

**Wymondley Parish Council
c/o The Old Rectory
Great Wymondley
Hitchin
Herts SG4 7ES**

2nd Feb 2026

Dear Sirs

Re Planning Application 26/00047/PIP -land adjoining Grange Farm Great Wymondley

I write on behalf of the Wymondley Parish Council to object to the above planning application for permission in principle to build 9 houses in a paddock adjoining Grange Farm Great Wymondley.

We have carefully considered the document produced by the applicant's consultants and make the following observations

Community engagement

In short that has been none.

When the Letchworth Heritage organisation wanted to develop the old barn on the frontage of this site on Hitchin Road they engaged with the Parish Council and the community through holding an open meeting. The principle of what they wish to do was discussed and it was finally agreed that six affordable and social homes would be supported. Their proposal to build two houses behind in the paddock was not considered appropriate for the reasons that will become clear on this application. It is depressing that they have reneged on the agreement with the community not to build on the paddock and we find it extraordinary that they have not engaged in any way on this occasion.

It is even more surprising that they have not advised the leaseholder of the land who has rented the grazing land from them for some 30 years. They are naturally extremely upset to find the application having been put in without their knowledge. They have horses on the land which would obviously have to be relocated. As part of the previous application a new stable block was built and it is that they now wish to demolish.

We find this lack of community engagement a major flaw in this application.

The Site

The site is described as being boarded by dense vegetation and tree planting around its perimeter. This is simply not true. The site is very open to Arch Road through the entrance of the Croft giving views out from the village both across the meadow and beyond. There is also a clear gap to the South West between Croft Cottage and the farm buildings.



In terms of listed buildings there are total of 12 listed buildings within 200 m of the site the nearest of which is Grange Farmhouse but all of which in terms of character and setting will to greater or lesser degree be impacted by the proposals. Of this the most significant is the Grade one listed Saint Mary's Church. The proposals impact the setting of a Grade One listed building. Furthermore, there are total of four properties that are considered noteworthy buildings in the conservation area of these four, three being the Croft, the Village Hall and the Green Man adjoin this site. The setting of these three noteworthy properties will be significantly diminished by the impact of this development. It will particularly have a devastating impact on the setting and views from The Croft as well as 1 to 6 Hitchin Road which look directly over the site.

It should also be noted that the site falls away towards the Grange farm Barn. We would envisage significant drainage and flooding risks if buildings roads etc were to be introduced.

Agriculture

Adjoining this site is a working farm, farming both arable and livestock. Grange Farm is not in the ownership of the Letchworth Heritage as could be deduced from their chosen definition of the site location.

There is an agricultural building on the boundary of the site to the west. The barn is used for storage of straw and on a cyclical basis the keeping of cattle. It seems extremely unwise to be building

houses so close to a cattle barn. We note that under the regulations if a farmer wishes to build a cattle barn it must be 400m from a residential property to minimise noise, odour and risk of flies and of course fire. It is therefore extraordinary to have an indicative



development whereby three homes (plot 4,5 and 6) look directly at the side wall of a very large barn.

Access Road

The application says that a new vehicle access would be created to the west of number 6 Hitchin Road. This access point near to the very congested Green Man junction with Hitchin Road, William Road and Arch Road would add additional traffic and a dangerous turn so close to the junction. It would also destroy the peaceful environment of the residents of 1 to 6 Hitchin Road in their rear gardens. We note that trees would have to be removed to allow the necessary width of access which would be very disappointing. The land to the west is not in the applicant's ownership so they would not be able to deliver the splays they are suggesting on the plan.

Planning framework

We now consider the above points in the context of the National and Local planning framework

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

The updated NPPF in December 2024 provides policy guidance for England in relation to planning considerations for this development. There are particular paragraphs to take note of including

- paragraph 7 which states the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of **sustainable** development.
- Paragraph 8 contribute to the economic social and environmental objectives.
- Paragraph 9 planning decision should play active role in **guiding sustainable solutions**.
- Paragraph 11 plans should apply a presumption in favour of **sustainable development**.
- Paragraph 110 states significant development at the state development should be focused where it can be **made sustainable** limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.
- Paragraph 135 that encourages planning decisions that enhance the **areas quality visual attractiveness and respect local character**.
- the greenbelt five principles are set out in sections 155
- Paragraph 156 to 159 set out the golden rules that would apply to potential grey belt development.

There is one fundamental theme that runs through all of the above points and that is **sustainable development**. The applicant has made the case that this site can be deemed sustainable development but whilst we acknowledge the village has a Pub, Church and village Hall the reality is otherwise it is not sustainable and will add congestion to already overused roads

- It is not possible to walk to the school in Little Wymondley due to the dangerous road and crossing the railway bridge
- There is no footpath from the development even to the Pub or to reach the bus stop
- There is no shop in Little Wymondley
- The bus service is very spasmodic. It only starts at 7.46 in the morning and does not run on Sunday or in the evenings
- There is no safe walking route to Hitchin or Stevenage
- There is no safe cycle route to Hitchin or Stevenage



It is not under the definition of the NPPF a sustainable location

The draft of the NPPF update 2025 is now in circulation for comment. This raises the option of underutilised sites which the applicant has latched onto. However, this a rural community and horse pasture is not deemed under utilising a site. There are two stables holding three horses and the meadow only really can cater for one horse so the extended pasture land behind Croft Cottage is used as well. The site has been let on this basis for 30 years and the stables built specifically for the purpose. If anything, the site is over used for its current purpose.

In the context of the revised draft NPPF the applicants view that this is a vacant and underutilised site is fundamentally wrong

The applicant states that this site is within the built area of the village surrounded on all sides by development.

This is not the case. The residential developed edge of the village is the rear of The Croft, 1 to 6 Hitchin Road and the Village Hall. Beyond that point are only farm buildings. which do not take up the whole of the western side. This land



therefore as can be seen from the pictures is offers open views to the near and far distant countryside.

This point is emphasised in terms of **Policy SP2 of the Local Plan**. Great Wymondley is a category B village where development is limited to infilling that does not extend the built core of the village into the surrounding countryside. This development is therefore outside of the established built form of Great Wymondley. The proposal on this site therefore fails to meet the key criteria of Policy SP2

They also state that the development on Arch Road is linear in nature. That is true and this development would fundamentally change that.

The applicant also states that “***There is dense vegetation and tree planting around the perimeter of the site***” I actually wonder at times if they are talking about the same site.

Clearly from the photos it is blatantly not dense vegetation on all sides

- There are views across the paddock from 1 to 6 Hitchin Road
- The site is totally open to the boundary of the Croft a building of character in the conservation area
- The paddock and views beyond are viewed from Arch Road and the houses opposite and on the Green
- The eastern side is part bordered by



agricultural buildings with spasmodic vegetation the remainder being open

We argue that this is not limited infilling as is suggested. Limited infilling suggests a small gap or plot within the built-up area i.e. between buildings. The term limited suggests that the infilling should be very restricted and not give rise to the expansion of the village or damage the Green Belts openness

This proposal is not limited in the context of Great Wymondley it is some 15%



expansion of the village. It is not in the village, its extents the built form into pure agricultural land and farm.

It clearly damages the Green Belt and the openness of the country views from adjoining properties, the Pub Garden and the heart of the village

An attempt to argue that this land is now Grey Belt is undermined by its integration with the surrounding character buildings and Listed properties as well as the fact that it is blatantly fully utilised land in a rural and agricultural setting.

The site does not meet the infill criteria it is open Green Belt and Conservation Area land with open long distant views.

In Summary

The Parish Council totally rejects the applicant's advisors' arguments on the points of fact and based on their many errors. Furthermore, we do believe that Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation should remember their own ethos for example on Environmental Stewardship. Ebenezer Howard viewed humans as part of nature, not separate from it. His design included permanent green belts of agricultural land to prevent urban sprawl and ensure residents remained connected to the natural world.

That is the reason Letchworth bought the land around and in Great Wymondley not to make a quick profit when they perceive, wrongly, that the NPPF tilts in their favour. We trust they will look hard at their own founding principles before taking this application any further.

So, we state in conclusion

- This land is not vacant
- It is not underutilised
- It has been home to horses for the past thirty years
- It is open Green Belt looking out to open Country
- Development would impact the core of the village conservation area, listed buildings and buildings of noted character
- It is not a sustainable development in the context of the NPPF
- It is right on top of a large working agricultural building so totally inappropriate for housing
- It takes away views from adjoining homes in Arch Road and Hitchin Road
- It fails to meet the criteria of the NPPF, Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan.
- The Applicant has failed abysmally to engage with the local community or their own tenant of 30 years



On behalf of the Wymondley Parish Council we would respectfully ask the Planning Officers and Planning Committee to refuse this application on the grounds stated above.

Yours Sincerely

Paul S Harding

Cllr Paul Harding FRICS
Planning Group Lead
Wymondley Parish Council