

Appendix 1.

Timeline of communications with North Herts District Council Planning Department

27/02/2025 – Email from case officer (Melissa Tyler) apologising for application response delay due to consultation with conservation officer. Case officer confirms “in principal the bike shed is not objectionable” but we are asked to look at alternative locations.

04/03/2025 – I respond as follows:

“After careful consideration, we believe that the current location is the best and safest position for the school community. Moving the bike shed to another location would mean it is not accessible to outside hirers, whom we want to use the bike shed as part of our sustainability plan. Additionally, if the shed is located in another part of the school, it would not be accessible to hirers beyond school working hours due to security reasons. Relocating the shed to the other side of the school would also require children to push their bikes through a busy car park with lorries and staff cars, which poses safety concerns.

We are open to providing a planted screen in front of the bike shed. Planting mature bushes is an easy solution that we can implement to address the visual impact.

I hope that this removes any concerns that you may have and will allow for a conditional approval on this basis.

Could you please confirm that you are happy with this and that we are able to proceed”.

05/03/2025 – Email from case officer (Melissa Tyler) as follows:

“I have discussed this with my manager and wondering whether it is possible to change the orientation of the bike shed so it runs along the shipping container therefore potentially reducing the impact on the front of the school? With additional planting to help screen I haven’t run this past conservation yet but would this be suitable as an alternative? Would need to reconsult Parish Council and hope this overcomes their objections?”

05/03/2025 - I respond as follows:

“With regards to the attached picture, you will notice that if we were to move this in front of the storage container it would protrude over the tarmac. You will notice in the picture the start of the red gates which is access on to the playground, hence the change will limit vehicular access on to the play area, more importantly fire service access, which requires 3.7m width.

We have been very particular with it proposed placement taking in to account many aspects such as safety, convenience, promotion of sustainability etc. It is disappointing that the Parish have made their objection when the proposed shelter is so far set back from public view and will provide huge benefit to so many within the community. I also believe that it is in keeping and uses sustainable materials. Our offer of a planted screen seems more than reasonable, even though it adds to the expense of an already tight budget”.

17/03/2025 – I emailed the case officer (Melissa Tyler) to ask if there is any update since my previous email.

17/03/2025 – Email from case officer (Melissa Tyler) as follows:

“At the moment I would concur with the objections raised by the Pariah Council and the Conservation Officer and therefore I can recommend approval for the proposed siting of the bike store.

Is there any possibility to reduce the size of the bike store so that it would fit along the shipping container and not restrict the access? Or if they definitely isn't any other location on site that it could go?"

18/03/2025 – I emailed the case officer (Melissa Tyler), advising that I have left her a voicemail requesting a call back to discuss a way forward.

20/03/2025 - I emailed the case officer (Melissa Tyler) to advise

"Further to my email below, please see attached picture from this morning highlighting the much needed addition of a proper bike shelter. We expect many more bikes and scooter to be used in the summer months and want to actively promote this to encourage an active lifestyle".

Picture attached:



27/03/2025 - I emailed the case officer (Melissa Tyler), requesting a call back to discuss a way forward.

02/04/2025 - Refusal notice received without a call back or any further communication to that above. I was under the impression that we were discussing a way forward and that a suitable planted screening would provide a good option to obscure the view from the road (approx. 100m away). We are currently planning full height screening to ensure that this will be in place for when the bike shelter is completed.

03/04/2025 - I emailed the case officer (Melissa Tyler), as follows:

"I have just left another voicemail and am following up with another email requesting a call back to discuss the bike shelter.

I have received your decision notice which is extremely disappointing, and a little upsetting on the back of failed communication attempts.

Please call me urgent[ly] to discuss"

09/04/2025 – I emailed the Development and Conservation Manager (Shaun Greaves) as follows:

"Hi Shaun,

I am sorry to have to come to you, but I am getting no response from your officer. I have emailed a number of times and left 3 voicemails over as many weeks. I was hoping for a brief discussion prior to receiving a rejection notice but this did not happen. The school feel very disappointed by the decision which appears to follow the comments of a very negative Parish Council.

I will go down the relevant line of appeal but for your interest I attach two pictures, one showing the current situation with bikes and scooters left to get damaged, the other showing an attractive alternative using sustainable resources to keep them tidy and under cover.

The application also included some lights along a dark and dangerous entrance footpath but I believe this is also rejected being under the same application. A question I wanted to ask but couldn't get a simple response.

Could you please call me at your earliest convenience to discuss.

Kind regards"

09/04/2025 – Having received Shaun's out of office response, I forwarded the above email to Sam Dicocco (Principal Planning Officer) as the email instructed.

10/04/2025 – Email response from Sam:

"Thank you for the email. I am corresponding now with the case officer and conservation officer so that any discussions we have are informed and productive. I have asked for the feedback urgently and will return as soon as possible".

10/04/2025 – I acknowledged and thanked Sam for his response

14/04/2025 – An update from Sam as follows:

"Just to follow up, I have not forgotten! Got an email from the conservation officer earlier today, just clarifying one minor point that I am sure you would raise, so getting an answer in advance!"

15/04/2025 - I acknowledged and thanked Sam for his response

26/04/2025 – I emailed and asked Sam if he had an update

30/04/2025 - I emailed Sam and Shaun as follows:

"I have just left a voicemail on Sam's answerphone. Could I please request a call back ASAP. Having had no responses from Emily for over about 2 months, Sam Kindly took this over to look into, but all I really want is a civilised conversation and discussion. I am happy to come into your offices if this is more appropriate".

30/04/2025 – Shaun Greaves responded to inform me that Sam was on leave, and that he would call me.

30/04/2025 – I responded

“Thank you Shaun,

Sam said that he was waiting for a response from the conservation officer prior to responding so not sure if he heard back.

My Main points of discussion are as follows:

1. Why was Emily so unresponsive? I sent her a number of emails and left several voice messages just asking for a chat / catch up. The email thread started by discussing the suitability of the proposals and if there was scope for change, and then she was impossible to get hold of followed up by a refusal notice.
2. An understanding of why the proposal were deemed to be inappropriate, based on a single comment from the Parish who appear to oppose everything. Surely the benefits of the bike shelter offer huge improvement to the current situation. Please see attached picture of existing and proposed for your ease.
3. Are the pathway lights also rejected?

After 2pm would be great Shaun, thank you”

30/04/2025 – Sam emailed to say:

“Hi Richard and Shaun,

Richard, my apologies, I did get to the bottom of the viewpoints with the Conservation Officer before my leave began.

If possible, and you are willing, I could respond on Tuesday next week on return to office. Apologies I cannot respond now, as Shaun said, am on leave and just checking my emails the once”.

30/04/2025 – I responded:

“Thanks Sam,

I appreciate your response being as you are on leave. It makes sense to wait until Tuesday when you return, as you may have further info.

06/05/2025 – Email from Sam:

“Good Morning Richard,

Would you be available this afternoon at around 15:30 to discuss? Is it ok to call on 07764 479996?”

06/05/2025 – I confirmed that this was a good time

06/05/2025 – I did not receive a call and emailed Sam at 17:00.

“Hi Sam, I assume that you've been caught up this after, could we speak tomorrow, I need to pick up the kids from school”.

I did not receive a response

08/05/2025 – I emailed again –

“Hi Sam / Shaun,

Could we please talk today, I need to report back to the school governing board tomorrow

Many thanks”

Telephone conversation with Sam Dicocco.

- **He was apologetic for Melissa’s lack of clarity and responses**
- **He made suggestion that if it were his case he would likely have offered a conditional approval on the basis of suitable screening**
- **He confirmed that there were no objections to the lights but as these fell under the same planning application, they were refused with the bike shelter**
- **We discussed options to move this forward, including a re-submission and an appeal.**

Summary

During early conversations with the case officer (Melissa Tyler), we highlighted why the proposed location was important to ensure inclusivity, use for all the school community, including people hiring the venue, safety to ensure children did not have to travel through the car park, space restrictions, and emergency service access around the building. We fully intend to screen the bike shelter so that it will not be overtly visible from the road (approx. 100m away), and in essence the school and its community are in desperate need of a suitable bike and scooter storage facility appropriately positioned. At present there are a few standing rings but as highlighted in the picture above, this is not adequate, and bike and scooters are left unsecured and open to the elements allowing for damage and a messy image.