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Response to Planning application from Hertfordshire County Council (T and CP GDP Order 2015)

Director of Planning

North Hertfordshire Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

District ref: 25/01694/PNQ
HCC ref: NH/25642/2025
HCC received: 7 July 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Paul Marshall

Location

Radwell Grange Farm Barns, Great North Road, Radwell, Hertfordshire, SG7 5EU

Application type

Prior Approval

Proposal

Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling : Change of use of agricultural buildings to create 7 dwellinghouses with associated building operations, private gardens and car parking

Recommendation

Notice is given under article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority recommends that permission be refused for the following reasons:

The Highway Authority recommends refusal due to serious concerns about highway safety and the complete lack of sustainable active travel options

Please see below reasons for refusal.

This is a fundamentally unsustainable location, being sited directly off a major strategic A road with derestricted speed limit. There are no footways, cycleways, bus services or rail services close by, and as such the proposed new houses will be entirely car dependent. This goes totally against all current sustainable and accessible travel policy, and accessibility policies. Key references include paragraphs 110 - 112 of the NPPF, and our LTP4 policy 1.

COMMENTS

The proposals are for a change of use of agricultural buildings to create 7 dwellinghouses with associated building operations, private gardens and car parking

CONTEXT:

Site Access Location and Road Layout

The access to the site is located on the A507, between Junction 10 of the A1(M) and the Baldock Services roundabout. Specifically, the access point lies approximately 64 metres eastbound along the dual carriageway gyratory that links the two roundabouts. This section of road is classified as the A507 and has a posted speed limit of 60 mph.

The access route to the site comprises two distinct sections. The first is a local access road, also subject to a 60-mph speed limit, which terminates at Grange Cottages. From there, the route turns at a right angle and continues as a private access road leading directly to the existing site. The total distance from the A507 junction to the site is approximately 800 metres.

POLICY REVIEW:

- Manual for Streets 2007
- National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)
- Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Local Transport Plan-4 [2018-2031, May2018]
- Cycle Infrastructure Design DfT Local Transport Note 1/20 (July 2020)
- HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (adopted in March 2024)

DRAWINGS

The Highway Authority note the submission of materials in support of the planning application, including drawing numbers: PL01 to 07, PL13 to 17, and Supporting Statement.

SAFETY CONCERNS AT THE A507 JUNCTION ACCESS POINT

There is a significant safety risk for potential residents accessing the site via the A507 junction. One key concern involves vehicles turning left into the site potentially encountering vehicles simultaneously turning left out of the site. If the incoming vehicle slows down to allow the exiting vehicle to proceed, there is a serious risk that a vehicle approaching from the A1 slip road may not have sufficient time to react or slow down.

Vehicles exiting the A1 via the slip road often travel at high speed and do not anticipate encountering a stationary or slow-moving vehicle in the inside lane. This creates a hazardous situation, particularly during hours of darkness or in adverse weather conditions, when visibility and braking efficiency are reduced. Under such circumstances, the likelihood of a collision increases significantly.

ACCESS ROADS CONDITION & ACCESSIBILITY CONCERNS

The road from the junction with the A507 is known as 'Access Road of Great North Road to Radwell Grange Farm' This is a highway maintainable road with a 60mph national speed limit.

During a site visit, it was observed that the access road is narrow and does not accommodate two-way traffic. There are no designated passing bays; instead, informal passing areas have formed due to repeated vehicle runovers, which have eroded the verges.

This condition presents a particular safety concern during winter months and periods of adverse weather where the runover areas would become excessively muddy and therefore likely unusable. The absence of street lighting further exacerbates visibility issues, making navigation difficult and increasing the risk of accidents or vehicle damage.

The private road extending from Grange Cottages to the site presents similar safety and accessibility concerns as the preceding access route. The road is narrow and does not allow two vehicles to pass comfortably. This was demonstrated during a site visit, where a 4x4 towing a trailer required the site visit vehicle to pull onto the grass verge to allow passage. Care had to be taken to avoid slipping into a small ditch that runs alongside the road, highlighting the limited margin for error and the potential risk to drivers.

Page 7 of the Supporting Statement under the heading Transport and highways it states:

The site is accessed by the combination of an existing unclassified road (up to Radwell Cottages), and a private road (from Radwell Cottages to the site). Both sections of road have a bound service and generally have sufficient width to enable cars travelling in opposite directions to pass each other. Accordingly, whilst the proposed change of use would likely increase the number of cars visiting the site, this would be offset by the reduced number of agricultural vehicles which are generally much larger and more disruptive in terms of the local road network.

The Highway Authority challenges the applicant's description of both accesses for the following reasons:

Insufficient Road Width: Both sections of the access road do not provide adequate width for two vehicles to pass safely without one mounting the grass verge. This was directly observed during the site visit, where a vehicle had to pull onto the verge to allow a 4x4 towing a trailer to pass.

Inaccurate Assumptions Regarding Traffic Impact: The assertion that the proposed residential use will offset the current agricultural traffic is not accepted. Agricultural access is typically seasonal and varies depending on the type of activity and equipment used. In contrast, residential use will generate more frequent and diverse vehicle movements, including cars and light goods vehicles (LGVs), with a higher likelihood of nighttime trips—particularly during winter months.

The applicant's claim that both sections of road are generally wide enough for two cars to pass does not reflect the observed conditions. The current road layout and width present clear limitations that would be exacerbated by increased residential traffic.

NON-MOTORISED ACCESS

No footways exist along the entire length of both access road to the site. The development cannot provide any footways as there is no destination that can be accessed on foot or cycle safely. Navigating to the site on foot or cycling during any time of the year especially evenings, winter months, or adverse weather fronts is unsafe or near impossible. It is in the interests of highway safety to ensure vulnerable users have access to safe facilities that encourage active travel and ensure the site is accessible for all vulnerable users. The proposals fail completely on safe sustainable access for all. This goes totally against all current sustainable and accessibility policies. Key references include paragraphs 110 - 112 of the NPPF, and our LTP4 policy 1.

PARKING

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is responsible for assessing the proposed development against local parking standards and ensuring that the required level of parking can be achieved within the site boundary.

VISIBILITY

No visibility splays have been provided where the access road meets the Great North Road. The posted speed limit is 60mph which requires a visibility splay of 2.4 x 215 (DMRB)

POLICY

The following policy has been used to determine the viability of the proposals in terms of sustainability and safety.

HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (adopted in March 2024)

Policy 5: Development Management

G) Resist development that would either severely affect the rural or residential character of a road or other right of way, or which would severely affect safety on rural roads, local roads and rights of way especially for vulnerable road users. This should include other routes which are important for sustainable transport or leisure.

Section 4 paragraph 2.5 b)

Ensure access arrangements are safe, suitable for all people, built to an adequate standard and adhere to the county council's Highway Design Standards

LTP4 Policy 1:

Transport User Hierarchy - opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need for travel - Vulnerable Road user needs (pedestrians and cyclists) - Passenger transport user needs - Powered two-wheeler (mopeds/motorbikes) user needs - Other motor vehicle user needs Represents a shift in emphasis with the aim of increasing rates of travel by more sustainable modes.

b) Ensure access arrangements are safe, suitable for all people, built to an adequate standard and adhere to the county council's Highway Design Standards

NPPF109. States: Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places.

Housing should be delivered in the most sustainable locations where connectivity is maximised, the need to travel by car is minimised, and safe and direct walking and cycling routes are provided.

With new builds the planning process seeks/provides the opportunity to improve conditions for both development and highway safety by applying current higher standards of policies, design, accessibility, and safety to new developments, and not to retain and/or continue with past obsolete standards.

CONCLUSION

The Highway Authority has reviewed the supporting documents and drawings and wishes to raise an objection to the application due to significant highway safety concerns and an almost complete absence of sustainable transport options.

Almost all journeys from the site will use the junction with the A507, which poses a risk to road safety.

Furthermore, the proposals do not comply with the design standards outlined in HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (adopted in March 2024), Manual for Streets, National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), and Local Transport Plan 4.

Signed

Paul Marshall

23 July 2025