

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 15th SEPTEMBER 2025

Case No: 25/01248/FUL

Proposal: Change of use from dwelling (Use Class C3) & agricultural land to a wellness centre (Class E) and wedding and events venue (Sui Generis) with guest sleeping accommodation and parking.

Location: Hemingford Park, Common Lane, Hemingford Abbots

Applicant: Dr Phil Kaziewicz

Grid Ref: 527646 270899

Date of Registration: 09.07.2025

Parish: Hemingford Abbots

RECOMMENDATION - APPROVE

This application is referred to the Development Management Committee (DMC) as the Officer's recommendation is contrary to that of the Parish Council.

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 Hemingford Park Hall is a Grade II* Listed private residence situated within generous grounds to the south-west of Hemingford Abbots and within the Hemingfords Conservation Area (CA). Outside of the residential curtilage of Hemingford Park Hall, the parkland is in agricultural use. Within the residential curtilage, there is a pool/spa building and various other ancillary structures – some of which are already in use as short term visitor accommodation. There are other Grade II Listed Buildings within the grounds and some structures (given their relationship and construction date) are considered to be curtilage listed. The Lodge House at the Rideaway entrance is a Grade II listed building.
- 1.2 The Hall and associated contemporary buildings are attributed to the architect Decimus Burton and originally constructed in c1843 for the Reverend James Linton. The buildings, garden and Parkland, within which they are located are within the designated Hemingford Abbots Conservation area.
- 1.3 The Hall and Park are accessed from two points, the first off Common Lane in the village and the second at the Lodge House off the Rideaway on the south side of the Park beyond the outskirts of the village on its southern side.

- 1.4 In terms of other constraints, the site is considered to be within the Countryside. There are some trees subject to Preservation Orders to the north-eastern access to the site (from Common Lane) and, given the location within the CA, any trees within the site are afforded formal protection. The site is also within Flood Zone 1 and has a low risk of flooding as per the most recent Environmental Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data.
- 1.5 The application seeks planning permission for the Change of use from dwelling (Use Class C3) & agricultural land to a wellness centre (Class E) and wedding and events venue (Sui Generis) with guest sleeping accommodation and parking.
- 1.6 The Planning Statement sets out the following:

The proposed development at Hemingford Park entails a change of use to enable the estate to function as a wedding venue and wellness centre. This will create a viable and sustainable future for the estate by diversifying its use and enhancing public access and enjoyment of its heritage assets. In summary, the estate will operate as follows:

(a) Wedding Events: The venue will host weekend wedding events primarily between May and September and in December but they can take place all year round. Each event will typically span Friday to Sunday. Guests may arrive on Friday, the main event will take place on Saturday, and departure and cleaning will occur on Sunday.

(b) Holiday Accommodation and Wellness Centre: When not in use for weddings, the hall and cottages will be available for holiday lets. The wellness centre will be open to the public Monday through Thursday and on non-event weekends, offering individual or small group bookings for spa and wellness experiences.

(c) Operational Capacity and Employment: The operation will support year-round economic activity, employing 5 full-time staff and full-time equivalent of 2 to 3 part-time or contract staff. Local service providers such as traffic and noise marshals, caterers, florists will also be engaged, supporting local economic growth.

(d) Local Economic Benefits: As well as providing a sustainable economic future for the heritage assets contained on the site and generating jobs in the process, the business plan demonstrates significant economic benefits for local businesses; supporting worthwhile employment especially within small companies and sole traders. The business described in this application will increase trade at the only local pub in Hemingford Abbots and the only local shop in the whole of the Hemingfords (Hemingford Grey), helping to secure the future viability of both, and to pubs and tourist destinations slightly further afield in villages like Houghton.

(e) Energy and Sustainability: The event and wellness centre will operate without the use of fossil fuels, using air-source heat pumps and supplemented by an existing 50kW solar array. This

ensures a low-carbon operation in line with national and local climate objectives.

(f) *Community Benefits:* The venue will offer free or discounted access to local charities and residents on a limited basis, helping to foster community engagement and support.

Weddings and Events

Wedding receptions will take place in the pool house. The swimming pool has been designed and constructed to have a special cover to allow the main pool area to operate as either a private function space or a pool. The proposed mixed use will take place within buildings already constructed and no new buildings are required to facilitate the expanded commercial use thereby making efficient use of existing facilities. The applicant proposes the following scope to the wedding business:

(a) Maximum of 26 weddings per year held on Saturdays (although spanning Friday to Sunday).

(b) Maximum of 180 guests.

(c) Event guests to use the Rideaway and eastern track access only (shown green on the Vehicle Access Plan HP004–PB003(A).

(d) Event guests to be ‘managed’ in terms of their space usage by on-site marshals in accordance with HP004-PB004(A).

(e) Event guests to park on the hard standing outside the existing agricultural barn (future hotel) only (shown on the associated car parking layout plan).

(f) Operational Hours 0800 and closing at midnight.

(g) No external amplified music and indoor amplified music to stop at 2300.

(h) No guests to be allowed outside in front of the facility after 1900.

(i) No fireworks or Chinese lanterns.

The wedding ceremony will either take place within the pool house or on the eastern terrace of Hemingford Park Hall (shown pale orange on HP004–PB004(A). Any use of the eastern terrace and lawn (shown pale orange on HP004–PB004(A) would cease by 1900. Use of outdoor areas for weddings after 1900 would be limited to the walled garden (shown Purple on HP004–PB004(A).

Proposed Wellness Centre Use

The applicant proposes the following for the commercial use of the proposed wellness centre:

(a) Opening time 1000 and closing time 1800, 7 days per week.

(b) No more than 14 guests allowed to use the spa facility at any one time

(c) The same access and parking arrangements would apply to wellness centre guests as event guests.

(d) The spa would not operate independently on wedding days but would be available for use by up to 14 members of the wedding party at any one time.

Operational Requirements for all uses

The applicants are in a position to control the operational activities on the site and propose the following:-

(a) All guest vehicles will use the entrance from Rideaway for access and exit. There will be no guest access from Common Lane.

(b) All commercial service vehicles will use the entrance from Rideaway for access and exit. There will be no service vehicle access from Common Lane.

(c) On entry vehicles would then use the eastern access track leading to either the event facility or the parking area located around the existing agricultural barn (future hotel) to the north of the site.

(d) All guests would park in the area next to the agricultural building (future hotel) in the allocated parking area as per the submitted car parking plan.

(e) Access to the event facility by vehicle (shown orange) will be limited to drop-offs, deliveries, and emergency vehicles.

- 1.7 The original description of development was 'Change of use from dwelling (Use Class C3) & agricultural land to a wedding and events venue (Sui Generis) with guest sleeping accommodation and parking'. This was changed following discussions between officers and the agent to the current description. A full 21 day neighbour (over 100 letters sent to residents), parish, consultee, site notice and press advert was carried out on the revised description. Officers also granted an extension to the consultation period for both the Parish Council and neighbours. Officers are therefore satisfied that not only have the statutory duties been complied with but also the Parish Council and neighbours have had adequate time to consider the proposals.

- 1.8 This application has been accompanied by the following:

- Planning Statement
- Heritage Statement
- Transport Technical Note
- Noise Assessment
- Odour Assessment
- Economic Analysis
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Drawings

- 1.9 Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) is a material consideration. It sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable

development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

2.2 The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):

- delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
- building a strong, competitive economy;
- achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
- conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment

2.3 Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provide statutory duties to be applied when considering impacts on Listed Buildings (including their settings) and Conservation Areas. The Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website [National Guidance](#)

3. PLANNING POLICIES

3.1 Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)

- LP1: Amount of Development
- LP2: Strategy for Development
- LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
- LP5: Flood Risk
- LP6: Waste Water Management
- LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
- LP11: Design Context
- LP12: Design Implementation
- LP14: Amenity
- LP15: Surface Water
- LP16: Sustainable Travel
- LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- LP21: Town Centre Vitality and Viability
- LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
- LP25: Housing Mix
- LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
- LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

3.2 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Developer Contributions SPD 2011
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)

- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
- Hemingfords Conservation Area Character assessment (June 2008)

Local policies are viewable at <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk>

3.3 The National Design Guide (2021):

- C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
- I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
- I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
- B2 - Appropriate building types and forms
- M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
- N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
- H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
- H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
- H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities.

For full details visit the government website

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 0500222FUL - Erection of an agricultural building for livestock (APPROVED)
- 1400578FUL - Original floor levels re introduced on ground floor of main house. Demolition of shed at rear of the property. Construction of a glazed link to run between the kitchen of the main house to a newly constructed, submerged pool house with sliding glass roof. Pool house will consist of two storeys with swimming pool and associated spa facilities. Ceiling raised and internal posts removed in billiards room. Gardens landscaped. Demolition of existing pool house structure and two sheds (APPROVED)
- 1400579LBC - Original floor levels re introduced on ground floor of main house. Demolition of shed at rear of the property. Construction of a glazed link to run between the kitchen of the main house to a newly constructed, submerged pool house with sliding glass roof. Pool house will consist of two storeys with swimming pool and associated spa facilities. Ceiling raised and internal posts removed in billiards room. Gardens landscaped. Demolition of existing pool house structure and two sheds (APPROVED)
- 1408234COND - Condition information for 1400578FUL & 1400579LBC (C2 CONDITION REPLY)
- 1408293COND - Condition information for 1400578FUL & 1400579LBC (C2 CONDITION REPLY)

- 15/80183/COND - Condition information for 1400578FUL & 1400579LBC (DISPOSED)
- 18/02612/FUL (Extension of Existing Barn for Cattle and Hay Feed Store) (APPROVED)
- 21/01768/FUL - Change of use to allow for a mixed use as private residence (Class C3a), a wedding and corporate events venue (sui generis use) with ancillary guest accommodation and parking (APPEALED AGAINST NON-DETERMINATION, APPEAL WITHDRAWN)
- 22/02454/NMA - Non material amendment for 1400578FUL to vary the floor plans and elevations in respect of the pool house. (REFUSED)
- 22/02452/LBC - Construction of a two storey pool house and spa with basement parking (Retrospective) (WITHDRAWN)
- 23/01739/HHFUL & 23/01749/LBC - Retention of pool building, basement car park, lift and enclosure, external courtyards, pond and associated hard and soft landscaping (revised siting) phased alterations to pool building (reduction in height), removal of staircase, removal of glazed balustrade to pond and alterations to fenestration of main façade. (APPEALED AGAINST NON-DETERMINATION, APPEAL WITHDRAWN)
- 23/01770/LBC & 23/01764/FUL - Change of use of pool building and garden area to use for events and a commercial spa and change of use to agricultural track and hard standing for agricultural and commercial use associated with use of the pool house. (WITHDRAWN)
- 24/01218/P3MPA - Change of use of an agricultural building to hotel use (C1). (APPROVED)
- 24/02342/HHFUL & 24/02343/LBC - Retention of pool building, basement car park, lift and enclosure, external courtyards, pond and associated hard and soft landscaping (revised siting), phased alterations to pool building (reduction in height), removal of staircase, removal of glazed balustrade to pond and alterations to fenestration of main façade (APPROVED)
- 25/00767/HHFUL & 25/00775/LBC - Proposed replacement greenhouse (retrospective) (APPROVED)
- 25/01451/CLED - Certificate of existing lawful use for tracks. (CERTIFICATE GRANTED)

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Hemingford Abbots Parish Council – Object on the following grounds:

- No details of what other events may take place
- Traffic/highway safety – concern over the information submitted in light of resident's own traffic report.
- Inadequate parking proposed
- Noise and disturbance (people leaving at the end of the event). Concern over the information submitted.

- The track running in front of Hemingford Park Hall and the impact upon the heritage assets as well as the ridge and furrow
 - Impact upon heritage assets
- 5.2 Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority – No objection subject to conditions.
- 5.3 Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Health Officer – No objection subject to condition
- 5.4 Huntingdonshire District Council Conservation Officer – No comment.
- 5.5 Historic England – No comment.
- 5.6 Lead Local Flood Authority – No objection.
- 5.7 Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service – Requests a condition for the provision of fire hydrants
- 5.8 Ecology Officer – No objection subject to conditions.

(Full responses are available on the website).

6. REPRESENTATIONS

- 6.1 Letters of objection were received from 52 local residents/neighbouring properties during the course of the application. The concerns raised have been summarised below:
- The proposal would harm the historic setting through increased traffic, noise, lighting, and commercial activity
 - Impact of the track upon the ridge and furrow, setting of the Listed Building and Conservation Area
 - Weddings will be late spring to early autumn resulting in most events taking place within a few months of the year
 - Noise and disturbance (people leaving at the end of the event, music, amplified speech, and fireworks) to the residents of Hemingford Abbots, in particular Common Lane and Rideaway
 - Failure to provide robust acoustic assessment
 - Disturbance to the tranquil setting of the countryside, Conservation Area and village
 - Additional traffic and congestion
 - Failure to provide robust highways assessment
 - Inadequate parking for events
 - Potential light pollution from the events
 - Potential impact upon local biodiversity
 - Failure to complete biodiversity checklist and failure provide PEA
 - Risk of increase flooding

- Additional load in the already at capacity water and sewerage system
 - Lack of demand for this type of service
 - Approving this application will create a precedent for future expansion
 - economic benefits are overstated as guests chose vendors
 - Inadequate consultation by the Council
- 6.2 Letters of support were received from a total of 61 residents (comprising of local businesses, local residents/neighbouring properties and residents from nearby villages/towns etc). The support raised have been summarised below:
- Long term use of heritage assets
 - New commercial enterprise
 - Economic benefits for the local area in terms of employment and spending

7. ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to Development Plan policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy (national and local) and guidance outline how this should be done.
- 7.2 Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with applications for planning permission the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)), the application must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as “the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area”.
- 7.3 In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan (relevant to this application) consists of:
- Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
 - Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
- 7.4 The statutory term ‘material considerations’ has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: *Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor* [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan,

paragraph 2 confirms that the NPPF is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

7.5 The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:

- The Principle of Development
- Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets
- Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety, Access and parking provision
- Flood Risk and Surface Water
- Biodiversity
- Trees
- Developer Obligations
- Other matters

The Principle of Development

7.6 The application seeks planning permission for Change of use from dwelling (Use Class C3) & agricultural land to a wellness centre (Class E) and wedding and events venue (Sui Generis) with guest sleeping accommodation and parking.

7.7 As the site falls within the open countryside, a number of policies are considered to be relevant to the proposal.

7.8 Policy LP2 (Strategy for Development) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan) sets out the overarching development strategy for Huntingdonshire through the plan period. The main objectives are:

- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities;
- Direct substantial new development to two strategic expansion locations of sufficient scale to form successful, functioning new communities;
- Provide opportunities for communities to achieve local development aspirations for housing, employment, commercial or community related schemes;
- Support a thriving rural economy;
- Protect the character of existing settlements and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside;
- Conserve and enhance the historic environment; and
- Provide complementary green infrastructure enhancement and provision to balance recreational and biodiversity needs and to support climate change adaptation.

7.9 Policy LP10 (The Countryside) places significant restrictions on developments in such locations, referring to only “limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan”

as being acceptable in principle. Policy LP10 requires all development in the countryside to:

- (a) seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value:
 - (i) avoiding the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) where possible, and
 - (ii) avoiding Grade 1 agricultural land unless there are exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the loss of land;
- (b) recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
- (c) not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others.

Loss of a dwelling

- 7.10 The Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 does not contain any specific policies that prohibit proposals which result in the loss of a residential dwelling.
- 7.11 NPPF paragraph 61 states that the Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of homes, and paragraph 78 requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against our housing requirement.
- 7.12 A substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements was introduced on 12th December 2024 in the revised NPPF and associated NPPG (the standard method).
- 7.13 As Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 is now over 5 years old it is necessary to demonstrate a five year housing land supply (5YHLS) based on the housing requirement set using the standard method. NPPF paragraph 78 also requires provision of a buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As Huntingdonshire has successfully exceeded the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test a 5% buffer is required here. The 5 year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS falls short of 5 years' supply.
- 7.14 While the Local Plan does not contain specific policies that prohibit the loss of a dwelling, in light of the Council's current inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the loss of a residential dwelling is contrary to national policy objectives and must be weighed appropriately against the proposal in the overall planning balance (which will be at the end of this report).

Agricultural land

- 7.15 Land within the red line and surrounding the residential curtilage of Hemingford Park Hall is Grade 3 agricultural land. Taking into account this is a change of use application that does not propose any operational development on agricultural land within this application, , the layout and size of the agricultural land, the fact it is within the setting of grade II* building used and currently only used for the grazing of livestock, the change of use of this agricultural land is considered acceptable.

Provision of a wellness centre (Class E) and wedding and events venue (Sui Generis)

- 7.16 As the site is located within the countryside, local plan policies such as LP19 (Rural Economy) and LP23 (Tourism and Recreation) are relevant here.
- 7.17 The aim of Policy LP19 is to promote a vibrant rural economy within the district's extensive countryside to support businesses with a genuine need to be located in the countryside. Whilst the proposal does not meet any of the qualifying criteria for new business development, the Planning Statement sets out the argument that the proposal enhances the long-term viability of the Grade II* Listed Building, without causing unacceptable harm to the built or natural environment. This will be discussed in the below relevant section 'Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets' and will be weighed appropriately in the overall planning balance (which will be at the end of this report).
- 7.18 Policy LP23 states A proposal for a new or expanded tourism, sport or leisure use in the countryside will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:
- a. it is well-related to a defined settlement unless there are robust operational or sustainability reasons why it needs to be located elsewhere;
 - b. it does not cause harm to, and where appropriate, enhances the ecological, landscape and heritage significance of the proposed location;
 - c. the impact of the scale, character and location of the development on both its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape are minimised as far as possible;
 - d. adequate servicing can be provided, including water supply, electricity and for sewage and waste disposal; and
 - e. it will not have an adverse impact on any internationally or nationally designated wildlife site through increased visitor pressure.
- 7.19 Policy LP23 lends support for new leisure development in the countryside if a proposal demonstrates compliance with the above criteria. It is considered that the proposal does comply with the criteria set out in the policy.

- 7.20 Overall, the principle of development is considered acceptable. Other material planning considerations are discussed below.

Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

- 7.21 The application site relates to the Grade II* Listed Hemingford Park Hall which is also within the Hemingfords Conservation Area. The wider site contains some separate Grade II Listed outbuildings with additional curtilage listed structures.
- 7.22 Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 7.23 Para. 212 of the NPPF set out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'. Para. 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification...'
- 7.24 Local Plan policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.
- 7.25 Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in Policy the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).
- 7.26 Both Historic England and the Council's Conservation Team were consulted as part of the application and offer no comment on the application.
- 7.27 The proposed change of use does not involve any physical alteration or works to the Listed Buildings or any of the curtilage

Listed Buildings or structures as part of the proposed development.

- 7.28 If the change of use is granted, the applicant will need to demonstrate compliance with the necessary building regulations. This is separate from the planning process. However, if any potential alterations to the historic fabric of the Listed Buildings are required to ensure compliance with Building Regulations, a Listed Building Consent will need to be submitted. This will be assessed on its own merits and determined under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and associated heritage policies.
- 7.29 The Planning Statement sets out that the activities associated with the change of use would be confined to a discrete area within the estate, principally the main house and the modern spa and pool building, and that these activities are consistent with a private estate context and would not diminish the significance of the buildings or their immediate or wider settings.
- 7.30 Concerns have been raised by the Parish Council and neighbouring properties in relation to the access tracks, and in particular the track that is in situ in front of Hemingford Park Hall. A certificate has been granted under reference 25/01451/CLED which confirms the lawfulness of the tracks. The potential impact of the creation of the tracks on the setting of the Listed Building, the historic parkland/ridge and furrow or the Conservation Area is therefore not something that can be considered given the lawful status of the tracks.
- 7.31 Concerns have also been raised that the proposal would harm the historic setting through increased traffic, noise, lighting, and commercial activity. However, given that the change of use proposal will utilise these tracks as they will provide connectivity from the Rideaway access to the pool and spa building, the hotel approved under 24/01218/P3MPA and the proposed parking area, the use of the tracks as part of the proposal is within the remit of the consideration.
- 7.32 Taking into account the lawful status of the existing tracks, the restriction and control on not only the frequency but also the amount of events (which is discussed in more detail below), and the fact that the increased visitor activity is consistent with the nature of a historic country estate which will also allow access to the heritage assets to members of the public, it is considered that the proposed use of the existing tracks as well as the wider site in conjunction with the proposed use will not be harmful to the setting of the Listed Buildings or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or the countryside.
- 7.33 The proposal also includes holiday accommodation within the Hemingford Park Hall and the various cottages on the site

including the Lodge House. Given that this proposed use is not too dissimilar from the current residential use, it would preserve the significance of the heritage assets and their settings as well as complementing the proposed change of use for the wider site.

- 7.34 In regard to the proposed wellness Centre, the Planning Statement sets out that the wellness centre will be open to the public Monday through Thursday and on non-event weekends, offering individual or small group bookings for spa and wellness experiences. Wedding receptions will take place in the pool house. The swimming pool has been designed and constructed to have a special cover to allow the main pool area to operate as either a private function space or a pool. The proposed mixed use will take place within buildings already constructed and no new buildings are required to facilitate the expanded commercial use thereby making efficient use of existing facilities. The proposed use of the pool/spa building would therefore preserve the significance of the heritage assets and their settings.
- 7.35 The Planning Statement sets out that the proposals present a neutral to beneficial impact in heritage terms. This is consistent with the conclusions of the Heritage Statement submitted in support of the application (Jon Lowe Heritage Ltd, July 2025). Increased public access to the site via its commercial operation would better reveal the significance of the heritage assets, consistent with paragraph 210 (c) of the NPPF (2024). Moreover, the income generated would contribute directly to the future maintenance and conservation of the estate as a whole, providing a sustainable long-term use that aligns with both national policy and the objectives of Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan.
- 7.36 The benefits will be discussed at the end of the report within the planning balance section.
- 7.37 The proposal includes a larger area to be used for car parking beyond the parking area approved under 24/01218/P3MPA. This is on existing hard standing. Acoustic barriers in the form of 1.8-2m close boarded fences are proposed on the north-eastern and the north-western boundaries of the proposed car parking area in order to mitigate potential noise (which is discussed in more detail in the below residential amenity section). This is within the Conservation Area but is situated a distance away from the Grade II* Listed Building and separated by other built form. Given that the general siting and height of the acoustic barriers is known, full details of the acoustic barriers can also be secured by condition. It is considered the visual impact of the 1.8-2m acoustic barrier can be mitigated by soft landscaping which can also be secured by condition. Hard landscaping should also be conditioned. Subject to the conditions, the proposed acoustic barriers and car parking area would not result in harm to the significance of the identified heritage assets and settings.

- 7.38 The statutory duties under sections 66 and 72 of the Planning, Listed Buildings and Conservation Area Act (1990) require that considerable importance and weight be given to any heritage harm. However, overall, it is considered that the proposed change of use here will preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and the setting of the Listed Buildings. The proposal will not result in any harm to the significance of the identified heritage assets or to the countryside. The proposal therefore complies with Policies LP10, LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Hemingfords Conservation Area Character assessment (June 2008), the provisions of Section 12 of the NPPF (2024) and part C2 of the National Design Guide (2021).

Residential Amenity

- 7.39 Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.
- 7.40 Given that the proposal seeks permission for a change of use, the main consideration on residential amenity is noise and odour.
- 7.41 The nearest residential properties in order of closest are Home Farm to the north-west (immediate neighbour), The Old Pavillion to the east, properties on Common Lane to the north/north-east and properties on Rideaway to the east.
- 7.42 Officers also note the concern raised by neighbouring properties and the Paish Council about the general odour impact, the general potential noise impact of the events, especially the noise associated with the comings/goings through the use of the car parking area and the access tracks.
- 7.43 In terms of odour, an Odour Assessment has been submitted with the application. The Environmental Health Team have been consulted as part of the application and are the technical experts regarding odour.
- 7.44 The submitted Odour Assessment sets out that the activities considered include daytime preparation of hot meals for up to 120 guests, occasional outdoor cooking, and evening use of mobile food vans for informal catering. The nearest receptor, Home Farm, lies 65m away and is screened by a 3m-high wall. Other residential dwellings lie at distances of 205m or more. The assessment finds that the source odour potential is small to medium, with any odours likely to be pleasant or neutral. Local meteorological data and the limited number and duration of event days further reduce risk. To reinforce this conclusion, an Odour Management Plan has been prepared and includes appropriate control measures. These

include carbon filtration within the kitchen extraction system, directional controls for food vans, avoidance of food waste build-up, and regular cleaning and maintenance procedures. Mobile food providers will be sited away from receptors, and collections will follow events without delay. A complaints procedure is also in place to ensure prompt action in the event of any concerns. The assessment concludes that odour does not present a constraint to the development, and that the proposed use is acceptable in planning terms. The Environmental Health Team agree with this.

- 7.45 In terms of noise, the application is supported by a Planning Noise Impact Assessment. The Environmental Health Team have been consulted as part of the application and are the technical experts regarding noise.
- 7.46 The Noise Impact Assessment (NIA), entitled 'Hemingford Park Hall' reference RP02-21458-R0, dated 21st May 2025 notes that the proposal is for up to 26 events per year, with music finishing at 23:00. The NIA considers there may be an adverse impact whilst larger groups utilise the area to the front of the property, and that this may impact on the property to the southeast. The mitigation proposed is to limit any larger gatherings to prior to 20:00, however the plan for wedding and events indicates that larger groups would be moved along earlier than this. The duration, timings and management of this aspect could form part of a Noise Management Plan (NMP) which could be conditioned.
- 7.47 The Noise Impact Assessment was completed with the bifold doors open. The door to the ground floor bar area of the pool building will remain closed (with the exception of ingress and egress) whilst amplified music is playing and the use of the doors will form part of the NMP. The use of the external areas will again be covered by the NMP. The use of a sound limiter is a potential mitigation measure to control the music noise levels at source, however because one of the mitigation measures is to close the bifold doors, this would have implications on the level the sound limiter could be set at, so actual (and appropriate) noise monitoring could be more suitable. This would need to be logged and results made available to the LPA on request.
- 7.48 Members should note that the Planning Officer, the Environmental Health Officer and a Licensing colleague visited the site where a demonstration of music levels took place. Music was played at a high volume, with doors open, and officers were able to observe this from the boundary. However, since this was a one off demonstration, it should be noted this has not been given significant weighting in the Environmental Health assessment and the comments are not based on this alone.
- 7.49 Acoustic barriers in the form of 1.8-2m close boarded fences are also proposed on the north-eastern and the north-western

boundaries of the proposed car parking area in order to mitigate potential noise impact upon. The acoustic barrier on the north-eastern boundary of the car parking area was previously requested by the Parish Council and therefore offered by the applicant. This will help mitigate any potential impact upon the nearest properties on Common Lane to the north-east. The acoustic barrier on the north-western boundary of the car parking area was requested by Environmental Health and will help mitigate any potential impact upon Home Farm to the south-east which is approx. 75m away. The existing building which is the subject of the 24/01218/P3MPA approval will also help mitigate any potential impact.

- 7.50 It has also been agreed that the hard standing immediately west to the existing building which is the subject of the 24/01218/P3MPA approval shall not be used for any event parking. Environmental Health have considered whether a further acoustic barrier will be required on the south-east boundary of the car park, but this is not considered necessary.
- 7.51 The concerns raised by neighbouring properties and the Parish Council regarding the potential noise impact are understood and noted. However from the information available, Environmental Health consider noise from events may be above the Lowest Observed Adverse Effect Level (LOAEL), but will be below the Significant Observed Adverse Effect Level (SOAEL). Therefore, they consider that with robust conditions the impact can be mitigated and reduced to a minimum. The Environmental Health Team have therefore advised there are not grounds to make an objection on noise, subject to appropriate conditions being utilised. Likewise, the Environmental Health Team have advised there are no grounds to make an objection on odour, subject to appropriate conditions being utilised.
- 7.52 Paragraph 56 of the NPPF states: *Local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition.* Therefore, Officers must consider whether a proposal can be made acceptable through the imposition of appropriately worded planning conditions.
- 7.53 The Environmental Health Team have advised that: (1) the imposition of conditions regarding a Noise Management Plan (covering general management of the site and events including bifold doors and when they will be closed, Management of Waste, Management of people, Management of vehicles – speed etc, complaint procedure, Monitoring procedure, management of large groups to the front of the property, leaving procedure and timings, etc); and (2) a noise condition in line with the NIA, Odour Management Plan, limit number of events per calendar year, no

events on consecutive weekends, limit times of amplified music, no external amplification, delivery and collection times limited and no fireworks, will address any noise and odour issues.

- 7.54 It is therefore considered that subject to the imposition of the above conditions, the proposal would not result in an unacceptable impact on the neighbouring properties' amenities and therefore the proposal would be in accordance with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Highway Safety, access and Parking Provision

- 7.55 Local Plan Policy LP16 sets out that a proposal will be supported where it's likely transport impacts have been assessed and safe physical access from the public highway can be achieved. Local Plan LP17 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.
- 7.56 The application is supported by a Transport Technical Note (Paul Basham Associates, May 2025) that builds upon the access and trip generation assessments which were assessed and accepted by the Highway Authority under prior approval ref. 24/01218/P3MPA (conversion of an agricultural building to a hotel). That approval confirmed the suitability of the Rideaway access. Those access arrangements remain unchanged as part of this proposal. To be clear, the proposal does not include use of Common Lane access by the main contractors or guests.
- 7.57 The Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority have been consulted as part of the application and are the technical experts regarding transport and highway safety.
- 7.58 Officers also note the concern raised by neighbouring properties and the Paish Council about the potential transport impact of the proposal, highway safety concerns about the access onto Rideaway and the inconsistencies within and between the submitted documents.
- 7.59 The Planning Statement and associated document sets out the following:

'All guest and commercial vehicles associated with the wedding and events venue, wellness centre, and overnight accommodation will be routed via the Rideaway entrance. The Rideaway access measures over 5m in width for a distance of 8m from the public highway and benefits from gates set back 31m, preventing any queuing on the carriageway. Visibility splays of 2.4m x 120m are shown to be achievable in both directions, in line with national

guidance and exceeding the requirements based on actual recorded 85th percentile speeds of 33.3mph. The access can safely accommodate vehicles entering and exiting simultaneously, and tracking diagrams confirm that it can be used by a 7.5t box van alongside a standard car, as well as by a fire appliance. There are no proposals for HGV access.

Trip generation is modest and seasonal. The spa facility, operating throughout the week with a maximum of 14 guests at any one time, is forecast to generate no more than 28 daily two-way trips. Weddings are confined to Saturdays and are expected to generate between 60 and 80 car movements, supplemented by taxis and minibuses. Larger events may charter shuttle buses. These volumes remain within levels previously accepted by the Highway Authority and are comparable to those associated with a small residential development of 10 dwellings. Furthermore, wedding-related traffic occurs outside of weekday peak hours and will not impact the strategic highway network.

Parking provision across the site exceeds 50 formal spaces with ample overspill areas available on existing hardstanding. For a 180-guest event, the majority of guests are expected to arrive via shared transport, with 30 to 40 private vehicles anticipated on site at peak.'

7.60 The Highway Authority provided an initial response and then a further response in light of comments received from neighbouring properties and the Parish Council. The Highway Authority has confirmed that whilst there are inconsistencies within and between documents, the Highway Authority has assessed the highway impact based on the information provided and also factoring in additional vehicle trips for staff, deliveries and servicing, and the occasional larger vehicle.

7.61 The Highway Authority has advised:

- The previous application confirmed that the access is 5m wide for 8m from the carriageway edge which is acceptable.
- Rideaway is a 'C' Class road so acceptable for the additional vehicle movements.
- The additional traffic flow will be insignificant with the exception of on a Saturday when, although it will be greater, it will be tidal with minimal two way movements at the access and will not be at peak times.
- The highway element of the access is adequate for a competent coach driver to use and any issue with over-running or damage will be within the site so a consideration for the applicant, not the LHA.
- Should a large box-type van etc be exiting the access whilst a car is approaching, or vice versa, there is adequate visibility onto the access such that the vehicle will not start to turn into the access and then have to reverse back onto the

carriageway. Also, we do not consider it un-safe for a vehicle to wait in the carriageway in this location as there is adequate forward visibility.

- Although the visibility splay to the south is detailed a 2.4m x 120 which is commensurate with a 40mph speed limit, the access is located only approximately 25m north of the start of the speed limit. However, our indicative highway records indicate that a visibility splay of 2.4m x 215m, commensurate with the National Speed Limit, appears to be achievable.

7.62 The Highway Authority has concluded that there would not be an unacceptable impact on highway safety and there is no reason to refuse the application or to request improvements to the access. A condition is recommended to ensure compliance with the submitted Technical note to ensure that delivery/servicing vehicles, wedding guests, and wellness centre users do not access the development via Common Lane. Officers consider that it is appropriate to exclude staff arriving by foot or cycle from this as access to the site from Common Lane would provides a better option for those residing in the village.

7.63 In regard to the amount of parking proposed, officers note the argument put forward by the applicant that 50 formal spaces (with overspill areas available) would be appropriate given that the majority of guests are expected to arrive via shared transport, with 30 to 40 private vehicles anticipated on site at peak. This approach is agreed.

7.64 As such, subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policies LP16 and LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036. The proposals do not conflict with Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Flood Risk and Surface Water

7.65 The site is at the lowest risk of flooding according to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 and Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning (Flood Zone 1) and the proposal is for minor development. A small area of Flood Zone 2 exists at the far eastern edge of the wider landholding but does not affect any operational part of the site. Accordingly the sequential and exceptions tests for flooding not engaged and the submission of a flood risk assessment is not considered necessary in this instance in accordance with the NPPF and NPPG.

7.66 The proposed development involves no new buildings and no changes to ground levels or drainage infrastructure. All access roads, parking areas, and buildings are already in place, and no external alterations are proposed. The site is not connected to the mains sewage/drainage network and therefore the proposed

change of use will have no effect on the public system. The Lead Local Flood Authority has raised no objection to the proposal. As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Biodiversity

- 7.67 Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment in a number of ways. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.
- 7.68 Concerns have been raised by neighbouring parties that the application has failed to complete the biodiversity checklist and has subsequently failed provide a Preliminary Ecological Assessment to assess the impact of the development on surrounding wildlife.
- 7.69 Given that the proposal did not include the creation of any new floorspace, it was a matter of planning judgement for officers at validation, who considered that the biodiversity checklist was not required. Nor was a PEA required in order to validate the application.
- 7.70 The Ecology Officer has been consulted as part of the application. The application seeks permission for a change of use only, making use of the existing access, tracks, and buildings. The site currently accommodates both residential use (including short-term visitor accommodation) and agricultural activities. The proposed change will result in an intensification of use, particularly in terms of visitor numbers, traffic, and associated noise. However, this will be limited to a maximum of 26 events per year, with activities concentrated around the main buildings. The Ecology Officer notes that the Environmental Health Team have recommended conditions to ensure noise is appropriately managed. In addition to those conditions, the Ecology Officer recommends a condition of no lighting without prior consent and no overnight stays outside of the built form. The Ecology Officer has advised that based on the information submitted, they raise no objections to the application. Officers accept the advice and these conditions are therefore recommended.
- 7.71 It is therefore considered that sufficient information has been submitted with the application to form an assessment on the

impact of wildlife, and that the imposition of conditions will address any potential impact upon wildlife, especially in terms of noise and disturbance.

- 7.72 The proposed development involves no new buildings and no changes to ground levels or drainage infrastructure. All access roads, parking areas, and buildings are already in place, and no external alterations are proposed. The application is therefore not required to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. Given the information submitted with the application, it is considered the proposal would not result in an adverse impact upon local wildlife. It is also noted that no lighting is proposed as part of the application but a condition ensuring no additional lighting is installed without prior consent is recommended. Overall, the proposal accords with Local Plan Policy LP30 and Section 15 of the NPPF (2024).

Trees

- 7.73 Policy LP31 of the Local Plan states a proposal will be required to demonstrate that the potential for adverse impacts on trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows has been investigated. A proposal will only be supported where it seeks to conserve and enhance any existing tree, woodland, hedge or hedgerow of value that would be affected by the proposed development. Where loss, threat or damage cannot be fully addressed through minimisation and/ or mitigation measures the proposal may be supported if alternative measures such as reinstatement of features, additional landscaping, habitat creation or tree planting will compensate for the harm and can be implemented and established before development starts.
- 7.74 There are some trees subject to Preservation Orders to the north-eastern access to the site (from Common Lane) and, given the location within the CA, any trees within the site are afforded formal protection. The proposal does not include any works that will affect the trees within the site. The proposal therefore complies with Policy LP31 of the Local Plan.

Development Obligations

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

- 7.75 The development may be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

Other Matters

Fire Hydrants

- 7.76 The comments from the Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue Service requesting a condition for the provision of fire hydrants are noted. Officers are seeking further justification and information from the Fire Service which will be reported on the late representations report. Notwithstanding this, it is considered that the principle of a fire hydrant on the site is acceptable in terms of heritage and therefore can be conditioned. This is because the red line for the application is big enough to ensure the fire hydrant is capable of being sited in a less sensitive area within the site. It is also noted that a fire hydrant is low-level feature, and therefore could also be potentially mitigated in terms of visual impact.

Neighbour concern: Approving this application will create a precedent for future expansion

- 7.77 Officers and members can only assess what is in front of them. Any future application will be assessed on its own merits and against relevant local and national policy.

Conclusion

- 7.78 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 7.79 The proposed change of use does not involve any physical alteration or works to the Listed Buildings or any of the curtilage Listed Buildings or structures as part of the proposed development. It is considered that the proposed development will preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and will preserve the setting of the Listed Buildings. There will be no harm to the significance of any heritage assets.
- 7.80 It is also considered that the proposal is acceptable in regard to the transport, highways (including highway safety), odour, noise, flood risk, biodiversity and trees.
- 7.81 While the Local Plan does not contain specific policies that prohibit the loss of a dwelling, in light of the Council's current inability to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, the loss of a residential dwelling is a material consideration and must be weighed appropriately against the proposal in the overall planning balance.
- 7.82 Hemingford Park Hall is a country manor house situated in the countryside and is not reflective of the average housing stock. Notwithstanding this, the loss of a dwelling in light of the Council not being able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply weighs negatively in the balance but carries only limited weight given the loss is of one dwelling which is not average housing stock.

- 7.83 Against that, there are several benefits to consider. Regarding the heritage benefits, the site is currently within private ownership (residential and agricultural) and the proposed change of use would increase public access to site due to its commercial operation which would better reveal the significance of the heritage assets for the enjoyment of the public. In comparison to the existing residential use, the income generated from the proposed use would contribute directly to the future maintenance and conservation of the estate, providing a sustainable long-term use. Significant positive weight is afforded to both heritage benefits.
- 7.84 The Planning Statement sets out the following additional benefits:
- (a) The applicant will be looking to preferentially employ local retired people to be traffic and noise marshals during events.
 - (b) Discounts to access the wellness centre, to hire the event facility (and to hire hotel rooms in the future) will be made available to local residents.
 - (c) Local charities will be given free hire of the event venue for one or two events per year.
 - (d) Events will not be held at the same time as the Hemingford Abbots Flower Festival but instead coaches will be able to park on the hardstanding next to the barn (future hotel) during the festival, discounts at the upcoming hotel will be made available to flower festival attendees and the parkland itself will be opened to festival attendees.
 - (e) As well as providing a sustainable economic future for the heritage assets contained on the site and generating jobs in the process, the business plan demonstrates significant economic benefits for local businesses; supporting worthwhile employment especially within small companies and sole traders. The business described in this application will increase trade at the only local pub in Hemingford Abbots and the only local shop in the whole of the Hemingfords (Hemingford Grey), helping to secure the future viability of both, and to pubs and tourist destinations slightly further afield in villages like Houghton.
- 7.85 The benefits that relate to discounts, free hire and not clashing with other events cannot be taken into account as these cannot be secured through planning conditions. Limited positive weight is also afforded to the potential employment of local retired people to be traffic and noise marshals during events on the basis that the development will generate local employment. However, moderate positive weight is afforded to the economic benefits of the proposal.
- 7.86 It should be noted that not all proposed developments are entirely without harm or entirely without benefit. Therefore, in reaching a recommendation on the application, Officers have considered the potential harm of the development against the potential benefits of the development. Officers have considered what weight should be

given to each material consideration. This forms the overall planning balance.

7.87 It is considered that the above identified benefits outweigh the loss of a dwelling in this instance. The development is policy compliant in all other regards. The proposal is in overall accordance with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations which indicate that permission should be refused.

7.88 For the above reasons, it is recommended that planning permission be granted in this instance.

8. RECOMMENDATION - Approval subject to the following conditions;

- Time
- Drawings
- Use class control
- Compliance with Transport Technical Note
- A Noise Management Plan
- Noise condition in line with the NIA.
- Odour Management Plan
- Limit number of events per calendar year
- No events on consecutive weekends
- Limit times of amplified music
- No external amplification
- Delivery and collection times limited
- No fireworks
- No lighting
- No overnight stays outside built form
- Full details of the acoustic barriers
- Hard and soft landscaping plan
- Fire hydrants

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquires about this report to **Lewis Tomlinson, Senior Planning Officer** lewis.tomlinson@huntingdonshire.gov.uk



22nd August 2025

Lewis Tomlinson Planning Officer

Huntingdonshire District Council
Pathfinder House
St. Mary's Street
Huntingdon
PE29 3TN

Dear Lewis

Ref: Planning Application: 25/01248/FUL|Change of use from dwelling (Use Class C3) & agricultural land to a wellness centre (Class E) and wedding and events venue (Sui Generis) with guest sleeping accommodation and parking

Hemingford Abbots Parish Council has voted unanimously to recommend refusal for this planning application for the following reasons:

1. Nature of the Planning Application (Descriptor)

The application states "wedding and events venue". This title is repeated in the accompanying 'Design and Access Statement'. No details of any events other than weddings are included in the application.

A very similar application was previously submitted in 2021, namely:
(21/01768/FUL|Change of use to allow for a mixed use as private residence (Class C3a), a wedding and corporate events venue (sui generis use) with ancillary guest accommodation and parking)"

There is therefore a reasonable assumption or presumption that there is an intention for events other than weddings to take place on the site, but again no details are provided.

The applicant's representative has verbally stated that the wording used for the planning application is not correct, but the Parish Council is bound to make its decision on what is formally submitted and as stated in the bundle.

On this basis, the Parish Council cannot make a clear determination until there is proper clarification regarding the nature and intent of the application.

2. Traffic / Highway Safety

Parishioners have commissioned their own traffic report which highlights that there are no passing places for traffic between the Lodge gates (at Rideaway) and the Wellness Centre.

In the UK, for commercial use (with regard to single-track rural roads carrying commercial vehicles) the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) provides guidance on layout, including spacing between passing places.

According to DMRB guidance (Volume 2, Clause 3.11.9.1): 'Where forward visibility is unrestricted, passing places should be provided at intervals of approximately 60 m (measured from the end of one to the start of the next), subject to terrain and land tenure considerations.'

Given that coaches and minibuses will be delivering patrons to events via the Lodge entrance, and also 7.5 tonne box vans making deliveries (acknowledged in the application), we are concerned about how road safety will be maintained, also mindful that pedestrians may also be walking on or beside the new track.

The passing location is restricted to a relatively short section of the track, located in front of the gates by the Lodge gates and adjacent to the highway at Rideaway – this section is estimated at only 15 metres in length, and is part of the direct approach to the splay at the junction with the road. If traffic builds up (patrons' arrivals can be expected to peak just before and after the event), we believe that queueing on Rideaway is inevitable, including late at night. This is a road with no footpaths, and frequent foot and equestrian traffic.

Traffic approaching the entrance from the south will be exiting a national speed limit (60mph), with limited visibility due to trees and a significant bend close to the junction with New Road. It is also highly likely that event traffic will approach this entrance from both directions, so it is also possible that the road is blocked both ways for periods of time.

It is believed that the speed measurement quoted in the application "85% decile - 33.3mph" (ref: 2024 change of use application Transport Statement pg7) was taken "in the vicinity of the 20mph speed limit" – this is not the relevant location! The survey was almost certainly conducted close to the splash, which is approximately 200m to the north of the Rideaway entrance where the average speeds will be much higher.

The application states that 45 car parking spaces are available. Given that up to 180 patrons plus staff may be attending at any time, we believe that this will be insufficient and would like to understand where excess vehicles will park. Any event parking on Rideaway would clearly be very dangerous, and any parking in the village would bring disturbance late at night as patrons leave the event(s).

3. Noise

The application states that events have been held with no apparent disturbance measured / recorded at the receptor points.

We are concerned that during events, windows and doors will inevitably be opened, which will significantly increase the sound levels.

The application states that patrons can use the walled garden up to 11pm in the evening, with no active mitigation measures. This, to our knowledge, has not been tested for potential effects on parishioners' amenity. Up to 150 people outdoors in the evening, with alcohol often being consumed, pose a significant potential for disturbance.

The applicant has suggested that locally retired people may be employed using hand-held devices to monitor the sound levels: this is wholly inadequate and unacceptable. The nearby Parish Village Hall uses an automatic sound measurement and suppression system where any amplification is immediately turned off if maximum sound levels are exceeded – which would be a much more effective remedy.

We are also concerned about large numbers of vehicles leaving late at night. The designated car parking areas are only 75 metres from the closest residents' properties, so there will inevitably be repeated light and noise disturbance throughout the year.

4. The New Road

Hemingford Abbots Parish Council and its parishioners have for more than three years repeatedly written to Huntingdonshire District Council regarding the lack of a planning application for this construction, but no reply has ever been received. It is now the subject of a retrospective CLEUD application. To date, the construction has been described as an 'agricultural track', or a 'track agricultural in form'.

This is the Parish Council's first opportunity to query this build, as it has previously been excluded from previous planning applications for the site.

The applicant's pack for the CLEUD acknowledges that a planning application should have been submitted in 2021 after it was largely constructed. We would like to know why Huntingdonshire District Council did not request a suitable application, especially given the repeated prompts from the parish - including an independent report supplied by a Heritage specialist (Pegasus) at the 2024 planning appeal hearing.

Our contention is that the road was built without planning permission, has damaged an important heritage asset (see below), and that Huntingdonshire District Council has failed to act appropriately in acknowledging these concerns in its decision-making (for example, not undertaking any enforcement investigations). We therefore believe that Huntingdonshire District Council should not and cannot grant a CLEUD under 'building for agricultural use', and

then immediately grant extended permission for commercial use as part of this application without addressing the repeated calls for an investigation into potential planning and heritage infringements.

5. Heritage

It is agreed by all parties that the site contains ridge and furrow (various statements made by the applicant and other interested parties in previous planning applications) - this has been built over without any consultation or approval from Historic England or the parish. No planning application was ever submitted for this road / track construction.

The applicant's advisors stated in its Heritage Plan in Sept 2023 (part of the appeal against non-determination of application 23/01749/LBC) that 'the track is of agricultural form' (para 98), and that '..it crosses land in which R&F is evident in aerial photography' (Para 100).

The NPPF requires harm to a heritage asset to be weighed against the public benefits under the provisions of paras 207 to 209.

Hemingford Abbots and Hemingford Park in particular is sited in an important Conservation Area. Any proposal should preserve and wherever possible, enhance features that contribute positively to the area's character, appearance and setting as set out in character statements.

The Conservation area Character Appraisal (2008) notes that where R&F survive it should be valued and preserved. (Ref: Applicant's 2023 Heritage Statement Plan Para 100).

Ridge and Furrow at this site has potentially medieval origins (ref: 2024 Pegasus Report), and is (some of) the best preserved in the district / county.

To repeat again, previous planning applications for this development have excluded the new road / agricultural track, as they have been confined to the red line around the property: e.g., the road /track in question was specifically ruled as being outside the scope of the planning appeal. Therefore, we do not know Historic England's opinions on this, but Hemingford Abbots Parish Council has consistently expressed concerns over damage to ridge and furrow and the importance of its preservation.

In 2024, Huntingdonshire District Council itself recognised the importance of the heritage value of ridge and furrow in the parish in its consideration of an application submitted by 43 Common Lane ('change of use from arable grazing land to residential garden'), where the Conservation Officer stressed the importance of protecting the ridge and furrow that was present. The planning application was subsequently withdrawn.

LP34 refers to "...no alteration of any feature of historic or architectural value.." and again "...cause no harm to the area's special character or appearance..." (ref: the applicant's Design & Access Statement, pages 38-42) - but ridge and furrow we believe has been damaged, and this

damage will inevitably be made worse by the additional traffic and footfall that would result from the approval of this application.

This construction has also altered the original approach to the house and resulted in negative impacts upon its landscape (Pegasus Group report 2024).

Under the NPPF framework, we would like Huntingdonshire District Council to answer the following questions:

- Why was a planning application not sought, as required by concurrent planning regulations, at the time for this build?
- Why have the repeated, written concerns of the Parish Council and its residents not been responded to?
- What public benefits result from the creation of this new road to weigh against the harm identified?

A freedom of information request will be submitted imminently (for the avoidance of doubt, before Monday, 25th August 2025) to seek more information from Huntingdonshire District Council regarding how this potentially unlawful development was managed. Hemingford Abbots Parish Council respectfully suggests that a decision cannot be made on this planning application until this investigation has been completed, as the use of the new road for access to and for servicing the venue(s) is a critical part of the application.

6. Conditions:

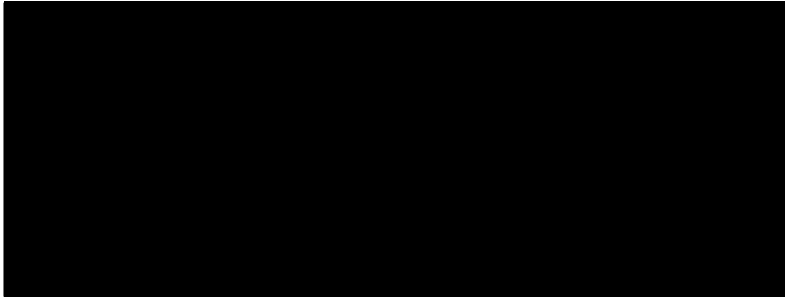
Whilst Hemingford Abbots Parish Council strongly opposes this application, if Huntingdonshire District Council were minded to pass it, we ask that the following conditions be introduced:

- a. Installation of an automatic noise measurement and suppression system which will remove power to any amplified music in the event of a breach of noise control
- b. Physical marshalling to take place to control traffic entering the site from Rideaway at peak times (for any event hosting more than 40 patrons).
- c. Appropriate information and signposting to all guests and contractors so as to avoid any traffic unnecessarily entering the residential area of the village.
- d. A clear, published plan for how parking 'overspill' will be managed.
- e. The grant of a temporary licence for 24 months during which the commercial use of the site can be monitored for any loss of resident amenity and traffic issues, and corrective actions taken.
- f. That large events (defined here as over 50 patrons) can only be held on alternate weekends (which would still allow the target number of 26 events a year to be achieved).

I would be grateful to receive confirmation from you that our recommendation for refusal and the reasons given have been uploaded to the Planning Portal.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely




General Notes

- Do not scale from this drawing
- All dimensions to be verified on site
- To be read in conjunction with all relevant documents
- In the event of discrepancy notify the Architect immediately
- All steel structural elements to be finished with intumescent coating, 30 minutes fire resistance. For all structural elements and connection see SE drawings.
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Issue Status

- SK Sketch	- T Tender	- P Permissions
- D Design	- E Existing Condition	- C Contract

rev	note	date	(drawn by/checked by)
()	: Issued for PL	13/07/23	(FA/HC)
(A)	: updated survey information for PL	18/06/25	(GW/HC)

 Boundary of application site

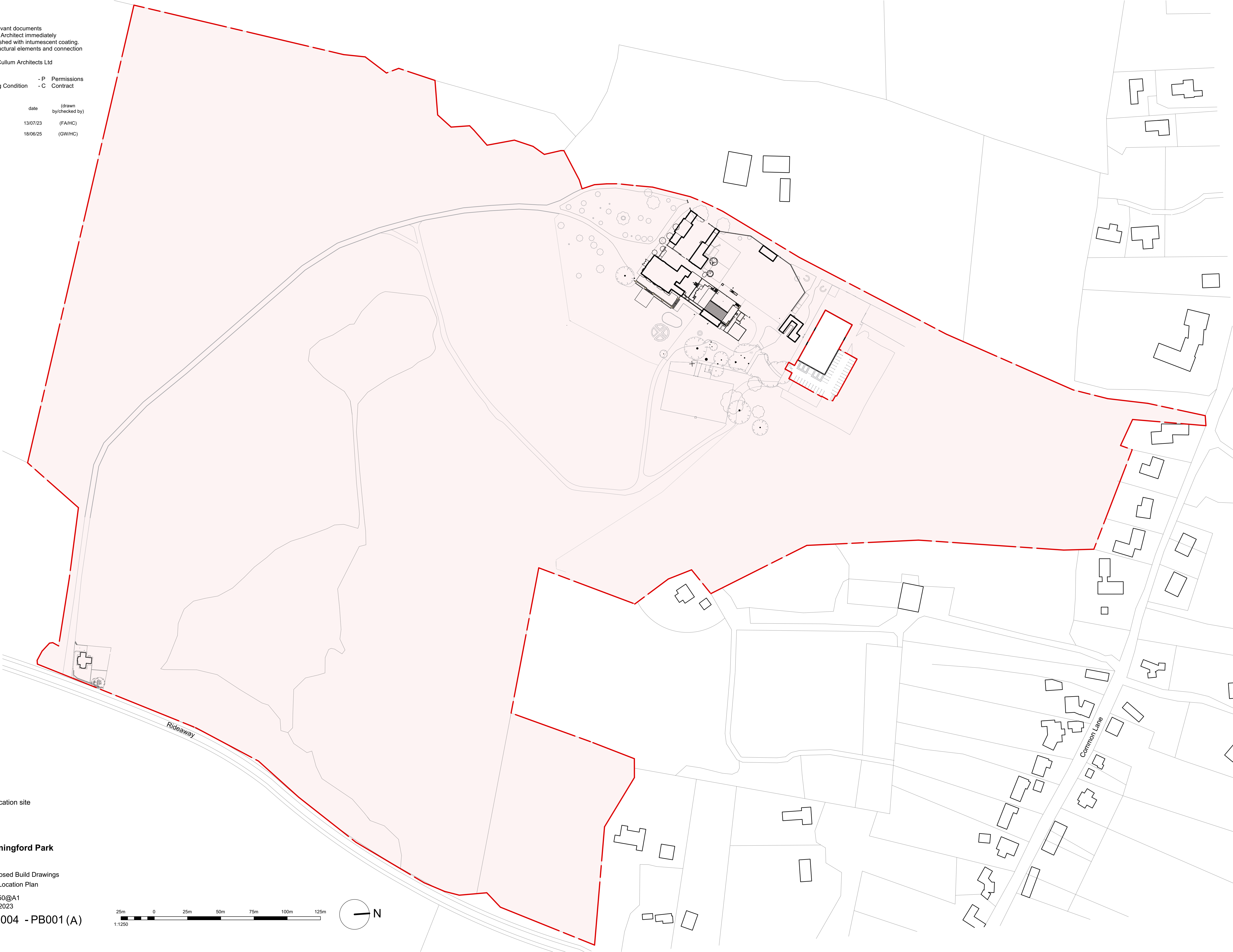
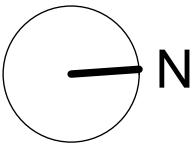
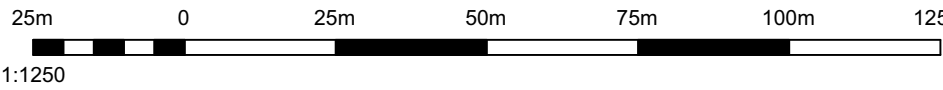
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Hemingford Park

Proposed Build Drawings
Site Location Plan

1:1250@A1
July 2023

HP004 - PB001 (A)



General Notes

- Do not scale from this drawing
- All dimensions to be verified on site
- To be read in conjunction with all relevant documents
- In the event of discrepancy notify the Architect immediately
- All steel structural elements to be finished with intumescent coating, 30 minutes fire resistance. For all structural elements and connection see SE drawings.
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Issue Status

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The diagram is a detailed site management plan for Hemingford Park. It shows the layout of various buildings and outdoor spaces, color-coded to indicate guest access zones. The 'Cottage guests' zone is shown in green, covering the cottages, coach house, and rear garden. The 'Guests before 7pm' zone is shown in orange, covering the eastern lawn, terrace, and parts of the main hall. The 'Guests before 11pm' zone is shown in purple, covering the main hall, spa, event facility, and orangerie. The plan also shows a walled garden, a service entrance, a facility entrance, and a car parking area. A red arrow points to a specific area on the eastern lawn, indicating a hard surface to be amended. The plan includes labels for various areas: Cottages guest parking, Cottages, Coach house, Residential, Hemingford Park Hall, Eastern terrace, Eastern Lawn, Walled garden, Spa entrance, Service entrance, Spa & Event facility, Orangerie, Facility entrance, Car Parking Access, and Deliveries and emergency Access. A north arrow and a scale bar are located in the bottom left corner.

A north arrow pointing towards the top left and a scale bar showing distances from 0 to 50 meters in 5m increments.

- Cottage guests
- Guests before 7pm
- Guests before 11pm

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Hemingford Park

Poposed Build Drawings
Site Management Plan
1:500@A2
July 2023
HP004 - PB004 (A)

General Notes

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- All vehicles access
- Deliveries and emergency access
- Car parking access
- Boundary of application site

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Hemingford Park

Proposed Build Drawings
Vehicle Access Plan
1:1250@A1
July 2023
HP004 - PB003 (A)

