

**5g 3/10/1200/FP – New function barn to provide entertainment space for weddings, charity fundraising events in association with Tewin Bury Farm Hotel at Tewin Bury Farm hotel, Hertford Road Tewin, AL6 0JB for Mr V Williams**

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**Date of Receipt:** 02.07.10

**Type:** Full – Minor

**Parish:** TEWIN

**Ward:** HERTFORD –RURAL SOUTH

**RECOMMENDATION**

That subject to no further material planning issues being raised within the responses to ongoing consultation, planning permission be **REFUSED** for the following reasons: -

1. Within MGB – EHLP (R021)
2. The proposed function barn, by reason of its scale and siting would intrude into the rural qualities of the surrounding area and impact on the openness of the Green Belt contrary to the ‘saved’ policies GBC1 and ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.
3. The proposed function barn by its scale and massing, and the sprawl of the associated car parking area, would be detrimental to the form and setting of the historic listed and curtilage listed group of buildings at Tewinbury Farm. The proposal would thereby be contrary to national planning policy within PPS5.

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**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract located within the Metropolitan Green Belt sited on the northern side of Hertford Road (B1000) in an area of open countryside. Land to the south of the site is a designated Wildlife Site and an SSSI between Hertford and Welwyn Garden City of 6.85 hectares comprising protected wetland/reed bed habitat for protected species managed as a nature reserve by the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust.
- 1.2 The main farm complex of the application site stretches from the original listed farmhouse and gardens to the east of the main entrance drive from Hertford Road, encompassing listed outbuildings, converted barns, stables and hay barns to provide facilities for weddings, meetings, conferencing and

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events etc. To the north of the complex, in one of the original listed farm buildings now known as Tewinbury Pie, is a restaurant open to the public.

- 1.3 The farm complex of barns and outbuildings around the hotel forms a cohesive historic group of buildings and intervening open spaces / car parks. All of the buildings are converted to alternative uses associated with the hotel site as a wedding venue and events/ conference facilities and storage.
- 1.4 The facilities at Tewinbury Farm provide 29 hotel bedrooms, a restaurant, 9 function rooms/conference buildings and an unauthorised marquee structure as an additional venue for weddings, conference, charitable events and music nights.
- 1.5 Located as the furthest element of building at the western end of the site is the unauthorised marquee measuring 30m x 35m with an internal floorspace of 875sqm. This is the subject of enforcement notice requiring its removal. It is constructed in plastic coated canvass over a metal frame made up of two separate bays joined together with walkways and hard surfaced areas.
- 1.6 There are also independent elements of air conditioning, heating fans and toilets which operate only in association with the use of the marquee. The building proposed here would replace the marquee structure.
- 1.7 Further to the west is a leveled shingle 300 space car park area of a substantial nature with post and rail fenced boundaries.
- 1.8 The proposal is to construct a large permanent brick and weatherboard function barn/ building 44m long and 14.5m at its widest point, with a height to ridge of 7.6m with an approximate floorspace of 450sqm.
- 1.9 The barn is proposed partially on the site of a small open straw barn which was to be relocated from the centre of the site, next to one of the listed barns in 1993 (under reference 3/93/1118/FP) to facilitate the construction of an additional car park, for guests attending events/facilities at the site.
- 1.10 The open straw barn (15m x 8m) to be relocated was not reconstructed on the site, the area being grassed field, some hard surfacing and circulating roads within the site until the marquees, with landscaping, hard surfacing paths and car parks were constructed,

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### **2.0 Site History**

2.1 The planning history of the site is extensive, the main relevant history is as follows:-

3/76/1306/FP Building/barn to rear of site. - Approved

3/78/1037/FP Erection of 100ft x 80ft cattle shed. - Approved

3/79/0583/FP Extension to agricultural building to form dairy and parlour. - Approved

3/80/1142/FP Agricultural workers dwelling. - Approved

3/83/0774/FP Construction of agricultural workers dwelling on land next to Westley Wood. - Approved

3/87/0165/FP Conversion of existing barn into 4 No. guest bedrooms. - Approved

3/89/0969/FP Change of use of agricultural building (Central barn) to form guest accommodation. - Approved

3/89/1116/LB Change of use of agricultural barn to form guest accommodation. - Approved

3/90/1739/FP Change of use of agricultural land to 18 hole golf course. - Withdrawn

3/90/1740/FP Change of use of agricultural land to 18 hole golf course. - Withdrawn

3/92/1364/FP Agricultural Building. - Approved

3/93/1118/FP Change of use of redundant barn (The Stables) to meetings and conferencing & relocation of straw barn to provide additional parking. - Approved

3/93/1119/LB Change of use of redundant barn (The Stables) to meetings and conferencing & relocation of straw barn to provide additional parking. - Approved

3/95/0202/CL use of building as farm shop for the sale of farm produce, pet foods and other goods Approved

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3/95/0271/FP Retention of existing use of building for farm office, farm shop and vegetable preparation. - Approved

3/96/1306/FP Alterations to farm shop. - Approved

3/97/1549/FP Change of use of existing loft space above shop for two bedrooms for letting. - Approved

3/99/1693/FP detached garage, amended access to Westley Lodge. - Approved

3/00/0978/FP Change of use of agricultural land to garden. - Approved

3/05/0591/LB Erection of antennae. - Approved

3/05/1766/FP Mast. - Approved

3/05/2383/FP Two storey extension to Westley Wood. - Approved

3/09/2003/CL Four umbrellas outside restaurant, Tewinbury Pie. - Refused

3/09/2004/CL Three umbrellas next to Stables. - Refused

3/09/2005/CL A gazebo in the Millstream garden. - Refused

3/10/0130/FP and 3/10/0131/LB Four umbrellas outside Tewinbury Pie restaurant, three umbrellas next to the Stables, a re-sited gazebo in the Millstream Gardens. - Approved

3/10/1407/FP Retention of marquees, gazebos, umbrellas and car park. - Withdrawn

### **3.0 Consultation Responses**

- 3.1 HCC Archaeology advises that the site at Tewin Bury Farm Hotel is in an Area of Archaeological Significance No 167 the buildings date from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and are Grade II Listed Buildings. The site is recorded in 1536 as *Tewynbury* the name implies manorial status and medieval pottery has been found on the site. This was observed when the car parks were constructed to the west of the main buildings, medieval pottery shards found indicating evidence of a medieval occupation. It is likely that the proposed development would have an impact on heritage assets of archaeology interest. A condition requiring archaeological monitoring and the analysis of the findings of the investigation is therefore recommended.

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- 3.2 Landscape comment that no landscaping proposals have been submitted where there are opportunities to enhance the surroundings with tree planting in the adjacent car parking areas. The integration of tree planting would transform the two dimensional footprint of the parking areas into a three dimensional design. Attach suitable condition to secure tree planting in mitigation.
- 3.3 Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to conditions that construction traffic and access arrangements are submitted to and approved by the highway authority.
- 3.4 HCC Countryside Access has no comments on the proposal.
- 3.5 Conservation Section: comments that Tewinbury dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the grade II listed farmhouse and some of the other outbuildings/barns were built. The farm expanded around a central yard and includes the 18<sup>th</sup> century listed grade II stables to the south, 18<sup>th</sup> century Tythe Barn with sluice to the north east as well as the 19<sup>th</sup> century listed Grade II cow sheds and granary to the north. Other historic buildings linked to the farmhouse dated to pre 1948 are curtilage listed.
- 3.6 The application for a permanent barn like structure on the site with associated hard surfacing has been designed to replace the temporary marquee on the site. I have taken into account the impact of the proposal on the significance of the farmstead as a complex of buildings orientated towards a regular courtyard with a detached farm house forming its east range. This regular plan type reflects the historic flow of processes within the farm and is closely related to farm size, status of constituent buildings as well as the terrain and land use which form the setting of the farm.
- 3.7 Accordingly the plan form and the setting are the principle values of this designated heritage asset which embody its significance (in line with PPS5).
- 3.8 The orientation and alignment of the new building will have a detrimental effect on the plan form of this farmstead. Admittedly the enlargement of the farmstead in the 1970's with large cattle shed, although contributing to the larger of the size of the farmstead, due to their orientation, do not have a serious detrimental impact on the character and curtilage of the farm.
- 3.9 In contrast the addition of the barn like building on the proposed scale and massing, orientated away from the focal point of the farmyard, and with associated large car park will result in creating a sprawling settlement and cause significant erosion of the legibility of the original plan form which was compact and regular.

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- 3.10 The proposed building due to its scale and massing will be too dominant, compete with historic buildings in the vicinity: upsetting the balance in the relationship and hierarchy of buildings in the farmstead. Its footprint would be much larger and the form much more dominant than the straw barn whose relocation to this site was approved under ref: 3/93/1119/LB and 3/93/1118/FP.
- 3.11 Tewinbury is characteristic of the East Herts area in being an isolated farmstead some distance from the nearest settlement and surrounded by fields. Construction of the proposed building and associated car park will considerably expand and breach the historic enclosure of the farmstead having a negative impact on its setting in disturbing historical patterns of the surrounding fields.
- 3.12 Owing to the existing woodland the new building will be screened from public views from Hertford Road, at the height of 7.6m it will be seen by ramblers walking along the river basin.
- 3.13 Having assessed the proposal against policies HE7.2, HE7.4, HE7.5 and HE9.2 of PPS5, it is the conclusion of the Conservation Officer that because of its massing and scale the new building will assert itself too dominantly against the historic buildings on the site and distort the balance of their relationship. Intervention in the surrounding landscape will affect the setting of the farm and alter the historic field pattern. From the conservation point of view no special circumstances have been quoted to out weigh this harm and the proposal is therefore recommended for refusal.
- 3.14 The Environment Agency advises that although the proposed development is within 20 m of a watercourse and in flood zone 2, concerns can be addressed by the use of the Flood Risk Standing Advice (FRSA).
- 3.15 Herts Biological Records Centre advises that the River Mimram should be protected and buffered from any impacts from the proposed development by a 3m minimum buffer zone. Due to the known presence of bats on the site bat boxes should be provided on the walls of the new buildings. There is also concern about the effect of light pollution associated with the proposal on the known wildlife on and around the site, the adjacent SSSI and the designated wildlife site, especially bats. Conditions are therefore recommended to address these concerns.
- 3.16 The Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust advise that a buffer zone of managed bankside vegetation is to be provided for nature conservation along the river by the applicant and conditions for the provision of the 'Buffer Zone', materials storage during construction, lighting and protection of the SSSI during construction area recommended.

#### **4.0 Parish Council Representations**

4.1 Tewin Parish Council support the proposal and comment that:

- The application has benefits to the Mimram Valley and hence to the Parish as a whole.
- Policy GBC14 makes reference to 'enhancing or conserving the key characteristic and distinctive features in the 'Landscape Character Assessment' the Mimram is regarded as the best chalk stream in East Anglia.
- Managing a river bank does not come for free and rejection of the application for a function venue has implications for the business which in turn will impact on the applicant's ability to manage the Mimram
- The current venue, is a source of local employment as referred to in policy EDE2
- The permanent structure should resolve problems regarding noise from the marquee, reported by neighbour.
- The proposal is considered to meet the criteria of policy GBC8 and GBC7.

#### **5.0 Other Representations**

5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 A letter of objection has been received by CPRE making the following points:

- The application at Tewinbury farm would add another 450sqm of function room facilities to a site given approval in 1984 for a few rooms to be used for 'hotel purposes to subsidise the farm working' which has expanded to a 39 bedroom hotel, 9 function rooms and a restaurant.
- Retrospective approval for the marquee was applied for contrary to policies PPS1 (Sustainable Development) PPG2 (Green Belts) and policies GBC1 and ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan and no 'very special circumstances' could be demonstrated and the application was withdrawn prior to determination.
- The current proposal is a permanent structure to replace the marquee; it does not meet the criteria of either national planning guidance or relevant local plan policies. The 'very special circumstances' stated are identical to the previous application and would presume that the Council having rejected the previous proposal would do so again.

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- Reference from the applicant to PPS7 suggests the Council should be “supportive of farm diversification schemes for business purposes that contribute to sustainable development objectives and help sustain agricultural enterprise” Given the growth of the Hotel as outlined, it has to be questioned whether the hotel is still ancillary to the farming operation or whether it is a business in its own right, to which the provisions of PPS7 would not apply.
- 5.3 A letter has been received from the NFU in support of the application commenting that the venue provides local employment in the rural community. All the development at the farm compliments the environment and the applicant has developed close ties with the community supporting local charities. The application will preserve the venue as a source of employment, the permanent nature of the building will reduce completely the noise associated with the current, temporary structure.
- 5.4 Letters have been received from Isabel Hospice and Macmillan Cancer Support in support of the fund raising activities of Tewin Bury Farm Hotel
- 5.5 A letter has been received from Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry in support of the application for a new function barn at Tewinbury Farm.
- 5.6 Seventeen letters in support of the application have been received from members of the public commenting that :
- Tewinbury is the single largest employer in the parish
  - With soundproofing there should be no noise problems with neighbours, removal of an old barn to provide a new one seems a natural next step
  - There are undoubtedly policy reasons for refusal but planners should use their powers to recommend acceptance.
  - The conversion of the buildings has been well done
  - The barn is designed to be sympathetic to its surroundings
  - There is a need for a facility of this size, the building is more in keeping than the marquee; the building will reduce noise and light and would be more efficient to heat
  - A sound proof barn would enable people to attend the entertainment functions without disturbance to neighbours.
  - The new building would provide employment for 20 people adding to the 140 who are currently employed on the site.
  - The building will enhance the site
  - The venue has helped us raise lots of money for charities
  - Lots of functions and events are carried out at the site for charities

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- The applicant has been involved in lots of needy causes over the years a sound proof barn is better than the marquee, having a larger place to hold larger charitable events, whilst generating more jobs.
- 5.7 A petition of 45 signatures from the staff at Tewinbury Farm Hotel has been presented in favour of the soundproof function barn
- 5.8 One letter objecting to the proposed new function barn at Tewinbury Farm has been received raising the following issues:
- The marquee has been a constant source of noise over several years.
  - The proposed new structure is intended for functions and charity events. However the Tythe barn, Stable and Mill Stream Suite has a total capacity for around 450 people on the hotel's web site.
  - Surely this is more than adequate for a rural business, I support rural business but the hotel site has been over-developed in recent years.
  - The erection of another function barn in the village is potentially damaging to the funding of the memorial hall, Pavilion and Public houses.
  - There is an increase in heavy goods vehicle using unsuitable roads.
  - The proposals do not represent a commitment to the environment that the website of the organisation states it has.
  - The proposal is detrimental to the character of the village is changing the nature of the area to the ill and should be opposed.

### **6.0 Policy**

6.1 The relevant Local Plan 'saved' policies in this application include the following:-

SD1	Making Development more Sustainable
GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
GBC8	Rural Diversification
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV2	Landscaping
ENV4	Access for Disabled people
ENV13	Development and SSSI's
ENV14	Local wildlife Sites
BH1	Archaeology and New Development
TR7	Car Parking Standards
LRC5	Countryside recreation
LRC9	Public rights of Way

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6.2 In addition to the above it is considered that PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), PPG2 (Green Belts), PPS5, (Planning and the Historic Environment), PPS7 (Sustainable Development in Rural Areas) and PPS9 (Biodiversity and Geological Conservation) are considerations within this application.

## **7.0 Considerations**

### **Principle of Development**

7.1 The site lies within the Green Belt wherein there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. In this case the proposal is for the replacement of the unauthorised marquee structures with a permanent purpose built function barn. The construction of the new function barn is not one of the limited categories defined as appropriate development in PPG2 and Local Plan policy GBC1.

7.2 Where development proposals amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt, 'very special circumstances' must be demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm.

### **Very Special Circumstances**

7.3 It is noted in the applicant's planning statement that the proposal has been put forward on the basis of the need for the function barn as it is essential to support the viability and profitability of the existing business. Further commenting that 'an agricultural style building to support the commercial interests of an existing rural enterprise should be considered appropriate within the Green Belt'. The provision of the proposed function barn would facilitate the significant number of charitable functions and events presently operated from the unauthorised marquees.

7.4 The planning statement listed the significant extent of the charitable and fund raising events and monies raised by the use of the marquees and the expectation that the proposed barn should function in the same capacity.

7.5 Although the whole Tewinbury Farm Hotel complex generates employment for approximately 145 staff there are many that have dual roles throughout the Tewinbury Hotel site. The applicant's statement shows that 67 members of staff would be affected by the removal of the marquees and possibly up to 10 members of staff would be lost if these proposals are not supported. In light of the proximity of Hertford and Welwyn Garden City and the employment opportunities in these nearby towns, whilst the projected loss of employment is unfortunate, it is considered to be modest in scale to the overall employment potential of the site and would not constitute 'very special circumstances' to justify the proposed building.

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- 7.6 There is also considerable reference within the applicant's statement to the vitality and viability of the site at Tewinbury Farm with reference to PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas. One of the objectives of this is to "raise the quality of life and environment in rural areas through the promotion of sustainable economic growth and diversification."
- 7.7 Tewinbury Farm was initially granted permission in 1984 for the provision of some rooms to provide a small country hotel. The site now bears very little resemblance to that initial development, with expansion across the Green Belt site, largely up to 2001. The historic core of 18<sup>th</sup> century barns, outbuildings and farmhouse have been converted to 9 separate functions rooms created as diversification development of the existing redundant agricultural barns on the site. There are also internal car parks to the west and east of the existing buildings and the development of a 29 bedroom hotel facility with an on site restaurant open to the public.
- 7.8 In this instance what is proposed are additional facilities above that which already function on the site as a successful and thriving business. Therefore the proposed function barn is not needed solely to sustain the economic well being or survival of the existing business at Tewinbury Barn.
- 7.9 One fundamental issue of the earlier development on the site, where conversion of buildings was approved was done so with regard to the provision of local plan policies GBC8: Rural Diversification, GBC9: Adaption and Re-use of Rural buildings and GBC10: Change of Use of an Agricultural Building.
- 7.10 The main objective of the policies were that in providing diversification within rural/ agricultural sites, the use or re-use / adaption of existing rural buildings or redundant agricultural buildings was paramount to sustaining alternative economic support for the holding or farm complex.
- 7.11 In terms of the function barn proposed, which is a new build, not a re-use or adaption of an existing original agricultural building, the considerations of policy GBC7 might be a material consideration. However this policy relates to the provision of a new agricultural building for agricultural use equitable to the functioning of a holding or active farm, which is not the case in this instance, where the proposed function barn has no reference to agricultural operations of an arable or grazing need.
- 7.12 The applicant's agent refers to the good works and community support of the applicant for charitable and fund raising events in Para 4.7 of the Planning Statement, itemising the monies raised for good causes over the years through events at the Tewinbury Farm Hotel complex including the use of the marquee. This is acknowledged as a worthy reflection of the

involvement and support for the local community the owner of the site has provided for the rural locality. While the Council applauds the commitment of the land owner to the rural economy and the support of charitable events, these matters do not constitute significant weight in terms of a material planning consideration as regard the need to demonstrate relevant 'very special circumstances to outweigh the inappropriateness or any other harm to the Green Belt'

### **Impact on character and setting**

- 7.13 The function barn, occupying approximately 450 sqm is to be sited on an area which is outside the main area of existing and historic farm buildings and would be an intrusive structure, as indicated by the Conservation Officer which competes in scale and form with the existing historic 18<sup>th</sup> century farmstead group. The proposal effectively duplicates the size and scale of the Tythe Barn sited along the Millstream gardens.
- 7.14 The barn by reason of its scale, height and siting introduces a large structure beyond the limits of the existing built environment on the site. In concert with the existing unauthorised extensive car parking area to the north, as shown on the amended application, with hard surfacing areas to the open aspect to the north and west of the proposed barn, it will fail to integrate closely with the established buildings, making little effort to preserve the openness or prevent harm to the Green Belt location.
- 7.15 The level of development on the site has dramatically changed over recent years, the urbanising elements of car parking; floodlighting and servicing facilities, fenced parking enclosures and engineering works detract from the rural appearance, character and setting of this Green Belt site.
- 7.16 The proposed amended plan showing the siting of the function barn (with associated car parking area) by reason of the materials, design, external appearance principally duplicates the existing weatherboard barn alongside the Millstream Gardens in terms of scale and extent. In terms of the aspect and visual amenity of the locality the proposed function barn would erode the relationship, forming a new area of development adversely impacting on the overall character and appearance of the site contrary to the provisions of policies GBC1 and ENV1.
- 7.17 The site of the proposed barn might be partially obscured from public views by the woodland planting along the river, within the nature reserve and SSSI, which previously precluded views of the marquee. But at a height of 7.6m to the ridge the proposed function barn would be seen by walkers along the river basin to south, views taken through the site and by the general public using the footpaths that traverse the site and surrounding

countryside. Most notably the barn and the associated parking area would appear as an intrusive urban environment, sprawling beyond the historic core out of context with its Green Belt and historic location.

### **Viability**

- 7.18 The applicant's statement refers in part to the need to retain the function provided in the marquees as this forms a substantial element of the Hotel Business at Tewinbury and its subsequent loss would have a significant effect on the viability of the remaining business on the site. Having considered the audited reports for the hotel site since 2006, when the marquees were first erected, the percentage of income generated from the marquee is not considered to be of such a level (approx 9 – 12% of turnover) as to materially affect the success or continued viability of the hotel and site.
- 7.19 The applicant's statement implies that the future of the whole of Tewinbury Farm enterprise depends on the continuation of the function barn facility, as a replacement for the unauthorised marquee. It is clear that from the reports this is not likely to be the case. Prior to the use of the marquees the farm was operating successfully as a popular venue for weddings conferencing, restaurant and hotel accommodation. As such it is considered that on the issue of viability there would be a loss of income but not such that without this development it would materially jeopardise the future of the other enterprises on the site.

### **Landscaping**

- 7.20 The proposed barn is sited at the far western aspect of the complex with the established landscaping of trees and hedgerows running along the edge of the river valley of the Mimram framed by the nature reserve and SSSI to the south west of the proposed barn. There is little landscaping retained in the locality of the proposed siting of the barn. Unsympathetic elements of paving wooden toilet blocks, heating and air conditioning units would be removed effectively leaving large hard surfaced areas and car parking as the surrounding character to the proposed barn. The amended plans submitted show the car park area to the north, previously excluded from the application for the function barn, included as part of the application enhanced with additional shrub planting.
- 7.21 The car park was predominantly grassed field prior to the insertion of the marquees with hedgerow boundaries that followed the original contours of the field boundaries defining the limits of the farm site. There are limited landscaping details provided with the submission to address any impact on

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the site from the proposed barn and car park or to enhance or preserve the Green Belt site, or mitigate the unsympathetic expanses of car parking.

- 7.22 The Landscape Officer comments that the site would benefit from the addition of a more comprehensive landscaping scheme to including mature tree planting around the site and within the car parking area, enhancing the setting of the site, to mitigate for the impact of the development. This could be achieved by the addition of a suitably worded condition.
- 7.23 There are also concerns from nature conservation consultees as to the urbanising impact of the function barn on wildlife in and around the site, specifically light pollution and the need to protect and provide buffer zones along the river to preserve and safeguard the wildlife in the nature reserve and SSSI.
- 7.24 The site lies within Landscape Character Area 43, Mimram Valleys Parkland characterised by 'a consistent parkland character that overlies any change in topography throughout this sinuous ribbon of flood plain pasture and woodland', with some arable fields on the gentle valley slopes. The strategy and guidelines for managing change are to conserve and strengthen, to respect the existing settlement pattern and form and adequately screen development from within the area. Landowners are to be encouraged to safeguard existing hedges, increase field boundaries, encouraging natural regeneration or the planting of native trees.
- 7.25 Once again in consideration of the landscape character and established field patterns of the locality a comprehensive landscaping scheme would address these details and could be secured by condition.

### **Parking**

- 7.26 There is an existing access to the site along a private drive from the B1000 which circulates through the site, linking to the car parking adjacent to the river to the east of the drive, serving overflow event parking (30 spaces) and visitor parking for the SSSI bird hide (28 spaces). There is further car parking to the north of the listed farmhouse with two car parks within the historic core of buildings to the west of the central drive serving adjacent function barns creating overall a total of 153 parking spaces serving the various activities and staff needs on the site.
- 7.27 The application for the function barn would provide a further 90 car parking spaces to the north of the function barn, thus proposing 243 parking spaces overall on the whole complex in concert with the function barn use.

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- 7.28 Highway have raised no objections to the proposed scheme, but have yet to comment on the amended scheme. They consider there is adequate car parking spaces provided already on hard-surfaced areas to accommodate a significant number of vehicles.
- 7.29 The function barn is a Sui Generis use but in character is similar to a conference and dining space for a hotel, a Class C1 use. This would in itself require the provision, under Class C1 of the East Herts Vehicle Parking Standards SPD, 97 car parking spaces. The applicant has provided 90 spaces. It is considered that the level car parking broadly meets the requirements and that a shortfall in provision would not be an issue in light of the varied an occasional use of some parking spaces as identified by the applicant.

### **Neighbour Amenity**

- 7.30 The nearest neighbours are located at a significant distance of 100m to 150m in most directions. Given this distance it is considered that no immediate amenity harm would arise as a result of this development. Previous noise issues on the site would be mitigated for by the development of the permanent building proposed rather than the previous temporary structure on the site.

### **8.0 Conclusion**

- 8.1 Overall the proposed function barn and retained area of car parking with limited landscaping is considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 8.2 Officers consider that the proposed function barn by reason of its scale, siting, massing, dominant and intrusive character and appearance, in concert with the urban nature of the car parking area, to cause unacceptable harm to the rural qualities of the surrounding area, the openness of the Green Belt and to detract from the historic setting of the original farmstead, contrary to policies GBC1, and ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan and national planning guidance PPS5. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated that clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and the impact on the openness and the character and appearance of the area.
- 8.3 The application is therefore recommended for refusal for the reason set out above.