

Cycling UK Stevenage comment on 23/01552/OP

Land South of Watton Road Knebworth Hertfordshire

We are concerned that this development will significantly increase the number of motor vehicles using Watton Road. This is directly against the North Hertfordshire Sustainability Principles for Transport point 2 “Active travel should be prioritised over other modes of transport. Walking and cycling should be the safest easiest and most direct forms of transport linking key destinations. The dominance of vehicles on main routes will be reduced and managed through tools such as filtered permeability.”

Watton Road is a key cycle route between Stevenage and Knebworth. It is significantly flatter than the alternative and busier B197 and for locations in the South and East of Stevenage it is more direct. Watton Road at the Stevenage end has a traffic free link running northeast direct to A602 cycleway and the segregated Stevenage cycleway network. Turning east at the Stevenage end of Watton road, a cyclist joins the Hertford Road where traffic levels are low due to the bus only gate to Ashdown Road. Beyond the bus gate Hertford Road has a 30mph speed limit with traffic calming humps all the way to the segregated cycleway at Roebuck.

NHDC Sustainability Principles Transport point 1 states “New development should be planned around walkable 20-minute neighbourhoods so every home can walk or cycle to meet their daily needs (including primary schools, local shops and mobility hubs)” It is important to note that the Watton Road route enables a cyclist to reach many destinations in the South and East of Stevenage within 20 minutes. These include: the Marymead Surgery of the Knebworth and Marymead Medical Practice, Barnwell School, Ridlins Stadium, Poplars Sainsburys to name a few. For many cyclists it would be a preferred route – avoiding the B197 gradients and busy road - to reach destinations across much of the rest of Stevenage within 20 minutes too.

Knebworth is a destination itself for cyclists reaching the village via the Watton Road. If motor traffic is significantly increased along Watton Road, they will be deterred from cycling to Knebworth destinations and activities including use of the village businesses. This is directly against the Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan 2018 Policy 1 Transport User Hierarchy and national active travel guidance.

We note that Active Travel England in their consultation response, have stated, “there are numerous active travel matters that require attention in accordance with policy to ensure that sustainable development can be delivered in a way that enables and embeds walking, wheeling and cycling as the first natural choice for local journeys.”

We support the ATE recommendation for deferral: “ATE is not currently in a position to support this application and requests further assessment, evidence, revisions and/or dialogue as set out in this response.” Cycling UK Stevenage would welcome the opportunity to be involved in such dialogue.