

**WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL**  
**DELEGATED REPORT**

<b>APPLICATION No:</b>	<b>S6/2007/1796/FP</b>
------------------------	------------------------

**NOTATION:**

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE:**

The application site is located on the northern side of Northaw Road East approximately 300m to the south west of the settlement boundary of Cuffley.

The application building is one of a group of five former agricultural buildings, a number of which have had planning permission for industrial uses. At the time of the site visit only the use permitted with application S6/2005/0941/FP appeared to be in operation at unit D. The application building unit E is disused and is currently used as storage for farm equipment and other items associated with the site. The application building adjoins a similar building (unit C) but they are not internally connected.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:**

The application seeks planning permission for a change of use of Unit D from agricultural use to storage and distribution (Class B8). The application form states that the proposal is for the use of the building for the operation of a textiles company.

No external changes to the existing building are proposed and therefore the application has only included a location and site plan. The agent has stated that no operational development would take place but has submitted a supporting statement to explain the site and proposals.

**PLANNING HISTORY:**

S6/2004/1538	Refused - allowed on appeal	Variation of Condition 2 (S6/1998/04) to allow the building to be used for general office use within Use Class B1(a)	Unit B Wells Farm, Northaw Road East, Cuffley, Potters Bar
S6/1998/0005	Granted	Change of use of agricultural building to specialist blacksmith, and wrought iron work manufacture.	Unit D, Wells Farm, Northaw Road East, Cuffley, Potters Bar
S6/1998/0004	Granted	Change of use of ground floor of agricultural building to ancillary office accommodation in connection with joinery and blacksmith businesses	Unit B, Wells Farm, Northaw Road East, Cuffley, Potters Bar

S6/1993/0641	Granted	Change of use from agricultural building to specialist carpentry	Unit A, Wells Farm, Northaw Road East, Cuffley, Potters Bar
S6/2005/0941/FP	Refused – allowed on appeal	Change of use of former agricultural building to storage and distribution (Class B8)	Unit D, Wells Farm, Northaw Road East, Cuffley

## **SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:**

National Policy

PPS1: Delivering sustainable development

PPG2: Green Belts

PPG13: Transport

PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:

None.

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

GBSP1 – Definition of Green Belt

RA1 – Development in the Green Belt

RA17 – Re-use of rural buildings

EMP8 – Employment Sites Outside Employment Areas

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **NORTHAW & CUFFLEY PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Comments stated that the Parish Council are not conversant with employment zones and therefore they leave this application to Officers decision.

### **REPRESENTATIONS**

None. Period expired 24/12/07.

## **DISCUSSION:**

**The main issues are:**

- 1. The proposed developments impact upon the openness and character of the Green Belt**
- 2. Whether the site is appropriate for proposed class B8 and employment use**
- 3. Other Material Planning Considerations**

1. The application site has had two appeal decisions for the changes of use of existing buildings. The most recent appeal was of application S6/2005/0941/FP. The Inspector's decision notice addresses the principle of a change of use on the site to a B8 use. The policies of the current district plan are addressed within this appeal and it forms a material consideration of this application.

PPG2 gives some allowance for the reuse of buildings within the Green Belt. Within the Inspector's decision notice for the appeal of application S6/2005/0941/FP it is noted that Policies RA1 and RA17 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 do not rule out the reuse of building in the Green Belt for B8 purposes.

Although disused the building appears to be capable of being used with some minor repair work. There can be no objections to the proposal in terms of the ability to convert the building to the proposed use and because no external alterations are proposed, the appearance of the building would remain unchanged.

It is proposed to have two members of staff at the building, one full time and the other part time. The staff would create two car journeys in the morning and two car journeys in the afternoon. On top of staff movements there would be two commercial movements per day and one large delivery vehicle 4 times a year. The application forms indicate that the unit has a floor area of 160m<sup>2</sup> and the proposed B8 use would occupy 150m<sup>2</sup>, which would only equate to 10m<sup>2</sup> for an ancillary use or function. When considered with the existing activity at the site, the overall intensity of use of the site would not be substantially increased when compared to an agricultural use.

Much of the site is screened from public view from the roadside by a wall, hedge and fence. The existing buildings are set back and do not appear prominent within the surroundings. The proposed activities would also be partially screened by the existing boundaries. The proposed use would mostly be contained within the existing building and would not have an adverse impact upon the openness of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities.

The proposed change of use would be comparable to that within application S6/2005/0941/FP, which was allowed on appeal. The proposal would result in a fewer vehicular movements than the previous application and overall would not result in a significant intensification of the use of the site.

It must be noted that the site would have an increase level of activity and although the proposal maybe acceptable, an intensification of use or the cumulative impact of future proposals may not be appropriate with in the Green Belt.

To prevent the application building from implementing alterations which may have an impact upon the Green Belt, if permitted, it would be necessary to remove permitted development rights for industrial and warehouse developments.

2. When considered against Policy EMP8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the application site would form an existing employment site outside of one of the designate employment areas. The requirements of this policy are assessed below:

(i) The proposal would form a small scale B8 use. When considering the staff that would be employed on the site and the size of the unit, which is comparable to the other units, the proposal would be a similar scale to the existing activities on site.

(ii) The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties. The nearest property is the farm house to Wells Farm. This dwelling is sited a sufficient distance from the application building to ensure the occupants would not suffer an adverse impact.

(iii) The application site has sufficient parking and servicing space for the proposed and existing business activities. The proposed vehicular movements to and from the site would be low and there would not be an adverse impact upon the surrounding highway network.

The application site is on a bus network and relatively close to centre of Cuffley, which has a good provision of shops and services.

3. The site concerned is located off Northaw Road East, which is deemed a Secondary distributor Road with a 60mph speed limit in terms of Hertfordshire Roads Gazetteer. Wells Farm has three access points off Northaw Road East. The existing crossover and access off Northaw Road East will not be altered as a result of this application and is considered acceptable to service the site. The proposed vehicular movements would not have an adverse impact upon the safety and free flow of the adjacent highway network.

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review - Supplementary Planning Guidance - Parking Standards, requires the provision of 1 car space per 75m<sup>2</sup> Storage & Distribution space; and 1 car space per 30m<sup>2</sup> Office space. The B8 use would accommodate 150 m<sup>2</sup> of the building and therefore a total of 2 car parking spaces would be required on-site for the proposal. The property concerned has access to a shared parking area of approximately 17 car parking spaces, 4 of which are related to the property concerned. Therefore, the proposal more than meets the parking requirement for the proposed use. Ample space also exists on-site to allow vehicles make deliveries and to turn safely and sufficiently on-site thereby enabling vehicles to exit the site in a forward gear. Therefore the development meets this requirement.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The proposed change of use would not have an adverse impact upon the open character or visual amenities of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The application site is considered to be an appropriate employment site for the business, which has been proposed. The proposal therefore meets the relevant requirement of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

#### **RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS**

#### **CONDITIONS:**

1. C.2.1 – Standard time limit
2. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), no development set out in Classes A, B or C of Schedule 2 Part 8 of the Order shall be carried out without the prior written permission of the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure that the application site does not implement further development, which may harm the open character of the Metropolitan Green Belt. In compliance with Policies RA1 and RA17 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

#### **SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:**

#### **Reason for Grant of Full Planning Consent:**

The proposal has been considered against PPS1, PPG2, PPS7, PPG13 and development plan policies (i.e. Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 GBSP1, RA1, EMP8, RA17), in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which indicate that the proposal should be approved. Material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the Development Plan (see Officer's report which can be inspected at these offices).

**INFORMATIVES:**

None.

**DRAWING NUMBERS:**

Site Location Plan DRG No 07/49/FL/1 & DRG No 07/49/FL/2 both date stamped 26 November 2007.

**Signature of author..... Date.....**