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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: 25/01141/FP
HCC ref: NH/25419/2025
HCC received: 18 June 2025
Area manager: Manjinder Sehmi
Case officer: Senober Khan

Location

IRONGATE BARN HALLS GREEN HITCHIN SG4 7DR

Application type

Full Application

Proposal

Change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre for agriculture, cookery and related rural-based activities (Use Class F1). Single storey extension to barn following demolition of existing lean-to. Installation of solar panels to roof of converted barn and plant to the roof of the proposed extension including six cycle spaces.

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:

No development shall commence until a Car Parking and servicing Management Plan relating to measures to manage the car parking shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. It shall include (but not limited to) the following:

- Car Parking Management: Outline measures to ensure efficient use of the parking spaces, including monitoring and enforcement strategies.
- Refuse Collection: Detail the procedures for refuse collection (including swept path track drawings), ensuring it does not interfere with vehicle movement or cause congestion.
- Congestion/Overspill Prevention: Propose strategies to prevent congestion and parking overspill onto the public highway, such as designated loading/unloading zones and clear signage.

The Car Parking Management Plan shall be fully implemented before the development is brought into use agreed by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter retained for this purpose.

Reason: In the interests of highway operation and safety and to ensure sufficient available on-site car parking meets the needs of users of the proposed development and in the interests of encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport.

Before the commencement of development, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of the car parking layout in accordance with local and national guidance, such as the Manual for Streets (MfS) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Prior to the first occupation/use of the development hereby permitted the car parking layout shall be installed in accordance with the approved detailed plans and thereafter retained and maintained at all times at the position shown.

Reason: To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

Prior to the use of the development hereby permitted, unless agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, details of cycling parking secure and sheltered storage for 10 cycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, in consultation with the Highway Authority. The cycle parking storage 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, for the duration of the development at all times.

Reason: To ensure construction of a safe development and to promote sustainable development in accordance with Policies 5, 19 and 20 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

The Electric Vehicle Charging Point and associated infrastructure details forming part of the planning application submission and indicated on the approved plans shall be implemented and brought into operation prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved.

Reason: To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and to promote sustainable development in accordance with Policies 5, 19 and 20 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).

ADVISORY NOTE

HCC as Highway Authority recommends inclusion of the following Advisory Note (AN) to ensure that any works within the highway are carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Highway Act 1980.

AN1) 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 County Council website at:

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

AN2) Obstruction of highway: 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 County Council website at:

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

AN3) New or amended vehicle crossover access (section 278): Where works are required within the public highway to facilitate a new or amended vehicular access, the Highway Authority require the construction of such works to be undertaken to their satisfaction and specification, and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. If any of the works associated with the construction of the access affects or requires the removal and/or the relocation of any equipment, apparatus or structures (e.g. street name plates, bus stop signs or shelters, statutory authority equipment etc.) the applicant will be required to bear the cost of such removal or alteration. Before works commence the applicant will need to apply to the Highway Authority to obtain their permission, requirements and for the work to be carried out on the applicant's behalf. Further information is available via the County Council website at: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/highways-roads-and-pavements/changes-to-your-road/dropped-kerbs/dropped-kerbs.aspx> or by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN4) Debris and deposits on the highway: It is an offence under section 148 of the Highways Act 1980 to deposit compost, dung or other material for dressing land, or any rubbish on a made up carriageway, or any or other debris on a highway to the interruption of any highway user. 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 and use thereafter are in a condition such as not to emit dust or deposit mud, slurry or other debris on the highway. Further information is available by telephoning 0300 1234047.

AN5) Avoidance of surface water discharge onto the highway: The applicant is advised that the Highway Authority has powers under section 163 of the Highways Act 1980, to take appropriate steps where deemed necessary (serving notice to the occupier of premises adjoining a highway) to prevent water from the roof or other part of the premises falling upon persons using the highway, or to prevent so far as is reasonably practicable, surface water from the premises flowing on to, or over the footway of the highway.

Brief description in support of proposed development by the applicant:

The proposal is for the change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre for agriculture, cookery and related rural based activities (Use Class F1) including six cycle spaces.

Parking

The most relevant category that reflects the future attendance of Groundschool is F1, which includes two spaces and an additional space per 30 square metres of public floor space. The project also provides cycle standards, with one space allocated for every four members of staff, in addition to spaces on an individual basis. The project is designed to accommodate a minimum of 10 bicycle spaces. This proposal ensures that there is sufficient space for the school's typical usage based on two scenarios:

Max use scenario one: two full-capacity classes are operational simultaneously. The configuration of 2x12 students and 2x1 teachers results in a total of 26 spaces. Should additional staff members be present, the total number of car spaces is estimated to be 31.

Max use scenario two: A lecture/dining event is taking place. In this scenario, the Places of Assembly metric is employed, with the GIFA associated with the assembly (as previously outlined) being utilised.

This results in a total of 29 car spaces being available. In light of the aforementioned scenarios, a reduction to 25 places is proposed due to the following:

- > The site is located on a working farm, as well as Groundschool activities, so they may not be counted as full-time. Besides, there is provision elsewhere on site for staff to park in relation to agricultural activities.
- > Furthermore, Groundschool promotes sustainable principles. For all events on site, car sharing is encouraged and attendees are encouraged to reduce car demand.
- > Stevenage/Baldock stations are 10-15 minutes away by car, which is a 30-minute bike ride away, so bicycle parking is also provided.

If the cost of installation is less than 7% of the total cost of a major renovation, the project will include 1 space with an EV charger and 1/5th of the total remaining spaces to have a cable route, for future charger installation, so 1 EV charger and 4 additional cable routes.

The proposal does not affect the overall accessibility of the site and the property; it allows level access to the concrete and parking areas. In addition, the proposal includes the introduction of a one-way system to facilitate efficient entry and exit.

The storage strategy will include a large bin, which will be incorporated into a shed to the side of the barn, ensuring it remains out of sight from the street.

Highways comments:

The proposal involves the change of use of existing barn from storage and distribution (Use Class B8) to use as a community events and learning centre (Use Class F1) with associated car parking spaces (including a EVCP) and six cycle spaces.

The proposed 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.

The Highway Authority (HA) has identified some issues with the proposed car parking layout concerning the 9 marked out bays (including 2 larger bays assumed disabled) at the southern end of the building which is substandard. The main concern is that the aisle width is only about 3 meters (at its narrowest), whereas it should be at least 6 meters to allow vehicles to access the bays properly.

To address this, the applicant has two options:

- Review and alter the car parking layout: This could involve redesigning the layout to ensure the aisle width meets the required 6 meters.
- Propose a one-way internal system: This would involve changing the layout to an Echelon type, which should comply with local and national guidance, such as the Manual for Streets (MfS).

The applicant will also need to prepare a comprehensive Parking and Servicing Management Plan. This plan should include:

- Car Parking Management: Outline measures to ensure efficient use of the parking spaces, including monitoring and enforcement strategies.
- Refuse Collection: Detail the procedures for refuse collection, ensuring it does not interfere with vehicle movement or cause congestion.

- Congestion/Overspill Prevention: Propose strategies to prevent congestion and parking overspill onto the public highway, such as designated loading/unloading zones and clear signage.

There's a discrepancy in the cycle parking provisions. The plan mentions 10 cycle parking spaces near the main entrance, but only 2 are shown in the submitted plans. To address this, the applicant should:

- Update the Plans: Ensure the submitted plans accurately reflect the provision of 10 cycle parking spaces.
- Sheltered and Secured Parking: All cycle parking should be sheltered and secured to accommodate the long-stay parking. This could involve installing covered bike racks or a secure bike storage facility.

The HA believes that there is sufficient scope for the applicant to satisfactorily address the above requirements and therefore can be conditioned.

Recommendation:

The Highway Authority has considered that the proposal would not have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highways and consequently have no objections subject to the following conditions and highway informative's.

Signed

Senober Khan

12 July 2025