



On behalf of our client, Sedas Strategic Land Ltd, Planning Potential were successful in achieving consent at appeal for 9 self-build units in Dacorum Borough Council.

The Site comprises a flat square land parcel, measuring circa 1.83 hectares (ha) located 400 metres north of Wilstone village, beyond the settlement boundary and in the designated rural area.

Planning Potential were originally instructed by Sedas Strategic Land Ltd back in 2022. An initial pre-application meeting was undertaken in February 2023 for 34 residential units. Following unfavourable feedback from the Council, Planning Potential worked closely with the project team to review the proposals afresh and a second pre-application was undertaken in September 2023 for 9 self-build units. The Council accepted that information on the Council Self-build Register identified a strong and unmet demand for self-build units.

Planning Potential project managed and coordinated the preparation of an outline planning application for 9 self-build units which was lodged in February 2024.

In March 2024, we were advised by the Council that the application was to be recommended for refusal. At the time, objections had been received from Highways and the LLFA. Whilst acknowledging that the Council's position on the principle of development was unlikely to change, by building up a good working relationship with the case officer, Planning Potential were able to agree with the Council that the applicant be afforded the opportunity to address the outstanding technical matters. Planning Potential worked closely with the technical consultants and Council to resolve outstanding technical matters, whilst keeping the application live, and objections from Highways and the LLFA were subsequently removed.

The application was refused in August 2024 on the basis of three grounds for refusal; principle of the development, design and layout, and impact to The Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area for Conservation.

Planning Potential project managed, and worked very closely with the project team, to prepare a robust appeal submission to the Planning Inspectorate. A strong suite of planning benefits were proposed including meeting an identified self-build need and the delivery of a pedestrian footway to enhance the connectivity and sustainability of the site. The appeal proceeded by way of a Hearing.

We worked with the relevant parties to prepare a legal agreement in advance of the Hearing Event, allowing reason for refusal three to fall away.

At the time of lodging the appeal, the Council's housing land supply position was 2.5 years. However, prior to the Hearing Event, Planning Potential identified a revised housing land supply position of 1.03 years and were able to agree the revised position, and that this was "severe", with the Council through a Statement of Common Ground Addendum. The Inspector noted that *"this equates to a very significant shortfall of housing supply"*.

By virtue of comprehensive submitted written evidence and participation at the Hearing Event, we were able to successfully argue that the material benefits of the scheme outweighed any conflict with Local Plan policy, in the context of a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Indeed, the Inspector concluded in their appeal decision that *"applying the so-called 'tilted balance', I find the substantial benefits of the scheme, comprising the provision of self-build housing, and the various economic, biodiversity and social benefits, all taken together, clearly outweigh any harms arising"*.

We were delighted to achieve a positive outcome for our client, after a long and complex planning journey, and to enable them to move forward with the development of the site.