



Mark Youngman
Development Management Group Manager
Hertfordshire County Council
Postal Point CHN115
Farnham House
Six Hills Way
Stevenage
SG1 2ST

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: 25/02064/OP
HCC ref: NH/26487/2025
HCC received: 15 September 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Samuel Tearle

Location

Land Adjacent To 10, Hambridge Way, Pirton, Hertfordshire,

Application type

Outline

Proposal

Outline Application : Erection of up to 50 dwellings including affordable housing, together with amenity space, landscaping and all associated infrastructure and works (all matters reserved except means of access).

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 due to insufficient information. The following additional details are required:

- Undertake an audit of the suitability of footways, cycleways, and public transport
- Spatial analysis of available local facilities and amenities and their accessibility from the site by walk, cycling and public transport.
- Provide PRow connection designs
- Provide a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit
- Provide swept path analysis
- Revisit the trip generation and inclusion of modal share

More detailed comments of the requirements are set out below.

COMMENTS / ANALYSIS

Description of Proposal

The proposal involves the development of up to 50 new homes, including affordable housing, together with amenity space, landscaping and all associated infrastructure and works, at Land adjacent to 10, Hambridge Way, Pirton, Hertfordshire.

Site Description

The proposed site is located on the southeastern corner of Pirton, a large village northwest of Hitchin in North Hertfordshire. The Site comprises of an undeveloped parcel of land bounded by Hambridge Way to the north and farm fields to the south and east.

The proposed access is from Walnut Tree Road via the Cotman End. Walnut Tree Road is a two-way single carriageway road with a footway along its eastern edge. The road is subject to a 30mph speed limit.

There are a number of Public Rights of Way ("PRoW") which surround the Site. Figure 2.2 of the TA illustrates the PRoW network.

The applicant has provided the following documents:

- ☐ Transport Assessment - (TA dated July 2025)
- ☐ Location plan
- ☐ Topographical Survey
- ☐ Concept/ Parameter Plan
- ☐ Illustrative Site Plan
- ☐ Land Use Plan
- ☐ Proposed Hambridge Way Junction Improvements
- ☐ Proposed Hambridge Way Emergency Access

History

The Planning Statement indicates that a review of North Hertfordshire District Council's 'Public Access' system demonstrated that the Site has no relevant planning history.

Pre-application discussions were held with HCC to determine the scope of the assessment.

Planning Policy

The Transport Assessment submitted does not provide any reviews for applicable policies. In any future submissions, it is required to review applicable policies but not limited to

- ☐ National Planning Policy Framework (Dec. 2024)
- ☐ Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4
- ☐ North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011 – 2031)
- ☐ North Hertfordshire - Vehicle Parking at New Development Supplementary Planning Document
- ☐ Hertfordshire County Council Guide to Developer Infrastructure Contributions (2021)

The Highway Authority would recommend further review of Cycle Infrastructure Design – Local Transport Note 1/20 (2020) and Inclusive Mobility (2021), ensuring adequate inclusive accessibility to local facilities including public transport, shops and schools by active travel modes, in accordance with the Government's Gear Change policy agenda and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act (2005).

Additionally, the applicant should also review HCC's Place and Movement Design Guide. Any improvement works to the highway and internal road network must be designed in accordance with the HCC Place and Movement Design Guide.

Trip Generation

Table 5.1 of the TA provides the vehicular trip rates proposed for the residential development, considering all units fall under land use category 03-A (privately owned market housing). However, there is an inconsistency in the trip rates shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2, when compared to the trip rates available in Appendix I.

Overall, the Highway Authority is content with the selection criteria used; however, it is recommend that the Applicant revisits the TRICS assessment by excluding sites surveyed on Fridays. Additionally, the Applicant should incorporate the people trips and provide the base modal share. This will help provide a breakdown of trips expected to use the different modes under both the baseline scenario and with implementation of the proposed sustainable travel targets.

Trip Distribution

The development trips have been distributed using the Census 2011 Journey to Work data for North Hertfordshire 014 MSOA and assigned to the network. The development is expected to have a large traffic impact at the Walnut Tree Road / High Street / Royal Oak Lane crossroad junction, with nearly 88% of trips anticipated to travel south to reach the various destinations.

Capacity Assessments

The Applicant has undertaken capacity assessments using Junctions software at the following junctions:

1. Cotman End / Walnut Tree Road priority junction
2. Walnut Tree Road / High Street / Royal Oak Lane crossroads

Baseline traffic

Manual Classified Count surveys were carried out on 12 June 2025 at the above junctions for the morning and evening peak periods, including the queue length surveys. While it has been noted that there is an outlier in the traffic data for the 15-minute period between 17:30 and 17:45, the network peak hour considered is 17:45 to 18:45 and therefore, we have no comments to raise.

Traffic Growth

To account for the background traffic growth, TEMPro has been utilised to estimate the growth rates from 2025 to 2030, and we consider this as suitable.

Committed Development

It is recommended that the Applicant liaises with the Local Planning Authority to confirm if any committed development in the area is to be considered in the assessments.

Base model validation

It is acknowledged that the Applicant has undertaken a validation exercise of the base models using the queue survey data. Appendix C shows that 5-minute spot checks were carried out to estimate the queue length for each arm of the junctions. The Highway Authority would like to understand if a maximum of 5-minute queue length measurements were also taken.

Impact assessment

- a. Model Geometry: Based on our high-level review, some inconsistencies have been noted with the geometric parameter inputs for both the junctions. However, it is not considered that these will result in any significant variations in the model results.

- b. Trip impact: The model results indicate that the development is expected to have minimal traffic impacts at both the junctions.
- c. Proposed improvement: The proposed pedestrian improvements relating to implementation of the crossing points along the Royal Oak lane and Hambridge Way at the Walnut Tree Road / High Street / Royal Oak Lane crossroads is expected to result in minimal traffic impacts only.

Accessibility

Walking

The TA highlights that the pedestrian infrastructure surrounding Walnut Tree Road and High Street in Pirton is characterised by a continuous footway on the eastern side of Walnut Tree Road, commencing at the existing site access and extending northwards into the village centre. This footway, approximately 1.5 metres wide, includes dropped kerbs near the junction with High Street and continues westward to key local amenities such as a convenience store, post office, primary school, village hall, and public house.

The applicant highlights that south of the site access, while formal footways are absent, wide grass verges provide informal pedestrian routes separated from vehicular traffic, which is typical in rural settings like Pirton. Opposite the site access, a public footpath leads to The Bury greenspace and connects to the western part of the village, offering access to a church, public house, bus stops, and residential areas.

The applicant has proposed improvement works to the pedestrian facilities at the Hambridge Way / Royal Oak Lane crossroads within the Strand 1 obligations. These works have been proposed to facilitate better connectivity for pedestrians by introducing formalised crossing points along Royal Oak Lane and Hambridge Way, to tie in with existing infrastructure and ensure continuous movement of pedestrians. It is proposed (DWG 2210-050.PL03 A) to reduce the width of the Hambridge Way bell mouth to allow room to introduce a footway connecting to the crossing points supported by tactile paving.

Any proposed mitigation measures/ off site works on the local highway network are expected to be supported by a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit.

Additionally, the TA notes that during the pre-application consultation, it was highlighted that a review of the national speed limit on Hambridge Way should be undertaken. A review of highway safety has been carried out, and it is considered that this alteration would not be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms. It is concluded that the implementation of the proposed development will maintain the same level of safety and provision as that provided by the neighbouring approved and constructed developments.

Furthermore, under Strand 2 contributions, the applicant has identified surface improvement interventions for Bridleway 21 north of the site. The Highway Authority recommends submitting the detailed design and surface material plan, and it is also advised to liaise with the PRow officer.

Cycling

The applicant highlights that Pirton benefits from a cycling-friendly environment, supported by its residential road network with a 30mph speed limit. The village is intersected by Bridleway 21, which forms part of the Icknield Way Cycle Trail, offering strategic connectivity from Thetford to Letchworth and the Chilterns. This route enables residents to access nearby towns such as Ickleford, Hitchin, and Letchworth Garden City by bicycle. The Chiltern Cycleway also traverses Pirton via Hitchin Road, providing links to local centres such as Barton-le-Clay and Stevenage, with clear signage aiding navigation.

Supplementary local routes, including Hambridge Way and the Wood Lane Bridleway loop, further enhance the village's cycling infrastructure, offering well-signed and accessible paths for short-distance travel.

Public Transport

The nearest bus service to the proposed development site is located north of Walnut Tree Road on Royal Oak Lane, where informal bus stops exist on both sides of the carriageway. Pirton is served exclusively by the number 89 bus route, which operates between Hitchin and Henlow Camp. This service provides seven weekday journeys, with the first bus arriving at 06:55 and the final departure at 18:57.

Although the applicant recognises that the bus stops lack dedicated infrastructure, it is highlighted that the frequency and coverage of the available service provide residents with a reasonable level of public transport accessibility.

The applicant notes that pre-application discussions identified the enhancement of the 89 bus service between Henlow Camp and Hitchin via Pirton as a suitable use, benefiting both residents and the wider community. However, the applicant highlights that Junction and bus stop improvements on High Street are not considered necessary due to scale, scope and distance, but HCC could choose to allocate contributions towards them.

Bus stop improvements on Royal Oak Lane, such as a pole, flag and bus cage, were noted as potential enhancements within the available highway land and this improvement could be funded under strand 2 contributions. However, it is highlighted that there is limited highways land to introduce the full suite of improvements by HCC.

The Highway Authority notes that bus stops on Royal oak lane are within the acceptable walking distance from the proposed access points of the proposed development and that there are opportunities to improve the attractiveness of bus services through consideration of improvements to the accessibility and bus stop facilities at these bus stops. The introduction of tactile paving at pedestrian crossing points, shelters, seating and raised Kassel kerbing should each be considered to improve the attractiveness of public transport.

The Highway Authority would recommend that the applicant provide a spatial and accessibility assessment using tools, including but not limited to isochrone mapping, to assess the distance to bus stops, local facilities, and amenities, and their accessibility by walking and cycling. A comprehensive evaluation of the site's accessibility to essential local services, including but not limited to healthcare facilities, primary schools, and other amenities, is required to ensure an informed assessment of sustainable travel options.

The lack of sustainable transport options to the site goes against the Policy 1 (Transport User Hierarchy), Policy 2 (Influencing land use planning) and Policy 5 (Development Management), contained within Hertfordshire LTP 4. HCC will require assurance that the development will be sustainable, in accordance with current policy promoting non-private vehicle-based trips.

Highway Safety

The applicant has utilised the CrashMap platform to examine personal injury traffic collisions that have occurred within the most recent five-year period of available accident data. The review indicates that no collisions have taken place along the site frontage on Walnut Tree Road. Within Pirton itself, only one slight collision was recorded at the junction of High Street and Cromwell Way, situated in the centre of the village. On this basis, the applicant concludes that Pirton maintains a

strong safety record, and the proposed development is not anticipated to introduce any highway safety risks.

The Highway Authority would recommend collecting the most recent 5 year data from the authority and review for any concerns and consider mitigation if required.

Vehicle Access

It is highlighted that the proposed site access would be via an extension of the existing residential access road i.e. Cotman End. This extension has been designed to incorporate the crossing of footpath 5.

The applicant has also emphasised that two options for the site access were discussed with HCC during pre-application consultations. Following these discussions, Option 1 was identified as the preferred solution and is being progressed for further consideration.

Drawing 2210-050.PL01 of the TA demonstrates the access arrangements from Cotman End. The access arrangements provide a narrowing of the access to accommodate the crossing of the established footpath 5, promoting full pedestrian priority. It is highlighted that the additional proposed development will not alter the visibility of the proposed scheme access.

The proposed access road extension from Cotman End would remove two existing visitor spaces, which will be relocated nearby and provided in addition to the parking required for the new development.

An emergency access is also planned for the development, situated in the north-eastern corner and accessed via Hambridge Way, making use of the existing entry point to the agricultural field. It is highlighted that this route will be designated exclusively for emergency situations, but when not required for such purposes, it will serve as a pedestrian and cycle access.

The applicant has highlighted that the provision of the site access and secondary emergency/pedestrian access will be provided under a S278 agreement within the Strand 1 obligations.

The Highway Authority would like to highlight that the main access would qualify for the P2/M1 street typology recommended under the HCC Place and Movement guidance. The minimum carriageway width recommended for the P2/M1 category of streets is 5.5 metres, and that of the footway is 2 metres. The proposed access arrangements do not meet these requirements.

Furthermore, at the point where the site access narrows, the applicant has proposed to implement a one-way working system with priority control to facilitate the safe movement of pedestrians, reducing the running width to 3.7 metres and thereby permitting only single-file vehicle movement. This approach is supported; however, it is necessary to demonstrate that a standard large car can safely pass through this narrowed section while, on the opposite side, a refuse vehicle is stationary at the give way line.

It is essential to carry out a swept path analysis to demonstrate that an 11-metre refuse vehicle can safely access the site in a forward gear.

It is noted that the emergency access is provided from the Hambridge Way. The Highway Authority would like to highlight that the Hambridge Way for majority of its length is a narrow carriageway of less than 3.7m width. Additionally, at present, the Hambridge Way has a 'No Vehicle' signage at approximately 120m from the junction with the Walnut Tree Road and Royal Oak Lane.

It is noted that emergency access to the site is proposed via Hambridge Way. The Highway Authority wishes to emphasise that, for the majority of its length, Hambridge Way comprises a narrow carriageway measuring less than 3.7 metres in width. As outlined in Chapter 7, Clause 7.2.3 of the Manual for Streets, it is recommended to consult with the local Fire Safety Officer for a carriageway width of less than 3.7 meters.

Furthermore, it should be noted that there is currently a 'No Vehicles – Except of Access' sign positioned approximately 120 metres from the junction with Walnut Tree Road and Royal Oak Lane.

Pedestrian and Cyclist Access

Pedestrian access is proposed via a 1.8-metre-wide footway extending from Cotman End into the site along the principal access route. In addition, a 3.7-metre-wide emergency access is proposed at the north-eastern corner of the site, which will also accommodate pedestrian and cycle access. A single bollard will be in place during the nominal use of the access to allow for only pedestrian and cyclist use.

It should be noted that, as referenced above, the recommended minimum footway width for streets classified as P2/M1 is 2 metres. It is therefore essential that this standard is met in the final design for the main site access via Cotman End.

Furthermore, the submitted Concept / Parameters Plan (DWG. 22130 (D) 015 Rev. D) illustrates 2 additional connections to the existing footpath network on the northwestern and southeastern corner of the site. The Highway welcomes the proposal. However, it is recommended to submit the detail design of these connections. It is also necessary to consult the PRoW officer for any proposal involving PRoWs.

The submitted Concept / Parameters Plan (DWG. 22130 (D) 015 Rev. D) identifies two additional proposed connections to the existing footpath network, located at the north-western and south-eastern corners of the site. The Highway Authority welcomes these proposals; however, it is recommended that detailed designs for these connections be provided. Furthermore, it is essential to consult with the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Officer regarding any proposals that involve public rights of way.

It has been identified that the immediate junction with the proposed site extension currently lacks both dropped kerbs and tactile paving. A thorough evaluation of the existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in the vicinity of the site is required, and appropriate mitigation measures should be implemented where necessary to ensure accessibility and safety for all users.

It is recommended that the development proposals must include adequate footways to an acceptable standard (at a minimum 2m width), dropped kerbs and tactile paving to enable safe and suitable access for pedestrians and mobility impaired users, in line with HCC Local Transport Plan Policy 1 and NPPF para 115 (a, b, c), to the existing sustainable infrastructure.

Road Safety Audit

Any proposed mitigation measures on the local highway network are expected to be supported by a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit. Any concerns identified by a road safety audit should be addressed by a designer's report detailing how any safety issues are to be addressed. This may lead to changes in the design. The proposed site access should not be approved in the absence of a road safety audit and a satisfactory designer's report addressing any concerns.

S278 Agreement

Any works within the highway boundary (including alterations to the footway and the existing site access) would need to be secured and approved via a Section 278 Agreement with HCC.

Swept Path Analysis

No swept path assessment has submitted as a part of this application. It is required to undertake swept path analysis using the following vehicles:

- 5.079m Large Car (SVD)
- 11m long Refuse Collection Vehicle
- 10.1m long Fire Appliance

The drawings should demonstrate that these vehicles can access the site safely in forward gear with fire appliance access complying with the standards set out in Manual for Streets section 6.7 as well.

Internal Layout

The internal layout must comply with design standards set in HCC's latest Place and Movement Design Guide for P2/M1 residential street.

The internal road network must include adequate footways to an acceptable standard (at a minimum 2m width), dropped kerbs and tactile paving to enable safe and suitable access for pedestrians and mobility impaired users, in line with HCC Local Transport Plan Policy 1 and NPPF para 115 (a, b & c).

Measures to prevent surface water runoff onto the public highway will need to be demonstrated.

Parking (Car and Cycle)

The applicant has reviewed the North Hertfordshire - Vehicle Parking at New Development Supplementary Planning Document and confirmed that the development will confirm to the car and cycle parking standards. The cycle parking provisions should be aligned with LTN1/20 requirements.

Hertfordshire County Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and the HCC Local Transport Plan Policy 5 requires all new developments to provide EV infrastructure. The DfT's Decarbonising Transport (2021) states that in 2030 the sale of new petrol and diesel cars will cease. The NPPF paragraph 112 (e) also requires sites to enable charging. Therefore, each dwelling must be served by at least one active EV charging unit. A standard condition will be required to provide electric vehicle charging points for each residential dwelling.

Refuse and Service Delivery

The applicant will need to provide details of the refuse and servicing arrangements for the proposed dwellings. Swept path assessments for the internal layout will be required for both standard refuse and service vehicles.

Travel Plan

Due to the scale and nature of the development, a travel plan will not be required.

Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP)

HCC would require a full Construction Traffic Management Plan to ensure construction vehicles would not have a detrimental impact on the highway network. A condition would be required to provide adequate parking for construction vehicles on-site to prevent on-street conflict and impacts to highway safety. Details submitted in respect of the method statement, incorporated on a plan, shall provide for wheel cleaning facilities during the excavation, site preparation and construction

stages of the development. The method statement shall also include details of the means of recycling materials, the provision of parking facilities for contractors during all stages of the development (excavation, site preparation and construction) and the provision of a means of storage and/or delivery for all plant, site huts, site facilities and materials.

A construction management plan template may be found at:
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/development-management/highways-development-management.aspx#managementplans>

Planning Obligations

Will be set out once the above issues are resolved.

Summary

In summary, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as the highway authority, wishes to recommend refusal of the planning application in its current form, pending the submission of the additional details identified within this document to enable a positive recommendation.

Signed

Samuel Tearle

10 October 2025