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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: 26/01224/S73
HCC ref: NH/29247/2026
HCC received: 21 May 2026
Area manager: Matthew Armstrong
Case officer: Matthew Armstrong

Location

Land Adjacent Sewage Pumping Station, Ashwell Road, Bygrave, Hertfordshire,

Application type

Variation of Condition

Proposal

Section 73 Application : Variation of Condition numbers 21 (External appearances): vary approved colour scheme. 26 (CTMP): vary amount of articulated lorry visits for no more than 4 weeks, and 29 (Enabling works): replace the wording "HGV movements" with "articulated lorry movements" of planning permission reference 22/00741/FP granted on 17.06.2024 for Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm including battery energy storage; continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works (as amended by information received 29 January 2024)

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 proposed changes to the wording of conditions 26 and 29 will affect adversely the free and safe flow of public highway users, contrary to paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024).

COMMENTS:

The applicant seeks to vary conditions 26 and 29 of 22/00741/FP.

Condition 26 requires a full Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) for the proposed solar farm, and includes a number of bullet point measures. One of these is a limit on the number of articulated lorries to two per day (i.e. 4 two-way trips). The applicant has submitted a Transport Note

(19/5/2026) and an Addendum to the CTMP (15/5/2026) which both set out an increase to articulated lorry movements to a maximum of 8 per day (i.e. 16 two-way trips) for a four-week period.

The applicant approached the Highway Authority earlier this year to request an increase in articulated lorry numbers to 4-per day (i.e. 8 two-way trips) on the basis of *“factors outside the control of the developer, including adverse weather conditions, temporary road incidents, emergency events and wider network disruption”*. We agreed to this on the basis they do not overlap on the highway network along Bygrave Road / Ashwell Road, and take place between the hours of 09:30-14:30. In addition, ‘Exceptional circumstances’ also needs to be defined, and we suggested the following logged events were legitimate reasons to allow for this higher level as a result of delayed deliveries:

- Adverse weather conditions;
- Temporary road incidents;
- Emergency works on delivery routes;
- Other unavoidable delay of delivery (please specify).

The information now submitted for the latest request to accommodate up to 8 articulated lorries per day over a 4-week period points to the existing traffic surveys, which already show 13 OGV2 movements (4-axle rigid and articulated vehicles) per day along Ashwell Road (thus demonstrating that the road already experiences these types of vehicles). The applicant says they will manage articulated lorry movements by holding them on-site and ensuring they only leave when there is not an approaching articulated lorry coming to their site. They go on to outline that if the increase is not allowed then it will increase construction work time by 14 weeks and *“would generate approximately 700 additional worker vehicle movements on Ashwell Road over that period, in addition to all other associated HGV movements arising from the extended programme”*.

The Highway Authority has carefully considered the request, and is unclear why the works will be extended by 14 weeks, or how there will be 700 additional worker vehicle movements when reassurances were given at the original planning stage that construction was feasible in the 35-week window with the 2-artic per day limit.

The proposed increase of up to 16 articulated lorry movements per day would more than double the existing number of observed OGV2's per day (13) along this route, and the applicant has no control over these existing HGVs on the road. This means the potential for one of the applicant's articulated lorries to meet another large oncoming HGV or articulated lorry increases, which is the exact occurrence the Highway Authority was trying to minimise through the 2-per day level.

The original vehicle tracking exercises undertaken showed that there are regular opportunities for cars to pass by articulated lorries along the approach route, which will be the most common daily scenario during construction. However, if a larger vehicle (e.g. a large van or an HGV) meets an oncoming articulated lorry, there are very few sections of the route which can comfortably accommodate this. Whilst such a scenario tends to generally work itself out if, as, and when they happen, it often results in notable damage to kerbs, verges, embankments, and sometimes even minor vehicle damage. There are also matters to consider around the slower deceleration rates of larger vehicles, and the need for possible awkward reversing manoeuvres to find a spot where two larger vehicles can pass by one another. Taken together, notably increasing the likelihood of this scenario occurring represents not only a highway safety concern, but also driver frustration and adverse effects to the free flow of traffic.

Furthermore, the Transport Note and CTMP Addendum give no consideration to the potential impact of the proposed increase on pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, and other more vulnerable users of the public highway network.

The Highway Authority would be willing to consider a compromise which involves increasing the delivery hours by one hour, to between 09:00-15:00 (which largely retains the avoidance of school opening and closing times), and increasing the maximum number of articulated lorries to 3 per day (i.e. 6 two-way movements). This represents roughly 1 articulated lorry movement an hour. The latest additional mitigation measures proposed by the applicant would need to be included for this increase.

Turning to condition 29 (which requires the North Road / Bygrave Road junction to be widened and the crossing point / central pedestrian island moved slightly forward), the applicant wishes to change the wording of this to enable construction to commence in advance of that work, using rigid HGVs. They state that the improved junction design is only necessary once articulated lorries start to use the junction, given the wider roadspace they need for manoeuvrability purposes.

However, the junction improvement is needed not only to accommodate the larger turning circle of articulated lorries, but to also mitigate against the notable increased number of HGVs generally. This is a junction which is well used by pedestrians crossing over it, and the redesign is necessary to improve visibility to/from all directions for both approaching drivers and pedestrians, and ensure the overall crossing experience is not made more intimidating by the increase in construction related HGVs.

With all the above in mind, the Highway Authority recommends that the proposed changes to the condition wordings is not granted.

Signed
Matthew Armstrong

11 June 2026