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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: 25/00663/PNMA
HCC ref: NH/24410/2025
HCC received: 24 March 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

The Exchange, Queen Street, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 9TY

Application type

Prior Approval

Proposal

Prior Approval Class MA - Comm to Resi : Creation of 6 self-contained residential units

Recommendation

Notice is given under article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the following conditions:

Conditions:

Before the occupation of the proposed development, cycle parking facility easily accessible by all users (Sheffield stands) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle parking shall be constructed and laid out in accordance with the agreed details and completed prior to occupation of the development hereby approved and shall thereafter be retained, maintained, and kept available for the occupants of the development at all times.

Before commencement of the development, a 'Construction Traffic Management Plan' shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. Thereafter the construction of the development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Plan. The 'Construction Traffic Management Plan' must set out:

- the phasing of construction and proposed construction programme.
- the methods for accessing the site, including wider construction vehicle routing.

- the numbers of daily construction vehicles including details of their sizes, at each phase of the development.
- the hours of operation and construction vehicle movements.
- details of any highway works necessary to enable construction to take place.
- details of construction vehicle parking, turning and loading/unloading arrangements clear of the public highway.
- details of any hoardings and how visibility splays will be maintained.
- management of traffic to reduce congestion.
- control of dirt and dust on the public highway, including details of the location and methods to wash construction vehicle wheels.
- the provision for addressing any abnormal wear and tear to the highway.
- waste management proposals.
- Provision of sufficient on-site parking prior to commencement of construction activities;
- Post construction restoration/reinstatement of the working areas and temporary access to the public highway;
- where works cannot be contained wholly within the site a plan should be submitted showing the site layout on the highway including extent of hoarding and remaining road width for vehicle movements.

Reason: To minimise the impact of the construction process on the on local environment and local highway network in accordance with Policies 5, 12, 17 and 22 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

HIGHWAY INFORMATIVES:

The Highway Authority recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Notes (ANs) to ensure that any works as part of this development are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highways Act 1980 and other relevant processes.

Storage of materials: The applicant is advised that the storage of materials associated with the construction of this development should be provided within the site on land which is not public highway, and the use of such areas must not interfere with the public highway. If this is not possible, authorisation should be sought from the Highway Authority before construction works commence.

Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

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

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> telephoning 0300 1234047.

Road Deposits: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit mud or other debris on the public highway, and section 149 of the same Act gives the Highway Authority powers to remove such material at the expense of the party responsible. Therefore, best practical means shall be taken at all times to ensure that all vehicles leaving the site during construction of the development are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available via the website

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/highways-roads-and-pavements.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

Brief Description of Proposed Development in support by the applicant:

It is proposed to change of use of the existing commercial (Use Class E) building formerly known as 'The Exchange on Queen Street, to residential accommodation (Use Class C) under Part 3, Schedule 2, Class MA of the Town and Country Planning, General Permitted Development Order (GDPO) 2015. These would comprise of 5 no. studio flats and 1 no. 1-bed flats.

The site is located in highly accessible location and benefits from being within Hitchin's Town centre such as an existing public car park, train station, local shops and market.

The proposal strategic aims to reduce car dependency and in light of the site's highly sustainable location, the proposals do not include any additional car parking at the site. The site is situated within a highly accessible location for walking, cycling and public transport with Bus Services located and Hitchin station within 1 km, furthermore the Site is conveniently located close to several large public car parks within easy walking distance. Notwithstanding, and in seeking to promote sustainable travel, it is intended to provide cycle parking in accordance with the standards set out in the London Plan (2021).

No objections were raised from the Highway Officer from the previous applications 23/02630/PNMA and 24/01306/PNMA.

In summary, it is considered that the proposals for a car-free scheme are suitable given the context of the Site, and this will help to encourage a shift towards more sustainable forms of travel and in accordance with the principles of Active Travel.

The Site is expected to result in a significant decrease of two-way daily trips associated with car borne trips when compared to the extant use. This should be seen in the context of the PDR and that this will not result in a material increase or change in traffic levels, particularly in relation to paragraph 111 of the NPPF, which states "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".

Highways comments:

The proposals involve the conversion of Class E use space (<1,500m²) located on the Site's lower ground floor (basement) into 6no. car free studio (1 person) apartments under Part 3, Schedule 2, Class MA of GDPO. The 24 studios that form part of The Exchange as part of 24/02058/FP have been approved.

Car parking provision is the responsibility of the LPA to determine the level and suitability of the car parking proposals, however, it is essential that it is operated in efficient and safe manner to minimise the impact on the local highway network which is the responsibility of the HCC HA.

Given the car-free proposals, as detailed later in this Section, vehicular access to the Proposed Development is only required for delivery, servicing, and emergency vehicles.

The relevant provisions of the GPDO do not refer to parking, but the perceived adverse impact to assess is one of congestion or highway safety, where the development is likely to result in a material increase or a material change in the character of traffic in the vicinity of the site.

The HA has reviewed the Transport Note dated February 2025 submitted by the applicant and given the site location is in the town centre, access to amenities, excellent accessibility and connectivity to

public transport, nearby public car parks and controlled parking in place on highways surrounding the site, the proposed car free development of 6 residential units is not expected to have any significant vehicle traffic impact on the operation or safety of the highway network.

Cycle parking will be provided in the form of a secure two-tier rack system within the surface level service yard to the rear of the building and comprise 30no. cycle parking spaces in accordance with standards (1 space per studio, including the 6no studios in this application), to ensure that all residents of the studio apartments will be able to use their bike to travel should they wish to. An additional 2no. short stay visitor spaces are to be provided in the form of 1no. Sheffield Stand immediately adjacent to the two-tier cycle rack facility.

Two tier cycle parking facility is only suitable for non-residential developments. Double deck cycle parking is unsuitable for residential development because it is less convenient than Sheffield type stands and discriminatory for short people and those with low strength. People with mobility issues are also disadvantaged due to the difficulties involved with lifting at height. Additionally, limited types of cycles can fit within double deck systems in comparison with the Sheffield type stand e.g. shopping baskets, child seats, etc. This is a residential development and so the majority of cycle parking (mix) should be Sheffield type which is accessible by all.

Recommendation:

No objection subject to the following conditions:

Signed

Senober Khan

14 April 2025