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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: 25/01060/FP
HCC ref: NH/25315/2025
HCC received: 9 June 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

ROYSIA LODGE ROMAN WAY ACADEMY BURNS ROAD ROYSTON SG8 5EQ

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

Temporary change of use of former hard surfaced play area to car park for offsite construction contractor parking. Erection of temporary fencing, access road and welfare building (change of use already commenced).

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 does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

Prior to the use of the development hereby permitted a Car Parking and servicing Management Plan relating to measures to manage the car park in particular the entry/exit, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. It shall include (but not limited to) the following:

- Parking attendants/banksman to assist with directing and managing traffic entering and egressing the site including minibuses, during the operational period of the car park to ensure no impact occurs on the public highway.
- Provision for Electric Vehicle charging points

The Car Parking Management Plan shall be fully implemented before the development is brought into use, in accordance with a timeframe agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway operation and safety and in the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Prior to the use of the development hereby permitted, unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of cycling parking storage, protected pedestrian visibility splays shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. The cycle parking storage and pedestrian visibility splays measures shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with the agreed details and completed prior to occupation of the development hereby approved and shall thereafter be retained, maintained, for the duration of the development at all times.

Reason: To ensure construction of a safe development and to promote sustainable development in accordance with Policies 5, 19 and 20 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

The Electric Vehicle Charging Point and associated infrastructure details forming part of the planning application submission and indicated on the approved plans shall be implemented and brought into operation prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved.

Reason: In the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport.

ADVISORY NOTE

HCC as Highway Authority recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Note (AN) to ensure that any works within the highway are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Act 1980.

Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence.

Further information is available via the County Council website at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

Obstruction of highway: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements before construction works commence. Further information is available via the County Council website at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

New or amended vehicle crossover access (section 278): Where works are required within the public highway to facilitate a new or amended vehicular access, the Highway Authority require the construction of such works to be undertaken to their satisfaction and specification, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. If any of the works associated with the construction of the access affects or requires the removal and/or the relocation of any equipment, apparatus or structures (e.g. street name plates, bus stop signs or shelters, statutory authority equipment etc.) the applicant will be required to bear the cost of such removal or alteration.

Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission, requirements and for the work to be carried out on the applicant's behalf. Further information is available via the County Council website at:

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/changes-to-your-road/dropped-kerbs/dropped-kerbs.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

Debris and deposits on the highway: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit compost, dung or other material for dressing land, or any rubbish on a made up carriageway, or any or other debris on a highway to the interruption of any highway user. Section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development and use thereafter are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available by telephoning 0300 1234047.

Brief description in support of the proposed development by the applicant:

This Transport Statement has been prepared to support a full planning application for the temporary change of use of a playground/parking area of a former middle school into a car park for contractor parking.

A minibus shuttle system will be employed to transfer contractors from the proposed car park to the Johnson Matthew HQ construction site on Orchard Way, Royston, where a new warehouse is being constructed but there is no contractor parking.

The site comprises a car park to support existing demand for contractors further afield, the application does not have regard to parking standards; rather this is making use of available hardstanding area.

Site Location and Existing Use

The entire school site incorporates a number of interconnected and detached buildings, which were used over the years by two schools (primary and middle school), a Children's Centre (providing support to young families) and a local Scouts group.

The primary school on site, Roman Way First School, which provided space for up to 277 pupils, shut in March 2019 and was replaced by Roman Way Academy, which maintained its maximum capacity and is operational at the time of writing.

The Children's Centre was opened in 2010 and is currently operational.

The Scout hut was built on site in approximately 1992/93 and remains operational on site.

The Roysia Middle School (community school) at the site initially closed in 2011 and was succeeded by an academy school of the same name, which eventually closed in December 2019.

Site access

The entire school site has 3 established vehicular access points.

The third existing vehicular access is from Burns Road, situated circa 20m west of the give way line of the Burns Road/Betjeman Road roundabout. This access currently provides only maintenance access to the school grounds and is subject to this planning application by providing access to the proposed site.

Despite the proximity to the roundabout, it is clear that the vast majority, if not all, trips to the site would come from the west, hence there would be an extremely limited risk of cars waiting to turn right into the site holding up traffic onto the adjacent roundabout.

The access is circa 4m in width with small radii (estimated as 3m), rather than as a vehicular crossover. This geometry would not allow two vehicles to pass at the access, however, the vast majority of trips would be tidal in nature, with contractors arriving in the morning and then departing in the afternoon. There would in theory be some conflict with minibuses travelling in the opposite direction, however, as is set out further in Section 4, such instances would be extremely rare and would happen outside of the network peak hours on an unclassified road with relatively low traffic flow.

The nature of the proposed car park for contractor parking would result in tidal trips, with cars arriving in the morning and then departing in the evening. Hence there would be extremely limited, if any occurrence of vehicles travelling in opposing directions at the access.

Traffic Collision Review

A review of traffic collisions in the vicinity of the site from the CrashMap database for the most recent 5-year period available, 2019-2023 inclusive, found no collisions occurred in the immediate vicinity of the access, and just one, a slight collision, on Burns Road between the roundabouts to the east and west of the site.

This slight collision occurred at the junction of Burns Road and Eliot Road, circa 110m west of the site access, involving a car which was slowing down impacting its offside with the front of an 'other vehicle' (unspecified) which was proceeding normally along the carriageway, not on a bend.

The collision occurred in daylight and there is good visibility at the junction at any rate, and the collision occurred on a Sunday evening, hence likely with low traffic levels. The collision is therefore considered to be due to driver error.

With an absence of other incidents having occurred in the vicinity of the site highway safety does not appear to be a notable issue associated with the proposal.

Proposal

The proposal comprises the change of use of the former school playground/parking area into a car park for contractor parking. The proposed car park will be in place for a period of 18 months.

The car park will have 88 spaces, each measuring 5m x 2.5m, operating in a one-way circulation system with aisles widths of 7.76m on the longer arms and 6.54m on the shorter arms of the car park.

A welfare unit comprising a toilet, drying room and rest area will also be provided in the car park.

A minibus shuttle system will be employed to transfer contractors between the proposed car park and the Johnson Matthew HQ construction site on Orchard Way, Royston, where a new warehouse is being constructed but there is no contractor parking.

Access

Vehicular access to the car park will be retained via the existing maintenance access from Burns Road, comprising a circa 4m width and circa 3m radii, this geometry would not allow two vehicles to pass at the access, however, the vast majority of trips would be tidal in nature, with contractors arriving in the morning and then departing in the afternoon.

Trips by minibuses could in theory present a conflict with contractor cars, however, with minibuses generally accommodating up to 17 passengers, there would likely only be 4 or 5

minibuses required to transport the maximum number of staff, giving relatively limited scope for any conflict to occur, and at any rate, such occurrences would be outside of the network peak hours, on what is reasoned to be a lightly trafficked, unclassified road.

To the west of the access, a 2.4m x 43m visibility splay, in line with Manual for Streets requirements for a 30mph speed limit, is achieved to the nearside kerbline.

To the east of the access, visibility of 2.4m x 36m is achieved to the southern side of the roundabout central island, to vehicles approaching the exit from the roundabout onto Burns Road towards the site. 36m is in line with the required Manual for Streets Stopping Sight Distance for a 25mph 85th percentile speed, which is considered to likely be higher than the speed of vehicles on the roundabout.

The car park and its access will be bounded by Heras fencing to prevent access from the proposed car park into the wider grounds of the school site, as well as prevent any pupils accessing the site and ensure wider school site security.

The car park entrance would be gated, with a staff member arriving to open the gate at 06:00 to allow access, and once all minibus shuttles have departed the site the gate would be relocked. The reverse would occur in the afternoon, with the gate being unlocked to allow minibus access, and once all minibuses and contractor cars have departed the gates would be relocked.

Swept path analysis illustrates that a minibus, represented by a 7.5t panel van owing to the limited size of minibuses available on the AutoTrack vehicle library, is able to access and egress the site in forward gear.

A separate 2m wide pedestrian entrance will be provided to the west of the vehicular access, which will provide for pedestrian access in and out of the car park as necessary, as well as to the adjacent Scout Hut.

Pedestrian movements associated with the Scout Hut will be physically separated from the vehicular access route with further Heras fencing.

Existing Use Trip Generation

The application site, in and of itself, as the playground/parking area of a former school, would have no inherent trip generation.

However, it seems unlikely that the school, which is permanently closed, would reopen without use of its playground/parking area, and moreover with a contractor car park operating immediately adjacent to school buildings.

Furthermore, the proposal is for 18-months only, and of course any extension to this would require a new application through which the status of the school could be reassessed.

Therefore, it is considered that trips associated with the proposed car park can be offset from trips associated with the former school.

To estimate trip generation associated with the former school the TRICS database has been interrogated. The former school could be expected to generate 203 vehicle trips during the AM network peak hour. Vehicle trips in the PM network peak are estimated to be just 19, however, between 15:00-16:00, which would include school pick-up time, the school would have been expected to generate 172 vehicle trips.

Proposed Use Trip Generation

With the proposed use being a car park for contractors, trip generation can be calculated with a good degree of accuracy using a first principles approach.

With 88 parking spaces, it can be assumed there would be up to 98 vehicle trips in the morning likely between circa 06:00-07:00, all well before the AM network and school peak hour, comprising up to 88 arrivals by contractor cars plus up to 10 trips by minibuses (up to 5 arrivals and 5 departures); and then the reverse in the afternoon, likely between 16:00-17:00, before the PM network peak and after the school peak time.

Trips over the whole day would therefore be up to 196 vehicle trips.

This would comprise both a considerable reduction in the network peak periods and over the day as a whole.

Conclusion

The proposal is not expected to generate a perceptible negative impact on the local highway network. The proposal should therefore not be refused on transport or highways grounds.

Highways comments:

The proposal involves the change of use of the former school playground/parking area into a car park for contractor parking. The proposed car park will be in place for a period of 18 months. The car park will have 88 spaces, and will have a minibus shuttle system to transfer contractors between the proposed car park and the Johnson Matthew HQ construction site on Orchard Way, Royston, where a new warehouse is being constructed but there is no contractor parking.

The proposed car parking provision is the responsibility of the LPA to determine the level and suitability of the car parking proposals; however, it is essential that it is operated in efficient and safe manner to minimise the impact on the local highway network which is the responsibility of the HCC HA.

The HA has reviewed the TS, based on the information provided it is considered that the proposed increases in traffic flows on the local highway network (outside the network and school peak periods) are not of a scale that would materially impact the relative operation of the local highway network.

However, the HA has concerns about the suitability of the existing vehicle access given its circa 4m width and circa 3m radii, this geometry as stated in the TS would not allow two vehicles to pass at the access, furthermore whilst the TS states the vast majority of trips would be tidal in nature, and only be 4 or 5 minibuses required to transport the maximum number of staff, nevertheless vehicles will come and go (uncontrolled) the HA considers the use of the existing vehicle access for the volume and nature of the vehicles expected is unacceptable and prejudicial to highway safety.

Notwithstanding, the HA considers that measures can be taken to mitigate against any potential for hazardous conditions to occur and that would be by a Car Park and Servicing Management Plan (CPSMP) which can be effective in controlling vehicle movements and thereby prevent vehicles from reversing or queuing back onto the highway. This plan might include (but not limited to) measures such as:

- Parking attendants/banksman to assist with directing and managing traffic entering and egressing the site including minibuses, during the operational period of the car park to ensure no impact occurs on the public highway.

Also, as part of the CPSMP

- Provision for Electric Vehicle charging points

The applicant has only catered for car trips, no consideration has been given to promoting and facilitating cycle trips, contrary to local and national policies. Secure and sheltered cycle parking provision should be provided on site.

Whilst the applicant has shown pedestrian visibility splays (0.65m c 0.65m) at the vehicle access, however vehicles can still drive over them and more likely to do so with on-coming vehicles, physical measures are required to protect the splay areas.

The HA believes that there is sufficient scope for the applicant to satisfactorily address the above requirements and therefore could be conditioned.

Recommendation:

The Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of consent subject to the listed condition and advisory notes.

Signed

Senober Khan

3 July 2025