



Free text comment responses

7.32. Several questions invited respondents to provide free-text comments, including on:

- SEN School.
- Landscape and green spaces.
- Affordable housing.
- Walking, cycling and road safety.
- Sports and community facilities.
- Sustainability and the environment.

7.33. These comments are summarised and analysed thematically below.

Summary of feedback comments

7.34. This section summarises the main themes raised in the written feedback received via the consultation website. It draws on comments from the 54 individual respondents who provided at least one written comment across the free-text questions.

7.35. Across the written comments, a strong theme is that many respondents' objections relate primarily to the principle of development on this site, often framed as concern about building on green belt/open countryside, the perceived scale and density of the proposals, and cumulative pressure from other development in the area. A recurring viewpoint was that many of the proposed "benefits" (such as crossings, SuDS or new green space) are perceived as mitigation for impacts associated with new development.

7.36. At the same time, respondents were not uniformly opposed to every component part. Several comments indicate support in principle for particular measures, most notably, safer crossings on Bedford Road, and for some, the principle of additional SEND provision. Other respondents welcomed the idea of a landscape-led approach, biodiversity and habitat creation, and energy-efficient homes, often emphasising the importance of clear delivery and high-quality implementation. This supports the quantitative pattern that some individual aspects of the proposals attract higher levels of support than overall support for the scheme.

Landscape, countryside character and green belt

7.37. Many respondents expressed strong attachment to the countryside setting around Ickleford and raised principle-based concerns about development on open land. Recurring points included:

- Concern that development on green belt/farmland could erode the village's semi-rural character, views, identity and "village lifestyle".
- A view that new onsite "green spaces may not fully compensate for the loss of existing open countryside, with several respondents framing this as a net reduction in meaningful green space.
- Concern about potential impacts on historic trackways/Public Rights of Way and the character of long-established routes.
- A preference for alternative spatial strategies, often expressed as "brownfield first", or directing growth to locations seen as more appropriate.

7.38. Alongside these objections, a smaller number of respondents commented positively on landscape measures in principle, describing proposals as *reasonable* or *lovely*, welcoming tree



planting, or supporting the dog-friendly character of open spaces, and emphasising the value of a landscape-led approach if implemented to a high standard. These points align with the quantitative ranking results, where protection of rural character and views was the most frequently selected priority.

Housing need and affordability

- 7.39. Comments on homes and affordable housing were mixed, though many focused on the scale and location of housing, and perceived implications for traffic, services and village character. Common points include concerns about pressure on roads, schools, healthcare and utilities, and views that growth should be supported by appropriate mitigation.
- Several respondents provided detailed views on what would constitute genuinely helpful housing provision, including:
 - Requests for clearer information on what “affordable” means in practice, including indicative price points.
 - Calls for smaller 1–2 bed homes to support first-time buyers and local households; some suggested flats (subject to being well-designed and in-keeping) and multi-generational options including accessible/sheltered accommodation.
 - Supportive comments recognising that a high percentage of affordable homes is positive in principle, even where respondents remain concerned about green belt and infrastructure.
 - Requests that affordable housing should be genuinely affordable relative to local incomes and needs.
- 7.40. Positive and constructive housing feedback: While many comments related to the principle, scale and location of development, a number of respondents offered constructive views on the housing element. This included:
- Support in principle for 50% affordable housing, conditional on clarity over tenure and delivery/management.
 - Requests for smaller homes (1–2 bed) to meet local need, particularly for younger households/first-time buyers.
 - Interest in accessible homes / bungalows / options for older residents, subject to good design.
- 7.41. Design quality also emerged: several respondents expressed dissatisfaction with typical new-build design approaches and called for higher quality design that is sympathetic to the village context.

SEN School – support in principle, but concerns about delivery and linkage to housing

- 7.42. SEN school comments were among the most polarised and detailed. A number of respondents, particularly those with personal or professional experience of SEND, expressed support in principle for increased specialist provision and noted pressures on mainstream schools.
- 7.43. Many respondents provided detailed views on the proposals for the SEN school, including:
- Conditional support for additional SEND provision, but not the wider housing-led development.
 - Scepticism about whether a 30-place school would materially address wider SEND needs.
 - Questions about the school’s operating model and accessibility, including whether it would be private, whether families could afford fees, and whether it would truly serve local need.



- Scepticism that the school is being used to justify or “sell” the wider proposed development.
 - Practical and operational concerns, including access and safety on Bedford Road, how pupils would arrive, construction phasing and whether a school environment can function effectively alongside long-running construction, and whether parking provision is adequate for staff ratios typical of SEND settings.
- 7.44. Where respondents expressed support for a new SEN school, it was often conditional based on additional clarity, delivery certainty, and the scale/impacts of the wider scheme.

Highways, traffic and road safety

- 7.45. Road safety and congestion were repeatedly raised by respondents. Comments commonly focused on:
- Existing perceptions of congestion and limited road capacity, and concern that development could exacerbate this.
 - Strong emphasis on pedestrian safety, especially the need for safe, convenient crossing points and safer conditions on Bedford Road.
 - Requests for credible evidence on traffic impact and for clear commitments to mitigation, including crossing infrastructure, traffic calming and safe walking/cycling routes.
- 7.46. Written feedback shows that safer crossings are widely welcomed in principle, but many respondents argue that:
- Existing leisure routes to Pirton are already adequate and valued for their countryside character.
 - Changes risk “urbanising” historic routes.
 - Equestrian access should be explicitly designed-in.
 - The overarching issue is traffic volume and cumulative impacts on Bedford Road.
- 7.47. A number of respondents also raised the point that a bus stop is of limited value without a reliable bus service and suggested improved connectivity to Hitchin station/town.
- 7.48. Notwithstanding wider concerns, safer crossings were frequently identified as a welcome measure in principle. These comments align with the quantitative results, where safer crossings were the top-ranked movement priority and were also frequently identified as one of the most beneficial aspects of the proposals.

Ecology, biodiversity and wildlife corridors

- 7.49. Ecology and biodiversity were frequently referenced, often intertwined with landscape objections. Comments included:
- Concern about loss of habitat and impacts on wildlife, including reference to species observed locally and a fear that cumulative development would leave “nowhere left” for wildlife.
 - Scepticism that biodiversity net gain proposals can genuinely offset the ecological loss of developing open farmland, described by some as “greenwashing”, “tick-boxes”, or creating isolated “islands” of habitat.
 - Requests for biodiversity measures to be robust, properly implemented and connected. Several respondents specifically called for wildlife corridors linking habitats across the wider area.



- Calls for appropriate planting (including native species) and a credible long-term approach rather than cosmetic measures.

Flood risk and drainage

- 7.50. A smaller but clear set of comments referenced flood risk and drainage capacity as key environmental and infrastructure concerns. Several respondents referenced existing issues during periods of heavy rain and expressed anxiety about:
- Surface water management and flood risk.
 - Sewerage and wastewater capacity.
 - Whether infrastructure upgrades would be required and secured.
- 7.51. Comments of this nature typically sought reassurance through evidence and specification.

Sports pitch and community facilities

- 7.52. Respondents' views on the proposed sports and community facilities were divided.
- 7.53. Some welcomed additional sports provision in principle, particularly where it could support young people and community activity.
- 7.54. Others questioned whether there is a local need or highlighted potential duplication of existing provision, and raised concerns about management, intensity of use and associated impacts.

Sustainability and the environment

- 7.55. Sustainability comments frequently returned to the relationship between environmental objectives and new development on green belt/open space. Some respondents questioned how sustainability measures would deliver meaningful net benefits in this location.
- 7.56. However, respondents also expressed clear expectations and constructive asks if development were to proceed, including:
- A view that EV charging and low-carbon heating should be standard rather than presented as exceptional.
 - Requests for solar panels on all new homes and stronger energy-efficiency commitments.
 - Calls to address the carbon footprint of construction, including construction traffic and machinery impacts.
 - Concerns about the environmental impact and requests to minimise harm.
 - Attention to infrastructure capacity linked to sustainability, including questions about national grid supply, sewerage, and the ability of local systems to cope.
 - Several comments linked sustainability to everyday place-making, including adequate parking (to avoid obstructed pavements), and strategies for waste/refuse and tree planting/shade.

Summary

- 7.57. Overall, the written comments indicate that opposition is frequently rooted in the principle of developing this site and the perceived scale of development at this location, particularly in relation to green belt/open land, rural character and traffic/infrastructure pressures. However, comments also show that some respondents recognise potential benefits within the proposals,



most notably Bedford Road safety improvements and, for some, additional SEND provision, alongside a desire for clear evidence and robust technical information through the planning application process.



8. Email and telephone correspondence

- 8.1. The following section summarises email and telephone correspondence received during the consultation period.
- 8.2. Three community and local stakeholders responded to the consultation by email.
- 8.3. **Correspondence 1 – Access arrangements:** The local NHDC ward councillor, Cllr Louise Peace, contacted the project team on behalf of a resident living close to the site on Bedford Road. The resident queried why the main access point shown on the illustrative masterplan on the consultation website differed from that shown on the North Herts SEND awareness campaign website. In response, a member of the CCP team explained that the illustrative masterplan on the North Herts SEND website reflected an earlier iteration of the emerging proposals. The masterplan published on the consultation website was confirmed as the latest, more detailed version, and changes to the access point was informed by technical analysis and pre-application feedback from Hertfordshire Highways, who requested a single access point for the site.
- 8.4. **Correspondence 2 – Equestrian access and bridleway considerations:** A member of the public submitted comments requesting that equestrians are explicitly included alongside walkers and cyclists in proposed off-road routes, noting that equestrians are vulnerable road users. The correspondent requested that the proposed controlled equestrian crossing is supported by routes accessible to equestrians, not solely walkers/cyclists, and that proposed routes and crossing reflected relevant policy and guidance, including the Hertfordshire Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). They further requested that the bridleway surfacing remains “green”, not tarmacked, that new routes provide a grass verge suitable for horses, with ongoing maintenance of adjacent hedgerows. Finally, they requested that Public Right of Way routes remain open (or provide safe diversions) during construction, with construction activity managed safely for horses. These points were referred to the project team to inform ongoing design of the new walking, cycling and equestrian routes.
- 8.5. **Correspondence 3 – SEN School catchment and housing/traffic concerns:** A member of the public stated support in principle for the SEN school, but expressed concern that it should serve local children and not result in pupils being bussed into the area. The correspondent also objected to the proposed residential element (citing 250 homes), referencing perceived overdevelopment in the context of other local proposals and permissions. They raised concerns about traffic congestion on the Bedford Road and through Hitchin, including pollution from stationary traffic and increased “rat-running” on local roads. They also raised concerns about existing congestion, including school related parking and traffic, and the capacity of local services and infrastructure to cope with additional demands.



9. Community Workshop

- 9.1. Two community workshop events were originally advertised, to be held on **19 November 2025 and 26 November 2025**.
- 9.2. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the workshop scheduled for **19 November 2025** was cancelled. The workshop on **26 November 2025** proceeded as planned and provided the primary in-person opportunity for discussion, Q&A and feedback.
- 9.3. A community workshop event was held on **Wednesday 26 November 2025, from 6.00pm to 8.00pm** at the **Priory School (Sixth Form Building), Hitchin**.
- 9.4. The workshop was designed to introduce and discuss the emerging proposals for Icknield Fields and provide an opportunity for attendees to ask questions, discuss key issues in person directly with members of the Applicant's project team, and provide oral and written feedback.
- 9.5. A range of local stakeholders were invited to attend the workshop, including North Hertfordshire District Councillors, Ickleford Parish councillors, Pirton parish councillors and Hertfordshire County Councillors. Local respondents to the North Herts SEND awareness raising campaign were invited, alongside local school representatives and voluntary and charitable organisations including SEND groups and sports clubs.
- 9.6. Invitees were also asked to circulate information of the workshop to interested groups, organisations or individuals and extend the invitation to attend. Ickleford Parish Council discussed the workshops at its Parish Council meeting on Wednesday 12 November, and shared details of the events with those present. An extract of the relevant meeting minutes is included at [Appendix 6](#).
- 9.7. At the workshop **22** people signed in using the sign in sheet, however not all attendees signed in. A headcount on the night indicated between **45 and 55 attendees**. In addition, **eight** members of the applicant's project team were in attendance to present the proposals, facilitate discussion and respond to questions.
- 9.8. Feedback forms were provided to all attendees at the start of the meeting asking people to comment on the positives, concerns, questions about the proposals and to provide general feedback. In total, **10 attendees** submitted written comments using the feedback forms provided.

Format and materials

- 9.9. The workshop followed a structured agenda comprising:
 - Welcome and introductions (5 minutes).
 - Introductory video (5 minutes).
 - Masterplan presentation, by James Chell on behalf of the Applicant and David Kreyling on behalf of Omnia Foundation (5 minutes).
 - Question and answer sessions (10 minutes).
 - Roundtable discussion (30 minutes).
 - Table feedback (15 minutes).
 - Wrap up and next steps (5 minutes).
- 9.10. Due to high levels of engagement and the number of questions raised, the Q&A and table discussion sessions ran beyond planned timings and the meeting closed at approximately 8.30pm.
- 9.11. You can view the workshop presentation in [Appendix 7](#).



Engagement Methods

9.12. Feedback was gathered through:

- Open Q&A following the masterplan and SEN school presentations.
- Facilitated roundtable discussion.
- Written feedback forms completed on the night.
- Facilitator and table notes capturing key points raised by attendees.

Key themes raised by workshop attendees

Traffic, highways and access

9.13. Traffic was the most frequently raised concern. Comments focussed on:

- Existing congestion and journey times on Bedford Road and within Hitchin.
- The capacity of the local highway network to accommodate additional development.
- Concerns about a single access strategy and vehicle trip generation.
- Requests for clearer information on Bedford Road improvements, junction arrangements and pedestrian crossings (including strong views on preferred crossing locations).
- Questions regarding the impact of school-related traffic (including taxis/minibuses) alongside housing traffic.
- Comments about cycling connectivity beyond the site and safe access onto Bedford Road.

Drainage, flooding, sewerage and utilities

9.14. Attendees raised concerns about:

- Surface water management and flood risk (on and off site).
- The effectiveness of SuDS and how drainage will be designed and maintained.
- Existing sewerage capacity and the need for upgrades.
- Wider utilities capacity (including electricity and gas), and sequencing of any works.

Infrastructure capacity (health and education)

9.15. Attendees queried whether local services could accommodate growing, including:

- GP and health capacity and how contributions would translate into deliverable provision.
- Local school place capacity and how cumulative growth in the area is accounted for.
- The view among some attendees that infrastructure should be delivered before new housing.

SEN school (location, catchment and operation)

9.16. There was strong interest in the proposed SEN school, alongside questions and concerns about:

- The rationale for the proposed school location, including proximity to the county boundary.
- What "local" provision means in practice, including whether places would be prioritised for Hitchin/Ickleford residents or allocated across a wider area.
- Transport arrangements for pupils, likely travel distances and traffic implications.



- Admissions eligibility and year group intake arrangements (including questions on starting year and single-gender provision).

Green Belt, landscape setting and settlement identity

- 9.17. A number of comments related to the principle of development and local character, including:
- Opposition to development in the Green Belt and concern about loss of countryside views and walking routes.
 - The perceived cumulative effect of development around Ickleford and concern about disproportionate growth.
 - Concern about maintaining separation and avoiding the merging of settlements.

Public rights of way, bridleways and equestrian safety

- 9.18. Attendees raised detailed points about:
- The status and use of bridleways and the need to ensure terminology reflects this.
 - Safety where site roads cross bridleways and the design of any horse/pedestrian crossing points.
 - Requests for wider green buffers between housing and the Icknield Way Path / bridleway to protect its character and setting.

Housing mix, affordability and management

- 9.19. Attendees asked for further information on:
- The proposed housing mix, including family housing, smaller homes and bungalows.
 - Whether affordable housing would be genuinely affordable for local people.
 - How affordable housing would be managed (including housing association involvement).

Parking and sports facilities

- 9.20. Comment included:
- Concern that the plans as presented would not reflect day-to-day car parking and on-street pressures.
 - Parking impacts linked to community of sports facilities and whether provision would be sufficient.

Cumulative development and future phases

- 9.21. A recurring theme among attendees concerned:
- Cumulative impacts alongside other nearby proposed and consented developments.
 - The sequencing and phasing of the proposals, and what is envisaged in each phase.
 - Land ownership and the potential for future development to the north and south of the site.

Communications and consultation reach

- 9.22. Some attendees raised concerns about:



- How consultation information was received (including references to reliance on social media for awareness).
- Reported inconsistencies in leaflet distribution, including for homes closest to the site.
- Confusion among some attendees about the purpose of the workshop and the roles of different organisations within the planning process.

Positive feedback and opportunities identified

- 9.23. Attendees identified elements of the proposals they viewed positively, including:
- Recognition of the need for additional SEND provision.
 - Support in principle for affordable housing, particularly where it is genuinely affordable, clearly defined and supported by an appropriate mix (particularly smaller and accessible homes).
 - Interest in improved walking, cycling and equestrian routes.

Key questions raised

- 9.24. Across the Q&A and table discussions, attendees most commonly asked:
- What is the expected traffic impact, including cumulative impacts, and what mitigation is proposed?
 - What improvements will be made to Bedford Road, crossings and access arrangements?
 - How will drainage, flood risk, sewerage capacity and utilities be addressed and phased?
 - Why is the SEN school located here, who will it serve, and how will pupils travel to site?
 - How will bridleways and the Icknield Way Path be protected and safely crossed?
 - What is the proposed housing mix and how will “affordable” be secured and managed?
 - How will local health and education capacity be considered and supported through contributions?

How feedback is being used

- 9.25. The issues and questions raised at the workshop have helped to inform the detailed design development submitted in the hybrid planning application for Icknield Fields and will continue to inform future design development in the preparation of a future reserved matters application.
- 9.26. Details of the final plans submitted with the planning application will be updated on to the project website and circulated to all workshop attendees who requested to be kept up to date with the proposals.



10. Stakeholder Briefing: SEN School and Sports Facilities

- 10.1. A stakeholder briefing meeting was held on Tuesday 3 February 2026, **from 6.00pm to 8.00pm** at the **Priory School (Sixth Form Building), Hitchin**.
- 10.2. The meeting was designed to provide local stakeholders with a final briefing on the Icknield Field masterplan and the detailed Phase 1 proposals for the SEN School and sports facilities. It also provided an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss operational and management considerations that will be developed further through the planning process.
- 10.3. Invitations were issued to stakeholders who had engaged with the project team during the pre-application process and had a specific interest in the SEN school and/or sports provision. This included individuals who registered interest/support through the SEN School awareness raising campaign, and representatives of local sports clubs and organisations.
- 10.4. **Four** people attended on the evening, out of **fourteen** who RSVPed in advance. The reduced attendance was attributed to adverse weather conditions. The applicant's team was represented by **Seven** members of the project team, enabling detailed discussion and Q&A with those present.
- 10.5. The meeting provided a walkthrough of the Phase 1 detailed proposals for the SEN school and sports facilities including how these would operate in practise. Omnia Foundation explained their educational model and curriculum and discussed how the 3G pitch will support both the school's programme and community use outside school hours, to be secured through the planning process. The discussion also covered the potential to bring forward additional sports pitches and facilities in Phase 2, noting that the design and specification of any Phase 2 sports provision would be developed at the reserved matters stage in dialogue with local sports stakeholders to reflect identified need.
- 10.6. The briefing also clarified the planning process and the distinction between:
 - Phase 1 detailed proposals being submitted shortly (including the school and sports pitch layout and design).
 - Elements that will be finalised through conditions and legal agreements (e.g. community use arrangements and management).
 - Matters that will be defined in detail as part of a future Phase 2 reserved matters application.
- 10.7. Information on the submission application, including the final plans, will be made available via the project website and shared with stakeholders who asked to be kept informed.



Photographs from the Stakeholder Briefing Event on 3 February 2026.



Format and materials

- 10.8. The briefing followed an agenda comprising:
- Welcome and introductions (10 minutes).
 - Presentation: Bugler Homes and Omnia Foundation. (20 minutes).
 - Presentation: Final plans walkthrough (20 minutes).
 - Table Discussion (30 minutes).
 - Discussion Feedback & Q&A (20 minutes).
 - Next Steps & Closing (10 minutes).
- 10.9. Due to the smaller-than-expected attendance than expected, the event format was adapted to prioritise a more interactive roundtable discussion, allowing additional time to explore questions and feedback in detail.
- 10.10. You can view the workshop presentation in [Appendix 8](#).

Engagement Methods

- 10.11. Feedback was gathered through:
- Facilitated roundtable discussion.
 - Written feedback forms completed on the night.
 - Facilitator and table notes capturing key points raised by attendees.

Key points raised

- 10.12. Attendees welcomed how the proposals are designed to address local needs, including:
- The role of the SEN school in responding to SEND pressures locally.
 - The school's design approach, tailored to support the educational needs of SEN children.
 - The inclusion of sports facilities as a key part of the education offer, with community use outside school hours.
 - The contribution of new homes, including affordable homes, to meet local housing need.
 - The quality of the housing design and the 'tenure blind' approach.
- 10.13. Attendees also suggested opportunities to explore further, including:
- Ensuring plays areas and green spaces are designed to be inclusive for children with SEND.
 - Considering a potential 'clubhouse' facility as part of the future sports provision in Phase 2.
 - Designing future sports provision for flexible multi-sport use, including netball and rugby.

How feedback is being used

- 10.14. Feedback from the briefing will help inform:
- The detailed management and operational agreements for the Phase 1 school and sports facilities, to be progressed through planning conditions and/or legal agreements.
 - The future design development of Phase 2 elements, to be taken forward through a reserved matters application.
- 10.15. The Applicant team will continue engagement with local SEND and sports stakeholders to explore Phase 2 opportunities to ensure future provision meets locally identified needs.



11. “You said, We Did” – How the proposals have evolved

11.1. Section 10 sets out the table below summarising the main issues raised and how they are being addressed.

Theme	“You Said”	“We Did”
Principle of development, Green Belt and Grey Belt	Objection in principle to development on Green Belt / Grey Belt argument is not accepted.	We commissioned a Grey Belt assessment by a professional town planning consultancy against the criteria set out in national planning policy and guidance. This demonstrates that the proposed development would not undermine the remaining Green Belt and would meet the ‘Golden Rules’ by providing 50% affordable housing, significant new public open space, investment in local infrastructure, and delivery of a new SEN school and sports facilities. The assessment will form part of the planning submission.
	The proposals will erode countryside and rural edge of Ickleford	We have prepared a landscape-led masterplan which uses green buffers and a strong landscape framework to retain and strengthen a clear edge to the settlement and open countryside beyond. Detailed landscape and visual impact assessment has been carried out to demonstrate the visual impact of the proposed development on key views from the surrounding landscape, which demonstrates that the impacts will not be significant following mitigation. Further detail will be provided through the Landscape Strategy and Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment submitted with the application.
	The proposals will cause settlement coalescence and merge Ickleford with nearby communities.	The independent assessment concludes that the proposals would not lead to settlement merging (as it does not reduce the gap between Ickleford and Hitchin) and that the site makes only a limited contribution to Green Belt purposes. This evidence, alongside the scheme’s landscape buffers, will be submitted with the planning application.
Landscape, biodiversity and environment	New green spaces would not fully compensate for the loss of open countryside and result in a net reduction in green space.	We have set out that the current site is currently private agricultural land, with access limited to existing PRoW/bridleways. The proposals provide around 40% of the site as publicly accessible open space,



		including meadows, wetlands, parkland and play, connected by new/improved routes.
	Concern about habitat, loss and scepticism that biodiversity net gain can offset impacts.	Confirmed a Biodiversity Net Gain will be secured, comprising a 33.3% net gain in habitat units and 114.3% in hedgerow units in Phase 1. A Landscape Strategy and BNG Metric/Plan will be submitted with the planning application, setting out habitat creation, planting and long-term management.
Housing quantum and phasing	Objection to 250 homes and concern about cumulative growth.	Confirmed the proposals comprise up to 230 homes overall, delivered as part of a hybrid application. These will help to meet a significant shortfall in housing supply in North Herts. The scheme's form is intended to be low-rise and shaped by the landscape framework. It comprises a density of approx. 20 dwellings per hectare within Phase 1 and approx. 18 dwellings per hectare overall. This is in line with the existing development in Ickleford (c. 17 dwellings per hectare) and less dense than other recent development locally. The planning application will include density/quantum information and supporting assessments.
	Requests for confirmation and clarification of the phasing strategy.	We have set out that Phase 1 will deliver the SEN school and approximately 100 homes, with later phases coming forward through subsequent approvals (including reserved matters for outline areas). A phasing plan will be submitted with the application.
SEN School location, offer and delivery	The school must benefit local families and not primarily out-of-areas pupils.	We have explained that Hertfordshire County Council is the SEND commissioning authority and that priority will be given to children from North Hertfordshire, with placements made via the EHCP process children from wider areas will be considered where appropriate based on need.
	Concerns the school will be fee-paying.	We have explained that places will not be fee-paying and will be funded through local authorities via the EHCP process.
	Who is the school for and why is it only for 30 places?	We have explained that the school is proposed for boys aged 12–17 with Autism and SEMH needs, delivered through a therapy-first curriculum. The proposed size reflects the operational model and educational support requirements.



	Why is the school proposed on this site; alternative sites should be used.	We have assessed potential sites across North Hertfordshire, which found no available, suitable or deliverable alternative that could support the proposed school and wider delivery model. Further detail will be provided within the application supporting information.
	Concerns that taxis/minibuses to the school will add to the traffic and increase journey times.	We have assessed school and housing trips through the Transport Assessment, including trip generation, junction impacts and mitigation. This concludes that the proposed development will not have a significant impact on the surrounding highway network. Measures will be developed with Hertfordshire Highways and secured through the planning/highways process where required. This will include a School Travel Plan which will be subject to ongoing monitoring, an initial version of which will be submitted with the planning application.
	When will the school be build and is there a risk the homes will be delivered but the school never will not be?	We have set out that the SEN school is to be delivered in Phase 1 and early in the programme (subject to consent). Later phases would require further approval from the Council before construction.
	Could the school be delivered without the housing?	We have explained that Bugler Homes and Omnia Foundation are working in partnership, and that delivery of the school is funded through the wider development proposals. It would not be viable to provide the school without cross-subsidisation from the wider development.
Highways, traffic and congestion	Bedford Road is already congested; the proposals will worsen congestion and "rat running".	We have set out that access will be from Bedford Road and will be developed in consultation with Hertfordshire Highways. A full Transport Assessment will be submitted with the planning application, including baseline conditions, forecast impacts and mitigation. This confirms that impacts will not be significant. Mitigation will be provided in the form of additional bus stops on Bedford Road to promote the use of public transport and reduce reliance on private vehicle trips.
	What improvements will be delivered (crossings, junction safety, calming, visibility)?	We have presented the emerging movement approach, including the provision of additional pedestrian and equestrian crossing points on Bedford Road, new/improved pedestrian routes, new bus stops, and measures to improve safety and



		accessibility. The detailed package and drawings will be submitted with the application and agreed through the highways process.
Public Rights of Way, Walking, cycling and bridleways	Walking and cycling must be safe and usable beyond the site (especially on Bedford Road).	We have set out the movement strategy includes new and improved walking/cycling links and safer crossing provision to support connectivity between Ickleford and Hitchin. The detailed design will be submitted with the application, along with a Residential Travel Plan that will be agreed with the Council's highways officers.
	Equestrian safety and bridleway connections must be recognised in the masterplan design.	We have included a Pegasus crossing and improved PRow connections within the emerging proposals. Detailed alignment, surfacing and safety measures will be developed through the detailed design and agreed with relevant stakeholders.
	The Icknield Way Path should not become an "estate path" with strong buffers from the new homes.	We have included green links, boundary buffers and separation between PRow corridors and housing through the landscape-led approach. The Landscape Strategy will set out the detailed buffer treatments and management.
Flood risk and drainage	Concerns about flooding and effectiveness of SuDS proposals.	We have set out that the site lies within Flood Zone 1 (meaning it has a very low risk of flooding) and that SuDS features are proposed as part of the landscape framework. A drainage strategy (and Flood Risk Assessment where required) will be submitted with the planning application which demonstrates that the development will not increase the risk of flooding.
Sewerage and Utilities	Concerns about local sewerage and utilities capacity	We will address utilities and wastewater capacity through engagement with statutory providers and the application technical work. Where upgrades/mitigation are required, these will be identified and secured through the planning process.
Social and community infrastructure	GPs and school capacity is already stretched, infrastructure should come first.	The proposed development will provide significant funding towards local infrastructure in the form of s106 contributions. The Council has confirmed that there is currently sufficient school capacity within the local area to accommodate the proposed development. We will continue engagement with relevant stakeholders (education/health) as the proposals progress.
Affordable Housing	What does "affordable" means in practice and will it be genuinely affordable to local people?	We have set out that 50% affordable housing is proposed. The tenure mix will be agreed with NHDC and is expected to



		include Affordable Rent and Shared Ownership. The affordable housing approach will be secured through the planning process, with homes owned and managed by a Registered Provider appointed closer to delivery.
Sports and community use	Is there a local need for increased sports provision in this area?	We have engaged with local sports clubs and will set out the need case and delivery commitments with the application documents. The sports facilities are intended to improve access to quality provision for local sport and young people.
	Concerns about parking and impacts from community use of sports pitch and facilities	We have set out that community use will be managed through a Community Use Agreement. Parking provision and operational arrangements will be set out within the planning submission, including site layout/parking and any management measures required. Each dwelling would benefit from 2no. parking spaces, with additional visitor spaces provided. A total of 39no. parking spaces are proposed for the school, including 3no. accessible parking bays.
Construction impacts	Concern about construction traffic, working hours, cleanliness and safe access for PRow users (including equestrians).	We will prepare a Construction Management Plan / Construction Traffic Management Plan to be submitted and secured by condition. This will address routing, hours, wheel washing, street cleaning, and safe PRow management/diversions.



12. Conclusions

- 12.1. This SCI demonstrates that early, extensive and ongoing engagement has been undertaken on the Icknield Fields proposals since July 2025, in advance of submission of a planning application, and that engagement will continue throughout the application process.
- 12.2. The engagement programme combined:
 - Early engagement with elected representatives.
 - A dedicated SEN awareness campaign to explain the proposed offer and provide a route for local residents to engage.
 - A multi-channel public consultation, including a dedicated website, leaflet distribution, social media promotion and email/telephone routes for feedback to be submitted.
 - An in-person community workshop enabling direct Q&A and detailed table discussion.
- 12.3. Consultation feedback indicates that respondents were predominantly local, with most living in the SG5 postcode area, and that responses were received across a broad range of age groups. The public consultation received 60 online feedback submissions.
- 12.4. Feedback received through consultation and the community workshop presents a mixed picture, rather than uniform opposition. A significant proportion of comments expressed objection in principle to development on this site, commonly linked to Green Belt/countryside concerns, cumulative change and highways impacts. However, there was also clear recognition of local needs and potential benefits, most notably in relation to SEND provision, and respondents identified a number of elements they supported or considered beneficial in principle, subject to reassurance on the detail.
- 12.5. Concerns from respondents commonly relate to the wider development, scale, impacts and concerns about the cumulative impact of proposed developments across the wider Ickleford and Hitchin area.
- 12.6. Across both supportive and critical feedback, the issues raised most consistently related to:
 - The principle of development and cumulative change.
 - Highways, traffic and road safety (including Bedford Road congestion, access arrangements and crossing provision).
 - Drainage, flood risk, sewerage and utilities capacity.
 - Infrastructure capacity (health and education).
 - Clarity on the SEN school offer, catchment and transport arrangements.
 - Protection of Public Rights of Way and equestrian/bridleway safety, including the character and buffering of the Icknield Way Path.
- 12.7. Many of these matters will be addressed through the planning submission and subsequent approvals. This will include:
 - A full Transport Assessment, including impacts and mitigation (and cumulative considerations where relevant).
 - Drainage and SuDS information, including approach to long-term management.
 - A Landscape Strategy and biodiversity documentation, including Biodiversity Net Gain and management proposals.
 - Information on construction management, including a Construction Management Plan/Construction Traffic Management Plan, to be submitted and/or secured by condition; and



- Planning obligations and/or conditions to secure mitigation and community benefits where required.
- 12.8. The Applicant recognises that meaningful engagement does not end when the planning application is submitted. Engagement will continue during determination and, if consent is granted, through subsequent stages (including reserved matters where applicable), with information remaining available via the project website and continued engagement with local elected representatives, education and SEND stakeholders, local community groups and organisations, and local residents.



13. Appendices

Appendix 1: Awareness Raising Campaign Website

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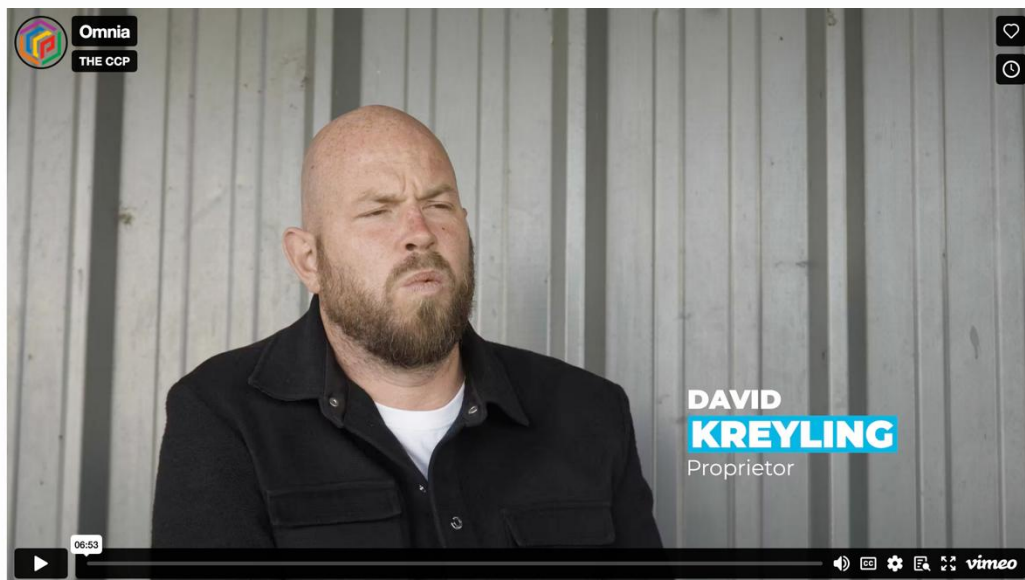
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An Independent Special School for North Hertfordshire

A new DfE-approved Independent Special School for children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), fully funded and ready to deliver.



There is a Special Educational Needs (SEN) crisis in North Hertfordshire. Too many children are left without the right support, sent miles from home or excluded from education altogether.

We want to be part of the solution that delivers better education and a brighter future for local children with ASD and SEMH. The Omnia Foundation, an experienced, DfE-approved SEN provider, is proposing a new, specialist school to meet local need.

Our plan is to build a new SEN school at Pound Farm in Ickleford. This is a quiet, rural setting ideal for therapeutic learning in an area with an identified shortage of SEN provision.

Together with our partner Bugler Homes, we are ready to fund and build this school at no cost to the public sector — but we need your support.

[Hertfordshire SEND Crisis](#)

[About the Pound Farm School](#)

[About Omnia Foundation](#)



We Need Your Support



Register Your Support



Sign the Petition

North Hertfordshire District Council will decide whether this school can go ahead. To succeed, we need to show the council that local families, carers, professionals and supporters want this school built.

What You Have To Say

Displaying 1 - 12 of 182

1 2 3 ... 16 »

Anonymous

I am a SENCo in a local school and strongly believe that a another specialist school for children with SEND is needed in the area.

Laura

Because there are not enough schools to support SEN.

Anonymous

Shortage of senior provision. My son attends a SEN school

Emma

All kids have the right to education and the shortage of sen placements mean kids are left without what they need or sent far from home , every child matters and change needs to happen

Helen

There is such a need for this in the area .I have a child with sen so am fully aware of the battle parents face as there just aren't enough places locallyb

Simone

As the mother of 2 autistic children & 1 with adhd , I've witnessed first hand the lack of resources available for sen children.
Too much pressure is on mainstream schools.
There seems to be more autism now , more schools need to be built.

Martin

My granddaughter has autism and my daughter is finding impossible to get support from local schools so has to be home schooled. A facility such as this would be a perfect for her and others with the same condition. I am also a councillor in Holwell.

Brittany

As a mother with SEN children I can see the need for much more support as unfortunately they have failed mine.

Tim

Overwhelming need and necessity.

MATTHEW

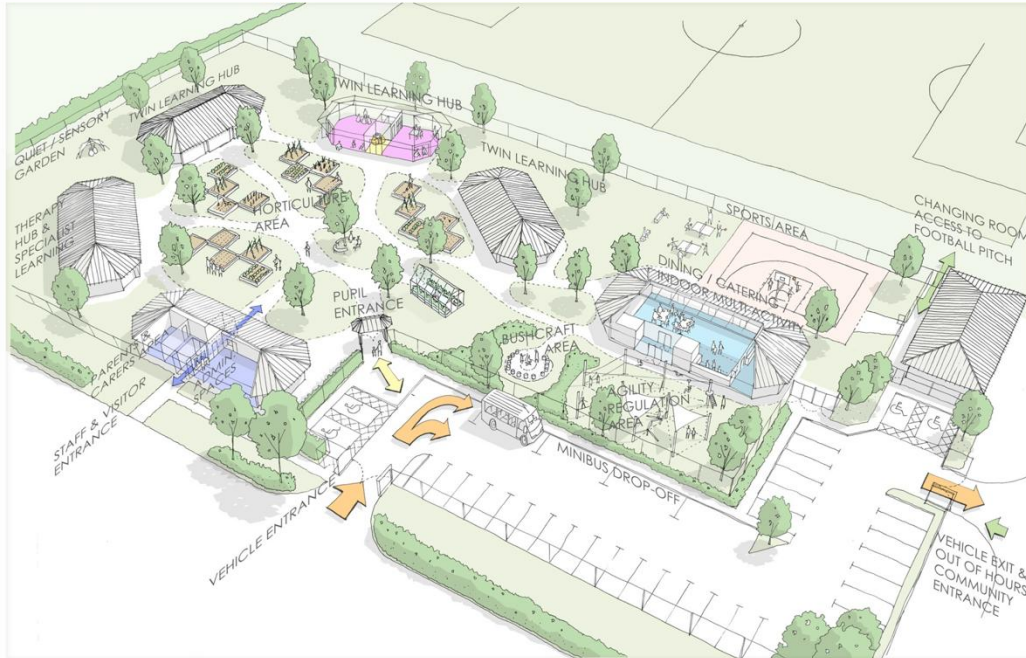
SEE MY ANSWER ON REGISTERING MY SUPPORT, TO ENSURE ALL KIDS WHO CAN'T COPE IN MAINSTREAM HAVE A SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE SETTING, ESPECIALLY NOE THE 'COVID COHORTS 'ARE COMING THROUGH WITH HIGHER RATES AND SEVERITY OF SEN NEEDS.

Anonymous

Anonymous

I have an autistic daughter and it's so difficult to get the right support

1 2 3 ... 16 »



Indicative sketch illustration of the proposed SEN school



Proposed site for a new SEN School at Pound Farm Ickleford



Parents	SEND Professionals	Residents and Supporters
Are you a parent of a child with SEN? Help us understand your experience and shape what this school delivers. Share your story Register interest in a place Join the campaign	Are you a SEND professional or school leader in Hertfordshire? Help us understand your experience and shape what this school delivers. Connect with Omnia Foundation	Want to stay informed or support the vision Sign Up for Updates

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The SEND Crisis in Hertfordshire

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The SEND Crisis in Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire is facing a SEND crisis. In 2023 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission inspection found "systemic failings" in SEND provision across the county.

- Around 36,000 children and young people in Herts with identified SEND needs
- Around 8,500 children and young people are not receiving SEND support
- 6,479 EHCPs, with SEMH and ASD the two primary needs
- 46% of these EHCPs are for children aged 11-15
- 49% rise in ASD diagnoses between 2015-2020, with needs continuing to rise
- Significant needs identified in North Herts, Stevenage and East Herts

To address these challenges, Hertfordshire County Council's current SEND Strategy emphasises the need to provide local specialist options and is working to expand places to address the shortfall.

Right now, there is a lack of appropriate or specialist school facilities for learners with the highest ASD or SEMH support needs.

Why it matters

Children across Hertfordshire are sent miles away from home for appropriate schooling or left without a school place at all.

Families face:

- **Waiting months or years** for suitable places
- **Inappropriate**, part-time or no **education** at all
- Attend mainstream schools that **can't meet their needs**, leading to exclusion or breakdown
- **Long distance travel**, causing distress and instability

This has terrible consequences on the mental health, family wellbeing, and the daily lives of children and families impacted. With parents often needing to leave work to provide full-time care and education for their children.

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A new SEN school at Pound Farm

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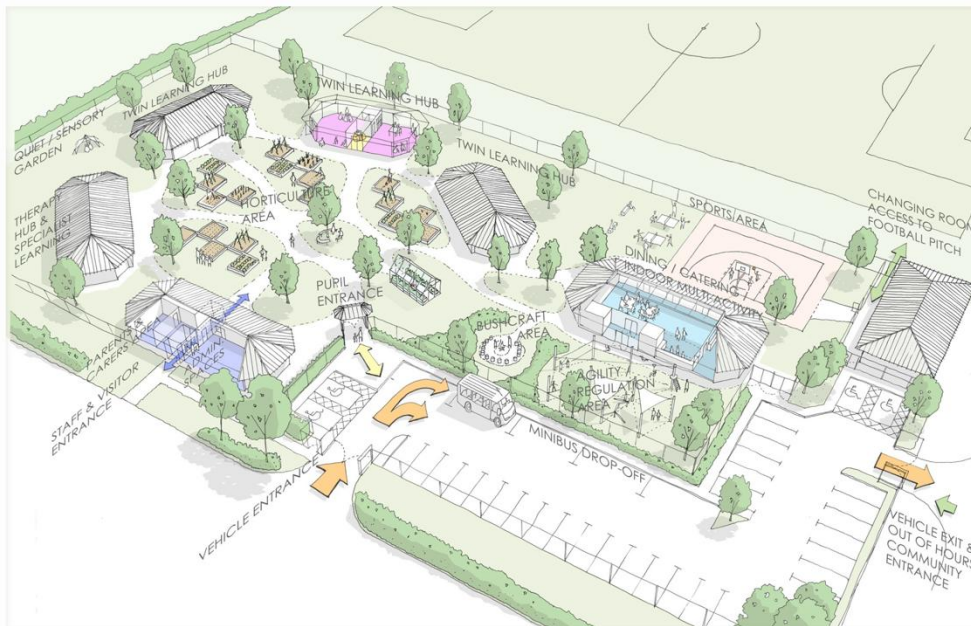
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A new SEN School at Pound Farm, Ickleford

Omnia Foundation want to create a new SEN school with places for 30 children providing therapeutic, physical and vocational support for young people aged 12–17.

With a strong emphasis on the importance of education through sport, the school would include space for three multi-sports pitches.

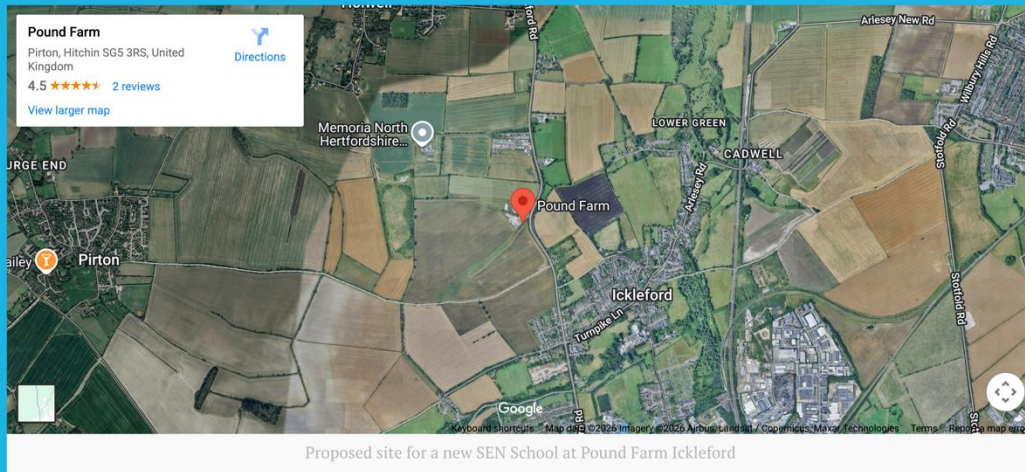


Indicative sketch illustration of the proposed SEN school



Why here?

Omnia Foundation identified Pound Farm, which offers a quiet, rural setting conducive to therapeutic learning and ample space for outdoor play, sport and physical activity. We have searched for comparable sites across Hertfordshire, and Pound Farm is the only one that is currently available, suitable, and deliverable.



School Offer



30-place school for children aged 12–17



Therapeutic, physical, and vocational curriculum



Space for 3 multi-sport pitches



Rural, calm environment ideal for SEMH support

Benefits

A new SEN school here will:



Help to bridge the gap in local SEN provision



Reduce reliance on costly out-of-county placements



Be fully funded and delivered at no risk or cost to Herts County Council or council taxpayer





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Omnia Foundation

Omnia Foundation is a Department for Education-approved Independent Special School, providing therapeutic, physical, and vocational support for young people aged 12–17.

Based in Rayleigh, Essex, the Foundation runs an SEN school supporting students who have been excluded from or disengaged with mainstream education due to neurodiversity, trauma, or complex SEMH needs.

With a commitment to accessibility and inclusivity, the school caters to a wide range of abilities and needs while offering diverse programmes focused on physical activity, the arts, drama, cooking, and other non-conventional subjects.

The Omnia Foundation's approach brings together therapy, sport, physical activity, and vocational pathways within a supportive framework. Building on the proven success of our Essex school, we are now extending this model to Pound Farm, creating new opportunities for young people to thrive.

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Meet the Team

David Kreyling



Proprietor

David has spent over 20 years working across education, sport, and physical activity, driven by a commitment to helping young people thrive. Between 2015 and 2018, he led projects with education providers that re-engaged 16–19-year-olds in study or employment, which highlighted for him the deeper reasons many young people become disengaged from education.

In 2019, David became proprietor of Omnia Foundation, an Independent Special School in Essex for boys aged 12–17 with SEMH needs and ASD. His vision was to create a setting that not only re-engages students in learning but also addresses the barriers preventing them from accessing education in the first place.

The school's whole-child approach combines therapy, physical activity, and a bespoke curriculum tailored to each student. Supported by an Ofqual-approved qualification, this model empowers young people to rebuild confidence, develop essential life skills, and progress towards meaningful futures — without being defined by labels.

Alongside his work with the Foundation, David leads the CSL Group, a collection of businesses focused on sport, wellbeing, and skills development. A strong advocate for Sport for Social Change, he believes physical activity can break down barriers, build resilience, and create healthier, more inclusive communities.

Ian Budge



Executive Director

Ian is the Executive Director of Omnia Education, part of the Omnia Sports Group, which is dedicated to improving opportunities and outcomes for children and young people with complex needs through innovative and inclusive education.

With more than 20 years' experience across education and sport, Ian has developed and led programmes that expand access to high-quality learning, strengthen pathways for vulnerable learners, and champion inclusion in schools and communities. He has previously held voluntary leadership roles as a school governor, charity board member, and magistrate in East London — reflecting his long-standing commitment to public service and community impact.

Ian is passionate about harnessing the power of education to transform lives and ensuring equality, diversity, and wellbeing are at the heart of provision. Alongside this, he is a regular speaker at national and international forums, contributing thought leadership on how education and sport together can drive meaningful social change.



Omnia Foundation Values



Open Minded

Promotes a culture of openness and honesty; accepts constructive criticism; creates an environment of trust; treats people fairly and equally; change is good; adaptable when faced with change



Motivated

Promotes the ethos of the organisation; demonstrates genuine commitment; takes ownership and responsibility; supports others in working towards the same goals; takes pride in the foundation community



Noble

Admired by others; a good role model; leads by example; builds strong relationships; is friendly and builds trust with others; works collaboratively; listens to new ideas; considers impact of actions on others



Independent

Makes informed decisions; willing to take a stand even in the face of resistance; takes accountability when things go wrong; proactively seeks personal development; able to minimise the impact of reactions on others



Achievers

Sees things from different points of view; remains positive in the face of challenge; promotes a culture where people feel empowered to challenge; willing to support and develop new ideas; continually evaluates own progress

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Partnership with Bugler Homes



To deliver the new school, the Omnia Foundation is working in partnership with Bugler Homes on proposals for Pound Farm. The development will include new housing, with affordable homes as part of the plan — helping to fund and make possible the creation of the school.

Through this partnership, the school will be:

- Fully funded and built at no cost to Hertfordshire County Council or taxpayers
- Delivered through a planning application later this year

The proposals are currently being designed in discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council planning department.

Bugler will shortly launch a separate public consultation focused on housing and wider proposals. The consultation process will include design workshops with the community.

If you are interested in participating in the workshops or would like to stay informed, you can email us at sendcampaignherts@outlook.com or sign up for updates.

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Illustrative masterplan proposals for Pound Farm

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FAQs

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FAQs

1	Will the SEN school be open to local children?	—
	Yes, places will be prioritised for North Herts and wider Hertfordshire pupils with EHCPs.	
2	Will this affect my child's existing placement or EHCP?	—
	No. This proposal is designed to add to local provision and reduce pressure on the system. Placement decisions remain with local authorities.	
3	Is this a developer-led plan?	—
	Omnia Foundation identified this site as the ideal environment for educating children with ASD and SEMH needs. The project has been developed in partnership by Omnia Foundation and Bugler Homes and designed in response to clear local need. The new homes will fund delivery of the new SEN school.	
4	Is Pound Farm on Green Belt land?	—
	Yes, the southern part of the site is in the Green Belt and has been assessed as not strongly contributing to the core Green Belt purposes. Most of the site is former agricultural land outside the green belt.	

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Feedback Forms

Sign the Petition

Sign the Petition

** indicates required fields

I support Omnia Foundation's proposals for a new SEN School in North Herts *

☐

Name *

First

Last

Postcode or Local Area *

Email

Only used to keep you updated if you opt in

Why do you support the plans for the new school?

Show my name publicly on the petition

☐ Yes

☐ No

I'd like to receive updates

☐ Yes

☐ No

CAPTCHA

Sign the Petition