

Kirby Manor Farm
Northfield Road
Ashwell
SG7 5JQ

Development Control Services
North Herts District Council
FAO: Shaun Greaves / Henry Thomas

8th January 2026

Dear Mr Greaves and Mr Thomas,

**Re: Formal Objection to Full Planning Application for Barns Adjacent to Kirby Manor Farm,
Northfields Road, Ashwell SG7 5JQ
Application Reference: 25/02115/FP**

We are the owners and occupiers of Kirby Manor Farm, a Victorian farmhouse immediately adjoining the application site comprising the barns proposed for development. We write to object to the above full planning application on the following material planning grounds.

While we acknowledge that Class Q prior approval was previously granted for conversion, this objection addresses the current full planning application, which involves additional impacts and considerations beyond permitted development rights.

1. Overlooking and Loss of Privacy

The proposed development would result in direct overlooking into the bedrooms of our farmhouse, causing a significant and harmful loss of privacy and residential amenity. Photos 1-4 refer.

This is contrary to:

- Policy D3 (Protecting Living Conditions)
- Policy D1 (Sustainable Design)

The overlooking arises from the proximity of dwellings, private gardens, and communal parking areas, all of which were not fully assessed under the prior Class Q permission.

We request that the application be refused unless effective mitigation is provided to prevent overlooking and loss of privacy.

2. Noise and Disturbance

Currently, our property benefits from a quiet rural setting. The introduction of 8 new dwellings housing up to 40 residents, alongside 20 parking spaces, will cause a substantial increase in noise and disturbance including vehicle movements, engine noise, reversing alarms, everyday garden use and external gatherings.

This represents a material intensification of residential use, detrimental to existing amenity, and conflicts with Policy D3.

We request - prior to planning approval being granted:

- A comprehensive Noise Impact Assessment addressing all sources of noise.
- Consideration of cumulative noise impacts, beyond traffic noise alone.

3. Boundary Treatments and Residential Amenity

a. Boundary Wall Behind Our Farmhouse

The proposed retention of a 1.1m high boundary wall (excluding trellis) is completely inadequate and fails to provide sufficient mitigation against noise, overlooking, and loss of privacy.

In addition, the wall also includes two large sections of wood covering the original access points to the barns from the farmhouse so it is not a solid wall - Photo 5 refers.

There is also a 0.6m level difference between our drive and the proposed development site, effectively reducing screening height to approximately 0.5m above the development land.

There is an existing 2.8m high brick wall along the first section of this boundary, demonstrating the acceptability and appropriateness of such a height here. Photo 5 refers.

We request - prior to planning permission being granted - a planning condition requiring:

- That the 2.8m high solid brick wall be extended along the full boundary behind our farmhouse, constructed using local Arlesey White bricks to match the existing wall and local vernacular.

b. Boundary Wall alongside the remainder of our property between it and the wider development site

The proposed 2m wall is acceptable in principle but must:

- Be measured from the finished ground level on the development site to ensure adequate height.
- Be constructed from matching brick and style to ensure permanence and visual consistency from our perspective - i.e. Arlesey White bricks.
- Provide a solid, impermeable barrier effective at mitigating noise.

We request - if planning permission is granted - a planning condition requiring:

- Submission of a noise assessment demonstrating the wall's effectiveness.
- Construction of this boundary wall prior to first occupation, with maintenance obligations thereafter.

4. Light Pollution

The proposal includes parking for over 20 vehicles, which will generate headlight glare, security lighting, and motion sensor activation. These lighting impacts will affect our bedrooms, disrupt sleep, and erode the dark skies and rural character of the area.

This constitutes unacceptable harm to residential amenity and conflicts with policies protecting local character.

We request - prior to planning permission being granted - a requirement for:

- A detailed lighting assessment.
- Conditions restricting lighting height, direction, intensity, and specifying automatic shut-off times for all lighting aspects including communal areas and private homes/gardens.

5. Overdevelopment and Intensity of Use

The number of proposed units results in an over-intensive form of development that does not respect the site's scale, character, or spatial arrangement. The dominance of parking and turning areas further undermines the rural setting.

6. Highways, Access, and Parking

We fully support the objections raised by the Highways Authority (report dated 10 December 2025) and add the following concerns:

- The applicant's estimate of only 9 additional two-way journeys during peak hours significantly underestimates traffic generation given 8 family dwellings with 20 parking spaces.
- The narrow, unmaintained 4-mile lane is unsafe, lacking passing places and subject to hazards such as excessive mud, speeding vehicles, and agricultural machinery and it is not gritted.
- The proposed access adjacent to our rear gate/driveway creates potential conflict and safety risks. Photo 6 refers.

The previous Class Q application included the additional access use of a farm track that runs beyond the boundary of the south side of our property and continues down the east side boundary to the gardens of units 4-8. This was proposed to give residents access for gardening purposes.

If allowed, it would effectively introduce another access point to this proposed residential site in addition to its farming purposes with significant impacts on highway access as well as adding to levels of noise, disturbance, lack of privacy and security to our property. Photos 7 & 8 refer.

We request that this access route is disallowed.

7. Design and Layout Alternatives

The current layout prioritizes developer yield over residential amenity, failing to meet the requirements of Policy D1, which calls for developments that respond positively to local context and safeguard living conditions.

We urge the Council to require revisions including:

- Reorientation of windows away from our farmhouse.
- Reduction in the number of dwellings.
- Relocation of parking areas to reduce impact.

8. Impact on Character and Setting

Our farmhouse and adjoining barns form an historic agricultural setting. The proposed development would harm this character by introducing urban domestic features incompatible with the rural context, eroding the functional relationship between farmhouse and barns, and using materials inconsistent with the local vernacular (rendering painted brick red instead of existing cream/yellow Arlesley White brick with grey zinc roofing instead of the slate tile roofs of neighbouring dwellings).

This conflicts with Local Plan Policies SP1 and D3.

9. Structural and Deliverability Concerns

One of the barns adjoins our garage and utility room so is part of our habitable dwelling, with 1-2m of the proposed development falling within our property boundary.

The application lacks necessary details regarding:

- Structural separation and protection of shared walls and foundations.
- Construction methodology and access.
- Maintenance access.
- There is no assurance the works can proceed without risk of structural damage to our dwelling.

Additionally, the application omits critical information on foul and surface water drainage arrangements, raising concerns for property integrity.

We request that before planning permission is granted these omissions are fully and satisfactorily addressed.

We also request - - prior to planning permission being granted - conditions stipulated for during the construction process including:

- Restricted working hours
- Limits on noise and vibration levels
- Requirements for dust suppression, fencing, and site cleanliness

10. Water Supply Impact

Our farmhouse is supplied by a private water pipe running through our garden to the farmyard. The application fails to demonstrate that the new development can be supplied without compromising our water pressure or flow.

No hydraulic or capacity assessments have been provided, nor assurances that the supply will not be adversely affected.

We request - prior to planning permission being granted - that there is a requirement to provide:

- A separate mains water connection for the new dwellings or full upgrading and separation of supply to protect our property.
- Written confirmation that no works affecting water infrastructure on our land will occur without our consent.
- Furthermore, it would be useful to have a comment from Affinity Water as a consultee to confirm how the development would be supplied and any implications for the water supply to our farmhouse.

11. Oil Tank Relocation

The existing domestic oil tank serving our farmhouse is on the application site and protected by our Title Deed. The application fails to address this asset's protection, retention, or relocation.

We request - prior to planning permission being granted - a pre-commencement condition requiring:

- Approval of a detailed relocation scheme.
- Confirmation of uninterrupted fuel supply during construction.
- Implementation of the scheme before any development begins.

12. Construction and Vibration Risks

Our Victorian farmhouse, built circa 1850, likely has shallow foundations vulnerable to vibration and disturbance. No Construction Method Statement or ground stability assessment accompanies the application.

We request, prior to planning permission being granted:

- Refusal of the application or imposition of conditions requiring a detailed Construction Method Statement.
- Pre-commencement structural surveys and vibration monitoring.
- Restrictions on construction techniques near our property.
- Restrictions on the destruction and removal of existing concrete - which covers the whole of the site - and particularly in the vicinity of our farmhouse. Preferably, this would remain as concrete which we understand would be the case for Class Q.

Summary

In conclusion, the proposed development would cause significant and unacceptable harm to the residential amenity, character, and setting of our Victorian farmhouse. It fails to demonstrate deliverability and conflicts with multiple Local Plan policies including SP1, D1, and D3.

There are also a number of key issues to be resolved.

Based on the above, we request that planning permission is not granted until such time as they are fully and satisfactorily resolved.

We urge the Council to refuse this application until all concerns raised have been fully addressed.

We also request that the application be referred to Planning Committee, a meeting that we would wish to attend and speak at.

Yours sincerely,

Michael and Nicolette Holmes

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