

Location: **The Barn
Great North Road
Radwell
Baldock
Herts
SG7 5EN**

Applicant: **Mr Martin Carey**

Proposal: **Erection of detached industrial storage building
following demolition of two existing industrial storage
buildings and installation of external lighting and
increase in material storage height to 6.0m.
(Development has commenced).**

Ref. No: **25/03197/FP**

Officer: **Henry Thomas**

Date of expiry of statutory period: 20/04/2025

Extension of statutory period: 18/09/2026

Reason for Delay: Requesting further details and awaiting an available committee meeting.

Reason for Referral to Committee: The site area exceeds 1 hectare therefore this is an application that should be considered by this Committee under relevant provisions of the Constitution.

1.0 Site History

1.1 21/03160/FP - Use of site for open storage (use class - B8 (storage and distribution))
including installation of hardstanding, associated landscaping and infrastructure.
Conditional Permission.

1.2 19/01077/FP - Erection of detached storage building
Conditional Permission.

1.3 24/00736/FP - Installation of EV charging zones, including the erection of sub-station
enclosure, LV panel, meter cabinet and associated works.
Withdrawn.

- 1.4 16/02937/1 - Detached storage building to store rolls of artificial grass.
Conditional Permission.
- 1.5 16/02690/1 - Retention of change of use from class B8 to proposed obstacle race training centre,(including portacabin, portaloo and approx. 20 obstacles (trenches, tunnels, tyres etc.) and parking for 20 vehicles.
Conditional Permission.
- 1.6 15/00479/1 - Change of use from class B8 to proposed obstacle race training centre,(including portacabin, portaloo and approx. 20 obstacles (trenches, tunnels, tyres etc.))
Conditional Permission.
- 1.7 07/01813/1 - Retention of detached single storey office buildings. Single storey extension to warehouse and detached stable building (as amended by plans received 16/10/2007)
Conditional Permission.
- 1.8 95/01246/1 - Change of use; from agricultural to Class B2 (General Industrial), alterations to the elevations and car parking facility.
Conditional Permission.

2.0 **Policies**

2.1 **North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011 – 2031**

Spatial Strategy and Strategic Policies

Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP6: Sustainable transport

Policy SP9: Design and sustainability

Policy SP10: Healthy communities

Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability

Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, biodiversity and landscape

Development Management Policies

Policy ETC2: Employment development outside Employment Areas

Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters

Policy T2: Parking

Policy D1: Sustainable design

Policy D3: Protecting living conditions

Policy D4: Air quality

2.2 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

Design SPD

Sustainability SPD

2.3 **National Planning Policy Framework (2023)**

Chapter 4: Achieving sustainable development

Chapter 5: Meeting the challenge of climate change.

Chapter 7: Building a strong, effective economy.

Chapter 12: Making effective use of land

Chapter 14: Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 17: Pollution, public protection and security
Chapter 19: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Site Notice and Neighbour Notification** – 55 representations have been received, 54 in objection and one neutral comment. Their comments are summarised as:

- Light pollution / harm to neighbour amenity.
- Harm to street scene / Visual impact
- Harm to road users / Highways safety
- Harm to ecology
- Landscaping from original permission not carried out
- Objection to large amounts of hardstanding
- Excessive height and lighting.

3.2 **Natural England** – No objection.

3.3 **HCC Highways** – No objection.

3.4 **Caldecote and Newnham Parish Council & Radwell Parish Meeting**– Objection.

“As evidenced above we believe that planning permission 21/03160/FP was never lawfully implemented and therefore should be treated as both breached and lapsed for the reasons provided... The original permission set the precedent for development scale and massing that should not be exceeding and such should be scaled back to this original position.”

3.5 **NHC Ecology** – Requesting further clarification.

3.6 **National Highways** – No objection

3.7 **NHC Environmental Health** – No objection.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The application site is a roughly tri-angular shaped area of land lying to the east of the A1M southbound carriageway, south of the spur road link to the Baldock Services and west of the Great North Road and as a result has an island position surrounded by the road network. The site area is 23120.00 sqm (2.32 ha). The existing vehicle access is on its southern boundary linking onto the Great North Road. The site consists of predominantly hardstanding and is set back from the highway by an existing belt of vegetation / landscaping. The site is currently in use for the storage of materials which are stacked more than 2m in height.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a detached industrial storage building following demolition of two existing industrial storage buildings and installation of external lighting and increase in material storage height to 6.0m. (Development has commenced) at this established site.
- 4.2.2 The replacement storage building would be approximately 43.1m by 18.6m with a dual-pitched roof, 7m to eaves and 9.3m to ridge. The floor space would be approx. 753.6sqm (38.5sqm larger than existing) with be a steel-framed structure clad in juniper green box-profile steel sheeting
- 4.2.3 The lighting consists of 9 x 13m high poles, and one 30m high pole.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:
- The principle of the proposed development.
 - The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its resultant impact on the character and appearance of the area.
 - The impact that the proposed development would have on the living conditions of neighbouring properties.
 - The impact that the proposed development would have on car parking provision in the area.
 - The impact that the proposed development would have on the environment.

Principle of the Proposed Development, Design and Appearance

- 4.3.2 The application site falls outside of any settlement boundary within an area designated as Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt where there is a presumption against new development. Policy CGB1 outlines exceptions this:

“In the Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt, as shown on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted provided that the development:

- a) Is infilling development which does not extend the built core of a Category B village;*
- b) Meets a proven local need for community facilities, services or affordable housing in an appropriate location;*
- c) Is strictly necessary for the needs of agriculture or forestry;*
- d) Relates to an existing rural building;*
- e) Is a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification; or*
- f) Would provide land or facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and cemeteries that respect the generally open nature of the rural area.”*

- 4.3.3 As the proposed development would relate to an existing rural building, Policy CGB4 provides further guidance:

“Planning permission for the re-use, replacement or extension of buildings in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt will be granted provided that:

b) Any existing building to be converted for re-use does not require major extension or reconstruction;

c) The resultant building(s) do not have a materially greater impact on the openness, purposes or general policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt than the original building(s); and

d) Any outbuilding(s) are sited as close as possible to the main building(s) and visually subordinate to them.”

- 4.3.4 The objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include those seeking to secure the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places (Chapter 14 – Achieving well-designed places). Policy DP3 of the NPPF states that *“Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings”*. In this regard, Policy D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan is consistent with the objectives set out within the NPPF.
- 4.3.5 The resultant building would be larger than the existing buildings combined, although in terms of floorspace gain this would be modest. However, the resultant building would be substantially taller and bulkier than the existing buildings. It would be located close to the side/rear boundary of the site where it would have some visibility to highway users. It is noted that the proposed juniper green box sheeting would help minimise its visual contrast against the treelines and is a common material and colour for other industrial barns within rural settings. However, the excessive height and scale would result in a dominant form of development which would visually harm the rural, verdant character of the A507 and A1M junction.
- 4.3.5 In addition to this, the proposed 30m pole would further contribute to the loss of the rural character. At 30m tall, it is visibly apparent from a distance. The post-top lantern or luminaire atop the 30m high pole is very visible for Highway users on the A1M, Great North Road and the village of Radwell to the south, more so when it is illuminated during the winter months. Due to its excessive height, the 30m lighting pole contributes to the further departure from the local rural character.
- 4.3.6 With regards to the 9m poles, these have a similar height and design to the streetlights that can be seen along the Baldock Services roundabout. Although there are no streetlights alongside where they would be placed, I consider that their modest height and scale would not result in any significant harm to the local rural character.
- 4.3.7 With regards to the increased storage height, the bulk of the storage is sufficiently set back from the highway and has limited visibility. Only the stacked units along the boundary would have an impact upon the local character. Although the site has some screening from the tree line, there is significantly more visibility during the winter months when deciduous trees are not in leaf. Given that the proposal seeks to raise this height to 6m

which would sit substantially above the tree line. This would result in further visual harm to the rural character of the highway.

- 4.3.8 The proposed development would inherently have a greater impact on the openness and rural character and appearance of the area, and the general purposes of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. Therefore, the proposal does not comply with Policies D1, CGB1 and CGB4 of the Local Plan and substantial weight is attributed to this harm.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity:

- 4.3.9 A core planning principle set out in the NPPF is to always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. This principle is reflected in the provisions of Policy D3 of the Local Plan.
- 4.3.10 Environmental Health has not raised any objections to the proposed light output of the floodlights. In my view, whilst I find them unacceptable in design terms of the visual appearance of the site. They would not directly harm the amenity of any neighbouring occupiers.
- 4.3.11 The proposed development would, on balance, not result in any unacceptable overbearing impact or loss of light or privacy to other nearby neighbouring occupiers and neutral weight is therefore attributed to this matter.

Impact on Parking and Highways:

- 4.3.12 HCC Highways and National Highways have not raised any objections to the proposed scheme. The proposed luminance would not affect highway users from a highway safety perspective. The continued use of the business is not considered to impact highway safety. The proposal complies with Policies T1 and T2 of the Local Plan, and Chapter 15 of the NPPF, and neutral weight is given to the absence of harm.

Environmental Matters

- 4.3.13 North Herts Council's Ecologist has not formally objected to the scheme and has recommended a condition for an EPS license. They have requested further details which will be addressed within an addendum to the committee report. Should a resolution to grant be made by the committee, a suitable hours of operation condition could be agreed by the ecology officer.
- 4.3.14 The proposed development, by virtue of its scale in general terms together on an industrial site would have no significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Chapter 19 of the NPPF. Therefore, neutral weight is attributed to this matter.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.3.15 The existing site is predominantly hardstanding with limited existing habitat space, as such the proposed development is 'de minimis' and would not exceed the threshold of 25 sqm of on-site habitat, or and/ less than 5 meters of linear habitats. This application is

therefore exempt from BNG legislation defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Sustainability and Business Case:

- 4.3.16 The NPPF sets out in chapter 4 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 17 confirms that there are three overarching objectives to sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 4.3.17 The proposed development would support the growth of the existing business on site in line with Local Plan Policy ETC2. As such. The applicant has put forward the justification that the proposed development is required to support the continued use of the site which provides 30 full-time jobs, although limited detail has been provided.
- 4.3.18 NPPF Policy E3 supports development proposals for Freight and Logistics where they have:
- a. *Have good access to transport networks (including via sustainable transport modes where possible) appropriate to the type of development;*
 - b. *Be sited and designed to limit environmental impacts (such as through the colocation or intensification of facilities to limit vehicle movements, provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure and sensitive building design and landscaping). The impact on local residents or other neighbouring uses should be acceptable, taking into account proposed mitigation, especially where night-time operations will be required; and*
 - c. *Provide sufficient and secure parking for lorries or other vehicles to cater for the anticipated use, in accordance with policy TR4(1)(e).*
- 4.3.19 Significant weight is given to the economic benefits arising from the retention of 30 jobs, albeit it is unclear that the development is necessary in the existing and proposed form to retain those jobs.

Other Matters

- 4.3.20 With regard to the neighbour and parish council comments regarding to breaches of condition. The current application is a retrospective application which seeks to address these issues. Should this application be refused, North Herts Council's enforcement team will reopen an enforcement case file.

4.4 Conclusion

- 4.4.1 The matters that weigh against and in favour of the development are finely balanced. However, it is considered that by reason of the siting, size, scale and design of the proposed building, height of lighting a lighting pole and material stacking, it is considered that the development would appear overly prominent in this countryside location and adversely impact the visual amenity of the site's surroundings and the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. It is considered that this harm is not outweighed by the identified

economic benefits that would arise and the support provide by relevant NPPF policies for continued business use of the site, to which significant weight is attributed. It is acknowledged that there are no objections on the grounds of highway and public safety and harm to residential amenity and these matters weigh neutrally in the planning balance.

- 4.4.2 Therefore, in conclusion, the identified harm to the character, appearance and openness of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt and conflict with Local Plan Policies D1, CGB1 and CGB4 outweighs the identified benefits, and it is therefore recommended that planning permission should be refused.

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 **Refused** for the following reason:

The proposed development, by virtue of its siting, size, scale, and design, together with the height of the lighting pole and the associated material stacking, would result in an intrusive and overly prominent form of development within this countryside location. Consequently, the proposal would cause significant harm to the character, appearance, and openness of the site's surroundings and the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. While the economic benefits of the development and the policy support for continued business use under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are acknowledged and afforded significant weight, these factors are not considered sufficient to outweigh the identified environmental and visual harm. The proposal therefore represents an unsustainable form of development that directly conflicts with Policies D1, CGB1, and CGB4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, and the core planning principles of the NPPF.

Proactive Statement

Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant in an attempt to narrow down the reasons for refusal but fundamental objections could not be overcome. 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.