



Planning Statement

Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Stantec on behalf of Martin Grant Homes (the 'Applicant') in support of a planning application for a residential-led development on the Land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin (the 'Site').
- 1.1.2 The planning application seeks outline planning permission, with all matters reserved except for access, for the following development:

"Outline planning application with all matters reserved other than means of access, for the erection of up to 41 dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space"

1.2 Pre-Application Advice

- 1.2.1 A request for pre-application consultation was submitted on 28th May 2025 to seek advice regarding the proposal. As part of the pre-application request, a number of technical notes were submitted to assist the Council in their consideration of the request. These included notes on heritage, landscaping, ecology and transport, as well as a Development Framework Plan.
- 1.2.2 Written pre-application advice was received from the Council on 18 July 2025. Feedback was provided by officers from housing, ecology, and conservation teams, with particular attention given to heritage matters. The conservation response raised concerns about the site's proximity to designated heritage assets, specifically Pound Farmhouse and Mill Farmhouse, and emphasised the positive contribution the site's current rural character makes to their setting.
- 1.2.3 The Council also confirmed that the site lies within the Green Belt. However, the proposal puts forward the case that it qualifies as 'Grey Belt', land that does not strongly fulfil key Green Belt purposes, as defined in the National Planning Policy Framework and supported by Planning Practice Guidance criteria. The Council's response acknowledges that the site makes only a moderate contribution to the Green Belt, particularly in relation to preventing the sprawl of Hitchin. The main concern identified relates to heritage, and the Council suggests that if this issue can be resolved, there would be no reason the site could not be regarded as Grey Belt. The response also highlights the District's current shortfall in housing supply (3.9 years), and notes that the delivery of new homes would weigh in favour of the development when balanced against its moderate Green Belt role.
- 1.2.4 In summary, the Council does not consider the site to make a strong contribution to the Green Belt in terms of checking unrestricted sprawl, aligning with previous professional opinion and marking a positive step forward for the project. The key outstanding issue relates to heritage. If the impact on the nearby listed buildings can be suitably addressed, potentially through adjustments to the layout, then the site could reasonably be considered as Grey Belt.

1.3 Supporting Information

- 1.3.1 In accordance with the national and local validation criteria, this application is supported by the following information:
- Site Location Plan ref CSA/3922/121 rev B
 - Development Framework Plan ref CSA/3922/122 rev F
 - Illustrative Masterplan ref CSA/6323/129 rev B



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- Developers Parameters Plan ref CSA/3922/133 rev B
- Archaeology & Heritage Desk-Based Assessment
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment: Design Stage and Biodiversity Net Gain matrix
- Desk Study Report (Phase 1 ground investigation report)
- Design and Access Statement
- Ecological Impact Assessment
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Green Belt Assessment
- Illustrative Landscape Strategy ref CSA/3922/125 rev A
- Outline Sustainability and Energy Statement
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Transport Statement
- Utility Study Level 2

1.4 Planning Statement Content

1.4.1 This Planning Statement is presented in the following sections:

- Section 2 – A description of the site and its surroundings
- Section 3 – A review of the relevant planning history of the site
- Section 4 – A description of the proposed development
- Section 5 – A review of the relevant planning policy
- Section 6 – An assessment of the suitability planning application
- Section 7 – Conclusions drawn from the Planning Statement



2 Site and Surroundings

2.1 The Site

- 2.1.1 The site is located within the district of North Hertfordshire and is located to the southern edge of Hitchin. It comprises two parcels of land connected by a narrow strip, with Sloe Hill Residential Home inset into the northern boundary, effectively separating the two fields. The total area extends to 3.37 hectares and the land slopes gently to the south.
- 2.1.2 The eastern parcel is located to the south of the junction between Mill Lane and London Road (B656). The northern element of this parcel consists of a number of trees, with grassland and boundary planting in the southern element. Within the trees, there are four category A trees along the north and eastern boundaries, as well as a single large common lime tree central to the parcel, surrounded by some elder. The boundary to London Road includes trees at the northern end of the parcel, and hedgerows further south. The boundary along Mill Lane is well treed.
- 2.1.3 The western parcel has more trees centrally to the site and benefits from boundary planting to all sides. The link between the eastern and western parcels consists of a number of trees, although it is possible to walk centrally through the link. The land is in private ownership and there are no Public Rights of Way across the site.

2.2 The Surrounding Area

- 2.2.1 To the west, the site borders the rear gardens of residential properties situated on Mill Road, within the neighbouring settlement of Gosmore. To the south of the site is a field currently in agricultural use, beyond which is further open land and then residential properties.
- 2.2.2 To the east, across London Road, is a small group of dwellings, including the Grade II listed 'Pound Farmhouse'. To the north of this, construction has commenced on the approved 84 dwelling scheme (see the Planning History section for more information).
- 2.2.3 The northern boundary follows Mill Lane, except where it wraps around Sloe Hill Residential Home. On the northern side of the road are residential properties. Mill Lane itself is a narrow single track lane with limited parking places.
- 2.2.4 Hitchin is a historic market town and is identified in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011–2031) as one of the district's four main population centres. London Road runs along the eastern edge of the site, and provides a direct link towards the town centre. It also connects to the A602 and subsequently the A505.
- 2.2.5 Regarding transport links, there are existing bus stops along London Road, the closest at distances of 320m and 520m. The stops are served by bus services 304, 314 and 315, which links the site to the town centre and Welwyn Garden City. The railway station at Hitchin is approximately 1.8 miles from the site and is served by Great Northern and Thameslink services. These provides links to London and beyond, Cambridge and Peterborough. Direct trains to London St Pancras International take approximately 33 minutes.
- 2.2.6 The closest primary school is St Ippolyts Aided Primary School located approximately 0.6 miles from the site. Whitehill Junior School is approximately 0.7 miles to the north. Regarding secondary schools, the closest are the Hitchin Girls and Hitchin Boys Schools (1.3 mile and 1.5 miles from the site respectively), with the Priory School approximately 2.3 miles to the north.
- 2.2.7 Hitchin is located in close proximity to Letchworth Garden City and Baldock, forming a strong functional relationship between the three towns.



3 Planning History

- 3.1.1 The site itself has no recent planning history. However, notable planning activity has taken place in the immediate vicinity, particularly to the east of the site, beyond London Road. The table below summarises a key nearby development that has been advancing through the planning process, including the discharge of conditions and amendments since the original approval.

Reference	Status	Location	Description/ Details
21/00434/HYA	Conditional Permission (Dated 19.03.24)	Land North Of Pound Farm London Road St Ippolyts Hertfordshire SG4 7NE	Hybrid application for a residential development to provide a total of up to 84 dwellings together with associated access from London Road, including provision of a roundabout, associated parking, landscaping, open space and ancillary works comprising: Phase 1 - Application for full planning permission for the erection of 36 dwellings; Subsequent Phases - Application for outline planning permission all matters reserved except for access on the remaining part of the site for the erection of up to 48 dwellings.
24/02907/RM	Conditional Permission (Dated 29.08.25)	Land North of Pound Farm London Road St Ippolyts Hertfordshire SG4 7NE	Application for approval of reserved matters relating to Phases 2 and 3 being appearance, landscaping, layout and scale pursuant to conditions 7, 8 and 9 of planning permission 21/00434/HYA for the erection of 48 dwellings and associated works

- 3.1.2 Of noted, application 21/00434/HYA includes a condition (number 17) that states that prior to occupation, the proposed roundabout access work and bus stops shall be provided and connected. An extract of the proposed roundabout plan is shown below:



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- 3.1.3 The highway works will form part of a Section 278 package with the final detailed design to be agreed with Hertfordshire County Council. As such, there may be some minor changes to the plan as shown above.



4 Proposed Development

4.1 Description of Development

4.1.1 The proposed development seeks outline planning permission for the following:

- Development of up to 41 residential dwellings
- A policy compliant 50% affordable housing
- Delivery of green infrastructure and public open space on the western parcel to serve the wider community

4.1.2 The application is accompanied by an illustrative masterplan, which sets out how the site could come forward. However, this plan is purely indicative, with final details to be agreed at the future reserved matters stage. However, the parameters plans sets out the proposed developable areas and building heights.

4.2 Residential Development

4.2.1 The planning application proposes up to 41 new dwellings, with the precise layout to be agreed at Reserved Matters Stage. The proposal includes 50% affordable housing, which would equate to up to 20 such dwellings on site.

4.2.2 The submitted Design and Access Statement provides further detail on the design evolution, demonstrating how the scheme has responded to site-specific constraints while respecting the local landscape and character. It sets out how the indicative masterplan has been informed.

4.3 Open Space and Green Infrastructure

4.3.1 A significant area of new public open space will be provided on both the eastern and western parcels and made available for formal public access. This proposal is supported by an Illustrative Landscape Strategy (Appendix G within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Green Belt Assessment document). This approach will enhance biodiversity while maintaining key landscape features. It sets out some principles for the key areas of open space, the detail of which will come forward through a future reserved matters application.

4.3.2 The existing boundary vegetation will be retained where possible, however some trees will need to be removed. Any loss will be compensated through new native tree, hedge, and thicket planting to strengthen site boundaries and enhance new public spaces. Landscape enhancements are included throughout the site to reduce effects on the wider setting.

4.3.3 A recreational route has been designed around the site, providing residents with an informal walking path. This route will weave around existing vegetation and through proposed meadows, creating an engaging experience. Naturalistic trim trail equipment will be placed along the path to add opportunities for play.

4.3.4 In the eastern parcel, the northern section will accommodate residential development, while the southern section will remain open space to respect the setting of the listed Pound Farm located to the eastern side of London Road. Hedgerow planting is proposed along the southern edge of the housing. The open space will include meadow grassland, mown walking paths, and an attenuation drainage basin.

4.3.5 A variety of planting will be introduced across the residential areas to deliver a high-quality landscape design that integrates the development into the existing framework. Planting will reflect local character and create attractive places for residents.



- 4.3.6 The development will deliver biodiversity enhancements to achieve the highest possible level of biodiversity on site. This includes a +44% gain in hedgerow units. While significant biodiversity enhancements are being implemented, it is not possible to achieve a net gain of 10% solely on site for habitat units. Therefore, the required shortfall will be delivered through off-site measures.

4.4 Vehicular, Cycle and Pedestrian Access

- 4.4.1 Vehicular access to the development will be taken from the proposed roundabout on London Road (B656) which functions as a secondary distributor road with a 30mph speed limit. The three-arm roundabout, approved to serve the opposite development, will be upgraded to a four-arm junction to serve the site. The design of the fourth arm has been carefully aligned to minimise the impact on existing vegetation, with particular emphasis on tree retention.
- 4.4.2 Pedestrian and cycle access will be incorporated into the new fourth arm of the roundabout, with a footway provided on its northern side. This will connect northwards to new bus stops located beyond the Mill Lane/London Road junction. Safe crossing of the northern arm of London Road will be achieved via a dropped kerb with central refuge, linking to the shared footway/cycleway on the eastern side of the road. This route provides access to local services and facilities in Hitchin to the north.
- 4.4.3 The proposal seeks to divert Mill Lane through the site, with Mill Lane stopped up to vehicular traffic at the existing junction with London Road. Instead, cars journeys would be directed through the site and would expect to use the roundabout to continue journeys.
- 4.4.4 Cycle parking will be delivered in line with the residential cycle parking standards set out in the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan.
- 4.4.5 Car parking provision will comply with the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan standards and will be confirmed at the reserved matters stage. Electric vehicle charging will also be provided, with at least one dedicated charging point per dwelling in accordance with policy requirements.

5 Planning Policy Review

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section outlines the relevant planning policies and assessment criteria applicable to the submitted proposals. It also reviews other material considerations, including pertinent policies from the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy.
- 5.1.2 Following the General Election on 4th July 2025, the newly elected Labour Government reaffirmed its commitment to delivering a minimum of 300,000 new homes annually, targeting a total of 1.5 million homes across the term. In support of this goal, a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 12th December 2024
- 5.1.3 The NPPF sets out national planning policies for England and provides guidance on their implementation.

5.2 National Planning Policy

- 5.2.1 The NPPF sets out national planning policy for England and provides guidance for plan-making and decision-taking. Several key sections are particularly relevant to the proposed development:
 - Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development;
 - Section 3 – Plan-Making;
 - Section 4 – Decision-Making;
 - Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
 - Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities;
 - Section 9 - Promoting sustainable transport;
 - Section 11 – Making effective use of land;
 - Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places;
 - Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt land.
 - Section 14 – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change
 - Section 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment
 - Section 16 – Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- 5.2.2 In Paragraph 2, the NPPF explains its role in decision-making, in the context of legislation.

“Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan, and is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.”
- 5.2.3 Paragraph 7 of the NPPF states that *‘the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development’*.



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- 5.2.4 This is further elaborated in Paragraph 8, which explains that *'Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives)'*. These three key objectives are economic, social, and environmental.
- 5.2.5 As outlined in Paragraph 10, the NPPF places a presumption in favour of sustainable development at its heart. Paragraph 11 further details how this presumption applies to both plan-making and decision-taking. Specifically, Paragraph 11(c) states that development in accordance with an up-to-date development plan should be approved "without delay." Additionally, Paragraph 11(d) states that:
- "where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong 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, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination."*
- 5.2.6 Paragraph 11b and 11d, Footnote 7 sets out a list of protected areas that a strong reason for refusing may warrant refusal of planning permission. This includes impact upon designated heritage assets and area of risk of flooding, amongst others.
- 5.2.7 Footnote 8 of the NPPF clarifies that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies to applications involving housing provision when:
- '...the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer as set out in paragraph 78); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.'*
- 5.2.8 NPPF paragraph 78, as cross-referenced in Footnote 8, sets out that;
- "Local planning authorities should identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against their housing requirement set out in adopted strategic policies, or against their local housing need where the strategic policies are more than five years old. The supply of specific deliverable sites should in addition include a buffer (moved forward from later in the plan period) of:*
- a) 5% to ensure choice and competition in the market for land; or*
- b) 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, to improve the prospect of achieving the planned supply; or*
- c) From 1 July 2026, for the purposes of decision-making only, 20% where a local planning authority has a housing requirement adopted in the last five years examined against a previous version of this Framework, and whose annual average housing requirement is 80% or less of the most up to date local housing need figure calculated using the standard method set out in national planning practice guidance."*
- 5.2.9 Footnote 9 further explains that, to satisfy paragraph 11(d), the application must be assessed against specific policies set out in the NPPF
- 5.2.10 Paragraph 66, in relation to housing mix, states



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'Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed, planning policies and decisions should expect that the mix of affordable housing required meets identified local needs, across Social Rent, other affordable housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures.'

5.2.11 Paragraph 110, regarding sustainable transport options, states the following:

'The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives (promotion of sustainable transport measures). Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, 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.'

5.2.12 Paragraph 115 sets out a list of criteria that need to be met by planning applications. It 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 reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code; 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.'

5.2.13 Paragraph 116 confirms that development should only be refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or if residual impacts would be severe.

5.2.14 Paragraph 139 relates to achieving well-designed places and states:

'Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or

b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design mor generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.'

5.2.15 With regard to the Green Belt, chapter 13 of the NPPF is important when considering the proposed development given its Green Belt location. Paragraph 154 of the NPPF sets out developments within the Green Belt that could be considered appropriate. Residential development is not on that list.

5.2.16 However, paragraph 155 confirms that residential development in the Green Belt should not be regarded inappropriate where:



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- 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*
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework*
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below*

5.2.17 The definition of Grey Belt is set out within the glossary, which states:

'For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously development 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. 'Grey belt' excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. '

5.2.18 The Golden Rules for development in the Green Belt are set out in paragraph 156. The required contributions are:

- a. affordable housing which reflects either: (i) development plan policies produced in accordance with paragraphs 67-68 of this Framework; or (ii) until such policies are in place, the policy set out in paragraph 157 below;*
- b. necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and*
- c. the provision of new, or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their home, whether through onsite provision or through access to offsite spaces.*

5.2.19 Paragraph 158 confirms that *'a development which complies with the Golden Rules should be given significant weight in favour of the grant of permission.'*

Other Notable NPPF Paragraphs

- 5.2.20 Paragraphs 40 and 41 strongly encourage LPAs to adopt a positive approach to decision-making, supporting the delivery of sustainable development. This includes promoting pre-application discussions and fostering a collaborative approach where applicants and decision-makers work together to improve outcomes.
- 5.2.21 Paragraph 96 highlights the importance of promoting healthy and safe communities through clear and legible site layouts and measures that enable and support healthy lifestyles. Similarly, Paragraph 103 emphasises the significance of access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for physical activity, as these can provide various benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.
- 5.2.22 Paragraph 124 encourages the effective use of land, while Paragraph 132 underscores the importance of design in the built environment. It states that "good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work, and helps make development acceptable to communities." Paragraph 135 sets out six criteria against which proposed designs should be assessed.
- 5.2.23 Paragraph 187 advises that developments should minimise impacts on ecology and landscape, providing net gains for biodiversity by establishing resilient, coherent ecological networks that can withstand current and future pressures.



5.3 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

5.3.1 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on 8th November 2022. Due to the Council's inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the policies within the Local Plan are considered out-of-date, and the NPPF now takes precedence in guiding planning decisions. However relevant policies are shown below that informed the proposals.

5.3.2 Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy and spatial distribution

Policy SP2 outlines the spatial distribution of at least 13,000 new homes in North Hertfordshire between 2011 and 2031. Around 80% of housing, along with most new employment, retail, and other development, will be focused within the settlement boundaries of the main towns, including Hitchin. A further 13% will be delivered in five larger villages.

5.3.3 Policy SP5 – Countryside and Green Belt

This policy explains the Council support the principles of the Green Belt and recognise the value of the countryside. Development within the Green Belt will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, while a general policy of restraint will apply to Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt.

5.3.4 Policy SP6 – Sustainable transport

The policy sets out a commitment to enhancing accessibility and promoting sustainable transport wherever feasible. It aims to align development with the NHDC Transport Strategy and Local Transport Plan by encouraging growth in locations that support sustainable travel to key services. Collaboration with Hertfordshire County Council and other relevant bodies is central to ensuring a range of transport options, such as improved walking, cycling, and public transport routes, are accessible to users.

5.3.5 Policy SP7 – Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions

The policy explains that developments must provide or contribute to infrastructure needed to support growth. Contributions should be proportionate and delivered in a timely manner. Planning permission may be refused if infrastructure needs aren't addressed. Viability concerns must be clearly evidenced.

5.3.6 Policy SP8 – Housing

The Plan aims to deliver at least 11,600 net new homes for North Hertfordshire's needs by 2031, plus an additional 1,950 homes to help meet unmet demand from Luton (around 1,400 of which will be delivered by 2031). The Plan includes a 13% flexibility buffer, aims for 20% of homes on previously developed land, and commits to maintaining a five-year housing land supply.

5.3.7 Policy SP10 – Healthy communities

This policy discusses the Council's commitment to providing and maintaining healthy, inclusive communities. It supports retaining existing community, cultural, leisure, and recreational facilities, while requiring new developments to include appropriate levels of such amenities.

5.3.8 Policy SP11 – Natural resources and sustainability

This policy explains that the plan aims to address climate change and flooding by supporting renewable and low carbon energy developments in suitable locations. It adopts a risk-based approach to flood management, directing development to low-risk areas and requiring Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and other measures to manage water sustainably. The Plan also promotes the protection and enhancement of the water environment in line with

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relevant regulations, encourages the remediation of contaminated land, and collaborates with utilities and neighbouring authorities to ensure adequate wastewater treatment capacity without harming protected environmental sites.

5.3.9 Policy SP12 – Green infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity

This policy supports significant growth while ensuring protection and enhancement of the natural environment. It requires protecting and managing a strategic network of green infrastructure, respecting landscape character and sensitive areas (especially the Chilterns AONB), safeguarding designated sites at international, national, and local levels, conserving biodiversity including key habitats and species, and protecting existing open spaces while promoting new and improved ones.

5.3.10 Policy SP13 – Historic Environment

5.3.11 The Council aims to balance growth with strong protection and enhancement of the historic environment. It gives great weight to conserving designated heritage assets and their settings.

5.3.12 Policy T1 – Assessment of transport matters

This policy says that planning permission will be granted only if development does not cause highway safety issues or unacceptable impacts on the highway network. For major developments, applicants must show how the scheme will be served by public transport, provide safe and convenient pedestrian and cyclist routes, and integrate fully with existing transport networks.

5.3.13 Policy T2 – Parking

This explains that planning permission will be granted if residential and non-residential parking meets the relevant minimum standards and guidance. Proposals must consider applicable Supplementary Planning Documents and clearly show how all parking needs will be safely and effectively met.

5.3.14 Policy HS2 – Affordable housing

This policy explains that planning permission for new homes on sites over 25 dwellings will be granted if affordable housing is provided at 40%, delivered on-site unless robustly justified, and genuinely affordable to local people. The affordable housing mix should be around 65% rented and 35% other forms, meeting local housing needs and contributing to a balanced mix.

5.3.15 Policy HS3 – Housing mix

Planning permission for new homes will be granted if the development provides a suitable range of house types and sizes based on overall plan targets, the latest housing need evidence, site location and accessibility, and recent housing supply. Additionally, the scheme must deliver a density, scale, and character appropriate to its location and surroundings.

5.3.16 Policy HS5 – Accessible and adaptable housing;

This explains that planning permission for major residential developments will be granted if at least 50% of homes meet the M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard, and if 10 or more affordable units are provided, 10% of those meet the M4(3) Wheelchair User standard.

5.3.17 Policy D1 - Sustainable design

This policy states that planning permission will be granted if development proposals respond positively to the local context and take reasonable opportunities to enhance public spaces, incorporate sustainable drainage, reduce energy and waste, retain and add vegetation, improve accessibility and connectivity, future-proof for technology and lifestyle changes, design out crime, and minimise visual impact of street furniture and parking.



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5.3.18 Policy NE2 – Landscape

This policy emphasises that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that carefully respond to the sensitivities of the local landscape character, safeguard the visual integrity of the surrounding area through appropriate mitigation, ensure the protection and longevity of key landscape features, and incorporate strategies for the ongoing management and maintenance of both existing and new landscaping.

5.3.19 Policy NE4 – Biodiversity and geological sites

This policy states that planning permission will only be granted when development proposals effectively protect, enhance, and manage biodiversity according to a defined hierarchy of site designations. Developments must deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological networks, and restore habitats where possible. The policy also mandates integrating habitat buffers appropriate to site sensitivity and establishing long-term management and monitoring plans to ensure ongoing biodiversity protection.

5.3.20 Policy NE6 – New and improved open space

This policy supports granting planning permission for developments that provide new or improved open space to meet the needs arising from the development, in line with Council standards and guidance.

5.3.21 Policy NE7 – Reducing flood risk

This policy states that planning permission will be granted only if development is located outside medium and high flood risk areas where possible, or otherwise passes sequential and exception tests using flood risk assessments. Developments must consider lifetime flood risks, climate change, and safe access, be designed to reduce flood risk without increasing it elsewhere, and minimise residual risks through resilient construction. Flood protection measures must avoid harm to nature, heritage, and landscape, ideally providing positive benefits.

5.3.22 Policy NE8 – Sustainable drainage systems

This policy states that planning permission will be granted for developments that use the most appropriate sustainable drainage solutions, considering technical, viability, and design factors to reduce surface water flooding, enhance biodiversity and water quality, and provide amenity benefits. Drainage systems should aim to mimic natural drainage processes and follow the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) hierarchy.

5.3.23 Policy NE11 – Contaminated land

This policy states that planning permission will be granted for developments affected by contaminated land only if a contamination risk assessment is submitted, appropriate investigation and remediation measures are in place to manage risks, and the site is deemed suitable for use considering ground conditions, groundwater vulnerability, and past land use.

5.3.24 Policy HE1 – Designated heritage assets

This policy requires planning applications affecting designated heritage assets or their settings to include a Heritage Assessment that evaluates the asset's significance, details the impact of the proposal, and outlines mitigation measures. Permission will be granted if the development secures conservation and continued use of the asset, uses materials that enhance local character, and causes less than substantial harm outweighed by public benefits. Proposals causing substantial harm or loss will be refused unless justified by significant public benefits.



5.3.25 Policy HE4 – Archaeology

This policy will support developments affecting heritage assets with archaeological interest only if a desk-based assessment and, if needed, a field evaluation is submitted. It requires demonstrating how important archaeological remains will be preserved within the development layout where possible. If loss of remains is justified, conditions must ensure proper recording, reporting, and archiving before damage occurs.

5.4 Vehicle Parking at New Developments November 2011

5.4.1 This SPD was adopted by NHDC on 10th November 2011 to provide guidance on parking provision for new developments. The Council's policy does not seek to restrict car ownership through parking standards but aims to influence car usage instead. Accordingly, the standards set a minimum parking requirement for residential developments based on current car ownership levels and projected growth. For residential properties, a minimum parking provision is required, and the SPD states that meeting this minimum is the norm in all cases.

5.4.2 The table below outlines the residential parking standards:

Class Use C3	Car Parking Standard	Minimum Cycle parking Standard
1 bedroom	1 space per dwelling Minimum	1 secure covered space per dwelling. None if garage or secure area provided within curtilage of dwelling.
2+ bedroom	2 spaces per dwelling Minimum	
Visitor/unallocated	Between 0.25 and 0.75 spaces per dwelling (rounded up to the nearest whole number), with the lower standard being applied where there are no garages in the proposed scheme and the higher standard applied where every dwelling in the scheme is to be provided with a garage.	If no garage or secure area is provided within curtilage of dwelling then 1 covered and secure space per dwelling in a communal area for residents plus 1 space per dwelling for visitors

5.4.3 The standards include flexibility; however, any exceptions to the minimum parking requirements must be supported by strong evidence, specifically addressing car ownership and visitor parking demand over the expected lifetime of the development.

5.5 Design SPD July 2011

5.5.1 This SPD provides guidance for development across North Hertfordshire, encouraging developers and designers to consider the local context and how their proposals can positively contribute to and enhance the surrounding area. Its overarching aim is to ensure high-quality development throughout the district. The SPD includes a dedicated section on Hitchin, identifying key documents that should be considered when preparing development proposals in this location. For the proposed site, the following apply:

- Urban Design Assessment for Hitchin



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- Hitchin Town Centre Strategy
- Hitchin Conservation Area Character Statement
- Paynes Park Development Brief
- Churchgate Development Brief

5.5.2 The Design SPD emphasises the importance of maintaining a high standard of design that respects and reflects the character and sense of place of Hitchin. New buildings should respond to the scale and typology of historic structures, with architectural styles and materials that complement the existing heritage. Generally, building heights are expected to be no more than three storeys, and flat roofs are considered inappropriate within the town.

5.5.3 The SPD also supports higher densities within the town centre and encourages a mix of uses, including residential development. It highlights the significance of active street frontages, with building facades oriented towards the street to promote natural surveillance and vibrant public spaces.

5.5.4 Public realm elements such as street furniture, colours, and signage should be maintained and enhanced to contribute positively to the overall streetscape and local environment.

5.6 Developer Contributions SPD January 2023

5.6.1 This document supports the Local Plan by providing guidance on the type and scale of developer contributions expected to support new development in the area. It outlines the requirements for developer contributions to ensure that growth is appropriately mitigated and local infrastructure is adequately supported.

5.7 Sustainability SPD September 2024

5.7.1 This document outlines the Council's sustainability expectations and how these should be integrated into the planning process. The SPD addresses key sustainable construction requirements, focusing on both mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its predicted impacts. It provides guidance on design strategies and energy efficiency measures aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and waste generation. The document promotes the creation of developments that support biodiversity and are resilient to a changing climate. Throughout the SPD, various guidance notes and checklists are provided, including a three-tier sustainability checklist categorised as Bronze, Silver, and Gold standards.

5.8 Emerging North Hertfordshire Local Plan

5.8.1 In January 2024, the Council began a full review and update of the Local Plan following a decision by the Cabinet. In January 2025, a Local Development Scheme was published, replacing the previous preparation timetable for the Local Plan update. The current timetable is as follows:

- Public Consultation (Regulation 18): October – November 2025
- Public Consultation (Regulation 19): October – November 2026
- Submission to Secretary of State: March 2027
- Adoption: December 2027

5.8.2 An 'Expressions of Interest' Call for Sites has been undertaken, and the site has been submitted for consideration.



- 5.8.3 Given it remains in the early stages of preparation and the lack of any published document for consideration, no weight can be given to the emerging Local Plan at this stage.

5.9 Material Considerations

North Hertfordshire's Housing Supply, Need and Delivery

- 5.9.1 At the Planning Control Committee meeting on 4 September 2025, the Council confirmed its current position on housing land supply. Reference was made to the Council's Housing Land Supply Update (May 2024), which identifies a requirement of 5,990 dwellings across the District for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029. Against this requirement, the Council reported a deficit of 1,359 dwellings over the five-year period 2024/25–2028/29. This equates to a supply of 3.9 years, which falls short of the five-year requirement set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Council has not published a further update since May 2024.

6 Planning Assessment

6.1 The Principle of Development

6.1.1 In assessing the principle of development of the site for residential use, the following matters are considered:

- Assessment against Green Belt policies
- Sustainable Development

6.2 Assessing against Green Belt Policies

6.2.1 The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Paragraph 153 of the NPPF sets out that in considering planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. As per footnote 55 however, this is “other than in the case of development on previously developed land or grey belt land, where development is not inappropriate.”

6.2.2 The site is considered Grey Belt. As such, the proposed development is appropriate development in the Green Belt and the tests of openness set out in paragraph 153 do not apply.

6.2.3 The proposed development does not meet those listed within paragraph 154 of the NPPF. However, paragraph 155 considers the development of homes in the Green Belt, and as such, the proposal should be assessed against the criteria set out within this paragraph, as set out below:

- 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;*
- c. *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraph 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d. *Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraph 156-157 below’*

6.2.4 These criteria are considered in turn below.

Part (a) – Grey Belt

6.2.5 The definition of Grey Belt is set out in chapter 5 above. It references whether the land strongly contributes to any of the purposes a, b and d of paragraph 143. The table below summaries the comments and assessment from the supporting Green Belt Assessment (set within the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Green Belt Assessment document):

Green Belt Purpose	Assessment
a) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	Development of the site would not be incongruous with the existing settlement pattern of Hitchin, continuing the pattern of growth either side of London Road and would be well related to the currently under construction development to the northeast, as well as existing built form along Mill Lane to the north (extending no further west than existing properties on the northern side of Mill Lane).

	Overall, the site is considered to make moderate contribution to this Green Belt purpose
b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	Planning Practice Guidance makes it clear that this purpose relates to merging of towns and not villages. Both Gosmore and St Ippolyts are classified as villages, and the nearest towns are Stevenage (just over 3km to the southeast) and Luton (approximately 8km to the southwest). Given the intervening distance between Hitchin and the identified towns, the site is assessed as making a weak or no contribution to this Green Belt purpose
d) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The site does not form part of the historic setting of Hitchin, nor does it have a connection to the historic aspects of the town or its conservation area. The site is considered to make a weak or no contribution to this Green Belt purpose.

- 6.2.6 Land which is considered to be Grey Belt excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in NPPF Footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. The table below summarises the site's position in terms of the Footnote 7 criteria:

Footnote 7 Criteria	Response
Habitats sites and/or designated SSSI	There is no formal designation on the land.
Local Green Space	The land is not designated as Local Green Space.
National Landscape	The site is not located within a National Landscape.
National Park or defined Heritage Coast	The site is not located within a National Park or defined Heritage Coast.
Irreplaceable Habitats	There are no known irreplaceable habitats on the site.
Designated Heritage Assets	The proposal is considered to cause less than substantial harm to the setting of the grade II listed Pound Farmhouse, towards the lower end of this harm spectrum. Harm to the grade II listed Mill Farm is expected to be less than substantial, at the lowermost end of this harm spectrum. Any harm is therefore below the 'strong reason for refusal' as set out within the definition of Grey Belt.
Areas at risk of flooding or coastal change	The site is located wholly within flood zone 1. There are small areas of surface water flooding at a 1 in 1,000 event, and these areas have been kept clear from any development or activity that would potentially impact flooding elsewhere.

- 6.2.7 Following the undertaking of the Green Belt Assessment and other technical work, the site clearly constitutes Grey Belt land and would meet part (a) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF. The



Council's pre-application response came to the same conclusion, subject to heritage matters, which this application provides.

Part (b) – Demonstrable Need

- 6.2.8 Footnote 56 of the NPPF confirms that, in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, 'demonstrable need' means a lack of a five-year housing supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Tests was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.
- 6.2.9 In terms of need within North Hertfordshire, the latest Council position was published in May 2024 (the Five Year Housing Land Supply Position Statement). No further report has been published since. However, it was acknowledged within the pre-application received the Council continue to consider the present position as 3.9 years. In a Committee Report for application 24/01444/FP to support Planning Committee on 18 September 2025, this position is reiterated. It states the following:
- 'At the time of writing, the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply with the figure sitting at 3.9 years. In this respect, the matters set out under Paragraph 11d of the NPPF become relevant'*
- 6.2.10 Based on the above assessment of the Council's own evidence base, it is clear there is a demonstrable need for housing within North Hertfordshire. Part (b) of paragraph 155 of the NPPF is therefore met.

Part (c) – Sustainable Location

- 6.2.11 Part c) of paragraph 155 requires a site to be in a sustainable location with specific reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework. Paragraph 110 of the NPPF states that development should be focused in locations which are, or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. Paragraph 110 recognises that opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into consideration in plan-making and decision-making. Paragraph 115 adds to this by requiring development to provide safe and suitable access; well-designed streets and parking areas; and for any impacts on the highway network to be effectively mitigated.
- 6.2.12 The site is located on the edge of Hitchin and there are existing connections into Hitchin. These will be improved by the required pedestrian and cycleway that form part of the application for the 84 dwellings on land to the east of London Road.
- 6.2.13 In terms of transport connections, the closest bus stop heading northwards on London Road is the London Road Crossroads stop which is served by the 304, 314 and 315 services into Hitchin. It also has dedicated services to the Priory Secondary School in the morning. It is located approximately 320m from the site at its closest point. In a southwards direction, the London Road Crossroads bus stop has direct services to Welwyn Garden City and St Albans, and also has a direct morning service to the Nicholas Breakspear School, a Catholic secondary school in St Albans. The New England Close bus stops to the north of the site are served by the same services and are approximately 550m from the site.
- 6.2.14 Hitchin also is well connected by rail. The station is located approximately 1.8 miles from the site and is served by Thameslink and Great Northern services. Thameslink services run between Cambridge or Peterborough to London (St Pancras, City Thameslink and Blackfriars amongst others) and Brighton or Horsham. Services into London run on average at 4 an hour. Great Northern Services link between Cambridge and London Kings Cross and are half hourly.
- 6.2.15 In terms of facilities, these are set out within the accompanying Design and Access Statement. There are two primary schools in close proximity, with the St Ippolyts Aided Primary School

and Whitehill Junior School located approximately 0.6 and 0.7 miles from the site respectively. There is a public house, village store and village hall in Gosmore. The large supermarket at Queen Street is located approximately 1 mile from the site, and the convenience store at the Stevenage Road petrol station is 0.8 miles from the site.

- 6.2.16 Regarding connectivity, upgrades are coming forward as part of the Pound Farm development opposite the site, and the proposed layout seeks to introduce connections to these. The proposed diversion of Mill Lane through the site will also benefit existing residents given the removal of cars from the Mill Lane/London Road junction.
- 6.2.17 The site therefore provides genuine options beyond the car to access day to day services. It therefore meets the terms of part (c) of the NPPF paragraph 155.

Part (d) – Golden Rules

- 6.2.18 NPPF paragraph 156 sets out the ‘Golden Rules’ required for residential development proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application. The three Golden Rules are discussed in turn below:

a. Affordable Housing

- 6.2.19 Paragraph 157 of the NPPF notes that for development plans that are out of date, the affordable housing contribution required to satisfy the Golden Rules is 15% above the highest existing affordable housing requirement which would otherwise apply to the development, subject to a cap of 50%. The adopted target under adopted Local Plan Policy HS2 is 40% for a scheme of this size, and therefore the requirement would be 50%. This is the requirement sought through this application.

b. Infrastructure – Necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure

- 6.2.20 The development would make significant improvements to local infrastructure to meet the needs of new residents which would also be of benefit to existing local residents. These contributions are expected to include the following:

- Early years, SEND, primary and secondary education
- Library provision
- Healthcare provision
- Community infrastructure

- 6.2.21 A key benefit resulting from the proposal is the diversion of Mill Lane through the site, so it is directly accessed from the proposed fourth arm of the roundabout. The existing junction between London Road and Mill Lane has poor visibility, especially southwards, given the vegetation on this corner. Stopping up this junction will create a safer access along Mill Lane. Crossing points are also proposed adjacent to the proposed roundabout.

c. Green Spaces – The provision of new, or improvements to existing green spaces that are accessible to the public

- 6.2.22 At present, the site is private with no public rights of access. That said, there is clear evidence of dog walking through the site. The application provides an opportunity to make the site formally accessible to the public. The proposed landscape masterplan includes mown pathways through the site that will be maintained to allow access at all times. The proposed footpath links the western field to the east and would allow an alternative route to Mill Lane for pedestrians.



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- 6.2.23 The proposed development therefore complies within the Golden Rules, and significant weight should be given in favour of granting planning permission in line with paragraph 158 of the NPPF.

Summary

- 6.2.24 The site therefore fully meets the terms of paragraph 155 of the NPPF. The proposed development would be classed as Grey Belt and as such would be considered appropriate development within the Green Belt. As such, there is no requirement to justify inappropriate development in the Green Belt under the terms of paragraph 153 of the NPPF are not required to be presented in this scenario. That said, this planning statement does highlight such circumstances that require weight in the decision-making process. These are:

- Delivery of 41 dwellings including 50% affordable housing
- Formal public access to the open space and routes through the site
- Realignment of Mill Lane to close the London Road junction and divert traffic to the proposed roundabout arm.
- Improved crossing areas around the proposed roundabout
- Provision of on-site playspace
- Ability to provide a total 10% biodiversity net gain
- Contributions to infrastructure provision
- Job creation during construction

6.3 Sustainable Development

- 6.3.1 The aim to deliver sustainable development is front and centre throughout the NPPF. Paragraph 8 sets out the three objectives of sustainable development.

- a) An economic objective: to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- b) A social objective: to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- c) An environmental objective: to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigation and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 6.3.2 The proposed development would achieve the three dimensions of sustainable development. How the scheme addresses each objective is discussed below.

Economic Objectives

- 6.3.3 Development of the site would create new jobs during the construction period including training and apprenticeship opportunities for adults, including young people within the local community. In line with the Homes Builders Federation housing calculator, a scheme of 41



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dwelling would support the employment of 142 people. Future residents would also contribute towards local spending to the benefit of business in Gosmore and Hitchin. The site would therefore contribute to expansion of the local economy.

- 6.3.4 The Home Builders Federation calculator also notes a scheme of 41 dwellings would generate £1.09m in tax revenue, including £82.5k in Council tax revenue.

Social Objectives

- 6.3.5 The proposed development would provide up to 41 homes which would assist in meeting the housing needs within the Council in the short term. This is especially important at this time given the inability of the Council to demonstrate a five year housing land supply.
- 6.3.6 In line with the requirements of the Golden Rules, the site will deliver 50% affordable housing. The precise mix will be agreed with the council but will seek to achieve the requested split of 65% rented and 35% affordable home ownership or other forms of affordable housing tenure. In line with adopted Local Plan policy HS5, a minimum 50% of dwellings would be built to M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard, and a minimum 10% of affordable units would meet M4(3) wheelchair user standard.
- 6.3.7 The proposal will bring forward significant levels of open space well above the standards set out in the development plan. It will bring the land into public access and provide walking routes to link the parcels. The proposal would also seek to enhance landscaping features and provide play space.

Environmental Objectives

- 6.3.8 The environmental objective of achieving sustainable development also includes improving biodiversity. The proposed development would meet this objective by providing 10% biodiversity net gain through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. On-site measures would include landscape and planting enhancements to encourage wildlife, as well as bird and bat boxes and SuDs. Off-site provision is to be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition.
- 6.3.9 The application is accompanied by an Outline Energy and Sustainability Statement. This assesses the scheme against the requirements of the development plan, including the Sustainability SPD. The dwellings will be designed with fabric first principles to reduce heat demand and energy needs in line with policy requirements. Energy efficient water and heating strategies are proposed.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

- 6.3.10 Paragraph 10 of the NPPF sets that 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11)'.
- 6.3.11 Paragraph 11(d) sets out that for decision-taking, this means that where policies for determining the application are out of date, granting planning permission unless:
- i. the application of Policies in the 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 whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.
- 6.3.12 The first thing to consider in determining whether the presumption of sustainable development set out at 11d) applies is whether North Hertfordshire District Council has an up-to-date plan.



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Whilst the Local Plan was adopted in 2022, there is clear evidence that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply.

- 6.3.13 As such Paragraph 11(d) and a presumption in favour of development is triggered. The presumption in favour of sustainable development has been acknowledged by the Council in recent reports to Planning Committee.
- 6.3.14 Footnote 9 to part ii of 11(d) sets out the specific policies (paragraphs 66, 84, 91, 110, 115, 129, 135 and 139) to consider when having regard to the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. This comprises:
- Paragraph 66 – the need to consider a mix of affordable housing proposed meets identified local needs, across Social Rent, other affordable housing for rent and affordable home ownership tenures.
 - Paragraph 84 – avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless exceptional circumstances apply.
 - Paragraph 91 – application of sequential tests to planning main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan.
 - Paragraph 110 – significant development should be focused on locations which are and can be made sustainable.
 - Paragraph 115 – development should provide safe and suitable access, well-designed streets and parking areas, and for any impacts on the highway network to be effectively mitigated.
 - Paragraph 129 – development should make effective use of land.
 - Paragraph 135 – Development should achieve well-designed and beautiful places.
 - Paragraph 139 – Significant weight should be given to developments which reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, and/ or present outstanding or innovative designs which promotes high levels of sustainable design and help raise the standard of design more generally in the area.
- 6.3.15 The Proposed Development would support each of the above policies of the NPPF. The development therefore meets the definition of sustainable development and meets the objectives as set out in the NPPF. The tilted balance or presumption in favour of sustainable development would therefore apply.

6.4 Design and Layout

- 6.4.1 The planning application is outline in nature, with only access to be considered at this stage. Details of layout and house types will come forward through the reserved matters process.
- 6.4.2 The access points assist in informing the potential layout of the site as seen on the illustrative masterplan within the Design and Access Statement. Access is proposed from the roundabout that will support the Pound Farm scheme on the eastern side of London Road. The route of the internal road into the site is not likely to change much given the need to connect to the diverted Mill Lane entering the site at its northern boundary.
- 6.4.3 The illustrative masterplan sets out how the development could come forward. It is based on an internal road network that seeks to avoid the need to remove the category A trees. The central lime tree within the eastern field will also be retained as a feature, with development set around this.



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- 6.4.4 A small area of land in the western parcel is also proposed for residential development. This would be in the form of a single shared access, which reduces the need for tree removal along Mill Lane. Again, the design of this area would be agreed at reserved matters stage, but it the illustrative masterplan shows a courtyard style development in this location, which is considered appropriate given the character of Mill Lane
- 6.4.5 The southern section of the eastern parcel will be utilised for a combination of open space and the drainage mitigation basin given this represents the lowest part of the site. The basin itself will be formally designed at reserved matters stage, but will be in that approximate location as shown. The edge of the built form takes into account comments from the Council's conservation officer at the pre-application stage, which sought to bring development away for the grade II listed Pound Farmhouse. Additional separation is shown, with the boundary planting also realigned to create a balance between heritage setting and landscape impact.
- 6.4.6 On the western parcel, the built area is within the northeast corner, and the rest of the site will be made available as public open space with formal access granted. A further drainage basin will be required to serve the built form, and will be located in an area to the south of the proposed dwellings, whilst also respecting the existing trees and pedestrian route.
- 6.4.7 The layout of the site therefore is informed by a number of technical considerations, as covered below, and seeks to make efficient use of the site from the vehicle access points proposed.

6.5 Housing Need, Mix and Tenure

- 6.5.1 The Government's ambition to deliver 1.5 million homes nationally underlines the scale of housing need. North Hertfordshire's contribution is an important part of this wider strategy to tackle shortages, which are directly linked to inequality, poor health outcomes, and reduced quality of life. As noted, the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing land supply and the scheme would make a contribution of up to 41 dwellings to assist meeting this identified shortfall.
- 6.5.2 In line with the requirements of the NPPF the Golden Rules, the development will provide 50% affordable housing. This would represent a maximum of 20 affordable units on the site. The Council requires a mix of 65% rented dwellings and 35% affordable home ownership (or other forms of agreed affordable housing tenure mix).
- 6.5.3 In their response to the pre-application request, the Council's Housing Supply Officer has confirmed the last Housing Needs Survey for St Ippolyts was undertaken in 2012 and described as 'very out of date', especially given the three allocated sites within the Parish which will provide 58 affordable dwellings. The formal affordable housing mix will be agreed through the determination period of the application and then secured in perpetuity through a Section 106 Agreement.
- 6.5.4 All affordable houses will be built to Nationally Described Space Standards. 10% of affordable dwellings will also be built to the M4(3) wheelchair user standard and would meet the aims and objectives of policies HS3 and HS5 of the adopted Local Plan.
- 6.5.5 Regarding market housing, there would be up to 21 on the site. Policy HS3 of the adopted Local Plan confirms the need to provide a range of house types and sizes, taking into account the findings of the most up to date evidence. The Stevenage and North Hertfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (SHMA) was published in August 2016 and will no doubt be soon updated as the new Local Plan cycle progresses.
- 6.5.6 The SHMA sets out the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for market housing within North Hertfordshire and this is summarised in the table below (taken from Figure 28 of the SHMA 2016).



House Type	North Hertfordshire Number (based on OAN)	North Hertfordshire Percentage
Flat – 1 bed	200	2%
Flat – 2 bed	360	3.6%
House – 2 bed	840	8.4%
House 3 bed	5,300	53%
House 4 bed	2,540	25.4%
House 5+ bed	790	7.9%

- 6.5.7 At reserved matter stage, the Applicant will work alongside the Council to ensure the development provides an acceptable market housing mix based upon the latest Council evidence, ensuring the proposal would meet the aims and objectives of policy HS3 of the adopted Local Plan.

6.6 Landscape Impact

- 6.6.1 Paragraph 139 of the NPPF advises that new development should reflect local design policies. The adopted Local Plan places strong emphasis on raising design standards to ensure proposals respond appropriately to the form and layout of surrounding areas. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA), prepared by CSA Environmental supports this planning application and concludes that the site is well related to the existing built edge of Hitchin and would represent a logical and contained extension to the settlement. The enclosed nature of the site, combined with new structural landscaping, will help integrate the development into the landscape. Any effects on landscape character or visual amenity would be largely limited to the site and its immediate context, with minimal impact on the wider area.
- 6.6.2 With respect to visual amenity, the LVIA confirms that impacts are limited. Views of the site are generally restricted to short distances and are primarily experienced by users of London Road, Mill Road, and Mill Lane. Established vegetation boundaries already provide effective screening, limiting visibility of the site interior.
- 6.6.3 The layout and the proposed building areas have been sensitively designed to respond to the local context of Hitchin and Gosmore and accords with relevant NPPF and Local Plan policies. In particular, Policy SP12 seeks to protect, enhance, and manage biodiversity networks and supports the creation of new and improved open space. The proposal delivers these outcomes by incorporating accessible green spaces, play areas, and integrated pathways that contribute to community activity and vibrancy. The development also complies with Policy NE2, as it respects the landscape character area and avoids unacceptable harm. Overall, the site and surrounding environment have the capacity to accommodate the proposed development with the mitigation measures embedded in the landscape design.

6.7 Ecology

- 6.7.1 The application is accompanied by a suite of ecological documents to support the proposal, including a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, and Ecological Impact Assessment, and a Design Stage Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment along with the appropriate matrix calculation.
- 6.7.2 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is a desk study of the site and its environs and provides a list of enhancement opportunities to support and inform the application. The Ecological Impact Assessment includes numerous surveys for species at the site, including badger, bats, birds, reptiles and amphibians.
- 6.7.3 Of note, the site is known to support bats although no roosts had been identified at the time of writing. In line with best practice, inspections will be undertaken ahead of any tree removal



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should any unknown roosts be present. Lighting details can be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition, which will take into account the final layout. Lighting must respect the surrounding ecology as informed by the results of the surveys.

- 6.7.4 An appropriately worded planning condition can ensure that clearance of habitat or features required to facilitate development should take place outside of the bird breeding season. Regarding reptiles, a single common lizard was found on the site and care can be taken to ensure any lizard population is not disturbed by the development.
- 6.7.5 Regarding biodiversity net gain, the proposed development would result in a -24% on site score. As such, the proposal would need to secure off-site credits to make up the shortfall. The biodiversity net gain can be secured through the appropriately worded condition as set out within national guidance.
- 6.7.6 The application is also supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Given the level of planting on site, there is a need for some tree removal to support the proposal. The tree survey work has informed the layout and particularly the potential route of the internal road as it seeks to avoid the category A trees on the site. Some category B and C trees would be removed as part of the proposal. The scheme does seek to replace some of the removed trees elsewhere on the site.
- 6.7.7 The proposal therefore meets the requirements of policy NE4 of the adopted Local Plan and national requirements set out within the NPPF and Environment Bill.

6.8 Open Space

- 6.8.1 The application documents set out the expected development areas at the site. The remaining land will be used for open space. In terms of quantities, the open space area would measure approximately 2.27 hectares, and that would be broken up into 2.24 hectares of amenity greenspace and recreation, and natural and semi-natural greenspace. The remaining 0.03 hectares will comprise of 4 natural plant areas across the site.
- 6.8.2 The illustrative Landscape Strategy sits within appendix G of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and Green Belt Assessment 2025 document and sets out the initial open space concept for the site. This provides a rationale for each specific area of open space, as well as an overall framework.
- 6.8.3 The southern area of the eastern parcel seeks to respect the setting of the grade II listed Pound Farmhouse. The areas will mostly be sown as meadow grassland, with mown walking paths set within. Play equipment, as part of a wider 'play on the way' design will also be located in this area and is expected to consist of natural play equipment. The western field will largely be left undeveloped and used for ecological enhancements.
- 6.8.4 A recreational route will be provided through the site as a whole. The aim is to create a meandering route for walkers through proposed meadows and planting, whilst also creating a formal link between the two fields. It will have further equipment along it to encourage explorative play.
- 6.8.5 The illustrative Landscape Strategy also provides a planting palette for the open space areas. This gives a guide as to how the requisite areas are expected to come forward, with the precise detail forming part of a future reserved matters application.
- 6.8.6 The open space will be secured in perpetuity through a Section 106 Agreement which will include details of the future maintenance of the areas, whether that is adoption by the Council or the utilisation of a management company.
- 6.8.7 The application provides key details regarding the open space for which the detail will come forward in a future application. The proposal is considered to meet the aims and objectives of policy NE6 of the adopted Local Plan, and national planning policy in this regard.



6.9 Transport

- 6.9.1 As noted, the planning application is in outline form, but access is to be considered at this stage. There are in effect three vehicle accesses into the site. The main route from London Road will be the fourth arm from the approved roundabout that serves the Pound Farm development to the east. The roundabout will require a slight elongation to ensure appropriate tracking into and out of the site.
- 6.9.2 The proposal seeks to divert Mill Lane through the site from the north, allowing it to then connect to the roundabout. This diversion does bring significant benefit to the local area. Mill Lane is a narrow single track road. The junction with London Road has poor visibility southwards, and once the approved roundabout is in situ, would have vehicles accelerating towards this junction. There is also a conflict between vehicles leaving Mill Lane, as those turning onto the road given that narrowness and visibility.
- 6.9.3 Mill Lane would then be stopped up to vehicle traffic. Those residential properties that are located on the eastern end of Mill Lane would be able to turn into the site and utilise the roundabout. There is the option the junction will remain open for cyclists, and details will be secured through a Section 278 application.
- 6.9.4 The third vehicle access proposed is that at the western parcel which will serve the small courtyard style development to the west of the Sloe Hill Residential Home. The illustrative masterplan shows 3 dwellings would be served from this access point, although the precise layout will be agreed at reserved matters stage.
- 6.9.5 A formal pedestrian entrance will be created from Mill Lane at the west of the site. There is an informal route into the site at this point at present, which is used by local dog walkers and local residents.
- 6.9.6 Matters such as parking provision will be provided in line with development plan policies, and will be a detail to be considered at the reserved matters stage.
- 6.9.7 The scheme includes dedicated facilities for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users. These improvements align with local transport policies by enhancing connectivity to nearby amenities and the wider area, encouraging active travel, and supporting sustainable transport objectives. The site benefits from strong links to surrounding settlements including Hitchin, Stevenage, and Letchworth Garden City, all of which are accessible by public transport. Local destinations such as St Ippolyts, Gosmore, and Sunnyside are within walking, cycling, or wheeling distance, further supporting sustainable travel choices.
- 6.9.8 The site is also well served by public transport. Existing bus services operate along London Road, with stops at Newlands Lane and London Road Crossroads approximately 320m and 550m from the site. The Pound Farm scheme is delivering two new bus stops in close proximity to the development. These will further improve accessibility and encourage greater use of public transport.
- 6.9.9 Rail services are available from Hitchin Station, located approximately 1.8 miles from the site. The station lies on the East Coast Main Line and is served by Thameslink and Great Northern services to London and beyond, Cambridge and Peterborough, as well as intervening stations. This provides strong regional and national connectivity for future residents.
- 6.9.10 Given its location and the sustainable transport measures proposed, the scheme accords with the NPPF and Local Plan policies by delivering strategic improvements that enhance accessibility and promote sustainable travel. It also creates local benefit through the diversion of Mill Lane.

6.10 Flood Risk

- 6.10.1 The site lies wholly within flood zone 1. Given the size of the development, the application is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment. This has assessed the site in terms of all forms of potential flooding, and also has informed the proposed drainage strategy for the proposed development.
- 6.10.2 The proposal seeks the addition of two drainage mitigation basins, one located in each parcel of the site. These will be designed to cater from run-off from the respective areas of built form in their proximity. Precise details of the size of the basins will be confirmed during the reserved matters stage. However, the illustrative masterplan has been informed by the comments from the drainage consultant, and provides guidance as to the size and location of the features.
- 6.10.3 Regarding surface water flooding, the 1 in 1,000 event maps show small levels of flooding in the southeast corner of both the western and eastern parcels. The development has been designed to ensure that these areas would not be subject to any physical works. They sit outside the development parcel parameter and the mitigation basin has been designed in order to avoid this area.
- 6.10.4 The NPPF definition of Grey Belt confirms that matters listed within footnote 7 (which includes 'areas at risk of flooding or coastal change') would be excluded from being considered Grey Belt where application of policies would provide a strong reason for refusing and restricting development. The development would make no impact upon these areas of surface water flooding, and as such, this would not impact upon the potential for the site to be considered Grey Belt.
- 6.10.5 The proposal meets the aims and objectives of adopted Local Plan policies NE7 and NE8 and guidelines set out within national planning policy.

6.11 Heritage

- 6.11.1 The site is located adjacent to two existing listed buildings. To the eastern side of London Road is the grade II listed Pound Farmhouse. The supporting Archaeology and Heritage Desk-Based Assessment provides a more detailed description of the building, but notes it is a two-storey building with an early/mid-19th century western façade to the front of an older building. There were concerns during the pre-application response regarding the setting of the building.
- 6.11.2 As such, the relationship between the proposed development platform and the listed building has been reassessed and pulled further away from the building. The boundary planting has also been reassessed to allow views of the building from the southern part of the proposed western parcel, which is dedicated to open space. As a result, the potential harm to the listed building is considered less than substantial, towards the lower end of this harm spectrum.
- 6.11.3 The grade II listed Mill Farm is located to the northern side of Mill Lane, adjacent to the western parcel. It is a single storey early 19th century dwelling that sits hard against the road edge. The development has sought to respect the setting of this building. Whilst there is a small courtyard-style proposal opposite the listed building, this has been set back to allow the retention of the strong vegetation frontage. When considered against the proposed layout, harm to Mill Farm is expected to be less than substantial, at the lowermost end of this harm spectrum.
- 6.11.4 The application also considers archaeology potential at the site. The Pound Farm development to the east did not record any significant archaeological finds or features. However, there has been a previous find in the western parcel. The site is not currently suitable to allow for a geophysical survey given the level of planting. As such, the application is informed by the Desk-Based Assessment, which confirms that if required, trial trenching could be achieved through an appropriately worded condition.



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- 6.11.5 Other heritage assets in the vicinity have also been assessed. This includes the Grade I listed Church of St Ippolyts and the St Ippolyts Village Conservation Area. The proposal would not adversely impact the significance of these heritage assets.
- 6.11.6 'Designated heritage assets (and other assets of archaeological interest)' are noted within footnote 7 of the NPPF, where such factors could exclude development from the definition of Grey Belt if the 'application of policies would provide a strong reason for refusing'. The result of the independent assessment that supports this application confirms that 'less than substantial harm' would result to the listed buildings. This would be factored into the planning balance. The impact however, would not provide a 'strong reason for refusing and restricting development'. As such, the site could still be considered Grey Belt.
- 6.11.7 The proposed development is considered to be in line with the requirements of policies HE1 and HE4 of the adopted Local Plan.

6.12 Sustainability

- 6.12.1 The planning application is supported by an Outline Energy and Sustainability Statement, which seeks to demonstrate the sustainability of the site in line with national and local planning policy. The application is in outline form and therefore specific house types are not provided. Further information regarding individual house type performance can be provided at reserved matters stage as necessary.
- 6.12.2 On energy, the proposal seeks to follow the nationally adopted energy hierarchy of reducing energy demand in the first instance, using energy efficiency and only then implementing low carbon and renewable sources where appropriate. Regarding sustainability, the scheme will support the creation of a balanced and healthy community by integrating green infrastructure, promoting sustainable transport options, and delivering energy-efficient homes that minimise energy demand and optimise resource use.
- 6.12.3 In line with the North Hertfordshire Sustainability SPD, the Statement demonstrates how the proposed would align with the requirements of the SPD. The proposal is expected to reach the 'Silver' target level for 'Promoting Biodiversity: Ecological surveys and assessments' and Promoting Biodiversity: Arboriculture Assessment. A number of the criteria cannot be assessed at this stage and therefore there is potential for further 'silver' assessments. All themes are expected to reach 'bronze' level as a minimum.
- 6.12.4 The proposal therefore is in accordance with policy D1 of the adopted Local Plan and meets the aims and objectives of the Sustainability SPD.

6.13 Contamination

- 6.13.1 The planning application is accompanied by a Desk Study Report that provides a Phase 1 desk study into geotechnical and geo-environmental factors relating to the site. The report has identified an infilled sandpit located in the western parcel of the site.
- 6.13.2 It concludes with a number of recommendations, including the need for intrusive investigation works. This would be wrapped in in Phase 2 works and would expected to be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition.
- 6.13.3 In lien with the recommendations of the report, the proposal continues to meet the aims and objectives of policy NE11 of the adopted Local Plan.

6.14 Section 106 Heads of Terms and CIL

- 6.14.1 North Hertfordshire District Council does not currently charge a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). The Council continue to use legal agreements to secure contributions from new development. In March 2021, the Council's Cabinet resolved not to pursue CIL at this time.



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6.14.2 The list below sets out the proposed Section 106 Heads of Terms expected for the development. These will be discussed and confirmed through the determination of this planning application:

- Affordable Housing: to be provided at 50% on site. The proposal aims to achieve 65% affordable and social rented units with the remaining 35% to be other forms of affordable housing.
- Healthcare: contribution to be made to support existing healthcare provision in the area.
- Education: to be made towards early years, primary, secondary and SEND facilities in the vicinity of the site.
- Library: contributions towards local library provision.
- Community Infrastructure: contributions towards any identified local community scheme
- Highways: potential contributions to local highway improvements to be agreed with Hertfordshire County Council.
- Public open space and Management: to cover the provision of on-site public open space including the proposed play provision and other green areas. The maintenance of this space is to be agreed, but will be either via adoption by the Council or maintenance by a management company

6.15 Statement of Community Involvement

- 6.15.1 Paragraph 40 of the NPPF encourages early engagement to allow for improvements to efficiency and effectiveness within the planning system for all parties. It adds that good quality consultation enables better coordination between public and private resources and improves outcomes for the community.
- 6.15.2 Alongside the pre-application request described in chapter 1 above, the Applicant undertook a public consultation to allow residents to provide their comments and thoughts to the proposals. A presentation was also given to St Ippolyts Parish Council. These events are summarised within the Statement of Community Involvement, which can be viewed in Appendix 1 of this Planning Statement.

6.16 Planning Balance

- 6.16.1 The site is located within the Metropolitan Green belt but lies adjacent to the existing settlement of Hitchin. The site is considered to meet the test of 'Grey Belt' and residential development would be an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt under the terms of NPPF paragraph 155. Development of the site would be a logical extension to Hitchin, especially given the development at Pound Farm to the east.
- 6.16.2 The proposed development would meet the 'Golden Rules' set out in paragraph 156-157. This includes the provision of 50% affordable housing, provision of public open space and improvements to local infrastructure through physical delivery and financial contributions as considered necessary.
- 6.16.3 The Council has confirmed that it cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply, the latest figure being 3.9 years. The absence of such a supply highlights that there is a need for land to come forward for residential development to address this housing shortfall. The potential designation as Grey Belt is agreed by the Council in the pre-application, subject to heritage information. This application confirms that impact upon the adjacent heritage assets would not provide a strong reason for refusal, a test set out in the NPPF definition of Grey Belt.



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- 6.16.4 Given the content of paragraph 153 of the NPPF, the application does not therefore need to consider very special circumstances. However, a list of key benefits resulting from the proposal is listed within paragraph 6.2 above. Further, careful consideration has been given to the setting of the site and impacts upon its immediate surroundings.
- 6.16.5 The proposal is therefore consistent with the NPPF's objective of delivering sustainable development and planning permission should be granted.



7 Conclusion

- 7.1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an outline planning application for up to 41 dwellings with associated infrastructure and open space on land at Mill Lane and London Road, Hitchin.
- 7.1.2 The site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt. At present, North Hertfordshire District Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply, The last published position (May 2024) states a 3.9 year supply can be demonstrated. The Council continue to note this figure in reports to Planning Committee in September 2025. There is a demonstrably need for housing, and the site is considered to be a sustainable location for growth.
- 7.1.3 Following an independent assessment, the site is not considered to strongly contribute to purposes a), b) and d) set out within paragraph 143 of the NPPF, a view shared by the Council within their pre-application response. This Planning Statement sets out how the development then meets the requirements and tests within the NPPF regarding Grey Belt land. The Golden Rules can be met as described above. As such, development is not considered to be inappropriate within the Green Belt.
- 7.1.4 The application is supported by a suite of technical documents that assess the sites suitability for development. Subject to recommendations, none of these reports have identified any material consideration that would preclude development coming forwards.
- 7.1.5 The Government is committed to delivering sustainable development. Local Authorities should adopt a positive approach to sustainable development, which will meet identified needs and which will not compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in the national planning policies.
- 7.1.6 Overall, the proposals compromise a sustainable form of development that will provide significant benefits to the local and wider community. There are no adverse impacts or material planning reasons that 'significantly or demonstrably' outweigh the many benefits of the scheme.

Appendix A Statement of Community Involvement



Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)

1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the stakeholder engagement and consultation that took place in support of Martin Grant Homes' proposals for its site at London Road, Hitchin. In particular, the methods used for engagement, including the distribution of information leaflets, the establishment of a dedicated project website, and an in-person community briefing event following an invitation from St Ippolyts Parish Council.

The engagement aimed to raise awareness of the project within the community, gather feedback from local residents, and build trust and transparency between the project team and local stakeholders.

This chapter also summarises the consultation feedback received, which has been categorised into key themes such as environmental impacts, benefits and project legacy, and needs case, and outlines the applicant's responses and actions taken to address these concerns.

2 Planning Policy Background

This section provides an overview of Government policy and other guidance in relation to community involvement in the planning system, as outlined within the following documents:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)
- North Hertfordshire District Council Statement of Community Involvement – September 2023

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF 2024 emphasises the value of pre-application engagement as a key step in delivering sustainable development that aligns with local needs. Encouragement to engage with the local community before an application is submitted is provided at paragraph 40 of the Framework:

'Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications.'

In ensuring that the right information is submitted with an application in order to facilitate good decision taking, paragraph 43 of the Framework recommends that applicants, 'discuss what information is needed with the Local Planning Authority and expert bodies as early as possible'.

2.2 North Hertfordshire District Council Statement of Community Involvement 2023

The North Hertfordshire District Council Statement of Community Involvement was adopted in September 2023 and sets out how the Council will engage with stakeholders and local communities as part of the planning process.

The Council encourage applicants to engage early with the planning authority before submitting a planning application. These pre-application discussions allow planning officers to offer advice without influencing the final decision, help confirm the necessary submission information, reduce the risk of invalid applications, and identify key issues and opportunities at an early stage.

Applicants are also encouraged to engage with the local community as part of the pre-application process on major planning applications. This provides an important opportunity for neighbours and local communities to raise any issues directly with the applicant and influence the proposals at an early stage, enabling the applicant to respond to any comments they have received. Suggested methods of publicity for major developments include neighbour and parish council notifications, and a website.

3 Stakeholder Engagement and Community Consultation

3.1 Goals

The key objectives of the consultation process were to:

- Inform the local community about the project.
- Gather feedback to inform the design and planning approach.
- Build trust and transparency between the project team and local stakeholders.

3.2 Methods of engagement

The pre-application consultation period with the local community ran from Wednesday 20th August to Friday 5th September 2025 during which the consultation was open for comments.

Engagement with the surrounding residential and business community was undertaken through the distribution of a leaflet, a project website, and an in-person community briefing at St Ippolyts Parish Hall.

3.2.1 Consultation Leaflet

To raise awareness of the Proposed Development and the consultation within the local community, an information leaflet was distributed to the local community surrounding the Application Site. 402 leaflets were sent to addresses (business and residential) within close proximity to the site.

The leaflet provided details of the consultation as well as the project website where further information could be found including the channels available to provide feedback. A copy of the leaflet is included at Appendix A.1.

3.2.2 Notification Email

A notification email was sent to stakeholders prior to consultation opening to raise awareness of the Proposed Development and the consultation. Stakeholders included, but were not limited to, statutory bodies, community groups and a local residents' association, regulatory authorities, council elected officials, local schools and a nearby business.

A further email was sent on the day of the consultation opening to notify that the project website was live, and the digital feedback form was available.

3.2.3 Project Website

A dedicated project website was set up at www.landatlondonroadhitchin.co.uk to provide further information about the project, including details about the site, the opportunities for local residents to give us their views on the proposal, and next steps. Please see Appendix A.2.

3.2.4 Community Briefing

After an invitation from St Ippolyts Parish Council, the plans for the proposed development were presented to a meeting at St Ippolyts Parish Hall on 8th September 2025. This included a A02 size visual aid (please see Appendix A.3) that was based on the information on the project website, followed by a question and answer session. A total of 6 members of the public attended the event. As this was a response to the invitation and the council meeting was scheduled for 8th September, after the consultation closed on 5th September, it did not align with the consultation timeframe. However, attendees were encouraged to provide feedback on the final application, and the process for doing so was clearly explained to them.

3.2.5 Feedback Form

The primary feedback channel was the feedback form, which was available on our dedicated project website. A small number of hard copies along with pre-paid envelopes were made available at St Ippolyts Parish Hall.

A copy of the feedback form is included at Appendix A.4.

3.2.6 Pre-application engagement with LPAs

A formal pre-application submission was made to North Hertfordshire District Council on 2nd April 2025 (Ref: 25/01424/PRE), providing details of the Applicant's intentions to prepare a planning application for the Proposed Development and outlining the supporting information. The Council subsequently undertook a site visit on 21st May 2025 to inform their written response.

The Council's formal written response was received on 18th July 2025, setting out officer-level advice on the principle of development, relevant planning policies, and key technical matters. The Council confirmed that any pre-application advice given is officer-level only and does not bind the Council in determining any future planning application.

The Council's response referenced national planning guidance including the NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance on Green Belt (2025), alongside local planning policy, including the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 and supporting documents such as the Developer Contributions SPD (2023) and Sustainability SPD (2024).

Key points raised in the Council's advice included:

- The site is designated Green Belt land but may be considered as 'Grey Belt' under the provisions of the NPPF and associated guidance, subject to further assessment, particularly in relation to heritage constraints.

- The site was assessed as making a moderate contribution to Green Belt purpose (a) (checking the unrestricted sprawl of Hitchin) and was not found to conflict significantly with purposes (b) or (d) as set out in paragraph 143 of the NPPF.
- However, objections from the Council's Conservation and Ecology Officers were received, citing harm to nearby listed buildings and potential adverse ecological impacts.
- The Council advised that further work would be required to address the heritage and ecology concerns before an application is submitted.
- Comments were also provided on site design, parking standards, bin storage requirements, Sustainable Drainage (SuDS), and the need for a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG) in accordance with the Environment Act 2021.
- The importance of early consideration of Heads of Terms (HoTs) for Section 106 contributions was emphasised, including affordable housing, open space, and other local infrastructure.

4 Responses and Feedback

4.1 Community briefing

At the meeting held at St Ippolyts Parish Hall, the public and members of the Parish Council raised concerns about how the proposal as summarised in the table below, along with a response relating to the proposal:

Comment	Response
Concern regarding the number of dwellings and additional cars within the Parish	The proposal will increase car numbers, but at a level that would have a negligible impact upon the surrounding road network.
Closure of the gap between Hitchin and Gosmore	The proposal would allow the retention of the open space areas for 30 years given biodiversity net gain requirements. There will remain open land between settlements.
Loss of a dog walking route	Previous dog walking was on private land, whereas the proposal would allow formal use of designated routes.
Lack of capacity at the school	The proposal will make financial contributions to the education authority to mitigate any harm resulting from the development.
Concern regarding the number of development in the western parcel	The illustrative layout shows a courtyard style development of circa 3 or 4 dwellings in this area
The presence of a ravine in the western parcel	The accompanying Ground Investigation report shows an infilled sandpit in the western parcel and sets out requisite recommendations accordingly.
The loss of semi-natural landscape	The proposal will include some planting and tree removal and introduce housing to the site. The retained open spaces will be enhanced to maximise the benefit of these spaces.

Suburban development in a rural area	The application is in outline form. However, at the reserved matters stage, matters such as design and materials will be agreed, and will ensure the development assimilates within the area.
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4.2 Summary of feedback

We received a total of 98 responses (96 via the feedback form, 2 via post).

The feedback has been analysed and categorised thematically. Each key theme has a summary which paraphrases the responses received. The following key themes were identified from the feedback:

- Traffic and transport: Feedback pertaining to the impact of the proposed development on local roads, vehicle movements, public transport, and overall accessibility.
- Utilities and infrastructure capacity: Feedback pertaining to the ability of existing services—such as water, electricity, sewage, and telecommunications—to support the proposed development.
- Needs case: Feedback pertaining to the justification for the proposed development.
- Principle of development: Feedback pertaining to the overall appropriateness and acceptability of the proposed development.
- Construction impacts and effects: Feedback pertaining to potential impacts associated with the construction process.
- Environmental impacts: Feedback pertaining to issues such as ecology, land quality, landscape, noise and health.
- Planning and policy: Feedback pertaining to compliance with relevant planning policies and references to previous planning decisions.
- Benefits and project legacy: Feedback pertaining to the positive outcomes and long-term impacts of the proposed development.
- Engagement and consultation: Feedback pertaining to how stakeholders and the community were involved and consulted at this stage of the development.

The applicant's response to feedback has been provided for each theme.

4.3 Applicant's response

A summary of the main issues raised by the community during the engagement process and the Applicant's response can be found in the table below.

Theme raised	Summary of feedback	Applicant's response
Traffic and transport	Concerns were raised about the traffic impacts from the proposed development. It was stated that London Road (B565) and Mill Lane are already congested, with ongoing developments at Pound Farm, Waterdell Lane, and Sperberry Hill adding pressure. It was also stated that London Road is often used as a shortcut to bypass motorway congestion, resulting in traffic jams and safety hazards due to a combination of speeding cars, farm machinery, and large trucks.	The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement that confirms that the level of traffic generation from the proposed development would not have a severe impact upon the local road network. The proposed development seeks to introduce safe crossing points for London Road, benefiting the existing residents as well as future occupiers of the scheme.
	Safety concerns were regarding narrow pavements, a lack of pedestrian crossings, and the absence of signage for horse riders, despite regular use by walkers, cyclists, and equestrians. The Mill Lane access was widely criticised: it is a narrow, rural lane unsuitable for increased traffic, and residents fear it will become unsafe and lose its character. Some suggest alternative access points closer to the nursing home and away from the nearby listed building. One respondent insisted that Mill Lane was a peaceful road and that vehicle access to London Road is safe with good visibility.	The narrowness of Mill Lane is acknowledged, and the scheme introduces formal public access to the site to provide an alternative walking route to Mill Lane. Visibility at the Mill Lane/London Road junction is not considered to be acceptable given the existing planting restricting views southwards. The proposal would allow Mill Lane users to safely utilise the proposed roundabout.
	Respondents stated that the current public transport provision was inadequate, which they	London Road is served by regular bus services into Hitchin or to St Albans and Welwyn Garden City.

	said increased car dependency and worsened congestion. It was stated that the local train station's parking was often full and that bus services were limited. Questions were raised about how the development would reduce traffic and pollution beyond the planned roundabout, with the suggestion of a Hitchin bypass. Parking on-site was raised as another issue, with calls for larger garages to avoid overflow parking on narrow roads.	It is acknowledged the development would not reduce traffic, but it can set out the alternatives to persuade future occupiers to use these non-car alternatives.
Utilities and infrastructure capacity	Respondents were concerned about the impact of the proposed development on the current local infrastructure and public services. Concerns were raised regarding the local primary school, which was emphasised as being at full capacity. There were concerns that additional housing would result in overcrowded classrooms, increased pressure on local high schools in Hitchin, and the possibility that children would be forced to travel further afield, increasing traffic congestion and reliance on car travel. It was suggested that specific engagement should be undertaken with the school's leadership and for developer contributions (via CIL or S106) to be used locally and transparently to mitigate impacts.	The proposed development will mitigate any impact created by making financial contributions to matters such as primary and secondary education, SEND provision, early years provision, libraries and health provision. Hertfordshire County Council will comment upon the capacity of the primary school. The development is not at a large enough scale to trigger a new primary school, so contributions towards nearby facilities are anticipated. The proposal can connect to the cycle path proposed at the Pound Farm scheme, with improved crossing facilities to be provided.

GP surgeries, dental services, and the local hospital were cited as being already overwhelmed, with residents reporting difficulty accessing appointments. There were concerns about the lack of shops, limited bus services, no cycle paths, and unsafe, narrow footways, particularly along the B656, as existing deficiencies that would worsen with more housing.

The impact of other existing and planned developments in the area was a key concern, with fears that population growth in St Ippolyts and Gosmore was outpacing both local capacity and national projections (e.g. ONS 2014). Requested were clear plans on infrastructure upgrades, waste management, connectivity, and child-friendly spaces.

Needs case

Respondents stated that the proposed development is unnecessary, citing that several housing projects are already underway in the area. It was stated that the reason behind the development is to benefit developers and landowners, rather than the local community.

Affordable housing was welcomed but concern was raised that this could be diluted once planning is approved. The housing crisis was mentioned in

At present, North Hertfordshire District Council is unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply, so the development of up to 41 would help make up the identified shortfall.

The affordable housing tenures and mix will be agreed with the Council and secured in perpetuity through a Section 106 Agreement. The application will be policy compliant for matters such as National

	support of the development citing a lack of affordable homes for first time buyers, families and for those downsizing. While some accept that there's a housing need, it was emphasised that if this proposal goes ahead it must be done respectfully, and with proper consideration for things like home size, downsizing needs, disability access, and how people will get to services without relying heavily on cars. One person questioned how the development could effectively meet the housing needs of two very different groups, first-time buyers, who often want smaller, affordable starter homes, and people looking to downsize, who may have different preferences or requirements. One respondent questioned the justification for the proposed changes to the London Road/Mill Lane junction, stating that no road traffic accidents have occurred there in the past 50 years, and viewed the improvement as unnecessary and profit-driven.	Described Space Standards, and M4(2) and M4(3) accessible housing The realignment of Mill Lane is seen as a benefit given there is poor visibility at that junction at present, and the introduction of a roundabout will see cars accelerating towards the Mill Lane junction. Stopping up would be an additional cost to the applicant.
Principle of development	Responses were mixed, ranging from strong opposition to support for the principle of the development.	The comments regarding parking are acknowledged. The details will come forward in a future reserved matters application, and it is expected the application

Some respondents expressed support or conditional support for the development in principle. Some felt that the proposal appeared well considered, particularly praising the integration of green space within the layout and the overall scale and design approach, which one described as “encouraging in its size and thought.” The high proportion of affordable housing was welcomed, with one respondent preferring a focus on affordable rented homes over market sale.

Others supported the idea of housing on the site but emphasised the importance of quality, diversity, and longevity in both the design and construction. Suggestions included ensuring a healthy mix of house styles, exceeding the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS), and avoiding low-cost or uniform building methods. There were calls to limit the number of dwellings and to include two parking spaces per home. It was requested that any housing should be clearly targeted at local residents or first-time buyers, with one raising concern that properties might otherwise be bought by commuters or investors.

Some offered ideas to enhance the scheme, including ribbon development along London Road

would meet policy requirements. This is the same for the design of the dwellings themselves.

Regarding the open space, this will be subject to a maintenance and management plan and will be secured for 30 years as part of the biodiversity net gain maintenance requirements.

The proposal would extend Hitchin southwards. However, the proposed open space at the southern end of the eastern parcel and that on the western parcel will ensure appropriate levels of open space will remain along the edge of the site. The boundary planting will ensure the development is generally viewed as self-contained.

Tree removal is needed to allow an access into the site, although additional planting around the site will be provided. Biodiversity net gain will be secured at 10% through appropriately worded planning conditions.

The illustrative masterplan shows how the site could be developed, but is not fixed through this outline application. The access points are fixed, but the layout has the ability to change within the parameters set out within the application.

rather than extending deeper into the site. While broadly supportive, these respondents often called for more detailed plans to fully assess the impact of the development, and some expressed a strong wish for the remaining open space to be protected from future applications.

Many respondents were concerned about overdevelopment in the area, with respondents citing ongoing and approved nearby projects that they state already place significant pressure on local infrastructure and threaten the rural character of Gosmore, St Ippolyts, and Hitchin.

Respondents were concerned that development would reduce the separation between these settlements, leading them to become increasingly merged or less distinct. The loss of community character, particularly the rural identity and historic nature of the villages, was a major concern.

Some called the proposal “ill-conceived” or “inappropriate,” as the need or viability of the proposal was questioned, given that other sites in the area have stalled or remain unsold. Others raised doubts about whether the layout and mix of homes would remain as currently presented, calling for safeguards to prevent further applications that might erode the remaining open

	space. There was scepticism around the use of ecological benefits within the proposal.	
Construction impacts and effects	Concerns were raised about vehicle access during construction, especially along Mill Lane. Some respondents questioned how construction and future traffic would be managed, fearing that Mill Lane might be closed or restricted, which would limit residents' access to their homes and disrupt pedestrian routes. There were particular worries about increased noise, dust, and traffic from simultaneous developments, notably affecting vulnerable groups like residents of Sloe Hill nursing home. While the preservation of mature trees was welcomed, assurance was sought on how tree roots and boundaries would be protected during construction. Questions were also raised about the limited access to the rear of the houses and calls for direct access from London Road at the southern end of the site. Additionally, one respondent expressed suspicion about the new road potentially linking to Mill Lane via adjacent farmland, suggesting it could enable future development in that area. Concerns about	The routing of construction traffic will be agreed with the Council ahead of construction commencing. It is currently anticipated that this would come direct from London Road. There should not be a requirement for construction traffic to use Mill Lane. Usual construction practices will be agreed to ensure minimal disruption to nearby occupiers, including the Sloe Hill residential home. Tree protection details will likely be agreed through an appropriately worded planning condition, and will ensure adequate protection for retained trees. The road access into the site is fixed, and therefore any changes would require permission and can be controlled by the Council.

the impact on local walkers and school access were also highlighted.

Environmental impacts

Respondents raised concerns about the environmental and landscape impacts of the proposed development. The site was described as a valued area of semi-natural meadow and young woodland — a local wildlife haven supporting species such as owls, bats, badgers, deer, kestrels, and hedgehogs. It was felt that the loss of mature trees, hedgerows, and habitat would be irreparable, with doubts that newly planted trees could replicate the site's established ecology.

Several planning suggestions were made, including hedgehog highways, limits on streetlighting to preserve “dark skies,” and the provision of dog waste bins. There were particular concerns about increased light pollution affecting wildlife, especially nocturnal species such as owls and bats.

While some welcomed the inclusion of green space in the plans, other respondents felt the commitment to biodiversity and environmental mitigation was vague or insufficient. Doubts were raised over the site's ability to achieve a 10%

The proposal does include some tree removal to allow for the access points to be available. The road has been designed to avoid the high category trees where possible, particularly the Category A trees.

The proposal will include replacement planting across the site to retain some of the green character of the site, particularly to the western parcel. The proposed planting also seeks to contribute to retaining the gap between the development and Gosmore to the south and west.

The application is supported by a number of ecological surveys to ensure that any harm to species is mitigated.

Whilst the detail will come forward in the reserved matters application of through discharge of conditions, it is expected that litter bins will be provided on site. Lighting schemes will be informed by requirements and ecological sensitivity.

Biodiversity Net Gain, given the length of time the land had been left uncultivated. There were calls for a fully funded, long-term environmental stewardship plan.

The site was also viewed as a key part of the remaining green separation between Hitchin and the villages of Gosmore and St Ippolyts. Its development was seen as detrimental to the rural character and identity of both villages, with many fearing it would accelerate the suburbanisation of the area.

Respondents highlighted the importance of the natural space for families and children, both for recreation and environmental education. Public access and dog walking were longstanding uses of the site, with some noting it had been used informally by the community for over 30 years. Its loss would remove the only accessible off-road walking space for local dog walkers.

Additional concerns focused on the site's physical geography. These included the risk of flooding in lower parts of Mill Lane, and doubts about the structural suitability of the sandy soil for new construction. Several also noted the cumulative impact of this and other recent developments on

It is anticipated that biodiversity net gain can be achieved through off-site provision.

The land is in private ownership so previous dog walking has been a technical trespass on the site. The proposal seeks to allow formal public access to the site and the footpaths that will be created.

Regarding flooding, the application is supported by a Flood Risk Assessment which has assessed the ability of the site to cater for the run-off created. This has informed the SuDS system proposed and the need for the two mitigation basins.

For horse riders, traffic levels along Mill Lane would only increase to a negligible level. Conflict with walkers would likely reduce as walkers are likely to walk through the site rather than along Mill Lane.

	the area's tranquillity — including for nearby care home residents. Local horse riders raised concerns about the safety of Mill Lane, which is currently used for winter rides and to access nearby bridleways. Respondents requested that the developer engage with the British Horse Society to ensure continued equestrian access and safety.	
Planning and policy	Respondents expressed opposition to the proposal due to its location on Green Belt land, with one respondent citing concerns about the gradual “erosion” of protected areas. It was stated that the development conflicts with both the North Herts Local Plan (2011–2031) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024), which emphasise the need to protect the Green Belt and prioritise the use of previously developed (brownfield) sites. It was stated that the proposed site is not included in the Local or Neighbourhood Plans, and planning policy requirements were highlighted to assess the incremental impact of such decisions on the wider area. One respondent stated that the proposal is structured to meet all the criteria needed to gain	The site is not allocated within the current North Hertfordshire Local Plan adopted in 2022. However, the application seeks to demonstrate the site is a sustainable location for development. The application, with its supporting technical information, is considered to meet the aims and objectives of the Local Plan, subject to the site being considered as Grey Belt in line with the NPPF definition. The application includes a Green Belt Assessment which has assessed the contribution the land makes against the Green Belt purposes within the NPPF.

approval from the North Hertfordshire District Council's planning department.

Respondents highlighted the role of the Green Belt in maintaining separation between Hitchin and nearby historic villages, particularly Gosmore and St Ippolyts, warning that this development could undermine their distinct identities. One comment raised a concern over the inconsistency of placing homes opposite Mill Farm, a listed building, while Pound Farm, also listed, has no development nearby.

It suggested that housing should instead be focused in more accessible areas with strong transport links, such as near Hitchin railway station or along the A1(M) at Fishers Green.

Benefits and project legacy

Respondents provided a range of views on the benefits of the proposed development, with feedback grouped around key themes including green space, affordable housing, transport, and community infrastructure.

There was support for the retention of green space, and an emphasis on the value of publicly accessible land for walking and recreation. The

The comment on safety around the SUDS is noted and detailed plans at reserved matters stage can provide relevant safety information to be agreed with the Council, such as a surrounding post and rail fence.

Affordable housing will be in agreement with the Council and secured in perpetuity through a Section 106 legal agreement.

intentions to preserve biodiversity and include a SUDS area were welcomed, the latter of which could offer opportunities for environmental enhancements such as ponds or wetlands - though one respondent emphasised the importance of human safety. The preservation of trees, particularly those along Mill Lane, was seen as important, with many opposing any loss of trees or future development on the designated open spaces.

The inclusion of 50% affordable housing was noted as a significant benefit, particularly in meeting local need. However, there was concern around the lack of clarity in the definition of “affordable,” with respondents seeking more detail on what this would mean in terms of pricing or rent. The proposed low-density housing was appreciated, given the rural setting.

There was cautious support for the proposed improvements to Mill Lane and London Road, including the new roundabout, which respondents stated could enhance traffic flow and road safety. The re-routing of Mill Lane and replacement of the existing junction were generally viewed positively, particularly if existing pedestrian routes, such as the footway along Mill Lane, are preserved or improved. The proposed pedestrian crossing on London Road and walking connections through

A scheme of this size would not trigger the provision of a health centre or other infrastructure services. However, it will make financial contributions to mitigate the harm resulting from the increased population at the development.

The site provides clear community benefits in terms of public access to the site and play provision, as well as benefits from the dwellings and affordable dwellings.

	the site, especially those linking to the development opposite, were also welcomed. It was noted that more connections to Hitchin are needed. Other respondents stated that the proposed development would primarily benefit the developers, with little to no gain for the local community. One respondent criticised the absence of additional amenities that would be seen as beneficial in the proposals, including shops, schools, medical facilities and transport links. Another respondent criticised a lack of a proposed playground for children.	
Engagement and consultation	Feedback was mixed, with some appreciating the initial detail and opportunity to engage, while others raised concerns about limited information, consultation timing, and the need for clearer communication and community involvement. One respondent considered the proposal as 'quite detailed' for an initial plan aligned with the 2027 Local Plan. Another respondent suggested that, because the development is expected to attract families with	The consultation event brought forward the information set out within the latest Local Plan consultation document. Given the application is in outline, there are no detailed plans or house types available at this stage. The open space will seek to include play provision for a variety of age groups, but given its size, more specific designated spaces as referenced are not likely to be possible.

children, this demographic should be consulted, especially those underserved by existing or planned community infrastructure (such as the sports centre, or 'outdated' playground). Ideas for consultation included engaging initiatives such as "Make Space for Girls" and exploring amenities for older residents, such as a community orchard or allotments.

St. Ippolyts Parish Council stated they appreciated the opportunity to gain more understanding of the proposal by attending the public Parish Council meeting on 8th September 2025.

Respondents who expressed a negative sentiment stated that the consultation lacked enough clear information to give meaningful feedback and requested more details about the location and type of proposed housing. One respondent was concerned about how closely the final plans would match what's currently being proposed, and questioned the definition of "affordable homes".

One respondent viewed consultation was a 'tick box exercise' and stated that the views of the local community would not be taken into consideration. Another respondent stated that the consultation process had a narrow window, overlapping with

All comments received have been reviewed and considered in the decision making process.

It is acknowledged the timing of the event was over the school holidays. This was a necessity to fit in with the development programme, given the application is predicated on the Council not being able to demonstrate a five year housing land supply.

summer holidays, and suggested more direct engagement and opportunities to share local views face-to-face would be valued.

5 Conclusion

The consultation process for the proposed development at London Road, Hitchin has been undertaken in accordance with national and local planning guidance, with an emphasis on transparency, accessibility, and early engagement. Different methods were used to inform and involve the community, and meaningful feedback was gathered across key themes such as transport, infrastructure, environmental impacts and the principle of development.

While concerns were raised, particularly around traffic, infrastructure capacity, and the loss of green space, the consultation also highlighted support for elements such as affordable housing, improved connectivity, and the provision of open space. The applicant has carefully considered this feedback and responded with a series of commitments to mitigate impacts and deliver community benefits.

Overall, the engagement process has provided valuable insights and ensured that the views of local stakeholders are reflected in the final application.

SoCI Appendix A – Consultation Materials

A.1 Consultation Leaflet



Land at London Road, Hitchin Summer 2025 Consultation

Martin Grant Homes is proposing a small development in Hitchin, on the western side of London Road, south of Mill Lane.

This new development aims to provide high-quality homes that complement the village's setting.

As we prepare our planning application, we want to consult with people who may be interested in our proposals. This is an opportunity for you to share your views and help shape the plans.



Our consultation will run from **Wednesday 20th August** until **Friday 5th September**.



Information about our proposals will be available on our website once the consultation is open, at www.landatlondonroadhitchin.co.uk.



To respond, please complete an **online feedback form via our website**, available from Wednesday 20th August.



A small number of hard copies of the feedback form will be available at St Ippolyts Parish Hall, Waterdell Lane, SG4 7RB.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts.

E: landatlondonroad@stantec.com



A.2 Website



Land at
London Road,
Hitchin

[→ Welcome](#)

[The Site](#)

[The Proposal](#)

[Next Steps](#)

[Have Your Say](#)



Welcome

Martin Grant Homes is seeking your views on its proposals for land to the west of London Road (B656) and south of Mill Lane, on the southern edge of Hitchin. The site location is shown in the image below.



Click to enlarge



Land at
London Road,
Hitchin

[→ Welcome](#)

[The Site](#)

[The Proposal](#)

[Next Steps](#)

[Have Your Say](#)

The site is not currently allocated for development, but Martin Grant Homes has previously promoted it through the last Local Plan process and intends to do so again in the upcoming review.

An opportunity has arisen to move forward with the preparation and submission of a planning application to North Hertfordshire District Council. The proposed development is expected to deliver between 35 and 42 new homes, with technical assessments currently underway to help shape and inform designs.

This consultation aims to gather feedback from the local community on the proposed development. Where possible, your views will help to influence the proposed layout and design of the scheme as it progresses.

The Site

The site is located on the southern edge of Hitchin within the administrative boundary of North Hertfordshire District Council.

It comprises two parcels of land connected by a narrow strip, with Sloe Hill Residential Home inset into the northern boundary, effectively separating the two fields. The overall site extends to approximately 3.2 hectares and consists primarily of open grassland and areas of tree planting.

To the north of the site is the settlement of Hitchin. To the west, the site adjoins the rear gardens of two residential properties located on Mill Road in the neighbouring settlement of Gosmore. To the east is a new development for 80 dwellings currently under construction, with a small cluster of dwellings further south.

The site is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt but lies immediately adjacent to the Hitchin and Gosmore settlement boundary. Nearby listed buildings will inform the layout of the proposals. There are no other statutory constraints that would prevent development on the land, pending the outcomes of ongoing technical assessments.

Planning Policy

At present, the development plan, which sets out the policies to which planning applications are assessed against, consists of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 adopted in November 2022. Any application will be judged against the policies within that document, as well as national policies set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Council are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan, with a target date for adoption set at December 2027.

The Proposal

The future planning application will be in outline form, with the access points provided in detail. If successful, a future reserved matters application will provide the specific details of the house types and the site layout.

The proposal seeks to provide circa 35-42 dwellings (50% of which will be affordable) including a small number of dwellings in the western parcel, along with public open space and a drainage mitigation basin. The layout is at the early stages of consideration, but is based upon the known opportunities and constraints. Please note this is subject to change ahead of the submission of a planning application.

The proposed access seeks to create a fourth arm from the roundabout serving the Pound Farm development, currently under construction. The proposal also seeks to divert Mill Lane through the site allowing the Mill Lane/London Road junction to be closed to vehicle traffic. This junction has poor visibility so utilising the roundabout would provide a key highway benefit in the area. Appropriate pedestrian and cycling crossings will be provided to allow access into Hitchin to the eastern side of London Road.

As noted, the site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Appropriate studies are required to ascertain whether a development of this nature is appropriate in this location. Further landscape assessment is underway. Some trees on site will be lost, but the proposal will seek to create replacement planting across the site. Ecological work on the site continues, and the proposal will seek to provide the mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain.

The image below shows how the site could come forward, with potential development areas shown in yellow. It also shows the realigned Mill Lane entering the site and utilising the roundabout.



Click to enlarge

Next Steps

This public consultation marks a key step in the process for the submission of a new planning application at the site. It is hoped the application will be submitted in late summer 2025. Members of the public will have the opportunity to comment formally to **North Hertfordshire District Council** once submitted.

Have Your Say

We hope the information presented is informative and provides a good understanding of the proposed residential development on the land west of London Road, Hitchin.

We welcome your feedback for consideration before we continue to develop, finalise and submit the planning application. Please provide your thoughts by answering the questions in the feedback form below. This consultation will close on **Friday 5th September 2025**.

FEEDBACK

A.2 Community briefing visual aid (size A2)



Land at London Road, Hitchin • Summer 2025 Consultation

Benefits

-  Up to 42 new dwellings, including 50% affordable housing
-  Access to open space and informal footpaths through the site
-  Realignment of Mill Lane to close the London Road junction and divert to join the proposed roundabout access
-  Provision of on site playspace
-  Ecological enhancements to western area
-  Addition of Sustainable Urban Drainage features, including mitigation basin
-  Design to inform the setting of the adjacent listed buildings

Next Steps

Planning application to be submitted in September 2025.

North Hertfordshire District Council will run a formal public consultation, inviting responses direct to the Council.



A.4 Feedback Form

Land at London Road, Hitchin Feedback Form



We would be grateful if you would fill in this form to provide us with written comments on our proposals.

You can choose whether to give feedback anonymously or to share your name and/or postcode. Providing a postcode assists our understanding of where responders live in relation to the proposed development.

Feedback can also be provided direct to the following email address:
landatlondonroad@stantec.com.

Information about our proposals will be available on our website once the consultation is open, at www.landatlondonroadhitchin.co.uk.

Name:

Postcode:

1. Overall, what is your overall impression of the proposals?

2. What do you consider to be the main benefits of the proposals?

3. Do you have any key concerns regarding the proposals?

4. Do you have any other comments about the proposals?

With every community, we redefine what's possible.

Stantec is a global leader in sustainable architecture, engineering, and environmental consulting. The diverse perspectives of our partners and interested parties drive us to think beyond what's previously been done on critical issues like climate change, digital transformation, and future-proofing our cities and infrastructure. We innovate at the intersection of community, creativity, and client relationships to advance communities everywhere, so that together we can redefine what's possible.