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Planning Department
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Philip & Julie Laws
Glendale
Snailswell Lane
Ickleford
Herts
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19th August 2025

Formal Objection to Planning Application [Ref: 25/01790/FP] – Proposed Self-Build Dwelling at ‘The Orchard’, Snailswell Lane, Ickleford

Dear Mr Howe

We wish to formally object to the above-referenced planning application on the following grounds. This objection draws upon the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031, the Ickleford Neighbourhood Plan 2011–2031, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and relevant case law.

1. Conflict with Green Belt Policy (NHDC Policy SP5; NPPF 147–149)

The application site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Ickleford and within the Green Belt.

Policy SP5 and NPPF 147–149 state that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless justified by ‘very special circumstances’, which are absent here.

The proposal would harm the openness of the Green Belt, both visually and spatially. Case law (Turner v SSCLG [2016] EWCA Civ 466) confirms that openness relates not only to volume but also to visual intrusion.

Grey Belt reclassification is not justified - the site is not previously developed land. It has not been designated for reclassification.

It contributes positively to the openness and rural setting of the Green Belt.

2. Breach of Settlement Boundary Policies (NHDC Policy SP2; Ickleford NP Policy SD1)

Policy SP2 restricts development in Category A villages such as Ickleford to within the defined boundary. This proposal is entirely outside that boundary.

NP Policy SD1 allows exceptions only for affordable housing or essential community facilities. A private self-build market dwelling does not meet these criteria.

3. Failure to Respect Local Character (Ickleford NP Policy SD3; NPPF 130)

The proposal does not relate to existing built form and would introduce a discordant, isolated dwelling within an open orchard plot.

This conflicts with SD3, which requires development to respect street form and spaces.

4. No Justification Under Exception Policies (NHDC Policy CGB2)

Policy CGB2 permits some limited development outside boundaries only where there is proven local need or significant community benefit.

This proposal meets none of those tests.

5. Harm to Character, Openness & Visual Amenity

The visual character of Snailswell Lane is defined by generous gardens, open green spaces, and low-density housing. The proposal is an overdevelopment of a small plot in a low-density area and is completely out of keeping with existing properties.

If allowed in the current form, it would set a precedent for further infill and so completely change the character of the lane.

6. Adverse Impact on Residential Amenity (NPPF 130f)

The Orchard's siting would directly harm neighbours' living conditions due to proximity of boundaries.

The 1.5 storey pitch is situated extremely closely to the boundary, impacting on privacy and overshadowing the two 1 storey neighbouring properties: **Mildens**, creating a loss of rural views and daylight to habitable rooms and a loss of privacy, and **Glenmore**, overlooking habitable rooms.

The proposed height of the development, as shown pictorially in the Planning Statement is to be between that of Mildens and Glendale, but Glendale cannot be seen from the property and so is a worthless comparison.

If a development is permitted, it should not be higher than that of the immediate neighbouring properties, Mildens and Ramblings.

7. Highway Safety & Access Concerns – BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic)

Snailswell Lane is a BOAT, primarily used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The BOAT is narrow, single-track, unsurfaced and without footways. It is already in such a state that it cannot be used by vulnerable pedestrians using walking aids.

Each additional property increases vehicular traffic from residents, guests, delivery trucks and so on, and so is unsuitable for further residential intensification.

During construction, vehicles will cause significant damage, disruption, blocking in residents beyond the siting and pose significant danger to vulnerable users.

The access point is constrained, forcing vehicles to reverse directly onto the lane, contrary to Hertfordshire County Council Highways guidance and Manual for Streets standards.

8. Loss of Biodiversity (NHDC Policy NE6; NPPF 174)

The orchard supports habitats for foxes, deer, birds and bats. Its removal conflicts with NE6 and NPPF 174, which require conservation and biodiversity net gains.

Ironically, the mature and healthy apple tree justifying the laughable name given to the plot as 'The Orchard' was felled earlier in 2025.

No ecological survey has been submitted, contrary to policy and statutory duty.

9. Flooding & Surface Water (NHDC Policy NE7; NPPF 159–169)

The lane is prone to surface water pooling and has been patched on numerous occasions by the Council, but the patching is inadequate and typically washed out following a few weeks of inclement weather.

Replacing permeable ground with buildings and hardstanding would further increase run-off, raising flood risk on-site and to neighbouring properties.

No Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) or mitigation strategy has been presented.

10. Precedent & Cumulative Harm

Approval would set a precedent for other garden/orchard plots along the Lane to be built on.

This cumulative effect will irreversibly erode the Green Belt and the character of the Lane.

If there were further developments, the Council must consider the cost and implications of enhancing Snailswell Lane to cater for the additional traffic: upgrading the road surface, widening by filling over the ditch, creating a separate pedestrian/cyclist/horse pathway and the creation of visitor parking spaces.

Conclusion

This proposal is in direct conflict with NHDC Policies SP5, SP2, CGB2, NE6, NE7, Ickleford NP Policies SD1 & SD3, and the NPPF.

It fails to meet Green Belt policy tests, undermines settlement boundaries, damages local character and amenity, increases flood and highway risks, and harms biodiversity.

I therefore respectfully request that North Hertfordshire Council refuse this application in full.

Yours sincerely,

Philip & Julie Laws