



The countryside charity
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Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

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

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

16th September 2020 (by email)

Dear Mr. Commenville,

Application No. 6/2020/2202/PN10

Prior approval for change of use from agricultural building to dwelling, with associated landscaping and parking at Holwell Court Farm, Holwell Court, Hatfield AL9 5RL

CPRE Hertfordshire object to this Application for Prior Approval.

We acknowledge that the application complies with the cumulative spatial restrictions and quantum of permitted development included in The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended in 2018. However, the work involved to realise the development may be beyond what could reasonably be described as conversion and the site is in an unsustainable location.

From the drawings provided both barns appear to be completely open along one of their long sides, in both instances around 30m. In order to make them functioning dwellings, these open elevations will have to be entirely infilled. This point was germane to the judgement in *Hibbitt v. SCLG* [EWHC 2853 (Admin)]. In that case the existing steel frame and roof of the barn was retained and the open sides infilled. The court held that this constituted substantial building work without which the agricultural building would not be capable of functioning as a dwelling and consequently went beyond what could reasonably be described as conversion. The Council will have to form a view on this point before determining the application.

The site is in an isolated position in the countryside, adjacent to the A414 dual carriageway. The nearest social, retail, health and education facilities and railway stations are in Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City and Hertford, 6.5 km, 5.5km and 5km distant respectively. These are all well beyond the maximum walking distance of 1.2 kilometres recommended in the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation publication 'Planning for Walking (CIHT, 2015)' and the Department for Transport's document 'Manual for Streets' which set out the requirements for pedestrians. The site will therefore be car dependent.

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

Registered Charity 1162419



The supporting letter accompanying the application points out that the nearest bus-stops are located at Holwell Roundabout, about 700m to the south. It is asserted that these can be accessed by 'a pedestrian footway' along the A414. However, it erroneously states that the service to Hatfield and Hertford is hourly. It is, in fact, every two hours. The service to Welwyn Garden City is a single bus on Tuesdays and Fridays. That is limited service.

We have walked this 'footway'. Travelling south from the site entrance to Holwell Roundabout there is a dirt track, less than a metre wide, from the site entrance almost 130m to a lay-by, then a short stretch of conventional footway which quickly reverts back to track and peters out to grass verge 75m before the roundabout. The bus stops are on the far side of the roundabout and cannot be accessed by any footways. There is no street lighting along the entire length. The route north to Cole Green Way begins as a conventional footway, but this also gradually peters out and becomes grass verge some 40 metres short of the underpass which forms the only pedestrian crossing of the A 414 and acts as the link to the cycle network. The A414 is the major east-west route across this part of Hertfordshire, a dual carriageway with no speed restrictions.

The proposed dwellings, one 5-bed and four 3-bed units, suggest that these are intended as family housing. These routes could not be safely used by the elderly, the disabled, parents with buggies or school children. This is contrary to paragraph 108(b) of the National Planning Policy Framework which requires that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

There appears to be a discrepancy in Section 6 of the Application form, which states that there are 6, not 5 proposed dwellings.

We urge the Council to reject this application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving