

PLANNING STATEMENT

**RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT,
PARKING, LANDSCAPING AND
ACCESS**

**LAND AT LONDON ROAD,
GOSMORE, HERTFORDSHIRE**

**ON BEHALF OF
HORNBEAM HOMES LTD.**

MARCH 2026

Title	Planning Statement
Project	Land at London Road, Gosmore, Hertfordshire
Client	Hornbeam Homes Ltd.
Issue	Final
Job Number	25113
Document reference	RP20260325
Produced by	James Garside MRTPI
Authorised by	Robert Shrimplin MRTPI MPhil TP

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. APPLICATION PROPOSAL AND THE APPLICATION SUBMISSION	3
3. APPLICATION SITE AND ITS WIDER CONTEXT	5
4. PLANNING HISTORY	6
5. POLICY FRAMEWORK AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS	7
6. ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN	10
7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	25

APPENDICES

1. HISTORICAL AERIAL IMAGERY
2. AERIAL VIEW OF SITE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been produced by Shrimplin Planning & Development on behalf of Hornbeam Homes Ltd. in support of a full planning application for residential development, parking, landscaping and access at Land at London Road, Gosmore, Hertfordshire (hereafter referred to as the “Application Proposal” and the “Application Site”).

1.2 The Application Proposal will deliver 5 new dwellings with a mix of three and four bedroom properties, each with generous private amenity spaces and off street parking, making an important contribution to meeting local housing needs in a sustainable location on the edge of the of the District’s most sustainable villages.

1.3 The applicant is Hornbeam Homes. The application includes a letter from the applicant explaining who they are:

“Hornbeam Homes are a proud small, family-run housebuilder. The company itself has been operating since 2015 but is part of the Horner family’s 45 year history in building locally. In that time we’ve proudly built homes across the county of varying styles, ranging from a design award winning block of apartments in the Hemel Hempstead conservation area to a stunning Barn Conversion in Norton Green. Our latest project has been ten units in the Green Belt in Park Street.”

1.4 They also explain some of the challenges that small housebuilders face:

“...small developers account for less than 10% of housing output. This decline represents not only a loss of business diversity but also a serious barrier to solving the housing crisis.

The reasons behind this collapse are well-documented by the Federation of Master Builders (FMB) and others; restrictive planning policy, difficulties in accessing small development sites, and disproportionate regulatory burdens.

Even with recent government promises, such as prioritising small sites in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and streamlining certain processes, progress seems limited.

For companies like ours, the challenges are immense. Securing funding can be far harder for small developers, who often have to rely on personal finances or smaller, more expensive lenders. Soaring material costs, international supply chain disruptions, and sustained inflation have further squeezed margins, leaving many projects unviable.”

- 1.5 The Application Site comprises an unused plot of land on the northern edge of the village of Gosmore. It is enclosed by development. It is bounded by London Road to the east and residential dwellings/plots to the north, south and west. It falls within the Green Belt. It is adjacent to the Gosmore settlement boundary defined in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. It is outside the Gosmore Conservation Area.
- 1.6 The Application Proposal has benefitted from input from officers through the pre-app process, including on the principle of development and design/layout as well as technical matters. The pre-app advice was supportive and the feedback given has been taken into account in the Application Proposal. The Applicant has carried out public engagement with the Application Site’s immediate neighbours.
- 1.7 The next chapter of this Planning Statement describes the Application Proposal and the information that forms the application submission. Chapter 3 explains the Application Site and its wider context. Chapter 4 summarises the planning history of the Application Site. Chapter 5 sets out the relevant policy framework and the decision-making process. Chapter 6 provides an assessment of the Application Proposal against the development plan. A summary and conclusion are provided in Chapter 7.

2.0 APPLICATION PROPOSAL AND THE APPLICATION SUBMISSION

2.1 This chapter explains the Application Proposal and the information that forms the application submission.

The Application Proposal

2.2 The Application Proposal will deliver 5 new dwellings with a mix of three and four bedroom properties, each with generous private amenity spaces and off street parking, making an important contribution to meeting local housing needs in a sustainable location on the edge of the of the District's most sustainable villages.

The application submission

2.3 The planning application submission comprises the information:

- Application form and certificates;
- Planning Statement (Shrimplin Planning & Development) (25 March 2026);
- Drawings (Mark Scott Architectural Design) (March 2026)
 - Location Plan As Existing, drawing number PL01;
 - Site Plan As Existing, drawing number PL02;
 - Site Plan As Proposed, drawing number PL03;
 - Plot 01 Elevations and Plans, As Proposed, drawing number PL04;
 - Plot 02 Elevations and Plans, As Proposed, drawing number PL05;
 - Plot 03 Elevations and Plans, As Proposed, drawing number PL06;
 - Plot 04 Elevations and Plans, As Proposed, drawing number PL07;
 - Plot 05 Elevations and Plans, As Proposed, drawing number PL08;
 - Site Section, As Proposed, drawing number PL09;
 - Landscape Site Plan, As Proposed, drawing number PL10.
- Design and Access Statement (Mark Scott Architectural Design) (March 2026);
- Transport Statement (Paul Mew Associates) (March 2026);
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Method Statement & Tree Protection Plan (Trevor Heaps Arboricultural Consultancy Ltd.) (18 March 2026);

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (Arbtech) (16 October 2025);
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Arbtech) (5 November 2025);
- Planning Noise Assessment (Spectrum) (2 February 2026);
- Letter from applicant (Hornbeam Homes Ltd.)

3.0 APPLICATION SITE AND ITS WIDER CONTEXT

3.1 This chapter describes the Application Site and its wider context.

The Application Site

3.2 The Application Site comprises an unused plot of land. It contains dense vegetation and a number of trees on the perimeter of the site. There is a substation near to the entrance but this falls outside of the Application Site. Historically, there have been buildings/structures on the site, as seen on historic mapping (Appendix 1).

3.3 The Application Site is enclosed by development, as seen on aerial imagery (Appendix 2). It is bounded by London Road to the east and residential dwellings/plots to the north, south and west.

3.4 The Application Site falls within the Green Belt. It is within Fluvial Flood Zone 1.

The Application Site's wider context

3.5 The Application Site lies on the northern edge of the village of Gosmore, adjacent to the Gosmore settlement boundary defined in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The conjoined village of St Ippolyts lies to the east (450m) and the main town of Hitchin is to the north (1.9km). Each of these settlements is inset from the Green Belt but there is sporadic development in between them.

3.6 The Application Site and the surrounding area is not subject to any landscape or heritage designations. The St Ippolyts Conservation Area is located to the west (360m) and the Grade I listed Church of St Ippolyts is located to the east (500m).

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 Planning permission was refused for “Bungalow and detached triple garage” on 16 November 1995 (95/1064/1).

5.0 POLICY FRAMEWORK AND DECISION MAKING PROCESS

- 5.1 The chapter sets out the development plan and the decision making process.

Development plan

- 5.2 The development plan comprises the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and Policies Map (November 2022).

Material considerations

- 5.3 North Hertfordshire District Council is preparing an update to its Local Plan. The Council is intending to publish its proposed submission Local Plan in October/November 2026. As the emerging Local Plan is still emerging it can only be given limited weight in decision making.
- 5.4 Relevant supplementary planning documents and guidance are material planning considerations, including the Design SPD (July 2011), Vehicle Parking At New Developments SPD (November 2011), Developer Contributions SPD (January 2023) and Sustainability SPD (September 2024).
- 5.5 The NPPF (December 2024), with additional guidance in the NPPG, is also an important material planning consideration.

Decision making process

- 5.6 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. To achieve this there are three objectives – economic, social and environmental:

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 mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.” (paragraph 8).

5.7 For “decision taking” this means:

“c) approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; or

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

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, 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” (paragraph 11).

- 5.8 The NPPF explains that, for applications involving the provision of housing, policies are considered out of date if:

“...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. See also paragraph 232.” (Footnote 8).

- 5.9 As explained in paragraph 6.7 below, the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply. As a result, the Local Plan policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date (NPPF, footnote 8), namely Policy SP2: Settlement hierarchy and spatial distribution, SP5: Countryside and green belt and SP8: Housing. The way in which they are out of date is explained in Chapter 6. This means that planning permission should be granted unless “the application of policies in [the NPPF] that protect areas or assets of particular importance [in this case the Green Belt] provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed” (NPPF, paragraph 11(d)(i)) or any harm would “significantly and demonstrably” outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF (paragraph 11(d)(ii)).
- 5.10 The next chapter assesses the Application Proposal within this policy framework and decision making process.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

- 6.1 This chapter assesses the Application Proposal in terms of Green Belt, delivering housing and the sustainability of the location.

Delivering housing

Policy framework

- 6.2 Chapter 5 of the NPPF deals with “delivering a sufficient supply of homes”. It begins by making clear that that new housing development will be supported:

“To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay.” (paragraph 61).

- 6.3 It emphasises the contribution that small and medium sites and windfall sites can make and encourages local planning authorities to encourage these:

“Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for Small and Medium Enterprise housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:...

c) support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions...” (paragraph 73)

- 6.4 The updated NPPF sets out a range of measures to deliver the Government’s commitments to delivering economic growth and new homes. This includes changes to the Standard Method for calculating housing needs that will result in higher

mandatory housing targets for almost all councils, with many seeing a substantial increase.

- 6.5 Local Plan Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution sets a target for “at least 13,000 new homes” over the plan period between 2011 and 2031 (emphasis added). As explained below, this target is likely to increase significantly in light of the new NPPF and standard methodology.

- 6.6 Local Plan Policy SP8: Housing sets a target for a range of house sizes:

“a broadly even split between smaller (1- and 2-bed) and larger (3+ bed) properties subject to up-to-date-assessments of housing needs”

- 6.7 Local Plan Policy HS3: Housing mix provides further detail:

“Planning permission for new homes will be granted provided that:

a) An appropriate range of house types and sizes are provided taking into account:

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

- 6.8 The North Herts Strategic Housing Market Assessment Part II Update (2023) identifies a need for a range of house sizes but particularly 3 bedroom (47.1%) and 4 bedroom properties (21.3%).

Assessment

- 6.9 As explained in Chapter 5, the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply. The Council's recently published Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update (November 2025)¹ found that it has a deliverable housing land supply of 2.6 years. This is significant worsening of the position compared to the position set out in its previous Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update (May 2024) which found a 3.9 year housing land supply. There is therefore significant pressure on the Council to deliver new housing.
- 6.10 The Application Proposal will have the significant benefit of making an important contribution to meeting local housing needs, helping the Council in meeting its housing land supply requirements. Importantly, it can provide an appropriate mix of housing that will address local housing needs, as identified in the North Herts Strategic Housing Market Assessment Part II Update (2023). This is also in accordance with the NPPF objective to boost the supply of housing and supports the economic objective of sustainable development by delivering land for housing and to support rural communities.

Sustainability of the location

- 6.11 The NPPF specifically highlights the importance of housing in rural areas:

"To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services. Where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby." (paragraph 83).

¹ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2025-11/5YHLS%20position%20statement%20-%20November%202025.pdf>

“Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport” (paragraph 89, emphasis added).

- 6.12 As we explain in Chapter 5, the Local Plan is out of date. Without prejudice to this we consider its strategy for how the Local Plan housing target is to be achieved. Local Plan Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution sets out a settlement hierarchy, towards the top of which are “Category A” villages, which includes St Ippolyts & Gosmore. The supporting text to the Policy recognises that new development is needed in the District’s villages to combat housing affordability pressures which are particularly acute in the rural areas:

“...it is important to allow growth of the villages in order to allow those communities to continue to function (paragraph 4.11).

- 6.13 Further evidence that the Local Plan recognises St Ippolyts & Gosmore as a sustainable village is demonstrated by the fact that two sites in the village have been allocated for housing for a total of 52 dwellings².

Assessment

- 6.14 St Ippolyts and Gosmore is recognised in the Local Plan as being one of the District’s most sustainable villages. The Application Site is close to the heart of the village and is within walking distance of a range of services and facilities, including a Village Store (200m), Parish Hall (300m), recreation ground (550m), public house (900m), primary school (570m), church (570m) and playground (900m). The Application Site is also close to the market town of Hitchin which has a wide range of services and facilities, including a train station. There is a bus stop within close proximity to the Application Site from where there are regular bus services to Hitchin and Welwyn Garden City. It is therefore a suitable location for a small residential development. This is recognised

² Local Plan Policy SI1: Land south of Waterdell Lane - 40 homes; Policy SI2: Land south of Stevenage Road - 12 homes.

by the Council in its Local Plan which allocates two sites for housing at the village totaling 52 new homes and as the Council has approved various similar developments in edge-of-village locations in the local area³.

- 6.15 The Application Site has the significant benefit of accommodating development in a sustainable location on the edge of one of the District's most sustainable villages, within walking distance of a range of services and facilities and within close proximity to a bus stop from where there are regular bus services to Hitchin and Welwyn Garden City. This is recognised by the Council in its Local Plan which allocates two sites for housing at the village totaling 52 new homes. It is also a site that contains development (a substation) and previously occupied by buildings / structures (Appendix 1). This is also in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan and supports the economic objective of sustainable development by delivering land for housing in the right places.

Green Belt

Policy framework

- 6.16 The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) sets out that new buildings in the Green Belt are “inappropriate development” and are “harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances” (paragraph 153).
- 6.17 It explains that:

“‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.” (paragraph 153).

³ Land On The South West Side Of Stevenage Road St Ippolyts: Erection of 14 dwellings (19/01669/FP)
Land North Of Pound Farm London Road St Ippolyts SG4 7NE: hybrid application for a residential development to provide a total of up to 84 dwellings (21/00434/HYA)
Land Between 53 And 81 And Land Rear Of 7-53 Waterdell Lane St Ippolyts: Erection of 52 dwellings (20/02412/FP)
The Foundry, Brookend Lane St. Ippolyts SG4 7NX: Erection of 7 dwellings (22/00754/FP)
Land On The South West Side Of Stevenage Road St Ippolyts: Erection of 14 dwellings (19/01669/FP)

6.18 The NPPF lists various exceptions to inappropriate development, including:

“e) limited infilling in villages” (paragraph 154).

6.19 Case law⁴ has proved that limited infilling within a village is not just restricted to a defined village settlement boundary. The test of whether or not a proposed development constitutes limited infilling in a village is a question of planning judgment and this would depend upon the assessment of the position on the ground.

6.20 The NPPF (December 2024) now also identifies housing, as well as commercial and other development, in the Green Belt as not being inappropriate where certain criteria are met:

“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 110⁵ and 115⁶ of this Framework; and

d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below” (paragraph 155).

6.21 In relation to part (a), the NPPF defines Grey Belt as:

⁴ Wood v SSCLG and Gravesham Borough Council [2015]

⁵ “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... 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” (paragraph 110).

⁶ “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 Code⁴⁸ ; 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.” (paragraph 115).

“...land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.” (Annex 2, Glossary).

6.22 The NPPF sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt. (a), (b) and (d) are highlighted in bold:

“a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land” (paragraph 143)

6.23 In relation to part (c), the NPPF provides further guidance on demonstrating that the site is a sustainable location:

“...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... 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” (paragraph 110).

6.24 In relation to part (d), to meet this criterion the development would need to meet the following “Golden Rules”:

“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.” (paragraph 156).

- 6.25 Local Plan Strategic Policy MG02: Green Belt provides a brief summary of Green Belt policy and criterion B makes clear that:

“All development proposals within the Green Belt will be considered and assessed in accordance with the provisions of national planning policy.”

- 6.26 Local Plan Policy SP5: Countryside and green belt similarly repeats the broad approach of the NPPF:

“Will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated” (paragraph c)

- 6.27 The Application Proposal has therefore been assessed against the NPPF (December 2024). North Hertfordshire produced a Green Belt Review (July 2016) to inform its Local Plan. It divided the District into parcels and each parcel was assessed against the Green Belt purposes. The Application Site falls within “Gosmore” (Sector 11d) which is a large area of land that stretches from the southern edge of Hitchin to Little Almshoe. However, the Assessment is out of date following the publication of the NPPG guidance on Green Belt assessments which makes clear that assessments should focus on the site and not the wider parcel of land. It says that assessments should be “sufficiently granular” and that “smaller areas may be appropriate in certain places, such as around existing settlements or public transport hubs or corridors” (paragraph: 004, reference ID: 64-004-20250225). It therefore cannot be given any weight in decision making.

Assessment – not inappropriate development in the Green Belt: limited infilling (paragraph 154(e))

- 6.28 The Application Site, and number of homes proposed, is modest in scale in the context of the village. It is adjacent to the settlement boundary and infills the gap between Flint House to the north and 4 Mill Road to the south west, as seen on the aerial imagery (Appendix 2). It therefore meets the definition of “infill development” in the

Local Plan. The Application Proposal is therefore not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is therefore in accordance with the NPPF.

Assessment – not inappropriate development in the Green Belt: grey belt (paragraph 155)

- 6.29 The first step in terms of paragraph 155 criterion (a) is to consider if the Application Site can be considered “grey belt” in terms of whether it meets purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. In terms of paragraph 143 purpose (a) regarding checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas, recent NPPG guidance confirms that “Villages should not be considered large built up areas” (paragraph: 005, reference ID: 64-005-20250225) and so purpose (a) is not relevant.
- 6.30 Without prejudice to this, the NPPG provides guidance on considering whether a site makes a “strong” contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. It says that these are “likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development”. It continues that, if developed, these sites would “result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt)”. As explained above, the Application Site is within the built up area of Gosmore and is surrounded by residential development/London Road on all sides. It does not represent an incongruous form of development. The guidance says that sites “adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development” would make a “Weak or none” contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. The Application Site therefore does not make a significant contribution to purpose (a).
- 6.31 In terms of paragraph 143 purpose (b) regarding preventing neighbouring towns merging into one another, recent NPPG guidance confirms that “This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.” (paragraph: 005, reference ID: 64-005-20250225). Hitchin is a town but Gosmore is a village and so purpose (b) is not relevant to the Application Site. Without prejudice to this, the Application Site

enclosed by existing residential development/London Road and a significant undeveloped area would remain between Gosmore and Hitchin.

6.32 In terms of paragraph 143 purpose (d) regarding preserving the setting and special character of historic towns, recent NPPG guidance confirms that “this purpose relates to historic towns, not villages” (paragraph: 005, reference ID: 64-005-20250225). Gosmore is a village and so purpose (d) is not relevant to the Application Site. Without prejudice to this, the Application Site is also not within, or in close proximity to, the Gosmore Conservation Area.

6.33 The Application Site is therefore grey belt. At the pre-app, officers agreed with this conclusion.

6.34 The Local Plan explains that much of the Borough is Green Belt:

“A large proportion of the rural area of the District is covered by Green Belt, with the remainder classified as rural area beyond the Green Belt” (paragraph 2.3).

6.35 Given the extent of Green Belt in the Borough it cannot be said that the loss of this small area would fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area.

6.36 In terms of paragraph 155 criterion (b), as explained above the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply. It only has a deliverable housing land supply of 2.6 years. There is therefore a demonstrable need for the development.

6.37 In terms of paragraph 155 criterion (c), as explained above, the Application Site is a sustainable location. Furthermore, any assessment of the sustainability of the location should also be viewed in the context of the NPPF (paragraph 110) which recognises that public transport options are more limited in rural areas.

6.38 In terms of paragraph 155 criterion (d), the “Golden Rules” set out in paragraph 156 of the NPPG apply to major development. This is not applicable to the Application Proposal.

6.39 The Application Proposal is therefore in accordance with the NPPF.

Assessment – inappropriate development in the Green Belt: very special circumstances (paragraph 153)

6.40 Without prejudice to this, should the Council determine that the Application Proposal would result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in line with the NPPF (paragraph 153), any perceived harm is limited, given the Application Site is located within one of the Borough’s most sustainable villages, as accepted by the Council through the pre-app response, and as the Application Proposal has been sensitively designed to ensure it is compatible with the character of its immediate context, as explained in the Design and Access Statement, will be screened from public views by mature trees and planting along London Road and will not cause harm to heritage assets, with the Application Site, as explained below. Any perceived harm should be weighed against the following considerations:

- Provision of housing, particularly in light of the Borough’s acute housing shortfall, as explained in detail in paragraphs 6.9 - 6.10 above;
- Provision of family housing, meeting identified needs, as explained in paragraph 6.10 above;
- Net gain in biodiversity, as explained below.

Design

Policy Framework

6.41 Chapter 12 of the NPPF recognises the importance that high quality design can make to an area:

“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

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. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process” (paragraph 131)

6.42 The NPPF continues that “Planning decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development...; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being...”. (paragraph 135)

6.43 Local Plan Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability is an important consideration and seeks to ensure new developments are “well designed and located and responds positively to its local context” (criterion a).

Assessment

6.44 The Application Proposal has benefitted from detailed pre-app discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council. The Design and Access Statement explains the

Application Proposal, including how the comments through the pre-app have been addressed.

- 6.45 The Application Proposal is therefore in accordance with the NPPF, as well as Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability. It also fulfils the “environmental objective” of sustainable development to protect and enhance our built environment.

Heritage assets

Policy Framework

- 6.46 Local Plan Policy SP13: Historic environment seeks to ensure new development conserves the Borough’s historic environment.

Assessment

- 6.47 As explained in Chapter 3, the Application Site is not within close proximity to any designated heritage assets. St Ippolyts Church is located on higher ground but is a significant distance to the west (360m) and mature trees and existing / recent developments on Brookend Lane and London Road would prevent unobstructed views. This is also relevant to the St Ippolyts Conservation Area. An important part of the significance of these heritage assets is the relationship with the village. The Application Proposal has been designed to ensure it is compatible with the surrounding village environment.
- 6.48 It will therefore not cause harm to any heritage assets and is in accordance with Policy SP13: Historic environment.

Residential amenity

Policy Framework

- 6.49 Local Plan Policy D3: Protecting living conditions seeks to ensure that new development protects the living conditions of existing neighbours.

Assessment

- 6.50 The Design and Access Statement has been submitted that demonstrates that careful consideration has been given to ensuring that the development respects surrounding neighbours. A Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted which demonstrates that target noise levels can be achieved. The application proposal is in accordance with Policy D3: Protecting living conditions.

Ecology

Policy framework

- 6.51 Local Plan Policy NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites is an important consideration.

Assessment

- 6.52 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), including a bat roost assessment, and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment have been submitted as part of the planning application. The PEA did not find any constraints to development. The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment shows that the Application Proposal results in 1.76 Habitat Units and 1.04 Hedgerow units. It also confirms that to achieve a BNG of 10%, 4.67 units will be delivered off-site.
- 6.53 The Application Proposal is therefore in accordance with Policy NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites.

Trees

Policy Framework

- 6.54 Local Plan Policy D1: Sustainable design encourages the retention of existing vegetation.

Assessment

- 6.55 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan has been submitted. This demonstrates that there will be no impact on trees on or adjacent to the site, in accordance with Local Plan Policy D1: Sustainable design.

Highways

Policy Framework

- 6.56 Local Plan Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters and Policy T2: Parking assesses the transport impact of developments.

Assessment

- 6.57 A Transport Statement has been submitted as part of the planning application which demonstrates that the application proposal is in accordance with Local Plan Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters and Policy T2: Parking.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This Planning Statement has been produced by Shrimplin Planning & Development on behalf of Hornbeam Homes Ltd. in support of a full planning application for a residential development, parking, landscaping and access at Land at London Road, Gosmore, Hertfordshire. The Application Proposal will deliver 5 new dwellings with a mix of three and four bedroom properties, each with generous private amenity spaces and off street parking.
- 7.2 Chapter 2 explained the Application Proposal and the information that forms the application submission. Chapter 3 described the Application Site and its wider context. Chapter 4 summarised the planning history of the site.
- 7.3 Chapter 5 explains that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply. As a result, the Local Plan policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date. This means that planning permission should be granted unless “the application of policies in [the NPPF] that protect areas or assets of particular importance [in this case the Green Belt] provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed” (NPPF, paragraph 11(d)(i)) or any harm would “significantly and demonstrably” outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF (paragraph 11(d)(ii)).
- 7.4 Chapter 6 assesses the Application Proposal. It will have the significant benefit of making an important contribution to meeting local housing needs, helping the Council to meet its housing land supply requirements. Importantly, it can provide an appropriate mix of housing that will address local housing needs. This is in accordance with the NPPF objective to boost the supply of housing and supports the economic objective of sustainable development by delivering land for housing and to support rural communities.
- 7.5 The Application Site has the significant benefit of accommodating development in a sustainable location on the edge of one of the District’s most sustainable Category A

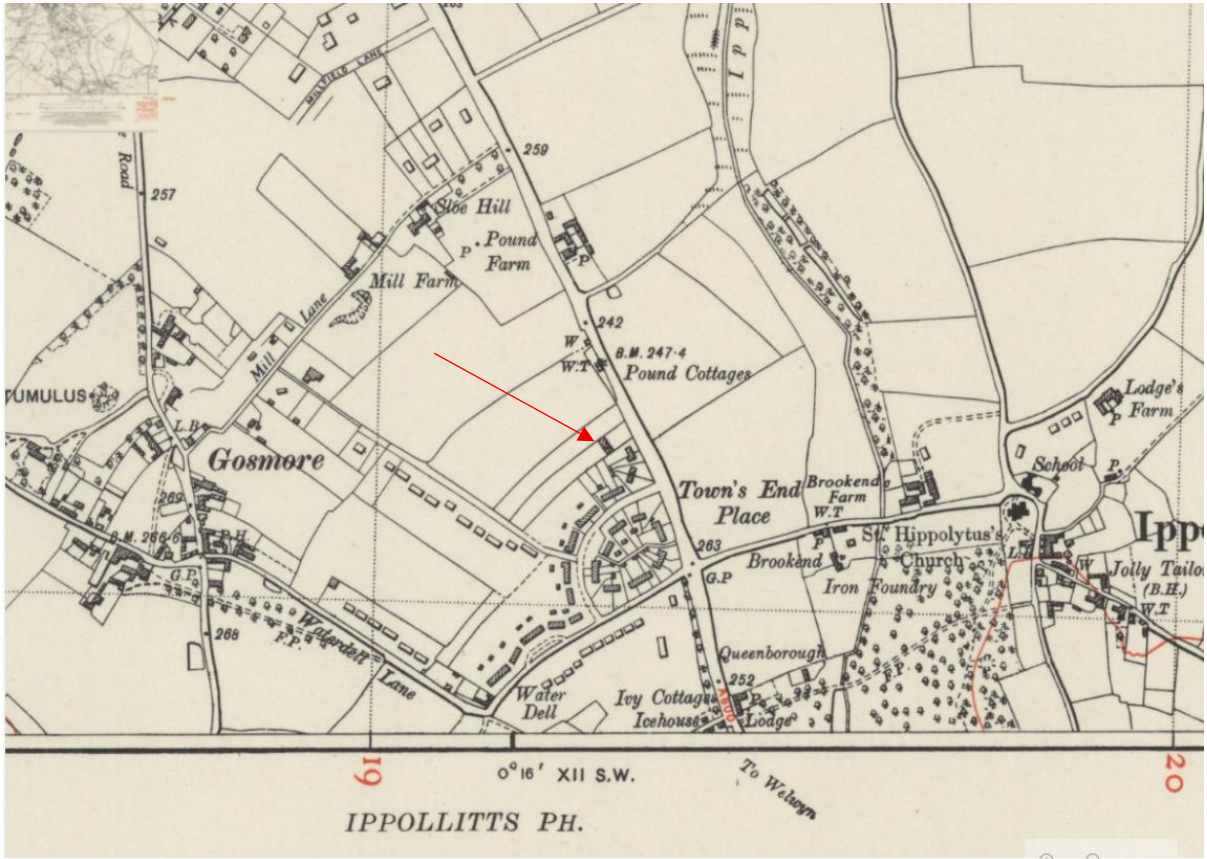
villages, within walking distance of a range of services and facilities and within close proximity to a bus stop from where there are regular bus services to Hitchin and Welwyn Garden City. This is recognised by the Council in its Local Plan which allocates two sites for housing at the village totaling 52 new homes and as the Council has approved various similar developments in edge-of-village locations in the local area. This is also in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan and supports the economic objective of sustainable development by delivering land for housing in the right places.

- 7.6 In terms of Green Belt, it explains that the NPPF (December 2024) identifies exceptions to “inappropriate development”, including “limited infilling in villages” (paragraph 154). The Application Proposal is modest in scale in the context of the village. It is adjacent to the settlement boundary and infills the gap between Flint House to the north and 4 Mill Road to the south west. It forms part of the built up area of Gosmore. It therefore represents limited infilling. The Application Proposal is therefore in accordance with the NPPF.
- 7.7 It also explains that the NPPF (December 2024) now also identifies housing, as well as commercial and other development, in the Green Belt as not being inappropriate where certain criteria are met (paragraph 155). The assessment concludes that the Application Site is grey belt and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the District (criterion a), there is a need for housing (criterion b), the Application Site is in a sustainable location (criterion c) and the ‘Golden Rules’ do not apply as this is not major development (criterion d). The Application Proposal is therefore in accordance with the NPPF. The Application Proposal is therefore not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 7.8 The Application Proposal has benefitted from detailed pre-app discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council. The Design and Access Statement explains the Application Proposal, including how the comments through the pre-app have been addressed. It is therefore in accordance with Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability, as well as the NPPF. It also fulfils the “environmental objective” of sustainable development to protect and enhance our built environment.

- 7.9 The Application Site is not within close proximity to any designated heritage assets. It will therefore not cause harm to any heritage assets and is in accordance with Policy SP13: Historic environment.
- 7.10 The Design and Access Statement has been submitted that demonstrates that careful consideration has been given to ensuring that the development respects surrounding neighbours. A Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted with demonstrates that target noise levels can be achieved. The application proposal is in accordance with Policy D3: Protecting living conditions.
- 7.11 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), including a roost assessment, and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment have been submitted as part of the planning application. The PEA did not find any constraints to development. The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment shows that the Application Proposal results in 1.76 Habitat Units and 1.04 Hedgerow units. It also confirms that to achieve a BNG of 10%, 4.67 units will be delivered off-site.
- 7.12 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan has been submitted. This demonstrates that there will be no impact on trees on and adjacent to the site. This is in accordance with
- 7.13 A Transport Statement has been submitted as part of the planning application which demonstrates that the application proposal is in accordance with Local Plan Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters and Policy T2: Parking.
- 7.14 No harms arise from the Application Proposal. It is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt and all other considerations have been addressed, as explained above.
- 7.15 Applying paragraph 11 of the NPPF, it is clear that there are no adverse impacts that would outweigh the benefits of the Application Proposal when assessed against the NPPF taken as a whole. The Application Proposal should be granted on this basis.

APPENDIX 1

HISTORIC AERIAL IMAGERY



APPENDIX 2

AERIAL VIEW OF SITE



Application Site



Residential development



Equestrian use