

ICKLEFORD PARISH COUNCIL



www.ickleford-pc.gov.uk

Mr T Rea
Planning Department
North Herts Council
PO Box 10613
Nottingham
NG6 6DW

28th October 2024

Dear Tom,

Ref: 24/01920/FP at Land to the East of Old Hale Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire
Full Planning Permission: Altered vehicular access to facilitate the use of land as a community car park together with the installation of new gates and fencing and associated landscaping.

Ickleford Parish Council strongly **OBJECTS** to the above planning application for the following reasons:

- The exit from this site is dangerous when turning into Old Hale Way, as it is near the bend from where traffic accelerates after negotiating the pinch-point of the bridge over the River Oughton at Ickleford Mill.
- This land is wholly in the Green Belt which is essential to protect the boundary strip between Hitchin and Ickleford. However, there is already a new large barn and allotments on the land, and this proposal for 30 parking spaces, EV charging points, bicycle spaces, new gates and fencing, landscaping and a further application to erect an 'agricultural dwelling' would see the irreversible erosion of Green Belt land.
- The applicant has already created a number of new parking spaces along Grubbs Lane in the middle of Ickleford village. The spaces remain fenced off and unusable, but would serve the apparent need for parking in Ickleford that the applicant claims, and cites as one of the justification for development of the land on Old Hale Way. The Parish Council is unaware of any survey of Ickleford residents' views on the need for extra parking for themselves anywhere in the village, let alone outside the parish boundary.
- Unofficial paths have already been created on the land North East of Old Hale Way, which are wide enough for agricultural vehicles, have hard surfaces and have created clearings which have destroyed natural habitats and essential wildlife corridors.
- Security lights would cause light pollution and affect nearby residents as well as wildlife.

- The River Hiz, one of only 200 rare chalk streams on the planet, has already had its riverbank cleared by the Old Ford, part of the land in question, to provide a picnic site which means that access to the fragile chalk stream has been exposed and abused.
- The River Oughton is also a chalk stream and a tributary of the River Hiz. After heavy rain, the run-off water regularly floods the road over the River Oughton by Ickleford Mill. The proposed hard-standing for 30 car parking spaces would increase the amount of water flowing off the site downhill to the flood area.
- The old railway embankment wildlife corridor, that runs from the land in question northwards behind Freewaters Close, would be compromised, disturbing the natural treeline habitats of Barn Owls, bats, buzzards, Red Kites and Little Egrets. The ground habitat is a natural and historic pathway used by foxes, deer and badgers. Otters and brown lizards have been sighted regularly in the rivers and riverbanks. Gerry's Hole is an undisturbed wetland wildlife area beside the railway embankment on the land and is home to frogs, toads, moorhens and ducks.

The Parish Council would like to know how the Ecological Impact Assessment has been carried out in order to address the wildlife and chalk streams issues.

To confirm, for all of the reasons above, the Parish Council strongly **OBJECTS** to this application.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Crosier

Judith Crosier
Clerk to Ickleford Parish Council

cc: District Councillor Louise Peace
cc: County Councillor David Barnard