



Icknield Fields

Land South of Pound Farm, Ickleford

Bugler Homes

Statement of Community Involvement

January 2026





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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out the pre-application consultation and engagement undertaken on proposals for **Icknield Fields (Land South of Pound Farm), Ickleford**, including a proposed **new Special Educational Needs (SEN) school** and residential-led masterplan. It records **who was consulted, how consultation was undertaken, what feedback was received, and how feedback has been considered** as the proposals progress towards a planning application.
- 1.2. The proposals comprise a **hybrid planning application** for a residential-led development alongside a new SEN school, sports facilities and associated community benefits. The scheme is **landscape-led**, with a significant proportion of the site proposed as **publicly accessible open space**, and includes walking, cycling and equestrian connectivity measures, plus sports provision intended to be available for community use outside school hours. The proposals also include a commitment to **50% affordable housing**.

Early and ongoing engagement with stakeholders

- 1.3. Engagement has been ongoing since the early stages of design development, beginning in **July 2025**, involving a wide range of stakeholders including:
 - Local elected representatives and parish councils.
 - Hertfordshire County Council members and SEND commissioning officers.
 - Education providers and SEND stakeholders.
 - Voluntary and community organisations.
 - Local sports clubs.
- 1.4. This early engagement helped establish key local sensitivities and expectations at an early stage, particularly around traffic and road safety, Public Rights of Way and bridleways, landscape setting and the importance of clearly explaining the SEN school offer and informed the approach to wider public consultation.

SEN school awareness campaign

- 1.5. Ahead of the main public consultation, a dedicated **SEN school awareness campaign** was undertaken. Its purpose was to:
 - Explain the identified need for additional specialist provision.
 - Set out the proposed educational offer and delivery model.
 - Provide a clear route for local people to register their support and interest.
- 1.6. This phase created a clear route for local residents to register support and interest. **268 expressions of support** were recorded for the campaign, which ran between **12 September and 7 October 2025**.
- 1.7. The campaign demonstrated strong recognition of SEND need and helped to inform the content and FAQs used in the wider consultation.



Public consultation and community workshop

- 1.8. A public consultation on the emerging proposals ran from 21 November to 12 December 2025 and was delivered through a combination of online and in-person methods to maximise reach and accessibility. This included:
- A dedicated consultation website, providing the emerging masterplan and supporting information, FAQs and an online feedback form (www.icknielfields.uk). The website was viewed by **2,303** visitors.
 - Leaflet distribution to local properties, directing residents to the consultation materials and explaining how to respond. **1,000 leaflets** were delivered to local properties in Ickleford and north Hitchin.
 - A targeted social media campaign (Facebook/Instagram) directing local audiences to the consultation website. The campaign generated **16,213 views, 1,137 engagements** and **1,106 click-throughs** to the consultation website.
 - A community workshop, providing presentations, Q&A and facilitated roundtable discussion to enable more detailed dialogue and direct questioning with local stakeholders. The workshop was held on **Wednesday 26 November 2025** and attended by around **50 local residents and stakeholders**.

Summary of consultation feedback received

- 1.9. A total of **60 individuals** submitted feedback via the consultation website. Feedback presented a mixed picture, rather than uniform opposition. A significant proportion of comments raised objections in principle to development on this site, alongside higher levels of support for specific components, most notably SEND provision and Bedford Road safety improvements. Views were often shaped by two distinct but overlapping perspectives:
- **Opposition in principle to development on this site, linked to:**
 - Loss of Green Belt/open countryside and perceived impact on the village of Ickleford.
 - Concerns about cumulative impacts of wider development proposals.
 - Traffic and congestion on Bedford Road.
 - Concerns about the impacts of local services and utilities (health, education, energy and sewerage).
 - **Wider recognition of local need and potential benefits**
 - Alongside opposition in principle, there was clear recognition that there is a need for additional SEND provision.
 - The SEN school was seen by many as a more tangible community benefit than the wider masterplan proposals.
- 1.10. Across both supportive and critical responses, there was also constructive feedback which recognised the value (in principle) of:
- **Publicly accessible open space and improved routes** (walking/cycling/bridleways), subject to detail and safety.
 - **Sports facilities** (particularly where community access is secured and parking/management is addressed).
 - **Affordable housing**, subject to clarity on what is meant by “affordable” and how it will be delivered and managed.



- 1.11. Alongside this, there was constructive feedback on the housing element, including support in principle for affordable housing (subject to clarity on tenure and delivery) and requests for a mix that better meets local needs, particularly smaller homes and accessible housing.
- 1.12. Although overall views on development were mixed, some respondents identified clear housing-related benefits. Where residents felt new homes could play a positive role, comments most commonly focused on the value of delivering genuinely affordable homes and a mix that better reflects local needs, particularly smaller homes and accessible accommodation. In the 'community benefits' responses, affordable housing and family homes were each identified by a number of respondents as the most beneficial element of the proposals.

Key issues raised

- 1.13. Across the public consultation and stakeholder engagement activities, the most common themes were:
- **The principle of development:** including green belt/grey belt concerns, settlement identity and concerns about the cumulative impact of change across the wider area.
 - **Highways, traffic and congestion:** Bedford Road impacts, crossings, single access arrangements, and cumulative traffic concerns.
 - **Infrastructure capacity:** GP provision, school places, utilities, and the need for infrastructure to be delivered "up front".
 - **Drainage, flood risk and sewerage:** confidence in SuDS, wastewater capacity and long-term management.
 - **SEN school clarity:** who it is for, what "local" means, admissions/eligibility, and transport implications.
 - **Public rights of way and equestrian considerations:** protection of bridleways, safe crossings, and maintaining the character of the Icknield Way Path.

How feedback is being used

- 1.14. Feedback from the consultation has been used to inform the detailed design development being progressed and submitted through the hybrid planning application and will continue to inform future design development, including reserved matters.
- 1.15. This SCI is not intended to repeat the technical evidence that will accompany the application, but it is important to be clear where concerns raised will be addressed through the planning submission and subsequent approvals. As the proposals progress:
- **A full Transport Assessment** will be submitted to assess impacts and mitigation (including cumulative considerations where relevant).
 - **Landscape Strategy and Biodiversity documentation** (including BNG approach and recommendations for long-term management) will be submitted.
 - **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment** will be submitted to demonstrate the impact of the development on key views from the surrounding area.
 - **Drainage information** (including SuDS strategy and management approach) will be submitted.
 - Planning obligations and/or conditions will secure appropriate mitigation where required.



- **Construction Management Plan/Construction Traffic Management Plan** will be prepared and agreed through the planning process to manage construction routing, working hours, site operations and PRow safety.
- 1.16. The Applicant recognises that meaningful engagement continues beyond consultation closing. Engagement with elected members, parish councils, education and SEND stakeholders and community organisations will continue throughout determination and (if consented) through subsequent reserved matters and delivery stages.



2. Introduction

- 2.1. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been prepared by the Community Communications Partnership ("the CCP") on behalf of Bugler Homes ("the Applicant"), in partnership with Omnia Foundation, in relation to their proposal for Icknield Fields at Land South of Pound Farm, Ickleford ("the Site").
- 2.2. Paragraphs 40-43 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) encourage engagement between applicant, local planning authorities and the local community. This is intended to enable "better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community".
- 2.3. The purpose of this SCI is to provide a clear record of:
 - The pre-application engagement and consultation undertaken
 - Who was consulted and the methods used to reach local communities and stakeholders
 - The feedback received
 - How that feedback has been considered as the proposals have progressed towards submission of a planning application
- 2.4. The Applicant recognises the importance of early and meaningful engagement, particularly where community views may be shaped both by the principle of development and by the detail of design, mitigation and community benefits. Engagement for Icknield Fields was therefore designed to be:
 - **Proportionate** to the scale of the proposals.
 - **Inclusive**, combining digital and non-digital methods.
 - **Accessible**, with clear information presented in plain English and supported by visuals.
 - **Transparent**, with feedback reported in a balanced and open manner in line with North Hertfordshire's Statement of Community Involvement expectations.
- 2.5. Engagement has been delivered through four linked strands:
 - **Early stakeholder engagement (July 2025 onwards)**: contact and meetings with elected representatives, parish councils, MPs, education providers, SEND stakeholders, voluntary/community organisations and sports clubs.
 - **SEND awareness campaign (September–October 2025)**: an online awareness and evidence-gathering campaign focused on the need for additional SEND provision, explaining that the school is being brought forward in partnership with Bugler Homes as part of wider proposals.
 - **Public consultation (November–December 2025)**: a multi-channel consultation including a dedicated website, leaflet distribution, and social media advertising directing residents to information and a structured online feedback form.
 - **Community workshop (26 November 2025)**: an in-person workshop event providing presentations, Q&A and roundtable discussion to enable detailed questions and discussion directly with the project team.
- 2.6. This SCI is structured to:
 - Describe the consultation and engagement approach
 - Record consultation reach and participation
 - Summarise feedback received, including headline results and key themes



- Explain how issues raised will be considered and addressed through the planning submission and subsequent approvals, including where further technical detail will be submitted and agreed through the planning process.



3. Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Openness

- 3.1. The Applicant recognises that communities are diverse and that people have different needs, preferences and levels of confidence in engaging with the planning process. The consultation and engagement programme for Icknield Fields was therefore designed to be inclusive and accessible,
- 3.2. The North Hertfordshire Statement of Community Involvement emphasises the importance of:
 - Early and meaningful engagement.
 - Using a range of consultation methods to reach different audiences.
 - Making information clear and accessible.
 - Providing opportunities for people to participate in ways that suit their circumstances
 - Ensuring transparency in how consultation is undertaken and reported.
- 3.3. The approach adopted for the Icknield Fields engagement programme has been designed to reflect these expectations and to ensure that local people with different preferences, access needs and communication habits could take part.

A multi-channel and inclusive consultation approach

- 3.4. To ensure that local people with different preferences, access needs and communication habits could engage with the proposals, a combination of digital and non-digital consultation methods was used.
 - A dedicated consultation website (www.icknieldfields.uk) hosted all information in one place, including plans, visual material and a user-friendly online feedback form. This allowed residents to view information and respond at any time, including evenings and weekends.
 - 1000 printed leaflets were delivered directly to all homes in Ickleford. This ensured that residents who may not routinely engage online, or who prefer hard-copy information, were directly informed and given clear instructions on how to take part.
 - A targeted social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram promoted the consultation to adults across North Hertfordshire, including Ickleford, Pirton, Hitchin, and surrounding areas. This helped reach working-age residents, families and younger adults who are more likely to engage digitally.
 - A community workshop event to provide in-person opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to review information, ask questions and share views.
 - A separate awareness raising campaign focussed on the proposed SEN school, intended to test awareness of need and support for new provision, in advance of the wider masterplan consultation.
 - Extensive direct engagement with local representatives, including ward councillors, Ickleford Parish Council, Pirton Parish Council, Hertfordshire County Council SEND officers, The St Alban's Diocesan Board of Education, local schools and sports clubs. These engagements provided important insights into local needs and priorities and helped to shape and inform the development of the proposals.
- 3.5. Residents were able to respond in several ways:
 - Via the online feedback form
 - By email
 - By telephone



- 3.6. This reflects the North Hertfordshire SCI's principles of providing choice in how people engage, rather than relying on a single method.

Accessibility of information

- 3.7. Consultation materials were designed to be clear and easy to understand, with technical planning concepts explained in plain English wherever possible. Information was structured using clear heading and supported by plans and images to assist those who find visual information easier to interpret than text alone.
- 3.8. The consultation website enabled residents to view information and respond at a time that suited them, including evenings and weekends. Clear contact details were provided so that residents could ask questions or provide comments outside the online form
- 3.9. The consultation ran over an extended period of time and remained live across weekdays, evenings and weekends, helping to ensure that people with work commitments, caring responsibilities or limited daytime availability were not excluded.

Engagement with different groups within the community

- 3.10. While this pre-application consultation did not involve formal demographic monitoring, the breadth of issues raised demonstrates that the process successfully engaged a wide cross-section of the local community, including:
- Local residents living closest to the Site.
 - Families and those with an interest in local education and SEND provision.
 - Elected representatives at the parish, district and county council levels.
 - Local voluntary and charity organisations with an interest in SEND and sports provision.
 - Older residents and long-standing local households, particularly in relation to concerns about Green Belt protection, Public Rights of Way, bridleways, ecology, biodiversity, flood risk, landscape and countryside setting.
 - People interested in transport, road safety, walking cycling and equestrian connections.
- 3.11. The consultation approach ensured that different perspectives could all be expressed and recorded openly, including both supportive and critical views.

Openness and transparency

- 3.12. In accordance with the North Hertfordshire SCI, the consultation was conducted on a transparent basis:
- The purpose of the consultation, the emerging nature of the proposals and the intent to use feedback to inform the final scheme and technical work were clearly stated.
 - Responses were invited through structured questions and free-text comment opportunities.
 - Feedback received through the formal channels has been summarised and reported within this Statement of Community Involvement, providing a clear and balanced account of the themes raised.



Ongoing engagement

3.13. The Applicant recognises that meaningful engagement does not end when the formal consultation period closes. The project team will continue to make information available through the project website and will provide updates as the proposals progress through the planning application process.

Summary

3.14. Overall, the consultation for Icknield Fields has been carried out in a way that is:

- Proportionate to the scale of the development.
- Inclusive, using both digital and non-digital methods.
- Accessible, through clear, plain-English information and multiple ways to respond.
- Open and transparent, through full reporting of feedback; and
- Fully aligned with the expectations of the North Hertfordshire Statement of Community Involvement.

3.15. This approach has enabled local people from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances to understand the proposals and to share their views in a meaningful and constructive way.



4. Engagement with elected representatives and local community stakeholders

- 4.1. Early, extensive and ongoing engagement with local elected representatives and community stakeholders has been underway since July 2025. Engagement will continue throughout the planning application process.
- 4.2. This early engagement helped shape the engagement programme and informed priorities for the masterplan proposals.

Purpose of the Engagement

- 4.3. The purpose of the early engagement was to:
 - Introduce the initial proposals and emerging masterplan principles.
 - Listen to feedback and understand local concerns, aspirations and priorities.
 - Identify key local sensitivities (including traffic, rights of way and village edge/landscape matters).
 - Discuss the proposed SEN school, including admissions, catchment and transport considerations.
 - Inform the evolving proposals and the wider public consultation approach.

Stakeholders contacted July 2025 onwards

- 4.4. From July 2025, initial contact was made with a range of stakeholders including:
 - **Parish Councils:** Ickleford Parish Council and Pirton Parish Council.
 - **North Hertfordshire District Council:** Offa and Cadwell ward councillors, Cllrs Claire Strong, David Barnard and Louise Peace, and NHDC Cabinet members including Cllr Daniel Allen (Leader of the Council).
 - **Hertfordshire County Council:** Senior members, including Cllr Steve Jarvis (Leader of the Council) and Cllr Mark Watkin (Cabinet Member for Education, SEND and Inclusion)
 - **HCC Education, SEND and Inclusion department officers**
 - **MPs:** Alastair Strathern MP (Hitchin) and members of Parliament representing Hertfordshire constituencies.
 - **Education bodies and providers:** St Albans Diocesan Board of Education, Ickleford Primary School, Brandles School, Larwood School, Priory School.
 - **SEND and Community Groups:** including Herts Parent Carers Involvement Group and Angels Support Group.
 - **Sports Clubs:** including Hitchin Belles Women Football Club, Hitchin Town Youth Football Club and FC Comets.

Summary of meetings and correspondence

- 4.5. Engagement activity included direct meetings (in-person/online), structured briefings and email correspondence. Engagement over the past year has included:
 - **23 July 2025:** Meeting with Alastair Strathern MP.



- **4 August 2025:** Meeting with Cllr Daniel Allen (Leader of NHDC).
- **22 August 2025:** Meeting with Pirton Parish Council.
- **10 September 2025:** Meeting with St Albans Diocesan Board of Education.
- **5 September 2025:** Meeting with Hitchin Belles FC.
- **16 September 2025:** Meeting with Ickleford Primary School Headteacher and Chair of Governors.
- **16 September 2025:** Meeting with HCC SEND Commissioning Service Officers.
- **29 September 2025:** Meeting with Headteacher and Learning Support/SENCO at Priory School
- **9 October 2025:** Meeting with John O'Callaghan, Partnership Director, The Herts Sport and Physical Activity Partnership.
- **7 November 2025:** Meeting with Brighter Futures Educational Trust (Larwood School and Brandles School).
- **26 November 2025:** Meeting with Mick Johal, Founder, North Herts Crusaders (Rugby League and Netball multi-sports club)
- **16 December 2025:** Meeting with FC Comets
- **13 December 2025:** Correspondence/phone conversations with Hitchin Town Youth FC.
- Ongoing correspondence with Cllr Claire Strong and Cllr Louise Peace (July – December 2025).
- Cllrs Louise Peace, Claire Strong and Ralph Muncer attended the community workshop event on Wednesday 26 November 2025

Key themes raised through early engagement

4.6. The early engagement programme helped to identify key issues and expectations, which were then reflected in the emerging proposals and in the focus of public consultation materials. Key themes included:

- **SEN school offer:** Strong interest in the proposals SEN school, alongside detailed questions regarding the offer, admissions, catchment arrangements and transport assumptions.
- **Cumulative growth and infrastructure capacity:** An emphasis that proposals would be viewed in the context of wider growth pressures in and around Ickleford and Hitchin, including education capacity, health provision and utilities.
- **Highways and road safety:** Need for robust highways and road safety mitigations, including the need for safer crossings on Bedford Road.
- **Sports offer:** Interest in the new sports provision, and the importance of a collaborative approach tailored to meet the requirements of voluntary and community sports, secured through a Community Use Agreement.
- **Public Rights of Way, bridleways and village edge/landscape:** The importance of protecting Public Rights of Way and bridleways, and ensuring the village edge is appropriately landscaped, with meaningful buffers and a high-quality public realm.
- **Housing mix and local need:** Stakeholders raised the importance of ensuring housing mix responds to local needs, including interest in accessible homes and bungalows, alongside family housing, and clarity on affordable housing delivery.



How this engagement informed the approach

- 4.7. Early engagement informed the proposals and consultation approach by:
- Reinforcing the importance of clearly explaining the SEN school offer.
 - Confirming rights of way, bridleways and landscape buffers as key design considerations.
 - Shaping the focus of consultation materials and FAQs around highways impacts, infrastructure capacity and delivery.
 - Highlighting where stakeholders wanted clearer evidence, to be addressed through the planning submission and supporting technical documents; and
 - Supporting continued engagement with sports clubs on community use and operational considerations.

Ongoing engagement

- 4.8. Engagement will continue through the planning application process, including with:
- Local ward members and parish councils.
 - Education providers and SEND stakeholders, including HCC commissioning and relevant education bodies.
 - Local sports clubs and community organisations.
 - Local residents.



5. Pre-application SEN school awareness campaign

- 5.1. Ahead of the pre-application public consultation on the emerging masterplan proposals, a dedicated SEN school awareness campaign was undertaken. The campaign was designed to explain the proposed specialist educational offer, introduce Omnia Foundation (including its ethos, and therapy-first approach), and gather early views on need and support for new SEND provision at Pound Farm, Ickleford.
- 5.2. The campaign recognised that the proposed SEN school forms part of a wider partnership proposal and would be brought forward alongside the wider development proposals. The campaign was not to replicate the masterplan consultation, but to ensure that the proposed school offer and the need for additional specialist provision were clearly communicated and understood ahead of the wider consultation programme.

Activity and approach

- 5.3. A dedicated campaign website (www.northhertssend.co.uk) was launched on 12 September 2025. The website set out:
 - The proposed educational offer (include age range and cohort size).
 - The type of needs the school is intended to support.
 - How places would be commissioned through the EHCP process.
 - How people could register their support and interest, and explain why they support the school.
- 5.4. The website made clear that the school is being brought forward in partnership with Bugler Homes as part of wider proposals that include housing, with the delivery of new homes required to fund delivery of the new school. The website includes a site location plan and an illustrative masterplan of the wider proposals and stated that a separate consultation on the masterplan proposals would follow. See [Appendix 1](#) for further details on this website.
- 5.5. The campaign was promoted via social media advertising on Meta Platforms (Facebook and Instagram) between **12 September 2025 and 7 October 2025** to raise awareness of the website and direct users to further information. The adverts were targeted to residents across North Hertfordshire.
- 5.6. The adverts were viewed **49,688** times by **21,905** individual accounts. **3,152** post engagements were recorded and **2,754** clicked through to website.

Participation and headline outcomes

- 5.7. During the campaign period, a total of **268 expressions of support** were received. These responses provide evidence of substantial interest in additional SEND provision and reflect the importance of clear information on the SEN school offer at an early stage.
- 5.8. Feedback submitted through the campaign largely related to the need for additional specialist provision and the potential benefits of increased capacity.



Types of support registered

- 5.9. Support was recorded via registration of support and/or petition signature. Both approaches offered respondents the opportunity to explain their reasons for support. Support was registered as follows:
- **142** signed the petition.
 - **98** registered their support.
 - **28** both registered support and signed the petition.
 - Altogether, **268** individuals registered their support for the proposals for a new SEN school at Pound Farm.
- 5.10. Based on self-reported location information, support for the proposed SEN school was recorded predominantly from North Hertfordshire as well as across the wider Hertfordshire County area and Central Bedfordshire.
- 5.11. Respondents consented to their supportive comments being shared with local councillors and decision makers to demonstrate public backing for the SEN School. The full list of supportive comments is included at [Appendix 2](#). To protect the privacy of respondents, full names and postcodes have been redacted, with only partial postcodes included.

Geographic profile of support

- 5.12. Support was recorded across a broad area, with a clear concentration in the local area and across Hertfordshire. See Image 1 overleaf for a heat map of supporter locations based on postcode information provided.
- 5.13. Supporters were asked to provide their location. Of the 268 submissions:
- **247** respondents provided their full postcode.
 - **5** provided a partial postcode district (e.g. SG5).
 - **15** provided a town name.
 - **1** did not provide any location information.
- 5.14. Based on the location information provided:
- **226** were recorded from within Hertfordshire (the Hertfordshire County Council area) including:
 - **10** supporters from within the parish of Ickleford.
 - **173** supporters from North Hertfordshire.
 - **43** from Stevenage.
 - **26** submissions from Central Bedfordshire.
- 5.15. The small number of submissions (**5**) that included only partial postcodes could not be robustly allocated to a single local authority area and have not been included within the local authority breakdown above. These were **SG4** (x2), **SG5** (x1), **SG6** (x2).
- 5.16. Overall, the campaign indicates strong support for the delivery of additional SEND provision, with responses predominantly from the local area and across Hertfordshire, alongside support from neighbouring areas. This pattern is consistent with the nature of specialist SEND provision, which often serves families across a wider catchment area.

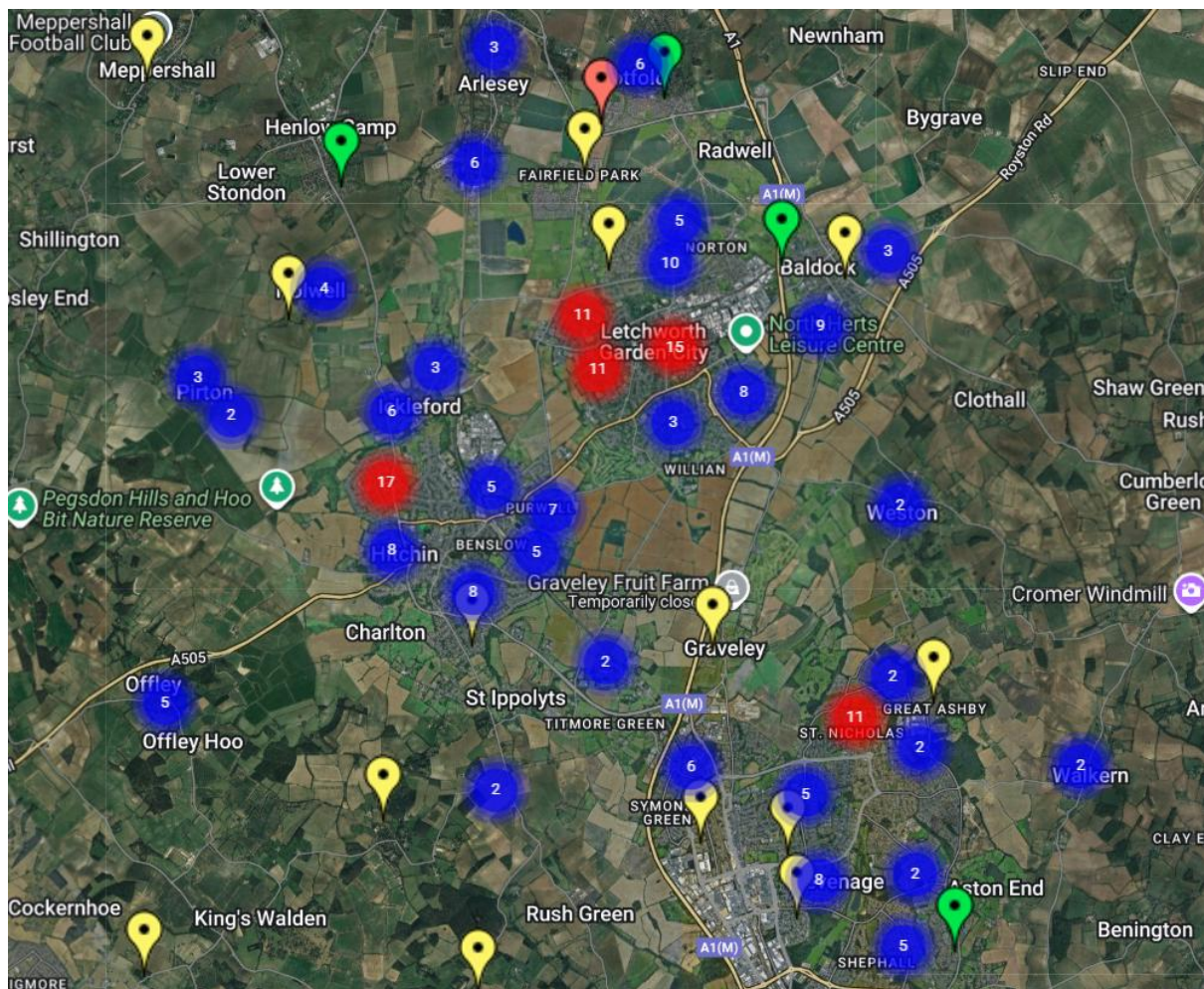


Image 1: Heat map of SEN School awareness campaign supporter locations based on postcode information provided.

Summary of supporter comments

5.17. Supporter comments were strongly focused on SEND need and lived experience, with many respondents referencing personal family circumstances, professional experience in education/SEND provision, or both. The most commonly expressed reasons for support are thematically summarised below:

Shortfall in SEND provision and need for additional local places

5.18. A central theme was that additional SEND provision is needed locally. Many supporters described the current level of provision as insufficient and expressed the view that more specialist places are required to meet needs within Hertfordshire/North Herts.

Supporting children with ASD/ADHD/SEMH and improving outcomes

5.19. Support frequently referenced the needs of children with Autism and/or associated needs (including ADHD and SEMH). Comments commonly described the importance of specialist



environments that can better meet individual needs and reduce pressure on children and families.

Pressure on mainstream school and the value of specialist settings

5.20. Many supporters referred to mainstream settings being under strain in meeting higher levels of need and expressed support for the principle of specialist provision to complement (rather than replace) mainstream education, with the aim of improving stability, support and outcomes.

Keeping provision closer to home

5.21. A recurring rationale for support was the desire for provision that is closer to local communities. Some comments referenced the difficulties associated with long travel distances or limited suitable options and supported additional local provision to reduce disruption for children and families.

Support for Omnia Foundation's proposed approach and ethos

5.22. A number of comments welcomed the school concept and model being proposed, including the emphasis on a therapeutic approach and a broader curriculum offer. This aligns with the campaign website description of a school offer for 30 pupils aged 12–17 with therapeutic, physical and vocational elements and an emphasis on sport.

Relationship to wider proposals

5.23. While the campaign was designed to focus on SEND provision, a small number of supporters commented on the wider masterplan context or emphasised that their support related specifically to the SEN school element. The campaign website itself is explicit that the proposal is being developed in partnership with Bugler Homes and that new homes are intended to fund delivery of the SEN school, with separate consultation on the wider proposals.

How the campaign informed the wider engagement programme

5.24. The awareness campaign helped to inform the subsequent public consultation by:

- Identifying areas where stakeholders sought clarity (for example admissions/catchment, commissioning, and transport assumptions).
- Informing the structure and content of FAQs and consultation materials.
- Ensuring that stakeholders interested in SEND had a dedicated route to engage and register support and interest.

5.25. Engagement with SEND stakeholders continued beyond the campaign period through early stakeholder engagement and the subsequent public consultation and workshop.

5.26. The outputs from the awareness campaign indicate strong recognition of SEND need. This sits alongside the wider consultation feedback, where views on development in principle were more mixed and where respondents often distinguished between support for additional SEND provision and concerns about the wider masterplan proposals.



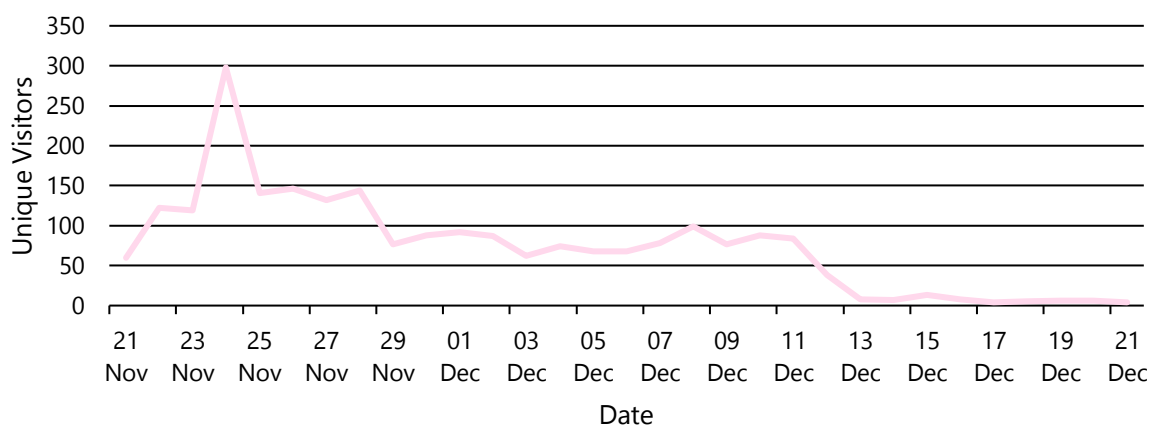
6. Public Consultation

- 6.1. A public consultation on the emerging proposals for **Icknield Fields (Land South of Pound Farm), Ickleford** was undertaken between **21 November and 12 December 2025**. The consultation used a combination of online and offline methods to ensure residents could access information and provide feedback.

Website

- 6.2. An online consultation website (www.icknieldfields.uk) was published on **21 November 2025**. The website provided information on the emerging proposals, including the illustrative masterplan, the proposed SEN school, landscape and biodiversity proposals, and the movement and access strategy. It also included a set of frequently asked questions. Screenshots of this website are provided in [Appendix 3](#).
- 6.3. The website included an online feedback form (with multiple-choice and free-text questions), alongside contact details so that comments could also be submitted by email or telephone. A privacy notice and links to further information were included.
- 6.4. Website traffic was measured for one month, from **21 November to 21 December 2025**. During this period, the website received **2,303** unique visitors, with a peak of **298** on **24 November 2025**.

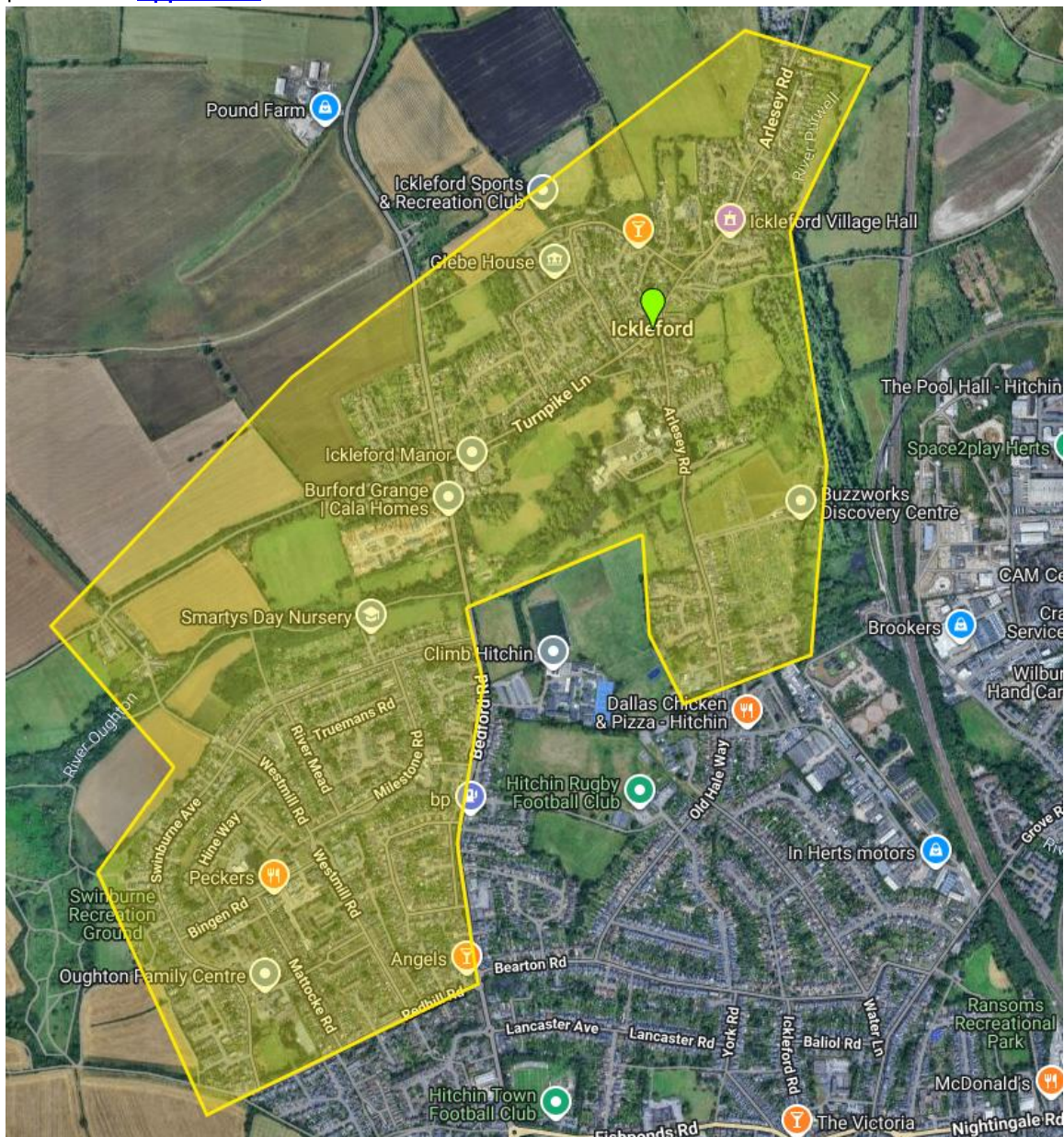
Unique Visitors per day from 21st November to 21st December 2025





Leaflet

- 6.5. A two-sided A4 leaflet was distributed to **1,000** properties in areas close to the site between **Sunday 23 November 2025 and Wednesday 26 November 2025**. The leaflet distribution area is shown on the map below and included all addresses in Ickleford and parts of north and northwest Hitchin closest to the village.
- 6.6. The leaflet provided an overview of the proposals and the partnership with Omnia Foundation, explained the hybrid planning application approach, and summarised local needs referenced within the consultation materials (housing, SEND and sports provision). It also set out how people could respond, including the website address and contact details.
- 6.7. The leaflet stated that the consultation would close on **Friday 12 December 2025** and that the website would remain live throughout the planning application process. Responses continued to be received after the closing date; these have been recorded within this SCI. The leaflet design is provided in [Appendix 4](#).





Social Media

- 6.8. A paid social media campaign ran between **21 November 2025** and **12 December 2025**, to promote the consultation and direct residents to the website. The campaign targeted people aged 18 years old and older in North Hertfordshire, with a focus around Ickleford, Pirton, Hitchin and the surrounding area.
- 6.9. The campaign ran on Meta Platforms (Facebook and Instagram). The advertisement was viewed **16,213** times by **11,378** individual accounts. **1,137** post engagements and **1,106** click-throughs to the consultation website were recorded.
- 6.10. This social media advert is shown in [Appendix 5](#).

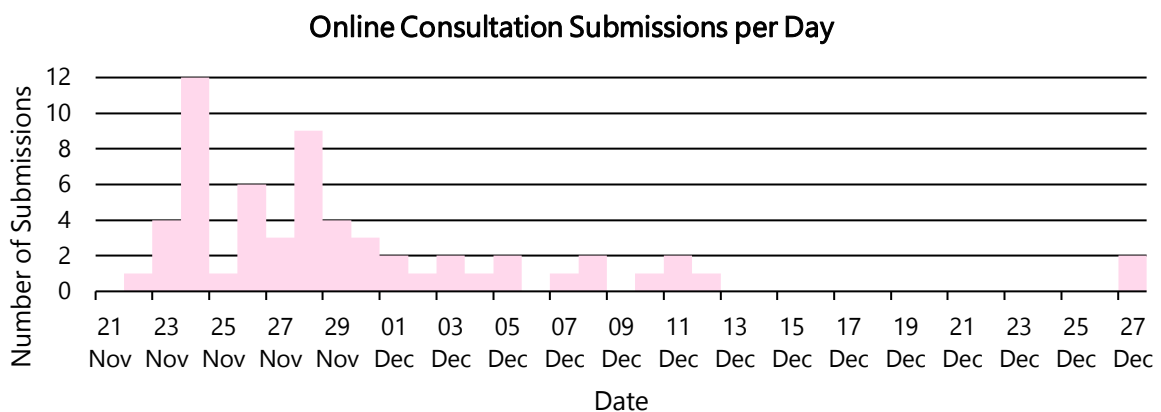


7. Public Response

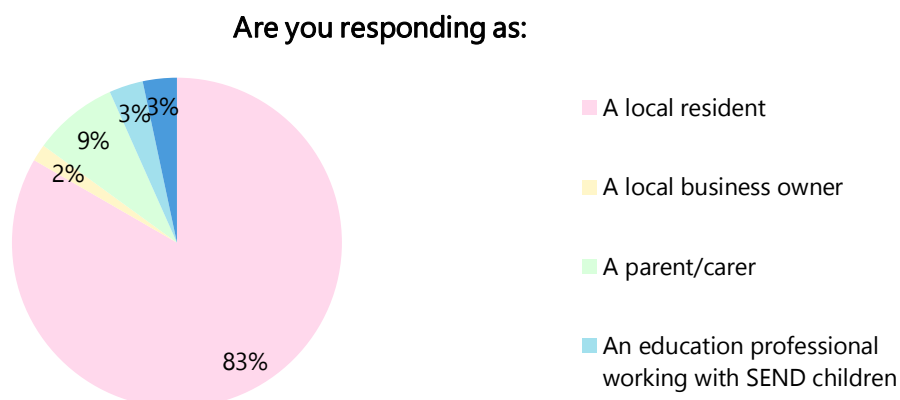
- 7.1. This section summarises the feedback received during the public consultation, including headline quantitative results from the online feedback form and the key themes raised in written comments.

Consultation Feedback

- 7.2. This section provides a quantitative analysis of the consultation responses received through the consultation website. A thematic summary of the comments explaining respondents' views is provided later in this section of this report.
- 7.3. A total of **60** individuals submitted feedback responses on the consultation website during the consultation period.

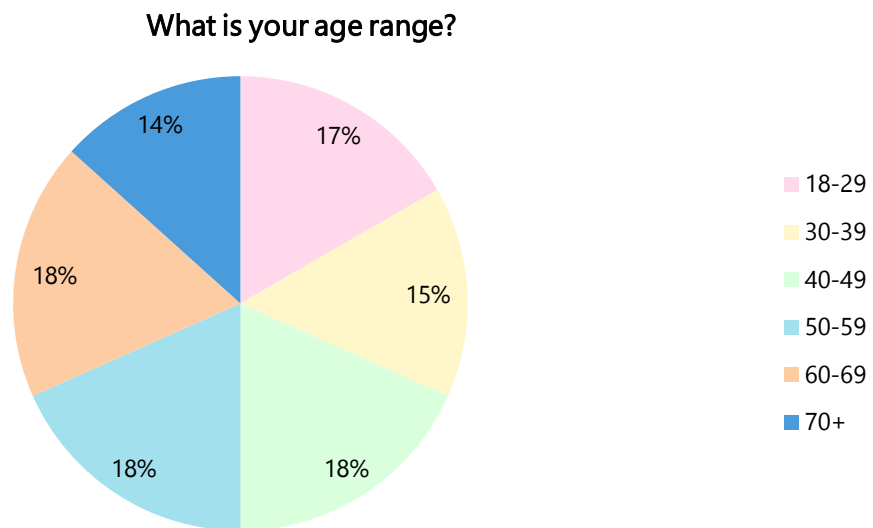


- 7.4. Of those who responded:
- 50 respondents identified themselves as local residents.
 - 5 respondents identified themselves as a parent/carer.
 - 2 respondents identified themselves as education professionals working with SEND children.
 - 1 respondent identified themselves a local business owner.
 - 1 respondent identified themselves as a local resident, parent/carer and business owner.
 - 1 respondent identified themselves as a local resident, parent and autistic person.





- 7.5. Most respondents (54) live locally in the SG5 postcode area, which covers Ickleford, west Hitchin, Pirton and surrounding rural villages in North Herts and parts of Central Bedfordshire. Responses were also received from residents in SG1 (1), SG4 (1), SG6 (2), SG15 (1) and SG16 (1).
- 7.6. Respondents were asked to identify their age range:
- 10 responded 18-29
 - 9 responded 30-39
 - 11 responded 40-49
 - 11 responded 50-59
 - 11 responded 60-69
 - 8 responded 70+



- 7.7. Overall, feedback was received predominantly from residents living close to the Site, and from respondents across a broad range of age groups.

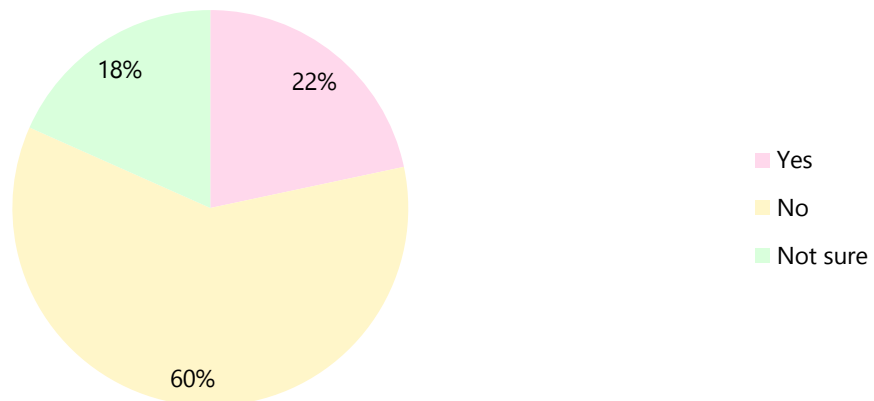


Overall views on the proposals

7.8. When asked whether they support the principle of development on this site:

- 36 respondents (60%) answered 'No'.
- 13 respondents (22%) answered 'Yes'.
- 11 respondents (18%) answered 'Unsure'.

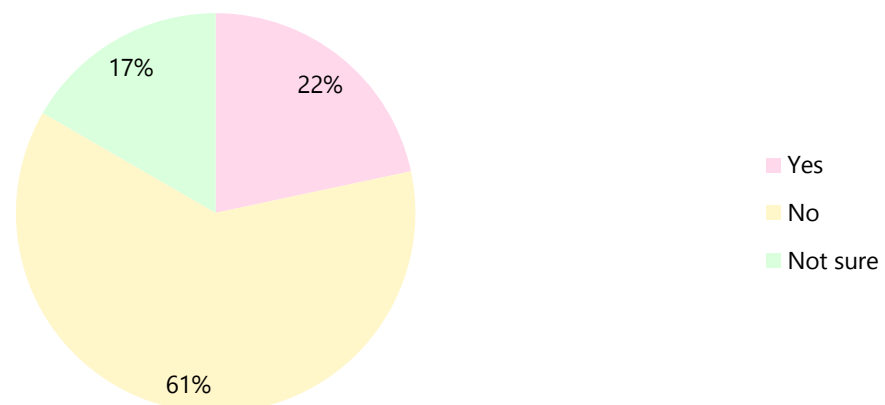
Do you support the principle of development on this site?



7.9. When asked, overall, if they supported the Icknield Fields proposals:

- 37 respondents (61%) answered 'No'.
- 13 respondents (22%) answered 'Yes'.
- 10 respondents (17%) answered 'Unsure'.

Overall, do you support the proposals for Icknield Fields



7.10. Overall, respondents are predominantly opposed to the proposals, with a minority supportive and a notable proportion unsure/undecided about the proposals. The similarity between responses to the "principle of development" and the "overall support" question suggests that views are closely linked to whether respondents consider development acceptable on this Site in principle. This is consistent with written comments, which frequently focus on the principle of building on open land and the perceived implications for the countryside setting and village character.



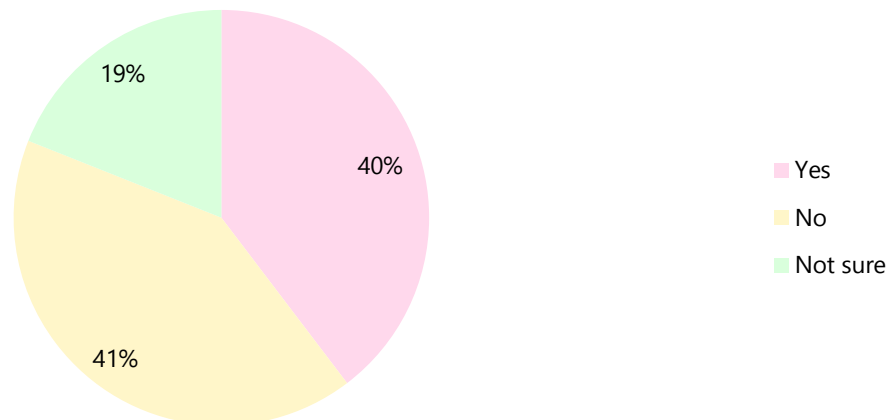
- 7.11. Importantly, later questions show that levels of support for some individual components of the masterplan are higher than overall support for the proposals, indicating that a proportion of respondents who oppose the proposals nonetheless recognise specific elements they consider to be beneficial, or remain open to persuasion depending on detail, evidence and mitigation.

SEN School

- 7.12. Respondents were asked if they support the principle of delivering a new SEN School at Icknield Fields:

- 24 (41%) answered 'No'.
- 23 (40%) answered 'Yes'.
- 11 (19%) answered 'Not sure'.
- 2 did not answer.

Do you support the principle of delivering a new SEND School at Icknield Fields?



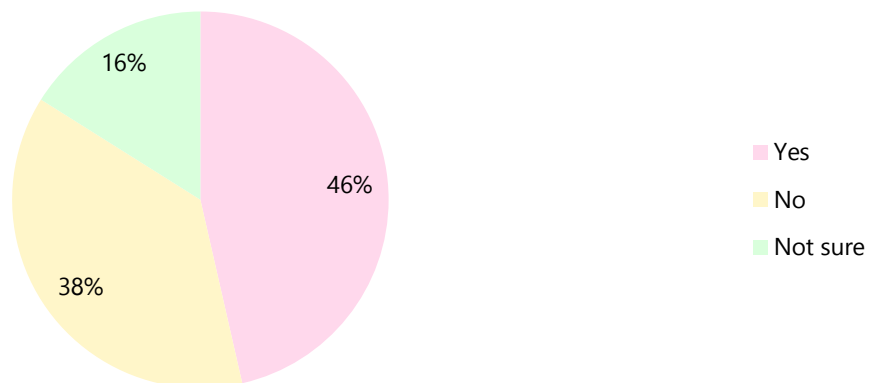
- 7.13. Responses on the SEN school were more evenly balanced than views on the proposals overall. All respondents who supported the proposals overall also supported the principal of the SEN school. In addition, several respondents who opposed the proposals overall nonetheless supported the SEN school in principle, suggesting a degree of conditional support for this element even where the wider scheme is not supported.
- 7.14. This suggests that, while many respondents objected to development on this site in principle, there is also recognition of the need for additional SEND provision.

Landscape-led approach and green space

- 7.15. Respondents were asked if they support the landscape-led approach to the masterplan:
- 26 (46%) answered 'Yes'.
 - 21 (38%) answered 'No'.
 - 9 (16%) answered 'Unsure'.
 - 4 did not answer.



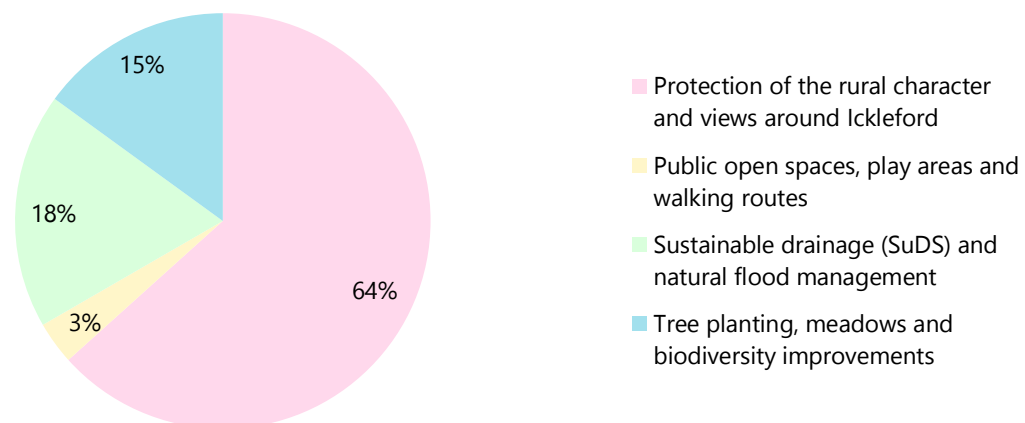
The proposals are landscape-led, with over 50% of the site as public open space, including the Icknield Way Green Link, parks, meadows and play areas. Do you support this landscape-led approach?



7.16. Respondents were asked to rank landscape and environmental features in terms of their importance. The most frequently ranked 'first priority' were:

- 38 respondents - Protection of the rural character and views around Ickleford.
- 11 respondents - Sustainable drainage and natural flood management.
- 9 respondents - Tree planting, meadows and biodiversity improvements.
- 2 respondents - Public open space, play areas and walking routes.

How important to you are the following landscape and environment features? (1st Choice)



7.17. These results indicate that the dominant landscape-related priority is the protection of rural character and views, which aligns with the overall pattern of principle-based concerns about development on open land. At the same time, nearly half of all respondents supported the landscape-led approach, suggesting that emphasis on green infrastructure is recognised by some respondents as a positive feature of the proposals, even where there may be disagreement about whether development should be permitted at this location.

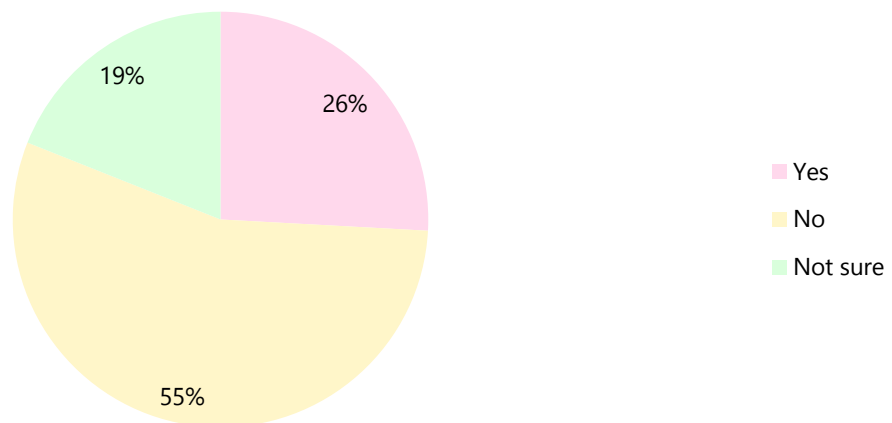


Homes and Affordable Housing

7.18. Respondents were asked if they support the approach of providing 50% affordable housing as part of the proposals:

- 32 (55%) answered 'No'.
- 15 (26%) answered 'Yes'.
- 11 (19%) answered 'Not sure'.
- 2 respondents did not answer this question.

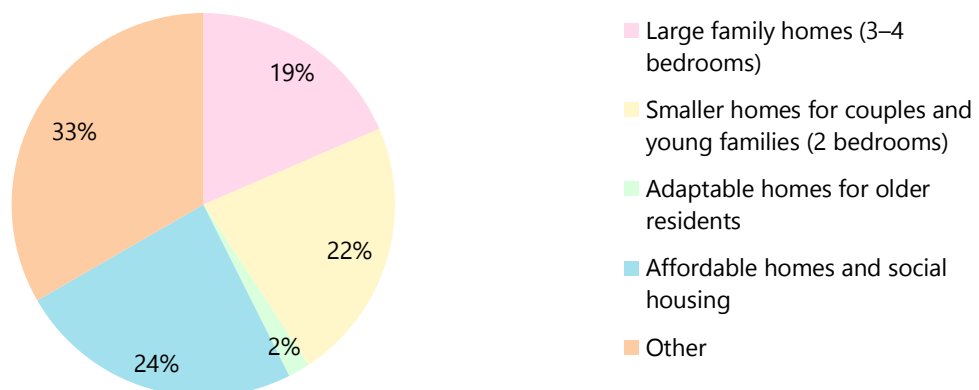
The hybrid application proposes approximately 250 homes, with 50% affordable housing. Do you support this approach?



7.19. Respondents were asked to identify the types of homes most needed locally. The frequency of responses is as follows:

- 13 - Affordable homes and social housing.
- 12 - Smaller homes for couples/young families (2-bed).
- 10 - Large family homes (3-4 bed).
- 1 - Adaptable homes for older residents.
- 18 - Other / free text comments.
- 6 respondents did not answer this question.

What types of homes are most needed locally?



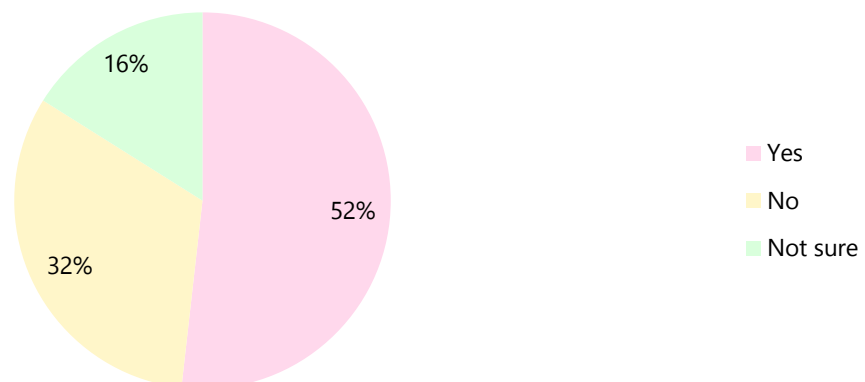


- 7.20. The largest single category was 'Other', with many respondents stating that no new homes are needed, or that infrastructure should come first. However, among respondents who selected specific housing types, the most frequently selected needs were affordable/social housing and smaller homes for younger households.
- 7.21. Overall, the response suggests that opposition is more closely linked to the principle and scale of development on this site than to rejection of affordable housing as an objective. This is reflected in the fact that "affordable homes/social housing" was one of the most frequently selected housing needs.

Walking, cycling and road safety

- 7.22. Respondents were asked if they support the proposed improvements to the Icknield Way Path and safer walking, cycling and equestrian crossings on Bedford Road.
- 29 (52%) answered 'Yes'.
 - 18 (32%) answered 'No'.
 - 9 (16%) answered 'Not sure'.

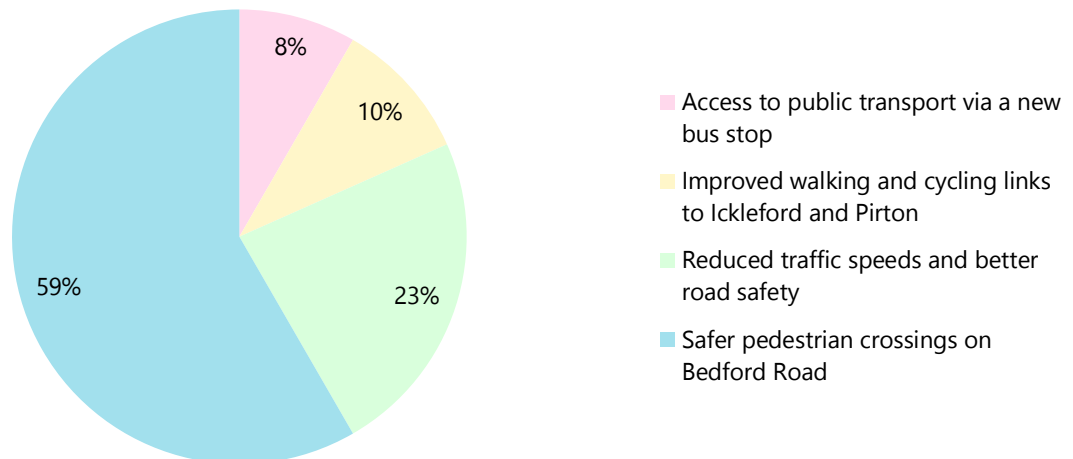
The proposals include improvements to the Icknield Way Path, new walking and cycling routes, and safer crossings on Bedford Road. Do you support these improvements?



- 7.23. Respondents were asked to rank their travel/movement priorities in terms of importance. The most frequently ranked top priorities were:
- 35 - Safer pedestrian crossings on Bedford Road.
 - 14 - Reduced traffic speeds and better road safety.
 - 6 - Improved walking and cycling links to Ickleford/Pirton.
 - 5 - Access to public transport via a new bus stop.



How important are the following travel improvements? (1st Choice)



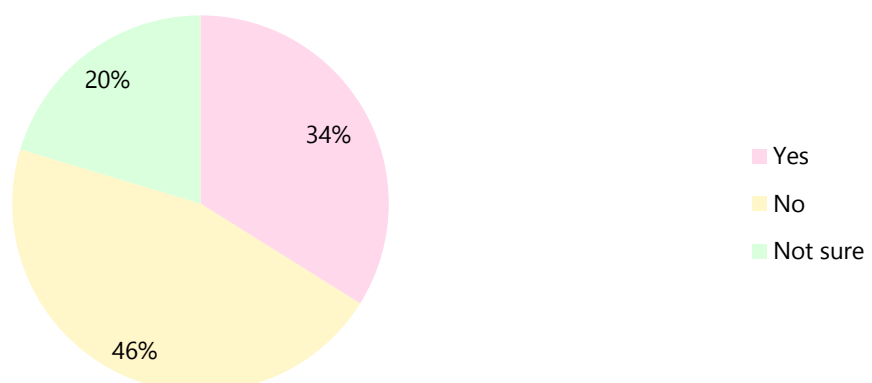
7.24. These results indicate that, regardless of views on the proposals overall, respondents place greater emphasis on road safety and pedestrian crossing improvements. Safer crossings were also one of the most frequently identified community benefits.

Sport and community facilities

7.25. Respondents were asked whether they support the proposed sports and community-uses in the masterplan:

- 27 (46%) answered 'No'.
- 20 (34%) answered 'Yes'.
- 12 (20%) answered 'Not sure'.
- 1 respondent did not answer this question.

The proposals include one new 3G all-weather pitch with community access, and safeguarded land for two future grass pitches. Do you support the sports and community use proposals?



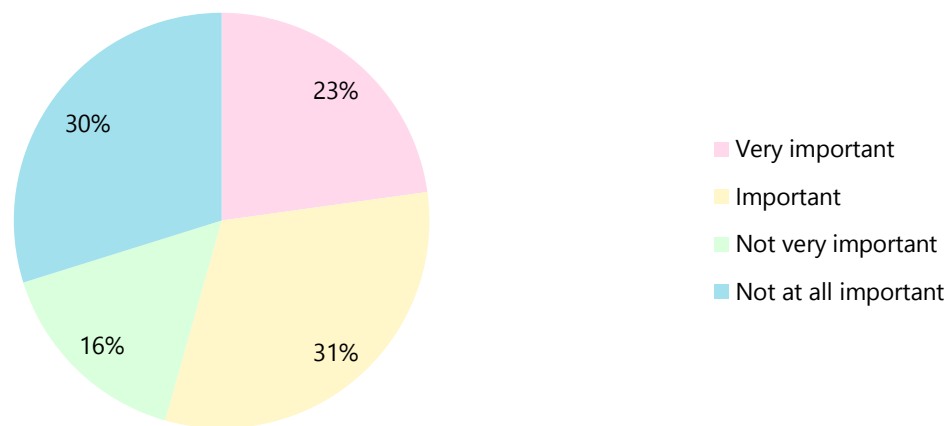
7.26. Respondents were asked how important these facilities for local sport and young people:

- 13 (23%) answered 'Very Important'.
- 18 (31%) answered 'Important'.



- 9 (16%) answered 'Not very important'.
- 3 respondents did not answer this question.

How important do you think these facilities are for local sport and young people?



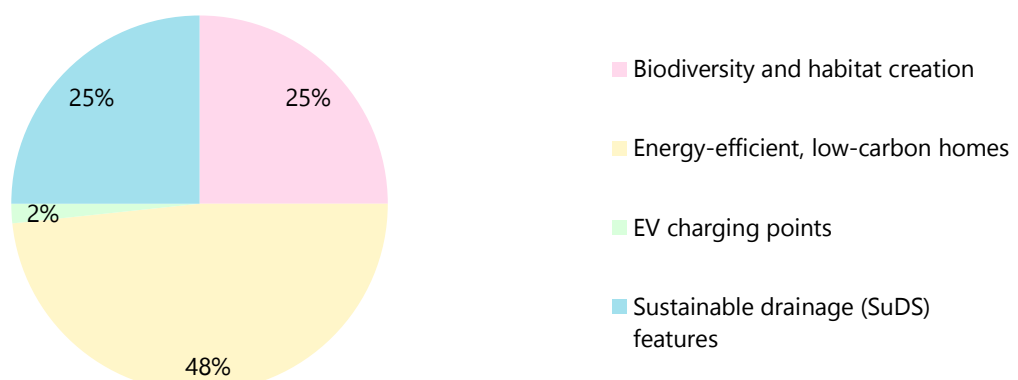
7.27. Responses indicate more varied views on sports and community provision, with a sizeable group seeing these facilities as important and another sizeable group considering them unnecessary. Where concerns were raised, they often relate to questions around local need, design, management and potential impacts.

Sustainability

7.28. Respondents were asked to rank their sustainability priorities. The most frequently ranked highest priorities were:

- 29 respondents – Energy efficient, low-carbon homes.
- 15 respondents – Biodiversity and habitat creation.
- 15 respondents – Sustainable drainage (SuDS) features.
- 1 respondent – EV Charging points.

The proposals include energy-efficient homes with EV charging, and at least 10% biodiversity net gain. How important are the following sustainability measures to you?





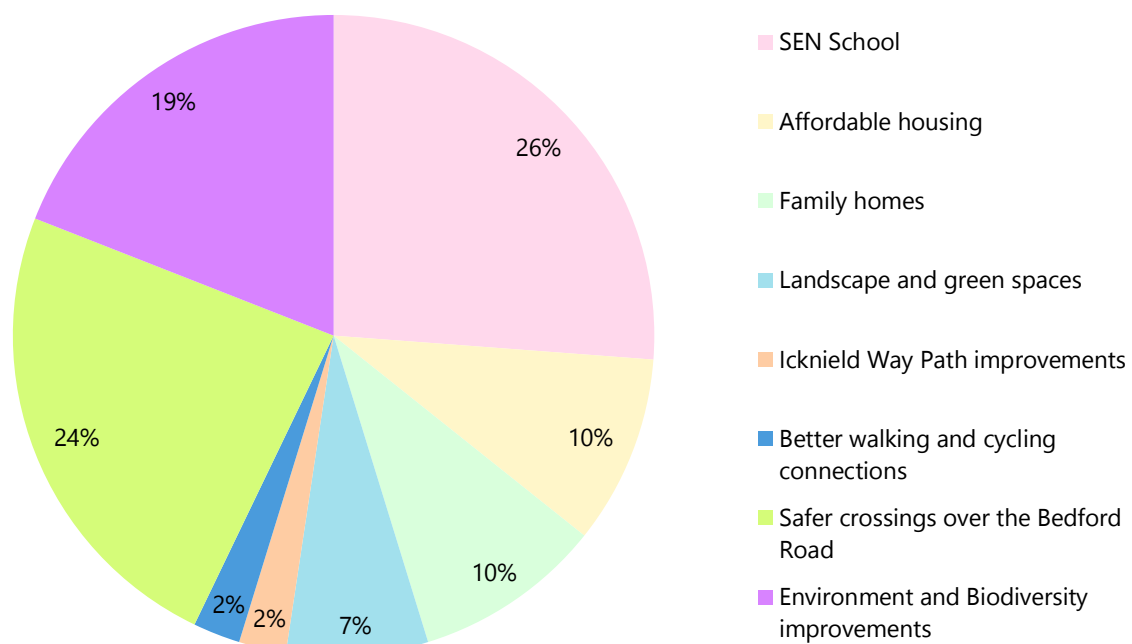
- 7.29. SuDS was most frequently ranked as the lowest priority (ranked fourth by 32 respondents), followed by EV charging (ranked fourth by 23 respondents). This suggests that respondents place greatest emphasis on energy efficiency and low-carbon homes, with more mixed views on the relative importance of SuDS and EV charging compared with other priorities.

Community Benefits

- 7.30. Respondents were asked to identify which aspect of the proposals they felt would be most beneficial for the local area. The table below sets out the frequency of responses. 18 respondents did not answer this question.

- 11 – SEN School.
- 10 – Safer crossings over Bedford Road.
- 8 – Environmental and biodiversity improvements.
- 4 – Affordable housing.
- 4 – Family homes.
- 3 – Landscape and green spaces.
- 1 – Better walking and cycling connections.
- 1 – Icknield Way Path improvements.

What aspects of the proposals do you think will be most beneficial for the local area?



- 7.31. Notwithstanding the overall level of opposition, respondents identified a clear set of perceived benefits and improvements, led by the SEN school and road safety/crossing measures. This reinforces that views are not uniformly negative across all components of the proposals.