

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Thomas Howe.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01597/PIP	Residential development of between 3 and 5 dwellings	Land On The North Side Of Stevenage Road St Ippolyts Hertfordshire

Submitted Plan Nos

Indicative Proposed Block Plan Existing Block Plan Site Location Plan

D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
NE4	Biodiversity and geological sites
SECN13	Protecting Green Belt Land
SP2	Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distrib
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
T1	Assessment of transport matters

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 No relevant history.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Neighbour Consultation –**

1x Representation:

- Seeks confirmation that no overlooking would occur into private garden.
- Seeks retention of existing foliage or enhancement to maintain privacy.

1x Objection:

- Makes reference to LPA ref. 26/00006/FP previously refused.
- Number of accidents at nearby junction onto the Wymondley by-pass and raises concern with regards the introduction of a new access potentially exacerbating the risks associated with this junction.

- Queues arise from vehicle movements within the area, causing delays to residents.
- School vehicle movements result in congestion on local roads.
- Vehicle movements during construction would potentially be harmful.
- Harm to welfare of ponies and equestrian occupants.
- Potential conflict with residents from equestrian uses.
- Seeks a full height fence panel to mitigate privacy losses.
- Concern with regards piecemeal approach to future development off the access.
- Proposed attenuation basin would be insufficient to address existing and proposed drainage concerns.
- Advises of vehicle accident on 11/7/26.
- Concerns regarding nature of road design and impacts to safety.

1x Support:

- Considers development to be on grey belt land.
- Looks forward to receipt of full application details
- Advises of relevant nearby decisions.

3.2 **Parish Council** – No Objection. Seeks moneys for the improvement of the junction with the A602 if possible, given provision of accident data.

3.3 **Environmental Health** –

Noise – Expects to see noise assessment at technical details stage owing to proximity to commercial land. Consideration of noise from road traffic and other sources would also be required.

Contamination – No concerns at this stage.

Air Quality – No Objection. Provides guidance with regards air quality.

3.4 **Waste and Recycling** – Preference is for waste vehicle to access and egress the site in a forward gear. Seeks swept path plan showing that this would be possible.

3.5 **Highways** – Trip generation would not materially affect the safe operation of the highway network. Site is within 400m of bus services on Stevenage Road and would therefore be suitably located to be connected with Stevenage, Letchworth, Baldock and other areas without requiring use of a private vehicle. An access road of adoptable width together with appropriate pedestrian connectivity can be accommodated within land under the applicant's control. Swept-path analysis has also been provided demonstrating that a standard Hertfordshire refuse vehicle can enter, manoeuvre within and exit the development in a forward gear.

3.6 **Ecology** – Concern raised with regard loss of permanent pasture habitat. Any development would be subject to mandatory 10% BNG, and whilst this is not within the scope of this application stage, it is unlikely to be deliverable within the site and may be required to be delivered on adjacent blue land. As the current site appears to contain semi-natural habitat which may be of interest for wildlife an ecological appraisal would be required to determine any potential impact on a protected species.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The application site comprises a ~0.49Ha parcel of land off Stevenage Road, to the north/east of the A602. To the east is an industrial site, to the north is green field land, and to the west is greenfield land, and the wider Kingshott School site. The site brushed over by the Green Belt and is located at approximately the halfway point between Hitchin and Little Wymondley.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Permission in principle is sought for the erection of a residential development of between 3 and 5 dwellings.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) explains that permission in principle is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing led development as part of a two-stage procedure. Permission in principle applications involve two stages. Stage 1 ('permission in principle stage'), is limited to the consideration of location, land use and the amount of development which, in the event of an approval, would leave the remaining matters to be considered in a technical detail application (Stage 2) (i.e. the 'technical details consent').
- 4.3.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications for planning permission, and therefore appeals and permission in principle, must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This application is a Stage 1 Permission in Principle application therefore the following matters are for consideration:

Location

- 4.3.3 An indicative block plan has been provided, with the red line plan showing the parcel of land being accessed off Stevenage Road, and projecting to the north of the adjoining industrial area to the east and other outbuildings to the west. A parcel of land to the north would remain outside of the red line plan. The application is within the Green Belt and is outside of the defined settlement boundaries of Hitchin to the west and Little Wymondley, to the East/South. Policy SP2 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 would therefore not comply with the provisions of this policy. It is considered that the exceptions described by Paragraph 154 of the NPPF would not apply to this development. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF sets out the requirements for other forms of development in the Green Belt including for the Grey Belt. These are set out below:

"The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*

d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below."

The NPPF Definition for Grey Belt is:

"For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development."

The five purposes of the Green Belt are set out below:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

4.3.4 It is noted that the site to the west of this conurbation, and to the east of Kingshott School was refused for various reasons including harm to the Green Belt, with specific reference to the development enabling the unrestricted sprawl of Hitchin and resulting in encroachment of the countryside in addition to its inappropriate nature. The application site is further east and is separated from the built core of Hitchin by this adjoining field and is within a loosely established and associated group of dwellings and buildings. It can therefore be considered as sufficiently different to the refused site to allow for the consideration of the development against the purposes of the Green Belt without prejudicing this decision. The Green Belt Assessment for East Herts, North Herts and Stevenage, prepared by LUC and dated March 2026 identifies the land as being within parcel HS4 of the Green Belt. It concludes that the wider parcel makes the following contributions to the purposes of the Green Belt:

Purpose A – Strong Contribution
Purpose B – Strong Contribution
Purpose D – Weak/No Contribution
Grey Belt - No

4.3.5 The PPGs advise that a strong contribution to Purpose A would include a site likely free of existing development, and that lacks physical features in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to be adjacent to or near to a large built-up area, and if developed would result in an incongruous pattern of development. The application site is broadly free from development, comprising green field land with post and rail fencing and maintained grass areas. It is considered that the tree belt, fencing and surrounding buildings would comprise physical features that could restrict and contain the development to the south, west and east. To the north, the 'red

line' area would extend out onto green field land north of these but would be approximately 40m to the west of an industrial/commercial zone, and south of a tree belt/boundary are to the north. Therefore, it can be considered that the site can be suitably contained by physical features. The site would not be adjacent to a large built-up area but would be approximately 250m from the sports fields associated with Kingshott School, or approximately 800m from the built core of Hitchin. The site can be considered as being near to a large built-up area, in this case, Hitchin, however, given the contained nature of the site within this conurbation, the site would not make a strong contribution to Purpose A and the development would therefore not directly enable the sprawl of Hitchin out into this part of the countryside.

- 4.3.6 A strong contribution to Purpose B is described by the PPGs as forming a substantial part of a gap between towns, and the development would likely result in the loss of visual separation between the two towns. The site is located approximately halfway between Hitchin and Little Wymondley and is set between Hitchin and Stevenage. The site is considered to comprise a modest portion of this 'gap' and would not develop a substantial part of the gap, nor would it result in a loss of visual separation between the towns. Therefore, the site would not make a strong contribution to Purpose B. There are no historic towns in proximity to the site, and therefore, Purpose D would not be contravened. It is acknowledged that the LUC report concludes that the wider parcel does not comprise Grey Belt land, however, given that the application site comprises a modest proportion of the wider parcel, and given the above consideration of the site-specific characteristics, the development would not contravene the purposes of the Green Belt.
- 4.3.7 In terms of the provisions of NPPF 155, the proposal would utilise grey belt land. There would be no assets described by footnote 7 that would be detrimentally impacted by the proposed development. The LPA cannot presently demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. Therefore, there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed, in this case, for market housing. Bus stops and a footpath are in proximity to the site, allowing for sustainable access into Hitchin and the wider area, with various amenities and transport connections available. Other bus connections to Wymondley and Stevenage are also available a short distance from the site. Highways have also touched on this in their representation. Therefore, the proposal would be set on grey belt land and would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and under the provisions of NPPF footnote 55 there is no need to consider harm to openness.

Land Use:

- 4.3.8 The application seeks to erect up to 5 dwellings within the site, with the surrounding area comprising residential dwellings, low-intensity private equestrian uses and to the east, industrial and commercial uses.
- 4.3.9 The prevailing land use in the surrounding area is not solely for residential purposes, however, it is noted that the predominant land use to the south of the site, adjacent to the access and facing onto Stevenage Road is for residential dwellings. It can therefore be considered that subject to suitable noise mitigation measures and assessments being undertaken at the technical matter stage, the location is compatible with residential uses. It is noted that equestrian uses may be odour and noise generating, however, these are not intensive and are unlikely to conflict with the use of the site for residential dwellings. The representation from Environmental Health is acknowledged, specifically, advising

that noise information is required at the technical matter stage, but is not objectionable at this stage. This representation alongside other observations is considered to provide sufficient information to conclude that residential land use in this location would be acceptable.

Amount of Development:

- 4.3.10 The indicative site plan shows five dwellings, accessed off Stevenage Road. The dwellings are shown to benefit from driveway access onto the track, backing onto the western boundary of the site, with the eastern side either landscaped or incorporating visitor parking bays. The site would measure approximately 0.49Ha in area, or approximately 10.2 dwellings per Ha if all five are constructed. This level of development density is not considered to be unduly dense, and given the well-proportioned plots of the indicative plan, is not considered to result in a cramped form of development at odds with the locality. It is noted that the development would nearly double the number of dwellings within this group, however, given the layout and its semi-rural location, this would not be unacceptable.

Other Matters:

- 4.3.11 Matters such as noise assessments, vehicular and pedestrian access, parking, scale, design and appearance, landscaping, relationship with neighbours and environmental matters such as land contamination, flood risk and ecological issues will be considered at the technical details stage should permission in principle be granted.

Procedural Matters:

- 4.3.12 The DLUHG sets out guidance (Gov.uk) on what is required in the determination of a 'permission in principle' application. No conditions can be attached to the grant of permission only confirmation of site location, the type of development and the amount of amount development (Paragraph: 020 Reference ID: 58-020-20180615).
- 4.3.13 The default duration of a permission in principle is 3 years therefore there is no requirement to specify the time limit (Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 58-014-20180615).
- 4.3.14 Local Planning Authorities can inform applicants at what they expect to see at the technical details stage (Paragraph: 045 Reference ID: 58-045-20180615). It is recommended that this can be done by attaching an informative to the grant of permission in principle. In this case the following matters would be expected to form part of a technical details consent application:
- ☐ Scaled drawings showing all floor plans and elevations and slab levels of the proposed dwellings
 - ☐ External materials and details of hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatment
 - ☐ Preliminary Risk Assessment concerning land contamination
 - ☐ Noise Impact assessment and if necessary, details of mitigation
 - ☐ Provision of electric vehicle re-charging infrastructure
 - ☐ Pedestrian and vehicular visibility splays
 - ☐ Vehicle tracking to demonstrate safe and usable parking spaces
 - ☐ Construction management statement
 - ☐ Cycle parking

- ☐ Drainage details
- ☐ Details of refuse and recycling provision
- ☐ BNG

4.4 **Conclusion and Planning Balance**

- 4.4.1 The proposed development would be in accordance with national, local plan and Neighbourhood Plan planning policies and is acceptable in terms of the location of development, the proposed land use and the amount of development.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None applicable.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That Permission in Principle be **GRANTED**.

Proactive Statement:

1. Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Informative/s:

1. An application for the approval of Technical Details Consent must be made no later than the expiration of three years from the date of this decision notice, after this period the Planning in Principle shall lapse.
2. The applicant is advised that the following matters would be expected to form part of the Technical Details stage following the grant of permission in principle:
 - Scaled drawings showing all floor plans and elevations and slab levels of the proposed dwellings
 - External materials and details of hard and soft landscaping including boundary treatment
 - Preliminary Risk Assessment concerning land contamination
 - Noise Impact assessment
 - Provision of electric vehicle re-charging infrastructure
 - Pedestrian and vehicular visibility splays
 - Vehicle tracking to demonstrate safe and usable parking spaces
 - Construction management statement
 - Cycle parking
 - Drainage details
 - Details of refuse and recycling provision
 - Details of an ecological survey, habitat plan, statutory metric, and details of

biodiversity net gain units.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 6 August 2026	