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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: 24/01371/FP
HCC ref: NH/21505/2024
HCC received: 3 July 2024
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

Hillcrest, The Causeway, Therfield, Royston, SG8 9PP

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

Full Planning Permission : Erection of seven dwellings (4 x 3-bed and 3 x 4-bed) including creation of vehicular access off The Causeway, carport, parking, landscaping, and associated works following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings

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 demonstrate a satisfactory policy and design-led approach to the 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 dated June 2024 has been submitted in support of the application.

The proposed development will include 7 dwellings for varying sizes, with associated parking.

A previous planning application (NHCC Ref: 23/02417/FP)¹ was submitted on 23rd October 2023 for the:

“Erection of 10 residential dwellings (1 x 2-bed, 7 x 3-bed, 1 x 4-bed and 1 x 5-bed) including creation of vehicular access, parking, landscaping, and associated works following demolition of dwelling and outbuildings.”

The application was withdrawn subsequent to comments from the local Highway Authority received on the 14 November 2023, which expressed concerns regarding the application’s considerations to the principles of sustainable development and the provision of suitable pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure.

It is understood that comments made in reference to planning application 23/02417/FP are largely applicable to the proposed development as it comprises a rearranged site layout of the same development site, to deliver the same land use (Use Class C2), albeit with a reduction in the number of units.

Although the development does not propose changes and improvements to cycling infrastructure, the proposal has been amended to include a 2m footway along the site frontage, providing safer pedestrian infrastructure and provides cycle parking for each dwelling.

The proposal includes the provision of new EV charging facilities for each dwelling.

The proposal encourages active modes of travel and will improve infrastructure for sustainable transport modes through the introduction of a new footway which will service the public and not only site residents, complying with sections a, b and c of HLPT Policy 5. While the improvement is limited in scale, it is considered to be of a scale that is commensurate with the scale of development.

The proposed site, however, is within a 15-minute cycle range from Royston, giving it access to services, public transport, and other amenities through cycling. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal is compliant and does align with current criteria for active travel methods and accessibility through non-private car modes of transport.

Highway safety records indicate that there is no safety issue for cyclists or pedestrians on the local highway network.

The closest pavements to the site are situated on the east side of The Causeway, just outside Therfield First School, approximately 20m to the south of the development site’s boundary. This pavement extends southward to Police Row, where it gradually fades away and resumes again past The Fox and Duck. It then continues along Police Row, leading to the southern part of the village on the eastern roadside.

In villages of this size, it's common to encounter limited pedestrian infrastructure. Due to the relatively low traffic volume, pedestrians tend to utilise the roads to travel by foot.

The local highway network's nature provides a favourable environment for cyclists, with the centre of Royston being accessible from the site by cycle in approximately 14 minutes.

Due to the proposed site's location, bus services do not operate in close proximity.

Access to Royston station from the site can be achieved within 15 minutes by bicycle, or via an 8-minute car journey. For cyclists, the station supplies cycle parking options, providing 178 spaces that are monitored by CCTV.

A new section of footway will be provided along the southern end of the site frontage, enhancing pedestrian accessibility to the nearby school and centre of the village.

Highway access to the site will be taken from a new priority junction to be formed on The Causeway, approximately 100m from the junction with Pedlar Lane/ Police Row/ The Causeway junction to the south.

The Causeway is subject to a 30 mph, on that basis, a 43 m splay length, based upon a 30 mph design speed (using Manual for Streets 2) is considered to be suitable.

A total of 14 allocated spaces will be provided for the 7 dwellings. Each dwelling will be provided with electric vehicle charging facilities. Additionally, two visitor parking spaces will be located on either side of the proposed road entering the site. Two covered and secure cycle parking spaces will be provided for each dwelling.

Domestic refuse will be collected by the municipal waste collection team. Suitable turning areas are provided within the site for the refuse vehicle.

The proposed development of 7 dwellings is predicted to generate a two-way flow of three vehicles during the AM peak hour and a two-way flow of four vehicles in the PM peak hour. This level of traffic flow would be readily accommodated by the proposed site access and is unlikely to have any noticeable impact on the local highway network.

Regarding road safety, five-year PIC data was acquired from CrashMap for the period 2018 to 2022. No collisions were reported within the area. Given the absence of collisions, there is no fundamental highway design flaw on the roads near the site. A further review has been undertaken, with a focus on pedestrian and cycle safety, which shows that there is no pedestrian or cycle safety issue on the roads surrounding the site.

HCC have raised concerns with respect to the sustainability of the site. The proposals include pedestrian infrastructure improvements which are considered to be commensurate with the scale of development, cycle parking in accordance with local planning policy guidance and electric vehicle charging points for each new dwelling. The proposals therefore provide sustainability enhancements and features that will encourage sustainable travel choices.

Highways comments:

The proposals involve demolishing the existing dwelling and ancillary outbuildings and the erection of seven dwellings (4 x 3-bed and 3 x 4-bed) including creation of vehicular access off The Causeway, carport, parking and associated works.

The applicant has submitted a Transport Statement (TS) in support of their application.

The proposed car parking provision and layout 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 TS takes on board the HA's previous comments for application ref. no.23/02417/FP, because the applicant states they are largely applicable to the proposed development as it comprises a

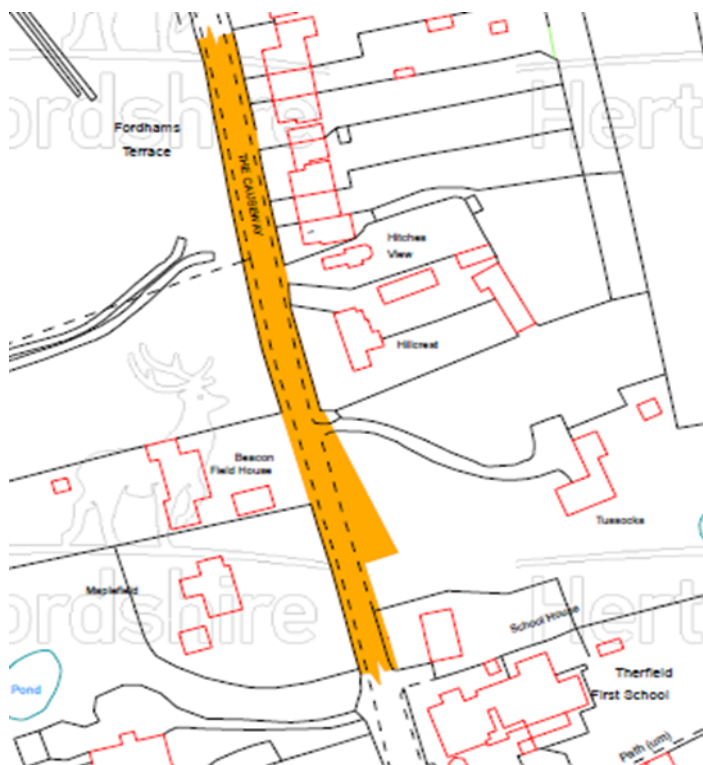
rearranged site layout of the same development site, to deliver the same land use (Use Class C2), albeit with a reduction in the number of units.

The HA has reviewed the TS and as stated in the previous submission whilst the HA would acknowledge the proposal is not expected to have any significant/detrimental impact on the operation of the local highway network, however unlike the previous submission the vehicle access is not centrally located and the southern visibility splay appears to be substandard because it straddles into the neighbouring property's frontage, visibility splays are measured to the nearest kerb/public highway boundary, not over 3rd party land.

In response to the HA's comments for a footway to be provided along the site's full frontage with The Causeway, the applicant has provided a footway along the southern side and a footpath along the northern side of the proposed vehicle access. Ideally a footway should be provided on the northern side of the vehicle access too, so pedestrians from northern neighbouring sites can use the footway facility, however the applicant is proposing a footpath which veers into the site alongside the dwellings, consequently the HA will seek legal agreement for public rights of way along the footpath, which will pass the proposed dwellings front entrances. Concerning the southern section of the footway, the applicant will be required to dedicate to the HA for adoption the proposed 2m wide footway. The applicant will be liable for the cost of making the footway along the length of the site's frontage and its associated commuted maintenance payment.

Whilst not raised in the previous submission the applicant is also required to extend the southern footway to link with the school footway.

Highway records confirm that there is highway land between the schoolhouse and the carriageway, therefore a footway fronting the school house connecting the site and the school footway can be provided thereby extending and enhancing the provision of pedestrian safety. See map below.



If an acceptable footway width is not possible then in view of the substandard southern visibility splay at the proposed vehicle access, the applicant could consider options, such as the provisioning of a kerb build out with (or without) a raised table, incorporating a footway which would link the footways either side, and narrowing the carriageway which would result in the sites southern visibility splay being commensurate with the speed of traffic (20mph), this would also prevent vehicles from parking along a section of kerb near the school.

Subject to the approved design of the vehicle access/visibility splays/footways, the applicant will be liable for the total cost (£278) of the highway works involved in delivering the determined measures including its associated committed maintenance payment.

The above plan does raise a number of other issues that need to be addressed/clarified, the land extending into the site is highway and being utilised as part of the proposed development: have any discussions taken place between the applicant and the LPA/HA with regard to the status (sale) of the strip of highway land, legal ownership, stopping up orders, etc. – these matters need to be fully addressed before approval can be granted.

In the TS it states that “there has not been a single pedestrian casualty on the roads in Therfield in the 5 year study period” while that is welcomed however the statement is meaningless given most if not all drive to destinations so occupiers are not likely to be pedestrians. The intention is to encourage and support walking as a safe and sustainable form of transport, this can only be achieved by ensuring there are sufficient provisions in place for pedestrians to utilise to make their journeys safely and in comfort.

The provision of footways along the site’s frontage would allow potential sites north of the site to be developed and link into the footway, and be alongside schemes within Therfield to improve active travel links to Royston. Therfield has been identified as a priority area in the North Herts Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). Specifically, it is categorised as a secondary route in the Network Plans. A secondary route signifies that improvements are prioritised, although specific interventions have not yet been identified. Further information on primary and secondary routes can be found in section 5.2 of the North Herts LCWIP: North Hertfordshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan | Hertfordshire County Council.

HertsLynx is Hertfordshire County Council’s Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service, offering a flexible way to travel by bus; unlike traditional bus services, the HertsLynx service doesn’t follow a timetable or have any set routes, instead passengers can choose from a wide variety of pick up and drop off locations within designated operating zones across Hertfordshire. The HertsLynx service provides travel between over 300 “virtual bus stops” within operating areas in North & East Herts, this includes Therfield with virtual bus stops. Therefore, the HA accepts that whilst not ideal virtual bus stop provision can be considered an acceptable form of sustainable travel option for occupiers, given its success and potential to expand in locations and frequency.

A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) was required to be submitted as part of the application with particular attention to pedestrian routes and safety, no such submission has been made, nevertheless in view of the above comments a RSA1 is required and should include the above measures as part of their review.

Recommendation:

The Highway Authority under the current submission cannot support the application due to the application has failed to demonstrate a satisfactory policy and design-led approach to the 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.

Informatives:

The HA will seek the developer to dedicate to the HA for adoption those parts of the site's frontage along The Causeway needed to provide at least 2m wide footway. The applicant will be liable for the cost of making the footway along the length of the site's frontage its linking with the footway fronting the school and its associated commuted maintenance payment.

A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit (RSA) will need to be submitted as part of the application with particular attention to pedestrian route and safety.

Signed

Senober Khan

29 July 2024