrounding area, having first been instructed in January 2020 whilst I was a Technical Director at the firm WSP, and then having been instructed again in January 2022 in my capacity as a Director at RPS. I led the RPS preparation of the Transport Assessment and Travel Plan that were submitted with the planning application.
- 1.8 I am very familiar with the site and the local highway area, having lived and worked in Hertfordshire for the past 20 years, and having visited the site on a number of occasions.
- 1.9 My evidence is given on behalf of Vistry Homes Limited. It relates to their planning appeal for the demolition of existing house and stables and the construction of up to 150 dwellings including affordable and custom-build dwellings together with all ancillary works at Land to the rear of 42-100 Tollgate Road & 42 Tollgate Road, Colney Heath, St Albans, Hertfordshire.
- 1.10 My evidence focuses on the part of the reason for refusal relating to the sustainability of the site in transport terms.
- 1.11 I consider the walking accessibility of the site to be good, with day-to-day facilities available within reasonable walking distance. A local shop and pub are within walking distance as are the bus stops. The village hall which has a pre-school is also close. The proximity of the site to the primary school, and secondary school bus services mean education trips have a realistic alternative to travel by private car.
- 1.12 Tollgate Road past the site is recognised as a 'Route suggested by local cyclists'. This provides a route to the A414 where cycle crossing facilities have recently been provided

linking into the traffic free route alongside the A414. Further north in NCN route 61, The Alban Way, which is a former rail line between St Albans and Hatfield that is now a traffic free cycle route. Roestock Lane also provides access to the underpass beneath the A1(M) which connects to segregated routes towards the university and beyond into Hatfield. To the east is also NCN route 12 which runs through Welham Green and Hatfield. My assessment does not rely on roads in the area which may be unsuitable for some cyclists.

- 1.13 The development site is accessible within a 25-minute cycle ride of the nearby town of Hatfield and village of Welham Green. Welham Green train station is also within a circa 15-25 minute cycle ride to the east of the development site (dependent on rider confidence). Hatfield has a wide range of facilities including significant employment areas and university, as well as a good cycle route network. To the north there are also excellent off-road routes towards St Albans including the Alban Way.
- 1.14 The existing bus services in Colney Heath operate at limited frequencies and days of the week, but may be used by future residents for some journeys to local destinations. These include weekly services to shopping destinations such as Sainsburys, Marks and Spencer, Next, Boots and TK Maxx Colney Fields. The weekly Hatfield service goes to The Galleria, Hatfield Town Centre and Tesco Extra. The service to St Albans has 5 buses daily and the first bus of the day gets to the city centre before 0815 and the last bus of the day leaves at 1720. It would therefore be possible to use this bus for commuting purposes for a typical 0900-1700 role to the city centre as well as stops along the way.
- 1.15 In terms of sustainability, I consider that the location of the site is conducive to providing future residents with a realistic choice to the private car for many day-to-day journeys. This view is supported by the planning Inspector for the recently consented site at Bullens Green Lane (ref: 5/2020/1992/LSM – Inspector’s decision 14 June 2021 [CD 14.6] paragraphs 37-41) This site is approximately 600m from the proposed development. I consider that the inspector’s conclusions can equally be applied to the appeal site.
- 1.16 I have assessed the site against the policies set out in paragraphs 110-112 of the NPPF [CD 1.1]. I conclude that it is in accordance with these policies.
- 1.17 I have reviewed the three parts of the reasons for refusal given by HCC and I do not agree with the justification.
- 1.18 Firstly, the review of cycle access has been carried out following an on-site audit and reviews the potential for access by bicycle. The HCC reason for refusal does not appear to relate to a deficiency, only a request for information in a different form. I believe that the updated isochrones presented in my evidence [CD 9.4] address this point.
- 1.19 Secondly, the request that the applicant engages with the bus operator is unnecessary and unhelpful. I have engaged with the bus operator who has simply directed me back to HCC.
- 1.20 Thirdly, I have set out the accessibility by public transport and I consider the site has good access to bus services that provide an alternative mode of transport to the private

car and could provide an important alternative to those sectors of the community who do not have access to a private car.

- 1.21 I have reviewed the third-party objections on the basis of the summary points within the council's committee report. I have responded to these points in my evidence. They generally comprise concerns on access, traffic impact and sustainable modes of travel that are dealt with within the Transport Assessment [CD 5.12], my evidence [CD 9.4] and the HCC statement of common ground [CD 8.2].
- 1.22 Mitigation measures are proposed in the form of conditions and obligations that will improve pedestrian and cycle facilities in the area.
- 1.23 I do not consider that the transport reasons for refusal can be justified and it is my opinion that the appeal should not be dismissed on these grounds.