

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Melissa Tyler.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
25/03211/FP	Change of use of existing building to offices (Class E (g) (i). (Development already carried out).	Fairclough Hall Farm Halls Green Weston Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7DP

Submitted Plan Nos

FHF-20-04 FHF-20-02 FHF-20-05

1.0 Policies

2.0 Site History

- 2.1** **18/02397/FP** Erection of single storey detached building to provide business meeting room, work stations, toilets and a café, following demolition of existing stables. **Conditional Permission 18/10/2018**

This permission had been implemented but not used due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.2 **20/00229/NMA** Increase in size of building to allow internal adjustment (as Non-Material Amendment of Planning Permission 18/02397/FP granted 18.10.2018). **Conditional Permission 11/02/2020**

2.3 **20/01242/FP** Change of use of existing business meeting room, work stations, toilets and a café to offices (B1) for a temporary period of three years. Conditional Permission 04/08/2020

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Weston PC** – No objection received

3.2 **Environmental Health** - *Thank you for consulting Environmental Protection on this application. I have no objections to the proposals.*

3.3 **Herts Highways** - 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. The Highway Authority have previously approved similar applications. As the development has already been carried out, also the site and access road are both privately maintained for which the Highway Authority have no jurisdiction. As such, the Authority's ability to comment is limited, given that its responsibilities are restricted to roads, footways, verges, and other infrastructure that are publicly maintained at the public's expense (i.e., the public highway). The Highway Authority have no further comments

3.2 **Neighbours** – None

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The application site is located on the edge of the small hamlet of Halls Green in the Green Belt around Stevenage. The application building is situated to the north of a complex of farm buildings most of which are now used to house small businesses.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 The application proposes the change of use of existing building to offices (Class E (g) (i). (Development already carried out).

4.2.2 The building contains an open-plan office area, meeting room, staff room, toilets and store. The building has a mezzanine level occupying approximately one third of the footprint of the building. A small amount of parking is located immediately adjacent to the building.

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key issue in this case is singular in my view. Would the use of the building as Class E (g)(i) be acceptable in terms of the Green Belt

- 4.3.2 For context, since the 2018 application the Government made significant changes to the use classes order which resulted in a new Class E category which amalgamated several use classes covering commercial, service and business uses.

Class E (Commercial, business and service) – including retail, restaurant, office, financial/professional services, indoor sports, medical and nursery uses along with “any other services which it is appropriate to provide in a commercial, business or service locality.

- 4.3.3 Given the 2020 application was a temporary permission for three year, and even though it can be assumed that as per Class E uses can be changed within the parameters. The condition on the 2020 application states that the use should revert back to the use in line with the 2018 application. This application seeks to regulate the change of use of the building to offices which commenced in spring 2021.
- 4.3.4 Paragraph 154 of the Framework advises that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless compliant with a list of exceptions set out in the remainder of the paragraph.
- 4.3.5 One relevant exception is paragraph 154 (h) (iv) which sets out that the reuse of buildings should not be regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt subject to the building being of a permanent and substantial construction. Exceptions set out under section (h) of paragraph 154 should further preserve openness and not conflict with the Green Belt purposes.
- 4.3.6 The building in question was granted under 2018 application and constructed in 2019-2020. No alterations or extensions are proposed. In line with the previous decision the use would not conflict with the purposes of the greenbelt in my view.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 Accordingly, the proposed change of use would be acceptable in principle in accordance with Paragraph 154 of the Framework and LP Policy SP5 and that permission be granted subject to a condition limiting the use class.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

2. The premises shall be used for the provision of an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions and the research and development of products or processes; Eg i) and ii) uses and for no other purpose (including any other purpose set out in Class E of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order, 1987 as amended, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

Reason: to ensure that the use of the premises is appropriate for this location, as other uses included within Class E would not be acceptable given their location and proximity to residential properties.

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is considered exempt under the statutory exemptions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>) or transitional arrangements in respect of the biodiversity gain condition.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 27 February 2026	