

ICKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL



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

September 2025

Dear Mr Howe

Re: Planning Application [Ref: 25/01790/FP] – Proposed Self- Build Dwelling at ‘The Orchard’, Snailswell Lane, Ickleford

We advise you that Ickleford Parish Council must **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this Planning Application. Please see below, the categories and reasons for our objections.

1. The Development

The proposed development is situated within the Green Belt and outside the Settlement Boundary for Ickleford.

Snailswell was a small hamlet in its own right until the Pirton/Holwell Parishes were changed and it then became part of the Ickleford Parish. It consisted mainly of old cottages, one of which was destroyed by fire, only to be replaced by a bungalow. The whole of Snailswell Lane’s residences are mainly bungalows, with the exception of two semi-detached residences and two detached houses, all of which were originally small holdings, producing food for themselves, or in the case of two residences, producing tomatoes for general sale, which were sent to London via the Hitchin to Bedford Railway, which crossed Snailswell Lane.

The reason we have highlighted the above is because the development with it being proposed as 1.5 storeys high, is not in keeping with its neighbours The

Mildens which is located to the West, and which is a standard single storey bungalow; and although the Applicant is trying to use its East side neighbour Glendale, a detached property, as reasoning to create the 1.5 storeys, Glendale is in fact, sited at such a distance from the development, to not be considered in the calculation.

The development site was originally part of The Mildens small holding and up until recent years, was used as a paddock for grazing horses and dog training. It consists of two areas, the front area being the one in question.

It is a small area of land and any kind of development being considered, would be far too large, leading to loss of privacy and light to The Mildens and in the case of the second floor, loss of privacy to the bungalow Glenmore situated to the South.

It has been suggested in the application that this land is 'Grey belt'. This most certainly is not the case. Not only, as stated above, has this land been entirely used for grazing, perhaps before that for agriculture, but it has never previously been developed. Cattle to this day, are still being grazed at the small holding Ramblings, another bungalow, situated West of the Mildens.

2. Access and Travel

Entering and exiting this development is dangerous, bearing in mind that it is situated on a narrow single tracked unmade BOAT (By-way Open to All Traffic) with the entrance facing onto a drainage ditch. There is insufficient space to turn a small vehicle, let alone the much sought after 4x4!

NPPF paragraph **115** states: In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:

- a) Sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location.***
- b) Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users***
- c) The design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflect current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code 48, and***

d) Any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.

The proposed development is situated on a By-way Open to All Traffic (BOAT), the definition of which is:

It is a carriageway and thus a right of way for vehicular traffic, but on which is used mainly for the purposes for which footpaths and bridleways are used, i.e. by walkers and horse riders. *(Taken from: Rights of Way, a guide to law and practice by J. Riddall and J Trevelyan)*

Initially, this BOAT was used by tractors, horse drawn carts, walkers and horse riders. Today it is ravaged by modern day cars, but more importantly Refuse and Delivery vehicles, which because of their size, weight and width, this being a narrow single carriageway with a drainage ditch to the South, (that eventually empties into the river Hiz, which is a protected chalk stream), cause undue damage to the surface gravel.

For many years the inhabitants have sought to have this BOAT upgraded to a standard that could withstand today's vehicles, but because of its grading, which is met, instead they have to suffer deep and damaging potholes, that are not only damaging to vehicles, but which have now become a hazard to horses and walkers, with flooding and puddles concealing the dangers beneath. It is certainly, during wet weather, a 'no go' area for wheelchair users.

A new development within this area, will not only cause undue damage to the existing track surface whilst construction is taking place, but with there being no drainage system within this part of Snailswell Lane, future run-off water and extra vehicular movements will cause further hazardous conditions to those already living there.

3. Ecology and Connectivity

This site is known for its wildlife and natural habitat, with foxes, deer, barn owls and many other species being common. Grassland, trees and hedgerows will be lost if development is permitted. What does the developer intend to put in place to protect all wildlife and their habitats?

Residents have already borne witness to the unnecessary removal, purely to give visual Site size, of a perfectly healthy and fruit laden apple tree, which was much admired by those living near or passing by.

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protects 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 the schedule. The hedgerow that sides this proposed development has been established for well over 35 years and gives a natural edging.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) place a duty on all public authorities, including local planning authorities, to consider biodiversity in developments. Local planning authorities are to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity on a site, no net loss in habitat connectivity and aims to enhance biodiversity.

Research into the serious decline in numbers of grass snakes and other reptiles in the UK, carried out by the Durham Wildlife Trust, has concluded that new housing developments 'interrupt the natural wildlife corridors of animals including reptiles and insects.' This prevents these various species from finding food and also partners to further their species.

Natural wildlife corridors are vital and should be included in all considerations when looking at plans for infilling developments which are currently so prevalent.

North Herts Council Local Plan Policy NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites states:

'Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity in accordance with the hierarchy and status of designations and features listed in Policy SP12.'

All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological networks and the water environment, and/or restore degraded or isolated habitats where possible.'

Given that so far this land has been accessible to, and is rich in, a range of wildlife, what mitigation measures will be put in place to protect and manage biodiversity during development and once the dwelling is inhabited? Habitat enhancements will not compensate for the loss of internal habitats as the original habitats will be destroyed, and the present members of the species will have lost their habitat and connectivity.

With this development covering the majority of the site, it will be inevitable that the natural corridors and habitats will be lost.

4. Flooding and Foul Drainage

The Parish Council have requested from NHC, that all future developments be stopped until Anglian Water can upgrade their Victorian sewage system to accommodate not only foul water but more importantly run-off water.

For many years the village of Ickleford has borne witness to sewage backwashing into gardens and homes. This occurs after storm water enters the Victorian one-pipe system only to find that the pipe and pumping station cannot cope and backwash occurs.

Any new developments will only exacerbate the situation, whether we are talking one property or a large site development.

This development is a typical example, not only with storm water, but more importantly foul water. It is a known fact and one that Anglian Water is well aware of, that a blockage exists between this part of Snailswell Lane and the pumping station situated near Cadwell Bridge. Because of this problem, residents near Lower Green, suffer the indignity of witnessing sewage engulfing their gardens, especially after storm water heightens the situation. To connect a new property to the already overworked system will cause further and unnecessary indignities to those residents already suffering the consequences of outdated and incapable of coping pipework.

Climate change is here now; deluges of storm water are inevitable. Any new development must be able to cope on its own with the use of SuDS and not depend on the already overworked infrastructure. The same could be said, in the case of this development, of a septic tank being installed, making them totally self-reliant.

It is considered by Ickleford Parish Council that the conclusive issues above significantly and demonstrably far outweigh the benefits of this proposed development being built on this Site and we therefore reiterate that we must **STRONGLY OBJECT** to this planning application.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Patmore

Steven Patmore

Clerk to Ickleford Parish Council

Cc: North Herts Cllr Louise Peace
Herts County Cllr David Barnard