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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: 24/01604/FP
HCC ref: NH/21816/2024
HCC received: 16 December 2024
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

Temple Dinsley, (formerly The Princess Helena College), School Lane, Preston, SG4 7RT

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

AMENDED PROPOSAL

Full Planning Permission : Change of use of the Former Princess Helena College and associated land from a former all-girls boarding school to 69no. private residential dwellings (Use Class C3), including the conversion of the main Grade II* Listed House to 35no. new apartments, the conversion of the retained Teaching Block to provide 8 new apartments, the demolition of the existing sports hall building and science block and replacement with 20no. new houses and 2no. new apartments, the conversion of the Tank House and the Pump House buildings to provide 2no. detached dwellings and the erection of 2no. new dwellings located within the summerhouse plantation. The provision of a new car-park together with domestic storage units and covered parking bays to include solar PV Panels, and waste storage units and the provision of new driveways and associated works. Erection of new sub-station building and plant room. In addition, the associated landscaping of the site including provision of new pathways and gates and the reinstatement of Grade II* Listed Parks and Gardens and the provision of a new Cricket Pitch and associated Cricket Pavilion

Recommendation

OTHER

Highways Comments:

The Highway Authority (HA) is being consulted by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) following a submission by the Preston Parish Council (PC) commenting on the response to the application by the Highways Authority, dated 31.10.24.

To clarify the HA was aware of the PC's position which had been conveyed to the HA by the LPA, the PC comments on footways were subjective relating to the aesthetics of the village appearance.

Whilst the HA appreciates and understands the views of the PC, however the HA's paramount consideration in any application is to assess applications objectively to ensure the design, build and provisions are safe for all road users, which the HA is duty bound to apply.

Nevertheless, the HA response to the PC comments (in ***bold/italic***) are listed below:

“Should additional footways be essential for health and safety reasons, the Parish Council would like serious consideration to be given to using alternative, environmental friendly materials which will be more appropriate in this rural community rather than tarmac.”

The HA in principle would acknowledge the PC suggestion and will request the applicant to submit detailed plans of the type, material and specification of footway build to demonstrate which best integrates within the existing public realm, and for the plans to be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority.

The Parish Council notes that the Highways Authority recommends enhancing the current bus stops with Kassel kerbs and bus stop poles but would like to point out that these were agreed and funded by the Castlefield development, although this work has not yet been undertaken.

The Parish Council also supports an improved bus service for the wider community as well as new residents.

The HA welcomes the PC support, the above measures will be addressed and coordinated by HCC Bus Service Development team.

The Parish Council does not support the suggestion of a bus shelter on The Green, it will detract from this most prominent feature of the village, its most attractive green space, a central focus for the community.

In line with HCC Local Transport Plan, mitigation should focus on the enhancing and encouraging active travel and public transport use. To deliver this, mitigation through sustainable transport improvements must be provided by the applicant. If it's possible for a bus shelter that can be designed in a manner that would still enhance use and blend in with the local environment, it will be for the applicant to consult with HCC Bus Service Development team.

The Parish Council understands that the Highways Authority would like to include pedestrian crossing points on School Lane, Hitchin Road, and Church Lane but questions if these are viable propositions as they will reduce the road width on already narrow lanes.

Both local and national policies as previously stated now place greater emphasis on Designing for Pedestrians and Cyclists, consequently developments should be 'permeable' linked to the surrounding network, allowing safe, direct routes for pedestrians and cyclists. Walking and cycling on safe routes is a requirement. Recent update to the Highway Code and NPPF now give greater priority to vulnerable road users such as cyclists and pedestrians over vehicles. The applicant is required to provide dropped kerbs either side of a crossing (the proposals do not involve any reduction in carriageway width) and could be of a type that is environmentally friendly, it will be for the applicant to address, if possible.

The Parish Council strongly supports the Highways Authority's recommendation to enhance road safety by improving speed signage and warnings on the approaching roads, particularly Hitchin Road.

The Parish Council has previously requested that the 30mph sign on Hitchin Road should be moved back nearer the Preston sign so that traffic approaches the village at a lower speed but this has been repeatedly rejected by the Parish Council's contacts at Hertfordshire Highways.

Improved signage and warnings would also be beneficial on entry to the village from the Luton direction and via School Lane.

The Parish Council would like to suggest that improved signage could be a condition of planning consent for the benefit of those living at the development but also for the wider community.

The Parish Council would be willing to participate in any initiative to reduce the speed limit within the village to 20mph, as this is something it has been enquiring about for some considerable time with no positive response.

The HA welcomes the PC support for the HA measures proposed to mitigate traffic speeds, thereby improve public safety, the suggestions proposed by the PC will be forwarded to the applicant to take on board in consultation with HCC highways implementation team, and if the above measures are feasible then these can form part of the applicant's obligations to implement.

The Highway Authority reserves the right to assess a future application/extend the assessment scope on its own qualities and request further information. These comments are given on a without prejudice basis, that do not commit the HA to any position, action, recommendation, or decision. If required opinions may change depending on the access strategy, outcome of interim appraisals and the results of the iterative transport statement process.

Recommendation:

The application has currently a refusal recommendation from the HA (comments dated 29 October 2024), the above comments to form part of additional Highways comments response that the applicant will need to take on board as part of any further revised submissions.

Signed

Senober Khan

14 January 2025