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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: 25/00457/PNQ
HCC ref: NH/24225/2025
HCC received: 10 March 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Paul Marshall

Location

Slip End Farm, Royston Road, Slip End, Baldock, SG7 6SG

Application type

Prior Approval

Proposal

Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling : Change of use of agricultural buildings to ten (10) dwellinghouses with associated building operations, private gardens and car parking

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 recommends refusal due to serious concerns about highway safety and the complete lack of sustainable active travel options

Please see below reasons for refusal.

This is a fundamentally unsustainable location, being sited directly off a major strategic A road with derestricted speed limit. There are no footways, cycleways, bus services or rail services close by, and as such the proposed new houses will be entirely car dependent. This goes totally against all current sustainable and accessible travel policy, and accessibility policies. Key references include paragraphs 110 - 112 of the NPPF, and our LTP4 policy 1.

COMMENTS

The proposals are for Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling: Change of use of agricultural buildings to ten (10) dwellinghouses with associated building operations, private gardens and car parking

Context: locally known as Cat Ditch Lane is a classified provides and provides a local distributor function in the road hierarchy. Cat Ditch Lane is highway maintainable at public expense. A 60mph speed limit applies. On HCC's Place and Movement network. Cat Ditch Lane is classed as P1/M1 (e.g. rural lane). No reportable highway accidents are recorded at the entrance to the site with Cat Ditch Lane in a (5-year rolling period). No Public Right of Way (as shown on the PRow map) directly affects the site or would be affected by the proposal. The county council considers Cat Ditch Lane not to be a traffic sensitive road

Policy Review:

- Manual for Streets 2007
- National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)
- Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC) Local Transport Plan-4 [2018-2031, May2018]
- Cycle Infrastructure Design DfT Local Transport Note 1/20 (July 2020)
- HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (adopted in March 2024)

PLANNING HISTORY

The application site has previous planning history.

DRAWINGS

The Highway Authority note the submission of materials in support of the planning application, including drawing numbers: PO1, PO2, and Supporting Letter

PARKING

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is responsible for assessing the proposed development against local parking standards and ensuring that the required level of parking can be achieved within the site boundary.

While the LPA determines the level and suitability of the car parking proposals, it is essential that the parking provision and layout operate efficiently and safely to minimize the impact on the local highway network, which is the responsibility of the Highways Authority.

ACCESS

The site is accessed via a private access road leading from Cat Ditch Lane to the site within the farm boundary which measures approx. 210 meters into the site area.

VISIBILITY

No visibility splays have been provided. The posted speed limit is 60mph which requires a visibility splay of 2.4 x 215 (DMRB)

CONTEXT:

The A505 is a Principle 'A' road and acts as a Primary Distributor function in the road hierarchy. The A505 is highway maintainable at public expense. A 70mph speed limit applies. On HCC's Place and Movement network the A505 is classed as P1/M3 (e.g. Motorway / Major A Road)

HAZARDOUS SITE

The junction of the A505 is classified by the Highway Authority as a Hazardous Site. In the period 2019 to 2024 there have been 9 accidents.

JOURNEY DESTINATIONS

Consideration must be given to the destination of journeys from the site, particularly with the junction of the A505. It is highly likely that almost all trips generated by the proposals will use this junction. For example, a typical journey from the site to Tesco Royston via the A505 would take approximately 9 minutes by car, while a journey to Tesco Baldock would take around 10 minutes.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES AVOIDING THE A505:

- To Tesco Baldock: 30 minutes and 14.4 miles
- To Royston: 18 minutes and 18.4 miles
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The A505 junction with Cat Ditch Lane functions as a gyratory system. Traffic traveling southbound in the outside lane must slow down to access a short deceleration lane, cross the northbound carriageway, and reach Cat Ditch Lane west.

Northbound traffic in the inside lane can use a short deceleration lane to turn left into Cat Ditch Lane. Additionally, northbound traffic in the outside lane can access a short deceleration lane to cross the central reserve, either joining the southbound carriageway or crossing into Cat Ditch Lane east.

Finally, vehicles traveling west on Cat Ditch Lane can cross both the southbound and northbound carriageways to access Cat Ditch Lane west, where the development access is approximately 90 meters away.

POLICY

The following policy has been used to determine the viability of the proposals in terms of sustainability and safety.

HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (adopted in March 2024)

Policy 5: Development Management

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.

Section 4 paragraph 2.5 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

LTP4 Policy 1:

Transport User Hierarchy - opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need for travel - Vulnerable Road user needs (pedestrians and cyclists) - Passenger transport user needs - Powered two-wheeler (mopeds/motorbikes) user needs - Other motor vehicle user needs Represents a shift in emphasis with the aim of increasing rates of travel by more sustainable modes.

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

SUSTAINABILITY / SAFETY POLICY

No footways exist along Cat Ditch Lane and the development cannot provide any footways as there is no destination that can be accessed on foot safely. It is in the interests of highway safety to ensure vulnerable users have access to safe facilities that encourage active travel and ensure the site is accessible for all vulnerable users.

NPPF109. States: Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, using a vision-led approach to identify transport solutions that deliver well-designed, sustainable and popular places.

Housing should be delivered in the most sustainable locations where connectivity is maximised, the need to travel by car is minimised, and safe and direct walking and cycling routes are provided.

Navigating to the site on foot or cycling during any time of the year especially evenings, winter months, or adverse weather fronts is unsafe or near impossible. The nearest bus stop is a 33-minute walk across fields adjacent to the A505. This goes totally against all current sustainable and accessibility policies. Key references include paragraphs 110 - 112 of the NPPF, and our LTP4 policy 1.

With new builds the planning process seeks/provides the opportunity to improve conditions for both development and highway safety by applying current higher standards of policies, design, accessibility, and safety to new developments, and not to retain and/or continue with past obsolete standards.

CONCLUSION

The Highway Authority has reviewed the supporting documents and drawings and wishes to raise an objection to the application due to significant highway safety concerns and an almost complete absence of sustainable transport options. Almost all journeys from the site will use the junction with the A505, which poses a substantial risk to road safety. The proposals do not comply with the design standards outlined in HCC's Place & Movement Planning Design Guidance (adopted in March 2024), Manual for Streets, NPPF (December 2024), and LTP4.

Signed

Paul Marshall

11 April 2025