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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:26/01947/PNR
HCC ref:NH/30257/2026
HCC received:28 August 2026
Area manager:Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Paul Marshall

Location

Waterhall Farm, The Valley, Whitwell, Hitchin, SG4 8BN

Application type

Prior Approval

Proposal

Prior Approval Class R Agric to Flex Use : Change of use of existing agricultural building to flexible commercial use comprising pottery studio and workshop, pottery teaching and associated storage, together with gym equipment repair and associated storage

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 does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the following Informatives

HCC as Highway Authority recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Note (AN) to ensure that any works within the highway are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Act 1980.

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) Obstruction of highway: It is an offence under section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 for any person, without lawful authority or excuse, in any way to wilfully obstruct the free passage along a highway or public right of way. If this development is likely to result in the public highway or public right of way network becoming routinely blocked (fully or partly) the applicant must contact the Highway Authority to obtain their permission and requirements 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.

COMMENTS

The proposals are for Prior Approval Class R Agric to Flex Use : Change of use of existing agricultural building to flexible commercial use comprising pottery studio and workshop, pottery teaching and associated storage, together with gym equipment repair and associated storage

Context:

The access to Waterhall farm is taken from The Valley which is an unclassified local access road and provides a local access function in the road hierarchy. The Valley is highway maintainable at public expense. A 30mph speed limit applies. On Hertfordshire County Council's Place and Movement network The Valley is classed as P2/M1 (Residential Street). No reportable highway accidents recorded within the immediate vicinity of the application site (5-year rolling). No Public Right of Way (as shown on the Public Rights of Way Map) directly affects the site or would be affected by the proposal. The county council considers The Valley not to be a traffic sensitive road.

Policy Review:

The key documents used to assess the application are

- Manual for Streets 2007
- National Planning Policy Framework (Aug 2026)
- Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Local Transport Plan-4 [2018-2031, May2018]
- Cycle Infrastructure Design Guidance (Department for Transport Local Transport Note July 2020)
- HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (adopted in March 2024)

PLANNING HISTORY

The application site has no previous planning history.

DRAWINGS

The Highway Authority note the submission of materials in support of the planning application, including drawing numbers: 2026/415/01 to 04, Planning Statement, Location Plan, and Block Plan

ACCESSIBILITY CYCLE PARKING

The Department for Transport's Cycle Infrastructure Design (Local Transport Note 1/20, July 2020) recommends that cycle parking spaces should generally measure 2.0m in length (with 1.8m considered acceptable as a minimum) and provide a minimum spacing of 0.3m between cycles. Provision is typically expected at a rate of at least one cycle parking space per dwelling. Where cycle parking is located externally, it should be secure, covered, and capable of being locked.

The provision of conveniently located, safe and secure cycle parking is an important measure in encouraging sustainable travel choices and reducing reliance on the private car. No cycle parking details have been provided as part of the application.

WALKING

Planning for Walking, issued by the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT) places emphasis on developments being located and designed, where practical, to give priority to pedestrian (and cycle) movements and have access to high quality public transport facilities. In terms of accessibility, 400m walking distance to bus stops is considered to represent a reasonable catchment. Bus stops are within walking distance although part of the journey would be on a narrow carriageway.

PARKING

Section 5 of the Planning Statement advises that no dedicated parking is proposed for the units and that users will instead utilise the existing communal parking areas. The applicant states that this arrangement has operated successfully for the existing use and is anticipated to continue under the proposed development.

ACCESS

Section 5 of the Planning Statement points out:

'The units have been in use for general agricultural purposes and agricultural storage. In order to facilitate their use in the past various sizes of vehicle have required access. The units now remain part of a quiet agricultural yard. The units are only being marketed to existing users of the mixed-use units at Waterhall Farm'

The Highway Authority are satisfied the existing access is adequate for the proposals.

VISIBILITY

Vehicle-to-vehicle inter-visibility and pedestrian visibility have an acceptable level of visibility and accords with the principles found in Hertfordshire's Place & Movement Planning Design Guide Part 4 Chapter 6 section 18.1, page 70.

EMERGENCY ACCESS

(2023), paragraph 116 (d), applications for development should allow for access by emergency vehicles. Guidance is set out in Manual for Streets (MfS) (6.7.2). HCC's Place and Movement Planning Design Guide (P&MPDG) (Part 2 Chapter 4). Requirements are set out in the Building Regulations: Fire Safety Approved Document B, Vol 1, Dwellings, 2010 (as subsequently amended). Access for a pumping appliance should be provided to within 45m of a single dwelling house (and within 45m of all points within the dwelling house). As far as it can be reasonably ascertained from submitted plans, the proposed development would be within the recommended emergency vehicle access distance from the highway.

CONCLUSION

Should the LPA be minded to approve the application please note the above conditions and informatives. This level of development is unlikely to generate any extra movements which would ultimately lead to demonstrable harm to the highway network in terms of free flow and capacity, therefore; the highway authority would not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission.

Signed

Paul Marshall

8 September 2026