



Wednesday, 14th February 2018

14-storey Boxmoor Forest to provide 435 new apartments

Lumiere Designs has submitted its Planning Application for a new development named Boxmoor Forest, located at 499 & 501 London Road, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9BG, to the Dacorum Borough Council.

This development is planned on Brownfield land, and will be a zero emission, net carbon positive, sustainable, mixed development scheme on a brownfield site adjacent to Hemel Hempstead Station for a total of 435 apartments which consist of 191 studios, 179 one and 65 two bed dwellings, with office space, on site gym, café and coffee bar, with a conference hall for the offices, banquet hall and a multipurpose hall, along with a play school crèche, with a library, pet care center, and a satellite health care center. The proposed development will also have a squash court, badminton room along with green roof, roof top tennis court and a half basketball court and underground parking.

Boxmoor Forest incorporates bio-filters into the façade of the building providing a massive area to act as a bio-filter. The plants and soil also trap water and air. The former is part of a sustainable drainage system as it retains 70% of water that is collected in terms of rainwater. The latter creates still air insulation increasing the thermal insulation of the structure and reducing its overall CO2/ Energy consumption.

Sustainable energy will be sourced through the use of Solar Panels, Geothermal energy, and Waste Water Heat recovery.

The 2016 Dacorum Borough Council, Dacorum Site Allocations Development Plan Document Examination response to the Secretary of State Inspectors notes that there has been a persistent under delivery of housing over a 15 year period.

Its 5 and 15 year's strategic housing has an increased reliance on the development of Greenbelt land as opposed to Brownfield development. Such a policy is unsustainable, especially when sustainable developments such as Boxmoor Forest are proposed on Brownfield land, bringing 435 apartments into the count of available housing. Further, a full 35% of housing will be made available in accordance with the maximum as prescribed in the NPPF document. That's 153 new affordable apartments.

An earlier 6-storey application made on the same sites 499 and 501 was exclusively for offices, and this application was rejected by the Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) on the grounds that they have requirements currently only for residential housing. Hence, the current proposal of Boxmoor Forest is devoted exclusively to housing for residential use. An additional 435 apartments will dramatically lessen the council's pressure to meet housing targets in the area. Yet, the DBC has rejected the Boxmoor Forest application on the grounds of "visual impact" and other such reasons. We strongly believe that overall benefits of this scheme in terms of housing and amenities will outweigh any perceived negatives that the people have in relation to this development.

Addressing other issues raised by the public, the underground parking provides approx. 326 parking spaces. The automated parking will reduce the time taken to park the vehicle, and more importantly keep the cars off the road and not take up any space.

"Local planning authorities should not refuse planning permission for buildings or infrastructure which promote high levels of sustainability because of concerns about incompatibility with an existing townscape, if those concerns have been mitigated by good design..." – (National Planning Policy Framework, Para 65).

For the council to reject a proposal based on cries of incompatibility by the locals goes against one of the NPPF's core policies.

16 million people more people will need housing by 2100 in just the UK. We have a responsibility to these people and all future generations to provide adequate and affordable housing, and to give them the dignity of a place to live and call their own. While providing such a large amount of housing, we can't afford to ignore the immense environmental impact of such a large populace, which is why Lumiere Designs is aggressively focused on creating sustainable, net zero emissions dwellings. Boxmoor Forest represents the most sustainable development of its type anywhere in the world. Britain has the opportunity to lead the world and show that emissions-free developments are not only possible today, but also profitable. A win-win-win – for the people, the environment, and the developer.

Lumiere Designs quotes the number '1439' in any discussion on Climate Change and pollution. 1439 are the number of people who die prematurely every hour due to the ill effects of environmental pollution. These are real individuals, real lives, robbed of a full life, robbed from their families. Even a single death that can be avoided is unacceptable. We have the means and we have the will, but it will require the cooperation of local councils and government for us to move forward and address these pressing issues. The price of every hour we lose to dithering is paid in thousands of human lives. All we ask is the council and people work alongside us to solve the real, pressing issues that need to be addressed.