



North Herts Council
Development and Conservation
North Hertfordshire District Council
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Date: 18 July 2025
Our ref: 06664

For the attention of: Planning Department, planning.control@north-herts.gov.uk

Application ref: 25/01420/FP
Location: Highover Farm, Highover Way, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 0RQ
Proposal/Description: Full Planning Permission: Change of use and external alterations to former agricultural buildings comprising grade II listed threshing barn and non-listed courtyard buildings. Partial demolition of courtyard building between proposed Units 1 and 2 to facilitate access. Single-storey rear extension to facilitate Unit 10. Subdivision and two-storey rear extension to farmhouse to form Units 11 and 12. Erection of new building for two dwellings (Units 13 and 14). Partial demolition and modify building for cycle storage to Units 2 to 8 inclusive. Erection of building to accommodate 2 car port spaces for Unit 5 and refuse storage for Units 2-8 inclusive. Detached bin enclosure / cycle store buildings for Units 9 - 14 inclusive. Hard and soft landscaping in association with the provision of private and communal space. Boundary treatment, installation of 14no. EV charging points, installation of solar PV array on south facing roof slopes of Unit 14 and both the cycle and refuse storage buildings serving Units 2 -8 including provision of BNG area.

Thank you for consulting with Place Services on the above application. This letter sets out our consultation response on the landscape impact of the application and how the proposal relates and responds to the landscape setting and context of the site.

Site Context:

The application site is located to the north-east corner of Hitchin and comprises redundant agricultural buildings and Grade II listed Threshing Barn. The site is accessed via Highover Way to the south of the site.

The built edge of Hitchin forms the southern boundaries of the site. The northern edge is currently open arable countryside, however, this land has Outline planning permission (Ref:



18/01154/OP) for 700 dwellings plus other facilities including a primary school. A Design Code for this site has been approved (Ref: 24/02906/DOC).

Planning Policy Context:

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (Adopted 2022)

The Site is allocated under Policy SP17: Site HT1 – Highover Farm, Hitchin. The large proportion of this allocation is associated with the 700 dwelling development and associated facilities located to the north-east of the site.

Part g) of Policy SP17 states: “Sensitive consideration of other designated and non-designated heritage assets at Highover Farm including the Grade II listed Threshing Barn”.

Para 4.236 also states: “The Highover Farm complex, at the south-west of the allocation site, is an important and long-evolved complex of agricultural buildings recognised on the Council’s register of locally important heritage assets. In 2018, the Threshing Barn, which lies within this complex, was Grade II listed.”

Policies to be considered that are relevant to landscape include Policy ENV3, ENV4, NE1, NE2, NE7, NE8, SP9, SP12 and SP13.

Review of the proposal/submitted information:

Public Open Space (POS) associated with the outline planning permission (Ref: 18/01154/OP) ‘Land North of Highover Farm’ is located directly adjacent to the site and forms the north-western boundary. This area of the site is located in Character Area ‘Threshing Barn Farm’ (Adopted Strategic Masterplan). As part of this Character Area, the relationship between the POS and the Grade II listed building has been considered, with intention to create an informal rural character which responds to Policy SP17.

We have concerns that the submitted application proposes rear garden boundaries along the north-western boundary which abuts the POS. The relationship between the POS and the listed building complex could be impacted by the introduction of rear garden fencing, which will form the boundary to the POS. Also some rear garden sizes appear small. The boundary treatment is not yet confirmed, however the introduction of close-board fencing (for example) would be inappropriate and harmful to the character of the open space that is proposed.

The impacts on the Grade II listed Threshing Barn will be assessed by a heritage consultant. However, from a landscape perspective, we judge that the proposed development can be accommodated within this site and enhances condition of the landscape surrounding the heritage building.

We therefore have the following comments on the layout:

- The boundary treatment to the POS is our primary concern. Inappropriate treatment to this boundary would sever the relationship between the Grade II listed building that the Character Area is based around. Therefore, further information regarding this boundary treatment is required. A low 1.2m boundary treatment would be preferable

to retain a visual relationship with the building from the adjacent POS. Materiality should reflect the farmyard barn complex. The Landscape Proposals indicate towards a 'soft boundary', however no information has been submitted in regard to this.

- The boundary treatment for Plots 1 and 2 either side of the access road, and Plots 8 and 9 either side of the footpath must also be considered. The boundaries should reflect the character of the Grade II listed building and associated complex. Close-board fences would not be appropriate here. There is also the option to soften these boundaries with hedgerow or climber planting.
- Similarly to above, we advise that the boundary treatment within the courtyard encourages the visual permeability and does not sever the relationship between the buildings and courtyard.
- 2no. trees (T1079, 1083) are proposed for removal owed to poor quality and 2no. further trees (NT2, T1077) are proposed for removal to facilitate the development proposals. We have concerns regarding the removal of T1077 which has a Tree Protection Order (TPO). The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) indicates that it could be retained with space, so we question whether layout options have been considered to retain this protected tree.
- The maintenance tasks should also include the removal of tree guards 3-5 years from planting, or once the plants have established.
- The grass lawn area needs specifying. We would recommend a flowering lawn mix.
- T1077 is shown as being retained on the Landscape Proposals, which contradicts with the AIA which shows removal to facilitate development. We would prefer that this TPO tree be retained, however both plans need to be consistent.

Whilst some hard landscaping information has been included within the Landscaping Proposals (Dwg. HFH 01), we advise that a separate plan is submitted specifically for hard landscaping and all boundary treatments. For clarity, this information would be clearer on a separate plan. The 'hard' landscaping shall be implemented and completed in accordance with the approved details before the dwellings to which it relates are first occupied.

The hard landscape plan should include details and specification of all hard surface materials and boundary treatments to be used within the development with a timetable for implementation, including all means of enclosure and boundary treatments, such as walls and fences.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of North Herts Council.

Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.