

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Tom Rea.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/02975/FP	Partial change of use of former quarry to private dog walking and exercise area including parking, one raised portacabin, installation of fencing and gate. Borehole exclusion zone.	Vicars Grove Pit Little Almshoe Road St Ippolyts Hertfordshire

Submitted Plan Nos

01-PL06B 01-01A 01-PL02A 01-PL03A 01-PL04A Proposes Site Plan Part 1 01-PL05A Proposed Site Plan Part 2

1.0 Policies

D1 Sustainable design

SECN13	Protecting Green Belt Land
SECN6	Building strong, competitive economy
T2	Parking
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SP9	Design and Sustainability

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 None relevant .

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 NHDC Environmental Health:

Advises that given the location the officer raises no objections

3.2 Highway Authority: No objections – recommends advisories

3.3 NHDC Ecologist: Advises no objections.

3.4 Natural England – Advise ‘No objections’

3.5 St. Ippolyts Parish Council – Advises no comments to make

3.6 Local Residents/Site Notice –

Message from a local resident:

- ☐ Elements of the proposed development may already have been implemented. Specifically, fencing and a gate appear to have been installed within the past few weeks, and the land is seemingly already being used as a private dog walking and exercise area. As the application remains under consideration, this raises concern that development may have commenced prior to the granting of planning consent. I would

be grateful if the Council could review this matter and confirm whether these works have been assessed in terms of planning compliance.

- ☐ In addition, while the proposal refers to the site as a former quarry, my understanding is that there may be Environment Agency considerations affecting the land and that restoration obligations may still apply. If this is the case, I would respectfully question whether the proposed use as a private dog walking and exercise facility would be appropriate or compatible with any required restoration or environmental obligations associated with the site.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The application site is located on the north side of Little Almshoe Road and lies within the Green Belt. It consists of a partly wooded area adjacent to an agricultural field to the east.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 The proposal is for the partial change of use of former quarry to private dog walking and exercise area including parking, one raised portacabin, installation of fencing and gate.
- 4.2.2 The site involves a 0.9-hectare area of the former Vicars Grove Pit quarry to a private dog walking and exercise area, including fencing, a gate, and protection of an existing borehole. The land is owned by the applicant, who operates a private dog exercise business, and will be used exclusively by the owner with no public access. The proposal utilises existing access and hardstanding areas for vehicle entry and preferred parking location.
- 4.2.3 The site is within the Green Belt and falls within Flood Zone 1

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key planning considerations relate to:
 - ☐ The principle of the use in the Green Belt;
 - ☐ Any impact on nearby residential living conditions;
 - ☐ Any highway/parking matters.

4.3.2 **Principle of the use**

The NPPF considers development in the Green Belt under Section 13 - Protecting Green Belt land. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The use of land for dog training/care is not specifically referred to, however paragraph 146 does consider certain forms of development to

be not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These include – (e) *material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds)*. It also allows under (d) *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction*. It is my opinion that the proposed change of use of land could be considered as not being inappropriate provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

4.3.3 The proposal includes some changes in the appearance of the site: the 2 metres high wire fence, the small storage shed (see plan 05) and the general paraphernalia associated with the training and exercising of dogs.

4.3.4 The site is quite isolated from any public views and sited well away from any public footpaths. I would refer you to the proposed Location Plan which shows the location of the proposed fence, including gate.. The site contains a number of trees forming part of a larger woodland. I consider the existing woodland would screen the site from Little Almshoe Road . The intended operation of the business is that dog training equipment would be put away in the portacabin shed at the end of each session. I consider the proposed development would have very limited visibility from any public vantage point.

4.3.4 The proposed storage shed is in a new building but would be considered appropriate development given it is an ancillary building to an appropriate recreational use in the Green Belt. It small scale and the existing screening means that it would cause no demonstrable harm to either the openness of the Green Belt or to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

4.3.5 Highway implications

The proposed development would generate additional car and van trips to the site and the applicant has provided the following information:

1.1. The applicant employs four part-time members of staff. Dogs are transported to the site in two company Ford Transit vans for supervised exercise.

1.2. Each van will visit the site up to four times per day, resulting in a maximum of 8 arrivals and 8 departures (16 vehicle movements per day).

1.3. No alterations to the existing access are proposed. The level of activity is modest, predictable, and directly associated with the established business

Taking account of the above, the location of the parking away from the road frontage; that the hardstanding is existing I consider that the development would be acceptable in highway terms. It is noted that the Highway Authority do not raise any objections to the development.

4.3.6 There is a requirement in the NPPF for development to be sustainable. There are 3 strands of sustainability, economic, social and environmental. The proposal is for a business and would generate employment. I therefore consider the proposal to be economically sustainable. The development would have no significant effect on social sustainability. The effect of the development on biodiversity would not be significant. The use would generate additional traffic to the site, although this would be limited due to the use of vans to collect dogs from owners' homes. Overall, I consider the positive and negative elements of sustainability to be balanced and that there is no objection on the grounds of sustainability.

4.3.7 Section 6 of the NPPF places significant weight on the need to support economic growth. Paragraph 83 specifically relates to the rural economy. I consider the proposed use of land would have a positive effect on the economy, in line with the NPPF.

4.3.10 Ecology and BNG

4.3.11 The site has been assessed for ecological constraints with a submitted assessment by an ecological contractor company. The report concludes as follows:

- ☐ A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal would not be appropriate for the site. The proposal is for the land to be used as an area for dog walking. As such there would be no changes to the landscape that would have any impacts on any protected species that may be on site.
- ☐ There are no expected works to be carried out on the trees on site unless there is a health and safety issue. If this arises then we can carry out a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) to see if any of the trees subject to works need further surveys in relation to bat or breeding bird potential.
- ☐ A perimeter fence is to be installed around the outer boundary of the parcel of land in question. This will be of a type that is considerate to any wildlife on site. No other works are predicted on site, therefore there will be no impacts to protected species and no changes to the habitat in terms of redevelopment.

4.3.12 The Council's Senior Ecologist advises that there are no ecological objections to the scheme and no ecological conditions are requested.

4.3.13 The site does not affect any priority habitat and is therefore exempt from the BNG Regulations.

4.4 **Climate Change Mitigation**

4.4.1 The impact on climate change relates to vehicular trips and this would be limited given the modest scale and operation of the business.

4.5 **Conclusion**

4.5.1 On balance, the development would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt; would cause no significant harm to the openness of the Green Belt; would represent sustainable development and would have limited impact on the appearance of the locality. Impact on nearby living conditions is unlikely to be an issue and can be mitigated by conditions. Noise should not be a significant issue for residents.

4.6 **Alternative Options**

4.6.1 None applicable

4.7 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

4.7.1 None proposed.

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. In the event that the use hereby permitted ceases, the approved fencing and portacabins (including any hardstanding) shall be removed from the site and the land reinstated to its former condition.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

4. There shall be no buildings, structures, hard surfaces, artificial grass, fences or other permanent means of enclosure on the application site, other than those approved as part of this application, unless first agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the locality and openness of the Green Belt and in accordance with Policy NE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

5. There shall be no external lighting unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the locality within the countryside and Green Belt and in accordance with Policy NE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

6. There shall be no more than 100 dogs on the application site at any one time.

Reason: In the interests of the living conditions and well being of local residents and in accordance with Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031..

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:

0. Highway Informatives:

AN1) 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 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

AN2) Debris and deposits on the highway: 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.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 12 March 2026	