

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Alex Howard.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/00969/FP	Change of use of existing annexe to one self-contained dwelling.	Nortonbury Farm House Norton Bury Lane Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 1AN

Submitted Plan Nos

Location Plan HIL/25/02 Proposed Site Plan HIL/25/01 A

1.0 Policies

SP2 Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distrib

SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SP9	Design and Sustainability
D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
T1	Assessment of transport matters
T2	Parking

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 Extensive site history. Relevant applications are as follows:

2.2 **13/02067/1HH** - Alteration to existing stable block comprising the replacement of stable doors and larger barn door with glazed doors and windows.

Conditional Permission

2.3 **08/00529/1HH** - Stable block to provide 4 stables, tack room and hay store as variation to planning permission ref no 07/02894/1HH granted 8 February 2008.

Permission

Conditional

2.4 **07/02894/1HH** - Stable block to provide 4 stables, tack room and hay store and detached double garage (as amended by plan received on 4th February 2008).

Conditional Permission

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Site Notice and Neighbour Consultation** – None received.

3.2 **Letchworth Heritage Foundation** – None received.

3.3 **Environmental Health** – No objections.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The site is Nortonbury Farmhouse, which is a sizable property on a sizable plot off Norton Bury Lane, Letchworth. The site comprises the main farmhouse and several barn/stable buildings associated with the livery use that also takes place at the site. To the north of the farmhouse is a large single storey detached building which was built as a 4 horse stable/tack room, before being converted into an annexe. The site is within the Green Belt.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of existing annexe to one self-contained dwelling. The building is existing on site and does not require any external alterations or extensions. Internally, the building has already been converted into an annexe with three bedrooms, kitchen/living space, bathrooms and storage areas. To the rear and side of the building, there is a large area of private amenity space which has been fenced off already, separating it from the larger private amenity space of the host dwelling.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key considerations are the

- Principle of Development
- Character and Appearance
- Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Properties/Future Occupiers
- Highways, Access, and Parking
- Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain
- Other Matters

Principle of Development

- 4.3.2 The site is within the Green Belt, covered by Policy SP5 of the Local Plan. Paragraph 154 of the NPPF sets out what development are not inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which are as follows:

“Development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;*
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) limited infilling in villages;*
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.

h) Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

i. mineral extraction;

ii. engineering operations;

iii. local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;

iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

v. material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

vi. development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order”.

4.3.3 The proposed change of use of the existing annexe into a self-contained residential dwelling would not strictly comply with any of the above exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt. However, the building was erected as a 4-horse stable and tack room following the grant of planning permission in 2008, and then it was converted with the necessary alterations into an annexe following the grant of planning permission in 2013. The building has remained as is for a fairly long period and the proposal is not looking to make any extensions, changes or alterations, only a change of use from an annexe to a self-contained dwelling which is not considered to undermine or cause any harm to the Green Belt generally. Openness would not be harmed; nor would the purposes of the Green Belt be fundamentally conflicted. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would be acceptable in the Green Belt, not cause any harm to openness or conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt, even though it would not strictly comply with the exemption criteria under paragraph 154 and it is outside of the defined settlement boundary of Letchworth, contrary to Policy SP2 of the Local Plan.

4.3.4 In general terms, the host dwelling is a very large property occupying a sizable plot. The proposal seeks to enable the current occupiers to downsize into a smaller property on the same site, allowing the host dwelling to be sold or let. The annexe building on the site is visually separated from the host dwelling, benefits from the shared access road, has suitable hardstanding areas to the front and sides of the building for parking, manoeuvring and bin storage, has a large area of lawn to the rear for private amenity space, and would not result in an unacceptable form of subdivision of this existing plot, given its large scale. For these reasons, the principle of this proposed change of use is considered to be acceptable.

Character and Appearance

4.3.5 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted provided that development responds positively to the site's local context in addition to other criteria. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan further considers that new development will be supported where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context. These considerations are echoed in Section 12 of the NPPF.

4.3.6 The building is existing on site following its conversion into an annexe. As a result, no alterations or changes are proposed under this application. In any case, the building is of high-quality finish and retains an equestrian character and appearance, which is

appropriate in this rural setting. The rear garden has already been subdivided by a 1.2m post and rail fence, which is considered suitable in this context.

- 4.3.7 The proposal is considered acceptable in character and appearance in accordance with Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Impact on the Amenities of Neighbouring Properties/Future Occupiers

- 4.3.8 Policy D3 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.
- 4.3.9 Given the isolated nature of this site, the only neighbour that would be impacted by this proposal is the host dwelling post sub-division. The host dwelling is set away from the application building by a fair distance, with a garage building separating the two buildings. The private amenity areas of both properties would be sufficiently distanced from each other so as to not result in any harm in respect of overdominance, loss of privacy and loss of daylight/sunlight.
- 4.3.10 The building is approx. 116sqm, which exceeds the minimum space standards for a 3-bedroom/6-person single-storey dwelling. All habitable rooms would have suitable levels of natural light, and the private amenity space would be very generous.
- 4.3.11 It is considered that the proposal will not cause unacceptable material harm to living conditions and well-being of neighbouring properties and future occupiers, in line with Policy D1 and D3 of the Local Plan.

Highways, Access, and Parking

- 4.3.12 The proposed dwelling would utilise the existing access track to the main farmhouse. This access track splits off to the right for parking for the main farmhouse and the proposed dwelling would utilise the split off to the left, where there is space for parking and sufficient room to maneuver and exit the site in forward gear. For this reason, the access arrangements are considered acceptable for this modest increase in intensification of the site.
- 4.3.13 In terms of parking, the scheme would be a three-bedroom dwelling which require at least 2 parking spaces per dwelling in line with Policy T2 of the Local Plan. As per the submitted plans, at least 2 parking spaces are provided for this dwelling, which is acceptable and in accordance with the relevant policies.

Ecology and BNG

- 4.3.14 The proposal would be exempt from the mandatory 10% BNG, given that it is a change of use.

Other Matters

- 4.3.15 It is considered that, as this is a proposal to subdivide the existing host dwellings plot and the site is within the Green Belt, it would be reasonable to remove permitted development rights through Classes A, B, C, D and E of Schedule 2, Part 1 of the GPDO 2015. This will retain control of future development to the LPA.
- 4.3.16 The site has suitable areas to the side and rear for bin storage and occupiers will be required to move their bins to the access of Norton Bury Lane on collection days, as they do now for the host dwelling. This is not considered unreasonable.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The proposal is considered acceptable in accordance with the relevant Local and National planning policies.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 N/A.

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 N/A.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended no development as set out in Classes A, B, C and E of Part 1 of Schedule 2 to the Order, (or any subsequent Statutory Instrument which revokes, amends and/or replaces those provisions) shall be carried out without first obtaining a specific planning permission from the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: Given the nature of this development, the Local Planning Authority considers that development which would normally be "permitted development" should be retained within planning control in the interests of the character and amenities of the area and to control development in the Green Belt, to align with Policy SP5, D1 and Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031, and Section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is considered exempt under the statutory exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>) or transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 11 June 2025	