

Adam Ralton
Development Management
Three Rivers District Council
Three Rivers House
Northway, Rickmansworth
Herts. WD3 1RL

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

26th June 2026 (by email)

Dear Adam Ralton,

**Planning application no. 26/0601/OUT
Land South of The White House, East Lane, and Between Bedmond Road
and East Lane Bedmond Abbots Langley
Outline application: Erection of up to 66 residential dwellings including access
(appearance, landscaping, layout and scale as reserved matters)**

I write with regard to the above planning application to which CPRE Hertfordshire objects for the following reasons.

1. The land identified for this proposed development is designated as London Metropolitan Green Belt in the adopted Three Rivers Core Strategy where development is stated as being inappropriate unless very special circumstances are identified which clearly outweigh the harms caused, according to criteria in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
2. The Applicant's planning consultants note the 2024 revision of the NPPF and the introduction of the concept of grey belt as the primary justification for the submission of this application. They also state that, in the event of grey belt not being established, very special circumstances can be identified to clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt in this location.
3. Very significant local community opposition continues in Three Rivers to development in the Green Belt. This application is part of a flood of planning applications being made by developers and land-owners since the revision of the NPPF in December 2024 on the Green Belt, to the extent that the principle of protection of the countryside, especially in southern Hertfordshire is being very seriously jeopardised.



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4. Despite the consultant's assertion that "there has been extensive and positive pre-application dialogue with Officers" (Planning Statement, paragraph 5.1) the site was not included in Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation documents in 2023 or 2025. Nor is it included in the 'on hold' Regulation 19 Local Plan or the list of sites which the Secretary of State has recently directed the Council to include in the emerging Local Plan.
5. The proposed development would very clearly constitute a breach of the first and third purposes of the Green Belt as identified in the NPPF (paragraph 143) to prevent urban sprawl and encroachment onto open countryside. We entirely refute the assertion that the first purpose of the Green Belt has no relevance in this case and that this site constitutes grey belt under the present legal definitions.
6. In the case of the London Metropolitan Green Belt, the first purpose of the Green Belt refers as much to the effect of the urban sprawl emanating from the growth of the capital as the major development generator in this and the surrounding areas, as to the sprawl of other major settlements. The proposed development is clearly urban sprawl beyond the built-up area of the adjoining settlement of Bedmond and encroachment into the countryside that the Green Belt legislation was designed to prevent. Arguments relating to the inconsequential impact of each individual application on the Green Belt as a whole become seriously inappropriate when the cumulative effect of several applications is considered, as is occurring in southern Hertfordshire.
7. It is noteworthy that virtually every major planning application for residential and commercial development within the Green Belt in Hertfordshire made since 12th December 2024 has identified the site as grey belt, notwithstanding the quality and character of the landscape or local conditions in each case. This is clearly an unsustainable position and it is becoming increasingly clear that the existing definitions and guidance on grey belt are entirely inadequate to prevent the wholesale removal of highly valued and significant Green Belt protections.
8. Recent planning inquiry, and increasingly Council planning decisions permitting development are demonstrating the hugely damaging impact of the present definition of grey belt on open countryside. It is increasingly recognised that grey belt poses an existential threat to Green Belt, despite the Government's ostensible commitment to its permanence (NPPF paragraph 142).
9. Remaining issues quoted in the Planning Statement regarding very special circumstances constitute obligations which would accrue to any proposed development of this size and function. The now standard practice in major planning applications in the Hertfordshire Green Belt of listing such benefits, including public services and facilities and the like reduces the consideration of such issues to a check-list of items irrespective of the



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conditions and circumstances of the location and inevitably renders them as less “special”.

10. As significant as the proposed benefits is the growing paucity of open space adjacent to built-up areas with its attendant physical and mental health benefits. The Green Belt in this area is under unrelenting pressure for development which is jeopardising the highly valued benefits which protection brings, and its continual reduction is in danger of bringing the planning system into disrepute.
11. We note the intention to provide 50% affordable housing but this is essentially meaningless without further information and commitments to its provision. There is significant experience in Hertfordshire and elsewhere of initial commitments to affordable housing not being maintained, generally quoting viability issues and at the very least the Council should seek robust guarantees regarding affordable housing proposals.
12. The existence of legally binding agreements between appropriate institutions involved in the provision of truly affordable low cost housing should be required in this case. Given the inadequacy of the official definition to reflect the true state of the housing market in Hertfordshire, affordability for average earning households is generally unattainable in the County.
13. In summary, it is undeniable that the planning policy context created by the 2024 revised NPPF has provoked a disturbingly high number of new applications and re-applications for sites which were previously refused permission. Whereas a proportion of such applications may warrant consideration for various reasons, the purposeful illogicality of the revised NPPF supporting five purposes of the Green Belt (para 143) and then only permitting three purposes to be considered in applications for grey belt (NPPF Glossary definition) is unsupportable in this and other cases.
14. South-west Hertfordshire is under unrelenting pressure for development and the value of the open countryside that remains increases for local communities and visitors, notwithstanding wider environmental benefits relating to the amelioration of the effects of climate change, maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity, and physical and mental health.

We urge the Council to refuse permission for this highly inappropriate speculative development.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager

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