

Preston Parish Council

Wantsend Farm, Ley Green, Kings Walden, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 8LX

Tel: 07887 875442 Email: clerk@prestonpc.co.uk

Peter Bull
North Herts District Council
Gernon Road
Letchworth
SG6 3TF

Friday, 13 December 2024

24/01604/FP: Amendments to the planning application

Preston Parish Council continues to support this development, including the amendments and additions to the application.

The Parish Council supports the sustainability plans to ensure that the development has the necessary measures for the present time while at the same time preserving the character of this Grade 11* Listed Building.

The Parish Council notes the detail provided in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment Report, particularly that plans for car parking have been adjusted and that the energy centre is no longer near trees. The Parish Council notes too that trees will be protected during construction and that replacement of trees removed from the site exceeds NHDC criteria.

The Parish Council accepts that the Landscape and Visual appraisal indicates that the effects from the development are mainly beneficial.

The Parish Council supports the plans presented by Preston Cricket Club for a Passmore Club Range pavilion to replace the existing one.

The Parish Council would like to take this opportunity to comment on the response to the application by the Highways Authority, dated 31.10.24 on the NHDC planning portal for this application.

It is disappointing that no-one from the Highways Authority contacted the Parish Council to discuss some of the issues raised in its response, especially when contact details were provided by the case officer. Had they done so, they would perhaps have understood the Parish Council's lack of support for some of their recommendations, eliminating the need for this comment: ".....unfortunately no substantive reason has been provided by the PC to the HA for not wanting footways other than they don't support it."

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As far as possible the Parish Council would like to work with the Highways Authority to obtain the best possible outcome for both the development and the wider community.

Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan (PPNP) places great emphasis on the green spaces in the village and parish. Please see relevant references to it at the end of this letter.

The Parish Council supports additional paths within the development and appreciates the proposal for a new internal footpath which will link The Dower House to the pedestrian access at School Lane for the benefit of those residents.

The Parish Council supports the maintenance, improvement and retention of green infrastructure in the village and would prefer not to have any new footways. Those proposed by the Highways Authority are in the Conservation area, meet the criteria from the PPNP and have been looked after and nurtured by residents for many years to be attractive green verges within the village. The Parish Council notes that in 2005, Preston received first prize in Hertfordshire's Small Village of the Year organised by the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

Should additional footways be essential for health and safety reasons, the Parish Council would like serious consideration to be given to using alternative, environmental friendly materials which will be more appropriate in this rural community rather than tarmac.

The Parish Council notes that the Highways Authority recommends enhancing the current bus stops with Kassel kerbs and bus stop poles but would like to point out that these were agreed and funded by the Castlefield development, although this work has not yet been undertaken.

The Parish Council also supports an improved bus service for the wider community as well as new residents.

The Parish Council does not support the suggestion of a bus shelter on The Green. There are a limited number of passengers taking the bus to Luton with most travelling to Hitchin which is a shorter distance for access to further transport opportunities, as well as work. Students from Preston also travel by bus to the three secondary schools in Hitchin during term time. A bus shelter is available in that direction.

In addition, the Parish Council believes that a bus shelter on The Green will detract from this most prominent feature of the village, its most attractive green space, a central focus for the community, and which has, for example, featured as a filming location for several TV programmes (including 'Foyles war'). The Green has historically been recognised as 'the natural place of assembly...' (A History of Preston in Hertfordshire by Philip Wray)

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The Parish Council understands that the Highways Authority would like to include pedestrian crossing points on School Lane, Hitchin Road, and Church Lane but questions if these are viable propositions as they will reduce the road width on already narrow lanes.

The Parish Council strongly supports the Highways Authority's recommendation to enhance road safety by improving speed signage and warnings on the approaching roads, particularly Hitchin Road.

The Parish Council has previously requested that the 30mph sign on Hitchin Road should be moved back nearer the Preston sign so that traffic approaches the village at a lower speed but this has been repeatedly rejected by the Parish Council's contacts at Hertfordshire Highways.

Improved signage and warnings would also be beneficial on entry to the village from the Luton direction and via School Lane.

The Parish Council would like to suggest that improved signage could be a condition of planning consent for the benefit of those living at the development but also for the wider community.

The Parish Council would be willing to participate in any initiative to reduce the speed limit within the village to 20mph, as this is something it has been enquiring about for some considerable time with no positive response.

Preston Parish Council hopes that these comments will be taken into account when the application is considered.

Yours sincerely



Lisa Lathane
Clerk to Preston Parish Council

Neighbourhood Plan References

P. 23: Objective E4: To protect and improve 'greenspace' e.g. The Green and all verges, within and around the village, to protect and enhance the features of the local environment, its views and vistas and to maintain the current level of tranquillity, so as to maintain and enhance the appearance of this rural settlement.

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P. 46: 10.18 Not surprisingly, it is very important for residents of Preston to protect the green spaces..... that they have and love.

P. 46: 10.19 The rural setting is why people choose to live in Preston95% agree it is important to minimise the impact of development on.....verges

P.46: 10.22 Residents place great importance on the green infrastructure in and around the parish.

P. 49: Policy EH3: Open and Green Spaces:

New development should not have an unacceptable negative impact on the uses and functions of existing green infrastructure (i.e. all types of green space, large or small, public or private) within the village and wider parish.

Development that fails to exploit opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure will not be supported.

P.75:many of the roadside verges throughout the village are green spaces..... All of this forms a key part of the rural character of the lanes in the parish.