

Development and Conservation Manager
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

Our ref: AC001 – 6

22 December 2025

Dear Sir

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
LAND EAST OF BEDFORD ROAD AND NORTH OF THE PRIORY SCHOOL,
HITCHIN**

On behalf of Arte Construction Limited and Simon Ward & Richard Horwood, I submit herewith an application for planning permission to create 50 no. one, two, three and four bedroom houses and apartments plus associated landscaping, open space, roads, drainage and other infrastructure on the land to the east of Bedford Road and north of The Priory School, on the northern edge of Hitchin.

The application site is a broadly rectangular plot of unused land with an area of 1.76 hectares (4.35 acres). It was previously used as a paddock and for grazing and is still predominantly grassland, with hedges and trees on the boundaries that are believed to be remnants of former field boundaries. The site is enclosed by Bedford Road to the west, with houses on the opposite side of the street that face towards it, while behind them the suburban area on the north western side of the town stretches away to the west and south west. To the south and east of the site are the grounds of The Priory School, with the school buildings to the south east, the car park for the school to the south and to the east, behind a barrier of mature trees, a football pitch with an artificial surface. To the north, stables, a paddock and a training arena sit between the site and the River Oughton, with a small group of houses beyond that which fills the majority of the gap between Hitchin and Ickleford. The site is relatively flat, with an almost imperceptible slope down to the northern boundary.

The adopted local plan designates the application site as part of the Green Belt, although it is an anomalous finger that projects into the built-up area of Hitchin so that it is enclosed by development on three sides that is excluded from the Green Belt. The December 2024 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) introduced grey belt land within the Green Belt and changed the circumstances surrounding the designation in the local plan. If the site can be shown to be grey belt, it is possible for residential development to be considered as not inappropriate, and this application confirms that the restriction on development in the Green Belt no applies to the site.

The application site is grey belt: it is clear that it does not contribute to purposes (a), (b) and (d) of the Green Belt and that there are no areas or assets that need to be protected, securing the definition as shown in Figure 1 of the Planning Practice Guidance on Green Belt. Furthermore, development of the site would not undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt that circles Hitchin because, as a small area of open land that projects into the built-up area of the town, it has little relationship with the remainder of the Green Belt in the area. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF sets out four requirements where the development of homes should not be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt and the proposed scheme demonstrates that all four requirements are met: the site is grey belt and does not undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt, there is a demonstrable unmet need for new homes because the district council cannot show a five-year housing land supply, the site is in a sustainable location, and the proposed scheme meets the Golden Rules. With regard to the latter, the application proposes that 50% of the new homes are designated as affordable housing, will contribute to improvements to infrastructure through planning obligations, and includes an area of new green space at the northern end of the site that will be accessible to the wider community and has a positive impact on the landscaped setting of the new homes. The proposed scheme is in compliance with the five points shown in Figure 2 of the Planning Practice Guidance on Green Belt, meaning that the creation of 50 new homes is shown to be “not inappropriate” in the Green Belt.

The proposed scheme shows that the main point of access to the site is at the northern end of the frontage to Bedford Road, and that a new area of public open space sits to the north of it as a buffer against the open land to the north and to create a transition from the Green Belt along the valley of the river. The estate road heads towards the eastern side of the site so that new homes can be placed with their gardens running up to the existing trees that mark the edge of the school, with a generous offset between the buildings and the existing landscaping. The road splits in two so that both spurs can return to the Bedford Road frontage: the road that runs through the middle of the site serves detached houses that create a new street scene to the main road while the southern route provides access to a pair of blocks of apartments. A landscaped edge to Bedford Road is proposed, with a tree-lined swale required as part of the surface water drainage scheme and the private drives setting the new homes back from the edge of the road. Footpath links provide short cuts for pedestrians, encouraging residents to choose sustainable travel options and to walk for shorter journeys.

A carefully considered palette of facing bricks, roof tiles and surfacing is proposed to be employed, enlivened by projecting elements, a varied roofscape, door canopy detailing and variations in plan form to respond to the layout of the site, using materials with a reduced environmental impact wherever possible. Common details for elements such as doors, canopies and boundary treatments are also employed to create a uniform backdrop against which the landscaping and public realm can be highlighted. As such, the scheme seeks to define its own character, responding to its position where Bedford Road meets the edge of the built-up area and making clear that the new homes are a later addition to the suburban area to the north and north west of the historic town centre: it is expected that the appearance of the scheme can help create and define a sense of place.

This application is submitted through Planning Portal in PDF format and comprises the following information:

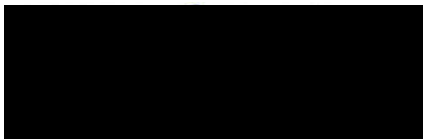
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|--|------------------------|
| 1. Covering letter | |
| 2. Application form | |
| 3. Location Plan | AC001-PL-01 |
| 4. Development Layout | AC001-PL-02 rev. B |
| 5. Soft Works | I496-01 rev. B |
| 6. Hard Works | I496-02 rev. B |
| 7. Opportunities and Constraints | I496-03 rev. B |
| 8. Proposed Access Arrangement and Visibility Assessment | RAP-DR-TP-3200 |
| 9. Detailed Layout | AC001-PL-03 rev. A |
| 10. Parking Layout | AC001-PL-04 rev. B |
| 11. Garden Areas Layout | AC001-PL-05 rev. A |
| 12. Storey Heights Layout | AC001-PL-06 rev. A |
| 13. Refuse Layout | AC001-PL-07 rev. A |
| 14. Materials Layout | AC001-PL-08 rev. A |
| 15. Affordable Housing Location Plan | AC001-PL-09 rev. A |
| 16. Fire Strategy Plan | AC001-PL-10 rev. A |
| 17. Apartment Block A, Floor Plans | AC001-HA-BKA-01 |
| 18. Apartment Block A, Elevations | AC001-HA-BKA-02 rev. A |
| 19. Apartment Block B, Floor Plans | AC001-HA-BKB-01 |
| 20. Apartment Block B, Elevations | AC001-HA-BKB-02 rev. A |
| 21. House Type A – Aa, Plans and Elevations | AC001-PD-Aa-01 |
| 22. House Type B – Ba, Plans and Elevations | AC001-PD-Ba-01 |
| 23. House Type C – Ca, Plans and Elevations | AC001-PD-Ca-01 |
| 24. House Type D – Da, Plans and Elevations | AC001-PD-Da-01 |
| 25. House Type E – Ea, Plans and Elevations | AC001-PD-Ea-01 rev. A |
| 26. House Type F – Fa, Plans and Elevations | AC001-PD-Fa-01 rev. A |
| 27. House Type G – Ga, Plans and Elevations | AC001-PD-Ga-01 |
| 28. House Type HA – HAa, Plans and Elevations | AC001-HA-HAa-01 |
| 29. House Type HB – HBa, Plans and Elevations | AC001-HA-HBa-01 |
| 30. House Type HC – HCa, Plans and Elevations | AC001-HA-HCa-01 |
| 31. Concept Street Elevations | CSE-01 rev. B |
| 32. Air Quality Assessment (September 2025) | |
| 33. Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Version 003 (01 December 2025) | |
| 34. Archaeological Desk Based Assessment, Version 2 (November 2022) | |
| 35. Design and Access Statement (December 2025) | |
| 36. Ecological Impact Assessment, Version 1 (December 2025) | |
| 37. Energy Strategy, Revision R1 (22 October 2025) | |
| 38. Environmental Noise Assessment (30 September 2025) | |
| 39. Flood Risk Assessment, Revision P01 (December 2025) | |
| 40. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Version 3 (28 November 2025) | |
| 41. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, A3 Figures Volume (31 August 2025) | |
| 42. Landscape Specification and Management Plan, Version 2 (29 November 2025) | |
| 43. Landscape Strategy (28 November 2025) | |

- 44. Planning Statement (December 2025)
- 45. Statement of Community Involvement
- 46. Statutory Biodiversity Metric (15 December 2025) in xlsx format with macros disabled for online submission
- 47. Sustainability Statement, Revision R2 (November 2025)
- 48. Transport Statement, V3 (December 2025)

The application fee of £31,750.00 has been paid through Planning Portal.

I trust that you will find the proposed scheme to be acceptable and that you will be able to grant planning permission to create 50 no. one, two, three and four bedroom houses and apartments plus associated landscaping, open space, roads, drainage and other infrastructure on the land to the east of Bedford Road, Hitchin, at your earliest convenience. However, if you have any queries or should you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

Yours faithfully



MICHAEL SMITH
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