

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Saffron Loasby.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01522/FP	Increase roof ridge height and front roof extension to facilitate additional office space at second floor level. Alterations to fenestration, external Insulation and rendering.	44 Wilbury Way Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 0AP

Submitted Plan Nos

202409.P.1001 202409.P.1002 202409.P.1101 202409.P.1102 202409.P.1103

1.0 Policies

SP1	Sustainable development in North Herts
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SP3	Employment
SP6	Sustainable transport
SP9	Design and Sustainability
ETC1	Appropriate uses in Employment Areas
D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
T2	Parking
NE11	Contaminated land

1.1 **National Planning Policy Framework**

Section 4 – Achieving sustainable development
Section 5 – Meeting the challenge of climate change
Section 7 – Delivering a strong, effective economy
Section 12 – Making effective use of land
Section 14 – Achieving well-designed places
Section 15 – Promoting sustainable transport
Section 16 – Promoting healthy communities
Section 18 – Managing flood risk and coastal change

1.2 **North Hertfordshire Draft Local Plan 2011-2031**

SP1 – Sustainable development in North Herts
SP3 – Employment
SP6 – Sustainable Transport
SP9 – Design and Sustainability
ETC1 – Appropriate used in Employment Areas
D1 – Sustainable Design

D3 – Protecting Living Conditions
D4 – Air quality
T2 – Parking

1.3 **Supplementary Planning Document**

Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD (2011)
Design SPD (2011)

2.0 **Recent Relevant Site History**

- 2.1 24/00376/FP – Increase roof ridge height and front roof extension to facilitate additional office space at second floor level. Alterations to fenestration – Conditional Permission 21/05/2024

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Site Notice:**

Start Date: 13/07/2026

Expiry Date: 05/08/2026

3.2 **Press Notice:** N/A

3.3 **Neighbouring Notifications:**

No neighbouring representations have been received.

3.4 **Parish Council / Statutory Consultees:**

None applicable.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 No. 44 Wilbury Way is a large two storey building situated within an employment area of Hitchin. The site appears to be vacant with its most recent use of the site being described as Class B2 (General Industrial) and Class E (Offices). The site is not within or adjacent to a Conservation Area, there are no Listed Buildings within proximity to the application site, and the site is not within the Green Belt.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is sought to raise the roof height of the existing building creating a third floor to the front of the building with space for offices. The proposal also includes an extension to the front central brick pillar entrance, alterations to fenestration, redesigning the roof profile, changes to the materials for external insulation and the replacement of the existing asbestos roof coverings. The development would also increase the height of the four bays that project beyond the rear of the front facing façade. This is a different design approach to that approved under the permission granted in 2004 for a similar proposal.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- The principle of development in this location.
- The design and appearance of the development and its impact upon the locality.
- The impact of the development upon neighbouring amenity.
- The impact of the development upon highways and parking.
- The sustainability of the proposed development.

Principle of Development:

- 4.3.2 Section 7 of the NPPF sets out that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity.
- 4.3.3 Policy SP3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan sets out that the Council will proactively encourage sustainable economic growth, support new and existing businesses and seek to build on the District's strengths, location and offer.
- 4.3.4 Policy SP3 states that the Council will "*safeguard employment areas within the District's main settlements... to enhance and protect their employment potential*" and will "*permit an appropriate range of offices, research and development, light industrial or B class employment uses within these areas*".
- 4.3.5 With the existing site consisting of uses including offices, manufacturing, and storage, the uses proposed would be acceptable in this location and supported by Local Planning Policy.
- 4.3.6 Furthermore, given the lack of any on-site constraints, the re-development of the building and associated works would also be acceptable in principle.

Design and Appearance:

- 4.3.7 The August 2026 National Planning Policy Framework continues to emphasise that the creation of high-quality, sustainable and well-designed buildings and places is a fundamental objective of the planning system. Good design remains a key component of sustainable development, helping to create better places in which to live and work and contributing to the acceptability of development.
- 4.3.8 DP3 of the NPPF requires development to be well-designed, respond positively to local context and character, and create attractive, sustainable and inclusive places. When assessing design quality, consideration should be given to the proposal's contribution towards liveability, climate adaptation, green infrastructure, movement and connectivity, built form, public spaces and local identity. Development should accord with relevant development plan policies and adopted design guidance, with substantial weight given to achieving high-quality design outcomes.
- 4.3.9 Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) and Policy D1 (Sustainable Design) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan seek to ensure that development achieves a high standard of design, responds positively to local character and context, promotes sustainable development, and creates attractive, safe, accessible and distinctive places. These objectives are closely aligned with DP3 of the NPPF (August 2026). Together, these policies seek to secure well-designed development that supports healthy communities, enhances environmental quality, incorporates green infrastructure, promotes sustainable transport choices and contributes positively to the character and appearance of an area.

- 4.3.10 The proposed development does not include any additions to the existing footprint of the building. The changes to the roof design and the external appearance are within the existing footprint and aim to improve the appearance, functionality, sustainability and longevity of the existing building, whilst retaining it for employment use.
- 4.3.11 The other commercial buildings in the vicinity comprise either a mixture of large expansive two storey shallow pitched buildings with large floor areas or buildings much like that of the application site that have brick facades for smaller offices and expansive warehouse structures behind them. The design of the application building is of its time and similar in material, design and appearance to others in the wider employment area. Properties to the south of the application site are more modern in their appearance and predominantly glazed from floor to ceiling.
- 4.3.12 The proposed redevelopment would deliver a significant enhancement to the visual appearance of the site compared to the existing building. The current structure is functional and utilitarian in character, with a dominant brick façade and limited architectural detailing. By contrast, the proposed building incorporates a contemporary design with articulated roof forms, high-quality materials, extensive glazing and a strong central entrance feature. The development creates a more attractive and distinctive building that would make a positive contribution to the street scene and is consistent with the high standards of design sought by Policies SP9 and D1.
- 4.3.13 The proposal successfully improves the site's relationship with its surroundings through improved pedestrian frontage and a well-composed architectural form. The varied roofline and façade treatment break up the building's massing and create a more human scale, whilst the modern design approach promotes a high-quality commercial environment. Overall, the development would transform a dated commercial building into a sustainable and visually attractive scheme that reinforces the objectives of Policies SP9 and D1 in delivering well-designed and sustainable places.
- 4.3.14 The design, siting, and appearance of the proposed development is considered appropriate to the locality. Whilst on the edge of the employment area, the development would not result in unacceptable harm to the locality by reason of its high-quality design, appropriate materials, and siting.
- 4.3.15 Considering the existing development on site, the design of the development and associated works, including landscaping, would result in an improvement to the appearance of the street scene.
- 4.3.16 The proposed development would comply with relevant local and national planning policies. No objection is raised to the design or appearance of the proposed development and associated works.

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity:

- 4.3.17 Policy D3 of the Local Plan sets out that planning permission will be granted for development proposal which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions this is consistent with NPPF Policy P3 on living conditions and pollution.
- 4.3.18 The application site is located within the employment site and neighboured to the south and west by residential properties that front Wilbury Way, Girdle Road, and Hillfield Avenue. The application site backs on to the railway which separates the application site from residential properties along High Dane to the east. Mature vegetation to both sides of the railway further screens the application site from residential properties.

- 4.3.19 The site is neighboured immediately to the north and south by existing employment uses. Given the application site would not change use, it is considered that the proposed raising of the roof height would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenities of nearby neighbouring occupiers. The new glazing at roof level faces towards Wilbury Way overlooking the other commercial units to the west. Beyond this are residential properties in Hillfield Avenue, some 130m west of the application building. Whilst the new floor and roof will be more prominent in the roofscape it would sit amongst other commercial buildings within this designated employment area. The additional height is not considered to be visually harmful and the design appropriate for the use.
- 4.3.20 No objection is raised to the impact the development would have upon other commercial uses to the north and east of the site.
- 4.3.21 The proposed development, by reason of its siting and appropriate scale, would not result in an unacceptable overbearing impact to nearby neighbouring occupiers.
- 4.3.22 Given the above, the proposed scale and siting of the proposed development would not result in any unacceptable overbearing impact to nearby neighbouring occupiers. The proposal would comply with both local and national planning policies.

Parking and Highways:

- 4.3.23 The proposed development does not propose any changes to the existing access or parking provision. The site benefits from 15 off-street car parking spaces for users to the front of the site. There is also vehicular access to the rear of the site as well as good access to bus routes; the closest stop being located directly outside the front of the building.
- 4.3.24 The Council's Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD (September 2011) advises on parking standards for various uses. In this case the application proposes 178m² of additional office space, resulting in the need for an additional 6 car parking spaces. However, the existing site offers 15 spaces, an overprovision of three spaces for the existing office use. Overall, the site has an under provision of 3 car parking spaces for the office use. Bearing in mind the site is close to other sustainable transport options and within short cycling distance of the train station, the under provision is not significant to warrant a recommendation for refusal.
- 4.3.25 However, there is no known cycle provision available on site and securing this by way of condition would go some way in addressing the shortfall and meeting the sustainability requirements of the Local Plan and NPPF. Based on the floor area of both the existing and proposed office space the need equates to 5 cycle spaces for staff and 3 for visitors. Whilst the existing use, nor the extant 2024 consent insists on cycle storage, the policies are clear that sustainable patterns of movement are prioritised and opportunities are taken to improve walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport and infrastructure is provided to support the transition to zero-emission vehicles.
- 4.2.26 In this instance it is considered reasonable to insist on cycle storage for the additional floor space as a minimum; thus, equating to 2 cycle spaces for staff and 1 space for visitors. The number of cycle and parking spaces is considered appropriate for the additional floor space and would comply with local policy.

- 4.3.27 Therefore, subject to the inclusion of a condition to secure onsite cycle parking provision, the impact of the development upon the local highways network is considered acceptable. The proposal would follow both local and national planning policies.

Biodiversity Net Gain:

- 4.3.28 The existing site has limited existing habitat space, as such the proposed development is 'de minimis' and would not exceed the threshold of 25 sqm of on-site habitat, or /and less than 5 meters of linear habitats. This application is therefore exempt from BNG legislation defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Sustainability and Climate Change:

- 4.3.29 Section 5 of the NPPF sets out that the objectives to support the transition to net zero by 2050 and to shape places in ways which are more resilient to the effects of climate change. This principle is echoed in Policy D1 of the Local Plan that encourages all reasonable opportunities to reduce energy consumption and waste.
- 4.3.30 The proposed development, by virtue of its limited scale in general terms together with the sustainable location would have no significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Section 14 of the NPPF and Policy D1.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 The proposed development is considered acceptable and would comply with the necessary provisions sets out within the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 and the National Planning Policy Framework (2026). Recommend granting conditional permission.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None applicable

5.0 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

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

6.0 **Recommendation**

- 6.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. 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. The development hereby permitted shall be built in external materials to match those detailed in the Materials schedule submitted as part of the Design and Access Statement, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the LPA.

Reason: To protect the visual amenities of the locality and to comply with Policies D1 and D2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

4. Prior to the first use of the third floor, hereby permitted, details of secure and covered cycle parking facilities shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved facilities shall provide a minimum of three cycle spaces and shall be installed in accordance with the approved details before the development is first brought into use. The cycle parking facilities shall thereafter be retained and maintained for that purpose at all times.

Reason: To promote and encourage sustainable modes of transport and ensure adequate, secure and convenient cycle parking provision in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and Policies SP6 and T2 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031.

Biodiversity Net Gain

This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is considered exempt under the statutory exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>) or transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. 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.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 25 August 2026	