

Georgia O'Brien
Planning and Building Control
Hertsmere Borough Council
Civic Offices, Elstree Way
Borehamwood
Herts. WD6 1WA

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

2nd October 2026 (by email)

Dear Georgia O'Brien,

Planning application no. 26/1187/REM

Land East of South Mimms Services, St Albans Road, South Mimms

Application for the approval of reserved matters relating to site-wide advanced infrastructure and enabling works (Phase 1a), including a permanent vehicular access off Swanland Road which will facilitate a temporary access during construction, a permanent emergency vehicle access off Bridgefoot Lane, pedestrian and cycle routes, internal roads, car and cycle parking, hard and soft landscaping, on-site water attenuation, temporary and permanent campus bridges, utilities and services, a security gatehouse, substations, ancillary buildings and service yards, the creation of development platforms to support the phased data centre development, and all associated infrastructure pursuant to outline planning permission reference 24/1152/OUTEI.

I write with regard to the above planning application for reserved matters, following the granting of the outline planning permission to which CPRE Hertfordshire has previously objected (ref. 24/1152/OUTEI). Notwithstanding the granting of consent in outline for the data centre, CPRE Hertfordshire maintains its opposition in principle to this inappropriate proposed development in the Green Belt and continues to have major concerns regarding this application for reserved matters.

It is clear from representations made by local community groups, including the Potters Bar Special Interest Group (PBSIG) and others, that there are significant omissions in this application which, at the least, require further consideration and call into question the granting of outline permission. We have already noted previously our concerns regarding the speed with which the original outline application was determined and it is incumbent on the Local Planning Authority to ensure that a proposed development of this magnitude and impact is appropriately assessed.

There is growing concern being expressed locally and internationally at the impact of major data centres on local communities, and the resources implications in terms of the large-scale power and water supplies required. An application for reserved matters is not the appropriate means of assessing the large-scale resource implications and there has been a significant lack of supporting information to justify this massive project from the outset and inconsistencies have arisen between the outline consent and this application.



**Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Hertfordshire**

When the data centre was granted outline planning permission it was indicated that the facility would be air cooled. Reference to the developer's website now suggests that the facility will be water cooled and since Hertsmere is located within an area of serious water stress, the impact on water consumption of this potential change should be fully explored.

Much of the area's water is drawn from the same underground sources feeding chalk streams which are internationally recognised ecosystems where extraction is strictly limited for environmental reasons. Equinix should clarify their requirements for water supply which should be assessed with regard to the cumulative effects of development already consented and being proposed, including large-scale residential developments in the County.

Similarly, there is a lack of clarity with regard to power requirements for the data centre and the responsibility for grid upgrades and related works. Equinix indicates that the cost of grid upgrades will not be borne by local residents and that all power used will be generated from renewable sources. The lack of detailed information on these matters is a serious omission and casts doubt on the feasibility and appropriateness of this proposed development.

CPRE is campaigning locally and nationally for a coordinated programme of data centre provision rather than the speculative provision of large-scale installations in the open countryside and Green Belt. CPRE Hertfordshire has also shared publicly recent research by the University of Hertfordshire (UoH) on the detrimental community impacts of this application (Responsible Data-Centre Siting: Perroo and Wolf, UoH, 2026) and residents' perceptions of misleading and selective information being provided by the developers and the Council.

Specifically, in addition to concerns regarding the impact on the rural setting of the Bridgefoot Farmhouse and Cottage as noted by Place Services, consultants to the Council, we note the response of the Environment Agency and their objection to the lack of flood risk model. The shortcomings of this application for reserved matters cast doubt on the capability of the local planning authority to determine this application and CPRE Hertfordshire will continue to support the local communities in their opposition to this proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Berry
Planning Manager

NOTE: We would request that this letter is published on the Council's website as a document relating to this application and should be grateful if you would notify us of the date of the appropriate meeting if it is to be determined by planning committee.