

DLA Town Planning Ltd

Our Ref: 24/01517/PRE

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Date: 21 October 2024

FAO: DLA Town Planning Ltd

Dear Sir/Madam

**Pre Application Advice : Conversion of stables to a dwelling and demolition of outbuildings
Fen Farm, Rabley Heath Road, Codicote, Welwyn, Hertfordshire, AL6 9UA,**

Please quote the following reference: 24/01517/PRE on all correspondence.

Pre Application Advice : Conversion of stables to a dwelling and demolition of outbuildings
Fen Farm, Rabley Heath Road, Codicote

I refer to your pre-application submission in respect of the above site, I am writing to you following an examination of the information submitted.

I would emphasise that this does not constitute a formal determination and is without prejudice to any subsequent formal planning application.

For your information the relevant government guidance and policies from the development plans are set out below.

Development site

The application site is in the curtilage of a large two storey detached dwelling that was approved under planning application 10/00134/1. The Detached stable block was existing prior to the replacement dwelling which is the subject of this pre-application. The land is designated as Green Belt.

Relevant planning history

09/01267/1 Erection of one four bedroom dwelling with detached garage following demolition of existing dwelling **Conditional Permission**

10/00134/1 Erection of one four bedroom dwelling with detached garage following demolition of existing dwelling (as variation to planning permission 09/01267/1 granted on 30 September 2009 and as shown on drawings 1; 2A; 3A; 4A; 5A; 101A and location plan 09029-01B received 29th March 2010) **Conditional Permission**

Proposal

Pre-application advice is sought for the erection of 1 No. eco residential dwelling.

Consultation responses

None consulted.

Relevant policies

NPPF:

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development;
Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities;
Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport;
Section 11 – Making effective use of land;
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places;
Section 13 – Protecting Green Belt Land;
Section 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;
Section 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031:

Policy SP1 Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire
Policy SP2 Settlement hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
Policy SP5 Countryside and Green Belt
Policy SP6 Sustainable transport
Policy SP8 Housing
Policy SP9 Design and Sustainability
Policy SP12 Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape
Policy T1 Assessment of transport matters
Policy T2 Parking
Policy D1 Sustainable design
Policy D3 Protecting living conditions
Policy D4 Air quality
Policy HE4 – Archaeology.
Policy NE2 Landscape
Policy NE4 Biodiversity and Geological Sites

Vehicle Parking at New Developments November 2011;
Design SPD July 2011;
Sustainability SPD 2024.

These documents and policies are all viewable on the Council's website under the Planning Policy section.

Discussion

The main material considerations relating to this development concern:

- Whether the acceptability of the proposal within the Green Belt.
- Whether the character and appearance are acceptable.
- Whether there would be impacts on neighbour amenity and whether the future living conditions would be acceptable.
- The safety of access and parking.
- And the suitability of landscaping, trees and biodiversity.

Principle

The site is located in the Green Belt and is in proximity to Codicote but is outside of the village boundary.

Paragraph 152 of the NPPF confirms – “Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.”

Paragraph 153 goes onto say “When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.”

Matters within Paragraph 154 of the NPPF related to the erection of a new building are not relevant given that this application does not constitute the erection of a new building. Exception c) is material given that this constitutes the extension and alteration of a building, and this requires that it must not be disproportionate to the original building. I note that you have prosed the demolition of a number of outbuildings

Paragraph 155 is relevant, and its exceptions are set out below:

- a) mineral extraction;*
- b) engineering operations;*
- c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
- d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*
- e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
- f) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.*

The principle of development maybe supported by the re use of the building as set out within exception d). With regards to the scale of the alterations, it may be that significant harm to openness would not arise from the development, however without details of scale, design and elevation and floor plans I cannot give a steer and I would consider the proposal may contribute some degree of harm given the residential furniture, boundary treatment of creating a new curtilage. The intensity of the residential use would remain largely the same and vehicle movements are unlikely to be significantly higher than existing. I consider this to be acceptable in the green belt. For these reasons, the proposal may not constitute inappropriate development and could be compliant with Local Plan policy SP5 and the provisions within Section 13 of the NPPF.

Sustainability

The development would make use of an existing access to the site and would add a single dwelling to the Council’s supply of housing. The development would provide economic benefits through the employment of local tradespersons in relation to the building’s construction, and in the longer term, future occupiers would contribute to the local economy by utilising local facilities. The dwelling would also provide limited social benefits through the provision of a small dwelling. Furthermore, whilst the property is not within a village boundary, the site is not considered remote given its proximity to Codicote, a Category A Village or Welwyn just over the border. The site would also need to be constructed to a high standard in compliance with current building regulations that would require the provision of EV charging, a high efficiency boiler, and low flow water fittings.

Character and appearance

The design should be compliant with Section 12 of the NPPF and Policy D1 and D2 of the Local Plan.

No elevation plans have been submitted, and therefore it is not possible to advise on the acceptability of the appearance of the dwelling.

Neighbour amenity

A core planning principle set out in the NPPF is to always seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. This principle is reflected in the provisions of D3 of the Local Plan.

No elevation or floor plans have been submitted, and therefore it is not possible to advise on the acceptability of the appearance of the dwelling.

Future living conditions

Paragraph 127 (f) of the NPPF states that “***decisions should ensure that developments... create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and wellbeing, with a high standard of amenity of future and existing users***”. Paragraph 127 (f) is reflected in Guideline 8 of Policy SP9 of the Local Plan.

No floor plans have been submitted. Therefore, I cannot confirm if sufficient internal space or built-in storage would be provided as required by the national space standards. These space standards will need to be met.

Parking and highways

An existing access and driveway are present. Any future application would need to make sure that at least two parking spaces for vehicles. This would be sufficient to meet the requirements within the Parking at New Developments SPD. You may wish to consult Hertfordshire Highways’ pre-application service to assess the safety and suitability of using this access for the proposed dwelling.

Landscaping, trees and biodiversity

Policy NE4 requires all new developments to deliver measurable net gains of biodiversity and therefore, any future application must include an ecological survey of the site with demonstratable measures being put in place to provide a net gain in on-site biodiversity.

Specific details of a soft and hard landscaping and boundary treatment scheme around the dwelling have not been provided and therefore, I cannot provide a formal and full response on the suitability of the landscape details of the development.

Climate Change Emergency

On 21 May 2019, the Council passed a Climate Emergency motion which pledged to do everything within the Council’s power achieve zero carbon emissions in North Hertfordshire by 2030. As one of the first councils to pass this motion, NHDC is leading the way on climate action. This declaration asserted the Council’s commitment toward Climate Action beyond current government targets and international agreements. Climate action has been a long-term corporate priority area for the Council, and has been pursued through our objective to Prosper and Protect North Hertfordshire:

This objective informs our commitments to:

- ☐ Green space provision.
- ☐ Representing the Climate Change interests of North Hertfordshire residents on county and regional plans, policies and aspirations.
- ☐ Supporting initiatives that increase the energy efficiency of residents' homes, reduce resource waste, and increase our sustainability for the longer term.
- ☐ Protecting our physical heritage.
- ☐ Finding environmentally sustainable solutions to the challenges

Along with the inclusion of EV charging points which are now a requirement on all new dwellings, other mitigation should be considered in order to make a positive contribution to the mitigation of the climate emergency. This might be achieved through layout and design of the proposed dwelling, materials and consultation methods maximising solar gain where possible. This would be seen as a positive attribute of any scheme alongside the inclusion of renewable energy technology, for example solar panels, ground heat source or air heat source pump units.

A detailed Energy Assessment will be required in any subsequent planning application, identifying which sustainable measures will be incorporated into the scheme and subsequently conditioned.

We have now adopted our Sustainability SPD you may wish to look at this for compliance.

Flooding and drainage

In accordance with policy NE8 of the Local Plan you should include a sustainable drainage solution as part of the development. This should aim to mimic the natural drainage patterns and processes as far as possible.

Formal Planning application

If this proposal were to proceed to the application stage, please ensure that you have referred to our validation check list to ensure that all the needed information and documents are submitted for consideration. Our validation checklist can be found on this link:

[Submit a planning application | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/submit-a-planning-application)

In any future application it would be good to understand why the stables are no longer required and I would be mindful that we would be unlikely to approve replacement stables elsewhere given that there is an existing stable in which you seek to convert and given that it is green belt it would have to meet the exceptions as set out in the NPPF. You would also need to demonstrate the access to the land rear of the green line if that land is to stay in the ownership of the applicant, unless the land is to go with the new house.

Conclusion

The NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The NPPF also states that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by this inappropriateness is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

Justification would be required at any future application to show that proposal does not constitute inappropriate development and is compliant with Local Plan policy SP5 and the provisions within Section 13 of the NPPF. The proposed development would provide modest benefits given that a new dwelling on a windfall site is welcomed.

Conversion and change of use of the existing stable building with the removal of the other outbuildings on the site, subject to design, scale and boundary and residential furniture within the proposed garden the proposal may be supported.

Any advice given by Council Officers for pre-application enquiries does not constitute a formal response or decision of the council with regards to future planning permission or other consents. The above comments are not binding on any future decision of the Local Planning Authority.

Yours faithfully

Melissa Tyler
Senior Planning Officer

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