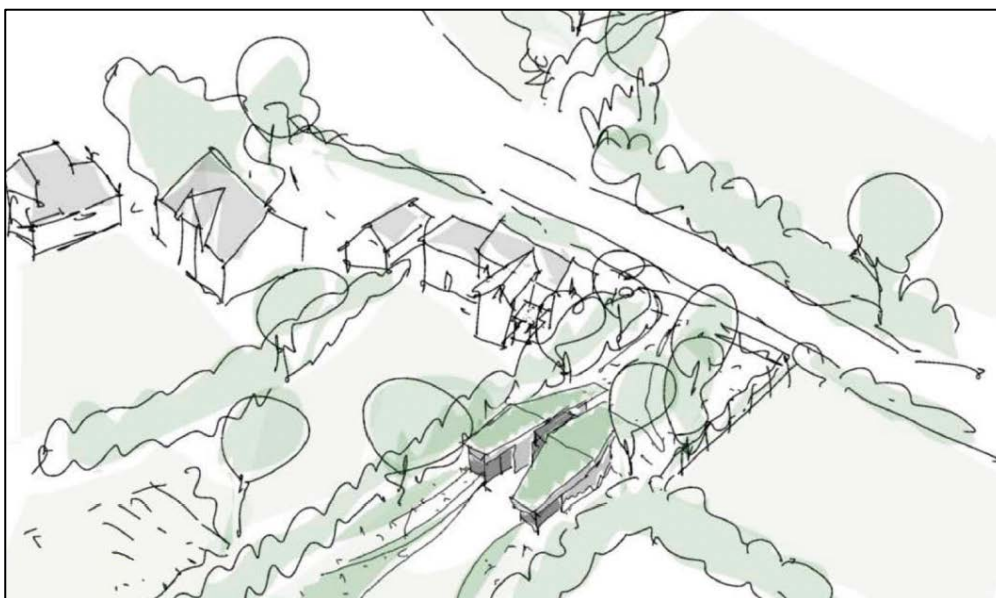


PLANNING STATEMENT

Land to the South of Wymondley Road, Hitchin

Job Ref: 24/056

Date: February 2026



Prepared by Tom Donovan BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI on behalf of

PETER GEORGE TOWN PLANNING



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Appendix 1: Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update (November 2025)



Section 1: Introduction & Background

- 1.1 Peter George Town Planning has been instructed by Mr Hill of the Curtis Trust to prepare and submit a planning application for **permission in principle** (PiP) for the erection of one detached dwelling at Land to the South of Wymondley Road, Hitchin.
- 1.2 As set out within the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the permission in principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development.
- 1.3 In considering whether to grant permission in principle, the PPG sets out that **the scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development**. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage.
- 1.4 The purpose of this statement is to set out the proposals, relevant local and national planning policy, and ultimately make the case as to why permission in principle should be granted.



Planning History

Ref.	Proposal	Decision
25/01077/PRE	Pre Application Advice: Erection of 1 detached 4 bed low energy dwelling	Advice issued 11/07/2025
15/02037/1	Change of use of farmland to residential and erection of 2 x 3-bed dwellings as semi-detached pair	Refused 25/09/2015



Section 2: Analysis of the Site and Surroundings

The Application Site

- 2.1 The application site is an undeveloped parcel of land immediately to the south side of Wymondley Road on the outskirts of Hitchin. The site bounds the defined settlement area of Hitchin but is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt.



Figure 1 - Site Location

- 2.2 The site lies immediately to the east side to nos. 1-2 Ninesprings Cottages which are themselves immediately adjacent to existing dwellings fronting Wymondley Road. Nos.1-2 Ninesprings Cottages are a semi-detached pair of two-storey dwellings. The neighbouring properties fronting Wymondley Road are pairs of chalet bungalows.



2.3 The site is demarcated from the adjacent agricultural field by an established hedgerow which extends along almost the full extent of its eastern side. A reasonably dense tree belt is located to the rear beyond which is the railway line. The site itself is largely scrubland with some scattered trees and other natural features.

2.4 The site is located wholly within flood zone 1 according to the Environment Agency mapping. The site is not located within nor is it adjacent to a conservation area. The nearest listed buildings are located within Great Wymondley which is some 800m to the east.

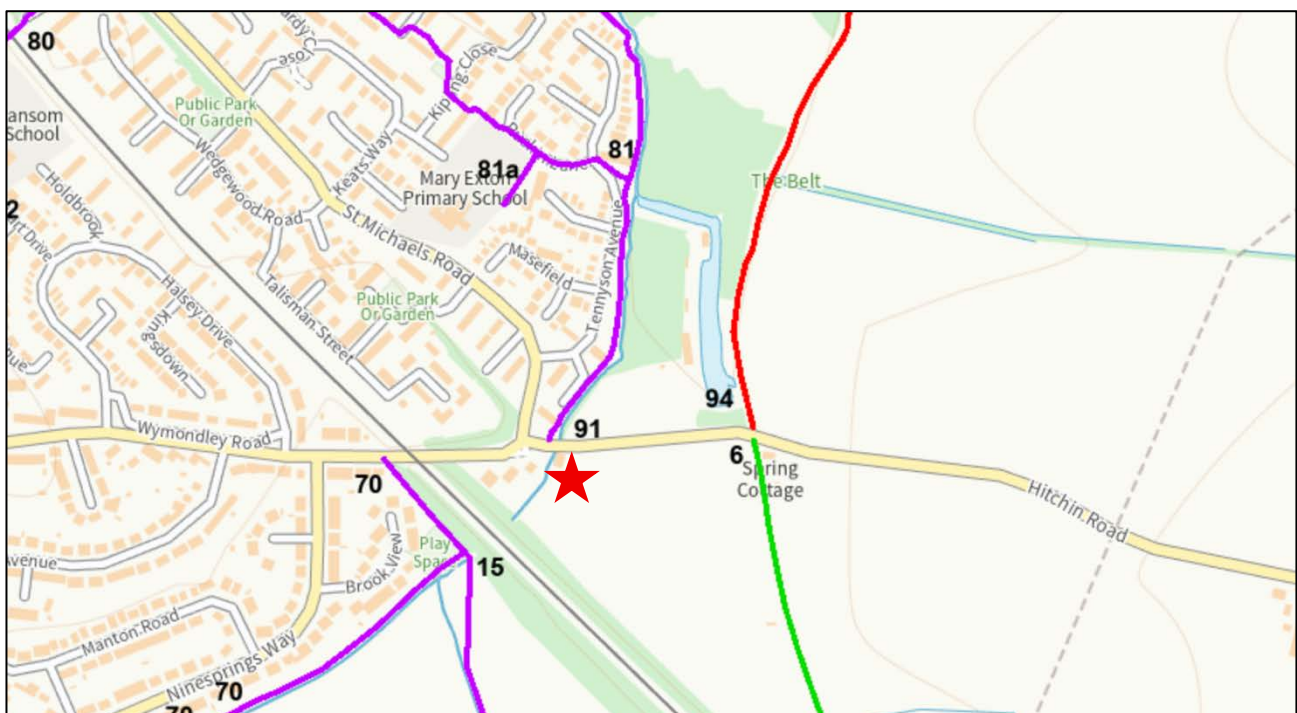


Figure 2 - Public Rights of Way

2.5 The site lies in close proximity to Hitchin's south-eastern edge. It is a short distance from the site to the existing pedestrian footpath on the south side



of Wymondley Road with Footpath Hitchin 091 nearby. Further, signage is located near to the junction with the roundabout to the west indicating that the section of Wymondley Road between restricted byway Hitchin 094 and bridleway Wymondley 006 is a ‘Highway Verge Path’.



Section 3: The Development Proposal

- 3.1 The proposed development can be described as follows:

“Permission in principle: Erection of one detached dwelling.”

- 3.2 The Planning Practice Guidance sets out that:

“The permission in principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development. The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second (‘technical details consent’) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed.”

- 3.3 This application is submitted as the ‘first stage’ or the ‘permission in principle’ stage. Subject to permission being granted, the detailed development proposals would be submitted as part of the ‘second stage’ otherwise known as ‘technical details consent’.



- 3.4 Accordingly, no ‘details’ are submitted as part of the proposals, only an indicative block plan setting out how it is envisaged that one dwelling could be accommodated on the site in a manner in keeping with the prevailing context.
- 3.5 Vehicular access is shown indicatively, albeit its precise positioning will need careful consideration prior to the submission of any technical details consent application which would follow any grant of permission in principle. This is not a matter to be considered at this stage.



Section 4: Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The Government policies on different aspects of planning are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework).
- 4.2 The relevant sections of the Framework are as follows:
- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
 - Section 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
 - Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities
 - Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 11: Making effective use of land
 - Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
 - Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land
 - Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Development Plan

- 4.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:
- “If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise.”*



4.4 The development plan context for the planning application is provided by:

- **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031**

4.5 The following policies are considered relevant to the consideration of this application:

Strategic Policies

- Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
- Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
- Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt
- Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP9: Design & Sustainability
- Policy SP10: Healthy Communities
- Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity

Development Management Policies

- Policy T1: Assessment of Transport Matters
- Policy T2: Parking
- Policy D1: Sustainable Design
- Policy D3: Protecting Living Conditions
- Policy NE2: Landscape
- Policy NE4: Biodiversity and Geological Sites

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD September 2011
- Design SPD July 2011



Section 5: Planning Analysis

Permission in Principle

- 5.1 As set out within the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), the permission in principle consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development.
- 5.2 In considering whether to grant permission in principle, the PPG sets out that **the scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development**. In this case, this will require an assessment as to whether the proposed development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and whether the location would otherwise be suitable for new housing. All other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage.

Principle of Development – Location & Land Use

Whether Inappropriate Development

- 5.3 North Herts Local Plan (LP) Policy SP5 deals with development within the countryside. It largely defers to the contents of the National Planning Policy



Framework (the Framework) in respect to the consideration of development in the Green Belt.

- 5.4 Paragraph 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that, unless compliant with a series of stated exceptions, development in the Green Belt should be regarded as being inappropriate in the Green Belt. Paragraph 155 of the Framework states that, the development of homes in the Green Belt on ‘grey belt’ land should also not be regarded as inappropriate development subject to compliance with a specific set of criteria.

- 5.5 ‘Grey belt’ is defined in the glossary to the Framework as follows:

“For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.”



- 5.6 The question is therefore whether the site **strongly contributes** to purposes A, B or D of the Green Belt purposes. An assessment of this in respect to each component is set out below.

Contribution to Purpose A

- 5.7 The site occupies a small undeveloped parcel of land to the south side of Wymondley Road, Hitchin. It is situated immediately to the edge of Hitchin's defined settlement boundary.

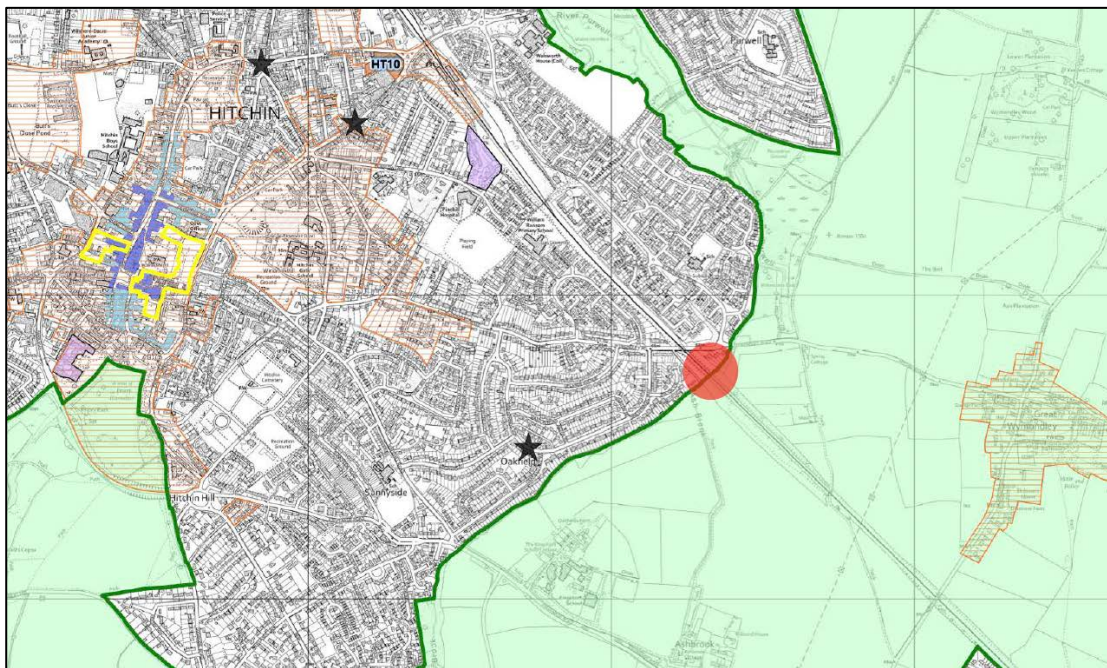


Figure 3 - Excerpt from LP Mapping

- 5.8 The site is located immediately adjacent to existing residential properties to the west and is demarcated from the surrounding agricultural field by existing boundary hedging along much of the eastern boundary. To the rear, the site is contained by existing trees and vegetation with the existing railway line beyond.

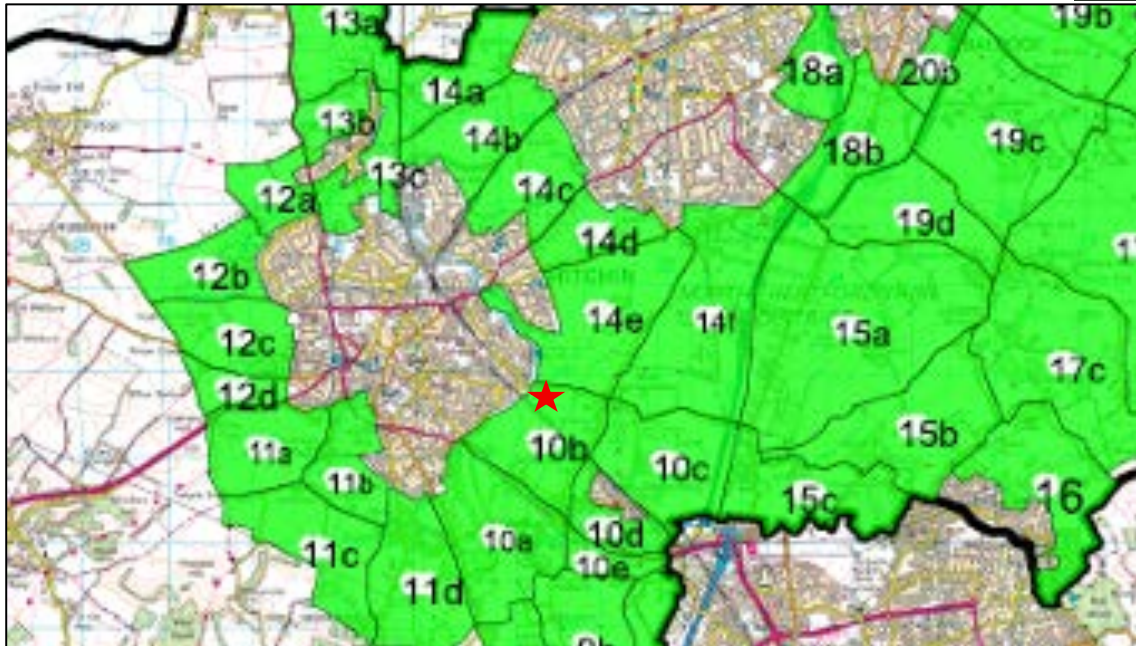


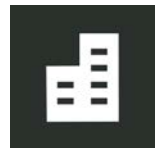
Figure 4 - Excerpt from Green Belt Review

5.9 The North Herts Green Belt Review July 2016 (GBR) identifies the site as falling within sub-sector 10b of sector 10 (Little Wymondley). Sub-sector 10b is described as follows: ‘Abuts the southern edge of Hitchin bounded by A602 Stevenage Road, Arch Road and Hitchin Road.’ The GBR assesses the contribution that each of the sectors make to each of the Green Belt purposes.

5.10 Regarding sub-sector 10b and sector 10, the GBR considers that these land parcels make a strong contribution to Purpose A because they play a significant role in preventing the expansion of Hitchin southwards.

10 Little Wymondley	3 - Plays a significant part in the prevention of sprawl from Hitchin to the north west.	3 - Plays a significant part in the preventing Hitchin and Stevenage merging.	2 - This parcel is more urbanised then the neighbouring countryside due to the amount of transport routes, small settlements	2 - Has some contribution to the setting of Hitchin. However no direct visual link with the historic core.	Has a close relationship with the north-west edge of Stevenage and the southern edge of Hitchin. Links the buffer between Letchworth/Hitchin to the wider countryside to the west. Overall makes a significant contribution to Green Belt purposes, helping to prevent sprawl and the merger of towns.
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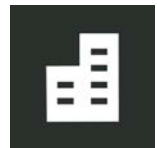
Figure 5 - Sector 10 Contribution to Green Belt Purposes (Taken from GBR)



10b Abuts the southern edge of Hitchin bounded by A602 Stevenage Road, Arch Road and Hitchin Road.	3 – Plays important role in preventing expansion of Hitchin southwards.	3 – Plays a critical role in preventing Hitchin and Stevenage merging.	2 – Protects countryside in gap between Hitchin and Stevenage.	1 – No direct link with historic core of Hitchin.	Urban influences include the Wymondley bypass and the east coast mainline railway. School playing fields on edge of Hitchin. Ippolyts Brook runs along the northern boundary. Significant Contribution
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Figure 6 - Sub-Sector 10b Contribution to Green Belt Purposes (Taken from GBR)

- 5.11 Sector 10 is a large parcel of land, and it is undoubtedly the case that much of the Sector contributes to preventing sprawl northward of Hitchin.
- However, as noted above, the site is a very small component part of the much wider land parcel, and the proposed development of a single dwelling is unlikely to diminish or cause harm to the contribution that the wider parcel makes in preventing sprawl.
- 5.12 Moreover, the site has a reasonable degree of self-containment from the adjacent agricultural field and from the wider countryside more generally as a result of the existing residential properties to the west, the boundary hedging to the east, and the trees and railway line to the south. As such, the development of the site could occur in a manner that would be largely self-contained in terms of the wider land parcel, would not extend incongruously into the Green Belt, and preserve the overall strategic importance of sector 10 (and sub-sector 10b) in preventing sprawl.



Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas	
This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.	
Contribution	Illustrative features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development. They are also likely to include all of the following features: - be adjacent or near to a large built up area - if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended “finger” of development into the Green Belt)
Moderate	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land’s contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to): - having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development - be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development - contain existing development - being subject to other urbanising influences
Weak or None	Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that: - are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area - are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development

Figure 7 - Excerpt from the Planning Practice Guidance

5.13 Consequently, judged in relation to the criteria set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), it is not considered that the site makes any more than a moderate contribution to purpose A and thus doesn’t strongly contribution to Purpose A.



Contribution to Purpose B

- 5.14 The GBR concluded that sub-sector 10b and sector 10 make a significant contribution to preventing Hitchin and Stevenage merging. However, the site is small and largely self-contained and is moreover immediately at the edge of Hitchin and is thus a significant distance from Stevenage's settlement boundary.

Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	
This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.	
Contribution	Illustrative Features
Strong	Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features: - forming a substantial part of a gap between towns - the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns
Moderate	Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to): - forming a small part of the gap between towns - being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation
Weak or None	Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that: - do not form part of a gap between towns, or - form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation

Figure 8 - Excerpt from PPG



5.15 As per the guidance in the PPG, the site is considered to make a weak contribution to this purpose in light of the fact that it forms only a very small part of the gap between Hitchin and Stevenage and makes no meaningful contribution to the visual separation of the two towns.

5.16 Accordingly, it is not considered that the site strongly contributes to Purpose B of the Green Belt purposes.

Contribution to Purpose D

5.17 The site is located at the south-eastern edge of Hitchin, an historic market town. However, given its opaque relationship with the historic core it is not considered that it makes a strong contribution to Purpose D. This conclusion is consistent with the GBR which confirms that sub-sector 10b has no direct link with the historic core of Hitchin.

5.18 Accordingly, it is not considered that the site makes any contribution to Purpose D of the Green Belt purposes.



'Grey Belt' Summary

- 5.19 For the reasons discussed above, it is considered that the site meets the definition of 'grey belt' as it does not contribute strongly to functions a, b or d of the Green Belt purposes.

Compliance with Paragraph 155

- 5.20 It is now necessary to consider Paragraph 155 of the Framework which states that:

“The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;***
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;***
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and***
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.”***

- 5.21 The applicant's response to each of the above is set out below:



a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;

5.22 In terms of the first part of this criterion, the application site meets the definition of grey belt land for the reasons discussed above.

5.23 Regarding the second part of this criterion, the PPG provides guidance regarding the consideration of the impact of releasing or developing grey belt sites on the remaining Green Belt in the plan area to be assessed. This states that:

“In reaching this judgement, authorities should consider whether, or the extent to which, the release or development of Green Belt Land would affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.”

5.24 The site comprises a relatively small parcel of land with existing dwellings situated immediately to the west. It has a reasonably high degree of self-containment due to the presence of boundary trees, hedgerows and other features which segregate it from the wider countryside.



- 5.25 The site is moreover a very small component part of the District's Green Belt which covers approximately 47% of its entire administrative area. Accordingly, its development would have little impact on the ability remaining Green Belt across the area of the Plan from serving its functions as intended.
- 5.26 Consequently, if developed as proposed, the impact on the strategic Green Belt within the district would be negligible. In those terms, the proposed would not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the Plan and would not affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way.
- 5.27 The proposed development would thus be compliant with limb (a) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.

b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;

- 5.28 Footnote 56 notes that, in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed, means the lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites,



including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Test was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.

5.29 The Council's Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update (November 2025) (attached as **Appendix 1**) sets out that the Council are currently only able to demonstrate a 2.6-year supply of land for housing. Accordingly, there is a demonstrable unmet need for new housing development.

5.30 The proposed development would thus be compliant with limb (b) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.

c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework;

5.31 The site is located immediately adjacent to Hitchin's built-up area as defined in the North Herts Local Plan (NHLP). It is a short distance from the site to the existing pedestrian footpath on the south side of Wymondley Road. The site is moreover located a short walk from three Public Right of Ways: restricted byway Hitchin 094 and bridleway Wymondley 006 which are situated approximately 200m to the east, and footpath Hitchin 091 which is adjacent to the roundabout with St Michael's Road to the west.



- 5.32 Further, signage is located near to the junction with the roundabout to the west indicating that the section of Wymondley Road between the restricted byway and bridleway is a 'Highway Verge Path'. Accordingly, members of the public are directed to walk along the verge on the north-side of Wymondley Road past the entrance of the site to reach the two afore-mentioned Public Rights of Way.
- 5.33 The site lies within walking distance of a number of bus stops including several along St Michael's Way, Wymondley Road and Ninesprings Way. These provide bus services to other locations within the town itself, as well as service to Letchworth, Stevenage and other nearby villages.
- 5.34 Accordingly, potential occupants of the site would not be unduly reliant on the use of the private car for access to the wide range of services and facilities that Hitchin contains. The site would thus represent be a sustainable location for new housing with respect to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework and would therefore be compliant with limb (c) of paragraph 155 of the Framework.

d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.



5.35 Not applicable: Development is not major development.

Summary

5.36 As discussed above, it is considered that the proposed development meets the definition of grey belt land and is moreover in full accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 155 of the revised Framework. Accordingly, it would **not be inappropriate development** in the Green Belt.

5.37 Consequently, it is considered that the site is suitable in terms of the **location** and **land use** components of a Permission in Principle application.

Amount of Development

5.38 The site comprises an undeveloped parcel of land immediately adjacent to existing residential properties to Hitchin's south-east side.

5.39 The indicative site layout demonstrates that the site could successfully accommodate a detached dwelling with associated access, parking and residential amenity.



5.40 The indicative proposals moreover demonstrate how development could be successfully integrated with the existing landscape. This would ensure that the semi-rural character of the site would be maintained.

5.41 In all, it is considered that the site is capable of accommodating a detached dwelling in a manner that would be in keeping with the surrounding landscape. Accordingly, inasmuch as is relevant to the determination of permission in principle, it is considered that the **amount** of development is appropriate.

Other Matters

5.42 All other matters are not relevant to the determination of this permission of principle application and should thus be dealt with at technical details stage. Such an approach is clearly consistent with the guidance contained within the PPG.



Section 6: Summary & Conclusions

- 6.1 This statement accompanies an application for permission in principle for the erection of one detached dwelling at Land to the South of Wymondley Road, Hitchin. The PPG confirms that the only matters pertinent to the consideration of such an application is limited to location, land use and amount of development.
- 6.2 As discussed in the foregoing, it is considered that the proposed development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt on the basis of compliance with Paragraph 155 of the Framework. The site is therefore suitable for residential development with respect to its location, and proposed land use. The amount of development has moreover been shown to be suitable.
- 6.3 All other matters are not relevant to the determination of this application but should rather be dealt with at technical details stage.
- 6.4 Accordingly, and in light of the contents of this statement, it is respectfully requested that permission in principle be granted.