

Hitchin Forum

CARING FOR OUR TOWN

29 Bearton Road
Hitchin
SG5 1UE
9 February 2026

Planning Control
NHDC
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
SG6 3JF

Attention of Paul Chaston

Dear Sirs

Planning Application 25/03234/FP

Land East of Bedford Road and North of Priory School, Hitchin

I am writing to you on behalf of Hitchin Forum.

We consider the promotion of this land for development to be incorrect. The land concerned is Green Belt under the only recently approved 2011-2031 Local Plan. The applicant has claimed that it can be developed as "Grey Belt", however we believe that this would apply only where the local authority has not designated enough sites to fulfill its projected 5 years need for housing. In the case of Hitchin this can hardly apply when on the East side of the town the Highover development alone involves 700 new dwellings, while developments on the West side of town number over 200.

We note the proximity to Ickleford, and the nearby development IC2 of Burford Grange, just over the Bedford Road and River Oughton. Within the village an application has been made for up to 100 dwellings on land South of Turnpike Lane – just over the river from the proposed site. These and the proposed application development will alter the character of the area and the setting of the river. This is of course what the Green Belt was set up to avoid – loss of separation and identity of town and village.

Traffic-wise, in addition to cars from Burford Grange, which involves 40 dwellings, some 19 dwellings have been built at "Ickleford Manor" at the intersection of the A600 with Turnpike Lane. Further up Bedford Road, site IC3 to the East would involve 150 dwellings and planning is being sought for up to 250 dwellings at "Icknield Fields" to the West of the A600. Current extensive developments in Lower Stondon and beyond will generate even more traffic on the Bedford Road, which is already heavily congested at morning and evening rush-hours.

We note the developer's stated intention to provide 50% affordable homes. We welcome this and would like to know details of the proposed tenure and how NHC will ensure true affordability of the 50% and how much the affordable the homes would cost.

Notwithstanding our concerns above, should approval be granted, we are pleased to see that:-

- There is a green gap between the built development and the river, as well as the SUDS pond.

- A bespoke hydrogeological assessment is envisaged
- 19 trees have been awarded Category B (trees whose retention is considered desirable and are of moderate quality).
- 3 hedgerows have been awarded Category B (retention is considered desirable and is of moderate quality)

We would like to see a planning condition specifying tree and hedge retention and their protection during the construction phase.

We would prefer if the pink developable area on p.26 did not extend right up to trees and hedges.

Yours faithfully

Neil Dodds

On behalf of Hitchin Forum