

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Tom Rea.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
24/02636/FP	Conversion of 4 stables to two one-bed flats. (Development already carried out).	Welwyn Equestrian Centre Pottersheath Road Pottersheath Hitchin Hertfordshire AL6 9SZ

Submitted Plan Nos

Location Plan Pre-existing and Proposed Floor Plans Pre-existing and Proposed Elevations

SECN12	Achieving well-designed places
SECN13	Protecting Green Belt Land
D1	Sustainable design
D3	Protecting living conditions
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SP6	Sustainable transport

1.0 **Relevant Planning Policy**

- 1.1 National Planning Policy Framework (2024)
Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
Section 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
Section 11: Making effective use of land
Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
Section 13: Protecting Green Belt land
- 1.2 North Herts Local Plan (2011 – 2031)
Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt
Policy D1: Sustainable Design
Policy D3: Protecting Living conditions

2.0 **Site History**

- 2.1 24/01321/PNG : Conversion of 4 stables to two one-bed flats. Withdrawn

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 Codicote Parish Council: Comment as follows:

'The Planning Committee have no substantive objections, we find it a little odd that the applicants did not: (a) just check with North-Herts that their proposed works did indeed come within the scope of Permitted Development before undertaking the works; and (b) provide any explanation in their retrospective application as to why they wanted to change the use of the stables to flats in the first place.'

3.2 Site Notice / Adjoining occupiers: No responses received.

3.3 NHDC Waste Services: Advise as follows:

Waste collection service provision is not outlined in this planning application. Without sufficient information I am not able to determine that the proposal can meet the requirements.

3.4 NHDC Environmental Health: No response

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

The application site comprises a single storey former stable block located within a working stable yard / equestrian centre. The Equestrian centre site is accessed from a track that leads to Pottersheath Road.

The site and the surrounding land is located within the Green Belt and is outside of any settlement boundary.

Immediately to the north west of the site is a recently completed residential development following the redevelopment of redundant agricultural buildings.

4.2 **Proposal**

Conversion of 4 stables to two one-bed flats. (Development already carried out).

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 **Principle of the use**

4.3.2 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate with some exceptions including at sub-paragraph h) :

iv. the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;

In this case the buildings that were subject of the conversion are former stables of timber frame construction with a brick plinth section at the ends and with a slate roof. It is

considered that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and therefore the development would not be considered inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

In terms of openness the converted buildings have been on site for some time and no extensions are proposed therefore there would be no harm to openness arising from the residential use.

It is understood that the accommodation units are not occupied by employees of the Equestrian Centre but by single gentleman unconnected with the equestrian business and renting the accommodation as their primary living accommodation from the owner of the yard. This raises some issues regarding living conditions as commented on in more detail below.

4.3.3 Design and appearance

- 4.3.4 The only external alterations appear to be the provision of entrance doors and two windows to each dwelling in lieu of the original stable doors. The yard in front of the cottages comprises a concrete hardstanding.

4.3.5 Living conditions of the occupiers

- 4.3.6 The two cottages have a gross internal floor area of approximately 34 sq metres (including bedroom, living room / kitchen area and shower room). This is below the minimum 37 sq metres required for a 1 bedroom, one person dwelling by the Department for Communities and Local Government publication 'Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard' (March 2015).
- 4.3.7 Each one bedroom unit has a front door with a small window in it. There is one window to the kitchen / living area with top hung opening. The shower room has an obscure glazed window with fanlight opening. The bedroom has no windows and there are no roof windows. There appears to be no mechanical ventilation on the external walls of the building.

The applicant has been asked to provide details of the Building Regulations approval for the conversion works but no such approval notices have been provided.

- 4.3.8 There is no allocated amenity space for the occupiers of the dwellings. The units are located within a busy equestrian business yard where horses and stabling staff and customers and associated vehicles move around during the day.
- 4.3.9 It is considered that the living conditions of the occupiers of the dwellings is of a poor standard as a result of the following:
- ☐ Noise and disturbance from the surrounding stable yard business
 - ☐ Lack of adequate internal living space
 - ☐ No external amenity space or external drying area
 - ☐ No dedicated refuse storage or collection facilities

- ☐ Poor levels of natural light and ventilation

4.3.10 Parking / access / refuse

4.3.11 The application forms and drawings confirm that there is no allocated parking for the two residential units. There is no allocated cycle parking. The application confirms that no provision has been made for waste storage and collection.

4.3.12 The application site is remote from any local services – the nearest local centre being at Oaklands almost 1 mile away. There is no bus service along Pottersheath Road which is narrow with no footpaths and for the most part unlit.

4.3.13 Climate change and BNG

4.3.14 No energy statement has been submitted however the development is unlikely to have any significant impact on local climate change.

4.3.15 As there is no habitat area affected the development is exempt from the need to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 The unauthorised development provides a poor standard of living accommodation for the existing and any future residents contrary to the requirements of Policy D3 of the North Herts Local Plan.

5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. By reason of the limited floorspace for each dwelling (below the nationally described space standard), poor levels of natural lighting, lack of facilities for waste storage and collection, lack of amenity space, allocated car parking area and / or cycle storage and general location within a working equestrian yard, the development gives rise to poor living conditions for the occupants of the dwellings contrary to the provisions of Policies D1 and D3 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been refused for this proposal for the clear reasons set out in this decision notice. The Council has not acted proactively through positive engagement with the applicant as in the Council's view the proposal is unacceptable in principle and the fundamental objections cannot be overcome through dialogue. Since no solutions can be found the Council has complied with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Anne McDonald	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Determining Officer Date: 5 June 2025	