

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Access Appraisal is prepared in relation to a planning application (reference 25/01198/FP) for development at Land to the East of 2 West Lane, Pirton, Hitchin SG5 3RA (the Site). The development (hereafter referred to as 'the Development') comprises:

- Extension of existing hardstanding (Development already carried out).
- Installation of permeable driveway (Development has commenced).
- Creation of vehicular access off West Lane.

- 1.2. The application was submitted to North Herts Council on 16th May 2025 with a decision issued on 29th August 2025 to refuse the application. The Decision Notice contained the following 'Particular of Decision' that is related to highway and access matters for the proposed development:

4. The development site is located on a classified road opposite a busy junction with Royal Oak Lane and Holwell Road. The Highway Authority consider that the development is likely to lead to conditions prejudicial to highway safety and amenity. As such the development is considered to be contrary to the provisions of Policy T1 of the North Herts Local Plan.

- 1.3. Further to the above, the relevant Statutory Consultee comment from Hertfordshire County Council, as Highway Authority, on their letter dated 25th June 2025 recommended refusal of the application for the following reason:

There is insufficient information supplied with this application to enable the Highway Authority to reach a recommendation. In the absence of the necessary information, the Highway Authority recommends refusal due to doubt over possible implications for highway safety and convenience. Please see reasons for refusal below:

Swept Path Analysis required

Drawing 25.072-P1 illustrates the existing and proposed hard standing. The proposed access is located at a 3-way junction with Royal Oak Lane and West Lane, which the Highway Authority deems traffic-sensitive due to high peak flows.

The Planning Statement asserts that there is sufficient space to turn and exit the site in a forward gear. However, the applicant must demonstrate how a vehicle towing a caravan can access the site and manoeuvre into position. Given the nature of the junction, it is essential that vehicles enter and exit the site in a forward gear, particularly when towing a caravan.

- 1.4. In response, this appraisal provides an analysis of vehicles entering, exiting and turning within the Development.

- 1.5. The conclusion of this appraisal is that, in accordance with Government policy set out at paragraph 116 of the NPPF, there are no highway safety reasons why planning permission should be withheld or refused.

2. RELEVANT TRANSPORT POLICY

- 2.1. The Government's planning policies for England are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework ("the NPPF"), published in December 2024 and updated with minor technical corrections in February 2025. Section 9 deals specifically with transport.
- 2.2. Paragraph 116 provides the Government's policy regarding the transport related circumstances in which planning permission can be withheld or refused stating:

'Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.'

- 2.3. With regards to access for the Development, the policy test regarding its acceptability is therefore if it would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

3. EXISTING AND PROPOSED VEHICULAR ACCESS

Existing Vehicular Access

- 3.1. The Site is currently accessed via a grass track on its eastern boundary. A gate is provided into the Site from this track.
- 3.2. The track is approximately 2.5m wide where it meets West Lane. This width of access means that all vehicles, including cars, take up the full width of the road when turning into and out of the track. Larger vehicles need to drive over highway verge including the grassed splitter island at the Royal Oak / West Lane junction, which is directly opposite the existing track access. Visibility for vehicles exiting the track is limited with a mature hedge located on its western side.
- 3.3. In the event that permission is refused, this existing access will continue as the lawful vehicular access to the Site.

Proposed Vehicular Access

- 3.4. The proposed access arrangements are illustrated on the plan provided at **Appendix A**. These comprise the provision of a new access to the Site directly from West Lane to the west of the track and closure of the existing means of access to the Site from the grass track.
- 3.5. The new access is 5.2m wide where it meets West Lane. Swept path analysis provided at **Appendix B** demonstrates that this is sufficient with so that cars / light vehicles are able to enter and exit without crossing the centre line of the road.

- 3.6. Turning to the concerns raised by the Highway Authority, a swept path of a large vehicle towing a touring caravan is provided at **Appendix C**. This demonstrates that the access is large enough for this vehicle combination to enter, turn around within the Site and exit in forward gears. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that it is likely that the caravan would be unhitched on Site and manoeuvred accordingly to its final destination with the reverse occurring for the caravan to be taken off Site with the towing vehicle in a forward gear.
- 3.7. The vehicle-touring caravan combination entering the Site requires the full width of the road to turn in. However, this is entirely within the carriageway with no requirement to drive over grass verge to achieve access. This manoeuvre would occur on infrequent occasions with more regular access being via car/light vehicle.
- 3.8. These access arrangements represent a significant improvement to highway safety compared to the existing means of vehicular access, which will no longer be used if the planning application is approved.
- 3.9. Turning to visibility, it can be seen from the plan provided at **Appendix A** that the hedgerow to the front of the Site will be set back approximately 2.5m. This will provide vehicles exiting the Site with clear visibility along West Lane in each direction, which is straight in this location. Again, this represents a significant improvement to highway safety compared to the existing means of vehicular access, which will no longer be used if the planning application is approved.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- 4.1. This Access Appraisal is prepared in relation to planning application 25/01198/FP for works at Land to the East of 2 West Lane, Pirton, including the extension of hardstanding, installation of a permeable driveway, and creation of a new vehicular access.
- 4.2. The application was refused, inter alia, on highway-safety grounds, with the Highway Authority citing insufficient information – specifically the absence of swept-path analysis for vehicles towing caravans.
- 4.3. This appraisal demonstrates that the existing access via a narrow grass track is substandard, requiring vehicles to overrun verges and offering poor visibility. In contrast, the proposed new 5.2 m-wide access from West Lane allows cars and light vehicles to enter and exit without crossing the centre line. Swept-path analysis demonstrates that a vehicle towing a touring caravan can enter, turn on-site, and exit in forward gear. Visibility is also significantly improved by setting back the boundary hedge.
- 4.4. The proposed access would therefore not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In contrast, the new arrangement represents a significant highway safety improvement over the existing access. In accordance with Government policy set out at paragraph 116 of the NPPF, there are no highway safety reasons why planning permission should be withheld or refused.