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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: 25/01846/FP
HCC ref: NH/28035/2026
HCC received: 28 April 2026
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

Land Adjacent 2 And 3 Wells Cottages, Smiths End Lane, Barley, Hertfordshire, SG8 8LJ

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

AMENDED PROPOSAL

Full Planning Permission : Change of use of 2 two-storey commercial units to No.2 residential dwellings and erection of bike sheds

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 recommends that permission be refused for the following reasons:

The HA objects to the proposed development as it has not been demonstrated that the site is sustainably accessible by non-car modes. The applicant has therefore failed to demonstrate safe and suitable pedestrian access to public transport, and the development would be inherently reliant on private car use, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4, and the Hertfordshire Place & Movement Design Guidance.

Highways comments:

The Highway Authority (HA) has reviewed the submitted Technical Note (TN) and acknowledges that the applicant has addressed a number of the previously raised highway concerns.

The submitted information demonstrates that appropriate visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m can be achieved at both accesses, which is acceptable for a 30mph environment. The submitted swept path analysis for private vehicles is also satisfactory, confirming that vehicles can access, park, and turn

within the site. The approach to refuse collection, whereby bins are presented for collection at the highway in line with the arrangement for surrounding rural dwellings, is accepted. The proposed access arrangements, including the retention of the existing access and provision of a new access, are therefore considered acceptable in highway terms.

The level of trip generation associated with the proposed residential use is low and is considered likely to be comparable to, or less than, the existing commercial use of the site. As such, the proposal would not result in a severe residual cumulative impact on the local highway network. The principle of drainage control at the highway boundary, including the use of slot drainage, is also acceptable and can be secured via planning condition.

Notwithstanding the above, the HA fundamental concern is in respect of sustainable transport and accessibility. Table 1 of the Technical Note identifies the nearest bus stops as Richmond's Garage (northbound) located approximately 450m (circa 6 minutes walk) and Richmond's Garage (southbound) located approximately 550m from the site. While these distances are relatively close to accepted walking thresholds of 400m, the assessment fails to consider the quality and safety of the walking route, which is a critical factor.

Smiths End Lane is a rural carriageway with no segregated footways and no street lighting. Pedestrians would therefore be required to walk along the carriageway in close proximity to vehicular traffic, including during hours of darkness. The applicant has not demonstrated that this route provides a safe, convenient, or attractive pedestrian environment, particularly for more vulnerable users.

As such, notwithstanding the proximity of bus stops in purely distance terms, the HA does not consider that genuine or practical access to public transport is achieved. The development would therefore be heavily reliant on private car use, and the applicant has not demonstrated that realistic opportunities for sustainable travel exist in practice.

This is contrary to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024), which seeks to prioritise sustainable transport modes, as well as the aims of Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4 and the Hertfordshire Place & Movement Design Guidance, which require development to be located and designed to provide safe, inclusive, and convenient access for all users, reducing reliance on the private car.

Recommendation:

The HA objects to the proposed development as it has not been demonstrated that the site is sustainably accessible by non-car modes. The applicant has therefore failed to demonstrate safe and suitable pedestrian access to public transport, and the development would be inherently reliant on private car use, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 4, and the Hertfordshire Place & Movement Design Guidance.

Signed

Senober Khan

18 May 2026