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12 March 2026

Dear Naomi

Application number: 25/03080/HYA

Location: GA2, Land North-East of Great Ashby Stevenage Hertfordshire

Proposal: Hybrid application for a residential-led development comprising residential (Use Class C3), educational use (Use Class F1), a community hub (Use Class F2) with associated new internal roads, access, parking, cycling infrastructure, landscaping and other associated infrastructure. Full application comprises the construction of vehicle access and an active travel link via Mendip Way, with associated landscaping and drainage works. The outline application, for which all matters are reserved except means of access, comprises the erection of up to 640 dwellings (Use Class C3), a site for a primary school, further land reserved for educational use (Use Class F1), a site for a community hub (Use Class F2), with associated infrastructure.

I previously wrote to you on 12 February about this application. Since then, a number of additional issues have been drawn to my attention, and I hope it is not too late for this addendum to my response. After further consideration, HMWT now **objects** to this application.

There are three main issues which concern us.

1. **Habitat buffers.** We previously asked for a minimum 15m buffer around ancient woodland and woodland habitats, and we note both the Natural England advice for ancient woodland and the requirements for a minimum 12m complimentary habitat buffer around wildlife sites, trees and hedgerows in Policy NE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. However, the Green Infrastructure Framework Plan shows a number of incursions into the buffers, largely as a result of access roads penetrating ecological features. As a result, the proposal is not compliant with Policy NE4. This also has an impact on ecological connectivity (2 below).
2. **Ecological connectivity.** We appreciate that the landscape design has made some efforts to improve ecological connectivity. This is certainly the impression conveyed by the depiction of green infrastructure in the Land Use Framework Plan and the habitat corridors in the Ecology Mitigation Strategy Framework. However, this is misleading, as is more clearly seen

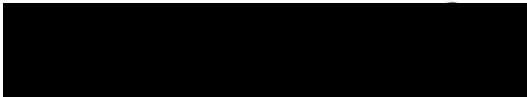
in the Green Infrastructure Framework Plan and the Vehicular Movement Framework Plan. Ecological features are breached by access roads and, in particular, Nine Acre Spring wood is isolated from other woodland areas because it is encircled by streets. Plans attempt to mitigate for this by introducing bat 'hop over' vegetation at key points, but this simply illustrates that this is a problem and we query whether this is sufficient mitigation. We also query whether it is necessary to introduce an access road on the south side of Nine Acre Spring wood, isolating it from adjoining woodland.

3. **Protected species.** We are also concerned about the impact on protected species, particularly badgers. We defer to the expertise of the Badger Trust on this matter and draw your attention to their objection.

All other comments I made in my letter of 12 February still stand.

Please contact me if you wish to discuss any of these issues in further detail.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Simon Marsh.

Simon Marsh MBE BA MA MSc MRTPI
Planning and Policy Manager