



BARLEY PARISH COUNCIL

March 5th 2026

**Re: Full Planning Permission : Change of use of 2 two-storey commercial units to No.2 residential dwellings and erection of bike sheds. Land Adjacent 2 And 3 Wells Cottages, Smiths End Lane, Barley, Hertfordshire, SG8 8LJ
25/01846/FP**

Barley Parish Council considered this planning application at its meeting on 02/03/2026 and agreed unanimously to object to the application.

In 2019 an application was made for change of use from agricultural to residential use, which was refused. Subsequently, in 2020, a change of use from agricultural to flexible commercial use was secured under Class R of the General Permitted Order (GPD0) 2015, with detailed planning permission for the necessary associated works being granted in July 2020. This planning application now seeks another change of use from commercial to residential.

Prior to this current application, the PC raised concerns about this development with NHDC, particularly whether it was being carried out in accordance with previous consents. We note on the NHDC planning portal it states that the development for which this application seeks consent has already commenced; we consider this to be a retrospective planning application.

The Parish Council's has two principle areas of concern: -

- The change of use being proposed; and
- The lack of detail provided and the substantial inaccuracies contained in the application.

1. The change of use

In planning terms, the change of use must be justified – why is the application being made? But the applicant has provided no information whatsoever to support the change of use to residential.

At the very least we would expect: -

- Information to demonstrate that the loss of the building's existing use is acceptable and will not cause problems
- Explain the need for the new use and its benefits; and
- For there to have been engagement with impacted parties, for example neighbours and the local community.

But there is no supporting evidence whatsoever and there has been no engagement with the community.

Local employment opportunities are very limited in Barley and the commercial use could be extremely beneficial to the village – more so indeed than 2x4 bedroom residential units. There is no evidence submitted that the currently unfinished commercial units have been marketed or any attempt made to use them for their original consented purpose.

2. The lack of detail provided and the substantial inaccuracies contained in the application

- There is no Design and Access Statement included within the application explaining the design rationale and access considerations for the proposal; demonstrating that the proposed development is appropriate for the site and context. The site is within a conservation area and directly overlooks Smith End Farm, a Grade II listed building with Group Value, any development in close proximity must to be considered from a heritage perspective.
- The site plan– see below:



- An additional area of land to the SE of the principal site is included, what is the rationale for the inclusion of this area given that part of it includes a pond which is not annotated on the drawing? It should not be included. Or, at the very least, if there is a sound but as yet unknown justification for its inclusion, PD rights must be removed.

- The site plan does not show the public footpath that crosses the site. This footpath runs along part of the shared access road to the new house and unit 2, it should be properly segregated from the road on safety grounds. The route of this footpath needs to be shown in relation to the development.
- The shared access with Unit 2 and Wells Cottage, together with the recently approved new accessway to Wellside Cottage, are not identified on the site plan. How will these multiple users be safely accommodated, identified and movements managed?
- A new access is identified to serve Unit 1. However: -
 - No sight lines are indicated to show that safe entry and exit can be achieved to satisfy HCC Highway requirements.
 - It would also appear there is inadequate onsite turning space to allow exit in a forward direction.
 - This access is directly opposite an existing access to Smiths End Farm which serves 4 properties but no mention has been made of the disruption/disturbance/conflict to these four properties and how this could be mitigated.
- The application form contains numerous errors and inaccuracies: -
 - The applicant has stated that work has not yet commenced to accommodate the change of use, when it quite clearly has and this is referenced on the planning portal.
 - The application references the bike stores but not the bin stores indicated on the site plan.
 - No information is provided on the materials to be used but the bike sheds, bin stores, brick wall (or post and rail fence) and new additional driveway, will all involve external materials.
 - The application includes floor plans and elevations. However, the west elevation drawing is wrong as it does not show the solar panels already installed to the roof of this elevation.
 - The applicant has stated there will be no new or altered vehicular access proposed to or from the public highway, but the plans clearly show a new additional access and, by definition, a new pedestrian access. See comments above.
 - As mentioned above the existing public right of way is not shown on any of the plans yet the applicant states there are no alterations to existing rights of way. This is clearly wrong as there is an existing adjacent public footpath on the north side of the site, the route of which has been altered during construction without, so far as we are aware, any approval. The footpath needs to be clearly identified and reinstated.
 - With reference to the foul sewage; if the mains sewer is going to be utilised, the connection to the drainage system must be known.
 - Assessment of flood risk - There is a large pond adjacent to the site which, as referred to above, is not shown on the drawings and which may be impacted by surface water disposal from the development by means of soakaways or

otherwise. Smith End Land does flood and reassurance needs to be given that the current situation will not be exacerbated.

BPC consider this application to be woefully inadequate. But it is not only the lack of critical detail and information, but also the applicant's approach that has caused concern. Given originally an application made for residential conversion under agricultural provisions was refused, was it always the intention to seek residential use through other routes? As far as we are aware, there has been no attempt to secure commercial occupiers for the scheme and, in the absence of a marketing strategy for the commercial units and the way in which alterations have been made to the construction of the development, it is difficult not to conclude it has always been the intention to seek a change of use to residential. We do, however, acknowledge that the motivation and approach of the applicant is not relevant to the determination of this application.

In conclusion, given the lack of information, detail and numerous factual inaccuracies, Barley Parish Council object to this application for the reasons set out above; we ask that it is refused by NHDC.

Kind regards

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