

# Preston Parish Council

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Ben Glover  
North Herts District Council  
Gernon Road  
Letchworth  
SG6 3TF

Friday 4 February 2022

Dear Mr Glover

**Reference: 21/02632/FP**

***Erection of 10 detached dwellings (1 x 2-bed, 4 x 3-bed, 3 x 4-bed and 2 x 5-bed) including garages, private amenities and creation of vehicular access off Back Lane as amended by plans received on the 4th January 2022. Land Adjacent To Dungarvan, Back Lane, Preston, Hertfordshire SG4 7UJ***

## **Introduction**

Preston Parish Council has reviewed the additional documents and amended plans provided for this planning application. This has led to identification of key issues which must be addressed before planning consent is granted and, where necessary, conditions imposed. These issues are highlighted here, in the order of the covering letter dated 2 December 2021 and with some additional points which do not appear to have been considered so far.

## **Site Access**

The Parish Council has noted that Hertfordshire County Council Highways has agreed that the site is accessible for refuse vehicles by removing or reducing any overhanging branches below 5.2m within the swept path analysis area so as not to collide with a high sided vehicle. While this arrangement may be in accordance with Highway Authority regulations, there is no indication as to whether Highways has been made aware that all the trees which may require pruning are within the Preston Conservation Area and that there is an oak tree close to the entrance of the site which is protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

The Parish Council is aware that the District Council's Tree Strategy Officer is a Consultee for this application. It is imperative that his views are taken into account and appropriate conditions imposed before any planning consent is granted to ensure that all the trees within the site, along its boundary and on the opposite side of the road are protected and preserved. If necessary, the site access could be moved to avoid potential damage to the oak tree.

### **Drainage Strategy**

The Parish Council has reviewed the Drainage Strategy Technical Note provided with the amended plans. It is essential that, when received, the response by the Local Lead Flood Authority is taken into account and strongly worded conditions imposed, if planning consent is granted, in order to protect the residents of this site and the wider population from the risk of flooding at any time in the future.

The covering letter does not indicate who will be responsible for the maintenance of the SUDS drainage system. The Parish Council is still of the view that this should be made a condition of planning consent to ensure clarity on responsibility and liability should any issues arise on completion of the development.

### **Quantum of Development**

While acknowledging that the housing mix attempts to meet Policy HD4 of the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan (PPNP), the Parish Council would like to reiterate that there is no need for more large dwellings in Preston and again suggests that the 5 bed houses in this scheme should be removed and smaller homes provided in their place.

### **Local Distinctiveness / Conservation Area**

The Parish Council agrees that conditions must be imposed to ensure that the exact colour of bricks and other external materials used are appropriate to the Conservation Area and surrounding properties. The Parish Council is in agreement with the suggestion that the dwellings will not have chimneys in order to prevent heat loss.

### **Sustainability and Energy Efficiency**

The Parish Council believes that a condition should be imposed to investigate the provision of solar panels on the dwellings, within the constraints of the Conservation Area but that it should be more strongly worded than in condition 21 of the extant planning permission, 20/01564/FP.

The Parish Council is of the view that a feasibility study should be undertaken prior to the commencement of building so that solar panels can be included in the building specification. To begin a feasibility study prior to first occupation of the development is too late as implies the dwellings are already constructed and while it is possible to install solar panels after construction, to do so as part of that process would seem to be a logical step.

While some rain water harvesting is planned, the Parish Council is also of the view that not to use grey water for flushing toilets is short sighted. If grey water was used to flush toilets the demand on mains water would be further reduced, enhancing the water saving measures already in place.

Water is a scarce resource and North Hertfordshire has low annual rainfall which is likely to be exacerbated by climate change. Affinity Water has increased pumping from the River Mimram this winter, which has now dried up west of Whitwell. New housing potentially makes this problem worse. As well as saving water, this additional measure will be a step towards meeting North Hertfordshire's climate change target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030, only eight years from now.

### **Ecology and Natural Environment and impact on Hedgerows**

The advice of the Tree Strategy Officer must be sought prior to any work being undertaken on trees and hedgerows within the site, including the species of trees, to ensure that they are appropriate for a rural area in Hertfordshire.

The Parish Council acknowledges that a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain will only be required when the Environment Act is enacted in 2023 but is of the view that it would be an appropriate gesture of good will if the developer agreed to meet this target, if planning consent is granted. Completion of the development will be close to the 2023 deadline.

It is essential that an appropriately worded condition ensures that a 1.83 or 2.13 metre fence is erected between the development site and Preston Primary School prior to any work commencing on site. This condition should clearly indicate that the on-going maintenance of the fence is the developer's responsibility.

There is no indication in the covering letter as to who will maintain the trees, hedges and landscaped areas within the development site. A suitably worded condition must ensure that the management and maintenance of all the green areas on the site are to be the responsibility of the developer in perpetuity. The Parish Council has limited financial resources and it is unrealistic to assume that it would be able to maintain this extensive area.

### **Highways and Parking**

Although it quotes TRICS data for increased traffic as a result of the proposed development, the covering letter does not acknowledge the concerns of local residents and parents of pupils attending Preston Primary School about increased traffic. The TRICS data does nothing to alleviate concerns

The Parish Council again suggests that the developer should agree with the Head Teacher, the Governors and Hertfordshire County Council any further measures which might be appropriate to mitigate the effect of this development on safety for all road users.

The Parish Council notes that the developer has confirmed that the grasscrete area which is used for parking for the school will remain in situ. It is concerned that this may be damaged during the construction period and would like a condition imposed to ensure that any damage is made good prior to the developer leaving the site.

### **Additional Points**

#### **Lighting**

In its original submission, the Parish Council pointed out that Preston is essentially a dark skies site and wildlife rich environment with almost no streetlights and none in the vicinity of the proposed development and asked for a condition to be put on planning consent to ensure that this strategy is continued. It would also like no external lighting anywhere on the site to be included in such a condition.

The Parish Council would like this request to be seriously considered in the on-going considerations of this application, particularly as a similar request has already been agreed in application 21/02076/FP which was granted consent on 27 January 2022.

**Broadband and mobile coverage**

The Parish Council notes that no consideration appears to have been given to the issues it raised regarding broadband and mobile phone provision and that the comments in its original submission remain relevant and must be taken into account.

**Conclusion**

Preston Parish Council would like serious consideration to be given to the points raised here alongside those of its original submission to this application. Due consideration must also be given to the PPNP which is now part of the Statutory Development Plan for North Hertfordshire prior to planning consent being granted. It is vital that the correct decisions are made and appropriate conditions imposed to ensure that this site is developed in a way which is appropriate, proportionate and relevant for Preston and its Conservation Area so that it remains one of the most attractive and unspoilt villages in North Hertfordshire.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lisa Lathane', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Lisa Lathane**  
**Clerk to Preston Parish Council**