

Consultation Statement

Land at Highover Farm, Hitchin

21st August 2025

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Client
Barratt David Wilson (North Thames)

Our reference
OP-19-23

21st August 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Consultation Statement has been prepared by Opus Works Consultancy Ltd in respect of engagement undertaken to provide information regarding discharge of conditions and Reserved Matters applications following on from the outline consent granted in November 2024 by North Herts Council (“the Council”) for:

“Outline application with all matters reserved other than access, comprising residential led development of up to 700 dwellings of use class C3 (dwellings), approximately 500 sqm of neighbourhood-level facilities, a new 2FE primary school, open space, play space, green infrastructure, and associated accesses (vehicular, pedestrian and cycle), including a new primary access off Stotfold Road with limited access off High Dane (as amended)”, ref: 18/01154/OP

- 1.2. There are several applications pertinent to this part of the Engagement process, which are as summarised below. Where applications have already been submitted details of the date of submission and relevant reference number are provided:

- Strategic Infrastructure Reserved Matters – covering the main spine road from Stotfold Road to High Dane (The Avenue) and all strategic drainage including two ponds, various swales and drainage runs necessary to drain the spine road and most of the site. Submitted 23rd December 2024. Application number 24/02780/RM.
- Discharge of Condition 5 of 18/01154/OP - phasing strategy. Submitted 20th December 2024. Application number 25/00076/DOC.
- Discharge of Condition 6 of 18/01154/OP – Design Code. Submitted 20th December 2024. Application number 24/02906/DOC.
- Discharge of Condition 20 of 18/01154/OP – Site Investigation Phase 2, this provides a detailed overview of soil and groundwater conditions, alongside further review to identify the presence of any contamination on site. Submitted 1st April 2025. Application number 25/00916/DOC.
- Discharge of Condition 12 of 18/01154/OP – Sustainability. Submitted 15th May 2025. Application number 25/01299/DOC.
- Discharge of Condition 14 of 18/01154/OP – Waste Management. Submitted 15th May 2025. Application number 25/01377/DOC.

- Discharge of Condition 15 of 18/01154/OP – Drainage. Submitted 15th May 2025.
Application number 25/01378/DOC
- 1.3. Further to comments from Council and County Council Officers and consultees during the post-submission process, it has been determined to amend the Strategic Infrastructure Reserved Matters application, alongside the detail to discharge Conditions 5 and 6. This detail was subject to the latest round of engagement.
 - 1.4. There are several applications to discharge other planning conditions set within the outline consent currently in preparation, which will be submitted over the course of the next couple of months, including:
 - Condition 13 - Open Space Management and Maintenance Scheme
 - Condition 17 – Design and Operation of proposed bus gate
 - Condition 18 – Construction Traffic Management Plan
 - Condition 19 – On-site Fire Hydrant provision
 - Condition 21 – Landscape and Ecological Management Plan
 - 1.5. To prepare the site for development, other works including archaeological site investigation (as required by Condition 16) are currently taking place, as will the erection of tree and hedge protection (as set out in the informative to Condition 26, although no start date for latter phase of works has yet been set.
 - 1.6. In line with S106 Legal Agreement requirements, a footpath link design between the site and Armour Rise, Collinson Close, Highover Way and High Dane is also being prepared.
 - 1.7. Finally, details of the first residential phase Reserved Matters have been prepared, this includes the Hitchin Meadows Open Space and Ecological Area.
 - 1.8. The submission of applications to provide detail follows wide-ranging, multi-stage pre-application discussions with a wide range of stakeholders and statutory consultees, including North Herts Council Planning Officers, Hertfordshire County Council Officers, Hitchin Walsworth Ward Members, Hitchin Forum and local residents and businesses and community organisations either located within or in close proximity to Land at Highover Farm (hereafter referred to as “the site”).
 - 1.9. The feedback provided has enabled significant, beneficial changes to the scheme to be identified and brought forward within the various applications submitted, as set out further in Section 5 of this document.

1.10. It is important to identify that the outline consent has set the principle of development as well as parameters for that development in terms of development quantum, land uses and indicative layout. As such, consultation now needs to be focused on the detail of planning submissions to ensure that these meet policy and legislative requirements. This report therefore records and responds to comments made in respect of the detailed proposals consulted upon. General comments regarding acceptability of the scheme have been disregarded to ensure focus remains on considering how best to bring forward Highover Farm in line with the principles set by the outline consent.



Figure 1 – Site Location

2. Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.1. In addition to the technical meetings with Planning and Policy Officers, the detail of which is set out in the DAS, the Design Team has sought to engage with Hitchin Forum, Hitchin Walsworth Ward Members and local residents and businesses during the pre-application stage. The feedback received has specifically influenced the overarching design approach.

Consultation undertaken to date

- 2.2. Given the significant time between the earlier 2024 Design Code consultation, this being related to the merger of Barratt and Redrow in the intervening period, engagement was undertaken in two phases in 2025:

1. A consultation update was placed online at www.dwh-highoverfarm.co.uk and at Walsworth Community Association. This neighbour notification process was supported by signage placed on site and notices placed on InYourArea and Nextdoor. Hitchin Walsworth Ward Members and Walsworth Community Association were also informed of this process. The consultation update was scheduled for three weeks from 28th April 2025 but was kept in place in the period up to the more detailed public consultation process, which took place in June 2025. A copy of the neighbour notification exhibition boards and associated notice are provided in [Appendix 1](#) for review.
 2. A public exhibition, supported by online consultation via the project website (details above) was undertaken on 5th June 2025 with the timeframe for feedback lasting throughout the month of June 2025. The public exhibition and online consultation were multi-faceted and provided details regarding applications already submitted to discharge planning conditions relating to the outline consent as well as the detail of forthcoming Reserved Matters Applications in respect of proposed residential development and associated open and play spaces.
- 2.3. To provide notice of the exhibition, a leaflet drop to 1,296 homes and businesses was undertaken ten days before the event. Figure 2, overleaf, reproduces the notice. Figure 3, which follows, identifies the extent of the letterdrop, as denoted by the red line.
- 2.4. To support the direct outreach, public notices, which replicated that sent via direct post, were placed on Nextdoor and InYourArea. Walsworth Community Association and Hitchin Walsworth Ward Members were also informed and provided with notices to place on their online noticeboards and facebook pages.
- 2.5. To enable a range of comments from a diverse range of interested parties, feedback capabilities were provided online and a dedicated project email – highoverfarm@opus.works and freepost address – FREEPOST HIGHOVER FARM were also put in place.

- 2.6. A presentation was also provided to Hitchin Forum on 17th June, which was followed by a Question and Answer session open to Forum Members and local residents.
- 2.7. The detail of meetings held with stakeholders and the Design Team response to the public and online exhibitions is set out in following sections.



Land at Highover Farm, Hitchin

PUBLIC EXHIBITION

Hitchin Town Hall, Mountford Hall

Thursday 5th June, 3.30pm—7.30pm

ONLINE

www.dwh-highoverfarm.co.uk

Barratt Redrow (BR) is seeking to submit a series of updated documents to amend some of the existing planning applications currently with the Council for consideration.

In addition, a Reserved Matters Application for the first phase of residential development and associated open space is also due to be submitted alongside details to set out the proposed Site Drainage, Sustainability and Waste Management Strategies.

BR wishes to engage with local residents and businesses to discuss this detail and a public exhibition has been arranged at the time and venue set out above. All details will also be uploaded to the project website, details also above, to coincide with the exhibition.

The views of local residents matter to us in delivering a new neighbourhood that can positively contribute to the local area. We therefore seek your views to allow this to be factored into design development, as appropriate.

We look forward to welcoming you at our second public exhibition following that undertaken in April 2024. The exhibition is a drop-in event which allows interested parties to attend at their own convenience during the stated opening hours.

Comments can be made:

- in person on the day of the public exhibition
- via the website www.dwh-highoverfarm.co.uk
- emailed directly to highoverfarm@opus.works
- Mailed to FREEPOST DWH HIGHOVER FARM



Figure 2 – Extract from Public Exhibition Notice

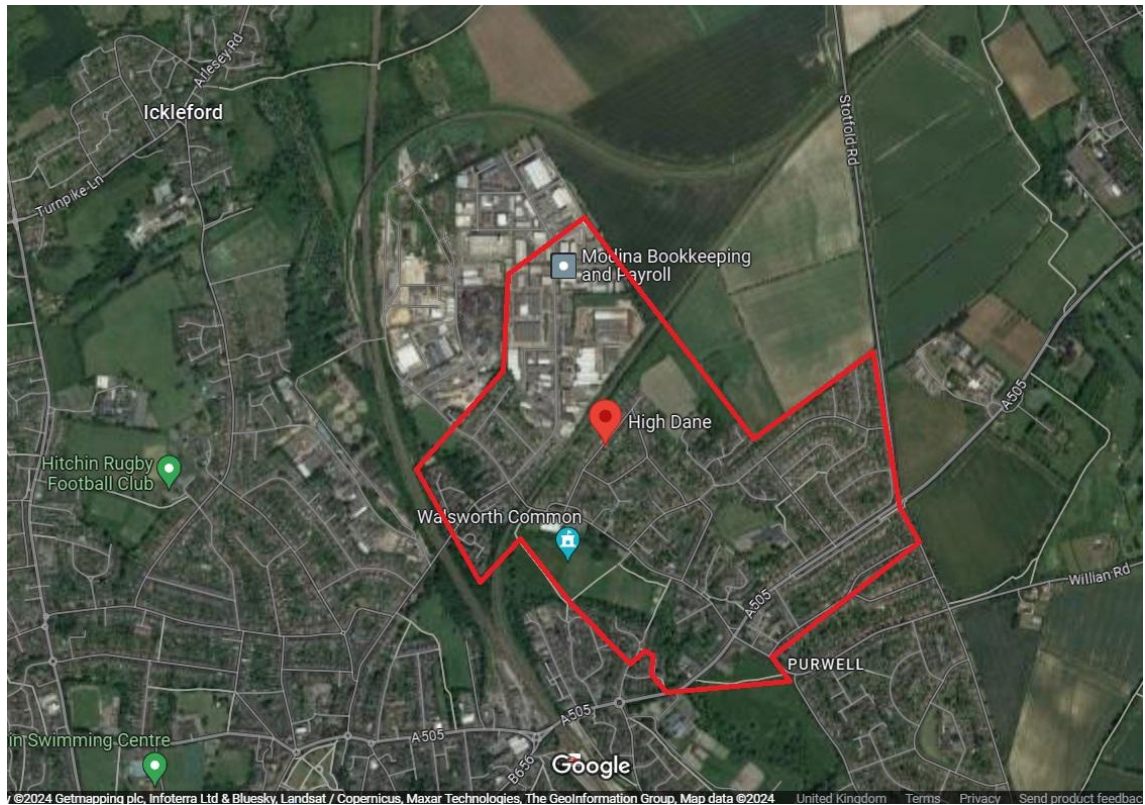


Figure 3 – Area of leaflet drop for June 2025 Public Exhibition

3. Pre-application meetings

- 3.1. The meetings held with key local decision-makers and stakeholders, in addition to the formal approaches to the Council's Planning Department and County Council Highways have been invaluable in terms of understanding key details for the Discharge of Conditions and Reserved Matters Applications, as well as identifying elements of the proposals requiring further consideration or clarification in terms of approach.
- 3.2. The following paragraphs summarise key issues discussed at each of the stakeholder meetings. More detailed minutes have been produced and can be provided upon request.

Meeting with Hitchin Forum, 17th June 2025

- 3.3. A presentation was given to Hitchin Forum on Tuesday 17th June. The Hitchin Forum Committee is chaired by Cllr. Ian Albert and is represented by North Herts Council Members, including Hitchin Walsworth Ward Members – <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=360>.
- 3.4. Following the presentation, a copy of which can be reviewed in Appendix 2, a Question and Answer session was held, with this being open to Committee Members and local residents. A summary of key issues, as agreed with Hitchin Forum, is set out below:
- Traffic movement – concerns were raised about recent movement of large vehicles on site and it was explained that the vehicles are needed to carry out more archaeological works. Going forwards all construction vehicles will access through Stotfold Road.
 - Flooding – the developers are aware of the recent flooding report released by Hertfordshire County. A member of the public raised concern about how the surface water will move in particular areas such as High Dane and Grovelands Avenue. It was explained that the drainage strategy has been carefully designed and has been submitted for the Council's consideration, which will also require assessment by the County Council as Local Lead Flood Authority received planning permission. One of the slides shows how the surface water would move.
 - Sewage issues – concerns were raised about how the sewers are already not coping and that the development will make it worse, particularly around areas like Woolgrove Road. It was explained that Anglian Water are a consultee of this development and are the strategy providers around this. It is Anglian's role to make sure the system can accommodate. Cllr Albert agreed these are legitimate concerns around sewage and explained how the process works with getting permissions from the North Herts Council planning team. When anymore applications come in, they will be publicised on the Council's website and members of the public can express their views.

- Phasing timings – the start date depends on the planning permission. The programme estimate of development is 6-7 years. The rate of how quickly the houses are built depends on how active the housing market is, as developers can complete more quickly if houses sell quickly. This is because they don't want to build and then have empty houses. More detail around the phasing is on the project website.
- School – explained how it is the County Council's responsibility on how quickly the school is built.
- Affordable housing – it was asked how the speed of building these works. It was explained that affordable housing works differently to the general market as they bulk sell it to housing associations at each phase. There will be delivery targets that need to be met. They are also policy compliant with the amount of affordable housing needed to be built.
- Affordable housing grant funding – it was asked how the announcement of more funding from the government into affordable housing could affect the timeline of the development. It was explained that the funding goes direct to housing associations and developers can't influence how much of the grant goes into this affordable housing.

More detail regarding the Design Team response to comments received during the pre-application process is summarised in Section 5 of this document.

4. The Public Exhibition

- 4.1 To ensure that a range of interested parties could comment upon the proposals, a well-publicised public engagement event was held on 17th June 2025, with this supported by an online presence at www.dwh-highoverfarm.co.uk.
- 4.2 The public exhibition was held within a large space at Hitchin Town Hall and took place between 4.30pm and 7.30pm. The location was chosen due to its availability, more locally accessible premises being unavailable to hold an exhibition throughout June and July. The Town Hall also benefitted from proximity to significant car parking and an accessible entrance and floor layout meaning that all parties wishing to review plans had the ability to do so.
- 4.3 The public exhibition was advertised heavily in advance and signs were also placed at the building entrance to encourage footfall and for wayfinding.
- 4.4 To aid understanding of the proposals, a series of Exhibition Boards were produced to set out the current planning position, the phasing of development coming forward and the details being applied for at this stage, including information on the proposed design of houses, streets and spaces in the first phase of residential development. A copy of the exhibition boards forms Appendix 3 of this document. The project website replicated the detail shown on the exhibition boards to ensure that all interested parties, whether attending in person or viewing online had access to the same level of information.
- 4.5 To enable comments from interested parties, a feedback form was provided at the exhibition. The feedback form was also provided online. A copy of the feedback form is provided within Appendix 4.



Figure 5 – photograph from the public exhibition, 5th June 2025

- 4.6 Given the very significant and advance local notification, the exhibition was well attended with 136 people attending, 73 of which signed in via the registers provided.
- 4.7 The website attracted 739 individual users and 3,044 views over the following 21 day engagement period for submission of comments. The website analytics are provided in Appendix 5 for review.
- 4.8 At the time of writing, 67 sets of comments, comprising completed feedback forms at the exhibition, online forms and email responses have been received, a summary of which is set out below. Comments objecting to the principle of development, which has already been set via the online consent, are not included as they are not pertinent to consideration of future planning applications.

Summary of Comments Received

Design

- Could brick colour be in keeping with the local area – sandy colour similar to Grovelands area, as opposed to red?
- Style of buildings looks nice

Layout

- Houses backing onto Grovelands will be higher. Can the layout be amended to improve privacy of existing residents?
- Can the community centre be moved so it impacts the new community it serves?
- Affordable homes should be mixed up, not concentrated at one end of the development by existing homes.
- Layout looks attractive
- Garages are a waste of space if cars are parked in front

Public Realm, Open and Play Spaces

- Like proposals to create improved outdoor/green space (8 mentions)
- Like the connection to the Greenway
- Would like to see more greenway and green space
- Layout and mix of green/play spaces looks attractive

Housing

- Agree that housing is required
- Too many houses (3 mentions)
- Why so many 4 and 5 bedroom houses and so few affordable homes?
- How 'affordable' is the housing?
- Needs more affordable homes (4 mentions)
- Mix of housing is positive but could do with more smaller units
- How have the number of affordable homes been decided on the development and will Hitchin's displaced residents be considered in the first instance?
- NHDC provision of 10% houses for the disabled is not enough.

Transport and Access

- Existing traffic is very heavy and will get worse (17 mentions)
- Concern regarding the access and additional traffic on the Stotfold Road
- Alternative access to the site not via Stotfold Road and/or High Dane
- How is the development of 700 homes not going to impact an already busy town and cause further traffic disruption and wear and tear to roads?
- Is traffic split to lessen impact to Stotfold Road? Residents weren't advised of this change (more houses accessed from High Dane)
- Is a bridge connection being considered?
- Can local traffic restrictions be considered to stop rat running, given heavy traffic on Stotfold Road? (For example, diagram provided with a no right turn at the end of Cambridge Road and a no entry sign in the slip road off Frensham Drive) (2 mentions)
- Put residents-only parking in place on Stotfold Road, Cambridge Road, Roundwood Close and Collison Close.
- What are the wider traffic plans for managing the increased vehicle traffic beyond the development footprint?
- More traffic on small side roads.
- Are any steps being put in place to reduce car usage by new residents?
- Existing problem with e-bikes and motorbikes passing through bollards to access streets in the local area. Need to counter this through design (2 mentions)
- Need more bollards, ANPR cameras and strict control on access to roads/paths.
- Will funds be provided/can works be undertaken to amend/upgrade the road systems? (3 mentions)
- Object to the cycle path joining into Armour Rise
- Scrap the footpath into Collison Close on safety grounds (blind reverse from no. 7)
- High Dane and Highover not wide enough to accommodate traffic. Access should be via Stotfold Road only.

Trees and Ecology

- Safety concerns regarding trees on site boundary
- Impact on existing fences from hedges/trees on site
- Impact on high variety of wildlife in the area
- More BNG and GNG (Policy CSS10) could be provided in the green spaces

Sustainability

- Prime agricultural land that supports food production will be lost to development

Drainage

- Like that drainage will flow to the back of the site.
- Concerns whether the drainage solution will work (2 mentions)
- Where will foul water be processed?
- Are there any upgrades planned for the existing sewage treatment plant?
- Sewage/waste water should not be pumped into Cambridge Road

Services

- Like that the bus route is being retained.
- Would like to keep the 81 bus for existing residents
- Can community uses be brought forward earlier in the development process
- Can information on improvements to the local bus services be provided?
- Pleased that the school will be built (3 mentions)
- No secondary school to accommodate additional children
- Insufficient infrastructure to accommodate the additional homes (7 mentions)
- No Doctor's Surgery provided

Other

- Are any 3g sports pitches to be provided?
- Diagrams/plans still vague. Roads not clear.
- No plans for traffic flow management.
- Concern regarding impact of the development on noise/air pollution (3 mentions).
- Why so few solar panels on the houses and non-residential buildings?
- Earlier public engagement comments appear to have been ignored regarding the location of the school and local centre and concentration of high density housing away from existing residents (High Dane, Armour Rise)
- Is there a covenant that prevents later conversion of garages?

- 4.9 To respond to the comments made, the Design Team has provided considered comments in Section 5 of this document.
- 4.10 The Design Team has responded positively and proactively to comments received, which have influenced and improved design and layout to provide a high-quality scheme that reflects its location, proposes appropriate materials and finishes and which brings forward one part of what will become a thriving new community at the edge of Hitchin.
- 4.11 A copy of all comments received (with personal details redacted) is provided within Appendix 6 for consideration.

5. Issues requiring further consideration and Design Team Response

5.1 Putting to one side comments about the principle of development, it is clear that the proposals do attract some support in terms of the provision of green and play spaces and affordable housing in particular, but there are very significant concerns regarding the impact on existing infrastructure, most notably the local highway network and sewer system.

5.2 To support design development of the emerging proposals for the Phase 1 Residential Reserved Matters Application and to guide the wider scheme in general, the engagement undertaken has identified some key themes:

- Concern regarding further housing being accessed onto High Dane, rather than via Stotfold Road
- The need for greater re-assurance regarding the proposed drainage solution and how additional capacity can be accommodated by the Anglian Water network
- Further detail should be provided regarding the envisaged impact on already congested roads adjacent to the development and measures proposed to reduce car usage and promote more sustainable transport modes
- Re-assurances to be given regarding proper control of traffic flows through the bus gate to stop rat running
- Potential for parking and road controls, including barriers to stop/obstruct use by e-bikes, scooters and motorbikes, to be put in place to protect existing residents from rat running and parking overspill from the development
- Thought to be given to implementation of on-site energy efficiency measures such as solar panels and air source heat pumps
- The range of amenities offered is considered positive and beneficial, but consideration should be given to bringing forward community uses earlier in the development process.
- Potential to include more BNG/GNG within proposed green spaces.
- Opportunity to build in birds/bats mitigation/boxes within the development
- Information to be provided to identify how the development can be accommodated in terms of utilities and service provision – water, gas, electricity, schools, health etc.
- Consideration to be given to layout/orientation and screening to adjacent existing properties to enhance residential privacy/amenity (at the appropriate time. No residential development will affect boundaries with existing residents)
- Need for boundary survey and discussions with adjacent residents regarding hedges and trees currently on site and management/maintenance of these (at the appropriate time. No residential development will affect boundaries with existing residents)
- Need for ongoing communication to keep residents informed regarding on-site activities and next steps, timings for planning applications and on-site construction.

- 5.3 In respect of areas flagged for further consideration, the Design Team has sought to investigate these further and positively respond as part of the planning submission, as follows:

Comment Provided	Design Team Response
Concern regarding further housing being accessed onto High Dane, rather than via Stotfold Road	The current proposals envisage 94 homes out of the consented total of 700 homes being accessed from High Dane, rather than Stotfold Road. The Strategic Infrastructure Reserved Matters Application (RMA), ref: 24/02780/RM, alongside the details being considered for the Phasing Strategy, ref: 25/00076/DOC and Site Wide Design Code, ref: 25/02906/DOC requires the Council and County Council to consider whether the proposals can be accommodated as envisaged by the outline consent. The Design Team considers that the number of homes to be accessed from High Dane will represent a minimal increase in traffic flow, able to be accommodated by the local highway network.
The need for greater re-assurance regarding the proposed drainage solution and how additional capacity can be accommodated by the Anglian Water network	Anglian Water is a statutory provider of water supply and wastewater infrastructure. This means local planning authorities must consult them on applications that may impact water supply or wastewater infrastructure. Through the planning process, providers such as Anglian Water are made aware of forthcoming development to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in their network for potable water and foul and surface water sewerage. Review of existing supply during this process can require developers to contribute to necessary upgrades. The Design Team has engaged in long-term, regular dialogue with Anglian Water to ensure that the development can be accommodated within their network. It is noted that the development will come forward in phases over a period of not less than 5 years, which in turn allows Anglian Water to

	review and upgrade its network, as appropriate.
Further detail should be provided regarding the envisaged impact on already congested roads adjacent to the development and measures proposed to reduce car usage and promote more sustainable transport modes	As part of the Outline Application, a detailed Transport Assessment was undertaken to determine the envisaged impact on the local highway network. This document also set out measures to reduce car usage, such as the network of footpaths and cycleways proposed, alongside measures to enhance bus usage in the vicinity. A bus service contribution of £875,000 (index-linked), which has been secured by s106 Legal Agreement, will be provided towards the costs of buses serving the development. Further, a contribution of over £3,600,000 (index-linked) has been secured by s106 Legal Agreement to upgrade and improve sustainable transport in the vicinity of the development as has a contribution of £10,500 to assist with evaluation and support for a School Travel Plan.
Re-assurances to be given regarding proper control of traffic flows through the bus gate to stop rat running	The Design Team fully wishes to control traffic flows through the bus gate and is committed to a physical deterrent. The decision on bus gate measures sits with the County Council, however. Discussions are currently being progressed with County Highways regarding this aspect of the proposals and details have recently been submitted to the Council for consideration, as part of proposals to discharge Condition 17 of the Outline Consent, ref: 25/01504/DOC.
Potential for parking and road controls, including barriers to stop/obstruct use by e-bikes, scooters and motorbikes, to be put in place to protect existing residents from rat running and parking overspill from the development	As above, control of the highway network is managed by the County Council, whilst misuse of footpaths and cycleways is a police matter. The Design Team is seeking to install the necessary deterrents upon land within its control and will raise comments made regarding potential localised traffic

	management measures to the County Highways Team's attention.
Thought to be given to implementation of on-site energy efficiency measures such as solar panels and air source heat pumps.	The Outline Planning Application took significant time to determine and this is to an extent reflected in some aspects of the proposals, such as use of gas boilers. The UK had planned to ban gas boilers in new-build homes starting in 2025, as part of the Future Homes Standard aimed at reducing carbon emissions. The idea was to replace them with low-carbon alternatives like heat pumps. Recent changes in government policy have scrapped that ban, with focus now being placed upon raising energy efficiency standards for new homes. As part of the RMA detail for the residential phases, it is currently proposed to use solar panels and heat pumps to ensure that the houses are sustainable and reflecting best practice and modern standards of energy efficiency.
The range of amenities offered is considered positive and beneficial, but consideration should be given to bringing forward community uses earlier in the development process.	The school land and a s106 financial contribution of c. £7.6m (index-linked) have been provided to bring forward the school. This is currently proposed in Phase 4 of the development. It is proposed that the community facilities will be brought forward to tie in with envisaged timings for development of the school, which equally makes sense in terms of the housing development and road infrastructure being connected to new residents on both sides following the completion of Phase 3. In addition, there are substantial off-site improvements, secured by s106 Legal Agreement (all index-linked), which will be realised through this development: • c. £400,000 has been secured to enable the improvement/expansion of Walsworth Community Association. • c. £80,000 for the provision of a 3G pitch at Priory, Fearnhill or Highfield School

	• £10,000 for a non-turf wicket at Ickleford Cricket Club • c. £420,000 towards a new Football Pavilion at Walsworth Common • £10,000 towards pitch improvements at Lucas Lane • £35,000 towards improvement of the gym at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre • c. £250,000 towards the Letchworth Greenway Extension • £160,000 towards improvement of the multi-use games area (MUGA) at King George V Playing Fields • c. £120,000 towards improvements to the clubhouse and playing pitch at Hitchin Rugby Club • £250,000 towards improvement to the changing rooms and sports hall at Fearnhill School • £50,000 towards the improvement of the boiler facility and/or changing rooms at Hitchin Swimming and Fitness Centre • £30,000 towards the extension of Health Services at Portmill Surgery • £17,000 to enable the creation of a footpath link between the Greenway and Highfield School In addition to the above, further contributions will be payable to the County Council in respect of: • Childcare Facilities • Library Services • Secondary Education • Special Educational Needs and Disabilities • Youth Services • Waste Services
Potential to include more BNG/GNG within proposed green spaces.	The proposed scheme creates very significant bio and geodiversity net gain as a consequence of proposals to create a series of open spaces and greenways as set out overleaf.

	<u>Green Spaces:</u> 1. Hitchin Meadows 5.7ha – includes compensatory farmland bird habitat, rural character fencing, enhancing existing hedgerow, species rich semi-natural grassland and rough grassland, creates a semi-rural character edge to the development, series of foot and cycle paths for access to the parkland, sustainable drainage integrated into the park layout, provision of a LEAP at 400 sq.m within this area to be designed with natural materials. 2. Highover Park 1.8ha – includes a NEAP comprising 1100sq.m, existing hedgerow boundaries to be retained and enhanced, species rich semi-natural grassland and rough grassland, links to the new public square area and surrounding housing and existing pond to be retained. 3. Pocket Park LEAP 0.16ha – to be the focus to one of the development parcels and connected into the wider green infrastructure network. 4. Threshing Barn Green 0.67ha – green setting to the listed building, species rich grassland and retention and enhancement of surrounding hedgerow, provision of continuous green space linking with Highover Park <u>Greenways:</u> 5. Icknield Linear Greenway – provision of a park and footpath alongside the railway line to create a buffer to the housing and link parts of the development site to Hitchin Meadows. Sustainable urban drainage features will be included to create landscape features and opportunity for informal play, species rich grassland and structural landscaping of native trees and shrubs. Minimum width for play provision 40m and 25m between rear of the school fields and the railway line.
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	6. Stotfold Linear Greenway – provision of a green buffer to Stotfold Road, minimum width of 25m with priority habitat hedgerow and trees, and inclusion of foot and cycle paths for linking through to the local foot, cycle and highway networks. 7. Dane Walk – by utilising existing field boundaries and established hedgerow, this buffer will form a green corridor between development parcels. Gaps in the hedgerow will be filled in and new verge areas with wildflowers will be established. The minimum width is 12m, 6m either side of the hedgerow. Dane Walk will link in with Highover Park and the Stotfold Linear Greenway <u>Off-site:</u> 8. Greenway link between Stotfold Road and the Letchworth Greenway to provide easier direct access between towns and to encourage active travel.
Opportunity to build in birds/bats mitigation/boxes within the development	Details of the make, model, and location of a minimum of integrated bat and swift boxes in appropriate buildings has been supplied to and approved by the LPA as part of the planning process. Bat and Bird Boxes are secured by planning condition and will be fully installed prior to occupation and retained as such thereafter.
Information to be provided to identify how the development can be accommodated in terms of utilities and service provision – water, gas, electricity, schools, health etc.	At outline application stage, significant discussions were held with the County Council and Statutory Providers to ensure that the development could be accommodated in terms of utilities and service provision, culminating in substantial s106 contributions towards health, leisure, schools and community facilities as set out above.
Consideration to be given to layout/orientation and screening to adjacent existing properties to enhance residential privacy/amenity	Currently the Phase 1 Residential RMA is being planned in detail. This application does not affect any boundaries with existing residents.

	As subsequent RMA's come forward for later residential phases, each will be planned to ensure that the scheme proposals meet required standards in terms of separation and amenity.
Need for boundary survey and discussions with adjacent residents regarding hedges and trees currently on site and management/maintenance of these	As above, the development is currently focussed on Phase 1, which does not affect existing residential boundaries. Nevertheless, later phases will and it will be necessary to consider boundaries with adjacent residents, including hedges and trees, as part of this process at the appropriate time.
Need for ongoing communication to keep residents informed regarding on-site activities and next steps, timings for planning applications and on-site construction.	The intent is for regular updates at key stages of the development process. It is envisaged that this will be controlled through two processes; one relating to next phase planning applications, which will be subject to engagement in a similar manner to that most recently undertaken and supported through an online presence and that relating to on-site works, which will be controlled by site management, so that there is a local, physical presence in place to deal with issues arising.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This Consultation Statement has been prepared by Opus Works Consultancy Ltd to accompany next stage Discharge of Conditions and Reserved Matters Applications relating to the outline consent at Highover Farm, Hitchin for:

“Outline application with all matters reserved other than access, comprising residential led development of up to 700 dwellings of use class C3 (dwellings), approximately 500 sqm of neighbourhood-level facilities, a new 2FE primary school, open space, play space, green infrastructure, and associated accesses (vehicular, pedestrian and cycle), including a new primary access off Stotfold Road with limited access off High Dane (as amended)”, ref: 18/01154/OP

- 6.2 This document has been produced to support the next stage submissions (notably the Phase 1 Residential RMA) following significant pre-application engagement with District Council Officers and Members, County Council Officers and local residents and businesses, which has helped positively mould the proposals submitted for consideration as set out within this document .
- 6.3 Further to the pre-application process held and comments received, it is clear that there is demand for housing in Hitchin and that the future phases of the Highover Farm development can help meet the Council deliver on this need. The proposals themselves, whilst not unanimously supported, do show strong support for many key aspects of the development, particularly the substantial areas of green and play spaces, affordable housing and community-focused floorspaces.
- 6.4 The applicant remains committed to positive and proactive engagement with the Council during the planning determination process and welcomes further discussions as considered necessary.

Appendix 1 – April 2025, Exhibition Boards and Notice

Appendix 2 – Hitchin Forum Presentation, June 2025

Appendix 3 – June 2025, Exhibition Boards

Appendix 4 – Feedback Forms

Appendix 5 – June 2025, Website Analytics

Appendix 6 – Comments Received (redacted)

