

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

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

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/01012/FP	Change of use from Sui Generis Timber Merchant to flexible Class B2/B8/E(g)(iii) Industrial and alterations to existing parking arrangements.	623 Blackhorse Road Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 1HB

Submitted Plan Nos

P0501 -LPE Location Plan P0501-00-GL-A - P0501_01-M_GL - Rev A P0501-ELE-A P0501-BPE P0501-BPP P0501-01-M_PL P0501-00_PL

1.0 Policies

1.0 Local and National Policy

1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)

Section 2 – Achieving sustainable development
Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed places
Section 14 - Meeting the challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal change

1.2 **North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031)**

Strategic Policies

Policy SP1 – Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP3 – Employment

Policy SP6 – Sustainable transport

Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability

Development Management Policies

Policy D1 – Sustainable design

Policy ETC1 – Appropriate uses in Employment Areas

Policy T1 – Assessment of transport matters

Policy T2 - Parking

1.4 **Supplementary Planning Design (SPD)**

NHC Vehicle Parking at New Development (2011)

NHC Sustainability (2024)

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

2.1 18/00490/FP New entrance road to existing commercial unit and demolition of existing brick store. CP

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 **Site and Neighbour Consultation** – None received.

3.2 **Herts Highways** - 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.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.1 The site is located on the north side of Blackhorse Road in Letchworth located on an employment site. There is an existing access to the site.

4.1.2 The application site is a 0.4ha and the existing site comprises 1,464sqm of commercial floorspace predominately as open warehouse but with a small extent of ancillary office space at ground and first floor. At its principal elevation it is a two-storey, flat roofed structure predominately constructed in red brick with a section of render, behind which is the warehouse area with vaulted sawtooth roof.

4.1.3 The site has a secure service yard area to the rear with HGV loading door, car parking and open storage area as well as some additional car parking on the frontage. It benefits from two vehicular crossover from Blackhorse Road, one which aligns with the access down the site of warehouse to the rear yard and a second from the west side of the front parking area.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the site from Sui Generis to flexible Class B2/B8/E(g)(iii) industrial use.

4.2.1 The key elements of the proposed scheme are as follows:

- Change of use of the premise from Sui Generis to allow Class B2, Class B8 or Class E(g)(iii) industrial uses with ancillary office space.
- Reconfiguration of Site Layout to remove open storage and re-provide car parking in new formal arrangement.
- Retention of existing singular HGV loading space.
- Provision of 9 cycle parking spaces in exceedance of policy requirements.

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- The acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its resultant impact on the character and appearance of the area.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the operations of adjoining units in terms of amenity.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on car parking provision in the area.
- The impact that the proposed development would have on the environment.

Proposed Use

4.3.2 The proposed use of the unit seeks to include B2/B8/E(g)(iii) industrial use. Class E (g)(iii) incorporates industrial processes such as those previously seen in the former B1c light industrial use.

4.3.3 The proposed change of use will result in an additional industrial unit within the safeguarded employment area and is proposed to have flexibility to be occupied for light industrial processes, general industrial or storage and distribution uses with ancillary office space which is supported by Policy SP3 and ETC1 of the Local Plan. The agent confirms that the flexibility is sought as the application is speculative with no end user current in place and a permitted range of appropriate uses will maximise the attractiveness of the unit to the commercial market both now and in the future.

4.3.5 On balance, the proposal would retain an employment generating use within the unit and would not result in the loss of the site to non-employment purposes. Given the mixed use nature of the Blackhorse Road and surrounding area, the principle of introducing these uses is considered acceptable.

4.3.5 Given the scale of the development and the retention of employment use within the unit, it is not considered that the proposal would not have a significant impact on the supply or function of employment land.

Impact on Amenity

- 4.3.6 The site is located in a predominantly industrial and commercial area where there are limited activities that would be at risk by the introduction of the proposed uses.

Compatibility with Surrounding Uses

- 4.3.7 The surrounding area comprises a mix of employment uses and the proposed inclusion of the proposed use classes is not considered to introduce a use that would be incompatible with the surrounding employment area.

Highways and Parking

- 4.3.8 The development proposes no alteration to the existing access points onto Blackhorse Road. The continued use of the two existing vehicular crossovers is acceptable, subject to them remaining in good condition and fit for purpose. The internal layout demonstrates that vehicles, including light goods vehicles and HGVs, can enter, manoeuvre, and exit the site in a forward gear, which is consistent with HCC's Place and Movement Planning and Design Guidance. The retention of a single HGV loading area to the rear is considered appropriate given the scale and nature of the site. Based on the submitted information, the proposal would not result in a material intensification of use compared with the historic timber yard operation. Therefore, the LHA considers that the development is unlikely to have a severe residual cumulative impact on the highway network in accordance with Paragraph 115 of the NPPF (2024).
- 4.3.9 The applicant has indicated that the proposal would not materially increase traffic generation relative to the previous use. Given the flexible nature of the proposed uses (B2/B8/E(g)(iii)), trip rates may vary depending on the end occupier; however, the scale of floorspace and retained servicing arrangement suggest that impacts would remain comparable to the lawful fallback position. The site benefits from reasonable accessibility to sustainable transport modes, including proximity to bus stops and Letchworth Garden City railway station, which supports opportunities for non-car travel. On this basis, the LHA considers that the development would not adversely affect the operation or safety of the local highway network.
- 4.3.10 The reconfiguration of the site formalises previously informal parking arrangements and removes open storage, which is supported in highway terms. While the level of car parking provision has reduced from the existing informal level, the introduction of a structured layout is likely to improve usability and safety within the site. The provision of 9 cycle parking spaces is welcomed and exceeds minimum policy expectations, supporting sustainable travel.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 4.3.11 This development is not subject to the statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan condition because it is exempt under the statutory exemptions as set out in paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

Environmental Implications

- 4.3.12 The Council's Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document (2024) seeks to ensure that new developments are future proofed against the challenge of climate change.

4.3.13 Section 14 of the NPPF sets out how the planning system should support the transition to a low carbon future. The principles set out in Section 14 are reflected in Policy D1 of the Local Plan, which sets out that development proposals should take all reasonable opportunities to reduce energy consumption and waste, retain existing vegetation and propose new appropriate planting, and future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle.

4.3.14 Based on the details submitted, the proposed development, is unlikely to have any significant implications for the local environment in terms of carbon emissions and therefore would be generally in compliance with Policy D1 of the Local Plan and Section 14 of the NPPF.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 The proposal would introduce additional use classes within an existing allocated employment area both of which would be acceptable in principle within this location and would not result in significant harm to the function of the employment area, the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, or the operation of the highway. I am therefore satisfied that the proposal is in accordance with Policies SP1, SP3, SP6, SP9, D1, ETC1, T1 and T2 of the Local Plan 2011-2031 and Sections 2, 6, 9, 12 and 14 of the NPPF 2025.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

4.5.1 N/A

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

4.6.1 N/A

5.0 **Recommendation**

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

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.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

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  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 9 June 2026	