

Transport Assessment

July 2024

EAS

Temple Dinsley

Preston, Hitchin SG4 7RT

The Door UK

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The content of this report is based on information available as of July 2024, the validity of the statements made may therefore vary over time as planning guidance / policies and the evidence base change.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 EAS has been appointed by The Door UK to provide transport planning input to support a planning application for the redevelopment at the former Princess Helena College boarding school, Temple Dinsley, Preston, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7RT. A location plan is contained at **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 The site is situated on the eastern edge of Preston village, 4.1km south of Hitchin and 5.2km west of Stevenage.
- 1.3 The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the old Princess Helena Boarding School to a residential scheme. Accordingly, the existing main building and teaching block will be converted into 43 apartments, formed of 12 x one-bedroom, 25 x two-bedroom, 5 x three-bedroom and 1 x four-bedroom units.
- 1.4 Further to this, it is also proposed that 22 houses will be provided in five residential blocks (Edwin, Violet, Sadleir, Ithel and Templar), located around the main building and teaching block. These will offer 2 x two-bedroom, 14 x three-bedroom and 6 x four-bedroom units.
- 1.5 Four detached houses, located away from the main building and teaching block are also proposed, with 2 x three-bedroom houses (Tank House and Pump House) located in the south of the site, and 2 x five-bedroom houses (Summer House and Harwood House) located in the north of the site.
- 1.6 The development will also offer a new reserve cricket pitch and associated pavilion for use by Preston village cricket team.
- 1.7 The site master plans are contained at **Appendix B**.

Background

- 1.8 EAS engaged in Highways Pre-App discussions with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as the highway authority, on two separate occasions, once during the early site feasibility stage and a second time when redevelopment proposals became more advanced. Both Highways Pre-App responses are contained at **Appendix C**.
- 1.9 A Planning Pre-Application process was also completed with North Herts District Council (NHDC) to discuss onsite parking provision. Further, follow up meetings with Local Planning officers also took place. The comments from NHDC relating to proposed site layout and on-site parking provision are contained at **Appendix D**.

Report Structure

- 1.10 The scope of this Transport Statement is in line with the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and national planning policy.
- 1.11 This report includes the following:
 - Section 2 – provides a review of relevant national, regional, and local planning policy in respect of transportation and highways;

- Section 3 – describes the existing site and its setting within the highway network;
- Section 4 – outlines the development proposal including a consideration of the access, parking, delivery, and servicing arrangements;
- Section 5 – presents the off-site improvements that will be provided as part of the development;
- Section 6 – outlines the findings of a Walking, Cycling and Horse-Riding Assessment and Review that was completed around Preston village;
- Section 7 – presents the multi-modal trip generation of the existing and proposed use and estimates the potential impact upon local on-street parking stress; and
- Section 8 – presents a summary and the conclusion of the Transport Statement.

2 Policy Context

2.1 This section of the Transport Statement describes the national, regional and local transport policy on which the development proposals will be assessed. This section considers relevant transport policy to this application:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- Hertfordshire County Council LTP4 (2018);
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022); and
- NHDC Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD (2011)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)

2.2 The current National Planning Policy Framework was published in December 2023, replacing the previous revised NPPF of September 2023, and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

2.3 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the development plan and it is a material consideration in planning decisions. Planning policies and decisions must also reflect relevant international obligations and statutory requirements.

2.4 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. At a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

2.5 In respect of that, Paragraph 10 of the NPPF states:

*So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development** (original emphasis).*

2.6 Section 9 of the NPPF on Promoting Sustainable Transport states, in paragraphs 108 and 109:

Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:

- *the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed;*
- *opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure, and changing transport technology and usage, are realised – for example in relation to the scale, location or density of development that can be accommodated;*
- *opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued;*

- *the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for net environmental gains; and*
- *patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places.*

The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

2.7 Paragraph 111, in relation to parking standards, states that the following should be taken into account:

- *the accessibility of the development;*
- *the type, mix and use of development;*
- *the availability of and opportunities for public transport;*
- *local car ownership levels; and*
- *the need to ensure an adequate provision of spaces for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles.*

2.8 Paragraph 112 adds that:

Maximum parking standards for residential and non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear and compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the density of development in city and town centres and other locations that are well served by public transport. In town centres, local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

2.9 Paragraphs 114 and 115 state that in assessing applications for development it should be ensured that:

- *appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes can be – or have been – taken up, given the type of development and its location;*
- *safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users; and*
- *any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree.*

Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

2.10 Within that context, paragraphs 116 and 117 state that applications for development should:

- *give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements, both within the scheme and with neighbouring areas; and second – so far as possible – to facilitating access to high quality public transport, with layouts that maximise the catchment area for bus or other public transport services, and appropriate facilities that encourage public transport use;*
- *address the needs of people with disabilities and reduced mobility in relation to all modes of transport;*
- *create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;*
- *allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and*
- *be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.*

All developments that will generate significant amounts of movement should be required to provide a travel plan, and the application should be supported by a transport statement or transport assessment so that the likely impacts of the proposal can be assessed.

Hertfordshire County Council LTP4 (2018)

2.11 There are several very relevant policies within the Hertfordshire County Council LTP4, these include:

Policy 1: Transport User Hierarchy *To support the creation of built environments that encourage greater and safer use of sustainable transport modes, the county council will in the design of any Scheme and development of any transport strategy consider in the following order:* • Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel • Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists) • Passenger transport user needs • Powered two wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs • Other motor vehicle user needs

Policy 2: Influencing land use planning *The county council will encourage the location of new development in areas served by, or with the potential to be served by, high quality passenger transport facilities so they can form a real alternative to the car, and where key services can be accessed by walking and cycling.*

Policy 3: Travel Plans and Behaviour Change *The county council will encourage the widespread adoption of travel plans through: a) Working in partnership with large employers,*

businesses and other organisations to develop travel plans and implement Smarter Choices measures. b) Seeking the development, implementation and monitoring of travel plans as part of the planning process for new developments. c) Supporting school travel plans, and working closely with parents, pupils, teachers and local residents to deliver a network of more sustainable transport links to school. The application of personalised travel planning techniques, marketing and other behavioural change initiatives will be considered when delivering physical transport improvements to maximise the potential to achieve modal shift.

Policy 4: Demand Management The county council considers greater traffic demand management to be essential in the county's urban areas in the next five years to achieve modal shift and improve sustainable travel provision. This can only currently be achieved efficiently and effectively through parking restrictions and charging applied to on-street, off-street and potentially at workplace parking. The county council will work with the district and borough councils and other key stakeholders to develop locally appropriate strategies.

Policy 5: Development Management The county council will work with development promoters and the district and borough councils to: a) Ensure the location and design of proposals reflect the LTP Transport User Hierarchy and encourage movement by sustainable transport modes and reduced travel demand. b) Ensure access arrangements are safe, suitable for all people, built to an adequate standard and adhere to the county council's Highway Design Standards. c) Consider the adoption of access roads and internal road layouts where they comply with the appropriate adoption requirements and will offer demonstrable utility to the wider public. Where internal roads are not adopted the county council will expect suitable private management arrangements to be in place. d) Secure developer mitigation measures to limit the impacts of development on the transport network, and resist development where the residual cumulative impact of development is considered to be severe. e) Require a travel plan for developments according to the requirements of 'Hertfordshire's Travel Plan Guidance'. f) Only consider new accesses onto primary and main distributor roads where special circumstances can be demonstrated in favour of the proposals. g) Resist development that would either severely affect the rural or residential character of a road or other right of way, or which would severely affect safety on rural roads, local roads and rights of way especially for vulnerable road users. This should include other routes which are important for sustainable transport or leisure. h) Ensure that any new parking provision in new developments provides facilities for electric charging of vehicles, as well as shared mobility solutions such as car clubs and thought should be made for autonomous vehicles in the future.

Policy 6: Accessibility The county council will seek to increase the ease with which people, particularly disadvantaged groups, can access key services, by: a) Working in partnership with key stakeholders such as bus and rail operators, community transport operators, the voluntary sector and public service providers. b) Supporting transport services which could include providing resource for bus and other transport services. c) Addressing the barriers to accessibility particularly regarding active modes and for people with impaired mobility. d) Promoting travel options and facilitating accessible travel information provision, including open data initiatives. e) Improving travel choices and options, including support for the provision of shared mobility initiatives.

Policy 7: Active Travel - Walking The county council will seek to encourage and promote walking by: a) Implementing measures to increase the priority of pedestrians relative to motor

vehicles, especially in town centres, and creating walking friendly town and neighbourhood centres. b) Delivering infrastructure to provide safer access to key services, and pedestrian facilities to enable and encourage walking. c) Identifying and promoting networks of pedestrian priority routes. d) Promoting walking as a mode of travel and for recreational enjoyment. e) Supporting the implementation of the Rights of Way Improvement Plan.

Policy 8. Active Travel - Cycling The county council aims to deliver a step change in cycling, through: a) Infrastructure improvements, especially within major urban areas to enable and encourage more cycling. b) Implementing measures to increase the priority of cyclists relative to motor vehicles. c) Improved safety for users including delivery of formal and informal cycle training schemes. d) Supporting promotion campaigns to inform, educate, reassure and encourage cycling provision and education, such as Bikeability. e) Facilitating provision of secure cycle parking.

- 2.12 Of the policies listed above, Policy 5, section (g) is of particular relevance, which can be broken down into three components and is addressed in Section 5 of this document:

The county council will to work with development promoters and the district and borough councils to:

- a) *Resist development that would either severely affect the rural or residential character of a road or other right of way,*
- b) *or which would severely affect safety on rural roads, local roads and rights of way especially for vulnerable road users.*
- c) *This should include other routes which are important for sustainable transport or leisure.*

- 2.13 The above policies stress the need to move away from a 'predict and provide for road traffic strategy' and instead focus the needs of non-car drivers first with car traffic being the lowest in the hierarchy. It will be seen within this TA that this objective will be met as a result of the improvements proposed for pedestrian and cyclists.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022)

- 2.14 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in November 2022.

- 2.15 Policy SP6 'Sustainable Transport' states:

We will deliver accessibility improvements and promote the use of sustainable transport modes insofar as reasonable and practicable. We will:

- a) *Comply with the NHDC Transport Strategy and the provisions of the Local Transport Plan and other supporting documents as relevant;*
- b) *Encourage development in locations which enable sustainable journeys to be made to key services and facilities;*
- c) *Work with Hertfordshire County Council, neighbouring authorities, Highways England and service providers to ensure that a range of sustainable transport options are available to all potential occupants or users. This may involve new or improved pedestrian, cycle and passenger transport (including rail and/or bus) links and routes;*

- d) *Seek the earliest reasonable opportunity to implement sustainable travel infrastructure on Strategic Housing Sites and other development sites in order to influence the behaviour of occupiers or users, along with supporting Travel Plans in order that sustainable travel patterns become embedded at an early stage;*
- e) *Assess development proposals against the parking standards set out in this Plan and having regard to relevant supplementary advice;*
- f) *Require applicants to provide assessments, plans and supporting documents to demonstrate the safety and sustainability of their proposals; and*
- g) *Protect existing rights of way, cycling and equestrian routes and, should diversion be unavoidable, require replacement routes to the satisfaction of the Council.*

2.16 Policy T1 'Assessment of transport matters' states:

Planning permission will be granted provided that:

- a) *Development would not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable impacts upon the highway network;*
- b) *Mechanisms to secure any necessary sustainable transport measures and / or improvements to the existing highway network are secured in accordance with Policy SP7;*
- c) *Suitable Transport Statements, Transport Assessments and / or Travel Plans along with supporting documents are provided where required; and*
- d) *For major developments, applicants demonstrate (as far as is practicable) how:*
 - i. *the proposed scheme would be served by public transport;*
 - ii. *safe, direct and convenient routes for pedestrians and cyclists will be provided; and*
 - iii. *comprehensive integration into the existing pedestrian and cycle, public transport and road networks will be secured*

2.17 Policy T2 'Parking' states:

Planning permission will be granted provided that:

- a) *Parking for residential development is provided in accordance with the minimum standards set out in Appendix 4 of this Plan;*
- b) *Parking for non-residential development is provided having regard to the standards for non-residential development set out in the relevant Supplementary Planning Document;*
- c) *Proposals have regard to relevant Supplementary Planning Documents, strategies or advice and;*
- d) *Applicants clearly identify how they provide for all likely types of parking demand and demonstrate that parking will be safe and of a design and layout that will function satisfactorily.*

Variations from these standards will only be considered where applicants can demonstrate that the accessibility, type, scale, mix and use of the development; the availability of and opportunities for public transport; local car ownership levels; and on-street conditions justify such variations.

NHDC Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD (2011)

- 2.18 Parking standards laid out in the Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD document states the following:

Table 2.1 – NHDC Residential Parking Standards

Class Use C3	Car Parking Standard	Minimum Cycle Parking Standard
1 bedroom	1 space per dwelling minimum	1 secure covered space per dwelling. None if garage or secure area provided within curtilage of dwelling.
2+ bedrooms	2 spaces per dwelling minimum	

- 2.19 The SPD document also outlines the presence of accessibility zones within the borough, stating that these zones can be used when considering residential parking provision, albeit in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.20 As such, Appendix 3 of the SPD shows that the village of Preston is located within Accessibility Zone Type 3, meaning that the residential scheme could provide 50-75% of unfettered demand.

3 Existing Site Accessibility

Site Location

- 3.1 The site is located directly on the east side of Preston, a village near Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7RT.
- 3.2 The site is bound to the east by undeveloped land and with Preston Road, School Lane and St Albans Highway bordering to the north, west and south respectively. A location plan is contained at **Appendix A**.
- 3.3 School Lane forms the main road through the village of Preston, becoming Preston Road in the north, linking to the village with Gosmore and Hitchin town beyond this. To the south, School Lane connects to St Albans Highway, offering access to a variety of villages, including Easthall, St Pauls Walden and Rush Green.

Accessibility and Local Facilities

- 3.4 The site is located directly to the east of Preston and as such the village centre can be accessed in relative ease. Preston offers a variety of facilities, including a public house/restaurant, children's nursery, children's primary school, a church, playground, and cricket club.
- 3.5 Other nearby villages, all within a 3km/15-minute cycle from the site, offer access to convenience stores, post offices, restaurants, a hairdresser, and village halls. Therefore, it is possible that future residents could access some everyday services without the need to rely on a personal vehicle.
- 3.6 Further afield, future residents would be able to access the southern side of Hitchin within a 25-minute cycle from the site; as well as the western expanse of Stevenage via a circa 30-minute cycle. These two towns offer access to a wider range of services and leisure opportunities for residents.

Vehicular Access

- 3.7 The site is served by two vehicular access points, with the main vehicular site access meeting School Lane, within the south-west of the site. The access is located circa 10m south of Crunnells Green, which joins School Lane on its western side.
- 3.8 This main vehicular access is circa 16m wide where it meets School Lane, narrowing to circa 4m as the road passes through an existing gate. The access road then maintains this width for approximately 200m where it opens up and connects to a number of internal roads, serving the main school site.
- 3.9 A secondary vehicular access point is located at the site's eastern border and connects to the St Albans Highway. From this access point, the associated driveway runs on a northwest/southeast alignment to the main school buildings, maintaining a width of approximately 3.5m. After circa 380m the driveway leads to an existing car park, located to the east of the main school buildings.

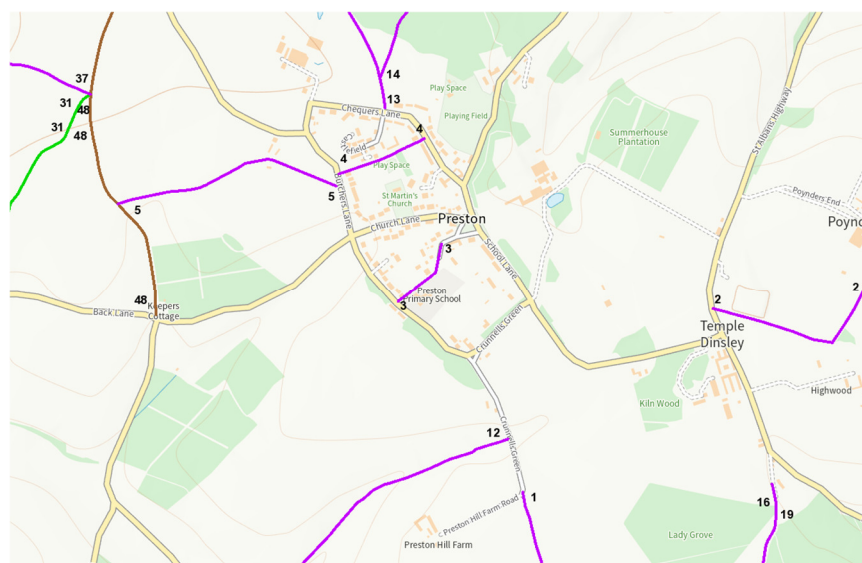
Pedestrian Access

- 3.10 The main pedestrian access into the site is located along the western border, opposite the School Lane/Crunchells Green junction. This route is not currently formalised, with access from the site being made through a gate and via the existing verge located on the eastern side of School Lane; no formal crossing point of School Lane is in place.
- 3.11 In addition, there is a (permissive) footpath on the site which commences at the main vehicular site access at School Lane, running across the field at the south of the site and joining back with School Lane in the east, near to where the junction with St Albans Highway. This would offer future residents' safe access from the western portion of the site to St Albans Highway in the east, whilst avoiding a section of road with no separate pedestrian facility.

Walking

- 3.12 A Footway runs along the western side of School Lane, commencing at Chequers Lane in the north. The footway is circa 1.8m in width and continues into the village, terminating to the south between The Red Lion Pub and Crunchells Green Road.
- 3.13 There are no formal or informal crossing points along School Lane, within the vicinity of the site, although the footway does offer access to other routes that allow users to access the western expanse of the village.
- 3.14 The site is surrounded by a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) which link the existing school site to the wider village of Preston. The PRoWs link the site to Preston primary school, located to the south-west, as well as St Martins Church and Preston Playground, located to the north.
- 3.15 Figure 3.1 shows the PRoWs within and surrounding Preston. The Footpaths are indicated as purple lines with the Bridleway shown as a green line.

Figure 3.1 – PRowS within and surrounding Preston (Source: Hertfordshire Definitive Map)



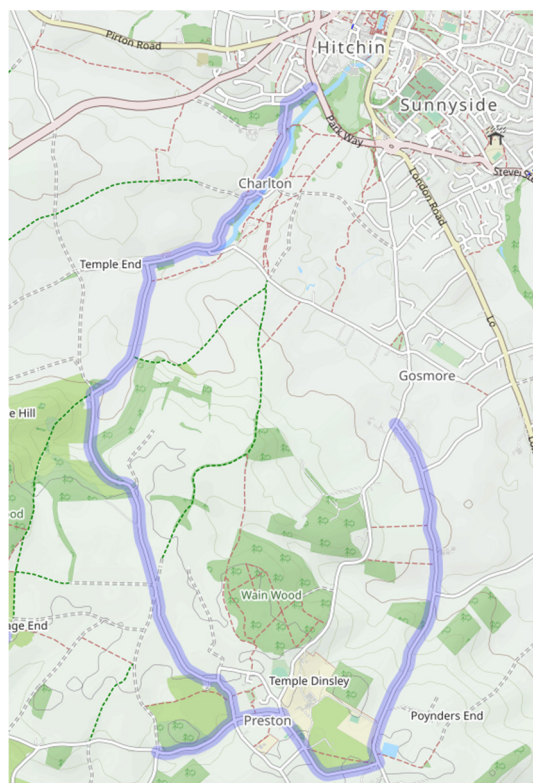
Purple = public footpath; green = public bridleway

- 3.16 Also of note is the North Chiltern Trail walking route, which passes through Preston, offering pedestrian access to nearby villages such as Whitwell, Poynders End, St Paul's Walden and Great Offley.

Cycling

- 3.17 There is no dedicated cycling infrastructure present within the village or on the surrounding local highway network. However, the local village roads would be conducive to cyclists, and it is noted that recreational Cycle Route 16 runs through Preston, offering an unbroken connection from the site to the southern side of Hitchin.
- 3.18 Figure 3.2 below shows the extent of recreational Cycle Route 16 within Preston.

Figure 3.2 – Recreational Cycle Route 16 (Source: OpenStreetMap)



- 3.19 Notably, the towns of Hitchin and Stevenage can be accessed within a 25-minute and 30-minute cycle respectively using a variety of roads and Bridleways.

Public Transport – Bus

- 3.20 The Red Lion Public House bus stops are located a circa 50m/1-minute (southbound stop) and a circa 140m/2-minute (northbound stop) walk from the site via the main pedestrian access.
- 3.21 The southern bus stop is indicated by a pole and flag, with timetable information provided, while the northern bus stop offers a small shelter. There are no bus cage markings on the carriageway, Kassel kerbs, nor real-time bus information.
- 3.22 These stops offer access to the 88 bus route that runs east/west between Luton and Hitchin. The route operates 6 services in each direction throughout the day Monday to Friday, with 4 services in each direction running throughout the day on Saturday. **Appendix E** contains the bus timetable.
- 3.23 Bus route 88 allows for Hitchin train station to be reached in a 26-minute bus ride, while Luton train station is accessible via a 42-minute bus ride. Other notable stops on the route include Ley Green, King's Walden and Breachwood Green.
- 3.24 Further to the above, negotiations were opened with the operators of HertsLynx, to explore the option of extending the existing coverage in North Herts to provide a service that runs into the village and potentially the site itself. Unfortunately, the Demand Responsive/Community

Transport Project Officer within HCC confirmed that Preston falls outside of the HertsLynx operating zone. The officer did however not rule out the potential of expanding the zone in the future.

- 3.25 It is understood that one expansion has already taken place with the service recently being made available in most of Dacorum District. The correspondence with HertsLynx is contained at **Appendix F**.

Rail

- 3.26 Hitchin rail station is located approximately 5.05km north of the site. The station is situated on the East Coast Main Line (operated by Great Northern) and provides frequent direct access to a host of local and regional destinations.
- 3.27 Hitchin rail station has the following off-peak services:
- 2 trains per hour (tph) to London King's Cross
 - 2 tph to Brighton via Gatwick Airport
 - 2 tph to Horsham via Redhill and Gatwick Airport
 - 2 tph to Peterborough
 - 1 tph to Letchworth Garden City
 - 3 tph to Cambridge
- 3.28 Further to the above, Hitchin rail station contains 291 sheltered cycle parking spaces in the form of secure cycle racks located to the north of the main station building. These spaces are monitored by CCTV. Bus route 88 offers direct access to the station.
- 3.29 Luton rail station is located approximately 9.43km west of the site. The station is situated on the Midland Main Line (operated by East Midlands Railway). The station offers direct access south into London St Pancras via a 33-minute direct train respectively; Corby can also be accessed via a 40-minute direct train journey. Bus route 88 offers direct access to the station.
- 3.30 Stevenage train station can be accessed in a 28-minute cycle (16-minute drive) from the site. Stevenage is served by Great Northern, offering services southbound to King's Cross. Other easily accessible locations include Welwyn Garden City, Potters Bar, Brighton, Gatwick Airport and Moorgate via Watton-at-Stone, as well as northbound services to Cambridge and Peterborough.

Highway Safety Review

- 3.31 The Crashmap website has been used to assess the safety record near to the site access points for the most recent five-year period available (2018-2022 inclusive).
- 3.32 No collisions are identified as having occurred within 150m of any vehicular or pedestrian access.

- 3.33 The nearest incidents to the site access points occurred along School Lane, circa 160m and 170m south of the School Lane site access on 22nd September 2022 and 10th November 2022. Both incidents involved cars colliding while proceeding normally along the carriageway. Both collisions resulted in a 'slight' injury.
- 3.34 The Crashmap reports of the incidents are contained at **Appendix G**.
- 3.35 Due to the distance of the above collisions from the proposed site accesses and, given a decrease in traffic movements associated with the redevelopment, as discussed later, highway safety is not considered to be a notable concern.

4 Proposed Development

Overview

- 4.1 The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the old Princess Helena Boarding School to a residential scheme. Accordingly, the existing main building and teaching block will be converted into 43 apartments, formed of 12 x one-bedroom, 25 x two-bedroom, 5 x three-bedroom and 1 x four-bedroom units.
- 4.2 Further to this, it is also proposed that 22 houses will be provided in five residential blocks (Edwin, Violet, Sadleir, Ithel and Templar), located around the main building and teaching block. These will offer 2 x two-bedroom, 14 x three-bedroom and 6 x four-bedroom units.
- 4.3 Four detached houses, located away from the main building and teaching block are also proposed, with 2 x three-bedroom houses (Tank House and Pump House) located in the south of the site, and 2 x five-bedroom houses (Summer House and Harwood House) located in the north of the site.
- 4.4 A Masterplan Layout for the development is included at **Appendix B**.
- 4.5 The site will provide two main car parking areas, both located to the southeast of the main building and teaching block, with one car park making use of existing hardstanding provision, while a second car park is to be constructed to the south of this. Discussions with NHDC have informed layout, form, and design parameters, all of which have been agreed as a result of the pre-application discussions.
- 4.6 The development will also offer a new reserve cricket pitch and associated pavilion for use by Preston village cricket team.

Vehicle Access

- 4.7 The proposal seeks to retain the existing main site access point off School Lane, with vehicular entry for most residential uses and the cricket pitch gained solely using this access. The site will work with a one-way vehicular flow arrangement from a point commencing at the gate, as currently in place at the site, with vehicles continuing along the existing internal driveway, egressing via St Albans Highway.
- 4.8 The proposal will retain the existing driveway that leads from School Lane, offering access to the main buildings within the site. From here residents and visitors will be able to access the relevant car parks and parking spaces.
- 4.9 The existing driveway that leads from the new main proposed car park will not be altered or widened.
- 4.10 Existing vehicular speeds were recorded along St Albans Highways to infer the required visibility splay lengths at the access point. The drawing contained at **Appendix H** shows that visibility splays of 2.4m x 83m and 2.4m x 66m can be achieved to the north and south respectively; both splays terminate at the nearside kerb line. This is in line with recorded 85th percentile speeds of 35mph and 30.5mph respectively. Both splays remain wholly within land owned and maintained by the highway authority.

- 4.11 Vehicular access to Tank House and Pump House will be made via an existing access point that connects to the existing access off School Lane, this will be formalised as part of the proposals. The access will offer a two-way vehicular arrangement for residents of Tank and Pump House only. The drawing contained at **Appendix I** illustrates the proposed access arrangements at School Lane.
- 4.12 As a result of this access arrangement, existing vehicular speeds were recorded along School Lane, circa 35m south of the new proposed access. This recorded a northbound 85th percentile speed of 29.7mph, resulting in a visibility splay requirement of 63m. A visibility splay length of 64m was assumed for the northern splay as a 30mph speed limit is enforced along this section of School Lane.
- 4.13 The drawing contained at **Appendix J** illustrates the achievable visibility splays at the School Lane access.
- 4.14 A copy of the ATC speed survey data from St Albans Highway and School Lane is contained at **Appendix K**.
- 4.15 Staff, players and visitors of the proposed cricket pitch will access the facility by entering the site off St Albans Highway, following the internal driveway for circa 170m, turning left into the pitch. Vehicles will then also egress from the site via St Albans Highway.

Pedestrian Access

- 4.16 Formalisation and improvement to the existing pedestrian access, located to the west of the main buildings is proposed. This will offer future residents a separate vehicle-free access into the site and direct connection to the centre of Preston village.
- 4.17 The new pedestrian route will make use of existing internal footpaths that will be resurfaced and extended, ensuring they run to meet the existing access point along the western boundary. Internal pedestrian connections will extend to each respective residential block and throughout the two main parking areas via dedicated walkways and landscaped areas.
- 4.18 Further to this, a new internal footpath is proposed, linking the Dower House development, located to the north of the site, to the aforementioned new pedestrian access at School Lane. The path is proposed to run close to and in line with the existing northwestern boundary of the site.
- 4.19 The existing permissive path on site, which commences at the main vehicular site access at School Lane and runs across the site, joining back with School Lane in the east, will also be maintained. This will offer future residents' safe access from the western portion of the site to St Albans Highway in the east avoiding the need to otherwise walk in the carriageway of School Lane.
- 4.20 It is also proposed that additional footpaths will be provided, spurring off from the main permissive path, linking to an existing gated access off School Lane as well as the proposed cricket pitch and PROW Preston 002 located in the east.
- 4.21 The drawing contained at **Appendix L** highlights the new and retained pedestrian network within the site.

Proposed Car Parking Provision

- 4.22 Discussions have taken place with NHDC regarding parking provision and layout. The current proposal for 127 car parking spaces equates to an allocation of one space for each one and two-bedroom apartment, two spaces for each 3-bedroom apartment and house; and 33 unallocated visitor spaces. It is also proposed that all allocated parking spaces and a policy compliant number of unallocated parking spaces will be provided with EV charging capabilities. This level of parking provision has been approved by NHDC as per the letter contained at **Appendix D**. It is noted that Building Regulation requirements may exceed policy compliant EV levels.
- 4.23 Separate parking areas for Summer, Harwood, Tank and Pump House will be provided in the curtilage of each dwelling.
- 4.24 This level of parking is slightly less than the relevant guidance set out in 'North Hertfordshire's Vehicle Parking at New Developments Planning Document', adopted in September 2011. This gives a recommended parking requirement of 151 spaces for the development, formed of circa 118 allocated and circa 33 unallocated visitor spaces (0.5 visitor spaces per dwelling assumed).
- 4.25 Nevertheless, the lower level proposed has been informed by investigation as follows:
- 4.26 By amalgamating data from Nomis Tables TS045 and RM001, it is identified that car ownership from the 2021 Census for LSOA's surrounding the site (North Hertfordshire 014B, 014C, 014E, 014F, 015C) comprises 1.09 cars per flat, with 26.1% of flats having no access to a car and 1.83 cars per house/bungalow. In this instance, five comparable LSOA's were used to inform car ownership of residents. This is because there are only nine flats located within the site's direct LSOA, which was deemed too small of a sample size.
- 4.27 Based on the identified level of car ownership, residents of the proposed apartments could be expected to own 47 (46.87) cars, while residents of the proposed houses could be expected to own 48 (47.58) cars, giving a total of 95 cars. This leaves a surplus of 32 spaces which could be further allocated to residents and/or visitors based on the 127 spaces that are proposed.
- 4.28 It is also worth noting that NHDC's Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD identifies Preston Village as being located within Accessibility Zone Type 3, as per Appendix 3 within the document. Commercial developments located within Accessibility Zone Type 3 are able to provide 50-75% of unfettered demand, which can apply to residential developments in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.29 Paragraph 5.6 in NHDC's Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD is outlined below:
- "Non residential accessibility zones have been identified in the Districts main towns based access to key services including GP's, schools, retail centres by public transport is considered. Maps of these zones are attached in Appendix 3. They are provided by way of evidence to indicate locations of best accessibility by public transport. These maps are also relevant to considering residential parking in Class C3 albeit only in exceptional circumstances."*
- 4.30 This further indicates that the proposed level of parking provision will be sufficient for future residents on site.

- 4.31 Car parking provision will be provided for the cricket pitch, with vehicles proposed to park within the site around the proposed pavilion. This is the arrangement at most cricket clubs, with no formal provision provided but instead players, staff and visitors parking on an ad-hoc basis around the pitch.

Cycle Parking

- 4.32 It is proposed that the site will provide a minimum of 158 cycle parking spaces, formed of 130 long stay spaces for residents and at least 18 short stay cycle parking spaces for visitors; this meets the policy requirements as set out by NHDC.
- 4.33 Long stay cycle parking for the 43 apartments will be provided within the car port of the resident's allocated car parking spaces, with a store of 2.5m x 3.0m provided. Long stay cycle parking spaces associated with the 22 houses will have two spaces provided in cycle stores within their residential blocks.
- 4.34 Cycle parking for Summer, Harwood, Tank and Pump House will be provided in the curtilage of each dwelling.
- 4.35 18 short-stay cycle parking spaces will be provided for visitors, split between two cycle stores, with 6 visitor spaces located within the residential block to the north of site and 12 visitor spaces located in the cycle store in the main teaching block, in the centre of the site.

Delivery and Servicing Arrangements

- 4.36 Refuse collection will be undertaken from within the site by the district's waste collection services. Bin stores are located within most residential blocks, allowing future residents to transfer their waste from their dwellings to these stores before collection day. Residents of Summer, Harwood, Tank and Pump House will leave their bins at storage points within the curtilage of their property.
- 4.37 It is then proposed that staff from the site management company will transfer waste from stores and the four detached dwellings to the corresponding bin stores located around the site. The main bin store is located within the East Park car park.
- 4.38 The drawing contained at **Appendix M** highlights the location of all bin stores within the site.
- 4.39 Residents within the western parts of the main building will also have their waste collected by the site management team on bin collection day, with bins transferred to the main bin store located within the East Park car Park.
- 4.40 On collection day, staff from the site management company will transfer bins stored within the main bin store to the roadside within the site where they will be transferred to the waiting refuse vehicle. Other bin stores will be served from the roadside of the internal vehicular route.
- 4.41 The drawing contained at **Appendix N** highlights that a refuse vehicle can enter and egress from the site in a forward gear, also showing where the refuse vehicle will wait within the site as waste is transferred into the vehicle. The refuse swept path analysis drawing highlights a

variety of different ways in which the refuse vehicle can access the site from School Lane, including from the north, south and Crunnells Green.

- 4.42 The drawing contained at **Appendix O** highlights that a fire tender is able to serve most points within the development. It is understood that alternative arrangements would be made where a fire tender cannot provide direct access.

5 Proposed Off-Site Improvements

- 5.1 In the first Highways Pre-App completed with HCC, it was considered that there was scope to provide off-site improvements within Preston village, to enhance sustainable travel options for future residents of the site to nearby facilities.
- 5.2 Subsequently, off-site land ownership queries were made to identify what parts of the village could facilitate improvements, with a request initially made to HCC Land Charges on 03/10/2024, to understand land ownership at the site's vehicular access off School Lane. The highway boundary mapping received as a result of this search is contained at **Appendix P**.
- 5.3 This initial mapping showed that verges/footways on either side of School Lane, between Crunnells Green and The Red Lion Pub were classified as Highway land and therefore could facilitate off-site improvements, for example new footway construction.
- 5.4 Later, another land ownership query was made to HCC Land Charges on 20/11/2023 to gauge land ownership around the village green, as well as School Lane, where the proposed pedestrian access is located. The mapping received from this request is contained at **Appendix Q**.
- 5.5 On the receipt of this second mapping request, it was clear that there was some disagreement in land ownership classification between the two maps, with the mapping received on 21/11/2023 now showing that the eastern side of School Lane was classified as 'Village Green' land.
- 5.6 At this point, a query was made to HCC Land Charges on 21/11/2023 to clarify the discrepancy between the two received highway boundary maps. Within this email exchange the HCC officer stated that both highway boundary maps are correct, and that Highway land always takes precedent over 'Village Green' land. The correspondence with the officer is contained at **Appendix R**.
- 5.7 With the aim of clarifying this further, EAS then reach out to HCC's Commons Enquiry Team, as well as the Right of Way team on 24/11/2024 to understand the development constraints that may be in place when trying to develop on land classed as 'Village Green'.
- 5.8 As a result of this email, Hertfordshire's Commons Enquiries Team highlighted that the 'Village Green' land within the Highway boundary plans is owned by Preston Parish Council. The Commons Enquiries Team also explained the difficulty of reaching agreement for any amendments to this land , stating the following:

"The registration of land as a town or village green makes it extremely difficult for anyone, even the landowner, to undertake works or make any changes. Technically it is not possible to do anything which would interfere with the local inhabitants use or enjoyment of a village green, this includes encroachment, fencing, grazing, or erecting any structures, unless it is for the better enjoyment of the green. Unlike section 38 of the Commons Act 2006, which applies in relation to common land, there is no way of obtaining consent to carry out works or install structures on a village green. Legally, village greens are protected by two Victorian Statutes, the 1857 Inclosure Act, and the 1876 Commons Act."

- 5.9 Further queries with Hertfordshire's Commons Enquiries Team were made to understand whether it was possible for the applicant to make highway improvements over any part of the area classified as 'Village Green'. It was stated that:

"To further complicate matters it is also possible for land to be considered both common land/village green and Highway Maintainable at Public Expense. These designations are mutually exclusive and whilst the Commons Registration Act 1965 (CRA65) clearly stated that public highways should not be included in any registration, a significant number were. S.10 of the CRA65 provided that the register became legally conclusive evidence that the land was common or village green on final registration, meaning that there are a number of instances where land is now considered both common land/village green and highway. This can obviously lead to a conflict between what is and isn't permissible for the differing designations (something which is somewhat of a grey area).

As mentioned previously the County Council is the Registration Authority for commons and village greens in the county, our duties and powers do not include the authorisation of works on a village green nor do they automatically extend to enforcement. As set out below the Parish Council (or District Council where there is no PC) can bring proceedings under the Inclosure Act and it is possible for anyone, including any local authority, to issue proceedings under the Commons Act 1976. Both situations require a local authority, organisation or individual aggrieved enough to act through the courts.

The matter really comes down to opinion, legally any works would have to benefit the local inhabitants, though what constitutes a benefit or detriment to the enjoyment of the green is quite a subjective subject. Undertaking any works which would require the agreement of the landowner. In this instance as the register entries show this was (and likely still is) the Parish Council, it would be worthwhile contacting them to discuss the proposals and gauge local opinion.

- 5.10 The full email correspondence between EAS and Hertfordshire's Commons Enquiries Team are contained at **Appendix S**.
- 5.11 Copies from the Village Green register was also received, highlighting land owned by the Parish Council within the village, this is contained at **Appendix T**.
- 5.12 At this stage, it was clear that the Parish Council needed to be consulted to gauge their opinion on possible off-site highway improvements within the village due to the above complications. Subsequently, a drawing of initial proposed improvements throughout the village was sent to the Parish Council for their review. Proposals included the extension of the existing footpath along School Lane, to the south, to meet Crunnells Green; with other improvements including the installation of a new footway over the village green, as well as the buildout of a new footway to the north to meet the existing Red Lion Pub northbound bus stop.
- 5.13 It was also proposed that the existing footway on the western side of School Lane, south of the Red Lion Pub, would be extended south to meet the proposed vehicular access off School Lane.
- 5.14 The drawings described are contained at **Appendix U**.
- 5.15 On review, the Parish Council confirmed that they would only approve the extension of the proposed pedestrian route (meeting School Lane on its eastern side opposite Church Lane).

5.16 The footway extension approved by the Parish Council is depicted in the drawing contained at **Appendix V**.

5.17 When the second Pre-Application advice was sought from HCC Highways in May 2024, once this land ownership constraint was better understood, it was clear that the reviewing officer did not fully acknowledge the issues surrounding the classification of a significant portion of verges within the village as 'Village Green'.

5.18 In their response the officer once again stated:

"Concerning the footway provision around the site's boundary with the public highway, the planning process provides the opportunity to plan/improve conditions for existing and future demands, in particular pedestrians with greater emphasis being placed on their safety and accessibility. These aims are supported by both local and national policies and footway provision is an essential factor in encouraging or hindering walking, providing appropriate footways is important as they encourage walking/active travel, giving people the ability to access most of their needs within an easy walk or cycle from their home, with safe access to cycling and local public transport options. Furthermore, ensuring safe routes for people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters, prams, or pushchairs.

Providing the right conditions such as footways as stated by the HA, will help residential and business developments to succeed and grow, and which will also help facilitate new developments around the footway network."

5.19 It is therefore understood at present that the constraints imposed by the land status have curtailed the potential for local off-site sustainable improvements which is a matter that is outside of the developer's control. It would be helpful if HCC is able to definitively confirm what land within the village is classified exclusively as 'highway land', which could accommodate sustainable improvements. It is clearly a matter for HCC and the Parish Council to determine.

5.20 To clarify the position, the developer will be amenable to installing all the off-site sustainable highway improvements initially identified but the complications here are beyond the developer's ability to resolve and therefore the developer cannot commit to anything further than the extension from the site to the east side of School Lane at this point in time.

6 Walking, Cycling and Horse Riding Assessment and Review

- 6.1 Within HCC's first Pre-Application response, it was requested that an audit of the existing pedestrian and cycling infrastructure should be completed to identify the quality of sustainable routes between the development site and nearby facilities within the village.
- 6.2 The village contains Bus Stops, a Public House, a Primary School, Church and Cricket ground. It is noted that there is no street lighting in the village of Preston. Subsequently, a route audit has been completed to each facility as follows:

Route to Northbound Red Lion Pub Bus Stop

- 6.3 Heading west from the site's proposed pedestrian access, residents will exit the site, making use of the new proposed footway with a proposed bark surface, and walk across School Lane; a quiet road transporting circa 100 vehicles in the respective AM and PM peak hours, with visibility of circa 55m to the north and 250m to the south for waiting pedestrians.
- 6.4 Residents will then proceed briefly on the mown grass verge on the western side of School Lane, using this to access existing footway provision. The route then proceeds north, using the same footway, crossing Chequers Lane continuing briefly in the carriageway for circa 20m, until another flat mown grass verge is reached, offering access to the northbound Red Lion Pub Bus Stop.
- 6.5 It is not estimated that residents will cycle to the bus stop due to the impracticalities of taking a cycle onto a bus.
- 6.6 The route is circa 1-minute walk, measuring circa 110m.



Figure 5.1 – Existing pedestrian access off School Lane to be formalised and improved



Figure 5.2 – Existing verge on the eastern side of School Lane, where the proposed bark path will be located.



Figure 5.3 – Existing footway on the western side of School Lane, between Church Lane and Chequers Lane (looking north).



Figure 5.4 – Lack of footway along the north side of School Lane, after crossing Chequers Lane (looking northeast).



Figure 5.5 – Mown grass verge leading to Red Lion Pub Bus Stop, no dropped kerb at verge (looking east).

Route to Southbound Red Lion Pub Bus Stop

- 6.7 Heading west from the site's proposed pedestrian access, residents will exit the site, making use of the new proposed footway and walk across School Lane. The route then proceeds briefly on the grass verge on the western side of School Lane. Residents will then briefly head south, crossing Church Lane, making use of the existing dropped kerb crossing points; accessing the bus stop located on the southern side of Church Lane. Church Lane is a quiet village road; the crossing point at Church Lane provides clear visibility to School Lane in the east and circa 60m of westbound visibility along Church Lane for pedestrians waiting to cross.
- 6.8 It is not estimated that residents will cycle to the bus stop due to the impracticalities of taking a cycle onto a bus.
- 6.9 The route is a circa 1-minute walk, measuring circa 30m.



Figure 5.6 – Pedestrian crossing point over Church Lane, dropped kerbs present (looking northeast)



Figure 5.7 – Footpath on the southern side of Church Lane by the Red Lion Bus Stop (looking east)

Route to Red Lion Public House

- 6.10 Heading west from the site's proposed pedestrian access, residents will exit the site, making use of the new proposed footway, and walk across School Lane. Residents will then proceed briefly on the grass verge on the western side of School Lane, using this to access existing footway provision. Residents will then briefly head south, crossing Church Lane, making use of the existing dropped kerb crossing points.
- 6.11 It is then estimated that residents will continue across the middle of the Village Green in a southerly direction, crossing an unnamed road that borders the northern side of the pub. There are no dropped kerbs along the northern side of the unnamed road and the road is estimated to transport few vehicles, with access only serving a few houses to the west.
- 6.12 Visibility for pedestrians crossing the unnamed road is good, with circa 20m achievable to the east (terminating at School Lane) and circa 50m achievable to the west.
- 6.13 Residents would take a similar route if cycling to the pub, remaining in the carriageway of School Lane and Church Lane, while also continuing along the road to the west of the Village

Green (estimated to be a quiet road, transporting few trips). From here, cyclists would turn left and proceed east along the unnamed road to reach the pub.

6.14 The route is circa 40m.



Figure 5.8 – Proposed route across the village green for pedestrian to access the pub. The village green is mown (looking north).



Figure 5.9 – Unnamed road to the north of the Red Lion Pub (looking east).

Route to St Martin's Church

- 6.15 Heading west from the site's proposed pedestrian access, residents will exit the site, making use of the new proposed footway, and walk across School Lane. Residents will then proceed briefly on the grass verge on the western side of School Lane, using this to access existing footway provision. Residents will then briefly head south, crossing Church Lane, making use of the existing dropped kerb crossing points.
- 6.16 From here, residents would continue west along Church Lane, within the carriageway for circa 150m, until reaching St Martin's Church on the northern side of Church Lane. It is estimated that few vehicles travel along Church Lane, with vehicle speeds also estimated to be very low, pedestrians naturally feel safe walking in the carriageway and in any case, there is no footway provision.
- 6.17 Residents would take a similar route if cycling to St Martin's Church, remaining in the carriageway of School Lane and Church Lane, continuing west for 150m along Church Lane.

6.18 The route is circa 3-minute walk and 1-minute cycle, measuring circa 175m.



Figure 5.10 – Route along Church Lane, no footway provision present (looking east)

Route to Preston Primary School

- 6.19 Heading west from the site's proposed pedestrian access, residents will exit the site, making use of the new proposed footway, and walk across School Lane. Residents will then proceed briefly on the grass verge on the western side of School Lane, using this to access existing footway provision.
- 6.20 Residents will then briefly head south, crossing Church Lane, making use of the existing dropped kerb crossing points. It is then expected that a pedestrian will continue across the middle of the Village Green, until reaching an unnamed road to the south, proceeding west for circa 110m in the lightly trafficked carriageway until reaching Preston Footpath 003.
- 6.21 Footpath 003, is a hard surfaced right of way, initially commencing at circa 3m wide (along the line of travel described) and then narrowing to around 1.5m wide with a hedge on each side. This is followed for a total of 175m in a southwestern direction, until reaching Back Lane, where a left turn is taken to immediately access the school entrance.

6.22 The route is circa 4-minute walk measuring circa 340m.



Figure 5.11 – Unnamed Road leading to Footpath 003, no footway provision present



Figure 5.12 – Southern extent of the unnamed Road leading to Footpath 003, no footway provision present



Figure 5.13 – Northern extent of Footpath 003. The footpath is paved.



Figure 5.14 – Southwestern extent of Footpath 003. The footpath is paved and circa 1.5m wide.

Prior Approval Community Shop (24/00928/PNR)

- 6.23 It is also understood that Prior Approval has been granted (REF: 24/00928/PNR) at The Pond Farmhouse, with proposals to convert the rear of the building into a community farm shop. As such, a route audit has also been completed for this route as well.
- 6.24 Heading west from the site's proposed pedestrian access, residents will exit the site, making use of the new proposed footway, and walk across School Lane. Residents will then continue west, proceeding briefly on a grass verge, until meeting the existing footway along the western side of School Lane. The route then continues north along this footway, until reaching Chequers Lane where the footway terminates.
- 6.25 Residents will then continue in the carriageway of Chequers Lane, a lightly trafficked road conducive to low vehicles speeds, for circa 145m until reaching Preston Footpath 004, where the route continues in a southwest direction for circa 230m until reaching Butchers Lane. Footpath 004 offers a gravel surface, remaining circa 1.5m for its entirety.
- 6.26 Once at Butchers Lane, pedestrians will walk in the carriageway and head south for circa 30m until reaching the eastern extent of Preston Footpath 005. Butchers Lane is a narrow country road with local vehicle speeds expected along its extent given its layout; forward visibility for pedestrians along this brief section is circa 45m to the south.

- 6.27 The route then continues in a north-westerly direction along Footpath 005 for circa 180m until reaching the proposed community shop. It is assumed that access to the shop could be made from Footpath 005.
- 6.28 For cyclists, the route would vary slightly, with residents remaining in the carriageway of School Lane and Church Lane, continuing west for circa 300m along Church Lane, until turning right and continuing north on Butchers Lane. Cyclists would remain on Butchers Lane for circa 280m until turning left and heading briefly on Chalton Road before reaching the proposed community shop.



Figure 5.15 – Eastern extent of Footpath 004. The footpath has a gravel surface and is circa 1.5m wide



Figure 5.15 – Section of Butchers Lane where residents will briefly walk in the carriageway (looking south)

7 Estimated Highways Impact

Existing School Use

- 7.1 Within HCC's first Pre-Application response, the reviewing officer stated that any future transport assessment of the site should be based on the development's impact relative to existing highway conditions (considering the school is currently shut and is therefore generating no trips), and not on past uses/generation. This section of the Pre-Application response is outlined below:

"The college/school operation is now closed generating zero trips, whilst the site retains the lawful use to open however this can happen at any time from now or in 5 years or 10 years etc., the current application is being considered and assessed under current policies, change of land use (no school) and site specific conditions which would include committed developments, if any, and not on what may or may not happen. Therefore, any transport assessment should be based on the developments impact relative to existing highway conditions and not on past uses/generation."

- 7.2 EAS disagreed with this view as theoretically the site could be reopened as a school at any point seeing that the extant land use is as a school, and therefore could generate all trip modes once again, without the need for the landowner to pursue a formal planning application.
- 7.3 Within the second Highways Pre-App completed with HCC, the lawful fall-back position was once again reiterated to the reviewing officer, with the Highways Pre-App Note stating the following:

"A lawful fall-back position is well and long established in planning caselaw, as a material planning consideration. Current case law holds that 'the prospect of the fall-back position does not have to be probable or even have a high chance of occurring; it has to be only more than a merely theoretical prospect'. The acceptability and material impact of a fallback position was confirmed in Mansell v Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council ([2016] EWHC 2832 (Admin), where Mr Justice Garnham confirmed that 'appropriate regard must be had to material planning considerations including the permitted development fallback position."

- 7.4 Comments received from the Highways officer reviewing the second Highways Pre-App stated that the officer acknowledged the assertion that the fall-back methodology would be used as the existing trip generation scenario.
- 7.5 In any case, as noted above, the lawful use of the site at Temple Dinsley is a Private Boarding School and this serves as the established fall-back position in this instance, thus, to make this position a material consideration and a reasonable baseline upon which to compare the proposals (in terms of vehicle movements and trip generation).
- 7.6 The TRICS database does not hold survey data completed at boarding schools and as such a first principles approach has been used to estimate existing trip generation using information from the previous landowner.

Previous School Operation

- 7.7 When in operation, the school accommodated a total of 200 students, comprising a mix of children who boarded full-time and day-students. Despite the fact that the number of students boarding fluctuated slightly year on year, it has been indicated that roughly 25% students (50 pupils) were boarders, with the remaining 150 pupils being day-students (student information as per: <https://best-boarding-schools.net/school/princess-helena-college@-hitchin,-hertfordshire,-uk/>).
- 7.8 Similarly, it is therefore also assumed that roughly 25% of the 160 full and part-time staff were based on the site permanently, with the remaining 75% commuting to and from the site each weekday; however, for robustness, this figure has been increased to 30% (on site permanently) so as not to overestimate existing vehicle trip generation (therefore it is estimated that 112 staff members travelled to site each day).
- 7.9 On this basis the site would have generated circa 317 vehicle trips in the AM peak hour (school started at 08:30), with this estimate accounting for lift sharing by students and staff, as well as the use of a single bus route that was available to students who lived locally. Previous work completed by EAS at a private primary school that also offered private school bus services (although more extensive than our existing land use), indicated that 30% of students travelled to and from school using the provided buses; subsequently, this proportion was also assumed when calculating the existing trip generation associated with the Princess Helena College. This therefore equates to circa 210 vehicle trips (105 in bound and 105 outbound) associated with students travelling to school as parents arrive at the school to drop off their child and depart from the site.
- 7.10 Previous work on the same primary school by EAS also indicated that 95% of staff members travelled to school using personal vehicles, so this proportion has been carried forward here. Subsequently, it is estimated that 107 staff members drove to the site each day. (therefore: 210 vehicle trips associated with students + 107 vehicle trips associated with staff = 317 total vehicle trips in the AM peak).
- 7.11 Naturally, a similar number of trips would be generated at the end of a school day by day-students and non-permanently based staff members, although this is likely to have been spread out more, with not all 317 vehicle trips falling within the PM peak hour, owing to the fact that the school finished at 16:00pm and various extra-curricular activities were offered by the school which ran until circa 17:30.
- 7.12 Subsequently, totalling the above, it is estimated that the school generated roughly 317 vehicle movements in the AM peak hour, and around 317 in the PM peak period, with close to 700 vehicle movements throughout the course of a day.

Proposed Apartment Use

- 7.13 To obtain trip rates associated with the proposed 45 apartments, the TRICS database was interrogated to find surveys of sites that met the following criteria:
- Multi-modal survey;
 - Privately owned flats (03/C);
 - Located in England, outside of London;

- Located in 'edge of town' and 'suburban area' locations;
- Carried out on a weekday in the last 5 years.

7.14 Five surveys were found that met these criteria, from which trip rates per unit are estimated, as summarised in Table 6.1, and are converted into trip numbers for the proposed apartments in Table 6.2. The full TRICS datasheet is included at **Appendix W**.

7.15 For uniformity when comparing the two uses, the PM peak period for the proposed apartment use has been extended to include all trip movements between 16:00 – 18:00. This has been outlined in Table 6.1 and 6.2 below.

Table 6.1 – Trip rates per flat unit (from TRICS)

	AM Peak (08:00-09:00)			PM Peak Period (16:00-18:00)			All Day (07:00-21:00)		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Total Vehicles	0.085	0.153	0.238	0.190	0.122	0.312	1.365	1.435	2.800
Pedestrians	0.048	0.249	0.297	0.101	0.090	0.191	0.698	0.821	1.519
Cyclists	0	0.011	0.011	0	0.005	0.005	0.047	0.048	0.095
Public Transport Users	0	0.095	0.095	0.048	0	0.048	0.207	0.247	0.454

Table 7b – Trip numbers for 43 proposed apartments (allow for rounding)

	AM Peak (08:00-09:00)			PM Peak Period (16:00-18:00)			All Day (07:00-21:00)		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Total Vehicles	4	7	10	8	5	13	59	62	120
Pedestrians	2	11	13	4	4	2	30	35	65
Cyclists	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	4
Public Transport Users	0	4	4	2	0	2	9	11	20

7.16 It can be seen above that the proposed 43 apartments could be expected to generate 10 vehicle movements in the AM network peak hour, with 13 vehicle movements in the PM network peak period, as well as 120 total vehicle movements throughout the course of a day.

Proposed Housing Use

7.17 To obtain trip rates associated with the proposed 26 houses, the TRICS database was interrogated to find surveys of sites that met the following criteria:

- Multi-modal survey;
- Privately owned houses (03/A);
- Located in England, outside of London;
- Located in 'edge of town' and suburban area locations;
- Carried out on a weekday in the last 5 years.

7.18 20 surveys were found that met these criteria, from which trip rates per unit are estimated, as summarised in Table 6.3, and are converted into trip numbers for the proposed 24 houses in Table 6.4. The full TRICS datasheet is included at **Appendix X**.

7.19 As explained above, for uniformity when comparing the two uses, the PM peak period for the proposed house use has been extended to include all trip movements between 16:00 – 18:00. This has been outlined in Table 6.3 and 6.4 below.

Table 6.3 – Trip rates per house (from TRICS)

	AM Peak (08:00-09:00)			PM Peak Period (16:00-18:00)			All Day (07:00-21:00)		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Total Vehicles	0.165	0.443	0.608	0.388	0.180	0.568	2.391	2.389	4.780
Pedestrians	0.045	0.129	0.174	0.043	0.042	0.085	0.466	0.480	0.946
Cyclists	0.007	0.028	0.035	0.014	0.008	0.022	0.097	0.102	0.199
Public Transport Users	0.001	0.022	0.023	0.015	0.002	0.017	0.082	0.091	0.173

Table 6.4 – Trip numbers for 26 proposed houses (allow for rounding)

	AM Peak (08:00-09:00)			PM Peak Period (16:00-18:00)			All Day (07:00-21:00)		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Total Vehicles	4	12	16	10	5	15	62	62	124
Pedestrians	1	3	5	1	1	2	12	12	25
Cyclists	0	1	1	0	0	1	3	3	5
Public Transport Users	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	2	4

7.20 It can be seen above that the proposed 26 houses could be expected to generate 16 vehicle movements in the AM network peak hour, with 15 vehicle movements in the PM network peak period, as well as 124 total vehicles throughout the course of a day.

7.21 Table 6.5 below summarises the vehicle trip number that would be expected to be generated by the proposed 43 apartments and 26 houses.

Table 6.5 – Trip numbers for the proposed use (43 apartments and 26 houses)

	AM Peak (08:00-09:00)			PM Peak Period (16:00-18:00)			All Day (07:00-21:00)		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Total Vehicles	8	19	26	18	10	28	121	124	244
Pedestrians	3	14	18	5	5	4	42	47	90
Cyclists	0	1	1	0	0	1	5	5	9
Public Transport Users	0	5	5	2	0	2	11	13	24

Proposed Cricket Pitch Use

- 7.22 Much like the existing use on site, the TRICS database does not hold survey data completed at cricket pitches and as such a first principles approach has been used to estimate existing trip generation using information from a member of Preston village cricket club.
- 7.23 It is proposed that the cricket pitch will be used as a reserve facility for the Preston cricket club, with no alterations proposed to the existing cricket pitch located in the north of the village.
- 7.24 Senior cricket fixtures at the ground will take place on Saturdays from the beginning of May to the middle of September. These fixtures will involve the arrival of around 15 vehicles (players and officials) at approximately 12 noon, departing around 19.00. Typically, 3 or 4 spectators' cars will come and go during the afternoon.
- 7.25 As such, a typical senior cricket fixture is expected to generate circa 38 vehicle movements with 19 of these being prior to the commencement of the match and 19 being once the match has finished.
- 7.26 It is also envisaged that the occasional junior fixtures will take place at the ground (various age groups from under 9 to under 14) on midweek evenings during May, June and early July, with a maximum of two evenings per week. The member of Preston cricket club has stated that there tends to be less lift-sharing with the junior players, so around 20 cars could be expected, arriving around 17.45 and departing around 20.30.
- 7.27 As such, a typical junior fixture could be expected to generate 40 vehicle movements during a weekday evening.
- 7.28 In addition, the grounds maintenance team would also be at the ground approximately 4 times per week for roughly two-hour periods – this would involve only one or two vehicles and be at irregular times (often early evening).
- 7.29 With the above in mind, it is expected that on the busiest day during the week, the cricket pitch is expected to generate 48 vehicles movements. It is expected that 28 of these vehicle movements will fall outside of the network peak hours.

Net Trip Generation

- 7.30 Table 6.6 summarises the vehicle trip numbers that would be expected to be generated by the existing use and each element of the proposed use, and accordingly provides estimated net vehicle trip numbers associated with the proposal. A worst case trip scenario has been assumed for the cricket use, with trip figures taken from an average weekday night as this session is estimated to generate the most trips throughout an average week.

Table 6 – Net vehicle trip generation on the local highway network associated with the proposal

	AM Peak (08:00-09:00)			PM Peak Period (16:00-18:00)			All Day (times vary for different land uses)		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Existing school use	212	105	317	105	212	317	350	350	700
Proposed residential use (26 houses)	4	12	16	10	5	15	62	62	124
Proposed residential use (43 apartments)	4	7	10	8	5	13	59	62	120
Proposed cricket pitch	0	0	0	20	0	20	24	24	48
Total for proposed use	8	19	26	38	10	48	145	148	292
Net	-204	-86	-291	-67	-202	-269	-205	-202	-408

- 7.31 It can be seen above that the proposals would be expected to result in a significant decrease in vehicle movements during both the network peak hours, as well as through the course of the day. It is therefore concluded that there is no need for any junction modelling or other capacity assessment associated with the proposal.
- 7.32 As well as the proposals engendering a significant reduction in trips when compared to the existing lawful use, the difference in habits of site occupants also needs to be considered. Future residents of the site would be far more likely to use the local bus routes to access nearby services and employment opportunities located within Stevenage, Hitchin or Luton when compared to former school students and staff. The future use of the site as a residential development could be considered more sustainable in terms of transport when compared to the current school land use, with future residents having the potential to make more use of sustainable transport options.

8 Summary and Conclusion

Summary

- 8.1 EAS has been appointed by The Door UK to provide transport planning input to support a planning application for the redevelopment at the former Princess Helena College boarding school, Temple Dinsley, Preston, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7RT.
- 8.2 The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the old Princess Helena Boarding School to a residential scheme. Accordingly, the existing main building and teaching block will be converted into 43 apartments, formed of 12 x one-bedroom, 25 x two-bedroom, 5 x three-bedroom and 1 x four-bedroom units.
- 8.3 Further to this, it is also proposed that 22 houses will be provided in five residential blocks (Edwin, Violet, Sadleir, Ithel and Templar), located around the main building and teaching block. These will offer 2 x two-bedroom, 14 x three-bedroom and 6 x four-bedroom units.
- 8.4 Four detached houses, located away from the main building and teaching block are also proposed, with 2 x three-bedroom houses (Tank House and Pump House) located in the south of the site, and 2 x five-bedroom houses (Summer House and Harwood House) located in the north of the site.
- 8.5 The development will also offer a new reserve cricket pitch and associated pavilion for use by Preston village cricket team.
- 8.6 The site is located directly on the east side of Preston, a village near Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 7RT. The site is bound to the east by undeveloped land and with Preston Road, School Lane and St Albans Highway bordering to the north, west and south respectively.
- 8.7 The site will offer two main car parking areas, both located to the southeast of the main buildings, with one car park making use of existing hardstanding provision, while a second car park is to be constructed to the south of this. Discussions with NHDC have informed layout, form, and design parameters, all of which have been agreed as a result of the pre-application discussions.
- 8.8 The proposal seeks to retain the existing main site access point off School Lane, with vehicular entry for most residential uses and the cricket pitch gained solely using this access. The site will work with a one-way vehicular flow arrangement, as currently in place at the site, with vehicles continuing along the existing internal driveway, egressing via St Albans Highway.
- 8.9 The proposal will retain the existing driveway that leads from School Lane, offering access to the main buildings within the site. From here residents and visitors will be able to access the relevant car parks and parking spaces.
- 8.10 Staff, players and visitors of the proposed cricket pitch will access the facility by entering the site off St Albans Highway, following the internal driveway for circa 170m, turning left into the pitch. Vehicles will then also egress from the site via St Albans Highway.
- 8.11 Vehicular access to Tank House and Pump House will be made via an existing access point that connects to the existing access off School Lane, this will be formalised as part of the

proposals. The access will offer a two-way vehicular arrangement for residents of Tank and Pump House only.

- 8.12 Formalisation and improvement to the existing pedestrian access, located to the west of the main buildings, is proposed. This will offer future residents a separate vehicle-free access into the site and direct connection to the centre of Preston village.
- 8.13 Further to this, a new internal footpath is proposed, linking the Dower House development, located to the north of the site, to the aforementioned new pedestrian access at School Lane. The path is proposed to run close to and in line with the existing northwestern boundary of the site.
- 8.14 It is understood at present that the constraints imposed by the land status have curtailed the potential for further local off-site sustainable improvements, which is a matter that is outside of the developer's control.
- 8.15 Discussions have taken place with NHDC regarding parking provision and layout. The current proposal for 127 car parking spaces equates to an allocation of one space for each one and two-bedroom apartment, two spaces for each 3-bedroom apartment and house; and 33 unallocated visitor spaces. It is also proposed that all allocated parking spaces and a policy compliant number of unallocated parking spaces will be provided with EV charging capabilities.
- 8.16 It is proposed that the site will provide a minimum of 158 cycle parking spaces, formed of 130 long stay spaces for residents and at least 18 short stay cycle parking spaces for visitors; this meets the policy requirements as set out by NHDC.
- 8.17 Refuse collection will be undertaken from within the site by the district's waste collection services. Bin stores are located within most residential blocks, allowing future residents to transfer their waste from their dwellings to these stores before collection day. For larger detached dwellings, residents will leave their bins within storage points within the curtilage of their property.
- 8.18 A fire tender is able to serve most points within the development. where this is not possible alternative methods will be employed.
- 8.19 It is estimated that the school generated roughly 317 vehicle movements in the AM peak hour, and around 317 in the PM peak period, with close to 700 vehicle movements throughout the course of a day.
- 8.20 The proposals would be expected to result in a significant decrease in vehicle movements during both the network peak hours, as well as through the course of the day. It is therefore concluded that there is no need for any junction modelling or other capacity assessment associated with the proposal.

Conclusion

- 8.21 This residential development has been considered with mind to local and national policy and will include positive transport benefits for the future site residents which will also benefit existing people living in Preston.
- 8.22 The NPPF states at Paragraph 114:

‘Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe’.

- 8.23 Here it is evident that there will be no severe impact on the highway, with the development engendering a decrease in vehicle trips when compared to the existing use. The sustainable installations will improve the opportunities and choices for people to use alternative modes of travel to the private car and hence this proposal does meet the policy test of the NPPF.

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