

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Melissa Tyler.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/00907/FP	Change of use of from Sui Generis Waste Centre to Class E(d) Indoor Sports Venue for Padel including bin store, cycle store and parking. (amended plans received 13.05.2025)	5 Hunting Gate Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 0TJ

Submitted Plan Nos

SD01125-1001 SD01125-1002-Rev-B - SD01125-1003 Rev A SD01125-1004 SD01125-1005-Rev-D
SD01125-1006 SD01125-1007

1.0 Policies

D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions

ETC1	Appropriate uses in Employment Areas
HC1	Community facilities
SECN11	Making effective use of land
SECN6	Building strong, competitive economy
SECN8	Promoting healthy and safe communities
SECN9	Promoting sustainable transport
SP1	Sustainable development in North Herts
SP10	Healthy Communities

2.0 **Relevant site history**

2.1 None.

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Environmental Health** – Given the location, I have no objections to the proposals.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The site has a large warehouse of sui generis use. The existing site comprises 1,557sqm of ground floor warehousing space, plus 605.5sqm of ancillary office space in the front part of the building which is 3 storeys. The site has a large, gated/fenced

yard at the rear which is accessed down the left side of the warehouse building. There is also on-street parking at the front.

- 4.1.2 The site is in a commercial and industrial area, where nearby uses are mainly light industrial, offices, storage or similar. The site is within an allocated Employment Area.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Change of use of from Sui Generis Waste Centre to Class E(d) Indoor Sports Venue for Padel including bin store, cycle store and parking. (amended plans received 13.05.2025)

- 4.2.2 The key elements of the proposed scheme are as follows:
- Reception area created with access to male and female changing/shower area with toilets and disabled toilet/shower.
 - Provision of 4 double padel courts (20mx 10m) and a single padel court (20m x 6m).
 - Ancillary juice bar to serve players only.
 - 29 car parking spaces and dedicated cycle parking in rear yard area accessed from Hunting Gate.
 - Use of first and second floor office space for business administration and meeting rooms for sponsors and businesses interested in corporate events.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key material considerations are whether the development is acceptable in principle, character and appearance, impacts on residential amenity, and parking.

Principle

- 4.3.2 The site is in an allocated Employment Area in the Local Plan. LP Policy ETC1 sets out what uses are appropriate in Employment Areas, with the Policy stating:

Within the safeguarded Employment Areas, and the Employment Allocations (BA10 and RY9), as shown on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for office, research and development, industrial processes, industrial and storage and distribution uses provided:

- a) For allocated sites any relevant site-specific criteria are met; and*
- b) Any Use Class B8 development is easily accessible from the primary road network.*

Planning permission for other uses will be granted as an exception to the above criteria provided they are:

- i. Ancillary to the above uses;*
- ii. Essential to the continued operation of an established premises;*
- iii. Would bring comparable benefits to office, research and development, industrial processes, industrial and storage and distribution uses in the same location; or*
- iv. Would make use of a site that would otherwise be likely to become or remain vacant for an extended period of time.*

Conditions and legal agreements will be used to limit uses to ensure that development meets, and will continue to meet, identified employment needs.

- 4.3.3 The proposed use as an indoor sports venue would not fall within the first part of ETC1. Under the remaining part of ETC1, the sports facility would employ 3 employees and would make use of a vacant building, therefore it's considered that iii and iv would be complied with.
- 4.3.4 The sports facility would also be within Class E, which includes uses such as offices and light industry that would allow the building to be converted in the future to such a use that would be more 'traditional' in the Employment Area. The principle of the change of use is acceptable. The proposal complies with Local Plan Policies SP3 and ETC2; and Section 6 of the NPPF.

Character and appearance

- 4.3.5 The proposal does not include any substantial external alterations to the building or the site. The proposed use as a Padel venue wouldn't be expected to have impacts on the locality comparable to office uses for example. In the wider Employment Area there are uses such as gyms, therefore the padel venue is not considered out of place in the area. The proposal complies with Policy D1 of the Local Plan, and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Neighbour amenity

- 4.3.6 There are no dwellings anywhere near the site, therefore the use will not affect residential amenity. Nearby uses are offices and light industrial, which are not considered would be affected by the use.
- 4.3.7 In regards to the proposed hours of Operation, the applicant intends to operate Padel from the premises between 6:00 to 00:00 Monday to Sunday to enable people to play before and after work and sometimes hold full day tournaments at weekends.
- 4.3.8 It's not considered that hours of use or the use of the site should be restricted by conditions as the proposed use and the location of the building are not so sensitive that they should be controlled. Impacts on amenity are acceptable, and complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan.

Parking

- 4.3.9 Parking standards are set out in the Council's 2011 SPD. There are no categories for pool halls in the standards, and no direct equivalents. The application form states 29 Car parking spaces will be provided with secure cycle store.
- 4.3.10 Parking provision is considered acceptable as not all employees are likely to be on site at the same time, the location of the site is at one of the outer edges of Hitchin and more difficult to get to which would discourage some visitors, and unallocated on-street parking is near the site.
- 4.3.11 The proposal complies with Policies T1 and T2 of the Local Plan, and Section 9 of the NPPF.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **GRANTED**.

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.

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.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 13 June 2025	