

**NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER - DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERNOH ROAD, LETCHWORTH, SG6 3JF  
ON THURSDAY, 13TH AUGUST, 2026 AT 7.00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: Nigel Mason (Chair), Emma Fernandes (Vice-Chair), Clare Billing, Val Bryant, Ian Mantle, Caroline McDonnell, Martin Prescott, Tom Tyson, Claire Winchester, Jon Clayden (In place of Louise Peace), Mick Debenham (In place of Dave Winstanley) and Bryony May (In place of Ruth Brown).*

**In Attendance:** *Robert Filby (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Jamie Graham (Trainee Electoral Services Officer), Shaun Greaves (Development and Conservation Manager), Sarah Kasparian (Principal Planning Officer (Major Projects)), Edward Leigh (Transport Policy and Projects Team Leader), Anne McDonald (Principal Planning Officer (Development Management)) and Nazneen Roy (Locum Planning Lawyer).*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately 25 members of the public, including registered speakers.*

**37 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 01 minutes 12 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ruth Brown, Louise Peace and Dave Winstanley.

Having given due notice, Councillor Bryony May substituted for Councillor Brown, Councillor Jon Clayden substituted for Councillor Peace, and Councillor Mick Debenham substituted for Councillor Winstanley.

**38 MINUTES - 2 JULY 2026**

*Audio Recording – 01 minutes 39 seconds*

Councillor Nigel Mason, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Caroline McDonnell seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

**39 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 02 minutes 27 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

**40 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 02 minutes 32 seconds*

- (1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.
- (2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (3) The Chair clarified matters for the registered speakers.
- (4) The Chair confirmed the procedure for moving to debate on an item.
- (5) The Chair advised that Section 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution applied to the meeting.
- (6) The Chair confirmed the cut off procedure should the meeting proceed at length.

**41 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 04 minutes 45 seconds*

The Chair confirmed that the registered speakers were in attendance.

**42 22/00956/OP LAND SOUTH OF, STEVENAGE ROAD, LITTLE WYMONDLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE**

*Audio recording – 05 minutes 23 seconds*

*N.B. Councillor Caroline McDonnell declared an interest on the item and moved to the public speaking gallery.*

The Principal Planning Officer (Major Sites) provided a verbal update on matters relating to Application 22/00956/OP and advised that:

- The Agent to the Applicant had sent an email detailing the triggers for delivery of highway works, and this was available to view on the Council website.
- Officers would wait for the Highways Authority to respond on the above.
- The word 'Knebworth' in paragraph 6 in the written update published with the supplementary documents to the agenda should have been removed.

The Principal Planning Officer (Major Sites) then presented the report in respect of application 22/00956/OP accompanied by a visual presentation consisting of plans and photographs.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Tom Tyson

In response to questions, the Principal Planning Officer (Major Sites) advised that:

- The Applicant had addressed flooding and drainage matters onsite and the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) had withdrawn their objection and recommended further conditions.
- There were 480 homes in the Wymondley Parish.

The Chair invited the first Public Objector, Mr Peter Bailey to speak against the application. Mr Bailey thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- Hitchin had received little rainfall in the last 6 weeks, and the additional dwellings would have a serious impact on Hitchin and the surrounding area.
- There had been no mention of drought conditions in the report.
- Measures to address air pollution and dust generated by the development would be minimal.
- Roads through Hitchin and Stevenage would be grid locked from the vehicles that new residents on this development would bring.
- There was concern on the heat that the extra dwellings would generate as this would compound with the construction of the nearby solar farm.
- New dwellings would add to carbon contributions.

There were no points of clarification from Members.

The Chair thanked Mr Bailey for their presentation and invited the second Public Objector, Ms Hayley Ward to speak against the application. Ms Ward thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- The Planning Inspector, as part of the Local Plan examination, had recognised several traffic and flooding related issues with the site.
- The site was less sustainable than surrounding strategic sites and should not be considered until they had been developed as per Policy SP2 of the Local Plan.
- Nitrous oxide monitoring in 2017-19 showed that legal EU limits were repeatedly exceeded next to the site, which highlighted air quality issues and conflicted with the Local Plan.
- Air quality monitoring took place during the COVID-19 lockdown, and since then, there had been the addition of other developments and the proposed Luton Airport expansion, which would require mitigations.
- The land was compressible and potentially unstable.
- The Environment Agency questioned the contamination investigations undertaken as housing foundations could create pathways for ground water contamination.
- Flooding in the area was well documented, including an event that had triggered a Section 19 report.
- Existing residents living downhill from the proposed development had not been assured that flooding would not impact them.

There were no points of clarification from Members.

The Chair thanked Ms Ward for their presentation and invited the third Public Objector, Wymondley Parish Councillor Paul Harding to speak against the application. Parish Councillor Harding thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- The objective of Policy WY1 in the Local Plan had not been met by this site.
- The full objection from Wymondley Parish Council was detailed within the report.
- Wymondley Parish Council doubted that this development could be integrated with the existing area as Little Wymondley would be roughly doubled.
- Nearly doubling the population without providing the necessary amenities and facilities risked creating a completely car-dependent community.
- Proposed cycle access to Stevenage missed the point that the main destination for residents would be Hitchin.
- Excluding a village hall from the S106 financial contributions request was concerning as the facility would help to create a sustainable community.

- There was uncertainty over who would pay and maintain the drainage, flood protection measures, paths, play areas and open spaces.
- There was no feasibility study to prove that 40% affordable housing was viable.
- Pressure from development already existed on Little Wymondley and this application could not be considered in isolation.
- The application should either be refused or deferred until the outstanding issues had been resolved and a site visit by the Committee had taken place.

There were no points of clarification from Members.

The Chair thanked Parish Councillor Harding for their presentation and invited the first Member Advocate Objector, Councillor Dominic Griffiths to speak against the application. Councillor Griffiths thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- The data in the Highways report was fundamentally flawed as it was conducted in 2020 during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and did not reflect current commuting patterns.
- Subsequent surveys had failed to account for pinch points in Little Wymondley, which meant that the application was based on misrepresented data.
- Adding several hundred extra vehicles into narrow lanes and constrained junctions would worsen highways safety and flow, which would justify refusing planning permission, as per paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- Safety would be further compromised with the addition of 300 dwellings as facilities in Little Wymondley were limited, and there were no commuting options or easy pedestrian or cycle access to the nearest towns.
- The Planning Inspector, as part of the Local Plan examination, acknowledged that traffic in Little Wymondley would be unavoidably exacerbated by this development.

The following Members asked points of clarification:

- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Nigel Mason

In response to points of clarification, Councillor Griffiths advised that:

- The only bus service in Little Wymondley did not currently operate due to nearby solar farm works but the Parish Council had organised a community bus service in the meantime, which had been delayed and could not go through the whole village due to parked cars anyway.
- Arriva had informed him that they would not be instating an additional bus service.
- The solar farm works would end by mid-October.

The Chair thanked Councillor Griffiths for their presentation and invited the second Member Advocate Objector, Councillor Ralph Muncer to speak against the application. Councillor Muncer thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- Nearby roads experienced chronic congestion and were in disrepair, and the Parish Council had been the first to declare a traffic emergency to highlight this.
- Nothing in the S106 contributions would mitigate highways related concerns.
- The active travel route to Stevenage would not alleviate concerns as residents would rather travel to Hitchin.
- Nothing had been proposed to address the increased use of nearby junctions at the A602 or Three Moorhens roundabout.

- With pressured education budgets, there were important financial issues surrounding Wymondley School and they should not set it up to fail.
- A site-specific flood risk assessment should be undertaken to better understand the impacts of this development on Stevenage Road, which frequently flooded.

The following Members asked points of clarification:

- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Nigel Mason

In response to points of clarification, Councillor Muncer advised that:

- An education assessment should be sought to determine whether action proposed by Hertfordshire County Council for Wymondley School was appropriate.
- A traffic emergency was declared by Wymondley Parish Council to draw attention to HGV congestion, road safety and road surface conditions and a fundamental restructuring of the roads in the parish was needed to mitigate vehicle movements.
- Wymondley School had seen 84 fewer forms of entry since 2015, and this trend would continue.
- Wymondley School would be put into a negative financial position in the medium to short-term if upgraded before more forms of entry were received.

The Chair thanked Councillor Muncer for their presentation and invited the Agent to the Applicant, Ms Philippa Martin-Moran to speak in support of the application. Ms Martin-Moran thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- This development was on an allocated site in the Local Plan, and its Green Belt designation was removed in 2022.
- It was in a sustainable location within reach of services in Little Wymondley, Hitchin and Stevenage, and new residents would support facilities in the former.
- 40% affordable housing would support a wide variety of housing needs.
- A significant contribution would be made to the five-year housing land supply shortfall, and the objective of Policy WY1 in the Local Plan would be met.
- There had been extensive engagement over the last four years, and there were no outstanding objections from technical consultees on the application principles.
- The site was thoughtfully designed as there would be limited landscape impacts, and it would be subject to a final design condition.
- Three character areas influenced by design styles in Little Wymondley were proposed, and over half the site would be multifunctional open space.
- Noise from the A602 would be mitigated by an acoustic band.
- Increased traffic to nearby junctions had been agreed as acceptable by the Highways Authority and would be minimised by sustainable travel measures.
- Environmental Health had agreed that pollution levels were within tolerance.
- Pedestrian and cycle access would be provided to the site and was considered safe by the Highways Authority,
- Offsite improvements to pedestrian and cycle access along Sicut Road, Stevenage Road and to junction 8 of the A1(M) had been conditioned.
- S106 contributions included £900K to increase bus service provision, £3.87M to expand Wymondley School, and further amounts for other purposes.
- Flood risk management and discharge rates had been agreed by the LLFA.
- Land contamination management had been agreed and further surveys conditioned.

The following Members asked points of clarification:

- Councillor Clare Billing

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Mick Debenham
- Councillor Val Bryant

In response to points of clarification, Ms Martin-Moran advised that:

- Traffic movements were higher in 2015 when data was conducted, and the 2023 prediction was a worst-case scenario.
- Traffic data had not been used from the COVID-19 lockdown period.
- Access to Stevenage would be upgraded as this had been requested by the Highways Authority.
- New residents would contribute to demand for new facilities in Little Wymondley.
- S106 contributions were based on requests made by statutory consultees, and there would be flexibility to allocate these appropriately for facilities like a village hall.
- Priority had been given to retain vegetation at the site access.

In response to points made during the verbal presentations, the Principal Planning Officer (Major Sites) advised that:

- Financial contributions towards a village hall were referenced in the table at paragraph 5.16.4 of the report where contributions would be paid to the existing pavilion or a new community hub or hall onsite.
- Primary education contributions referenced in the same table would be spent on what the Education Authority would deem to be needed to mitigate the impact of the development and could be spent elsewhere rather than on Wymondley School.
- Paragraph 5.13 of the report detailed air quality and Condition 35 on the application detailed the Traffic Management Plan, which would address dust and other factors, and the Applicant would have to submit this to the Council in consultation with the Highways Authority for approval.
- There were an estimated 300 – 320 homes in Little Wymondley according to the 2011 census.

In response to points made during the verbal presentations, the Transport Policy and Projects Team Leader advised that:

- Traffic recorded in 2014-15 was above current levels as per Department for Transport counters, and the Applicant had used those figures with a 14.7% growth rate to produce the data. However, it was acknowledged that there had been zero or negative traffic growth in the area as confirmed by the 2023 figures and the Highways Authority was comfortable with the traffic data accuracy.
- 112 trips would come out of the development during the morning peak hour, which would increase vehicles on the A602 by less than 1%.
- Existing problems with the junction on Stevenage Road were acknowledged but the Applicant had demonstrated that the highways impact would not be severe.
- An upgrade of the A602 junction to a signalised junction might take place in the future but would not be funded by a financial contribution from this development as the Highways Authority had prioritised this towards an upgraded cycle route to Stevenage.
- A cycle route would be provided to Stevenage rather than Hitchin as it was anticipated that future residents would make more trips to the former, and it would form part of the wider Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan.
- Agreed developer financial contributions for bus services would increase provision on the number 80 bus route by 50%, which could provide half-hourly frequency at peak times, extended operating hours and a Sunday service, which would benefit existing villages and new development.

Thursday, 13th August, 2026

- The representation from St Ippolyts Parish Council detailed in the written update published with the supplementary documents had been misunderstood and traffic lights were proposed in the North Central Hertfordshire Growth and Transport Plan for the Stevenage Road-A602 junction rather than Blakemore End Road.
- The Highways Authority would consider and consult on the most appropriate upgrade for that junction once funding became available.

In response to points made during the verbal presentations, the Development and Conservation Manager advised that this was an allocated site in the Local Plan, and the principle of development was acceptable because of this.

*Councillor Caroline McDonnell left the Council Chamber at 20:16.*

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed to grant permission and this was seconded by Councillor Val Bryant.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Martin Prescott

The following points were made as part of the debate:

- Mitigations would be in place as the bus service would increase and the size of Wymondley School would not increase hugely.
- Despite the issues regarding unsustainability, there was not much choice except to grant permission for the application.
- Elements of this application were uncomfortable, such as doubling the size of the village but there were no legal grounds to refuse the application.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That application 22/00956/OP be **GRANTED** planning permission subject to:

- A) The completion of a satisfactory legal agreement and the applicant agreeing to extend the statutory period in order to complete the agreement if required; and
- B) Providing delegated powers to the Development and Conservation Manager to (i) resolve outstanding matters including financial contributions and (ii) update conditions and informatives with minor amendments as required; and
- C) The conditions as set out in the report of the Development and Conservation Manager.

*N.B. Following the conclusion of the item, there was a break in proceedings at 20:21 and the meeting reconvened at 20:41. During the break, Councillor Caroline McDonnell returned to the Chamber.*

**43     25/02885/OP LAND AT MILL LANE, LONDON ROAD, ST IPPOLYTS, HITCHIN, SG4 7NN**

*Audio recording – 01 hours 34 minutes 15 seconds*

The Principal Planning Officer (Development Management) provided a verbal update on matters relating to Application 25/02885/OP and advised that:

- The written update published with the supplementary documents to the agenda contained details of contributions sought by Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure Team, information on the project that sustainable transport contributions would support, 1 late neighbour representation and minor corrections to the report.
- A request from St Ippolyts Parish Council had been made for any sports pavilion contributions to be index linked to Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) Q1 2024.
- 49 responses had been received on the application, with 45 in objection and 2 being neutral, which superseded paragraph 3.21 of the report.
- None of the responses raised matters different to those already detailed in the report except for the response summarised in the written update.

The Principal Planning Officer (Development Management) then presented the report in respect of Application 25/02885/OP accompanied by a visual presentation consisting of plans and photographs.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Caroline McDonnell
- Councillor Bryony May

In response to questions, the Development and Conservation Manager advised that:

- All sites in the Green Belt, including this one, were subject to a planning application measured against criteria in paragraph 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the 'Golden Rules' would need to be met for it to be acceptable.
- The western half of the site would be protected from future residential development by condition as public open space if permission was granted.

In response to questions, the Principal Planning Officer (Development Management) advised that:

- The western part of the site would remain in the Green Belt as public open space.
- Details of how Mill Lane would be closed were unknown, but the Highways Authority had insisted that traffic should go through the development to London Road rather than via Mill Lane for highways safety reasons.
- Land could be classed as Grey Belt if it met the tests related to the purposes of the Green Belt and the additional tests at paragraph 155 of the NPPF.
- Existing development was on three sides of the eastern part of the site, which meant that it only made a moderate contribution to stopping urban sprawl and the site had been designated as Grey Belt as it had met all the other tests.
- Landscaping would be a consideration for the reserved matters application, but it also needed to demonstrate suitable mitigations to progress.
- Different site access options had been considered by the Highways Authority, and the proposal before them was the only option they were willing to support.
- A planning application for land to the south would need to be considered on its own merits and separate tests.

The Chair invited the first Public Objector, Mr Matt White to speak against the application. Mr White thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- The site was a rich, diverse piece of the Green Belt that residents had cherished for decades.
- A variety of wildlife and biodiversity were present, and the site had provided a vital amenity in lockdown for residents.
- The Green Belt was created to protect land such as this for nature and outdoor recreation purposes.
- The site restricted urban sprawl and prevented neighbouring settlements from merging and did not meet any exceptions at Paragraph 154 of the NPPF to allow development.
- St Ippolyts Parish Council, Campaign to Protect Rural England, Hitchin Forum, and the Council Green Belt Assessment Review Report all concluded that the site was in the Green Belt. Therefore, the view that the site was Grey Belt was subjective.

There were no points of clarification from Members.

The Chair thanked Mr White for their presentation and invited the second Public Objector, Mr Lorimer Miller, to speak against the application. Mr Miller thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- Mill Lane was a narrow, unlit access road with no footpath.
- New developments in the area such as this would change the use of Mill Lane and additional vehicles would conflict with pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders.
- Mill Lane had come to a standstill when London Road was closed in January.
- Removing the site access from Mill Lane would significantly improve safety and the current design was the least safe option available.
- The assessment of the Highways Authority was flawed as it had been based on assumptions that Mill Lane was an access road, had ignored pedestrian movements, lacked real world observation and omitted a road safety audit.
- There were no mitigations for traffic directly flowing through Mill Lane, and paragraph 115 of the NPPF stated that development should be refused on highways grounds if there was an unacceptable impact.
- Elderly pedestrians would be put at increased risk, and the application should be refused or deferred until a full safety assessment had been conducted on Mill Lane and mitigations were in place.

There were no points of clarification from Members.

The Chair thanked Mr Miller for their presentation and invited the third Public Objector, Ms Donna Matthews, to speak against the application. Ms Matthews thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- The site was not in the Local Plan.
- The LUC Green Belt Assessment concluded that the land made a strong contribution to Purpose A of the Green Belt assessment, but this had been disregarded.
- Development on three sides of the site was not sufficient justification for its designation as Grey Belt.
- The site was not on the urban edge of Hitchin as detailed in the report and the application should not have been assessed on this basis.
- The land made a strong contribution to Purpose A of the Green Belt assessment as it was open countryside with mature trees and would result in a finger of development in the Green Belt buffer separating St Ippolyts from Hitchin.

- The Pound Farm development had extended Hitchin to the south but there was no justification for approving successive development because of this.
- 23 trees would be removed, including those under a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), and this would impact the character and heritage of the area.

There were no points of clarification from Members.

The Chair thanked Ms Matthews for their presentation and invited the Member Advocate Objector, Councillor Ralph Muncer, to speak against the application. Councillor Muncer thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- It was clear that this application was inappropriate development on important Green Belt land.
- This piece of land protected both St Ippolyts and Gosmore from urban sprawl resulting from development in Hitchin.
- Pressure on infrastructure in St Ippolyts would be increased with little to offset it.
- Significant congestion on London Road and the Three Moor Hens roundabout would be compounded.
- Granting permission for this application would set a worrying precedent for all land in the Green Belt.
- The best way to protect this land and the rural character of the area would be to refuse permission for the application.
- Nothing would stop a developer from submitting a planning application for the western part of the site in the future if permission was granted.

There were no points of clarification from Members.

The Chair thanked Councillor Muncer for their presentation and invited the Agent to the Applicant, Mr Paul Derry, to speak in support of the application. Mr Derry thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- Delivery of 41 homes in a sustainable location, including 50% affordable housing would make a significant contribution to the housing shortfall in North Herts.
- Redirection of traffic through the site away from the Mill Lane-London Road junction would create a safer route and connectivity benefit.
- Significant public open space areas would be provided.
- A minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) would enhance the local habitat.
- There had been no heritage objections to the application, and they agreed with the land designation as Green Belt and that the 'Golden Rules' had been satisfied.
- The site represented just 3% of the HS7 site and should be considered on its own merits rather than being judged in the context of a larger area.
- All Category A trees onsite would be retained as the development had been designed around them, and all lower quality trees that needed removing would be replanted.
- The tilted balance was applied to the application as the Council could not demonstrate a five-year housing land supply as detailed in paragraph 11 of the NPPF.
- Built form had been removed from the western part of the site and that area would form part of the BNG Management Plan for the site.

The following Members asked points of clarification:

- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Caroline McDonnell
- Councillor Claire Winchester

In response to points of clarification, Mr Derry advised that:

- It would not be possible to deliver 10% BNG onsite as the baseline was high, and delivering this would compromise benefits such as public access to the western part of the site.
- They had not yet agreed where biodiversity credits would be purchased, but this would be up to the Council and the landowner on the proximity of these.
- A viability report had not been carried out on the 50% affordable housing, but the Heads of Terms and financial contributions had been set out.
- Heritage impacts had prevented them from putting site access further south.

In response to points of clarification, the Development and Conservation Manager advised that it would not be possible for the developer to put forward a viability case to reduce the 50% affordable housing as it was neither a brownfield nor a complex or multi-phased site.

In response to points of clarification, the Principal Planning Officer (Development Management) advised that negative onsite BNG could not be used as a reason to refuse the application as conditions required the 10% BNG to be met either on or offsite, including a Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan as detailed by Condition 1 in the report.

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed to grant permission and this was seconded by Councillor Emma Fernandes.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Claire Winchester
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Caroline McDonnell
- Councillor Clare Billing
- Councillor Emma Fernandes
- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Ian Mantle

The following points were made as part of the debate:

- The land was part of the Green Belt as detailed by the LCU Green Belt Assessment and its value had been highlighted by residents.
- The designation of part of the land as Grey Belt was subjective.
- 4 trees had recently been put under a TPO, and they should not be destroyed for the sake of housing delivery.
- Favour was given to development at the right place and time, but the benefits from this development were too marginal to lose the valuable, natural landscape.
- This application was inconsistent with the climate and biodiversity emergencies declared by the Council as it was only viable through the demolition of 23 trees.
- The site provided vital housing delivery with 50% of that being affordable, but the loss of trees and valuable landscape preventing urban sprawl was too great to grant permission.
- The Grey Belt tests had been met, so the designation was not subjective.
- Development volume in the rural setting of Mill Lane was concerning.
- This land was important as it provided a buffer between Hitchin and St Ippolyts and was valuable when considering other development in the area.
- The land made up just 3% of the HS7 site and was surrounded by development on three sides.
- The western part of the site would safeguard open space from further development.

- While there were harms from the regrettable loss of trees, this did not substantially outweigh the benefit delivered by 41 homes.
- There had been evidence of traffic problems when Mill Lane had been used as an alternative route to London Road and it would be difficult to mitigate increased numbers of cyclists or pedestrians on Mill Lane without changing its character.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That application 22/00956/OP be **GRANTED** planning permission subject to:

- A) Providing delegated powers to the Development and Conservation Manager to agree the outstanding S106 Heads of Terms related to the sports pavilion, and any other minor changes to conditions and informatives as required; and
- B) The completion of the S106 Legal Agreement and any necessary extension of time taken to complete this; and
- C) The conditions and informatives as set out in the report of the Development and Conservation Manager, with amendments to Conditions 7, 12 and 20, as follows:

'Condition 7

*No development shall take place (including ground works or vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) should be informed by the November 2025 Ecological Impact Assessment and include the following:*

- a) *Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.*
- b) *Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".*
- c) *Practical measures to avoid or reduce impacts during construction.*
- d) *The location and timing of sensitive works to harm to biodiversity features.*
- e) *Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.*

*The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.*

*Reason: To protect wildlife and biodiversity. LP Policy NE4.*

Condition 12

*Parking / Internal roads / Turning areas:*

*The detailed plans should be submitted in connection with approval of reserved matters application which shall show to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority:*

- *The details of all hard surfaced areas within the site. This includes, but is not limited to, all roads, footways, forecourts, driveways, parking and turning areas, and foul and surface water drainage.*
- *The level of footway and carriageway visibility from each individual vehicle access, and the level of visibility from and around each main junction within the site, within which there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 600mm and 2m above the carriageway level.*
- *That service vehicles, including refuse and emergency vehicles, can safely and conveniently access and route through the site, to include the provision of sufficient turning and operating areas.*
- *The provision of sufficient facilities for cycle storage.*

*All these features shall be provided before first occupation and maintained in perpetuity.*

*Reason: To provide adequate visibility for drivers within the site, to promote alternative modes of travel, and for the overall free and safe flow of all site users.*

Condition 20

*No residential development shall be more than two storey in height.*

*Reason: To ensure that the new development is in keeping with local context. LP Policy D1.'*

**44 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

*Audio recording – 02 hours 52 minutes 47 seconds*

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed and Councillor Jon Clayden seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following report will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act (as amended).

**45 PART 2 MINUTES - 21 NOVEMBER 2024, 3 APRIL 2025 AND 21 APRIL 2026**

*N.B. This item was considered in restricted session and therefore no recording was available.*

Councillor Nigel Mason, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Emma Fernandes seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Part 2 Minutes of the meetings held on 21 November 2024, 3 April 2025 and 21 April 2026 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and signed by the Chair.

**46 APPEALS**

*Audio recording – 02 hours 57 minutes 25 seconds*

The Development and Conservation Manager presented the report entitled 'Planning Appeals' and advised that:

- One appeal had been lodged on an application for a detached dwelling in Ickleford, which would be decided by written representations.
- Two appeals had been allowed, one due to a disputed condition and the other due to a certificate of lawful use.
- An enforcement decision relating to The George, Baldock would be reported on at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.06 pm

Chair