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| <b>DELEGATED FILE NOTE</b> |
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**CASE OFFICER:** ...Tom Rea.....

| APPLICATION<br>REFERENCE | BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF<br>DEVELOPMENT                                                                                | APPLICATION SITE                                                             |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 25/00301/FP              | Change of Use of existing caretaker's<br>cottage from residential (Use Class C3)<br>to educational (Use Class F1). | Hitchin Girls School<br>Highbury Road<br>Hitchin<br>Hertfordshire<br>SG4 9RS |

**Submitted Plan Nos**

2256 00 0001 Location Plan 2256 00 0001

**1.0     Policies**

D1                      Sustainable design

D3 Protecting living conditions

HC1 Community facilities

HE1 Designated heritage assets

2.0 **Site History**

2.1 None relevant

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 Site Notice / Adjoining occupiers: No comments received.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 Detached two storey cottage (54 Highbury Road) located on the corner of Highbury Road and Windmill Hill immediately adjacent the main Hitchin Girls school entrance gates leading off Highbury Road.

The property has two bedrooms and domestic accommodation on the ground floor comprising kitchen, lounge, dining room and utility as well as an attached garage. The property has a small garden to the front south east corner of the plot but this is not included in the red line application site.

The property falls within the Hitchin Conservation Area (Character Area 4 – Windmill Hill and Walsworth Road) and is identified as ‘Positive Building’

4.2 **Proposal**

Change of Use of the Caretaker’s Cottage, located within the grounds of Hitchin Girls’ School, from residential use (Use Class C3) to educational use (Use Class F1).

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 **Principle of the use**

4.3.2 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.

The proposed use would be adjacent to and / or within school grounds and would be accessible by a range of transport modes. The use would also meet the needs of the local community in providing a facility dedicated for SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities). The use would therefore comply with Policy HC1.

4.3.3 The building was formerly used as staff accommodation (e.g. a caretaker's accommodation) but has been vacant for over a year thus there will be no loss of residential accommodation.

4.3.4 Impact on heritage assets

4.3.5 The site is just inside the Hitchin Conservation Area. This part of the CA is dominated by the school buildings and its grounds on both sides of Highbury Road and accounts for almost 50% of Character Area 4.

4.3.6 No external changes are proposed to the existing building which will remain within the ownership of the school and form part of the school grounds. The change of use will have no material impact on the wider setting of the Conservation Area.

4.3.7 Impact on nearby residents

4.3.8 There are no immediately adjoining residential properties though there are some residential properties to the south beyond the public right of way track leading to Windmill Hill. The nearest property is some 20 metres distant but is unlikely to be affected by the use of the building for educational purposes given the small scale of the use (approximately 42 sqm) and the restricted hours of use which are stated as 08:00am – 18:30 pm Monday to Fridays.

4.3.9 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.

4.3.10 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.

4.3.11 Access and car parking

4.3.12 There are no changes to the parking and access arrangements for the building. Ample parking exists within the school grounds to accommodate any limited if any additional parking associated with the use. In addition the site is within a sustainable location where public transport choices and walking and cycling are encouraged.

4.3.13 BNG and Climate change

4.3.14 The application site has under 25 sq metres of habitat land and is therefore exempt from the BNG Regulations and the need to demonstrate 10% net gain in BNG.

4.3.15 The scale of the development proposal means that it is unlikely to result in any significant impact on local climate change.

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.        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.

**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.

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| <p>Signed</p>  <p>Sam Dicocco</p> | <p>Development Management<br/>North Hertfordshire District Council<br/>Council Offices<br/>Gernon Road<br/>Letchworth<br/>Herts<br/>SG6 3JF</p> |
| <p>Determining Officer<br/><b>Date:</b> 17 April 2025</p>                                                          |                                                                                                                                                 |