

ICKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL



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Mr Thomas Howe
Planning Officer/Development Management
North Hertfordshire Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6H

10th July, 2025

Dear Mr Howe,

Re: Planning Application: 25/01904/FP - Land to the Rear of 34, Arlesey Road, Ickleford.

We advise you that Ickleford Parish Council **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this Planning Application, known from the Local Plan as IC1. Please see below, the categories and reasons for our objections.

1. The Land

This land, which is of good grass/grazing quality, is well within the Green Belt surrounding Ickleford and it is in our opinion, that during the Autumn/Winter months, this development will be observed from the Grade 1 St Katharine's Church, which is located within the Conservation Area of Ickleford.

Before being used as pastureland, the proposed Site was used as an apple orchard for many years. A layout plan of the orchard, used many times within the Application, shows the trees being many in number. Today one still remains. It is, therefore, our perspective, that if the land is no longer required for pasture, which has been proven by the Applicant, then this should once again, because of its location, be returned to an 'Orchard for All', Woodland for the benefit of our clean air policy, or added to the North Herts Council "habitat bank" with improved public access.

2. The Development

2.1 It is our considered opinion that this development is not within the Local Plan prospective. It holds no future for the Ickleford or local homeowners of tomorrow. Because of its size, there is no assisted housing or the chance of even a starter home. The Development consists only of 2 x 2 bedroomed semi-detached houses, 2 x 3 bedroomed semi-detached houses, the remaining being either 4 or 5 bedroomed, the prices of which will most likely be aimed at homeowners looking to 'downsize' from more palatial homes perhaps, because of our locality, from London.

This was also the case with IC2. The Planning Application with all its promises, turned into homes being sold around the £million sectors.

2.2 It is felt that for IC1, insufficient parking has been allowed.

Looking to the future with teenage children acquiring cars, and the family car now being an SUV or 4x4, the majority of which are unable to fit into garages, there is the possibility this development will need parking for over 20 vehicles. It will be impossible to accommodate all vehicles within the boundary of every house, leading inevitably to on road parking. Being a single-track road, as is Duncots Close, this will be chaotic.

Not only does the development have inadequate private parking, but also there is insufficient parking for the visitor to the development with a figure of five spaces only being made available.

With all the above, this in itself, whilst looking at the plans, will cause insufficient room for manoeuvrability not only for residents and visitors, but refuse, delivery and more importantly emergency vehicles.

Refuse vehicles, following the rule that they must leave the road in a forward gear, will have no other choice but to reverse into the site, endangering those in Duncots Close especially the houses built next to the proposed entrance/boundary to the development.

Bin storage areas are designed to accommodate three bins only, what is proposed for the fourth?

2.3 Through bad over development layout, the residents of Duncots Close, to the West and South of the Site, will find their privacy impeded by the loss of seclusion in their gardens and homes, by being overlooked.

2.4 Concern has been raised by the Residents of Duncots Close, as to who actually owns the land between them and the proposed development? The land in question presently supports, not only one of Duncots Close streetlights, but also their fire hydrant, soakaway and more importantly their utilities.

The poor Site Plans have not considered, that whilst the area may now be covered by established hedging, nonetheless, they have planned the new gardens on top of the Duncots Close utilities – gas, electric and water. This emphasises the fact that too much land has been taken, by the developer, to accommodate the Site's design.

3. Flood Risk and Waste Drainage/Sewage System

3.1 Flood Risk

The Parish Council at this juncture, would like to point out that once again Google Maps, with all its mistakes, has been used in this Application. Ickleford is situated nowhere near the River Purwell and that the river in question, that runs along the Eastern side of the Parish, is in fact the River Hiz, which along with its tributary, the River Oughton are very important Chalk streams, which carry their own protection,

being, and we cannot emphasise this enough, **two of the surviving 200 chalk streams in the World.**

IC1 has always been classed as 'naturally' wet, given its location and although categorised as Flood Risk 1, we must always be aware that Climate Change is with us and the future problems it will undoubtedly bring.

It has been brought to our attention that certain Insurance Companies now class this area as a flood plain to the point of house insurance carrying a premium to cover this, as Climate Change happens.

With the water table for Ickleford very high, being situated within a river valley. It was disappointing therefore, to read that the Flood Risk Summary Statement and Substantial Surface Water Drainage Strategy document, included with the Application, states: The SFRA "that no historic surface water flooding incidents within the vicinity of the Site", with Duncots Close suffering severe flooding of water and sewage after severe storms, this statement is most certainly untrue.

We were also surprised to read that the Flood Report was based upon information obtained from others and that drawings contained in the report are based on information available at the time of production and should not be used as detailed design for construction purposes!

With the Developer intimating that flood and surface run-off water will be directed to the River Hiz via the present Swale, the Parish Council strongly objects to this decision, bearing in mind our earlier and highlighted explanation above, regarding the delicate nature of the Hiz chalk stream, which supports ecology in trout, voles and otters, and thus, must be kept pure. Run-off (commonly known as fish kill), especially from roads and footpaths, contain a high density of contaminants, namely oil, petrol, diesel, rubber dust and many more, which would damage the delicate ecological balance of the river and therefore, all waste and run-off water must be directed into another more appropriate and efficient system to be filtered and disposed of.

3.2 Waste Drainage/Sewage System

Whilst Anglian Water are not in a position to prevent the use of their system, if there is sufficient capacity (their figures are worked out on sewage only and do not take into account run-off water) they do however, acknowledge that Ickleford's Victorian single pipe structure, is unable to cope with rainwater and sewage after a heavy rainfall, emanating in a backwash of sewage rising in the homes and gardens in Duncots Close, Laurel Way and Lower Green. It is important to consider therefore, that should this development go ahead, that not only would it suffer the same predicament, but would exacerbate the wastewater and sewage problems already suffered in Duncots Close and Laurel Way, of which, Anglian Water have given no indication of modernising.

This problem has also been indicated in our Neighbourhood Plan Section 9.36 2022-2035.

4. Archaeology

- 4.1 We feel that the archaeology for this particular development, bearing in mind its location, will prove, although subject to flooding, positive. Located near to both the Icknield Way and Hicca Way and with findings already located of both the Iron and Bronze age, this Site will be of great historical interest. Aerial photographs have shown cropmarks of the Bronze and Iron age too and last but not least with Ickleford once being in the Parish of Pirton the Anglo-Saxon connection may also be found at Ickleford sites.

5. Ecology

- 5.1 NHC Local Plan Policy 14 relates to nature conservation and will be saved in the Local Plan:

Nature Conservation for Local Nature Reserves, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Nature Reserves of the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and sites of local Wildlife Significance, the Council will preserve their wildlife importance by not normally granting planning permission for development proposals in these sites, or which may harm their value, and will seek their continued management for nature conservation

For sites of Wildlife Value, the Council will not normally grant planning permission for development proposals which do not take account of and encourage the potential nature conservation value of the site.

Elsewhere, or when a development proposal is acceptable, the Council will expect development proposals to take account of, and where possible, to show improvements to the nature conservation value of the site and its surroundings. In addition, the Council may require the preparation and implementation of a management scheme to maintain or enhance the site's nature conservation value. Hertfordshire have produced a document: Guidance on applying 'Hertfordshire's Ecological Networks' within the planning system, which includes the following paragraph describing planning applications for 'purple' or 'category 2' land:

"These patches contain habitats not currently qualifying under S41 of the NERC Act, but with high potential to do so. Whilst not receiving the same level of statutory and policy-based protection as the green areas, they should nonetheless be avoided by development and protect by the development management system where reasonable to do so. This is because they are important components of ecological networks, and it is much quicker, less risky and more cost-effective to restore these habitats than to create new ones elsewhere".

5.2 Wildlife

The Site, backs onto an area, although privately owned, is of natural beauty and which is enjoyed and admired by many locals and visitors alike. Because of its careful management, it has become a natural habitat for many species, namely deer, foxes, rabbits, barn owls and many more, that have made this area not only their home but also their hunting ground.

During 2007 a Barn Owl project was set up to help protect the dwindling numbers. Many Landowners in Ickleford, Pirton and Holwell, were encouraged to support this programme by permitting the use of specific trees to carry Barn Owl boxes. (See Appendix A)

The project was and still is a great success. Barn owls are no longer endangered, but surveys are still carried out every year to ensure their continued growth.

IC1, was just one of those areas, sustaining three Barn owl boxes, affixed to good healthy trees. Although not every year did the boxes help to produce Barn owl chicks, they did however, encourage Stock Doves and Kestrels, both of which are amber listed endangered species. (See Appendix A).

Since 2023, the Barn Owl Group have been dissuaded in attending these paddocks (IC1) and the Barn Owl boxes have fallen into disrepair and what would appear, the trees felled.

Regardless of the report on Ecology accompanying the Application, it is our belief that past habits have shown that these paddocks can not only support unendangered wildlife, but it has been seen to encourage those birds that need help to survive, namely the Stock Dove, Kestrel and as seen nesting in the only surviving apple tree, starlings which are also amber listed endangered species.

With so much nature on its doorstep, we feel sure that deer, foxes, rabbits, hedgehogs and many other species, would follow their own created corridors and visit the Site on a regular basis, especially adjoining the natural habitat already mentioned.

If nothing else, we must be seen to protect what we have been given to appreciate and admire and not let unnecessary development wipe out yet more wildlife habitat.

5.3 Grassland

The grassland with its natural hedgerow will be lost by this development. The grass, although now kept mown, was horse-grazed and yet its excellent quality is now dismissed as poor and only fit to become a building site.

The grassland has full recovery potential and therefore could be important for grass snake habitat, foraging areas for small mammals as well as for insects and wild plants.

5.4 Hedgerows

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important hedgerows' from being removed, (uprooted or destroyed). Hedgerows are protected if they are at least 30 years old and meet at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of schedule 1, for example, woody trees (listed in the Hedgerows Regulations) within the hedgerow.

The mature hedgerow on the boundaries of IC1 is considered as having high potential for breeding birds. The removal of hedgerows around the existing field will result in the loss of habitat and the disturbance of nesting birds

The construction and development of IC1 would affect nesting birds for at least 2-3 years. Any new planting would then take time to establish any suitable nesting sites and habitats. Therefore, net loss of habitat is indicated.

5.5 Hedgehogs

If the Site is to be fenced and hedgehog 'holes' created to allow hedgehogs throughout the Site, how will this mitigation be protected and continued once the dwellings are privately owned?

6. Travel

The Developer has given no consideration to the entry and exiting of this development. It has been assumed that this conundrum will be executed by the use of Duncots Close.

No thought has been given to the lack of paving and therefore safety of residents, both from the new development or Duncots Close, who have suddenly to take extra safety precautions every time they leave their homes. As the numbers of vehicles grow within the new development, so does the risk of an accident, purely through the lack of pavements, which are at present non-existent and with no capacity to install them.

Duncots Close is a small cul-de-sac development of detached houses approached by a narrow tar/blocked paved road. Refuse vehicles reverse into the road for ease of manoeuvrability and residents, at present, arrange for their bins to be at one point of collection, to protect their frontages from HGV damage. Children, because of the safe environment are free to play at will, this will be curbed with the increased traffic bringing new hazards, for example delivery vehicles that travel at speed, the situation exacerbated by the entrance to the cul-de-sac being used by opportunistic drivers to park whilst collecting children from the Village school, visiting the Shop/Larder and other activities throughout the year.

It is therefore in our opinion that Duncots Close would be unable to accommodate, because of its layout and size; vehicles using this road to enter and exit the new development. It should in fact, be afforded the safety of being a 'gated' development, as has been the case with Green Man Close.

With the Village school reaching capacity, it is inevitable that families will have to look further afield for education. This in itself will encourage the use of the family car, with its added pollution and additional dangers for the residents of Duncots Close as these vehicles manoeuvre in and out of the new development.

7. Future Development Versus Local Plan

We have to ask the question, is this development necessary and will it fulfil the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the latest Standard Method for Housing Needs Assessment (April 2025)?

At the time of the Local Plan initiation, land that could be plucked legally from the Green Belt, was hard to come by, then local Landowners came forward with the solution. At the time, regarding development, no one knew what other sites were going to become available.

Regarding Ickleford, five new sites have been identified, since the initiation of the Local Plan and, in some cases, have already been built, namely Green Man Close and Ickleford Manor, numbering 27 houses. The other three sites, Lodge Court, Arnolds Farm and Bowmans Mill, are in one case nearing completion, one just about to commence and in the case of Bowmans, we await an UpToDate Planning Application. Housing numbers for these three sites total approximately 86.

With the completion of IC2, inclusion of the expected IC3 with its 100+ houses, and the unexpected sites totalling approximately 115, we feel that Ickleford has achieved more than expected towards the housing shortage. We therefore have to ask, is IC1, with all its location, site and design problems, a necessary and worthy development, that has been proven will bring nothing to the Local Plan ideals, but accomplish more expensive houses that only a select few can afford?

IN CONCLUSION

- The Land – is of good quality grass/grazing land and should be preserved.
- The Development – Is not within the Local Plan prospective.
- Flood Risk/Waste Drainage/Sewage System – Would increase the problems already suffered by Duncots Close and Laurel Way.
- Archaeology – The Site may be of historical interest.
- Ecology – Endangered species on Site, must be acknowledged and protected.
- Travel – No consideration has been shown to Duncots Close and its Residents.
- Future Development Versus Local Plan – Is this development necessary.

It is felt by Ickleford Parish Council that the conclusive issues above significantly and demonstrably far outweigh the benefits of new homes being built on this Site and we therefore reiterate that we **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this Planning Application.

Yours sincerely,

Kathy Goldie

Cllr Kathy Goldie
Chairman Ickleford Parish Council

Cc: District Councillor Louise Peace
County Councillor David Barnard

APPENDIX A



ADULT FLYING FROM NEST BOX



KESTREL CHICK ABOVE AND ADULT BELOW

