



The countryside charity  
Hertfordshire

31a Church Street  
Welwyn  
HERTS AL6 9LW  
[www.cpreherts.org.uk](http://www.cpreherts.org.uk)  
[office@cpreherts.org.uk](mailto:office@cpreherts.org.uk)  
01438 717587

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Antoine Commenville  
Development Control  
Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council  
Campus East  
Welwyn Garden City  
Herts. AL10 6AE

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

15<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (by email)

Dear Mr. Commenville,

**Application No. 6/2019/3135/FULL**  
**Conversion of barn into 1 x dwelling**  
**At Danecroft Riding Stables 1A Vera Lane Digswell Welwyn AL6 0EW**

CPRE Hertfordshire object to this application for residential development in the Green Belt.

The documentation accompanying the application describes the most recent use as both agricultural and equine, though the history clearly confirms the use of the site as equine. Given the removal of the mobile home from the site and proposed conversion of the barn/stable block, it is not clear what the current use is. Consequently, in our view, this application is for change of use, though that is not stated in the documentation.

Conversion of the barn to residential will introduce a domestic use in the Green Belt. We accept that the conversion of the existing building is not inappropriate under NPPF 145(c) which allows for the alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

However, the appearance of the building would be materially changed. The existing building is clearly agricultural in appearance. It has one window and a door. The proposed conversion contains fourteen windows, (some full height to illuminate the proposed mezzanine floor within). The resulting appearance is of a two storey house, not a single storey barn. This is not, as the applicant claims "*a small change in design from the existing utilitarian farm building.*" Consequently the domestic character of the proposal would be at odds with the rural character of the area and as such the proposal would not accord with paragraph 2.3 of the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance (2005). Nor would it accord with policies D2 and RA10 of the current Development Plan in terms of respecting the character and context of the area and contributing to the conservation, maintenance and enhancement of the local landscape character.

CPRE is working nationally and locally for a beautiful and living countryside

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

President: Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO  
Chairman: Richard Bullen

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There is reference in the Planning Statement to the ability to achieve the proposal under recent amendments to Permitted Development Rights which, in the applicant's view, indicate the Government's 'direction of travel'. Class Q of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (as amended) is clear that it is not the aim of permitted development rights to allow the domestication of the countryside. To qualify for the permitted development rights afforded by Class Q, the building must be an Agricultural Building. The definition expressly excludes equine activities. Any conversion should utilise existing openings and minimise the number of new openings. This proposal does not meet these requirements.

As the Inspector who dismissed the previous appeal seeking residential development on this site said: *"The overall design and appearance of the dwelling would not be in keeping with the substantial nature of other dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the site. Its presence would detract from the appearance of the site and the rural character of the area."* That comment applies equally to this proposal.

Vera Lane is an unsurfaced Public Right of Way (Welwyn 034). There are no proposals in the application to upgrade it, though it would undoubtedly be impacted by the conversion to residential. It has no footways or lighting and, again as noted by the Inspector, is not suitable as a pedestrian route. The level of access to facilities by means other than the car is very limited, calling into question the sustainability of the location for residential purposes.

We urge the Council to reject this application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving