



Mark Youngman
Development Management Group Manager
Hertfordshire County Council
Postal Point CHN115
Farnham House
Six Hills Way
Stevenage
SG1 2ST

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: 24/01426/FP
HCC ref: NH/21655/2024
HCC received: 16 July 2024
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

9 - 10 High Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1BH

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

Full Planning Permission : Demolition and redevelopment to provide 44 residential apartments (in four part 4 storey / part 5 storey linked blocks) 325 sqms of Class E floorspace at ground floor fronting the High Street, landscaping, amenity and associated parking

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 Highway Authority under the current submission cannot support the application due to the application has failed to provide relevant detailed information outlined in the above comments to enable the Highway Authority to fully assess in detail and clarity the highway implications of the proposed development, contrary to Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4) policies 5 and 6 and also contrary to the principles of sustainable development contained in the NPPF, therefore the proposals represent a risk to highway safety for all road users.

Brief Description of Proposed Development by the applicant:

A Transport Statement has been submitted to support proposals for demolition and redevelopment to provide 44 residential apartments, 325 sqms of Class E floorspace at ground floor fronting the High Street and associated parking.

The site, which is situated between the High Street and the A505 Paynes Place consists of two retail units and a now unused rooftop car park.

Pedestrian access to the existing retail units is taken from the High Street, which features wide footways to either side of a reduced width carriageway. It operates as a pedestrianised route on Saturdays where traffic is banned between 10:00 – 16:00. The High Street includes street lighting and is subject to a 20 mph speed limit.

Paynes Place includes circa 2.0 m wide footways to either side of the road. The western footway widens to approximately 5.0 m in the vicinity of the adjacent Waitrose store and multi storey car park. A signal controlled crossing is located immediately to the south of the site, providing access from the High Street to the Waitrose store and car park. Paynes park is a one way road, subject to a 30 mph speed limit and is illuminated.

The site is accessed via a crossover, which leads to areas of car parking to the rear of the site and at rooftop level. The site access has a visibility splay to the right of 2.4 x 43 m.

The proposed development site is located in Hitchin town centre with good access to local facilities and amenities. The site benefits from good public transport by bus and rail.

The existing access location on the A505 Paynes Park would be retained to provide access to the site. The access would lead onto a small service area for the proposed dwellings and a basement car park. The retail unit would be serviced from the High Street.

The use of the site access, service area and basement car park by a car, delivery vehicle and fire tender.

Pedestrian and cycle access to the proposed dwellings would be taken from the site access on Paynes Park. A pedestrian access would also be provided from the High Street.

Personal Injury Collision (PIC) data has been obtained from the CrashMap1 database for the most recent five-year period up to 2022 for the area surrounding the site. A total of two incidents (April 2018 and November 2020) were recorded in the vicinity of the site, both of which were classified as being slight in nature. In the absence of any identifiable cluster, the lack of recorded incidents would suggest that there is no existing highway safety issue in the vicinity of the site.

The proposed development would include a total of 32 parking spaces for the residential units, including 5 disabled spaces for the accessible flats. The proposed retail unit would not be provided with parking. The spaces would be located at basement level and would be accessed via a signal controlled ramp.

The proposed retail unit would be provided with a total of 2 long stay spaces located in a secure area to the rear of the unit at ground floor level and a Sheffield stand located on the High Street in the vicinity of the site to provide 2 short stay spaces.

A total of 44 long stay spaces will be provided for the proposed dwellings in accordance with the minimum cycle parking standards. These would be located in secure cycle stores at ground floor level, using two tier cycle racks. Eight of the spaces would be able to accommodate adapted/cargo cycles.

Deliveries to the proposed retail unit would use the existing loading bays provided along the High Street.

Deliveries to the proposed residential units would take place from a service area to be located at ground floor level and accessed from Paynes Park.

Refuse collection for the proposed retail unit would follow the existing waste collection arrangements. The waste would be stored at ground floor level and would be brought forward for collection.

A Waste Management Plan detailing how the collection of residential waste arising will be managed could be provided by way of a planning condition.

The proposed development is predicted to generate a two way flow of 11 vehicles in the AM peak hour and 10 vehicles in the corresponding PM peak hour. This level of traffic generation would have negligible impact on the surrounding highway network.

The proposed retail unit would be smaller than the existing retail use on site and would not be provided with car parking. As a result, its impact would be restricted to servicing trips, which are also likely to be less than those associated with the existing use. As such, no further analysis in relation to the proposed retail use has been undertaken.

The proposed development would provide 44 flats and a 335 m² retail unit with a total of 32 parking spaces in a basement car park. While the level of parking would be less than the minimum standards set out in the North Herts BC SPD, it reflects the location of the site in the town centre and car ownership levels for flats.

The redevelopment of the site is predicted a peak hour two way flow of circa 10 vehicles, which would have a negligible impact on the adjacent highway network.

Highway comments:

The proposal involves the demolition and redevelopment to provide 44 residential apartments and 325 sqms of Class E floorspace at ground floor fronting the High Street, with a total of 32 parking spaces (including 5 disabled spaces) in a basement car park.

The proposed car parking provision is the responsibility of the LPA to determine the level and suitability of the car parking proposals, however, it is essential that it is operated in efficient and safe manner to minimise the impact on the local highway network which is the responsibility of the HCC HA.

The HA has reviewed the submitted Transport Statement and has the following comments to make:

The site location is in the town centre, access to amenities, excellent accessibility and connectivity to public transport, nearby public car parks and controlled parking in place on highways surrounding the site, the HA welcomes the relatively reduced level of car parking to encourage greater use of sustainable forms of transport.

The TS has evaluated the trip generation of the proposed development and *“predicts it to generate a two way flow of 11 vehicles in the AM peak hour and 10 vehicles in the corresponding PM peak hour”* and concludes *“this level of traffic generation would have negligible impact on the surrounding highway network.”*

The status of Paynes Park is it's a classified road, A505 30mph, its part of the strategic road network, and given the proposed development is new the planning process seeks/provides the opportunity to improve conditions for both development and highway safety by applying current higher standards of design, build and safety to new developments, and not to retain and/or continue with past obsolete standards.

Whilst the HA acknowledges that any vehicle access will still be within the existing zig zag markings and given the proposed vehicle access proximity to the pelican crossing, any problems associated there would have a knock-on impact on to the strategic road network and in particular road user safety caused by vehicles stopped/waiting at the vehicle access for access, potentially causing obstruction of view for oncoming traffic to the pelican crossing.

The TS has not undertaken to evaluate the existing sites trip generation and given the above concern about the vehicle access and zig zag markings, and given that the site is proposing more car parking and for residential the HA considers that the proposed development will generate more vehicle trips than existing use.

Furthermore, it is not clear how the residential development refuse collection will be undertaken, the applicant has not shown swept path track drawings for a refuse vehicle (12.2m) servicing the site and has stated that "A Waste Management Plan detailing how the collection of residential waste arising will be managed could be provided by way of a planning condition". The HA on highway safety grounds will not accept refuse to be collected from A505 Paynes Park highway, this would create an obstruction to traffic for a relative period of time and given the narrowness of the carriageway could lead to unsafe manoeuvring to pass by traffic experiencing forward visibility being obstructed by the parked refuse vehicle in close proximity to the pelican crossing.

Furthermore, given the site specific conditions and the proposed vehicle access design there is limited scope for any error, any mistake by the refuse vehicle driver in turning would result in multiple manoeuvres being undertaken including reversing back along the A505 to align the vehicle correctly.

For the above reasons the HA will not support any development which will result in an intensification of vehicle trip generation, given the town centre location the HA would recommend a car free development (except for disabled car parking) to mitigate the above safety and network operational concerns.

Notwithstanding, the HA would recommend that detailed information is provided to the LPA concerning the car ramp design and layout.

The HA would advise that the applicant provide and substantiate detailed plans to demonstrate that the basement car parking layout, in particular car ramp and accessway curvature, widths and clearance on structure and parking layout design conform with the appropriate car park design guidance's (eg The Institution of Structural Engineers fourth edition (March 2011), - Design recommendations for multi-storey and underground car parks and regulations.

To improve the adjacent pedestrian crossing facility the HA would seek from the applicant wider footway along the sites frontage to provide a wider and more comfortable public realm area (as provided on the eastern side of the crossing) for pedestrians/child buggies/wheelchair waiting to cross without causing obstruction/ delays to other users. The same would be required from the neighbouring site as and when that site comes up for redevelopment.

The applicant has stated that a total of 44 long stay spaces will be provided for the proposed dwellings in accordance with the minimum cycle parking standards. These would be located in secure cycle stores at ground floor level, using two tier cycle racks. Eight of the spaces would be able to accommodate adapted/cargo cycles.

The HA would advise that access to the development cycle storage should also be from both High Street and Paynes Park as proposed for pedestrians to encourage greater use and easy access for cycling.

Two tier cycle parking facility is only suitable for non-residential developments. Double deck cycle parking is unsuitable for residential development because it is less convenient than Sheffield type stands and discriminatory for short people and those with low strength. People with mobility issues are also disadvantaged due to the difficulties involved with lifting at height. Additionally, limited types of cycles can fit within double deck systems in comparison with the Sheffield type stand e.g. shopping baskets, child seats, etc. This is a residential development and so the HA would recommend the majority of cycle parking (mix) should be Sheffield type which is accessible by all and not two tier.

The applicant is advised of Hertfordshire's Planning Obligations Toolkit (2021), it sets out that in order for the County to be able to support the very significant amount of new development coming forward over the next few years, a very significant amount of new and improved sustainable transport infrastructure is needed. In high level principle therefore, each new development should make a contribution towards this infrastructure to mitigate its own impact (subject of course to meeting the 3 CIL tests). The headline figure as stated in our Toolkit is £6826 per dwelling (i.e., the average amount each new dwelling across the county needs to pay in order for the necessary new infrastructure to be delivered). Multiply this by the 44 dwellings proposed = £300,344. The North Herts Local Cycling and Walking Plan (LCWIP) proposes infrastructure improvements in the Hitchin town centre, where footway and junction improvements are accompanied by new crossings and segregated cycle facilities (see Appendix G of LCWIP).

Recommendation:

The Highway Authority under the current submission cannot support the application due to the application has failed to provide relevant detailed information outlined in the above comments to enable the Highway Authority to fully assess in detail and clarify the highway implications of the proposed development, contrary to Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4) policies 5 and 6 and also contrary to the principles of sustainable development contained in the NPPF, therefore the proposals represent a risk to highway safety for all road users.

Signed
Senober Khan

7 August 2024