

Further Information: Article 4 Directions relating to Gunnels Wood and Pin Green

What is an Article 4 Direction?

An Article 4 Direction is a means by which a local planning authority can bring within planning control certain types of development, or changes of use, which would normally be 'permitted development' (i.e. not require an application for planning permission). An Article 4 Direction removes permitted development (PD) rights and requires a planning application to be submitted.

What will the Article 4 Directions do?

Three Article 4 Directions have been made in total. All relate to changes of use from B1 (employment uses) to C3 (residential use).

Two Directions remove the PD rights for changes of use from B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwellinghouses). The Borough Council was previously granted an exemption from this PD right by the Government for some areas of Gunnels Wood. This is due to be revoked in May 2019. The first of these two Directions covers those currently exempt areas. The second covers all other parts of Gunnels Wood and Pin Green.

The third Direction removes the PD rights for changes of use from B1(c) (light industrial) to C3 (dwelling houses). This right is due to come into force in October 2017.

The removal of PD rights means that a planning application will be required for any of these changes of use. Planning applications will be assessed against current planning policy.

Why are Article 4 Directions required?

PD rights have recently been introduced by Government legislation, to allow for some changes of use from business uses to residential use, to be carried out without the need for planning permission.

This has the potential to lead to a significant loss of employment land for the Borough. As demonstrated through the Local Plan process, there is already a shortage of employment land being provided within the town, against the identified need. This makes it crucial that we protect all existing employment uses.

In addition to this, the original masterplan for Stevenage specifically separated employment uses from other (potentially conflicting) uses, such as housing. Gunnels Wood and Pin Green are now successful designated employment areas, home to a number of international businesses and corporate headquarters. Allowing residential uses into these areas is something many businesses have strongly objected to previously, and the Council shares their view that it has the potential to create conflict, resulting in a domino effect in terms of more and more employment uses leaving the area.

An Article 4 Direction will ensure that all proposals for changes of use to residential are passed through the planning system and that existing policies can be applied.

Will this prevent changes of use to residential being carried out?

No. An Article 4 Direction would only require planning permission to be sought; it would not automatically allow the Council to refuse changes of use. Applications would be considered against current planning policy.

Why have I been notified?

The regulations relating to Article 4 Directions require local authorities to give formal notice to all land owners and occupiers within the area to which an Article 4 Direction would relate. As such,

communications have gone out to all landowners and property addresses within the designated Gunnels Wood and Pin Green Employment Areas.

What happens next?

Following the consultation period, the responses will be considered and authority will be sought from Executive to confirm the Directions. The formal Notices of Direction (enclosed) provide further details as to when each of the Article 4 Directions would be implemented.