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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: 25/01122/FP
HCC ref: NH/25248/2025
HCC received: 3 June 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Geoffrey McMahon

Location

LAND ADJ TO UPPER COOMBE FARM COOMBE ROAD KELSHALL SG8 9SA

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

Erection of self-build retirement bungalow with associated hardstanding, parking, sliding gate, fence and EV charging point

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 because the development proposals are not consistent with local and national guidance regarding sustainable transport policy.

COMMENTS

Coombe Road is an unclassified road maintainable at public expense, fulfilling a local access function in the road hierarchy. The speed limit is 60mph and there have been no accidents in the road during a five-year rolling period.

Policy Review

The key documents used to assess the application are:

- Manual for Streets (2007)
- National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
- Hertfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan-4 2018-2031 (May 2018)
- Hertfordshire County Council's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (March 2024)

Drawings

The Highway Authority notes the submission of materials in support of the planning application, including drawing numbers 6578/102C (Existing and Proposed Location and Proposed Site and Block Plans) and 6578/101C (Proposed Plans and Elevations).

Sustainability

New developments are expected to provide safe access by all modes of transport, in particular non-car modes, thereby contributing to a diminishing reliance on exclusively car-borne access, in accordance with both local and national policies and guidance. These considerations are especially important when assessing a development intended for use by retired people.

Access on foot

There is no footway on Coombe Road, which is single track, unlit and has a 60mph speed limit. It would be dangerous to walk here in favourable conditions, and even more so in bad weather and/or after dark. There are no retail businesses, schools or other community services within reasonable walking distance of the site.

Access by bicycle

The local road network is equally unsafe for cyclists. The development proposals contain no reference to secure cycle storage.

Access by public transport

Active Travel England/Department for Transport guidance recommends that residential development should be located within 400m of a bus stop and 800m of a railway station. To provide a viable alternative to the private car, public transport services should run on headways of no longer than 15/20 minutes, and be available during the evenings and weekends.

The nearest transport hub is 3200m away at Ashwell and Morden station, offering half-hourly stopping train services between London and Cambridge. This is also the location of the closest bus stop to the site, which has six daily services in each direction between Royston and Letchworth, and none on weekday evenings or Sundays.

Access by private vehicle

The proposed site plan indicates parking space for two cars and an electric vehicle charging point. In view of the preceding observations, the dwelling could not be safely or reliably accessed by active or public transport modes, making this essentially a car-dependent development.

Access by emergency vehicles

The applicant has not demonstrated that the site would be accessible by a fire tender as specified under Manual for Streets 6.7.2.

Access by refuse & recycling vehicles

The applicant has not demonstrated that the location would satisfy the requirements set out under Manual for Streets 6.8.9. In particular, the proposed bin collection area appears to be inaccessible from the public highway, and would require a significantly longer drag distance than the 30m maximum recommended.

CONCLUSION

This is a fundamentally unsustainable location, being sited off a major strategic A-road with a derestricted speed limit. There are no footways, cycleways, bus services or rail services close by, and the proposed new dwelling would therefore be effectively car dependent.

The Highway Authority considers that the development proposal does not promote sustainable transport as required under Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024 revision) and Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan-4, and therefore recommends that the application be refused.

Signed

Geoff McMahon

19 June 2025