

Note of explanation for the Council's weightings

The Inspector has requested a note seeking an explanation for the differences in weightings applied to the various benefits and harms of the scheme afforded by the Council, when compared to those set out by the Appellant.

The Council has liaised with and is awaiting a response from the Appellant on the Inspector's separate question in respect of the different scales used by the parties, however, in order to prevent delay this has been produced in advance.

Although different scales of weighting have been used (since the Appellant decided to revise their scale, subsequent to the draft SoCG submitted with the appeal), when considering the scales used, it can be concluded that effectively the same weight has been afforded to housing and affordable housing delivery, with both parties attributing the upper level of their scale to these provisions. The same approach, working down the respective weightings, can be applied to custom and self-build dwellings, the primary school, medical centre, Biodiversity Net Gain, locational sustainability, low carbon development and retail spending.

The differences are as follows:

Supported living for vulnerable young adults

The Council attribute a greater level of weight to the delivery of this element of the scheme. There is a significant, demonstrable need across Hertfordshire for children's supported living. Whilst there may only be 5 bedrooms proposed as part of the scheme, this is larger than other schemes being proposed across the District and will significantly assist children locally.

Provision of a local centre

In theory the provision of a local centre is a positive for the development, however, realistically it depends on the nature of the end use and in this case some caution should be applied, as the local centre includes NHS provision and local community centre (we have separately afforded the NHS provision moderate weight as a benefit).

There is no set floor area proposed for the residual retail and café uses proposed and no identified end users. There is therefore no guarantee of these elements coming forward in a manner that is meaningful or beneficial to the community.

Had discussions occurred with a potential end user or a clear size indication been provided, then additional weight could be afforded. Given the limited information available, the Council considers that only limited weight can be afforded to this benefit.

Provision of Sports Facilities and Play Spaces

The Council affords greater weight to this benefit than the Appellant does. It is considered that these provisions are secured via the permission and will be of benefit to the wider community as well as the proposed development, in an area where there is a need for sports provisions. It is therefore afforded moderate weight.

Electric vehicle charging

EV charging is now a building regulations requirement and the scheme provides nothing more than the requirements under those regulations. To afford weight to this element, as well as the positive weight attributed to the low carbon development (which includes both the physical construction of dwellings and carbon emissions), is considered to amount to double counting, hence no weight is afforded to this element.

New Country Park

The provision of open space is welcomed, but is not considered to add significantly to the local community provision where public rights of way and access to open space are already available, hence it is considered that moderate weight should be afforded to this element of the scheme.

Active Travel

The scheme includes improvements to bus provision and upgrades to some active travel routes which are welcomed, but are only required as a result of the development. They will be of a limited additional benefit to the wider community. Accordingly, we afford this limited weight, which is greater than that afforded by the Appellant.

Job Creation

The Appellant affords this significant weight, the equivalent to our moderate weight. The job creation on site is potentially limited in its nature. The school employment generation will depend on how it is resourced, typically 1FE schools are linked to other schools as independently they are less financially viable than a 2FE school, there is potential for this school to be linked with the existing Little Green Junior School. This is also representative of the County Council's move towards primary schools rather than split infant and junior provision. If this occurs, the number of jobs created will be less than a standalone school.

The NHS provision will relocate existing jobs, it is a proposal to allow smaller clinics to merge into a more cost beneficial location, so the number of jobs created will be minimal, but the ability to serve more residents due to the more efficient location would be enhanced.

The community building, café and retail outlet will be dependent on the nature of the end use and could be low in respect of job creation.

There will be some job creation as a result of the construction phases of development, but these will be finite in their length depending on the phase of development and the nature of the job undertaken.

Accordingly, it is considered that limited weight should be afforded to job creation.

Increased Revenue

The Appellant has divorced retail spend from increased revenue. It is understood that they are giving weight to Council tax revenue which is required to enable the Council to fund services associated with the proposed development itself. It is not increased funding to benefit the area, but as a direct response to an increased demand for services. It is not considered therefore that this should be afforded any weight.

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