

ICKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL



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Date: 11th May 2026

Dear Mr Chaston

Re: Planning Application 26/00558/HYA

We advise you that the Ickleford Parish Council, supported by the Residents of Ickleford and surrounding areas, **VEHEMENTLY OBJECTS** to this Planning Application. Please see below, the categories and reasons for this decision.

1. The Land

This area, regardless of Government policies, is very much 'green belt' and helps encompass and protect Ickleford and its status as a village, from other nearby villages and the County of Bedfordshire, ensuring that it remains within the confines of North Hertfordshire. No evidence has been produced by the Developer to demonstrate that the use of this high-quality agricultural land, for housing, is necessary and therefore, should be protected as 'green belt'.

After seeking advice, it has been confirmed that this arable land, which has been farmed for hundreds of years to date, is classed as Grade 2 - 3a which is of good food production quality.

The best and most versatile land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a and is the land which is the most productive and efficient in response to delivering food and non-food crops for future generations.

NPPF 125 states: Planning policies and decisions should:

(b) Recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many function such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production.

In recognition that this land is of good agricultural quality, it is felt that it should remain within the food production land bank and worked for the production of crops required and needed for the good of the Country.

The NHC may consider this land meets their Local Plan needs, (to limit housing development on the basis of agricultural land quality, would impact on the requirement to meet housing needs), we feel this Development as planned, is both unnecessary and unjustified.

2. The Development

- 2.1 After attending the Developer's organised meeting, we were all made aware that this development is a co-ordinated partnership between the Organisers of the SEND school, the Care Home and the Developer.

It would appear that the SEND school and Care Home, needs a developer to buy the land, whilst the developer, needs the SEND school and Care Home to gain sympathy and support from those parents and families, desperate to gain entry for their children at a specialist school nearby or aging parents into a Care Home. Thus, votes for the development are secured.

Unfortunately for the parents of those children needing such a school, information was not to hand that this will be a 'privately run' independent school and will only be catering for 30 boy students in their teenage years. The Organisers will have no say in which children will be attending, but that they may well reside in a different County, therefore, children residing in Hertfordshire may not be included.

It is our considered opinion that this is not only unfair and dishonest with their plans for this SEND school, but that it is very much a misguided intention, on behalf of the Developer, to help secure a positive response to their Planning Application.

With the new Government legislation, that future SEND children will attain the education and help they need in State run schools, the need for private independently run SEND schools will become unnecessary and should not be used as a bolster for gaining planning approval.

The latest inclusion, on behalf of the Developer, is for a Care Home. Whilst this may be a tempting opportunity for many families, the location for such a facility has not been given the consideration it warrants. With its proposed location next to a very busy and dangerous highway, regardless of what road design they envisage, entry and exiting onto this road will be perilous, especially for the older generation of visitor. It is therefore our considered opinion that the Developer has given more thought to 'dangling a carrot' than the dangers of such an establishment's location.

- 2.2 The land to the West of the Bedford Road, is traversed by many well-established historic footpaths and bridleways e.g. the Hambridge Way, the Icknield Way Footpath/Trail, as well as many other Definitive Map footpaths and bridleways which are overseen and cared for by the Ickleford and Pirton Parish Councils. We are surprised and concerned therefore, to bear visual witness, to how the Developer has taken it upon themselves to move established paths and bridleways that are already included on the Definitive Map, to fit in with their site's layout.

It is therefore, very concerning to read, as part of the Developer's eye-catching brochure, that it is their intention to 'celebrate' the development with new walking and cycling routes, in other words paving over the already established and naturally formed footpaths and bridleways.

With the proposal for over 230 houses, the peaceful pastime of horse riding, walking and cycling will become almost impossible, with the dangers of dog attacks, children at play, vehicle especially with the possibility of ambulances and visitors to and from the Care Home and other hazards, all proving that these hobbies will be almost impossible to enjoy.

The Parish Council are very concerned that the Icknield Way Path and Trail will be destroyed by the Developer's over enthusiastic 'celebration'. Usage, especially during very wet weather, will undoubtedly destroy the proposed 'park-like green link', especially by horse riders and cyclist, when using the Icknield Way Trail.

- 2.3 At present, the Application boasts the inclusion of a new controlled pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian crossing for the Bedford Road.

When it was raised by the Parish Council, supported by our County Councillor, for a Pegasus Crossing to be installed at the same location envisaged by the developer, we were informed by Herts Highways, that such a location would be dangerous, because of its location on the Bedford Road. We, therefore, find it difficult to understand how the Developer can promise such an inclusion, when it has already been established by HCC as being dangerous?

The proposed bus stop and new pedestrian crossing, which is approximately 100m from that already mentioned in the previous paragraph, and which will be very unpopular with motorists, brings to light the dangers that already exist on this stretch of the A600 Bedford Road.

With there being a blind bend to the North, a crossing situated at this point, is an accident waiting to happen. With the future proposal of a Primary School being situated on the East side of the A600 along with another expected 150 homes, young Mothers and children will be frequent users of this crossing. It is, therefore, our considered opinion that no thought has been given to the sighting of this crossing, especially if they consider another entrance into the development is needed.

The Parish Council, along with our County Councillor have, for many years, been trying to achieve the installation of a pedestrian crossing, sited close to Ryder Avenue, only to be told by Herts Highways, that as there have been no fatalities, we will not be considered!

- 2.4 When the new North Herts Crematorium was first proposed, one of the major concerns was ensuring that it could be entered and exited safely from the A600. The road, being capable at this point, was widened to accommodate hearses and visitors the safety of waiting to turn right, from the North in a central lane. Likewise, those wishing to turn right on exiting, had the safety of the central lane to pause for clearance.

This layout would be impossible for the new development, without acquiring enough land to establish a turning point. However, the dangers that already exist, with the speed of the traffic at this point and the steep bend, far outweigh this type of road management scheme ever being considered.

The Application is for up to 230 houses, at present, plus SEND school staff and pupil vehicle movements and Care Home staff and visitors. We are therefore looking at vehicle movement of approximately:

460+ cars (Houses etc)
150+ cars (Teenage Children for school, college and recreation)
30 cars (Taxis for SEND Pupils)
30+ cars (SEND Staff)
30+ cars (Care Home Staff)
20+ cars (Care Home Visitors)
10+ Vehicles (Ambulances. Minibuses etc., for Care Home)

Totalling: Approximately 730 car movements, twice per day, trying to exit and enter the development from one entrance onto one of the busiest roads leading into Hitchin and beyond, especially during rush hour.

3. **Ecology**

The hedging, that once surrounded this area, has already been hacked back by an overzealous Developer.

The flora and fauna have therefore, lost the ability to produce young or regrow because of the lack of hedging and field edging. Bee and wildlife corridors have inevitably been destroyed.

Because this area has always been farmed, it is difficult to quote which species will no longer be seen in these parts, but we can be safe in saying it will be many. This area has fast become the feeding ground of the re-established Red Kite, along with many other raptors and owls (**the barn owl having only just been taken off the British Trust for Ornithology 'Amber' list for endangered species**). Because of these being witnessed, we can therefore assume that small rodents must be in existence. Fox, Roe and Muntjac deer, have been seen crossing the main Bedford Road, with the occasional badger finding its demise.

It is therefore felt, for the sake of Ecology, that these food crop producing farmlands, should be preserved in their present agricultural and wild state.

4. **Infrastructure and Transport Assessment/Travel Plan**

4.1 Infrastructure

It is assumed that with its location, all waste and sewage water will be directed towards Hitchin.

Ickleford's old Victorian Sewage one pipe system, which cannot cope with waste and run-off water from the Village at present, certainly will be unable to accommodate such quantities envisaged from this and any future developments.

From the Plans, it would seem that the developer has included four ponds to accommodate run-off water, one of which is situated next to a play area, which for the children could be a safety hazard. One is also sited next to the proposed SEND school. With these students being very vulnerable, perhaps this position should be reconsidered too?

With the inclusion of a Care Home, no consideration has been shown towards how this size of development would impact on amenities e.g. Doctors surgeries, Dentists and Hospitals. We must today also include the police, ambulance and fire services. It is a known fact that these are all struggling to accommodate North Herts requirements as they stand today.

School places are already a major concern in Ickleford, with some students missing out on local education and having to travel to Hitchin and Letchworth. In the original Local Plan, the Ickleford school could more than accommodate the expected children, but since windfall sites have been allowed to be developed, it now finds that it is full and unable to meet the numbers for the future.

4.2 Transport Assessment/Travel Plan

Successive Governments have championed that we should look to using our feet, cycling or using public transport to travel to and from work, shopping and recreation and not the car. Whilst this may have proved very successful in various areas of England, unfortunately North Hertfordshire finds these aspirations hard to implement.

The proposed new development, because of its location, is a prime example.

Both Letchworth and Hitchin railway stations are too far to walk. Using a bike or even car sharing to either station, will find it almost impossible to park.

Buses, both through the centre of the village or via the Bedford Road A600, only offer one route from and to Henlow Camp that stops at Hitchin rail station. Unfortunately, the last time for home departure is 18.39, which is inconvenient for the majority of people working in London. Extra curriculum for students, would have to be considered almost impossible if totally reliant on public transport.

It is therefore evident that the only form of transport anyone can use from this or any new development, would be the car. Whether petrol, hybrid or full electric, our roads will become more clogged than they are at present.

The A600 being one of the busiest roads south into Hitchin and north towards Bedford, during rush hour, is at a standstill both to and from Hitchin. Traversing Ickleford village for Eastward travel to and from Arlesey, Stotfold, Letchworth and Baldock, is becoming more and more dangerous for children walking to and from school, with its narrow roads and footpaths.

With the NHC Planning Committee recently agreeing to 100 houses being built to the South of Turnpike Lane, with no consideration being given to the additional traffic pouring out onto Turnpike Lane, eventually adding to the chaotic situation at

the Turnpike Lane/Bedford Road/Westmill Lane roundabout, which is so congested that the level of pollution, in and around this area; must now be staggering and should be monitored.

Why should the residents of Ickleford have to breath in such pollution especially whilst walking to the school and local facilities? This proposed development with its estimated 730 vehicle movements, can only add to this contamination.

5. In Conclusion

- 5.1 The Land is, without question, 'Green Belt', of good quality agricultural land within the grading of 2 – 3a and should be protected, at all costs, for the production of food for future generations.
- 5.2 The Government's new legislation on SEND children being educated within State School education, far outweighs the need for privately run independent SEND schools, as has been put forward by this Foundation and Developer.
- 5.3 Inappropriate and dangerous location for a Care Home.
- 5.4 Ecology will be destroyed.
- 5.5 Established footpaths and bridleways, including the renown Icknield Way Path/Trail, will be moved and designed to suit the development and not the good of those who today and for hundreds of years have used them.
- 5.6 Bad design placement of proposed pedestrian/horse crossings and bus stops.
- 5.7 On-site design water hazards.
- 5.8 Impact on all amenities e.g. Doctors, Dentist and Hospitals as well as police, ambulance and fire services.
- 5.9 The use of the car is inevitable.
- 5.10 The daily movement of approximately 730 vehicles to and from the development, leading to increased traffic hazards and pollution.

Closing Statement

The Residents of Ickleford have more than fulfilled their obligations towards the housing land supply for North Herts. To date nearly 600 houses, in various stages of development, have been forced upon the Village.

We have encountered heavy vehicle movements constantly entering and leaving the village while development takes place. Certain parts of the Village, through poor and antiquated infrastructure, has witnessed the degradation of seeing sewage entering their gardens and homes all because NHC refuses to take Anglian Water to task, in enforcing a pipework upgrade.

The Parish Council have, on two occasions, asked NHC for all future development to be either refused or deferred until all infrastructure is upgraded, but to date, no suitable response has been received.

It is therefore felt by Ickleford Parish Council, supported by the Residents of Ickleford and surrounding areas, that the conclusive issues and closing statement above, significantly and demonstrably far outweigh the benefits of new homes, a SEND school and Care Home, being built on this Site and we therefore, **VEHEMENTLY OBJECT** to this Planning Application.

Yours sincerely

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the Clerk/RFO.

Clerk/RFO - Ickleford Parish Council

Cc: North Herts Councillor Louise Peace
County Councillor David Barnard