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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: 25/01420/FP
HCC ref: NH/25540/2025
HCC received: 27 June 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

HIGHOVER FARM HIGHOVER WAY HITCHIN SG4 0RQ

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

Change of use and external alterations to former agricultural buildings comprising grade II listed threshing barn and non-listed courtyard buildings. Partial demolition of courtyard building between proposed Units 1 and 2 to facilitate access. Single-storey rear extension to facilitate Unit 10. Subdivision and two-storey rear extension to farmhouse to form Units 11 and 12. Erection of new building for two dwellings (Units 13 and 14). Partial demolition and modify building for cycle storage to Units 2 to 8 inclusive. Erection of building to accommodate 2 car port spaces for Unit 5 and refuse storage for Units 2-8 inclusive. Detached bin enclosure / cycle store buildings for Units 9 - 14 inclusive. Hard and soft landscaping in association with the provision of private and communal space. Boundary treatment, installation of 14no. EV charging points, installation of solar PV array on south facing roof slopes of Unit 14 and both the cycle and refuse storage buildings serving Units 2 -8 including provision of BNG area.

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:

No development shall commence until a detailed pedestrian audit to identify where potential improvements could be made to the walking, cycling or public transport network to mitigate the developments impact and encourage use of more sustainable modes of transport is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority.

These works shall be constructed to the specification of the Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority's satisfaction and completed before occupation of the development.

Reason: To ensure that sustainable travel options associated with the development are promoted and maximised to be in accordance with Policies 3, 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

Before commencement of the development, a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) for the vehicle access proposals, with particular attention to pedestrian routes and safety, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. Thereafter the recommendations, if any, shall only be carried out in accordance with the report.

Reason: To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and in the interests of highway safety in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan 4 (adopted 2018).

No development shall commence until detailed technical plans are submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority, which show the detailed engineering designs and construction of the vehicle access and associated highway works identified in the RSA1 and pedestrian audit. These works shall be constructed to the specification of the Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority's satisfaction and completed before commencement of work of the development.

Reason: To ensure the provision of a vehicle access which is safe, suitable, and sustainable for all highway users.

Prior to the first occupation/use of the development hereby permitted the vehicular access shall be installed in accordance with the approved detailed technical plans and thereafter retained and maintained at all times at the position shown. Arrangement shall be made for surface water drainage to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

Prior to the first occupation/use of the development hereby permitted, the measures on the public highway shall be installed in accordance with the approved details prior to occupation of the development.

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

The cycle parking shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with the approved plans, agreed details and completed prior to occupation of the development hereby approved and shall thereafter be retained and maintained.

The Electric Vehicle Charging Points 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 any residential unit hereby approved or any commercial use hereby approved commencing. Thereafter the Electric Vehicle Charging Points shall be permanently retained available for use at all times.

No development shall commence until a Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, including elements of the CLOCS standards as set out in the Highway Authority's Construction Management template. Thereafter the construction of

the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan: The Construction Management Statement shall include details of:

- Access arrangements to the site.
- Traffic management requirements.
- Construction and storage compounds (including areas designated for car parking, loading / unloading and turning areas).
- Siting and details of wheel washing facilities.
- Cleaning of site entrances, site tracks and the adjacent public highway.
- Timing of construction activities (including delivery times and removal of waste) and to avoid school pick up/drop off times.
- Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities.
- Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway.
- Where works cannot be contained wholly within the site a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding which must be kept within the site boundary, pedestrian routes and remaining road width for vehicle movements

Reason: In order to protect highway safety and the amenity of other users of the public highway and rights of way in accordance with Policies 5, 12, 17 and 22 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

HIGHWAY INFORMATIVES:

The Highway Authority recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Notes (ANs) to ensure that any works as part of this development are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highways Act 1980 and other relevant processes.

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 website

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

Obstruction of public highway land: 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 website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> telephoning 0300 1234047.

Road Deposits: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and 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 are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.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.

Highway to remain private: The applicant is advised that all new highway routes within the development site are likely to remain unadopted and the developer should put in place a permanent arrangement for long term maintenance. At the entrance of the new estate the road name plate should indicate that it is a private road to inform purchasers of their future maintenance liabilities. Further information is available via the website <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

Brief description in support of proposed development by the applicant:

The proposal is for the change of use to support the residential re-development of Highover Farm into a development comprising 14 dwellings. The highway impact of the development will be low. Consequently it is considered that a Transport Technical Note (TTN) assessing the accessibility of the site, provide information on the proposed site layout and the likely trip generation is sufficient to support the planning application rather than a full Transport Statement.

A pre-application consultation has been undertaken with NHC and the development proposals have incorporated the comments provided where appropriate.

Site Location

Highover Farm is an existing derelict farm located in the north eastern corner of Hitchin, around 2.3km north east of Hitchin town centre and 1.4km north east of Hitchin railway station. There is currently a farmhouse and 5 outbuildings clustered around a central courtyard.

The existing site is formed of a shared surface area and so there are no footways but there is a 4.8m wide access track through the site for vehicles. Vehicular access is achieved off the northern end of the Highover Way cul-de-sac. The access is 6m wide due to the adjacent perpendicular parking spaces for the nearby dwellings.

Around 20m north of where the access road joins Highover Way, the 3.7m wide access road bends to the east and then immediately to the north in an 's' shape. The access road also provides access to three cottages, called Highover Cottages. These Cottages are accessed from the rear via a T-junction off the access track, although there is a footpath at the front of the Cottages which provides pedestrian access to Highover Way. These Cottages will be retained as part of the development proposals and fall outside of the red line boundary.

To the north of the site is a consented residential development called 'Land to the North of Highover Farm'. This site received planning consent in November 2024 (18/01154/OP) for up to 700 dwellings,

a new 2FE Primary School and open space. There will be pedestrian and cycle connections to the proposed development at Highover Farm via the north western and north eastern corners of the site.

Highway Safety

The highway safety of the local road network, online accident data has been obtained from the Crashmap website for the most recent available five-year period, 01 January 2019, to 31 December 2023, shows that there have been no collisions in the past five years in the immediate vicinity of the site.

Sustainable Transport Accessibility

Walking

There are 1.8m to 2m footways on both sides of Highover Way, with the southern footway being separated from the live carriageway by a 3m wide grass verge. There are no controlled crossings on Highover Way but there are uncontrolled crossings with dropped kerbs at the side road junctions, however tactile paving is only provided at the junction with Orchard Road.

The existing access to the site is a shared surface route which provides pedestrian access to Highover Farm and Highover Cottages. It also provides access to three parking spaces on the eastern side of the access road. It is assumed that these spaces are for the residents of Highover Cottages.

Whilst it is proposed that the majority of the development will be a shared surface provision, a 2m footway will be provided on the western side of the access road to provide a safe pedestrian route around the proposed bend. It also provides a safe off-road pedestrian route to Highover Cottages and the consented pedestrian link to the consented development to the north of the site.

The adjacent consented 'Land North of Highover Farm' development will have a network of footways and footpaths through the development providing pedestrian links between the Highover Farm site, High Dane and Stotfold Road. An Access & Connectivity plan produced by Planit I.E. Limited for the Outline application (see Appendix B) shows the proposed pedestrian and cycle links within the consented development. This plan has been taken from the North Herts Council planning website but the final layout of the development will be subject to a future Reserved Matters application.

This plan shows that there will be a 3.5m pedestrian / cycle link through the development, connecting to the proposed Highover Farm development at the north western corner adjacent to Highover Cottages and a connection in the north eastern corner of the site.

Consequently, the consented 'Land North of Highover Farm' development will be providing a significant amount of sustainable transport improvements in the vicinity of the proposed development.

Public Rights of Way

There are no PRow's which cross the site. There are three public footpaths within a short walk of the proposed development.

Cycling

There is currently no dedicated cycle infrastructure in the vicinity of the site, however, there are cycle improvements proposed as part of the consented 'Land North of Highover Farm' development.

Public Transport

Bus Services

The closest bus stops to the site are located on Highover Way and Sturgeon's Way. These bus stops are both within a 400m distance from the centre of the site. The Sturgeon's Way bus stop consists of a bus shelter with seating and timetable information. The Highover Way bus stop just consists of a flag and a timetable. There are no bus cages at either bus stop and so there is no parking restrictions preventing cars from parking on the bus stop.

The consented 'Land North of Highover Farm' development will be providing a S106 contribution of £875k towards the cost of diverting bus routes 81/81a through the development. To prevent through traffic on the development's spine road, a bus gate is proposed within the development.

Proposed Development

The development proposals include the demolition of parts of the existing outbuildings, the provision of a new semi-detached building and the conversion of the remaining outbuildings and the existing farmhouse into 14 dwellings.

In accordance with Part 3 of the Hertfordshire Design Guide 'Place and Movement, Planning and Design Guide' it is considered that the development reflects a P3/M1 road. As the road will serve 14 dwellings, after the turning for Highover Cottages, the road will reflect a Mews cul-de-sac.

Highover Farm is located at the northern end of Highover Way, which forms a cul-de-sac. Vehicle access will be achieved via the existing access off Highover Way but the access will be improved, widened and surfaced. It will incorporate a 2m footway on the western side of the road for the first 67m to provide pedestrian access to the site, Highover Cottages and the adjacent committed development. This footway will disappear outside Plot 2, to provide a shared surface development.

To allow for two large cars to pass each other on the bend, the access road which incorporates a 90 degree bend, is proposed to be 5.5m wide widening to 6.9m within the site's eastern half to serve a number of driveways and the eastern most six dwellings. This route is a shared surface with 1m service margins.

Swept path assessment shows that the 12.1m Refuse Vehicles are able to enter and depart the site in forward gear.

During the pre-application discussions Hertfordshire Highways requested that the refuse turning head was provided to the west of the proposed car port and bin store. The potential for relocating the turning head was reviewed but it was identified that this would require a reduction in parking spaces which could not be provided elsewhere within the site.

Visibility Splay Assessment

As the site is an existing farm yard and the proposals involve converting the existing outbuildings into dwellings, the access road and the parking spaces have had to be fitted around the retained buildings. Consequently the visibility splay assessment, shows that the retained buildings result in only 10mph splays being achievable. Consequently, it is proposed to implement an internal speed limit of 10mph.

Drivers will enter the development through the middle of an existing outbuilding and it is considered that this will represent drivers entering a farm yard, with the building and a cobbled rumble strip acting as a gateway feature. Consequently it is considered that the nature / characteristics of the development, when combined with the 90 degree bend on the access road, will act as a traffic calming measure.

Extent of Adoption

Higlover Way is currently adopted highway but the existing farm access and farm yard is private. It is proposed that the development will remain private.

Vehicle Parking Provision

Resident parking will be provided in accordance with Table 4.1 of NHC's 'Vehicle Parking at New Development Supplementary Planning Document' (September 2011).

As on-street parking already occurs on Higlover Way and the difference in visitor parking provision is only one space for a 14 dwelling development, it is considered that this parking can be accommodated on-street without creating a safety concern.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points (EVCPs)

EVCPs will be provided in accordance with Building Regulations Approved Document S which requires one EVCP per dwelling with an allocated parking space.

Cycle Parking Provision

The cycle parking will be provided in accordance with Table 4.1 of NHC's aforementioned Parking SPD (September 2011).

No dwellings will have garages and so seven dwellings will be provided with a cycle store in the rear garden. This cycle store will provide space for 2 bicycles, whilst the remaining seven dwellings will have communal cycle stores adjacent to the highway. This cycle store will be in a former farm outbuilding converted into a cycle store. A single visitor space will be provided as a Sheffield stand for each dwelling and located adjacent to the front door of each dwelling. Consequently, there will be a total provision of 42 cycle parking spaces.

Trip Generation

Higlover Farm has an existing farmhouse which will already generate traffic travelling to and from the site, however the proposed development will increase the traffic movements associated with the development.

Trip rates have been extracted from the TRICS database for similar sites. To provide a robust assessment, the trip rates have been extracted for Private Houses as this land use typically has a higher trip generation than affordable dwellings or apartments.

The resultant trip rates and the trip generation for 14 dwellings indicates that the number of additional vehicle trips during the peak hours will be minimal. It is therefore not considered that the impact of the development would be severe in accordance with paragraph 116 of the NPPF.

Highways comments:

The proposal involves the change of use from farm to residential, involving demolition of parts of the existing outbuildings, the provision of a new semi-detached building and the conversion of the remaining outbuildings and the existing farmhouse into 14 dwellings with associated car, cycle and EVCP provisioning.

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 TTN and whilst the HA would acknowledge the proposal is not expected to have any significant impact on the operation and safety of the local highway network and on most of the other issues assessed in the TTN concerning the internal layout and measures proposed, however the applicant has not addressed ensuring how pedestrians will be able to access to key destinations such as shops, schools, bus stops etc to promote active travel. The applicant has stated that *“the adjacent consented ‘Land North of Highover Farm’ development providing pedestrian links between the Highover Farm site ... and ... subject to a future Reserved Matters application.”* whilst that is the case however there is no indication of what that may involve and when it will be implemented, the HA is assessing this application and its impact.

Therefore, the Highway Authority will require a pedestrian audit to be undertaken to key destinations identifying whether any deficiencies that create barriers to vulnerable road users currently exist and submit proposals/measures to rectify such barriers along key desire lines and improve linkages including in and around public transport. Any improvements identified in the audit (dropped kerbs, tactile paving, pedestrian crossings, cycling, etc) will be required to be delivered under a S278 agreement, to ensure that the surrounding infrastructure, such as roads, cycleways, footways and footpaths, can handle the changes brought by the proposed development, in accordance with the relevant policies and guidance’s.

A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) will need to be submitted as part of application with particular attention to pedestrian routes and safety.

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

Also, it is Hertfordshire County Councils policy to seek a planning obligation in respect of Sustainable Transport including for all developments. The revised NPPF -July 2021 promotes accessibility by sustainable means including bus, cycling, and walking, and the provisions of S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act-1990 allows that planning obligations, governed by the guidance within CIL Regulations may be used to mitigate the impact of development. HCC adopted a new toolkit to seek planning obligations towards sustainable transport. Full details on HCC’s policy towards planning obligations may be found at the following web address <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/freedom-of-information-and-council-data/open-data-statistics-about-hertfordshire/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/property/planning-obligations-guidance.aspx#developercontributions>.

Based on the above, the county council will actively seek planning obligations which will improve sustainable transport facilities and services for passenger transport users who are using the development and generally for those users in the surrounding area. In addition to the strand 1 highway works outlined above, wider necessary / strand 2 highway measures are required. The headline figure as stated in our Toolkit is £9861 per dwelling (i.e., the average amount each new dwelling across the county needs to pay in order for the necessary new infrastructure to be delivered). Multiply this by 14 dwellings = £138,054 (index linked to March 2024).

Recommendation:

The Highway Authority has considered that the proposal would not have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highways and consequently have no objections subject to the following conditions and highway informative’s:

Signed
Senober Khan

18 July 2025