

Rotimi Osindero, The Orchard, Great Wymondley

Application Reference no: 26/00047/PIP

I object to this application on the following material grounds. In summary:

1. The application is not a sustainable development on an underutilised site;
2. The assessment that the land is grey belt is misconstrued; and
3. The proposal would materially affect the character and resources of Great Wymondley.

First, **Inconsistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**. The development is both inappropriate and conflicts with NPPF, the Local Plan, and Neighbourhood Plan. The land is green belt and has been used for horse grazing for decades. The horses' presence is part of the character of a rural village which is shortly to lose vast mileage of its green belt land to solar farms. In contrast to the application's description, the site is not boarded by dense vegetation, rather there are open views from Arch Road across the paddock to the adjoining fields. The site is also within 200m of 12 listed buildings and a number of noteworthy buildings in the conservation area, all of which will be negatively impacted by the development. The application does not provide any very special circumstances for the development; it substantially impacts openness and seeks to fill a much beloved and specifically used green space in the village with urban sprawl. It is simply not a sustainable development (paragraphs 7-11 NPPF 2024).

Second, **Incorrect assessment as Grey Belt**. The land has not been assessed as Grey Belt land by any local authorities. The application clearly notes the proposed development of this site does not fall within any of the exemptions set out in NPPF Paragraph 145, in which development of Green Belt land can be considered appropriate (para 5.7). The Applicant's assertions that the criteria of paragraph 154 concerning the site's classification as Grey Belt are misconstrued. I contest that the land does not independently or cumulatively strongly contribute to the purposes of Green Belt as set out in paragraph 143 (a),(b) or (d).

- a) Para 145 (a) –Need to check unrestricted sprawl: The site is not enclosed by residential properties. There are open views over the site onto agricultural property and fields. The distance between the proposed site and the outer edges of the Poets Estate of Hitchin is approximately a mere 0.6 miles. The risk of urban sprawl between Great Wymondley and Hitchin cannot be said to be negligible.
- b) Purpose B - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another: 300 houses are due to be built between Little Wymondley and Great Wymondley. Whilst Great Wymondley is indeed a village, risk of urban sprawl from developments such as this proposal, considerably enhances the risk of the green spaces between neighbouring towns being diminished. The 2016 North

Hertfordshire Green Belt Assessment makes reference to Parcel 10 and sub-parcel 10c playing a critical role in preventing Hitchin and Stevenage merging. As stated, the site is 0.6 miles from the outskirts of urban development of Hitchin's borders.

- c) Purpose C - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; The land is home to horse and protected species and provides beloved green space to the village community.
- d) Purpose D - **To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns:**
Great Wymondley is a beautiful, rural village. The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that villages can be included in the Green Belt where it is necessary to restrict development because of the contribution the village makes to the Green Belt. This was clarified by Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in [parliamentary questions on 18 March 2025](#). The National Planning Policy Framework and the Green Belt guidance do not introduce a definition of historic town, town, or village. Wymondley is recorded in the Doomesday Book of 1086, was the site of a motte and bailey castle and a large number of iconic listed historic buildings.
- e) Purpose E – **To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land:** Green belt land should be protected and other sites would be more appropriate for this development.

The remaining criteria for building within Grey Belt requires that there is (a) demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed, (b) The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework and (c) Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements.

The village's resources are already strained. Roads and pathways are either non-existent or not fit for purpose. The village has neither a school nor a shop. There is no demonstrable need for further residential houses in the village that could outweigh the loss of countryside or heritage and strain on local resources. The applicant does not class the proposal as a major development and therefore does not seek to meet the Golden Rules Requirements which is disappointing. It is noted that the criteria for a major development as defined by the NPPF is 10 residential houses or a site of 0.5 hectares. This proposal therefore marginally does not meet the criteria by proposing 9 residential properties. Was the proposal to include a single further house, the applicant would need to ensure the houses were affordable, commit to necessary improvements to local infrastructure and improve local green spaces. However, this does not form part of the proposal.

Material Considerations

- A) Loss of home to horses and protected bird species. The field in which the development is proposed is a well-used horse paddock. The paddock is not underutilised. It is currently grazed by 3 horses. It is generally accepted that horses ought to have 1.5-2 acres per horse. Should the stable be demolished, it is likely the bonded horses would need to be separated as there are very few yards in the area, at great distress to the horses. The stable is also home to annually active swallow nests. Swallows are protected (classified as Green) under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is illegal to damage, destroy or interfere with active nests.
- B) Agricultural Land. The site directly adjoins a working livestock farm used for keeping cattle. The proposed dwellings will be within 400m of the agricultural barn. This will detrimentally impact the residents on the basis of noise and smell. Moreover, the proposed design will result in a number of the properties directly backing onto the agricultural barn wall, likely making these properties undesirable.
- C) Access and Traffic. The planning application's indicated access point will be on the approach to the Green Man junction. This is an incredibly busy junction for commuters and has been a key issue in the recent Parish Council declared Local Traffic emergency. This would likely be very dangerous for those using the access road. Great Wymondley cannot currently handle the volume of traffic that by-passes through the village as seen by the huge volume of pot holes reported this year. This development will only serve to increase congestion for a village whose infrastructure is not coping.
- D) Community Engagement. There has disappointingly been no community engagement at all, even to the long-term leaseholder of the land.

In summary, this is not a sustainable development. The application's proposed location and use is inappropriate, would significantly detriment the conservation area and negatively impact the character and resources of Great Wymondley.

Yours truly,

Rotimi Osindero