

<u>Location:</u>	Highover Farm, Highover Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 0RQ
<u>Applicant:</u>	Gill-Hudson Homes
<u>Proposal:</u>	Internal and external alterations to threshing barn to facilitate change of use to 2no. self-contained dwellings (Unit 3 to also include adjacent unlisted, single-storey courtyard building).
<u>Ref. No:</u>	25/01383/LBC
<u>Officer:</u>	Sarah Kasparian

Date of expiry of statutory period: 19 August 2025

Extension of statutory period: 20 March 2025

Reason for Delay

Due to detailed negotiations, receipt of amended plans, subsequent re-consultation and joint consideration with application ref. 25/01420/FP

Reason for Referral to Committee

Site area

1.0 **Relevant History**

- 1.1 There is no planning history for the application site.
- 1.2 This application site is adjacent to outline planning permission ref. 18/01154/OP. Both sites are within a Strategic Housing Site ref. HT1.

2.0 **Policies**

- 2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024
- 2.2 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- 2.3 North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 2022

Policy SP13: Historic Environment
Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets
Sustainability SPD 2024

The application site is associated with the Strategic Housing Site under Policy SP17: Site HT1 'Highover Farm, Hitchin' in the NHDC Submission Local Plan 2011-2031.

3.0 **Representations**

Statutory Consultees

- 3.1 **Conservation Officer** – No objection following detailed discussion and negotiations, subject to conditions.
- 3.2 **Hitchin Forum** – Generally in favour of the proposals in particular the reuse of the building. Other comments relating to observations regarding the structure of the Threshing Barn that require further detail.

Neighbour and Local Residents

- 3.3 There are no adjacent properties to the Threshing Barn to notify regarding this application. A site notices was displayed close to the entrance to the site on Highover Way.
- 3.4 No neighbour or resident representations were received in relation to the application.

4.0 Planning Considerations

4.1 Site and Surroundings

- 4.2 The application site is located at the end of Highover Way and comprises an enclosed farmyard and a farmhouse. The site is located on the southern edge of the site allocation HT1, where up to 700 homes have been granted outline permission. There are currently open arable fields to the north of the farmyard, but this is due to change in coming years.
- 4.3 The site itself is broadly rectangular in size, with access from the end of Highover Way. The current access is unmetalled; there is informal parking spaces just off Highover Way. Access continues north, a sharp right turn provides current access to the farmyard, and round to the left serving Highover Cottages.
- 4.4 The buildings on site comprise the timber framed Grade II listed Threshing Barn, another timber framed building and the remainder are brick built. The main farmyard buildings broadly form a 'C' shape, and the brick farmhouse sits in the gap of the C. There are currently two more recent smaller farm buildings in the centre of the yard. The buildings have been disused for many years now and are in a clear state of disrepair: roofs are starting to fall in, and it is very overgrown.
- 4.5 This listed building description was taken from the Historic England website:

Threshing barn, constructed in the late C16 or early C17, and extended in the C18.

MATERIALS: the threshing barn is timber-framed with weatherboard cladding over a flint plinth, having red brick infill laid in Flemish bond, and a slate roof covering.

PLAN: T-shaped in plan, comprising a rectangular-plan barn laid out on a south-west to north-east axis, with a porch projecting from the centre of the south-east elevation, and an aisle to the north-west side, most likely added in the C18.

EXTERIOR: the threshing barn has a steeply-pitched roof with a slate roof covering, plain bargeboards at the gable ends, and catslide roofs over the north-west aisle and south-east shelters. The timber-framed structure has weatherboard cladding over a flint plinth, having red-brick infill to the corners and some rebuilding to parts, including the western ends of the gable walls where it appears the north-west aisle may have been added in the C18. The gabled porch to the centre of the south-east elevation has double-leaf plank doors with strap hinges opening externally, under a jettied gable supported by knee braces. Outshot shelters were added to either side of the porch in the mid-C19, each having three timber posts supporting a slate roof (the south roof has collapsed entirely).

The north-west elevation has double-leaf plank doors opening internally, directly opposite the porch of the south-east elevation.

INTERIOR: the interior is formed of seven bays, the central bay of which retains a cobbled threshing floor. The queen-post roof structure has clasped purlins, with diagonal bracing to the principal rafters, each of which were numbered by the carpenter. The tie beams have knee braces to the principal posts, the majority of which in turn have diagonal braces to the wall plate. The collar beams are at bay and half-bay intervals. The south-east wall appears to retain a high proportion of its original timber posts, studs and diagonal braces over an original flint plinth wall. The timber posts of the former north-west wall now stand on red-brick plinths. The north-west aisle (most likely added in the C18) has aisle tie beams bolted to the north-west principal posts, and knee braces to the north-west wall, which has closely spaced studs and some diagonal braces. The gable walls retain a high proportion of their original flint construction, while their western ends have been rebuilt in brick, possibly when the north-west aisle was added in the C18. Parts of the north-west wall and porch have been repaired with red brick over various periods.

4.6 **Proposal**

- 4.7 The proposal is for both internal and external alterations to the listed threshing barn to facilitate its change of use to two self-contained dwellings.
- 4.8 Unit 3 would also include the adjacent unlisted, single-storey courtyard building on the corner, and comprise a three-bedroom unit. The main entrance would be from the corner brick building. Bedrooms would be located on the ground floor and living accommodation on the first floor.
- 4.9 Unit 4 would comprise the rest of the Threshing Barn, with its entrance taken from the projecting midstretey. This central bay of the threshing barn would be retained for its openness and original character. There would be 4 bedrooms on the ground floor and living accommodation on the first floor.
- 4.10 Externally there would be new openings in the front and rear elevations as well as the roof slopes. Internally there would be a new opening between the Threshing barn and the attached corner brick building.
- 4.11 This application should be read alongside the application for full planning permission ref. 25/01420/FP, which includes details of amenity space, parking, bin storage and other planning considerations.
- 4.12 The application is supported by the following plans and documents:
- 2208.LBC.01 Location Plan
 - Amended 2208.LBC.02B Proposed block master plan with measured survey
 - Amended 2208.LBC.03A Proposed Threshing Barn ground floor with measured survey
 - Amended 2208.LBC.04A Proposed Threshing Barn first floor with measured survey
 - Amended 2208.LBC.05B Proposed block master plan
 - Amended 2208.LBC.06A Proposed Threshing Barn ground floor
 - Amended 2208.LBC.07A Proposed Threshing Barn first floor
 - Amended 2208.LBC.08A Proposed Threshing Barn elevations units 3 and 4
 - Amended 2208.PL.13A Boundary treatment plan
 - Amended 2208.PL.02F Proposed block master plan with measured survey
 - Amended 2208.PL.05F Proposed block master plan

- 21939 MBC Global Survey Existing Floor Plans
- 21939 MBC Global Survey Existing Elevations
- 21939 MBC Global Survey Roof Plan
- Condition Survey 19 June 2025
- Heritage Statement 23 May 2025
- 7219 Structural Appraisal for Removal of Roof Covering 28 August 2025

5.0 **Key issues**

- 5.1 The only issue to consider is the impact that proposals will have on the special character or historic interest of the Grade II listed Threshing Barn.
- 5.2 Section 16(2) Physical works to listed buildings, including those listed under S1(5)a attachment and S1(5)b curtilage pre-1948) of The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The LBCA Act) stipulates that *'in considering whether to grant listed building consent for any works the local planning authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'* Effect upon listed buildings therefore should be given considerable importance and weight. Relevant factors include the extent of assessed harm and the heritage value of the heritage asset in question.
- 5.3 Paragraph 207 of the NPPF stipulates that in determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution to their setting and where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation. Paragraph 208 of the NPPF confirms that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting their setting) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise.
- 5.4 NHLP Policy HE1 stipulates that planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they will, amongst other things, lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset and this harm will be outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use. This policy reflects paragraph 215 of the NPPF which confirms that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 5.5 This listed building application seeks approval for the conversion of the Threshing Barn to form two residential properties. This application for listed building consent should be read alongside the application for full planning permission ref. 25/01420/FP, which includes the conversion of the rest of the farmyard and some new build units to comprise a total of 14 residential units, and considers the effect upon the setting of the listed building.
- 5.6 The Conservation Officers had been involved in pre-application discussions with the applicant on their proposals for residential development in the farmyard including the Threshing Barn. The initial discussions centred around the principle of conversion and retaining the central 'threshing floor' area of the central bay of the building. Officers and the applicant agreed to forming two units subject to retaining the central threshing flood,

rather than subdivide that space. Instead, this central bay will be open and given to unit 3 as a large open floor to ceiling height which will reflect the original character of the building. As far as possible the applicant has located windows and doors sensitively between historic timbers and located new partitions to respect the layout. Unit 2 will be joined to the single storey brick barn that links the two timber framed buildings.

5.7 Discussion continued after the planning application and application for listed building consent were submitted to refine the proposals. Some particular points of discussion related to the Threshing Barn which has resulted in discussion and amended plans:

- i. Detail relating to proposed window and door openings and subsequent impact on the existing timber frame
- ii. Detail related to removal of roof slate for reuse and protection of the timber structure
- iii. Questions and detail relating to how the steel frame will sit around the building, how it will be clad and how wall and roof insulation will work for the conversion

5.8 Subject to the recommended conditions, in order to restore the Threshing Barn, and to preserve and provide a long-term use of the listed building, officers have no objections to the proposals. Officers are satisfied that the provisions of Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as supported by the aims of the NPPF and NHLP Policies.

6.0 **Conclusions**

6.1 The public benefit of restoring the Threshing Barn and securing the buildings long term use, with the associated residential development at the farmyard and the contribution of the site to housing delivery weigh heavily in favour of the Listed Building Consent. The proposed development aligns with the NHLP policies and the NPPF on preserving heritage. The proposals would not harm the architectural or historic interest of the listed building and are therefore acceptable.

6.2 The NPPF confirms that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and that they should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. Overall, it is considered that the proposals would incur some low-level inherent harm to the Grade II listed Threshing Barn. However, it is considered that the proposals have sensitively considered the historic fabric of the heritage assets and will provide a new use for this currently vacant building and overall redundant site which will support their long-term maintenance and conservation. The heritage benefits of delivering this proposal would out-weigh the inherent harm arising for the heritage significance of the Grade II Threshing Barn. Accordingly, there is no reason for refusing consent for the works proposed.

7.0 **Alternative options**

7.1 No alternative options applicable.

8.0 **Pre-commencement conditions**

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

9.0 **Legal Implications**

9.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development

plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

10.0 **Recommendation**

10.1 That listed building consent be **GRANTED** subject to:

- a) The issuing of full planning permission for the farmyard reference 25/01420/FP;
- b) Providing delegated powers to the Development and Conservation Manager to update conditions with minor amendments as required;
- c) The applicant agreeing to extend the statutory period in order to complete the agreement as required; and
- d) Conditions set out below:

1. **Time limit**

The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. **Approved plans**

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. **Timber frame**

Notwithstanding the red coloured timber frame sections identified at 5.1.6 Internal Elevation 24 on page 25 and 5.1.7 Internal Elevation 26 on page 28 of the Heritage Consulting Condition Survey dated 16 June 2025, these frame members and any others identified during further inspections of the frame shall form part of a detailed full inspection with the Local Planning Authority and their removal shall be agreed with the Local Planning Authority prior to the new frame members being formed. Furthermore, where new frame sections are required, these shall be undertaken in oak unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of the listed barn under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

4. **Steel frame**

Notwithstanding reference to *'a new steel frame is to be erected in front of the existing timber frame'* at 4.1 of the Heritage Consulting Condition Survey (16 June 2025), the Threshing Barn shall not be over-framed in steel unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Full details of all proposed steelworks shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any steel work. Thereafter the steel work shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

5. Insulation

Section details of all roof and wall insulation works shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the insulation works. Thereafter this work shall be undertaken in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

6. Brickwork

A sample of the facing brickwork for the plinth shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the plinth being constructed. The plinth thereafter shall be built in accordance with the approved brick sample.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

7. Weatherboarding

A sample of any new timber weatherboarding and details of its external finish shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to its installation. Thereafter the weatherboarding shall be installed in accordance with the approved sample and finish.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

8. Fenestration

All new windows and doors shall be manufactured in timber unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

9. Windows

All new openable windows shall receive flush casements unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

10. Rainwater goods

All new rainwater goods shall be black metal or cast-iron effect, details of which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the rainwater goods shall be installed in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grouping at Highover Farm under Section 66 of the

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the Local Plan.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage and during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. 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.