

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Harriet Sanders.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/02082/FP	Erection of rear extension with covered veranda area, first floor side extension, alterations to fenestration and fascias, external cladding, repainting of existing render and brickwork and landscaping works.	Two Chimneys Stotfold Road Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 4JS

Submitted Plan Nos

5812-01A 5812-02A 5812-03 5812-04C 5812-05A

1.0 Policies

SP1	Sustainable development in North Herts
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SP12	Green infrastructure, landscape and biod
D1	Sustainable design
D2	House exts, replcmnt dwellings outbuild
D3	Protecting living conditions
T1	Assessment of transport matters
T2	Parking
NE4	Biodiversity and geological sites

2.0 Site History

2.1 None recent.

3.0 Representations

3.1 Site notice posted – no objections received.

3.2 Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation – no response at the time of writing this report.

3.3 NHDC Ecology – no objection subject to conditions.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site and Surroundings

- 4.1.1 The application site consists of an existing public house located to the north west of Letchworth Garden City. To the north and east of the site are agricultural fields; to the south is a dog walking/training park and to the west are cemetery grounds. The site is accessed off Stotfold Road, which runs along its eastern boundary.
- 4.1.2 The central part of the building is two stories in height with various single storey projections and extensions to the side and rear with both pitched and flat roofs. The overall appearance of the building is mixed with no particular cohesion in character or appearance.
- 4.1.3 There is car parking to the side and rear of the building with an outdoor seating area to the rear. There are areas of extensive, mature landscaping around the site that serves as a natural screen.
- 4.1.4 The site is located within the Green Belt and just outside the settlement boundary of Letchworth Garden City.

4.2 Proposal

4.2.1 Consent is sought for:

“Erection of rear extension with covered veranda area, first floor side extension, alterations to fenestration and fascias, external cladding, repainting of existing render and brickwork and landscaping works.”

4.2.2 In detail, this includes:

Front elevation

- Repaint existing render – soft beige grey Dulux Chalky Downs 4
- Timber clad gable ends – grey vertical timber boarding
- Remove signage
- Infill existing first floor window
- Repaint all timber windows dark grey – anthracite RAL 7016
- Existing timber fascia and verges repainted dark grey – anthracite RAL 7016

Car Park side elevation

- Remove existing porch
- Repaint existing render – soft beige grey Dulux Chalky Downs 4
- Paint existing brickwork low walls – colour not stated
- Repaint all timber windows dark grey – anthracite RAL 7016

- Clad existing side elevation in grey vertical timber boarding

Rear Elevation

- New rear extension – two storey gable end facing car park side elevation with faux hay loft detail, projecting roof with post truss details in Oak, new timber entrance doors in Dulux California Claret (12 YR 07/279) with sliding barn door detail in matching vertical cladding, roof tiles to match existing
- Timber cladding
- Repaint windows
- Paint brickwork

Side Elevation

- Retile roofslope above stairs to match existing
- Flat roof extension – brickwork to match existing
- New door entrance
- Repaint render

Landscaping

4.2.3 Planting is proposed at the front, car park side and rear elevation of the building including 7 new trees to replace the tree removed to facilitate the rear extension.

4.2.4 Hard landscaping works are proposed at the side and rear including:

- Hard resin surfacing at new entrance from car park;
- Part Indian stone or similar surface and part gravel for external dining area;
- Bark surface play area.

4.2.5 Materials – detailed above.

4.2.6 Access – no change.

4.2.7 Parking – 73 spaces existing – no change to existing.

4.2.8 Floorspace – existing 645m², proposed 870m², net additional 225m².

4.2.9 Employees – existing 8. Proposed 12.

4.3 Key Issues

Principle of development

4.3.1 The site is located within the Green Belt and just outside the settlement boundary of Letchworth Garden City.

- 4.3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states at paras 153 and 154 that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness.
- 4.3.3 The guidance notes that *“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”*
- 4.3.4 ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
- 4.3.5 The guidance continues that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the exceptions listed applies. Relevant to this application is the following exception:
- “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;”*
- 4.3.6 The provisions of NPPF are supported in the Local Plan under Local Plan Policy SP5. The policy states that the Council:
- “will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated.”*
- 4.3.7 In order to be supportable, any proposal in the Green Belt should either meet one of the exceptions listed in the NPPF or demonstrate that Very Special Circumstances (VSC) exist that outweigh any harm caused by the development.
- 4.3.8 The applicant considers that the proposal meets the exception c) in the NPPF and argues that it is not a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original building. There is no definition of what constitutes a ‘disproportionate addition’. However, both quantitative and qualitative factors should be considered.
- 4.3.9 The proposal will result in a net addition of 225m². This is approximately a 35% increase which is substantial. The rear extension is large and introduces a substantial form and bulk to the existing building. However, the additions relate adequately to the original building which is varied in form, height, style and layout. Whilst the additions are large, they are considered to be on the cusp of what can be considered to be disproportionate in the context of the existing commercial building.
- 4.3.10 The proposal is therefore considered to meet the exception criterion but is on the cusp of being acceptable. In order to be robust, Very Special Circumstances have also been assessed and set out below.

Very Special Circumstances

4.3.11 If a proposal fails to meet the exception criteria in para 154, proposals should not be permitted unless Very Special Circumstances exist that outweigh the potential harm resulting from the proposal.

4.3.12 The applicant has submitted a Planning Statement and additional information setting out why the proposed works need to be undertaken and why the layout and design needs to be as submitted.

4.3.13 The applicant states the following key points:

- The investment into the Two Chimneys is necessary due to the ongoing demands on the pub sector in the UK and the fact that the current operation is struggling financially.
- Hickory's are an independent brand with 14 sites around the country and delivers a high-class food and drink option with a Southern States of America style. Service levels are extremely high and customer satisfaction is also a priority.
- The design of the proposal reflects this "Southern Style" which is not only important to the brand but also to the site's functionality. Flexibility of space is important and the design of the extensions allows for additional, safe and secure seating areas.
- The proposal will broaden the location's appeal in line with consumer trends by:
 - Amending the flow of the site to improve guest access from the car park;
 - Extending the kitchen footprint to deliver a more diverse and authentic offering;
 - Increasing the space within the restaurant to offer a more comfortable dining experience;
 - Developing a bar space that has the ability to offer a unique sports viewing experience;
 - Improving the kerb appeal of the property so it feels authentic in line with the experience.
 - With the implementation of the above, it means the restaurant can operate with a broader appeal in line with the current and predicted future trends. This will ensure the building's long-term viability and the retention of a community asset.
- The proposal will provide an improvement on the relatively dated character of the existing building, which also provides a more coherent architecture.

4.3.14 The proposal therefore seeks to invest in a currently struggling commercial enterprise. The proposed works are required to accommodate the Hickory's provision. The proposal will

maintain and improve an existing commercial business and community facility, contributing to the local economy and offering an increase in employment opportunities.

- 4.3.15 The above reasons are considered to be VSC that outweigh any potential harm arising from the proposed works. If it is considered that the exception c) of para 154 of the NPPF is not met, then it is considered that VSC exist to justify the inappropriate development.
- 4.3.16 For the reasons set out above, the principle of the proposal is supported. The proposal therefore meets the provisions for development in the Green Belt in the NPPF and Local Plan policy SP5.

Location, Design and appearance

- 4.3.17 The existing building is a mixture of design and appearance and has a limited overall design style. The proposed works will significantly alter the overall appearance of the building. The proposed rear extension and veranda will be a substantial addition to the building. However, it will be sited to the rear of the building and will not be particularly visible from the street. The area is already used by customers for dining/seating in the garden.
- 4.3.18 The design style for the Hickory's brand is 'southern states of America'. The overall design is considered to be acceptable and will not cause harm to the existing streetscene.
- 4.3.19 The proposed materials are acceptable but it is reasonable to control the details of the materials by condition.
- 4.3.20 The proposed landscaping is acceptable and will help to enhance the overall appearance of the proposals.
- 4.3.21 Overall the design and appearance of the proposal meet the requirements of the NPPF and Local Plan policies D1 and D2 and are acceptable.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

- 4.3.22 The application site is relatively isolated. It is surrounded by a dog training facility, cemetery and open agricultural fields. No harm to neighbouring properties will occur from the proposed works.
- 4.3.23 The proposal meets the requirements of the NPPF and Local Plan policy D3 in terms of impact on neighbouring properties and is acceptable.

Parking and Access

- 4.3.24 SPD "Vehicle Parking at New Developments" (2011) sets out the parking standards for Food and Drink Premises.

There is a requirement of:

- 1 space per 5 m2 of floorspace of dining area plus 3 spaces per 4 employees.
- The proposed dining area is 305 m2, requiring:
 - overall customer parking – 61 spaces
 - additional 9 spaces for staff (12 employees)
 - Total - 70 spaces.

4.2.25 The proposed parking layout provides 73 spaces, which is acceptable and meets standards.

4.2.26 The existing access off Stotfold Road is to be retained to serve the site. The proposal will not result in a significant intensification of use on the site. The existing access is therefore acceptable.

4.2.27 The proposal meets the requirements of the NPPF and Local Plan policies T1 and T2 and is acceptable in terms of parking and access.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain Requirements

4.2.28 The applicant submitted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) in support of the application, which also contains a biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment. The PEA concludes that the proposal will not affect any existing habitats and the BNG assessment concludes that the proposal would result in a gain in habitat units of 10.527%. The proposed works will result in the loss of one tree which has been compensated for with the planting of 7 new trees.

4.2.29 Consultation response from NHDC ecologist responded as follows:

“Thank you for consulting me, having read through the submitted documents I would have no objection to the proposal. The 2025 Ecological Appraisal did not find any protected species interest associated with the site.

The August 2025 Statutory Biodiversity Metric records the site as having a baseline value 0.53 Habitat Units with post development habitat units are expected to be 0.58 giving a net gain of 10.5% as a result of tree planting. Trees are classed as medium distinctiveness which need to be secured for 30 years.

In this case the use of a Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) is advised.”

4.2.30 It is reasonable to attach conditions controlling the provision of a Landscape Ecological Management Plan and Biodiversity Gain Plan. The applicant has agreed to these pre commencement conditions.

Environmental Implications

4.3.31 Section 14 of the NPPF sets out how the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. The principles set out in Section 14 are reflected in Local Plan Policy D1, which sets out that development proposals should take all reasonable opportunities to reduce energy

consumption and waste, retain existing vegetation and propose new appropriate planting, and future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle.

4.3.32 The proposed development would have no significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Section 14 of the NPPF and Local Plan.

4.4 Conclusion

4.1 Acceptable in planning terms.

4.5 Alternative Options

4.5.1 None applicable

4.6 Pre-Commencement Conditions

4.6.1 I can confirm that the applicant is in agreement with the pre-commencement conditions that are proposed.

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. Details and/or samples of materials to be used on all external elevations and the roof of the development hereby permitted shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority before the development is commenced and the approved details shall be implemented on site.

Reason: To ensure that the development will have an acceptable appearance which does not detract from the appearance and character of the surrounding area and to

comply with Policy D1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

4. The development shall not commence until a Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority and including:
 - (a) a non-technical summary;
 - (b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the LEMP;
 - (c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
 - (d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development.

The measures should be delivered and remain on site thereafter.

Reason: In order to safeguard biodiversity and comply with Policy NE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:
 - (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
 - (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Hertfordshire District Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>).

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Advice about how to prepare a Biodiversity Gain Plan and a template can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/submit-a-biodiversity-gain-plan>

The Biodiversity Gain Plan should be submitted as an 'application for approval of details reserved by condition following grant of planning permission' via the Planning Portal.

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  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 11 November 2025	