

Applicants' response to Highway Authority consultation response dated 31st January 2025
In relation to planning application 24/02814/FP - Land at Mill Farm, Charlton Road, Hitchin,
Hertfordshire, SG5 2AB

This statement constitutes the applicants' response to the consultation response dated 31st January 2025 from the Highway Authority.

Summary of Highway Authority consultation comments

- Plot 1 - the position of the access is unsafe. The proposed access and parking arrangements are situated on the apex of the bend.
- Plot 2 - visibility splays are required. For the existing access serving Plot 2, visibility splays would be necessary due to anticipated changes in traffic nature and volume.
- Substandard parking spaces. 2 parking bays will be provided for each dwelling measuring 4.8m x 2.4m; it appears that parking bays are substandard and should be 5m x 2.5m.

Applicants' responses to Highway Authority comments

- The comments have not had regard to the fact that both accesses already exist and serve the existing agricultural use and buildings on the site i.e. the proposal entails the use of existing accesses for the proposed use rather than the introduction of new accesses.
- The access to serve Plot 1 already exists in a position on the apex of the bend on the Lane serving an agricultural shed, which is proposed for demolition. At present this access can be utilised by large agricultural vehicles serving the established agricultural use of the site.
- The proposed access arrangements for the dwellinghouses involve Plot 1 using the existing access serving the agricultural shed, to be demolished, and Plot 2 using the other access which currently serves the Farm.
- The applicants consider there to be a highway safety benefit from the proposed residential use through the removal of the potential for large agricultural vehicles to continue to use the site.
- Traffic speeds in the vicinity of the site are low due to the rural nature of the highway network in the vicinity of the application site and the bend in the Lane acts as a physical feature to keep traffic speeds low.
- The demolition of buildings on the site and the associated change of use of buildings will result in a change in traffic nature and volume but it will not be a detrimental change and in the applicants' view will be beneficial as it will replace large agricultural vehicles with residential traffic associated with 2 no. dwellinghouses.

- The parking spaces measure the standard 4.8 x 2.4 metres. However if the Planning Authority conclude that such dimensions are substandard then the applicants have no objection to these being increased to 5.0 x 2.5 metres, and as pointed out by the Highway Authority such an increase can be controlled through the imposition of a condition.
- Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety. The applicants contend that a strong case has not been put forward that the proposal would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.
- The Planning Authority will need to carefully weigh up the comments of the Highway Authority 'in the round' and against all of the other material considerations relating to the proposal, and accord appropriate weight, including the weight which should be attached to the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area which will result from the proposal.

John Clarke B.A. (Hons), MA, MRTPI, Senior Planner, Howkins & Harrison, 7-11, Albert Street, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 2RX

31st March 2025