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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 13TH FEBRUARY, 2025

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

Please find attached supplementary papers relating to the above meeting, as follows:

Agenda No Item

6. **24/01371/FP HILLCREST AND LAND AT TUSSOCKS, THE CAUSEWAY, THERFIELD, SG8 9PP (Pages 3 - 8)**

REPORT OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONSERVATION MANAGER

Erection of seven dwellings (4 x 3-bed and 3 x 4-bed) including creation of vehicular access off The Causeway, footpath, carport, parking, landscaping, and associated works following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings (as amended by plans and information received 22nd October 2024 and 18th November 2024).

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Addendum and Update to Committee Report

Item 6 : 24/01371/FP – Hillcrest And Land At Tussocks The Causeway Therfield SG8 9PP

Erection of seven dwellings (4 x 3-bed and 3 x 4-bed) including creation of vehicular access off The Causeway, footpath, carport, parking, landscaping, and associated works following demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings (as amended by plans and information received 22nd October 2024 and 18th November 2024)

This addendum report concerns three matters:

Matter 1 – Further representations received from Therfield Parish Council (TPC) and the submission of an additional Stage 1 Road Safety Audit

On 28th January 2025 the Council received further comments from Therfield Parish Council following a meeting with the case officer, highway officer and members of the Parish Council on 22nd January 2025. The comments are as follows:

- ***The proposed solution is a result of flawed decision making since the initial consultation for the development.*** The initial requirement from highways to improve sight lines/relocating the site access point, resulted in the proposal for the footway. This in turn resulted in a requirement from highways to connect the footpath, and the need for the calming feature. An alternative approach to improve the sightlines would remove all the subsequent issues and interventions.
- ***The concerns regarding the validity of the Stage 1 Safety Audit as previously expressed by the Parish Council remain.*** We understand the staged nature of the safety audit process but it is vital that the process starts based upon accurate and comprehensive information, including a relevant site visit. So we request that the highways scheme drawing is updated to include the existing accesses on the west side of The Causeway and that a new Stage 1 audit site visit is carried out at a date and time which includes school drop off or pick up times, and/or Chapel on a Sunday morning. Following that, a revised Stage 1 report can be prepared which will form a sound basis for further audit stages, reducing the risk of those later stages identifying costly and time-consuming design changes.
- ***The proposed solution will have knock on impacts.*** The reduction of parking on the Causeway, when there was consensus that three properties in the development will also park on the road means that parking issues will be exacerbated elsewhere in the village. Which were dismissed in the call, but will increase the risks of accidents elsewhere in the village.
- ***As per the point above, we are still concerned that the site layout is inappropriate regarding plots 1-3 and their parking provision and should be revisited.***
- ***The house located adjacent to and to the south of the application site is known as School House but is privately owned and has no connection with the school. If the***

delivery of the highway scheme would require taking a strip of the existing front garden to facilitate construction of the proposed new footway, how would this be achieved? Are the highway boundary records of sufficient accuracy to ensure delivery of such a strip of land?

· Therfield is a dark skies village with no street lighting. The Traffic Signs Manual 2019 Chapter 3 (Regulatory Signs) states that: Many regulatory signs must be illuminated throughout the hours of darkness by internal or external lighting if they are sited within 50 m of a street lamp forming part of a system of street lighting where the speed limit is greater than 20 mph. So lighting of the priority signs shown on the drawing may or may not be illuminated. This is a design decision which should be addressed by the detailed design and checked by the Stage 2 Safety Audit.

· We do not believe that due consideration has been given to the size and manoeuvrability of modern farm vehicles. Therfield remains an agriculturally based village and two of our farm establishments have farm contracting businesses included. These tend to employ incredibly large tractors and trailer units which are currently eroding road edges while drivers avoid vehicles parked or traveling in the opposite carriageway. In addition, one farm is a straw wholesaler and regularly trailer lorries towing an additional trailer unit travel through the village. These farm vehicles will struggle to negotiate this priority scheme leading to an unanticipated danger on the road. A number of photographs have previously been submitted to attempt to show this problem.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues further, ideally as part of a site visit. We are committed to finding solutions that meet the needs of all parties.

The above comments were acknowledged by the case officer and passed to the applicants for a response. The applicants arranged a second Stage 1 Road Safety Audit in order to address the Parish Council's concern that the original Audit was carried out during the school holiday period. The second audit was undertaken on 4th February 2025 between 2.55pm and 3.40pm when school children were being collected from Therfield First School. In respect of the traffic impact on the school, the second Stage 1 Road Safety Audit reported as follows:

'3.4 As expected, a number of parents/carers arrived by car to collect children from the nearby Therfield First School during the site visit. Some parked outside the school on The Causeway, although the majority parked on Police Row or Pedlars Lane.

3.5 Whilst those currently parking outside the school will need to adapt their parking behaviour to suit the new arrangement as appropriate, it is confirmed that the Audit Team does not have any further road safety concerns to raise as a result of this additional site visit.'

A copy of the second RSA undertaken on 4th February is published on the Council's website.

In addition to the above, the applicant's transport consultants provide the following response to the continuing concerns of the Parish Council:

TPC comment 1

"The proposed solution is a result of flawed decision making since the initial consultation for the development. The initial requirement from highways to improve sight lines/relocating the site access point, resulted in the proposal for the footway. "

Response:

This is incorrect, the footway extension has been included as a result of HCC's responses to the previous planning application and their initial response in July 2024 to this application, requesting that the footway is extended to enhance pedestrian safety between the site and the school.

HCC's comment on the previous application with respect to footway provision was that: "This housing development is proposed in an area with 2 very short sections of substandard width footways ... expecting residents to walk along the carriageway of The Causeway is not acceptable for a new build development."

HCC's July 2024 comments stated: "Whilst not raised in the previous submission the applicant is also required to extend the southern footway to link with the school footway. Highway records confirm that there is highway land between the schoolhouse and the carriageway, therefore a footway fronting the school house connecting the site and the school footway can be provided thereby extending and enhancing the provision of pedestrian safety."

TPC comment 2

"The concerns regarding the validity of the Stage 1 Safety Audit as previously expressed by the Parish Council remain. We understand the staged nature of the safety audit process but it is vital that the process starts based upon accurate and comprehensive information, including a relevant site visit"

Response:

The Audit team has re-visited the site at school collection time on 4th February 2025 and provided an updated Audit report, confirming that their findings / recommendations remain unchanged. A copy of the updated Audit is attached.

TPC comment 3

'The proposed solution will have knock on impacts. The reduction of parking on the Causeway, when there was consensus that three properties in the development will also park on the road means that parking issues will be exacerbated elsewhere in the village.'

Response:

The scheme provides two parking spaces per dwelling, plus four visitor parking spaces, in accordance with North Hertfordshire's parking standards, thus there is no reason to anticipate additional on street parking as a result of the development. The proposed highway works would displace approximately two potential parking spaces from in front of School House. This is a negligible impact and has been accepted by HCC highways.

TPC comment 4

"We do not believe that due consideration has been given to the size and manoeuvrability of modern farm vehicles."

Response:

The carriageway width to be retained alongside the new footway build-out is 3.5m, with the width of a 16.5m articulated vehicle being 2.5m, thus there is more than adequate space for all road traffic to pass. Notably, the proposed footway measures 2m wide, the same as or slightly less than a parked car, therefore will have no greater impact upon passing traffic than a parked car would.

TPC comment 5

"The house located adjacent to and to the south of the application site is known as School House but is privately owned and has no connection with the school. If the delivery of the highway scheme would require taking a strip of the existing front garden to facilitate construction of the proposed new footway, how would this be achieved? Are the highway boundary records of sufficient accuracy to ensure delivery of such a strip of land?"

Response:

The works as currently drawn do not propose any amendments to the frontage of School House and only utilise existing road space where cars currently park and thus the scheme provides a robust, worst case analysis assuming that the highway boundary follows the edge of the road.

Therfield Parish Council have been re-consulted on the second Stage 1 RSA and any comments will be reported to the Committee meeting.

Hertfordshire County Council, as highway authority, have also been re-consulted on the second Stage 1 RSA. The Highway Authority note the results of the second Stage 1 RSA and confirms its reasons for requiring the road traffic measures .

Matter 2 – Clarification of the impact of the proposed development on the Grade II listed Elm House

Reference is made in the officer report within the agenda of the closest listed building to the site, the Grade II listed Elm House, a detached two storey dwelling set within a large plot some 50 metres due south-west of the site on the opposite side of The Causeway. With regard to the impact of the proposed development on the setting and significance of Elms House, the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment states:

‘...it is considered that this listed building is sufficiently distant from the application site, and divided from it by both mature planting and the presence of intervening houses, that there is no potential for its significance to be affected by the proposals considered here. The site, or indeed the adjacent public domain of The Causeway, affords no means to experience the listed building and no historic associations have been identified between the site and this building that might contribute to its significance as a designated asset. Although relatively close, the site is not considered to form a part of its setting and the proposals have no potential to affect its significance..’

Whilst the Council’s Conservation officer concurred with this opinion in his initial comments on the scheme, it should be noted that the erection of a four-bed dwelling under refs: 15/02914/1 and 18/02283/NMA together with the creation of a new vehicular access under ref: 18/02914/FP has altered the setting to Elm House. The adopted Therfield Conservation Area Character Statement refers to the *‘significant areas of planting around Elm House’* (paragraph 2.17) which reinforces the view that Elm House is well screened and this, together with its considerable setback from The Causeway and other built development between the house and the application site, means that the proposed development is likely to have a neutral impact on the setting and significance of the listed building. Having said that, the setting to Elm House as experienced on its north side is now slightly more open and Elm House can, to an extent, be experienced more fully from The Causeway. When commenting under ref: 15/02914/1, the Council’s Conservation Officer noted that *“the character of this part of the conservation area is relatively loose-knit and not solely residential”* citing Therfield Chapel and Therfield First School. The CO went on to say that *“Whereas views of the north facing front elevation of Elm House are limited, the rear (south facing) elevation to Elm House is much more visible from the triangular grassed area to the south. It could be said that the garden area to the south of Elm House is potentially more significant than that to the north-east”*.

Accordingly, as required by paragraph 208 of the Framework, an appropriate assessment has been made of the particular significance of the heritage asset at Elm House and how it may be affected by the proposed development with the conclusion being that there would be no conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposals.

Matter 3 – Correction and clarification to the published report

The agenda report states the applicant name as Mr T. Hanson. For clarification, the applicant is Hanson Services Ltd as stated on the application form.

Condition 20 – The plan referred to has been updated to SK01 Rev B.

12th February 2025