

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE**

By

MR P MOODY

For

ONE SELF-BUILD CUSTOM DWELLING

On

**Land Adjacent To 4 Lower Titmore Green,
Little Wymondley, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4
7JT**

PLANNING STATEMENT

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Explanation of abbreviations used in this Statement

BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NHDC	North Herts District Council
NHLP	North Herts Local Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OR	Officer's Report
PDL	Previously Developed Land
PiP	Permission in Principle
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PRoW	Public Right of Way
VSC	Very Special Circumstances
WPNP	Wymondley Parish Neighbourhood Plan

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Statement forms part of an application for Permission in Principle ('PiP') for one self-build, custom dwelling, on land which adjoins **No. 4 Lower Titmore Green, Little Wymondley, Hertfordshire, SG4 7JT** ('The Site'). The Site comprises land formerly used as a builder's yard and now used to support the occupation of the adjoining dwellings (Nos 1-4 Lower Titmore Green), as it houses a septic tank. It is previously developed land (PDL).
- 1.2. In May 2021 an approach was made to North Herts District Council (referred to in this Statement as 'NHDC', 'the Council', or the 'LPA') for pre-application advice. This was eventually received in a letter dated 29th July 2021 (the LPA's letter is attached as **Appendix 1**). The reason that this application for a PiP is being made is that the Applicant's attempt to obtain feedback from the NHDC produced a negative result. Since 2021, there have been wider changes in the planning background, particularly at national level (see below), which the Applicant considers have overtaken the advice he received in 2021.
- 1.3. The Site falls within the Green Belt as defined within the North Herts Local Plan (NHLP). North Herts Council does not have a 5 year supply of housing land. The Site is land which is previously developed and does not strongly contribute to any purposes of the Green Belt, when considered in the context of the plan area as a whole. In these circumstances, development involving the provision of housing in a sustainable location is not regarded as 'inappropriate' development in the Green Belt (see NPPF, paragraph 155 and footnote 56). The further consequence is that the usual requirement to demonstrate very special circumstances ('VSC') to justify development in the Green Belt does not apply.
- 1.4. This Application comprises the following:
 - The completed application forms for PiP;
 - A Site Location Plan, Drawing No. P-24-654-1; and
 - This Planning Statement
- 1.5. The proposed dwelling will be a project under the Self-Build and Custom Housing Act 2015, (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016) ('The Self-Build Act').
- 1.6. This Statement is set out as follows:
 - The requirements of PiP;
 - The provisions of the Self-Build Act.
 - Housing land supply;

- The Development Plan and the most important policies for the determination this application;
- Relevant National Policy;
- An assessment of the merits of the Application
- Summary and conclusions.

1.7. There is also further information about the Site and its background contained in the **Appendices** to this Statement as follows:

- **Appendix 1** – the Council’s pre-application advice letter
- **Appendix 2** - Site & Surroundings
- **Appendix 3** - Planning History
- **Appendix 4** – Synopsis of relevant planning policy

2. PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE

- 2.1. It is important to remember that an application for a PiP is different from either an outline or full planning application. As a result, the scope of the matters for consideration in a PiP application is much more focussed. According to the Government's Planning Practice Guidance, 'PPG' (at Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 58-001-20180615, Revision date: 15 06 2018):

"...the permission in principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed".

- 2.2. Paragraph: 012 of the PPG (Reference ID: 58-012-20180615 Revision date: 15 06 2018), beneath the heading "What matters are within the scope of a decision on whether to grant permission in principle?" explains that:

"The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these 'in principle' matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage. In addition, local authorities cannot list the information they require for applications for permission in principle in the same way they can for applications for planning permission".

- 2.3. The information requirements to make the application, when compared with those for conventional planning applications, are relatively light (see PPG, paragraph: 058 Reference ID: 58-058-20180615 Revision date: 15 06 2018):

"The submission of a valid application for permission in principle requires:

(a) a completed application form

(b) a plan which identifies the land to which the application relates, drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North

(c) the correct application fee".

- 2.4. The PiP route for obtaining planning permission for the proposed development, is available in this case because:

- The proposed development is for housing;

- The proposal is for a 'minor' development, as opposed to a 'major' development (The Permission in Principle (amendment) Order 2017, Part 2a Section 5B(5) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1309/made> defines 'major' development as being where the number of dwelling houses to be provided is 10 or more, or where the development is to be carried out on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more).
- The development does not fall within the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations;
- The development is not a householder application.
- It is not a habitats development.
- The proposal is not otherwise excluded from a grant of PIP by Article 5B of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) (Amendment) Order 2017.

3. THE SELF-BUILD ACT

- 3.1. The Self-Build and Custom House Building Act 2015 places a statutory duty on Councils to keep and publicise a register of people who want to self or custom build in their area and to have regard to the register when exercising planning, housing, land disposal and regeneration functions.
- 3.2. Furthermore, Section 2A(1) of The Housing and Planning Act 2016 places a duty on Councils to grant *“suitable development permission* in respect of enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the authority's area arising in each base period”* [*** the legislation's term “Development permission” expressly includes PiP**]. There is therefore a statutory requirement to grant sufficient permissions to meet demand. It should also be noted that the requirement to meet demand is contained in primary legislation, as opposed to policy or guidance.
- 3.3. The proposal qualifies as a Self-Build and Custom Home because it will be commissioned by the Applicant for his occupation and designed to meet his specific requirements. The Applicant will be the first owner of the home and will have a primary input into its design and layout.

4. SITE & SURROUNDINGS

4.1. The matter of the Site & Surroundings is covered in fuller detail at **Appendix 2** to this Planning Statement.

4.2. In summary, the Site:

- comprises PDL, having served in the past as builder's yard and is now in a supporting role to the adjoining terrace of dwellings (it accommodates a septic tank – going forward, the tank will need to be relocated, but there is scope to do so at the rear of the Site and leave the required 7 metres clearance from the new dwelling);
- has residential development on two of its sides and other residential development and employment opportunities close by;
- is visually enclosed by existing development, as well as by mature landscaping/close boarded fencing at its boundaries;
- has shops, employment and services in the close vicinity which can be accessed directly using the surrounding network of local Public Rights of Way (PRoW);
- is close to bus routes in the vicinity (Routes 92, 92A, & 391);
- is not subject of elevated flood risk;
- is not within a Conservation Area, and there are no heritage assets in its vicinity which would be affected by its development for a residential unit.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 5.1. The matter of the Site's Planning History is covered in detail at **Appendix 3** to this Planning Statement. The specific history relating to this site is brief; being limited to planning applications to develop the Site as a dwelling in 1989 (**Application Ref 89/00428**) & 1990 (**Application Ref 90/0252/1**). Both of these applications were refused, with the subsequent appeal against the 1990 refusal being dismissed. No on-line documents are available relating to either case, but the land was already designated as Green Belt at the time and so this would have been likely to have formed the main reason for refusal.
- 5.2. Also of interest is the more recent application for the conversion of the adjoining stables building at No. 5 Lower Titmore Green (**Application Ref 17/01191/1**) which was granted on 14th July 2017. Matters which assisted the Case Officer in reaching the conclusion that the conversion of the structure to a dwelling *"would not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt and therefore is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt"* appear in the Officer's Report ('OR') at paragraphs 4.3.2 - 4.3.8.
- The *"building sits in row of existing properties on the south-west side of Titmore Green with further built development within relatively close proximity"* and that the new dwelling would, therefore, not be *"isolated"* (OR, paragraph 4.3.2).
 - OR paragraph 4.3.2 also noted how *"well screened"* the site was from public view.
 - In relation to 'sustainability', paragraph 4.3.5 of the OR referred to a planning appeal at No. 6 Lower Titmore Green (Ref: APP/X1925/W/16/3142620), where the Inspector had found that the development would help support the rural economy and there would also be *"social benefits....provided in a supply of housing to meet the needs of the present and future generations"*.
 - In the overall 'planning balance' (see OR, paragraph 4.3.8) *"when taking the NPPF as a whole"*, the Case Officer agreed with that Planning Inspector and *"found that the provision of one dwelling would result in significant economic, social and environmental benefits"* which were not outweighed by either of these sites' limited public transport access(*).

[* since the time of Planning Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/16/3142620 which was dated 27th May 2016, and the grant of permission for the stables conversion at No. 5 Lower Titmore Green in July 2017, the situation with local public transport access would have improved markedly following the construction of the estate of housing and bus stop at Perranporth Lane. This bus stop is about 800 metres away from the Site].

6. THE COUNCIL'S PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE LETTER

- 6.1. The Applicant has previously approached the LPA for pre-application advice and the Council's response has been attached to this report as **Appendix 1**. The proposal submitted for the advice was for a four-bedroom chalet bungalow (of some 189m² in total area), with parking to the front of the site. The proposal's roof height was to be 6.8m from ground floor level to the top of the ridge.
- 6.2. In the 'Conclusions' to the LPA's letter of pre-application advice, the proposal was considered "*unacceptable*" in relation to the local plan as it currently was, as well as against the emerging North Herts Local Plan (NHLP). "*Very special circumstances are not demonstrated*" and as a result, if the proposal "*were to proceed to the application stage, it would be recommended for refusal*". The letter did, however, note that the Site's "*proximity*" to the 'Safeguarded land west of Stevenage' "*may become relevant, subject the timing of any planning application*".
- 6.3. This pre-application advice, was dated 29th July 2021 and therefore considered the proposal against an earlier version of the NPPF (that of July 2021), as well as the previous local plan, which had been adopted in 1996. The emerging NHLP was by that time at an advanced state of preparation and accordingly its provisions were given weight in the response (the NHLP has since replaced the 1996 version, upon its adoption in November 2022). The 'Wymondley Parish Neighbourhood Plan' (WPNP) also mentioned in the LPA's letter remains in force.
- 6.4. A synopsis of the current planning policy background is contained within **Appendix 4** to this Planning Statement. Essentially, whilst the 'Development Plan' background to the Site is largely unchanged since this letter, the national picture is very different (see below in Section 8).

7. THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

7.1. The adopted 'Development Plan' for the area is:

- **North Herts Local Plan Written Statement (NHLP)** – adopted 8th November 2022; &
- **Wymondley Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2031 (WPNP)** – adopted 26th September 2019.

7.2. **Designations & Constraints** - The 'Policies Map' for the NHLP shows the entirety of the Lower Titmore Green area as being within the Green Belt (**Policy SP5**). There are no site-specific allocations upon the land itself, but the edge of the area of "Safeguarded Land" (**Policy SP8**) to facilitate the expansion of Stevenage is situated to the immediate south-east of the subject site. An extract from the NHLP 'Policies Map' is included in **Appendix 4** to this Planning Statement.

7.3. Bearing in mind the consideration of a PiP application is limited to location, land use and the amount of development, only certain policies are relevant to the determination of the Application and these are summarised at **Appendix 4**.

7.4. In particular, we draw attention to the following 'Development Plan' policies

North Herts Local Plan

Policy SP2 *"Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution"* – states that *"the plan makes provision for at least 13,000 new homes"*.

Policy SP5 *"Countryside and Green Belt"* – generally supports *"the principles of the Green Belt"*, only permitting proposals *"where they would not result in inappropriate development....."*.

Policy SP6 *"Sustainable transport"* – states that *"the use of sustainable transport modes insofar as reasonable and practicable"* will be promoted.

Policy SP8 *"Housing"* – supports housing growth *"across the District....sufficient land to deliver at least 11,600 net new homes for North Hertfordshire's own needs"*. Furthermore, a five-year housing land supply will be maintained as well as a target to complete *"20% of new homes over the plan period on previously developed land"*. The only concession towards making provision to meet the demand for self-build is upon the designated Strategic Housing Sites.

Policy HS3 *"Housing mix"* – which states that it will take into account the progress on meeting the housing targets in the plan and part of this evidential exercise will include the *"Council's Self-Build Register and other relevant evidence of housing need"*;

Policy IMR1 *“Five Year Housing Land Supply” - in order to deliver “the total housing requirement of 13,000 net dwellings over the plan period.....The housing land supply will be measured against [specified] housing requirement targets....for the remainder of the plan period from 1 April 2024 to 2031”.*

Policy IMR2 *“Local plan early review” – in this policy the Council undertakes to carry out “a whole plan review of the Local Plan 2011-2031 by the end of 2023 at the latest.....All policies will be reviewed but with particular regard paid to.....Housing requirements for the District.....”.*

Neighbourhood plan

Policy GB1 *“Green Belt” – states that where development proposals impact on Wymondley Parish, they “must comply with Government Green Belt policy; primary consideration will be given to effective use of brown-field sites, which are not of high environmental value...”.*

8. NATIONAL POLICY

- 8.1. On the 30th July 2024, in a Parliamentary Statement (entitled *“Building the homes we need”*), the Right Honourable Angela Rayner MP, former Deputy Prime Minister and, then, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, said that in order to *“build the 1.5 million homes we have committed to deliver over the next five years”*, fundamental reforms would need to be made to the *“housing and planning system”*. According to the section of the Parliamentary Statement, headed *“Building In The Right Places”*:

“The first port of call for development should be brownfield land, and we are proposing some changes today to support more brownfield development: being explicit in policy that the default answer to brownfield development should be yes; expanding the current definition of brownfield land to include hardstanding and glasshouses.....”.

“It is however also clear that brownfield land can only be part of the answer, and will not be enough to meet our housing needs – which is why a Green Belt designed for England in the middle of the twentieth century now must be updated for an England in the middle of the twenty first. The Green Belt today accounts for more land in England than land that is developed – around 13 per cent compared to 10 per cent. Yet as many assessments show, large areas of the Green Belt have little ecological value and are inaccessible to the public. Much of this area is better described as ‘grey belt’: land on the edge of existing settlements or roads, and with little aesthetic or environmental value. It is also true that development already happens on the Green Belt, but in a haphazard and non-strategic way, leading to unaffordable houses being built without the amenities that local people need.....”.

“But we cannot wait for all release to come through plan making. Where authorities are under performing – be that lacking a sufficient land supply or failing to deliver enough homes as measured by the Housing Delivery Test – we will therefore also make it clear that applications for sites not allocated in a plan must be considered where they relate to brownfield and grey belt land. This route will maintain restrictions on the release of wider Green Belt land, meaning it would remain possible for other Green Belt land to be released outside the plan-making process where ‘very special circumstances’ exist, but such cases would remain exceptional....”.

- 8.2. These comments were reiterated by the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Matthew Pennycook MP, in the Ministerial Statement of 12th December 2024 (also called *“Building the Homes We Need”*), which accompanied the release of the revised NPPF. Within this Statement Mr Pennycook specifically refers to:

- The “acute and entrenched housing crisis”, despite which the level of building being in decline and “the number of homes granted planning permission has fallen to its lowest in a decade”.
- The goal to deliver “1.5 million new homes.....of all tenures” during this Parliament.
- The need to be “clear that these decisions must be about how to meet those needs, not whether to do so at all. We are therefore restoring mandatory housing targets. This means that local authorities must use the standard method as the basis for determining housing requirements in their local plans”.
- That “meeting ambitious new targets relies on allocating sufficient land to do so”.
- “Developers should first look to brownfield, or previously developed, land....And we have made changes to support that, making the default answer to proposals to build on brownfield ‘yes’”.
- However, it is also acknowledged that “there are simply not enough sites on brownfield land registers to deliver the volume of homes that the country needs each year, let alone enough that are viable and in the right location. And that is why we have grasped the nettle and proposed a modernised, strategic approach to Green Belt land designation and release, fit for the 21st century”. As a result, “where authorities fail to meet development needs, developers may bring forward proposals on low-performing grey belt land outside of the plan process, but with higher performing land protected from this form of release”.
- Mr Pennycook also acknowledged that “rapidly driving up planning consents in the context of a system with woefully inadequate local plan coverage will increase the number of permissions secured outside of local plan allocations in the short-term. This is necessary if we are to see the scale of delivery we need to meet our commitment to 1.5 million homes. Therefore, where it applies, the presumption in favour of sustainable development must have real teeth. The changes we make today ensure that the presumption carries real weight, acting as a significant adjustment to the decision-making balance in favour of approving development....”
- The various measures announced in the Statement are “Part Of A Bigger Plan” to “address wider blockers in the planning system” and make the “necessary changes to unlocking the land needed to deliver 1.5 million homes and the scale of new infrastructure.....essential to transform the housing crisis, deliver growth, protect the environment, and provide hope to the many thousands of people locked into substandard and unaffordable housing”.

8.3. The cornerstone of National Policy within the December 2024 revision to the NPPF is the achievement of a sustainable pattern of development through a plan led system. The NPPF provides a framework within which local plans and decisions can provide for sufficient housing in a sustainable manner.

8.4. In achieving sustainable development, the planning system has three interdependent, overarching objectives. These are an ‘economic’ objective to ensure the planning system can facilitate growth in the economy; a ‘social’ objective to ensure sufficient homes are provided and through fostering well designed developments to support communities; and an ‘environmental’ objective to protect and enhance the natural and built environment, including making the best use of land (see NPPF, paragraphs such as 1, 2, 7 & 8).

8.5. According to NPPF paragraph 39, LPAs:

“should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible” [our underlining].

8.6. A presumption in favour of sustainable development is set out in NPPF paragraph 11. For decision making it states that proposals that accord with an up to date plan should be approved *“without delay”*. Paragraph 11 goes on to consider circumstances where there are no relevant development plan policies, or where the most important policies for determining an application are out of date.

8.7. NPPF, paragraphs 14 & 232 and Footnote 8 to paragraph 11 also refer to circumstances where the development plan might be out of date. These include situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and in the case of a neighbourhood plan, where the plan is more than 5 years old and/or does not contain *“policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement”*.

8.8. Section 5 of the NPPF is concerned about delivering a sufficient supply of homes. From the outset it records the Government’s objective to *“significantly boost”* the supply of homes (NPPF, paragraph 61).

8.9. NPPF paragraph 63 refers to meeting the need for various specialist types of housing including specific reference to custom and self-build housing. Footnote 28 to paragraph 63 refers to the requirements of the Self-Build Act 2015 and the requirement to give sufficient permissions to meet the demand.

- 8.10. NPPF paragraph 73 refers to small and medium sized sites and the contribution these can make to meeting housing needs in an area; that they are essential for smaller housebuilders and that they can often deliver new homes quickly. Paragraph 73(a) states that Councils should support small sites to come forward for, amongst other things, self-build and custom build housing. Paragraph 73(d) supports the development of windfall sites.
- 8.11. With regard to housing land supply, NPPF paragraph 78 requires Councils to maintain a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies.
- 8.12. Housing in rural areas is considered by paragraphs 82 to 84 of the NPPF. Paragraph 83 states that to promote sustainable development, *"housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby"*.
- 8.13. Chapter 13 of the NPPF concerns the Green Belt. The NPPF issued in December 2024 changes policy for the protection of the Green Belt. Most significantly in the context of this application is that it redefines what is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The 2024 version of the NPPF also amends the approach to dealing with PDL and it introduces the concept of Grey Belt. Grey Belt is defined in the 'Glossary' at Annex 2 to the NPPF as being:
- "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"*.
- [the NPPF's footnote 7 excludes certain types of land from this definition, such as where they involve designated heritage assets, national designations for protection of landscape or habitat, or where the land is at high risk of flooding].
- 8.14. NPPF paragraphs 153 to 160 deal with proposals affecting the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 states that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. However, this is qualified by footnote 55, which indicates that this requirement would not apply to development on PDL or Grey Belt land, *"where development is not inappropriate"*.

- 8.15. Paragraph 153 continues to say that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. This paragraph of the NPPF further states that such circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations (this is reaffirmed by paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 64-014-20250225 of the Planning Practice Guidance, 'PPG', issued in February 2025).
- 8.16. NPPF paragraph 154 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate, unless one of the identified exceptions arises. Within this list of 'exceptions', paragraph 154g refers to the *"limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential)....which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt"*.
- 8.17. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF also refers to *"the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt"*. This is a wholly new paragraph in the 2024 version of the NPPF and states that housing development should *"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 [which, according to NPPF footnote 56, "in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, means the lack of a five year supply of deliverable housing sites"];*
 - *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 [these requirements only relate to 'major' developments].*

8.18. In terms of the reference in paragraph 155 above to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF regarding 'sustainable locations', these policy sections refer to such matters as limiting demand for travel, siting development where there is a choice of transport modes and where safe and suitable access is available for all users. However, paragraph 110 of the NPPF does also acknowledge that *"opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making"*.

9. HOUSING LAND SUPPLY AND HOUSING DELIVERY

- 9.1. North Herts cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land. The most recently published assessment of housing land supply (dated November 2025) reflects the position as at 31st March 2025. At that point, the housing land supply was calculated to be 3.3 years (source: North Herts 'Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update' November 2025, Table 11).
- 9.2. That assessment was based on an annual requirement of 1,043 dwellings per annum and the Council's latest document acknowledges that *"there is a deficit of 1,586 dwellings over the five-year period of 2025/26 – 2029/30"*.

10. ASSESSMENT

- 10.1. LPAs *“should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way”* and *“seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”*. In order to do this *“the full range of planning tools available”* should be used, explicitly including *“permission in principle”* (NPPF, paragraph 39).
- 10.2. The reason that this application for a PiP is being made is that the Applicant’s previous attempt to obtain feedback from the LPA in 2021 produced negative advice (**Appendix 1**). Since then, there have been wider changes in the planning background, particularly at national level, which the Applicant considers would have overtaken any advice given in 2021.
- 10.3. It is important to remember that the matters within the scope of a decision on whether to grant a PiP application are limited to location, land use and the amount of development. All other matters, such as the relocation of the septic tank or the creation of the road access, will be part of the later consideration of the Technical Details stage. [NB: there is scope in the Site to install a replacement septic tank more than 7 metres away from any dwelling and still serve the existing properties, plus the new one].
- 10.4. The Site is PDL. It is not subject to any elevated risk of flooding and is not subject to any other legislative designation which might preclude its development for residential purposes. The Site does, however, fall within the designated Green Belt.
- 10.5. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan (in this case the NHLP and WPNP), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Other material considerations in relation to decision-making are Government policy in the NPPF & PPG, as well as that within Ministerial Statements.
- 10.6. The Council admits that it cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing land. Furthermore, the NHLP should have undergone *“a whole plan review....by the end of 2023 at the latest.....with particular regard paid to.....Housing requirements for the District”* according to **Policy IMR2**. The WPNP was adopted more than 5 years ago and, in any event, contains no housing allocations anyway. The policy consequence of these elements is that the ‘Development Plan’ is out of date.

- 10.7. In the circumstances where the ‘Development Plan’ is out of date, NPPF paragraph 11 requires applications to be granted planning permission, unless the application of policies within the NPPF provide a strong reason to refuse permission, or the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies of the NPPF considered as a whole.
- 10.8. Paragraph 61 of the NPPF restates *“the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes”*. This paragraph must also be seen in the context of the two Ministerial Written Statements *“Building the Homes We Need”* outlined above, which set out reforms to fix the foundations of the system, to improve affordability, turbo charge growth and to build 1.5 million houses over the next five years. Key points from these Ministerial statements include:
- Such is the *“acute and entrenched housing crisis”*, that *“we cannot wait for all release to come through plan making. Where authorities are under performing [say through “lacking a sufficient land supply] we will therefore also make it clear that applications for sites not allocated in a plan must be considered where they relate to brownfield and grey belt land”*.
 - The need to be *“clear that these decisions must be about how to meet those needs, not whether to do so at all.*
 - *Therefore, where it applies, the presumption in favour of sustainable development must have real teeth. The changes we make today ensure that the presumption carries real weight, acting as a significant adjustment to the decision-making balance in favour of approving development”*;
 - The *“default answer to brownfield development should be ‘yes’”*.
- 10.9. According to the NPPF, there are three dimensions to sustainable development (‘economic’, ‘social’ and ‘environmental’). As well as the contribution towards meeting urgent need, the ‘economic’ and ‘social’ benefits of the current proposal would be the housing provision in a rural area, where such development can assist with enhancing the *“vitality of rural communities”* (say, where it might help to sustain a local school). Development of the Site is also likely to support an SME builder and/or local tradespeople who are important to maintain housebuilding skills and thereby contribute to avoiding too much reliance on volume housebuilders to meet housing need. The development will also make better use of a brownfield site, thereby fulfilling the ‘environmental’ objective (see for instance NPPF paragraphs such as 7, 8, 83, 124, 125 and 128).

- 10.10. NPPF paragraph 73 acknowledges the role played by “*small and medium sized sites*” in meeting housing needs in an area and accordingly Councils should support small sites to come forward for, amongst other things, self-build and custom build housing. Importantly, in this case, development of this Site will also provide a self-build plot for which there is a demand. There is a statutory requirement arising from the Self-Build Act to grant planning permission in this context. The NHLP only makes express provision for 56 self-build plots within the entire District over the whole plan period and all of these are upon its 5 ‘Strategic Housing Sites’. Therefore, it is unlikely that any of these plots will be delivered in the immediate term (NPPF, paragraph 73 and NHLP **Policy SP8**).
- 10.11. Although sites where there is a choice of mode of transport are the generally preferred location for new development, that is not to say that all development in rural areas is necessarily ruled out merely because there is no realistic alternative to car use. The NPPF does recognise that “*the opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas*” and this should be acknowledged when making decisions on applications in rural locations. Public transport access has significantly improved in the locality in recent years (with the building of the estate at Perranporth Lane). In the current instance the bus stops can be accessed via the local network of PRowS and the other services can also be accessed on foot or by cycle (see map extracts at **Appendix 2** and the policy references summarised at **Appendix 4** - for instance NPPF, paragraphs such as 89, 109 & 110, as well as NHLP **Policies SP1, SP2 & SP6**).
- 10.12. The only outstanding issue raised by this Application is, therefore, that of Green Belt policy (see Chapter 13 of the NPPF, the PPG and NHLP **Policy SP5**).
- 10.13. In the past, most forms of new housing would be ‘inappropriate’ development in the Green Belt. This, and the absence of ‘VSC’ to justify the development, is the probable reason that the 1989 & 1990 proposals failed to achieve permission (see **Appendix 3**). However, since that time, the National Policy position has changed quite markedly. For instance, under paragraph 154, the development of Green Belt PDL can be acceptable provided that it “*would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt*”.

10.14. NPPF paragraph 155 sets out circumstances when housing development would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt and if a proposal meets the criteria of that paragraph 155, there is no requirement to demonstrate 'VSC' in order to justify granting permission.

- **NPPF paragraph 155(a)** requires the Site to be Grey Belt. Reference has been made above to the definition of Grey Belt. Grey Belt is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (d). The Site is PDL. In terms of its contribution to Green Belt purposes, the circumstances of this specific case are unusual, in that the land is already completely enclosed by dense landscaping and domestic-style close boarded fencing (and has been so for many years). The plot has been used in the past as a builder's yard and now provides a supporting function for nearby residential properties. As a result, the Site does not serve to check the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area (Green Belt purpose (a)); it serves no purpose in separating towns (purpose (b)); it would not protect the setting of an historic town (purpose (d)); and it would not assist with urban regeneration (purpose (e)). The only remaining potential Green Belt role would therefore be to safeguard the countryside from encroachment (purpose(c)). The policy test in this respect is whether the development of the Site would *"fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan"*. The scale of the Site is wholly insignificant in the context of the plan area and the development of the Site would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt. The Site would therefore qualify as PDL and Grey Belt and because it does not strongly contribute to any of the relevant purposes of the Green Belt, the terms of NPPF paragraph 155(a) are satisfied.
- **Paragraph 155(b)** requires there to be an unmet need for the development proposed. Reference has already been made to footnote 56 of the NPPF. In the case of North Herts District there is a demonstrable shortfall in housing land (see the North Herts 'Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update' of November 2025). Paragraph 155(b) is therefore also satisfied.

- **Paragraph 155(c)** requires development to be in a “sustainable location”. NPPF paragraphs such as 89 & 110 recognise that “opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making”. Whilst the Site falls outside the defined settlement limits, there is continuous development along Lower Titmore Green and it has been accepted by the Case Officer in the application at No. 5 Titmore Green (see **Appendix 3**) that the Site is not ‘isolated’. As noted above, since that report was written, local public transport opportunities have improved. Shops, services, workplaces, education and health facilities, as well as bus stops, are all available within walking distance, using the network of footpaths (see PRoW and map extract within **Appendix 2**). In the context of a rural setting, the Site can be said to be in a reasonably sustainable location. Paragraph 155(c) is, therefore, also satisfied.

10.15. As all of the requirements of paragraph 155 are met, the proposal is not inappropriate development within the Green Belt. There is therefore no requirement to demonstrate ‘VSC’ in order to justify allowing development (See also PPG paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 64-014-20250225).

11. CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY

- 11.1. This Application is for a PiP.
- 11.2. Therefore, the only matters relevant to the determination of this application are the location of the Site, land use and the amount of development. All other matters are to be considered at the Technical Details stage.
- 11.3. The Application satisfies the requirements of the regulations in terms of land use because it is a proposal for housing and the amount of development falls within the scope of a “*minor development*”. The Site is PDL; it is not subject to elevated flood risk; no designated heritage assets are affected; and the location of the Site is suitable for housing. Overall, the proposal can be said to satisfy the three elements for sustainable development set out in the NPPF (‘economic’, ‘social’ and ‘environmental’).
- 11.4. Although a previous application for residential development of the Site was dismissed at appeal and the most recent LPA pre-application feedback was also negative relating to its prospects for development, both of these events were under a very different Government policy regime.
- 11.5. In relation to the ‘Development Plan’, North Herts cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing land and the NHLP should have been comprehensively reviewed by the end of 2023. The WPNP is over 5 years old and contains no relevant policies. Having regard to NPPF footnote 8, the ‘Development Plan’ for the area is out of date. The policy consequence of the Council’s recent housing delivery performance is the engagement of the presumption in favour of development.
- 11.6. NPPF paragraph 11(d) states that planning permission should be granted, unless policy within the NPPF provide a strong reason for refusing the development or the adverse impacts arising from the proposal demonstrably outweigh the benefits. NPPF footnote 7 does identify Green Belt policy as potentially being one of these protected areas.
- 11.7. However, the revised NPPF, issued in December 2024, places even greater emphasis on the delivery of housing than its predecessors. It also changes the approach to housing in the Green Belt. Housing is not inappropriate development when the circumstances arising in paragraphs 154g and/or 155 arise.

11.8. These circumstances are:

- that the land is Grey Belt;
- that there is a shortfall in housing land supply; and
- that the proposal “*would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt*”.

11.9. All of these circumstances all apply in this case, where the enclosed nature of the Site means that it does not performs any of the Green Belt purposes. The proposal is therefore not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and according there is no requirement to demonstrate ‘VSC’ to justify the development.

11.10. Furthermore, there are no adverse impacts arising from the Application that would justify refusing development in terms of NPPF paragraph 11(d)(ii).

11.11. In essence, the benefits of the proposal are: the contribution it will make to meeting housing need in a rural area; the development is likely to support an SME builder and local tradespeople; making better use of a brownfield site; and, most significantly, it will provide a self-build plot for which there is a demand. There is a statutory requirement arising from the Self-Build Act to grant planning permission in these circumstances.

11.12. Finally, because, the ‘Development Plan’ is out of date, there is a presumption in favour of the proposal and no reasonable basis to refuse this application for Permission in Principle.



Michael Fearn BA (Hons) DipTP (Dist) MRTPI
Director

26th November 2025



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Chartered Town Planner
Royal Town Planning Institute

Appendix 1

Pre-Application advice letter from North Herts District Council dated 29th July 2021

29 July 2021

Mr Perschky 5 Wellington Road Stevenage Herts SG2 9HR	Our Ref: Contact: Direct Line: Email:	21/01554/PRE Laura Allen 01462 474826 laura.allen@north-herts.gov.uk
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**Land Adjacent To 4 Lower Titmore Green, Little Wymondley,
Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 7JT**

Thank you for your pre-application submission, named above, which was received on the 25/5/21 and I write in response following a consideration of the submitted information.

Please note that this reply is an officer opinion only and is not a formal determination of the Council, and is without prejudice to any subsequent planning application that may be submitted.

For your information the relevant government guidance and policies from the development plan are as follows:

National Planning Policy Framework July 2021:

In general and with regard to:

- Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development;
- Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
- Section 8 - Promoting healthy communities;
- Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport;
- Section 11 – Making effective use of land;
- Section 12 – Requiring good design.

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations 1996:

- Policy 2 - Green Belt
- Policy 3 - Settlements within the Green Belt
- Policy 5 - Excluded villages
- Policy 26 - Housing Proposals;
- Policy 55 – Car Parking (SPD Car parking);
- Policy 57 – Residential Guidelines and Standards.

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 Proposed Submission Local Plan and Proposals Map:

Policy SP1 Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire;
Policy SP2 Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution;
Policy SP8 Housing;
Policy SP9 Design and Sustainability;
Policy CGB2a: Exception sites for affordable housing in the Green Belt
Policy T2 Parking;
Policy D1 Sustainable Design;
Policy D3 Protecting living conditions

Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2031

Policy NHE5 Roosting Devices
Policy GB1 Green Belt
Policy HOD1 Wymondley Parish Housing Needs
Policy HOD 2 Design
Policy HOD3 Parking

Vehicle Parking at New Developments (VPND) November 2011

Design SPD July 2011

Emerging Local Plan update

The emerging Local Plan 2011 – 2031 is at an advanced stage towards adoption. The Inspector's Main Modifications letter has now been received, and the Council's Cabinet Committee has resolved to grant public consultation, which has recently closed. It is now hoped that the emerging Local Plan will be adopted before the end of the year. As a result, the emerging Local Plan is at an advanced stage of preparation and significant weight can be given to the policies contained within it.

Site

The site was previously used as a builders' storage yard. It has existing access and a septic tank, which is shared with the neighbouring property. The site falls within Green Belt in both the current and emerging Local Plans.

It is interesting to note that the site does not fall within the Little Wymondley settlement boundary, however it does fall within the area covered by the Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan. It is also positioned within close proximity to the Safeguarded land west of Stevenage in the emerging Local Plan. These matters are covered in greater detail below.

Proposal

Pre-application advice is sought for erection of a four-bedroom chalet bungalow in the centre of the site with parking to the front of the site. This comprises a ground floor area of approximately 109 metres squared and a first floor of 80 metres squared. The roof height would be 6.8m from ground floor level to the top of the ridge.

The proposed dwelling would comprise two storeys incorporating a lounge, study, family room, wc and kitchen/dining room at ground floor level, and four bedrooms (1 including being an en suite) and bathroom at first floor level. Finish materials are not currently specified but are stated would be sympathetic to the existing dwellings.

The proposed drawing number for the proposed plans and elevations is MMBL- TDWPPA01.

Principle of residential development

The Council is required to determine all planning applications in accordance with the development plan, which currently consists of the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan no.2 with Alterations and the emerging policies of the Submission Local Plan 2011-2031 (ELP).

In relation to current Local Plan Policy 5, the site falls just to the west of the Little Wymondley settlement boundary and as such this policy cannot be applied.

The site lies within designated Green Belt in both the existing and emerging Local Plan.

In relation to current Green Belt policy, Policy 2 of the Council's Saved Policies applies.

This policy states that except for proposals within settlements which accord with Policy 3, or in very special circumstances, planning permission will only be granted for new buildings, extensions, and changes of use of buildings and of land which are appropriate in the Green Belt, and which would not result in significant visual impact. It is important to note that current Policy 3 part 4) does not apply as the site does not fall within defined settlement boundaries.

It is relevant to consider whether the development would constitute inappropriate development as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Paragraph 149 of the NPPF states that:

A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) limited infilling in villages;*

f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:

– not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or

– not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

Paragraph 150 of the NPPF states that:

Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

a) mineral extraction;

b) engineering operations;

c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;

d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

f) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

In considering the proposal against paragraphs 149 and 150 of the NPPF, none of the requirements of paragraph 150 are met. The exceptions outlined in paragraph 149 a)-d) and f) can also clearly be eliminated as not applicable.

With regard to exception e) in paragraph 149, as set out under 'Site' above, the site does not fall within the Little Wymondley settlement limits and therefore this does not comply with this exception. Referring to part g) of paragraph 149, the site could be considered as limited infilling, however as it would create a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development and would not provide affordable housing this cannot be triggered.

In summary, the proposal would constitute inappropriate development when considering against the NPPF and emerging Local Plan Policy SP5 part c), which echoes national policy in this regard. Given the site does not provide affordable housing, it cannot also comply with emerging Policy CGB2a.

Turning to paragraph 147 of the NPPF, it is clear that inappropriate development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

Further to this, paragraph 148 of the NPPF states that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The headings below consider these issues in greater detail.

Other considerations

Five-year supply / Planning Balance

The NPPF requires for Council's to maintain the provision of a five-year supply of land for housing development. Due to the on-going delays with the emerging Local Plan the Council's five-year land supply position has deteriorated and the latest published monitoring report shows that this Council has less than a 1.5 year supply of land on allocated sites. Thus, the tilted balance as set out in paragraph 11 of the NPPF is engaged. This states:

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting planning permission unless:

- i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed, or*
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.*

In my view, due to the advanced stage of the emerging Local Plan, combined with the lack of the five year supply for new housing land, this proposal needs to be considered under part ii of paragraph 11d). The provision of a new dwelling is a benefit of the proposal. I will assess below if there are any adverse impacts that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh this benefit.

Other harm

Sustainability

In relation to sustainable development, the Council states that key settlements within and adjoining the District should be the main focus for housing in emerging Local Plan Policy SP1.

As outlined in emerging Local Plan Policy SP2, Little Wymondley is allocated 312 new dwellings in the emerging plan. It is significant to note this level of planned growth for the village and the fact that the proposed site falls beyond the current and emerging settlement limits, indicating a less sustainable location, further away from services and facilities.

In terms of travel impacts, given the dependency on services outside the immediate area coupled with limited public transport, a reliance on the private vehicle would be established, which is not conducive to the creation of sustainable development. This therefore conflicts with emerging Local Plan Policy SP6 part c).

Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan

The Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan contains a range of policies that would need to be applied should an application be submitted (see list above). Of particular significance is Policy GB1 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which sets out that:

...development proposals impacting on Wymondley Parish must comply with Government Green Belt policy; primary consideration will be given to effective use of brown-field sites, which are not of high environmental value.

Development proposals should not impact negatively on Wymondley Parish - particularly in terms of visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt landscape and its important contribution to the character of our villages/hamlets.

Whilst this largely mirrors national policy, I consider that this adds greater weight to the argument against development in this location. Further to this, there would be a notable visual impact of the development when considering the submitted site photographs.

Safeguarded land west of Stevenage

Emerging Local Plan Policy IMR2 sets out that an early plan review will be undertaken by the end of 2023. This includes reviewing the safeguarded land west of Stevenage. The safeguarded land to the west of the A1(M) at Stevenage has been identified to meet longer-term development needs as set out in SP8 part e) iii). Whilst the site does not fall directly within the safeguarded land, its proximity to it may become relevant, subject the timing of any planning application.

Layout and design considerations

Wymondley Neighbourhood Plan Policy HOD 2 Design requires that all developments should be well-designed and located appropriately.

Emerging Local Plan Policy D3 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions

Key issues in relation to layout and design are:

- Close proximity to neighbouring property at 4 Lower Titmore Green and effect of visual bulk.
- Windows are present on both side elevations impacting on neighbouring properties in terms of adverse overlooking and loss of privacy. Whilst this could be screened, there would be the additional issue of limited light into the proposed study.
- The first-floor plan appears to show a door leading outwards, but it is unclear if this is an error. In addition, the annotation for bedroom 2 does not seem to be in its correct position, perhaps linked to the former issue with the door position.
- The site presently contains a septic tank and access, which is shared with the neighbouring property. No details are currently provided as to the positioning, ongoing use or any amenity impacts, such as odour.
- No details on materials are supplied at present.

Parking and access

Policy 55 of the Local Plan and Policy T2 of the Emerging Local Plan guides that all development proposals should provide sufficient space to accommodate its own generated car parking needs. The Vehicle Parking at New Developments Supplementary Planning Document (VPND) provides further guidance on residential car parking requirements. The VPND sets parking standards for residential dwellings at a minimum of two spaces per two plus bedroom units, as well as between 0.25 and 0.75 visitor spaces per dwelling (rounded up). The visitor space requirement is increased where a garage is proposed to accommodate resident parking.

No information is currently supplied on parking. However, based on the above standards, at least two car parking spaces would be required, plus ideally 1 additional visitor space as no garage is proposed.

The VPND also requires for minimum cycle parking standards. The requirement states that one secure resident cycle parking space should be provided per dwelling if no garage is provided.

Amenity issues

In accordance with emerging Local Plan Policy D1 part d), the proposed dwelling would need to meet the minimum size requirements of the Nationally Described Space Standards, which it does from the floor plans submitted. Each house will need to have a minimum of 75sqm private rear amenity space which appears to be met.

Emerging Local Plan Policy D3 states that developments should not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions. As set out in 'layout and design considerations' I have some concern regarding the proposed positioning of the dwelling and impact of bulk, as well as the impact on light, privacy and overlooking due to the current window arrangement.

Bins and sheds

This Council requires for each dwelling to have space for three wheelie bins and two collection boxes for refuse and recycling storage. It is not acceptable for bins to be left in the frontage and therefore a bin store in the rear garden is advocated. Given that no details are provided that indicate a garage would be created, a garden shed for storage would be required.

Climate Change Emergency

On 21 May 2019, the Council passed a Climate Emergency motion which pledged to do everything within the Council's power to achieve zero carbon emissions in North Hertfordshire by 2030. As one of the first councils to pass this motion, NHDC is leading the way on climate action. This declaration asserted the Council's commitment toward Climate Action beyond current government targets and international agreements.

Climate action has been a long-term corporate priority area for the Council, and has been pursued through our objective to Prosper and Protect North Hertfordshire. This objective informs our commitments to:

- Green space provision;
- Representing the Climate Change interests of North Hertfordshire residents on county and regional plans, policies and aspirations;

- Supporting initiatives that increase the energy efficiency of residents' homes, reduce resource waste, and increase our sustainability for the longer term;
- Protecting our physical heritage;
- Finding environmentally sustainable solutions to the challenges.

Along with the inclusion of EV charging points other mitigation should be considered in order to make a positive contribution to the mitigation of the climate emergency. This might be achieved through layout and design of the proposed dwelling house, maximising solar gain where possible. This would be seen as a positive attribute of any scheme alongside the inclusion of renewable energy technology.

Conclusions

I consider this proposal unacceptable when considering the tilted balance. This is on the grounds that very special circumstances are not demonstrated and that it would create a notable visual impact when compared to the existing use. Aside from the design and amenity issues raised above, the site also represents an unsustainable location, contrary to the emerging Local Plan. If it were to proceed to the application stage, it would be recommended for refusal.

Any advice given by Council Officers for pre-application enquiries does not constitute a formal response or decision of the council with regards to future planning permission or other consents. You should also be aware that the information provided within this document gives no guarantees about the final formal decision made on any planning application.

Yours sincerely

Laura Allen

Laura Allen

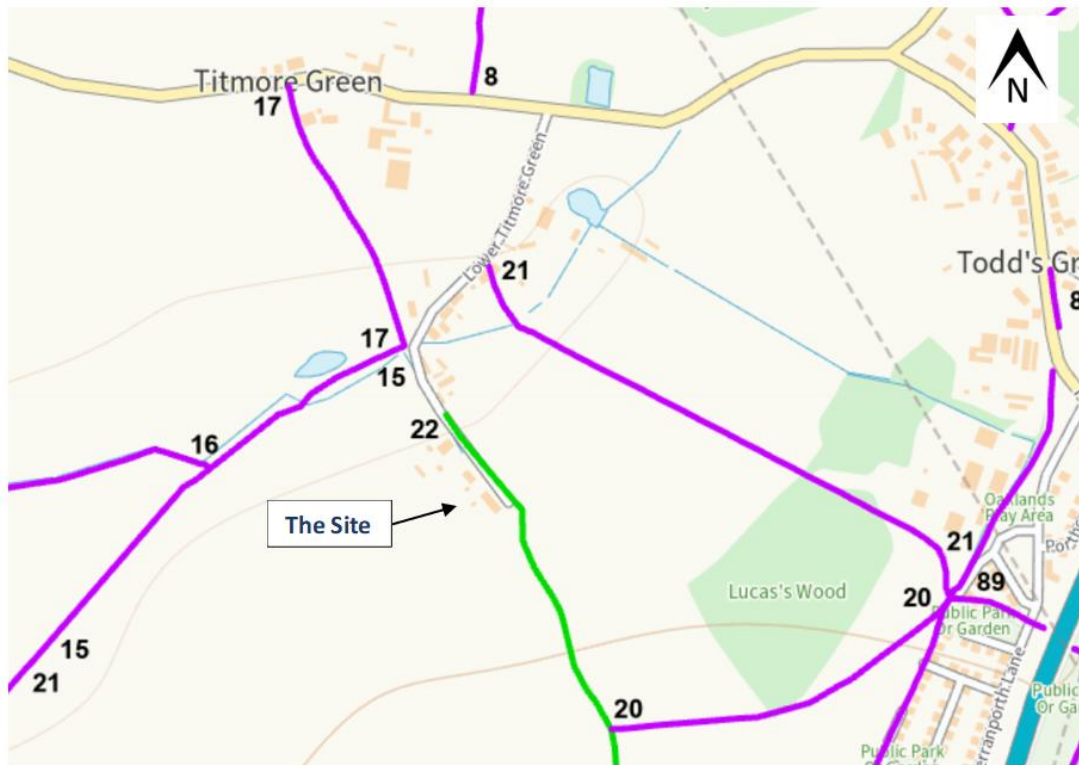
Senior Planning Officer

The Council's Privacy Notice is available on our website: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/data-protection/information-management-gdpr>

Appendix 2

Site and surroundings as at November 2025

- A2.1 The subject plot is at the southern end (close to the turning head) of the cul-de-sac of Lower Titmore Green, a narrow rural road. To its south-east, the land is adjacent to a terrace of 4 late Nineteenth/early Twentieth Century cottages. These houses are two storeyed in height, built of brick with slate roofs and have been much altered (in the cases of the properties at each end of the terrace they have both been substantially extended to the side). Parking is to the front of each dwelling, accessed from Lower Titmore Green. Adjoining to the north west of the Site is No. 5 Lower Titmore Green, a post-war detached dwelling, again of two storeys and also built of brick. Next to No. 5 there is a collection of mainly single storey former equestrian buildings (now converted into a dwelling) known as 'Wrens Acre'.
- A2.2 The subject plot amounts to some 0.06 of a hectare in area (600m²) and is broadly rectangular (although the site tapers to the rear). The plot fronts Lower Titmore Green (the frontage measures some 13 metres) and is currently mostly unused and heavily overgrown. The subject land is considerably higher than the road, but the plot itself appears broadly level. There is a septic tank towards the front of the site which serves the 4 properties in the adjacent terrace. We are informed that the subject land was formerly in use as a builder's yard and there was previously a timber building on the site used as storage. However, other than some rubble, there is no vestige of this activity left upon the site.
- A2.3 Apart from a steep vehicle access, adjoining the house at No.4, the frontage of the subject land on to Lower Titmore Green is heavily screened by mature landscaping and trees. There is a similar level of dense screening at the northern end of the site and the two sides and rear boundaries are enclosed with close board fencing. To the north of the site the land is open countryside, in the form of arable fields or pasture for horses.
- A2.4 There is a good network of public rights of way in close vicinity of the site (see extract from Hertfordshire County Council's website below <https://webmaps.hertfordshire.gov.uk/row/row.htm> which shows bridleways and footpaths).



008 FP Commences from Ippollitts - Stevenage Road E of Beech House thence N to S boundary of Little Wymondley Bypass at TL 2147 2679. Recommences at N boundary of Bypass at TL 2148 2684 thence N to join Stevenage - Hitchin Road adjacent to Bucks Head P.H

015 FP Commences from county road, Lower Titmore Green at junction with FP17 thence SW past FP16 to join FP21 (St Ippollitts) NE of Almshoe Bury.

016 FP Commences from FP15 E of Dell Close thence W and SW to join FP19 (St Ippollitts) at parish boundary SW of Dell Close.

017 FP Commences from Stevenage - St Ippollitts Road opposite "Hermit and Redcoats" P.H. thence SE to junction with FP15 at county road, Lower Titmore Green.

020 FP Commences from parish boundary at junction with FP89, (Stevenage Town) on east side of Lucas's Wood thence SW to join BR22 S of Lower Titmore Green.

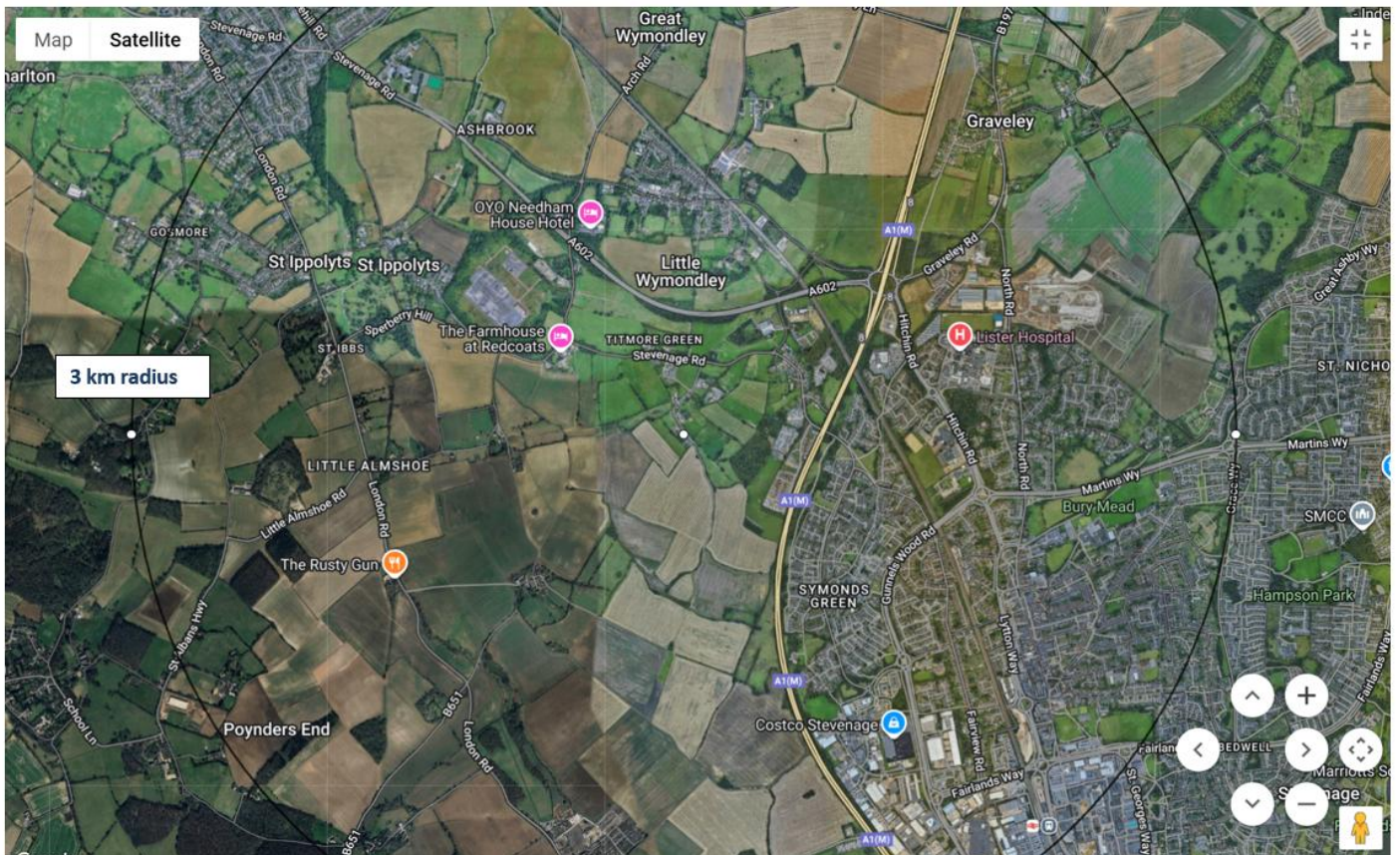
021 FP Commences from parish boundary at junction with FP20 and FP89 (Stevenage Town) on east side of Lucas's Wood thence NW through Wood to join county road at Titmore Green Farm.

022 Bridleway Commences from end of county road S of Lower Titmore Green thence generally S and SW to join BR24 (St Ippollitts) at parish boundary E of Almshoe Bury (known as Titmore Green Lane).

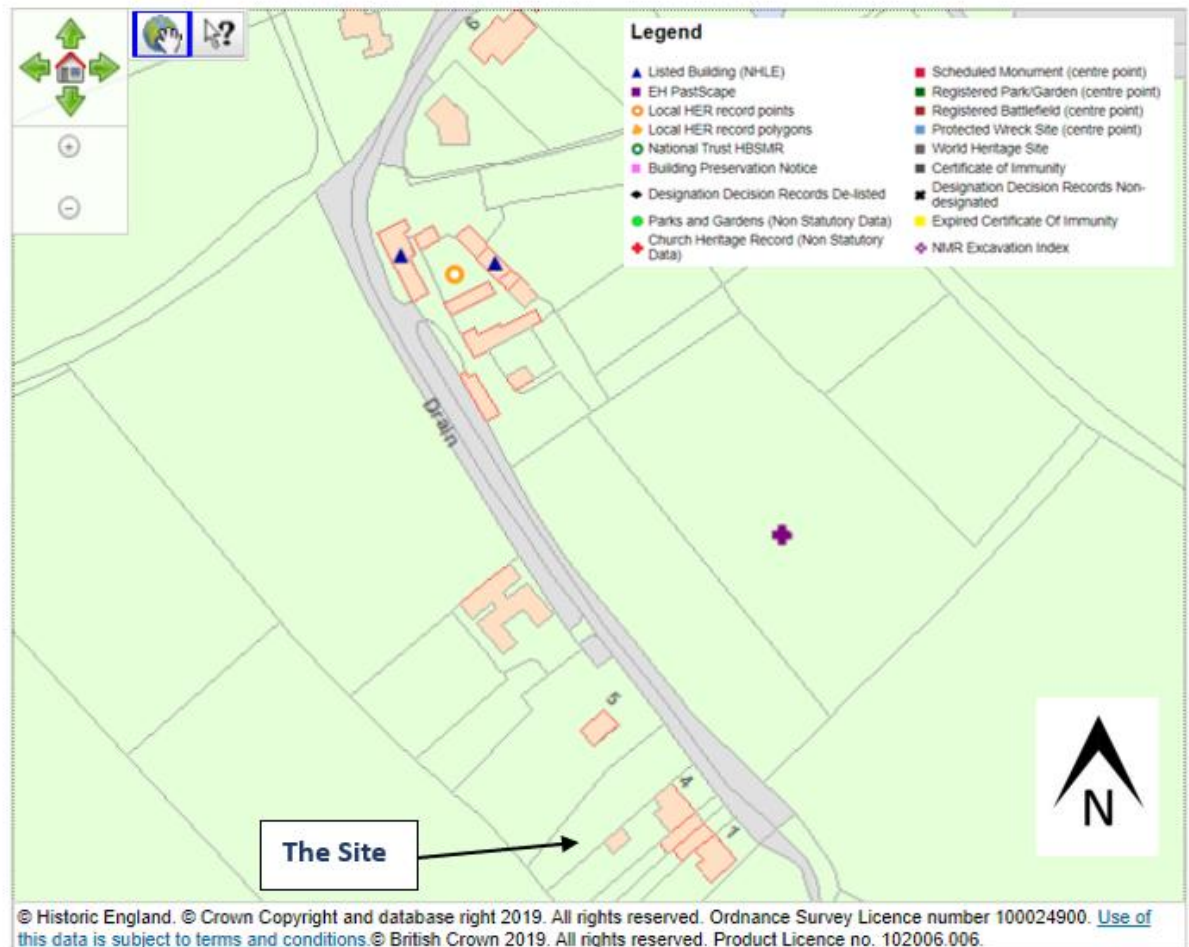
023 FP Commences from county road south of bridge over railway thence southeast along north east boundary of fields parallel with railway to join path to Sicut Road.

A2.5 In relation to local services, there is a public house upon Stevenage Road (the 'Hermit of Redcoats'), some 500 metres to the north of the site which is accessible by Footpath 017. There are also places of employment on Lower Titmore Green itself.

- A2.6 There are also bus routes in the vicinity (Routes 92, 92A, & 391 are located in Perranporth Lane (circa 800 metres away from the Site via Bridleway 022 and Footpath 020) and at Todds Green circa 800 metres via Stevenage Road and also Chantry Lane 1.3km.
- A2.7 Otherwise, all of the elements needed to support a household are available well within a 3 km radius of the Site in Stevenage or Hitchin, and accessible by road or cycle. The nearest convenience shop to the site is within Stevenage at Fisher's Green, on the other side of the A1(M) (some 2.5 kms, by road, to the south-east).



A2.8 **Heritage Assets** – below is an extract from the ‘Heritage Gateway’ (Historic Environment Record).



Extract from the ‘Heritage Gateway’ showing the site in the context of nearby heritage assets

A2.9 The site is not within a Conservation Area. There are some listed structures some 150 metres north of the subject site – the ‘Lower Titmore Farmhouse’, its outhouse and barn; all of which are listed Grade II. There is no evidence of archaeological interest upon the site itself.

Appendix 3

**Planning History of the Subject Site as at 20th
November 2025 together with key elements of
history from other nearby sites**

A3.1. **Subject Site** - In relation to previous Planning History, there are two entries on the LPA's on-line Planning Register:

- **Application Ref 89/00428** – *“Detached dwelling with double garage. (Outline - all matters reserved)”*. Refused 22nd June 1989. There are no documents available on-line relating to this application. The reason for refusal is not recorded.
- **Application Ref 90/0252/1** – *“Detached dwelling and detached garage. New vehicular and pedestrian accesses”*. Refused 12th April 1990. There are no documents available on-line relating to this application. The reason for refusal is not recorded. An appeal against the refusal was dismissed.

A3.2. **No. 5 Lower Titmore Green's** history includes the following:

- **Application Ref 17/01191/1** – was for the *“Conversion of existing stable and haybarn to two bedroom dwelling (as amended by drawings received 21 and 22 June 2017)”*. This was granted on 14th July 2017, subject to a number of conditions. This case involved the conversion of an existing structure into a dwelling and was considered against a different national and local policy background, but the Officer's assessment in relation to certain aspects of the case is of interest to the current proposal:

4.3.2The building sits in row of existing properties on the south-west side of Titmore Green with further built development within relatively close proximity to the north of the site, on the opposite side of the road. The existing building is well screened from public view and it is proposed to enclose it further, from the wider landscape, with the provision of hedging and post-and-rail fencing along the north-west side of the building, enclosing it and its proposed curtilage from the larger paddocks and fields to the north. Consequently, the proposal would not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt and therefore is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt (and so the consideration of very special circumstance is not necessary in this instance).

4.3.4 In this instance, there has been a relatively recent appeal decision () at the neighbouring property, No.6 Titmore Green, whereby the inspector allowed the conversion of a barn to a new dwelling, in May 2016. Given the similarities of the two proposals, the close proximity of the two sites and the how recent this decision is, guidance can be provided and officers are 'steered' by this appeal decision.*

[* Appeal Ref: APP/X1925/W/16/3142620, dated 27th May 2016]

4.3.5 The inspector found that ‘the future occupiers of the new dwelling would be largely reliant on the car to access most essential services and facilities’ given the relatively isolated location of the site. However, the provision of a new dwelling would support, ‘albeit in a limited way’ a sustainable rural economy especially during construction and as a result of spending by the future occupiers on local service and facilities. Social benefits would also be provided in a supply of housing to meet the needs of the present and future generations, although one dwelling would make a limited contribution. The same consideration can be applied to the proposed change of use of the stables and haybarn at Wrens Acre.

“4.3.8 However, in considering the overall planning balance, when taking the NPPF as a whole, the inspector, in considering the proposal at No.6, found that the provision of one dwelling would result in significant economic, social and environmental benefits. In this instance, at Wens Acre (No.5), this is an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt, whereby the development would not result in an isolated dwelling within the countryside. As such, although the proposal may not represent a sustainable form of development, this would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme and the proposal is therefore considered, on balance, an acceptable form of development”.

- **Application Ref 17/02667/1**- was made under S73 for the “Conversion of existing stable and haybarn to two bedroom dwelling (removal of condition 4 and variation of condition 2 attached to planning permission 17/01191/1)”. Essentially this application created a separate access for the dwelling. The revised proposal was granted on 15th January 2018.

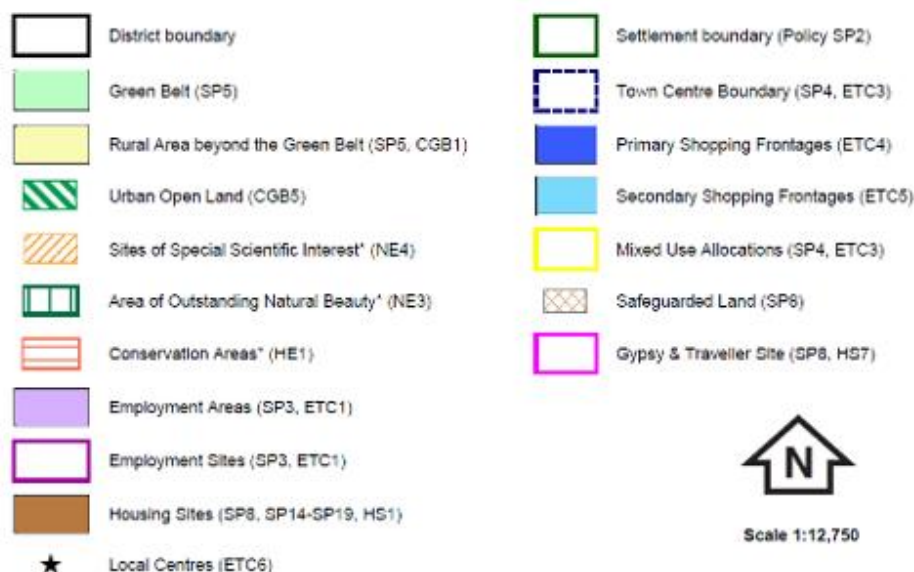
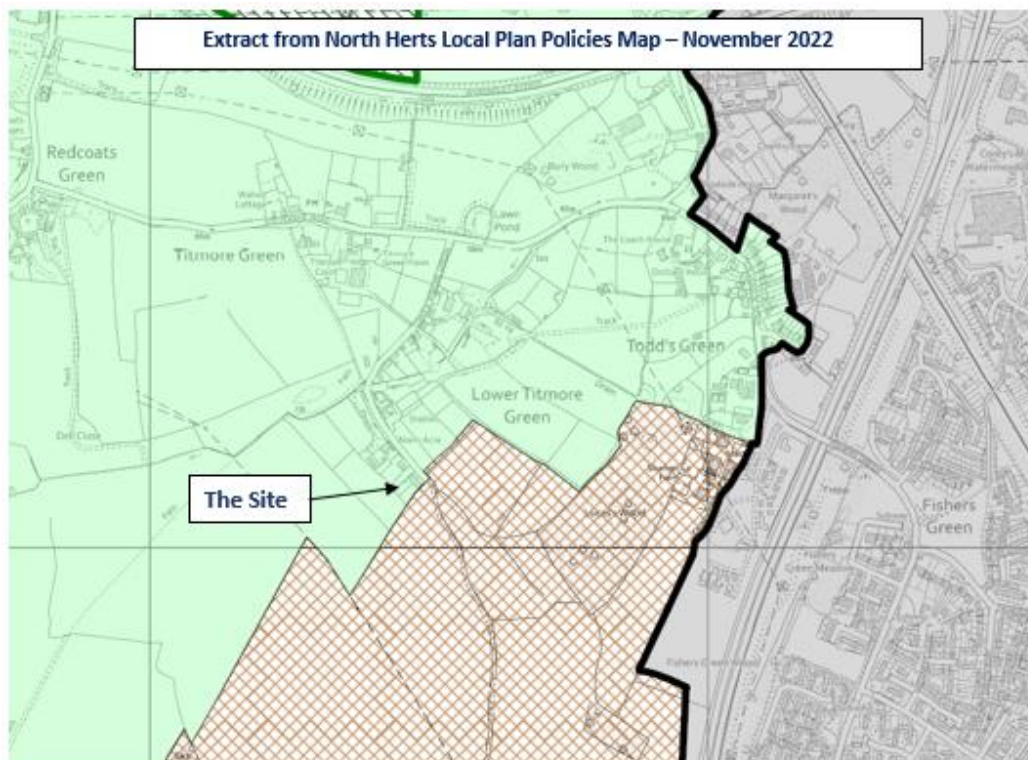
Appendix 4

Synopsis of Relevant ‘Development Plan’ Policy as at November 2025

A4.1 For the purposes of this report, the adopted ‘**Development Plan**’ for the area is:

- **North Herts Local Plan Written Statement (NHLP)** – adopted 8th November 2022; &
- **Wymondley Parish Neighbourhood Plan (WPNP) 2015-2031** – adopted 26th September 2019.

A4.2 **Designations & Constraints** - The ‘Policies Map’ for the NHLP shows the entirety of the area being in the Green Belt (**Policy SP5**). There are no site-specific allocations upon the land.



Scale 1:12,750

*Designations set under different legislation, processes and / or by other bodies and may change outside of the Local Plan process

NATIONAL POSITION

A4.3 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) & Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) contain the current sources of national policy. The latest version of the NPPF dates from December 2024 (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf) & the PPG is regularly updated (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance>). These policy matters are summarised in Section 8.0 above.

LOCAL POSITION

NORTH HERTS LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031 – adopted 8th November 2022

- Policy SP1** *“Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire”* – supports the “principles of sustainable development within North Hertfordshire”. The “key settlements” are to remain as the “main focus for housing, employment and new development making use of previously developed land where possible”. However, in order to “ensure the long-term vitality of the District’s villages.....growth which provides opportunities for existing and new residents and sustains key facilities” will be supported.
- Policy SP2** *“Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution”* – states that “the plan makes provision for at least 13,000 new homes”, of which 80% “will be located within the adjusted settlement boundaries of the following [main] towns”. The villages are categorised by size and range of facilities and will accommodate around 7% of the District’s housing development. There is no provision made in the NHLP for housing development within Titmore Green.
- Policy SP5** *“Countryside and Green Belt”* – generally supports “the principles of the Green Belt and recognise the intrinsic value of the countryside”. Within the Green Belt proposals will only be permitted “where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated”.
- Policy SP6** *“Sustainable transport”* – states that “the use of sustainable transport modes insofar as reasonable and practicable” will be promoted. Development will be encouraged “in locations which enable sustainable journeys to be made to key services and facilities”. Proposals must demonstrate that they are safe; that they provide adequate car parking; and that “existing rights of way” are protected.

Policy SP8

“Housing” – states “Over the period 2011-2031, housing growth will be supported across the District....sufficient land to deliver at least 11,600 net new homes for North Hertfordshire’s own needs” will be released. Furthermore, a five-year housing land supply will be maintained as well as a target to complete “20% of new homes over the plan period on previously developed land”. 56 plots on the 5 designated Strategic Housing Sites are reserved as self-build. In order to “provide long-term certainty”, land to the west of the A1(M) at Stevenage will be safeguarded “to meet longer-term development needs in the period beyond 2026 subject to a future review of this Plan”. This review should take place “by the end of 2023”.

Policy HS3

“Housing mix” – states that planning permission for new housing will be granted “taking into account:

- i. the overall targets of this plan;*
- ii. the findings of the most up-to-date evidence including the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Council’s Self Build Register and other relevant evidence of housing need;*
- iii. the location and accessibility of the site; and*
- iv. recent completions, existing permissions and sites in the five year supply...”.*

Policy IMR1

“Five Year Housing Land Supply” - in order to deliver “the total housing requirement of 13,000 net dwellings over the plan period.....The housing land supply will be measured against housing requirement targets of: 350 dwellings per annum for the plan period from 2011 to 31 March 2020; 500 dwellings per annum for the plan period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2024; and 1,120 dwellings per annum for the remainder of the plan period from 1 April 2024 to 2031”.

Policy IMR2

“Local plan early review” – in this policy the Council undertakes to carry out “a whole plan review of the Local Plan 2011-2031 by the end of 2023 at the latest. This will determine whether this Plan needs to be updated either in whole or in part. All policies will be reviewed but with particular regard paid to.....Housing requirements for the District and wider housing market areas; Housing delivery having regard to the progress and implementation of the Strategic Housing Sites and Local Housing Allocations identified in this plan and the rates of development being achieved.....”.

WYMONDLEY PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN 2015-2031 (WPNP) – adopted 26th

September 2019

Policy GB1

“Green Belt” – states that where development proposals impact on Wymondley Parish, they “must comply with Government Green Belt policy; primary consideration will be given to effective use of brown-field sites, which are not of high environmental value.....proposals should not impact negatively on Wymondley Parish – particularly in terms of visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt landscape and its important contribution to the character of our villages/hamlets”.

Policy HOD1

“Wymondley Parish Housing Needs” – this policy is quoted in full and reads: “in considering housing proposals impacting on the Parish we will consider demographic trends and community needs, and work with stakeholders to ensure that any housing delivered meets community needs in terms of affordability, type, tenure and range.”