

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Henry Thomas.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/01141/FP	Change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre for agriculture, cookery and related rural-based activities (Use Class F1). Single storey extension to barn following demolition of existing lean-to. Installation of solar panels to roof of converted barn and plant to the roof of the proposed extension including six cycle spaces.	Irongate Barn Halls Green Weston Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7DR

Submitted Plan Nos

255-002 Existing Site/Roof Plan 255-003 Existing Ground Floor Plan 255-004 Existing Elevations 255-005 Existing East and West Elevations 255-022A Proposed Site Plan (downtakings) 255-023A Proposed Ground Floor Plan 255-023A Proposed Ground Floor Plan (downtakings 255-024A Proposed Mezzanine Plan 255-024A Proposed Mezzanine Plan (Downtakings) 255-025 Proposed Roof Plan (downtakings) 255-025 Proposed Roof Plan 255-030 Proposed Elevations (rendered) 255-030 Proposed Elevations (downtakings) 255-030 Proposed North and South Elevations 255-031 Proposed Elevations 2 (rendered) 255-031 Proposed Elevation 2 (downtakings) 255-031 Proposed East and West Elevations

1.0 Policies

D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
D4	Air quality
SP1	Sustainable development in North Herts
SP9	Design and Sustainability
SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN13	Protecting Green Belt Land
T2	Parking
HC1	Community facilities

SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment
HE1	Designated heritage assets

2.0 **Site History**

- 2.1 **25/01935/FP** - Change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre for agriculture, cookery and related rural based activities (Use Class F1). Repairs to timber frame and external weatherboarding, including interfaces with adjacent construction, making good after duntaking of harmful modern fabric. Internal wall linings. Replacement glazing and adjusted openings with replacement glazing, localised repairs to existing concrete floor slab. Provision of services routes.

Concurrent Application.

- 2.2 **25/01936/LBC** - Repairs to timber frame and external weatherboarding, including interfaces with adjacent construction, making good after duntaking of harmful modern fabric. Internal wall linings. Replacement glazing and adjusted openings with replacement glazing, localised repairs to existing concrete floor slab. Provision of services routes to facilitate the change of use of the barn to a community events use

Concurrent Application.

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 **Site Notice & Neighbour Notifications** – None received.
- 3.2 **HCC Highways** – No objection subject to conditions.
- 3.3 **Environmental Health** – No objection subject to conditions.
- 3.4 **Weston Parish Council** – None received.
- 3.5 **HCC Archaeology** – No objection subject to conditions.
- 3.6 **NHC Ecology** – No objection subject to conditions.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The application site is a cluster of farm buildings on the west side of Halls Green Road within a built-up hamlet of Halls Green. The site is within the Green Belt. There is a public right-of-way to the rear of the farmstead. Irongate Farmhouse is a Grade II listed building which lies south of the application site. The application relates to one of the modern barns which do not fall under the curtilage listing of the farmhouse. The farmstead is served by two vehicle access points at the north and south of the site.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre for agriculture, cookery and related rural-based activities (Use Class F1). Single storey extension to barn following demolition of existing lean-to. Installation of solar panels to roof of converted barn and plant to the roof of the proposed extension including six cycle spaces.

- 4.2.2 The proposal seeks to facilitate an 'agroecology' learning centre situated on a working farm. The planning statement provides the following:

"The barn in question is proposed to be segregated to provide a flexible kitchen/teaching area, lecture/teaching space, gallery, commercial kitchen and associated spaces for an office, storage and WC's. This includes the insertion of a mezzanine at first-floor level. This will enable the barn to be used to host teaching and community events."

- 4.2.3 The proposed materials are:

Walls – External walls: vertical charred timber, corrugated dark hemp cladding, corrugated translucent polycarbonate.

Roof – Wildflower roof, corrugated steel, single ply.

Windows – Timber frame windows

Doors – Door composed of hemp cladding, glazed door within timber frame.

4.3 **Key Issues**

Principle of Development – Green Belt

- 4.3.1 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that development within the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it falls under one of the outlined exemptions. Given that the proposal is for the reuse and extension of an existing building within the Green Belt, the development would fall under *c)* (for the extension) and *h) iv.* (for the reuse).
- 4.3.2 The proposed extension to the barn would have a similar footprint to the existing lean-to it would replace. When compared against the size of the original barn, I would not consider the

proposed extension to be disproportionate or to have a greater impact than the existing lean-to. The proposed external staircase on the southern elevation would have a minor projection which would not harm the openness of the site.

- 4.3.3 With regard to the reuse of the barn, the existing barn has a concrete frame with block and brickwork walls, and a corrugated metal roof. I therefore consider that the barn is in a suitable condition to comply with paragraph 154h) iv.
- 4.3.4 The proposed reuse and extension of the barn would not harm the openness of the area and would not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt. The proposal therefore complies with Policy SP5 of the Local Plan and Section 13 of the NPPF.

Principle of Development – Change of Use

- 4.3.5 The barns in question have been formerly used for B8 storage but currently lie vacant. The proposal therefore seeks to bring these buildings back into reuse. Policy HC1 states that planning permission will be granted for community facilities that are:
- a) Appropriate in scale having regard to their local context;*
 - b) Accessible by a range of transport modes; and*
 - c) Would meet an identified need in the local community.*
- 4.3.6 Although Halls Green lies close to Weston and Great Ashby, it is not served by any public transport links. As such, the site will be reliant on vehicle and cycle transport. Whilst this is acknowledged, given the ties to agriculture for these types of facilities, they are inherently going to be located in areas with limited transport links. In my view, this would not be a sufficient basis to refuse the application on.

Design and Appearance

- 4.3.7 The barn and lean-to extension are predominantly screened from the Highway by the adjacent L-shaped barn. There would be limited views of the altered barn as seen from the public realm. In any case, I consider that the proposed materials and design would be sympathetic to the setting of the barn. I do not consider that the external staircase would appear out of place within the agricultural setting. Given the fact the lean-to extension is currently in poor condition, the proposal would be beneficial in bringing the site into reuse.

Impact on heritage assets

- 4.3.8 The redevelopment of the barn would be in close proximity to the Listed Farmhouse and the adjacent curtilage listed barn. The agent has provided the following:

“The barn and lean-to in question, whilst perhaps not completely inappropriate in a rural context, do not make a positive contribution to the setting of the grade II listed farmhouse.*

Accordingly, there is an opportunity to improve the buildings and their relationship with the listed building.”

- 4.3.9 The application was considered by NHC’s Conservation Officer informally and a formal consultation was also sought for the concurrent application under ref 25/01936/LBC for the curtilage listed barn. Although the barn itself is in a suitable condition, the lean-to appears to be in poor condition, as such, the conservation officer agreed with the agents comment and suggested that the impacts of the proposal on the character and appearance of the building and its significance as a designated heritage asset are considered acceptable.

Impact on nearby residents

- 4.3.10 There are no immediately adjoining residential properties other than the farmhouse itself which would be set sufficiently away from the barn and extension. Environmental Health have considered the impact of the proposed roof plant in terms of noise and disturbance. Given that they have not objected to the scheme, this is given significant weight.
- 4.3.11 There are no permanent permitted change of uses from Class F1. Only temporary uses are permitted but this does not include F1 a) (education). It is recommended that a condition is attached restricting the use to Class F1a) and for no other purposes unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agent has requested that the hours of operation are restricted to 8.00am to 7.00pm on Mondays to Wednesdays and Sundays, 7.00am to 11.00pm on Thursdays to Saturdays. Given the isolated nature of the site, I consider these hours to be appropriate.
- 4.3.12 The proposed use is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of impacting on nearby residential properties in accordance with Policy D3 of the Local Plan.

Access and car parking

- 4.3.13 The proposal seeks to reuse the two existing vehicle accesses. HCC Highways have been consulted on this application and have raised no objection subject to a number of conditions and informatives. This is given significant weight, it is considered that the proposed development would not have any significant adverse impacts upon highway safety.
- 4.3.14 With regard to parking, the scheme proposes 25 vehicle parking spaces, 10 cycle storage spaces and 1 EV charging point. Due to its age and amendments to the Use Classes Order, the Parking SPD does not provide a clear requirement for proposals of this nature, as such a common-sense approach is applied.
- 4.3.15 The agent has provided the following metric for the capacity of the site. Whilst students under 17 are not a key part of the business plan, on occasion, there may be a visiting local school group, on a drop-off basis, which would likely take place instead of over-17 workshops.

Expected Users	Maximum	Likely Average
Full time staff	1	1
Part time staff	4	2
Students over 17	24	12
[Or] Students under 17	35	0

4.3.16 When compared against educational establishments, the SPD would require a minimum of 10 vehicle parking spaces. Given the isolated nature of the site without any public transport links, this requirement would be quite low in my view. As such, the proposed 25 vehicle parking spaces would be an adequate provision for the scheme.

4.3.17 The proposal complies with Policy T1 and T2 of the Local Plan.

Biodiversity Net Gain

4.3.18 The proposed development is considered '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.

4.3.19 The scale of the development proposal means that it is unlikely to result in any significant impact on local climate change. The proposals include renewable energy elements including solar PV to the roof of the main barn and a sedum/green roof to part of the roof of the side extension.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 The proposal is acceptable in planning terms.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

4.5.1 None applicable

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 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. No works are in any circumstances to commence unless the local planning authority has been provided with either:
- o a licence issued by Natural England authorizing the specified activity/development to go ahead; or
 - o a statement in writing from the relevant licensing body to the effect that it does not consider that the specified activity/development will require a licence.

Reason: To ensure that works do not result in adverse impacts to protected species. Local Plan Policy NE4.

4. A lighting design strategy for biodiversity for the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall;
- a) identify those areas/features on site to which bats and other nocturnal species are particularly sensitive and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places, or along important routes used to reach key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging, and
 - b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places.

All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that works do not result in adverse impacts to protected species. Local Plan Policy NE4.

5. No development shall commence until a Car Parking and servicing Management Plan relating to measures to manage the car parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. It shall include (but not limited to) the following:
- o Car Parking Management: Outline measures to ensure efficient use of the parking spaces, including monitoring and enforcement strategies.
 - o Refuse Collection: Detail the procedures for refuse collection (including swept path track drawings), ensuring it does not interfere with vehicle movement or cause congestion.
 - o Congestion/Overspill Prevention: Propose strategies to prevent congestion and

parking overspill onto the public highway, such as designated loading/unloading zones and clear signage.

The Car Parking Management Plan shall be fully implemented before the development is brought into use agreed by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter retained for this purpose.

Reason: In the interests of highway operation and safety and to ensure sufficient available on-site car parking meets the needs of users of the proposed development and in the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport.

6. Before the commencement of development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of the car parking layout in accordance with local and national guidance, such as the Manual for Streets (MfS) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to the first occupation/use of the development hereby permitted the car parking layout shall be installed in accordance with the approved detailed plans and thereafter retained and maintained at all times at the position shown.

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).

7. Prior to the use of the development hereby permitted, unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of cycling parking secure and sheltered storage for 10 cycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. The cycle parking storage shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with the agreed details and completed prior to occupation of the development hereby approved and shall thereafter be retained, maintained, for the duration of the development at all times.

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

8. The Electric Vehicle Charging Point 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 the development hereby approved.

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).

9. A No demolition/development shall take place/commence until an Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of

archaeological significance and research questions; and:

1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording
2. The programme for post investigation assessment
3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording
4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation
6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

Reason: The site lies within an area where there is significant potential for archaeological remains and any finds should be retrieved and/or recorded before they are damaged or destroyed as a result of the development hereby permission and to comply with Policy HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

10. The demolition/development shall take place/commence in accordance with the programme of archaeological works set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A)

Reason: The site lies within an area where there is significant potential for archaeological remains and any finds should be retrieved and/or recorded before they are damaged or destroyed as a result of the development hereby permission and to comply with Policy HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

11. The development shall not be occupied/used until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis and publication where appropriate.

Reason: The site lies within an area where there is significant potential for archaeological remains and any finds should be retrieved and/or recorded before they are damaged or destroyed as a result of the development hereby permission and to comply with Policy HE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

12. Equipment shall be installed to effectively suppress and disperse fumes and/or odours produced by cooking and food preparation, and the equipment shall be effectively operated for so long as the commercial food use continues. Full details of the method of odour abatement and all odour abatement equipment to be used, including predicted noise levels of the equipment in operation, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the installation of the equipment. The approved equipment shall be installed and in full working order to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority prior to the use hereby permitted commencing.

Reason: In order to prevent the adverse impact of odours arising from cooking activities on the amenity of nearby residents. Local Plan Policy D3.

13. Details of any external plant, machinery and equipment installed or operated in connection with this permission shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the installation of the equipment. The details shall include predicted noise levels of the equipment in operation.

Reason: To safeguard neighbouring amenity and to comply with Policies D3 and D4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

14. The use hereby permitted shall be limited to educational purposes only falling within Class F1 a) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the general amenity of the locality and to comply with Policies D1 and D3 of the Local Plan.

15. The use hereby approved shall only take place between the hours of 8.00am and 7.00pm on Mondays to Wednesdays and Sundays, 7.00am and 11.00pm on Thursdays to Saturdays.

Reason: The use is located in close proximity to residential properties and the restriction of activity is necessary to ensure that the residents of those properties can continue to expect to enjoy times of reasonable peace and quiet. Local Plan Policy D3.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. 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.

Informative/s:

1. 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 County Council website at:
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/business-and-developer-information/business-licences/business-licences.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

2. 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 County Council website at:

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

3. 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.

4. It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit compost, dung or other material for dressing land, or any rubbish on a made up carriageway, or any or other debris on a highway to the interruption of any highway user. 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 and use thereafter are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway.

Further information is available by telephoning 0300 1234047.

5. The applicant is advised that the Highway Authority has powers under section 163 of the Highways Act 1980, to take appropriate steps where deemed necessary (serving notice to the occupier of premises adjoining a highway) to prevent water from the roof or other part of the premises falling upon persons using the highway, or to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, surface water from the premises flowing on to, or over the footway of the highway.
6. Please note that any external ducting or venting may require planning permission in its own right from the Local Planning Authority.

Signed  Anne McDonald Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 11 December 2025	