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# HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**Supplementary Report  
Land south of Chiswell  
Green Lane, Chiswell Green,  
St Albans**

September 2022

**Carter Jonas**



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**Client:** Alban Developments Limited and Alban Peter Pearson, CALA Homes (Chiltern) Ltd and Redington Capital Ltd.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Health Impact Assessment Supplementary Report (HIA) has been produced in response to the comments made by Hertfordshire County Council dated 9 August 2022 to the HIA that was prepared to accompany a planning application that has been submitted for the construction of up to 391 dwellings on land south of Chiswell Green Lane, Chiswell Green.
- 1.2 The submitted HIA dated April 2022 demonstrates that an integrated approach to the proposed development is being followed which will support healthier lifestyles and the general wellbeing of existing and future residents in the area. This is detailed in the Design and Access Statement and other supporting documents which accompany the planning application.
- 1.3 Hertfordshire County Council acknowledge that there is no single method available for the completion of HIA's however the authority recommends in its Position Statement dated October 2019 that use is made of the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) assessment methodology as there is no comparable methodology available in England. The completion of HIA's is however not mandatory in England unlike the position in Wales.
- 1.4 The submitted HIA was prepared using an accepted tool produced by the NHS London Healthy Urban Development Unit. This tool was used in preference to other tools and methodologies that are available because it provides a very accessible, proportionate, and appropriate means of assessment that identifies the relevant health issues.
- 1.5 The submitted HIA took the form of a prospective rapid assessment and reviewed the potential health impacts of the development, identifying those that are significant. The objective was to focus on achieving health outcomes that can be delivered in association with the proposed development for existing and future residents.

## 2.0 THE SITE AND APPLICATION

- 2.1 The application site extends to some 14.02ha and is located adjacent to the village of Chiswell Green, approximately 1.1 km southeast of St. Albans. Chiswell Green, along with the villages of Bricket Wood and Park Street lies with St Stephen Parish.
- 2.2 The application has been submitted for outline planning permission and has been described as demolition of existing buildings and construction of up to 391 dwellings (Use Class C3), the provision of land for a new two-form entry primary school, open space, associated landscaping, and new access arrangements.
- 2.3 The proposed development would comprise a variety of dwelling types and sizes however the precise mix would be determined through the subsequent reserved matters application. The development would include affordable housing (40.0%) and self-build plots (3.0%).
- 2.4 The planning application has been made jointly by Alban Developments Limited and Alban Peter Pearson, CALA Homes (Chiltern) Ltd and Redington Capital Ltd.

## 3.0 EXISTING METHODOLOGIES

- 3.1 There are a variety of methodologies and tools available for the completion of HIA's. Hertfordshire County Council in its Position Statement recommends that the model developed by the Welsh

Government is used. The completion of HIA's is not however mandatory in England and local planning authorities through Local Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents have produced further guidance. There is however no prescribed method for the completion of HIA's and it for those involved in the development sector to determine how this is best achieved and what form it should take (i.e. comprehensive, rapid or desktop). This is acknowledged in "Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning: a guide to for local authority public health and planning teams"<sup>1</sup> produced by Public Health England.

- 3.2 The following sections provide an overview of the two models recommended for use by Public Health England in its guidance.

## **NHS London Healthy Urban Development Unit (HUDU)**

- 3.3 The London Plan, and many London Borough Local Plans, refer to the use of HIA. In response, the HUDU have developed two widely accepted tools that can be used to ensure health and wellbeing are properly considered in planning policies and proposals.
- 3.4 The HUDU Rapid Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Tool<sup>2</sup> uses existing evidence to quickly assess the impacts of a development plan or proposal and recommends measures to address negative impacts and maximise benefits. This tool is set out as a matrix and focusses on the built environment, specifically issues directly or indirectly influenced by planning decisions.
- 3.5 For very large development proposals, the Healthy Urban Planning Checklist<sup>3</sup> provides a tool to screen for possible health impacts to include in a rapid or full HIA.
- 3.6 A fuller description of the HUDU tool is contained within the HIA submitted to accompany the planning application for the development of the site.

## **Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU)**

- 3.7 The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 requires HIA to be carried out by public bodies in specific circumstances. The WHIASU has produced several resources to support practitioners in completing HIA's, most notable is its publication "Health Impact Assessment: A Practical Guide"<sup>4</sup> which introduces the HIA process and is complimented by a Screening Record Sheet<sup>5</sup>, Scoping Checklist<sup>6</sup> and Population Groups Checklist<sup>7</sup>. The guidance provided is generic, and suitable to be adapted and developed to suit a policy, programme, plan, project, or change to service delivery, as necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Impact Assessment in spatial planning: a guide to for local authority public health and planning teams, Public Health England, October 2020.

<sup>2</sup> NHS, London Healthy Urban Development Unit, HUDU Planning for Health, Rapid Health Impact Tool

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit, Health Impact Assessment. A practical guide

<sup>5</sup> Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit, Health Impact Assessment Screening Record Sheet

<sup>6</sup> Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit, Scoping Check List

<sup>7</sup> Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit, Population Groups Checklist

- 3.8 An additional tool produced by the WHIASU provides a Quality Assurance Review Framework for Health Impact Assessments. This document aims to provide guidance to a range of audiences on undertaking a quality assurance review of HIAs.
- 3.9 Further guidance and models have been developed by local authorities as detailed in Annex 4 of the document produced by Public Health England;<sup>8</sup> a few of them have been outlined in Appendix A to address the criticism that the submitted HIA did not include a literature review.

## 4.0 DELIVERING HEALTHY OUTCOMES

- 4.1 The importance of the environment to health and well-being is well established and led to the establishment of the town planning system. Despite our long history of understanding the detrimental effects on health of factors such as pollution and household overcrowding McKinnon and colleagues<sup>9</sup> argue that regulatory and governance systems still permit development of the environment in ways that are likely to harm health. They cite that car-centric development, for example, has taken precedence over people centred proposals and as a result, non-communicable diseases, such as respiratory conditions, dementia, and some cancers, have become more prevalent.
- 4.2 McKinnon and colleagues highlight that “Putting Health into Place,”<sup>10</sup> advocates that health professionals become more involved in the planning and development of new places. As indicated in the HIA submitted with the planning application, the publication points towards the need to establish shared leadership, linking planning and health at the earliest stages of developments. It also recommends the development of integrated care systems—that is, partnerships between NHS partners, for managing operational and financial performance of services in their area and provides a framework for when these partnerships should be formed. The aim is to ensure a shared vision and a joined-up approach among stakeholders and across disciplines that is based on evidence about local health needs and environmental design. organisations, local councils, and other partners, for managing operational and financial performance of services in their area and provides a framework for when these partnerships should be formed. The objective is to achieve a shared vision and a joined-up approach among stakeholders and across disciplines that is based on evidence about local health needs and environmental design.
- 4.3 Against this backdrop, Hertfordshire County Council in its comments dated 9 August 2022 has made recommendations to the local planning authority to support the health and well-being of future residents. These recommendations focus upon six areas and are detailed below. A response to each point is provided where possible to demonstrate how health outcomes will be achieved rather than responding to any perceived shortcomings within the HIA. As already indicated, the HIA submitted with the planning application has been produced as a proportionate and appropriate assessment of the proposals to inform future design considerations as advocated by “Putting Health into Place.”

### Air Quality

- 4.4 The Air Quality Assessment submitted with the planning application predicts that pollutant concentrations upon future occupants will be insignificant and with less reliance being made upon the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Strengthening the links between planning and health in England - McKinnon and colleagues - BMJ 2020;369:m795

<sup>10</sup> Putting Health into Place (2019) Public Health England

use of fossil fuels could improve. The applicants accept that any new development should be clean by design, incorporating interventions into design to reduce emissions, exposure to pollutants and contribute to better air quality management as advocated by "Putting Health into Place." The intended use of Air Source Heating and the provision of electric vehicle charging points will help to deliver this objective.

## **Indoor Air Quality**

- 4.5 The comments made in connection with poor indoor air quality and its impact on health have been noted. As indicated in the Air Quality Assessment submitted with the planning application, pollutant concentrations upon future occupants are predicted to be insignificant. Accordingly, there will be no impediment upon future residents that might prevent them from ventilating their homes naturally and without recourse to mechanical systems.

## **Creating Access for All**

- 4.6 The observations on the importance of access for all are fully acknowledged by the applicants. As indicated in the HIA submitted with the planning application the development would be designed to be accessible for people with impaired mobility and include, for example, level thresholds, wide entrance and internal doorways as required by the Building Regulations. Other factors, such as the use of colour for people with dementia will also be considered.

## **Active Travel**

- 4.7 In response to this point made by Hertfordshire County Council it is proposed to implement a development-wide Travel Plan to promote and raise awareness of more sustainable modes of travel. This would be consistent with the provisions of the Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan seeks to encourage modal shift and active travel. The implementation of a Travel Plan would complement the evidenced based guidance on the potential impacts of transport on health and health inequalities which highlights that being inactive is a major risk to health. Further information is contained within the Residential and School Framework Travel Plan documents that have been prepared which accompany the planning application.
- 4.8 The Residential Framework Travel Plan includes initiatives and travel management mechanisms which would involve the appointment of a Travel Plan Co-ordinator, provision of travel information on occupation of the development and the promotion of walking, cycling and public transport as feasible and realistic alternatives to the private car use. The School Framework Travel Plan aims to influence behaviours from the day of opening by proposing measures which seek to minimise unnecessary single occupancy car travel.

## **Model Shift and Active Recreation**

- 4.9 The proposed development is located within approx. 0.5km of the village centre. Local services and facilities would therefore be accessible by foot or bicycle. Bus services operate via the village centre and the railway stations at How Wood and Park Street are 2.5km away. Whilst indicated in the HIA that discussions are taking place with service operators to re-route buses through the development, the Highway Authority has since confirmed its preference to receive a contribution to increase the frequency of existing services along the Watford Road.
- 4.10 It is envisaged that the main area of public open space would be located centrally within the development to allow for ease of access by existing and future residents. New "off street" green

routes will be provided to create footpath and cycle connections as part of a wider green and blue infrastructure network and provide links to the surrounding area.

## Healthy Food

- 4.11 It is widely accepted that a healthy diet and regular exercise are made a major determinant of good health. The applicants therefore support Hertfordshire County Council's desire to encourage the City and District Council to consider the imposition of planning and licencing restrictions on the operation of fast-food outlets to provide a balance of food choices available. The proposed development is not intended to include a shop or fast-food outlet given its limited size and the proximity of the site to existing services and facilities which are within walking distance. The applicants are therefore unable to exert any influence over individual diet choices.

## Other Matters

- 4.12 In addition to the six themes identified comments have also been made about the absence of information relating to employment in the area. It is well established that being in work is generally good for an individual's wellbeing, physical and mental health whilst being unemployed or long-term sick is associated with adverse physical and mental health.
- 4.13 Table 1 shows that in comparison with the eastern region and the position nationally unemployment levels within the St Albans area are lower. As indicated in the submitted HIA the proposal will provide employment opportunities during the construction phase and further employment will be provided at the proposed primary school/pre-school. Furthermore, the proposed development would be close to major employment centres which can be accessed by public transport. Future residents will therefore access to employment.

Table 1: Employment and Unemployment April 2021 to March 2022

	St Albans (no.)	St Albans (%)	East (%)	Great Britain (%)
Economically Active Persons	78,000	83.4	80.8	78.5
In Employment	76,100	81.4	78.0	75.2
Employees	64,200	68.7	68.0	65.6
Self Employed	10,900	11.6	9.8	9.3
Unemployed	2,000	2.5	3.3	4.1

Source: NOMIS

## 5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

- 5.1 The submitted HIA was prepared using an accepted tool produced by the NHS London HUDU. This tool was used in preference to other tools and methodologies that are available because it provides a very accessible, proportionate, and appropriate means of assessment that identifies the relevant

health issues. There is no prescribed method for the completion of HIA's however the emphasis should be on the delivery of health outcomes.

- 5.2 Additional commentary has therefore been provided to demonstrate how the proposals will deliver healthy outcomes and address the issues raised in response to the observations made by Hertfordshire County Council. The submitted HIA and this Supplementary Report can however only consider the development proposals. There are other social determinants, such as ethnicity, income, and gender, that affect population health and well-being that fall outside the remit of the planning system.

## APPENDICES

### A Examples of Local Authority Guidance

#### South Cambridgeshire District Council

- A1. To support Policy SC/2: Health Impact Assessment in the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2018, a specific Supplementary Planning Document<sup>11</sup> (SPD) builds on existing guidance and provides advice on the preparation of HIA submitted alongside a planning application. Of particular use is Appendix 3 of this document, which sets out a review checklist for HIA of development project, setting out clearly the expectations of what a HIA should include.

#### Wakefield Council

- A2. In Wakefield, HIAs are required to be submitted as part of the planning application for development schemes likely to have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. To simplify the process of carrying out HIA of a development scheme or proposal, Wakefield Council have developed a HIA for Planning Toolkit, with tools for undertaking both Rapid and Comprehensive<sup>12</sup> HIA. Wakefield Council's Health Improvement Team have identified key priority themes for each Wakefield Council Ward, where evidence suggests a HIA should focus.

#### Essex Planning Officers Association Health Impact Assessment Guidance Notes, 2018 and Essex Healthier Places Guidance

- A3. In response to the Government's priorities placed on health and wellbeing, the Essex Planning Officers Association published the Health Impact Assessment Guidance Notes in 2008 which encouraged all local authorities in Essex to include a planning policy requirement within their Local Plans to ensure that HIA's accompany large-scale development proposals. The Guidance Notes have been supplemented by the Essex Healthier Places guidance which gives more in-depth information on what needs to be considered when looking at health, wellbeing, and the environment. The supplementary guidance draws upon the Sport England Active Design Principles which are a key element that should underpin all new development across Essex and Southend.

#### Oxfordshire Health Impact Assessment Toolkit, 2021

- A4. This toolkit has been prepared by WSP on behalf of the Oxfordshire Growth Board, to assist Oxfordshire's local planners and planning applicants in undertaking the screening and, where required the completion of a rapid Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The toolkit takes the form of a rapid HIA proforma and methodology, which is expected to be implemented when Oxfordshire's district council planning departments are determining any 'major development' within their district.

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<sup>11</sup> South Cambridgeshire District Council, Local Development Framework, Health Impact Assessment, Supplementary Planning Document

<sup>12</sup> Wakefield Council, Rapid Health and Wellbeing Impact Assessment for Planning (HIA) Tool

## **Sport England Active Design Principles, 2015**

- A5. In partnership with Public Health England, Sport England has developed its original Active Design objectives and produced new guidance to ensure the places we live, and work, take sport into account. The guidance links health, design, and planning by creating the right environment for people to lead active lifestyles. Ten active design principles have been developed to inspire and inform the layout of cities, towns, villages, neighbourhoods, buildings, streets, and open spaces, to promote sport and physical activity and active lifestyles.

