



North Herts Council
Development and Conservation
North Hertfordshire District Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6DW

Date: 24 October 2025
Our ref: 10224

For the attention of: Paul Chaston

Application ref: 25/02401/OP
Location: Land South Of Turnpike Lane Ickleford Hertfordshire
Proposal/Description: Erection of up to 100 dwellings with means of access from Turnpike Lane including associated landscaping, drainage, car parking; infrastructure and all ancillary and enabling works following demolition of all existing structures (all matters reserved except means of access)

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above Outline planning application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

Site Context:

The site located to the south of Ickleford, a village north of Hitchin. The site comprises several grass fields utilised for grazing, woodland blocks and scrub. Boundaries are well-enclosed by vegetation, and vegetation along the River Oughton which runs along the south-east boundary. Turnpike Lane forms the northern boundary and Bedford Lane forms the western boundary. Various employment development and residential development surrounds the site to west, north and east, with Green Belt to the south.

Planning Policy Context:

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (Adopted 2022)

Policies to be considered that are relevant to landscape include Policy ENV3, ENV5, NE1, NE2, NE6, NE7, NE8, SP9 and SP12.

Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan (Made 2024)

Policy E1: Maintaining Separation states; *“Development proposals should respect the undeveloped gap between Ickleford and Hitchin”*.

As per Policy E2: Protecting the Landscape, we advise that the proposals protect and enhance the *“natural landscape and local character of the Parish”*, mature trees, and hedgerows. *“Such features should be protected and, where appropriate, incorporated into landscape design schemes”*.



Policy E3: Rural Character states that development proposals should respect the rural character of the village and its surroundings by ensuring that:

- *“they respond positively to the local topography, landscape and water features, trees and plants in the vicinity and on the site.*
- *the scale and character of new buildings are in keeping with the rural setting,*
- *the variable sense of space between and around existing buildings is retained where appropriate, particularly in the green heart of the village and where views of the countryside beyond the village are available. The design of new buildings should ensure that adequate space is provided around them to compliment the rural character of the village,*
- *boundary treatment and landscaping schemes are carefully designed so as to maintain the rural character of the area,*
- *Views of particular importance as defined on the Policies Map should be protected and not be obstructed by new development.”*

Policy MTT1: Provision for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Horse-riders should also be considered.

Ickleford Design Code

- The site is located within Area Type D: Green Belt which is a more sensitive area type.
- The Design Code Guidance should be applied to the design and layout of the proposals.

Review of LVIA

The application has been accompanied by a Landscape, Visual and Green Belt Appraisal (LVGBA) undertaken by the Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd in September 2025 (Rev. 001c). The Methodology is included within Appendix EDP1. Overall we are satisfied with the included methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects.

Landscape Character

Within the North Herts and Stevenage Landscape Character Assessment, the application site is located within Landscape Character Area 217 River Oughton and Purwell Valleys. Key characteristics of this LCA that are relevant to the site include the meandering watercourse with associated ponds and water bodies. The strategy for this LCA is to ‘improve and conserve’. The following guidelines are therefore advised:

- *“Promote and encourage maintenance of existing pastureland within the river valley*
- *Promote the creation of new and retention of existing ditches connecting to the river*
- *Promote and encourage the biodiversity of locally native species*
- *Promote and maintain semi-natural habitats along the river*
- *Promote the planting of trees including appropriate protection within grazing areas*
- *Where appropriate promote and encourage public access to the river*
- *Avoid damage to the riverbanks as a result of agricultural or other practices*

- *Do not clear vegetation from riverbanks where evidence of use for perching and nesting”.*

Trees/woodland is major/moderate beneficial and moderate beneficial for hedgerows. However, we are aware of a TPO on site towards the northern boundary. Further submissions should include details of the location of the TPO alongside the proposed tree removals required to facilitate the scheme.

Overall, we do not disagree with the judgements made regarding landscape character effects. Where our judgements may differ slightly, these are not deemed substantial.

Visual Amenity

6no. viewpoint receptors have been included within the LVGBA, as per Dwg no. edp9240_d001b. Typically we would have expected more viewpoints from receptors located further from the site, to provide a more representative assessment of wider views. However, we note the enclosed nature of the site where views are limited.

Viewpoint photography has been undertaken in July 2025, when vegetation was in full-leaf cover and therefore does not represent the worst-case scenario. We recognise that this is a constraint of the assessment and that this has been acknowledged within Para 1.15.

Viewpoint 2 (Turnpike Road) is located on the northern boundary and demonstrates views of the boundary vegetation. Compared to the included summary photography, we anticipate that there would be views through the vegetation in winter towards the development site.

A new access is being proposed from Turnpike Road through the TPO vegetation. New views into the site will then be created. However, no viewpoint receptors have been included to represent this view south.

Nevertheless, the judgements included within Table EDP8.1 Summary of Predicated Effects is representative of anticipated effects and therefore we do not disagree.

Review of Submitted Proposals

Policy E1 (Maintaining Separation) requires that *“Development proposals should respect the undeveloped gap between Ickleford and Hitchin”*. The proposed site is located to the south of Ickleford and forms part of the gap between the two settlements. The site is however fairly well-enclosed by vegetation and is bound to the south by the River Oughton, which restricts further southerly development towards the edge of Hitchin. Development within the site is situated to the north-east corner away from the edge of Hitchin, which contributes to maintaining separation.

Trees along Turnpike Road are covered by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 1971. 6 trees of varying quality are to be removed to facilitate the proposed access arrangement. Clarification is required on whether any of the TPO trees are being removed.

The site topography falls towards the southern edge adjacent to the River Oughton. Whilst we do not disagree with the general location of the SuDS basin, it is located centrally within the Public Open Space (POS) to the south-west of the site and will therefore be visible within the site. As a result, the visual amenity of the SuDS basin is important. We advise that the basin is well planted to enhance the visual amenity and biodiversity. A softer approach than standard should be proposed for the headwalls, which should not be precast concrete or have galvanised railings.

The LEAP is located amongst trees and existing vegetation. Creating passive surveillance is important for Designing Out Crime. Views over the LEAP should therefore be intentionally designed from surrounding residential development.

We welcome that houses are predominantly orientated to face outwards, providing passive surveillance over the perimeter pedestrian route that circumnavigates the site.

Extensive tree planting as street trees throughout the development is welcomed to soften the built form, provide shading, biodiversity and interest.

We welcome the connection points proposed into neighbouring developments, which enhances the connectivity of the scheme and surrounding areas.

General comments regarding and design and appearance include:

- Hedgehog highway gaps should be provided within any other garden fences and barriers to link up the gardens within the scheme. We would recommend the dimensions are proposed at 100mm x 100mm.
- Play-on-the-way would be a beneficial addition to the proposals, following any pedestrian routes around the outside of the scheme.
- Development should avoid the root protection areas (RPAs) of all trees within or surrounding the Site, particularly given trees are limited. Any hard landscaping proposed within the RPA of existing trees must use no-dig surface solutions. Tree protection measures for all trees must be used during construction and should be submitted in an AIA/AMS.
- We would expect details of tree pit design to be provided and where trees are proposed in close proximity to hard landscaped / surfaced areas or equipment, details of root barrier systems should also be provided.
- A predominance of one species or variety should be avoided in order to minimise the risk of widespread biotic threats to the urban forest and to increase species diversity. Preference should be given to native trees and shrubs, but in certain urban and residential situations, better results might be achieved by the use of naturalised trees and shrubs, which are not necessarily native but are the correct tree for site conditions and would add landscape and arboricultural value.
- Amenity grass should not be a blanket proposal to all soft landscaped areas. There are opportunities to incorporate a wildflower and/or pollinating seed mix to some areas to improve visual amenity and enhance biodiversity opportunities.
- A multifunctional approach is to be adopted to offer maximum value for space utilised. For example, incorporating natural play through these areas whilst also

providing a biodiverse planting strategy. Fencing of SuDS should be avoided as it reduces the amenity benefits provided by these areas whilst increasing maintenance. Multifunctionality is completely compatible with creating safe and easily managed ponds. For example, a series of 'benches' on the approach to a pond provides a safe vantage point and opportunity to stop and consider safety. Gently sloping edge or edges allows for safe entry and exist of shallow pool and other wetlands. Health and safety risks can also be managed through education and raising awareness – interpretation boards can be provided to inform the public of the function of the pond and also to provide information on the flora and fauna the system supports.

Submission documents: (if pre-app or outline)

Arboricultural Survey and Impact Assessment

- Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan
- Hard landscaping – The surface treatment to footpaths, public realm and highways should be aligned with the character of the development.
- SUDs strategy (including existing watercourses) – Ditches, rain gardens, swales, ditches, rills, ponds, etc.
- Planting strategy – High quality planting along access roads, boundaries and within public spaces should be proposed.
- Ecological enhancements, bird / bat boxes and habitat hibernacula proposals.

Summary:

Overall, from a landscape perspective the proposed development could be accommodated within the site owed to the contained nature and location amongst the surrounding built areas of Ickleford. We advise the above recommendations are considered.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of North Herts Council.

Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.

