

Popes Farm
Northfield Road
Ashwell
SG7 5JG

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

Dated: 9th January 2026

Dear Sir,

Re: Formal Objection to Full Planning Application
Application Reference: 25/02115/FP
Kirby Manor Farm, Northfield Road, Ashwell SG7 5JQ

We are Martin and Sarah Talks, the owners and occupiers of Popes Farm, located on Northfield Road close to Kirby Manor Farm. We write to formally object to the above full planning application.

This objection builds upon the concerns we raised in our letter dated 2 January 2025 in relation to the earlier application and should be read in that context. While we recognise that prior approval was previously granted under permitted development, this current full application introduces additional and intensified impacts that warrant renewed and careful consideration.

Highways, Access, and Highway Safety

The proposal outlines the creation of 8 additional households with associated parking. Given the current situation of only 4 households in the immediate vicinity, this proposal would greatly increase the daily traffic on Northfield Road, intensifying existing and well documented problems, as set out below.

- Northfield Road is a single track, approximately 4 mile rural lane connecting Ashwell to Eyeworth. It is impossible for two vehicles to pass one another along much of its length due to its narrowness, yet it lacks designated or maintained passing places or pull ins.
- The lane is frequently muddy and is not gritted during winter months. It contains several blind bends and a long straight section close to the application site where vehicles regularly travel at excessive speeds, often well in excess of 60mph. There have been several accidents involving cyclists and motorists in recent years.

- The road is regularly used by agricultural vehicles, particularly during harvest periods such as sugar beet harvesting. At these times, large lorries and tractors can block the road entirely and leave thick layers of mud, significantly increasing the risk of accidents.
- In addition to cars and agricultural vehicles, Northfield Road is heavily used by cyclists, runners, walkers, and pedestrians, making it a genuine multi use route with limited visibility and no footways.
- Surface water run off is poorly managed and maintenance of drainage ditches has been neglected. As a result, the road is prone to flooding, further reducing safety and accessibility.
- The introduction of eight new households will not only increase resident vehicle movements but will also result in a significant rise in delivery traffic, including couriers, food deliveries, and service vehicles. Such drivers are often unfamiliar with rural lanes and frequently drive inappropriately for the conditions, exacerbating safety risks for existing users of the road.

Taken together, the scale of traffic generation associated with this proposal is wholly unsuited to the nature and condition of Northfield Road and represents a serious highway safety concern.

Noise, Disturbance, and Cumulative Impact

As outlined previously, Northfield Road and its surrounding farmland currently benefit from a relatively quiet rural environment. The construction phase alone would introduce prolonged periods of noise, vibration, heavy vehicle movements, and potential access disruption.

Once occupied, the cumulative impact of up to eight households will fundamentally alter the character of the area. Everyday domestic noise, vehicle movements, external activity, and lighting will extend well beyond the site boundary and into surrounding farmland, to the detriment of residential amenity and the wider rural environment.

Impact on Wildlife and Ecology

The barns and surrounding land at Kirby Manor Farm form part of a long established and relatively undisturbed rural habitat. The area supports a wide range of protected and notable species including swallows, swifts, bats, owls, buzzards, badgers, foxes, and muntjac. There is a high likelihood that several of these species, particularly bats, swallows, and owls, use the existing barns for nesting, roosting, or shelter.

The application contains no ecological assessment proportionate to the scale and intensity of the proposed development. Increased noise, vibration, artificial lighting, and human activity will cause disturbance, displacement, and fragmentation of habitats.

In particular, artificial lighting from dwellings, parking areas, and security systems will disrupt nocturnal species, while construction and residential activity will disturb nesting

birds and established foraging routes. The loss of dark skies and quiet conditions will materially alter the ecological balance of the area.

At a minimum, the application should be refused or deferred until full bat, bird, and protected species surveys are undertaken at the correct seasonal times, and clear mitigation and compensation measures are secured, including integrated nesting and roosting features and a lighting strategy that protects wildlife corridors.

Rural Character

Beyond highways and ecology, the proposal represents an urbanising influence that is wholly out of keeping with the historic agricultural setting of the site. The intensity of use, concentration of parking, increased lighting, and domestic paraphernalia will erode the rural character that underpins both landscape value and biodiversity.

Conclusion

Taken together, the highway safety risks, lack of adequate ecological assessment, harm to wildlife, increased noise and light pollution, and cumulative impact on the rural environment represent substantial planning harm.

We respectfully request that North Hertfordshire District Council refuses this application, or defers determination until these issues have been fully and satisfactorily addressed.

Yours faithfully,

Martin Talks

Sarah Talks