

Public rails against Boxmoor Forest application

Many locals believe the proposed 435-home brownfield development in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, is inappropriate due to traffic concerns and its sheer scale.

20 February 2018 / Planning & regions, Policy

Lumiere Developments' proposed a zero emission, net carbon positive, mixed use scheme has generated much local ire in Hemel Hempstead.

On the face of it, the development ticks a lot of boxes. It would replace a Mitsubishi showroom and Kwik Fit garage on-site and deal with legacy contamination issues. It would also provide 435 homes, underground car parking, solar panels, a playschool creche, library, a roof-top tennis court, and generate enough electricity to power residents' EVs.

The applicant sees the Boxmoor Forest development – which is represented as a large, densely vegetated apartment complex – as being "the most sustainable development of its type anywhere in the world" with "carbon neutral, emission-free offices and dwellings encased in a modern integrated community."

However, many of the 143 comments on the outline application are not quite so gushing about the scheme. The first criticism is that the scheme is simply too big for the surrounding area.

"The building is too large for the site/scale not sympathetic to surrounding locale or existing character," one recent comment notes. "Plans suggest 14 storeys would be 141ft (43m) high and as such result in total loss of privacy and loss of light to existing residential properties. The parking indicates eight floors below ground? What are the excavating risks to those adjacent? Parking is insufficient for proposed amenities."

Another prickly point is the increased traffic congestion the development could bring to the general area. "It will generate more traffic onto an already congested road," another comment notes. "It will severely impact on many neighbouring properties with overshadowing and reduction of sunlight."

Another commentator has no problem with the idea of sustainable development – just not this one. "I am not against a form of regeneration here but this is not a sensible proposal. I urge the Council not to let the development's Green credentials outweigh all the other relevant factors it has to consider."

In response to BB's questions about the public's reaction, James Doe, assistant director for Planning and Regeneration at Dacorum Borough Council, says:

"Dacorum Borough Council will consider all objections carefully, as well as letters of support, as part of its determination of the application. We receive many planning applications and each submission is assessed on its individual planning merits.

"In determining applications, we take into account and balance a wide range of material planning considerations including national and local planning policies, advice from specialist consultees, comments from third parties including local residents, and the situation on the ground. The officer recommendation will be formulated once all comments have been received and reviewed."

A decision on the planning application will be made before 16 April 2018.



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