

PLANNING, DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

Hexton Manor, Hexton Hertfordshire SG5 3JH



July 2024



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD regarding a householder planning application for erection of a garage block outbuilding, following demolition of the existing service outbuilding and removal of current extensions of the dwelling. The site address is Hexton Manor, Hexton, Hertfordshire SG5 3JH.
- 1.2 The Statement provides an assessment of the planning policy framework relevant to the proposal, as well as other relevant material considerations and explains the design process and principles based on a contextual understanding of the site and the locality.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The site comprises a large detached main dwelling building of Hexton Manor, which is grade II listed, with various substantial outbuildings, separate cottages, lake, extensive gardens, walled garden and internal access roads, as part of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.
- 2.2 In regard to planning policy designations, the building is within the Green Belt, is within the Hexton Conservation Area and, within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 2.3 The grounds of Hexton Manor are designated as a historic park and garden. The following images show the location plan of the site, followed by photographs of the building.



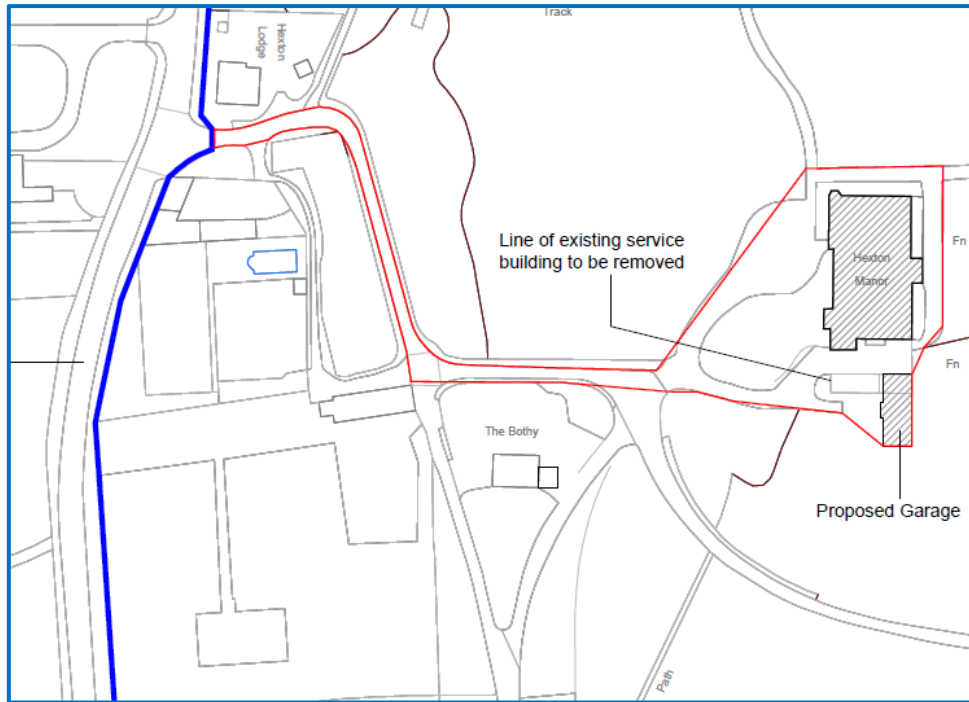


Figure 1 – Location plan of the application site and surroundings



Figure 2 – View of the service outbuilding alongside Hexton Manor





**Figure 3 – View of service building rear elevation,
from adjacent higher ground level**

3. Planning history

3.1 The most relevant recent planning history for the site is:

24/00254/FPH – Demolition of existing front conservatory and rear colonnade. Alterations to fenestration and external render – Pending grant of planning permission.

24/00255/LBC - Internal and external alterations following demolition of front conservatory and rear colonnade. Alterations to fenestration - - Pending grant of listed building consent.

4. The proposal

4.1 The proposal consists of erection of an outbuilding as a set of garages for occupier vehicles of Hexton Manor. The building would follow demolition of the existing outbuilding in the same general location, which is a service building



containing biomass boiler system, plant and utility service stores, to serve the Manor building.

- 4.2 The new building would measure 17 metres in length, 6.9 metres in depth, with a pitched roof height of 5.4 metres. Materials are proposed to match the Manor building for off white 'Linen' shade of painted render, which is to be shortly approved for the main Manor building, together with matching natural slate tiles and white painted timber garage doors.
- 4.3 The position of the garage block building would be front elevation to face in same direction as the front elevation of the Manor. This essentially rotates the existing building position 90 degrees and would be further set back from the Manor's front elevation line.
- 4.4 Minor works for hard and soft landscaping are proposed around the new garage building, to enhance the setting of this part of the site.
- 4.5 The proposal consists of the following plans:
2024-32-301 - Proposed West and East Elevations
2024-32-302 - Proposed Side Elevations and Site Plan
2024-32-303 - Proposed Floor Plan
2024-32-304 - Existing West and East Elevations
2024-32-305 - Existing Side Elevations and Floor Plan
2023-32-306 - Location Plan
- 4.6 The following images are extracts from the principal drawings for the development, of existing and proposed site plans, proposed floor plan and the proposed front elevation.



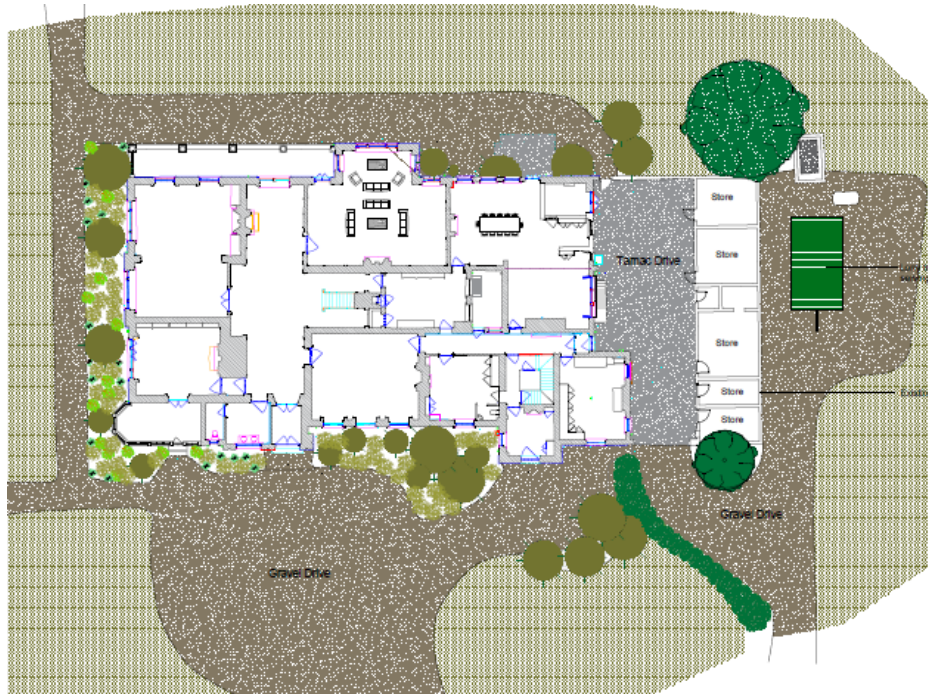


Figure 4 - Existing site plan extract

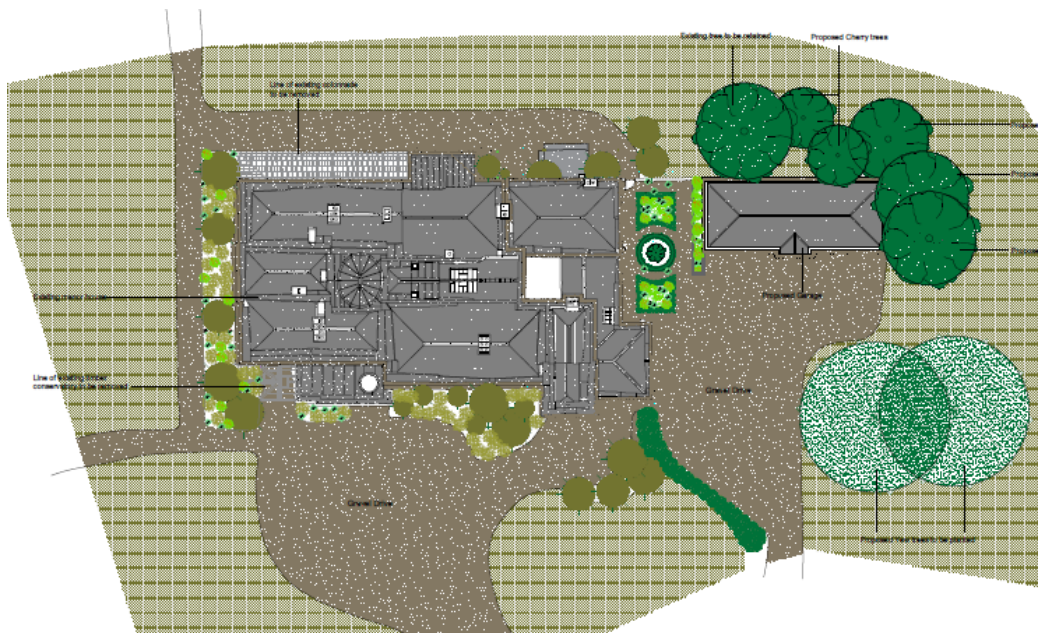


Figure 5 - Proposed site plan extract



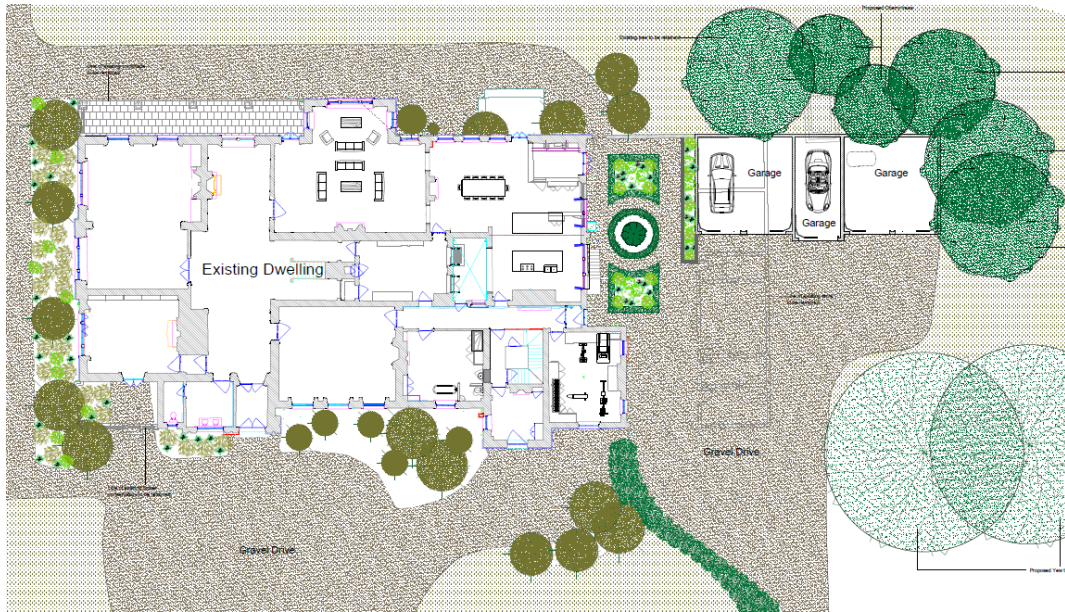


Figure 6 - Proposed floor plan

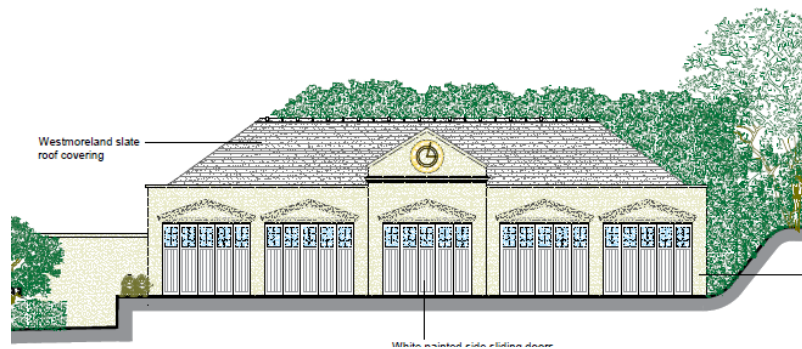


Figure 7 - Proposed front elevation

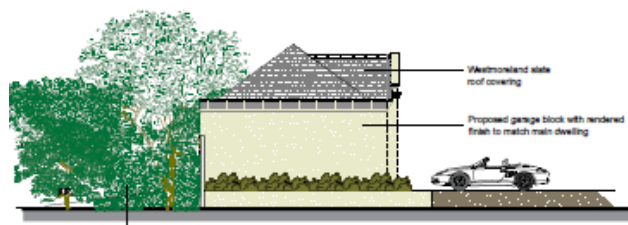


Figure 8 - Proposed left side elevation



5. Relevant planning policy

5.1 The relevant planning policies at the local and national level, are as follows:

5.2 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031

Policy SP5 - Countryside and Green Belt

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

Policy T2 - Parking

Policy D1 - Sustainable Design

Policy D3 - Protecting Living Conditions

Policy HE1 - Designated heritage assets

Policy HE4 - Archaeology

Policy NE3 - Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design

Vehicle Parking at New Development

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 12. Achieving well-designed and beautiful places

Section 13. Protecting Green Belt land

Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6. Green Belt

6.1 The application site lies within the Green Belt, being just outside of the Hexton settlement envelope and is washed over by this designation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Section 13 explains that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, except for listed exceptions.



- 6.2 One relevant exception is the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces. The new building would clearly be of the same use, being an ancillary outbuilding for vehicle garaging storage, compared to the current building of store and utility services, as an equal ancillary building.
- 6.3 Whether a replacement building is materially larger, is a judgement of fact and degree, which demands that each proposal is considered in relation to the size and character of the original building. The proposed increase in volume, footprint and floor area are commonly used indicators. However, as well as mathematical calculations, the visual impact of the proposal has to be considered.
- 6.4 The following section sets out the floor areas and volumes of the existing and proposed outbuildings, together with those of the extensions of the Manor which are to be removed, for the front conservatory and rear colonnade. These are set out as follows.
- 6.5 Floor area of existing service building = 101.2 m²
 Volume of existing service building = 250.0 m³
 Floor area of existing colonnade = 38.2 m²
 Volume of existing colonnade = 156.2 m³
 Floor area of existing conservatory = 10.2 m²
 Volume of existing conservatory = 49.1 m³
- Floor area of proposed garage = 120.1 m²
 Volume of proposed garage = 504.5 m³
- 6.6 As can be seen from the above figures for existing and proposed floor areas and volumes, the new building would have an increase of just 19% in floor area, but a 100% increase in volume. However, when factoring in the removal of the current extensions of the Manor, there would be an overall reduction in floor



area. The total floor area to be removed would be 149 square metres, with the new building being only 120 square metres.

- 6.7 There would be a total volume increase, with volume to be removed of 455 cubic metres and the new garage building comprising 504 cubic metres. This however equates to just an 11% increase across the total volume comparison in this case, which is considered to be 'not materially larger'. The front conservatory and rear colonnade are about to be consented for removal under the current applications for planning permission and listed building consent, as part of overall refurbishment and enhancement proposals on the Manor building.
- 6.8 It is entirely reasonable to include the removal of these current extensions in the overall assessment, because the existing and proposed outbuildings are sited very proximate to, and closely related to, the host Manor building in this case.
- 6.9 Therefore, even though the new building would have a greater volume, the actual overall situation would be one of a very comparable volume across the dwelling and its associated garage building. Therefore, the replacement building would be in the same use as the existing and would not be materially larger than the existing building and extensions to be removed.
- 6.10 Furthermore, there is also a significant design enhancement benefit of the proposal. The existing building is completely inappropriate and utilitarian in its mass and flat roof form. It is located very close to the Manor and spans its length alongside the flank elevation of the Manor, in a wholly unsympathetic fashion. This is together with removal of the adjacent trailer with container housing woodchip for the current boiler system, but this is to be changed back to oil heating and is no longer needed.
- 6.11 The new garage building would face in the same direction as the Manor, with front elevation towards the front driveway in a regular and expected layout. The building would clearly provide the benefit of being able to screen up to 5



vehicles away from view, as a further enhancement of the overall setting of this listed building.



- 6.12 Therefore, were it to be considered the proposals do not accord with this relevant exception of the NPPF, it is advanced that the actual enhancement to the setting of the Manor building, with this high quality ancillary garage building, constitutes very special circumstances in this case. This circumstance is entirely sufficient to outweigh any identified very minor element of harm upon Green Belt openness. The resulting building would sit entirely comfortably and subserviently alongside the Manor, within the overall site of the Hexton Manor Estate.
- 6.13 The proposal therefore forms an exception to inappropriate development under local and national planning policy. In view of the above, the proposal is considered to constitute appropriate development within the Green Belt, being in accordance with Section 13 of the NPPF, together with Policy SP5 of the Local Plan.

7. Design and character

- 7.1 In regard to the design of the new garage building, this is considered to be of high quality and entirely appropriate for the host listed building and context in this case. The front facing but set back layout, compared to the Manor, would read as an entirely subordinate and ancillary outbuilding, serving the main building. The attractive inset pitched roof with eaves parapet detail, front gable feature, overall form and matching materials to the Manor, would be a significant design enhancement compared to the unsympathetic and flat roof current building.
- 7.2 The siting of the current building (along with the associated trailer with container), are of poor form and design. This is considered entirely acceptable and would be of matching materials for facing brickwork, with the whole roof



changed to slate tiles, matching to the Manor building. This is demonstrated with the commissioned CGI, as shown below.



Figure 9 – CGI of the new garage building alongside refurbished Hexton Manor building

- 7.3 The proposal relates well to the scale, character and appearance of the host building, being entirely subordinate and sympathetic in overall form and proportions. The scheme is therefore considered to be in accordance with the Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan.
- 7.4 In regard to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is considered there would be no adverse impact upon the AONB in this case, with only an enhancement to its character and setting. The site is very secluded within the overall Hexton Manor Estate.
- 7.5 The development is appropriate in scale having regard to national policy, in this case exceptions for development in the Green Belt. The proposal would conserve the AONB's special qualities, distinctive character and biodiversity, tranquillity and remoteness, in accordance with national planning policy and the overall purpose of the AONB designation.



- 7.6 The sensitive size and design and site layout have regard to the Chilterns Building Design Guide and technical notes, by being of high-quality design which respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, its traditional built character and reinforces the sense of place and local character. The proposal therefore accords with the requirements of Local Plan Policy NE3 for the Chilterns AONB.
- 7.7 Overall, the new building would be completely sympathetic and subordinate to the main Manor building, with high quality matching materials to result in an attractive ancillary building, with no harm upon the visual amenity of the public or private road street scene. As such, the design and appearance of the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the provisions of Policies D1, SP9 and NE3 of the Local Plan, the Design SPD and, with Section 12 of the NPPF.

8. Impact upon neighbouring living conditions

- 8.1 The new garage building would be well spaced away from other residential properties, with the closest being The Bothy, which is shortly to become a dwelling but likely for guest accommodation for family and friends. The development would therefore have no detrimental impact on the living conditions of any nearby occupiers. The proposal complies with D3 of the Local Plan and, with Section 12 of the NPPF.

9. Heritage assets

- 9.1 In regard to heritage assets, the existing store and service building could be considered to be curtilage listed to the main listed building of Hexton Manor, as a grade II listed building. Other listings within the overall Manor Estate are the Medieval Cross Base adjacent Hexton Manor, which is also grade II listed, with the Walls to the Walled Gardens also being grade II listed. There is then also the Pump on Roadside Opposite Dairy Cottages, which is also grade II listed.
- 9.2 The site is located within the Hexton Conservation Area and the grounds of Hexton Manor are designated as a historic park and garden. In regard to the



character and significance of the host building itself, this is considered to be enhanced by the proposal.

- 9.3 As stated above, the current building totally detracts from the setting of the listed building, from its flat roof form, very close siting and poor design and appearance, as a purely functional and utilitarian building only. It is sited close to the principal windows of the kitchen and this will be enhanced to become a key outlook of the ground floor of the Hexton Manor dwelling.
- 9.4 By rotating the new building to face the frontage, instead of facing this flank elevation of the Manor, and through its highly appropriate and enhanced design compared to the existing, the overall setting of the Manor would be greatly enhanced by the proposals. This is together with enhanced hard and soft landscaping around the new building and alongside the Manor.
- 9.5 Therefore, the main listed building of Hexton Manor would only be enhanced in its setting and special character. The proposal would not affect the listed Medieval Cross, the Walled Garden, or the roadside Pump feature and, would only enhance the designated historic park and garden of the overall Hexton Manor Estate. The character, appearance and overall setting of the Conservation Area would also be enhanced by the proposal.
- 9.6 There would therefore be no harmful impact upon heritage assets and the scheme does not conflict with any provisions of the Local Plan, or Section 16 of the NPPF.

10. Access and parking provision

- 10.1 There are no alterations required to the access into the overall site, which is off Village Street. The garage building would be accessed from the front driveway as existing. There is clearly ample parking provision on site but the building would allow for screening vehicles away, being of visual and security benefit. An electric vehicle charging point would be installed within the building. The



development would have no adverse impact upon the safe and free flow of the highway network.

11. Trees and landscaping

- 11.1 In regard to trees of the site, there are many trees within the overall site of Hexton Manor Estate. No trees are required to be removed for the proposed new building, with some shrubs / scrub to be removed only.
- 11.2 Landscaping will be enhanced by new planting around the building and in between it and the Manor itself, as denoted on the Proposed site plan.

12. Flood risk

- 12.1 In regard to flood risk of the site, as shown in the image below from the Environment Agency flood risk mapping, the whole Hexton Manor Estate site is located well away from any area of flood risk. Being in Flood Zone 1 (FZ1), this is the zone of lowest flood risk. The site is also not in an area identified by the Environment Agency as having critical drainage problems. It is reasonable to conclude that the site is not at risk of flooding and that the proposed development would not result in an increase in flooding. The following image shows the flood risk for the site, from the Environment Agency mapping.



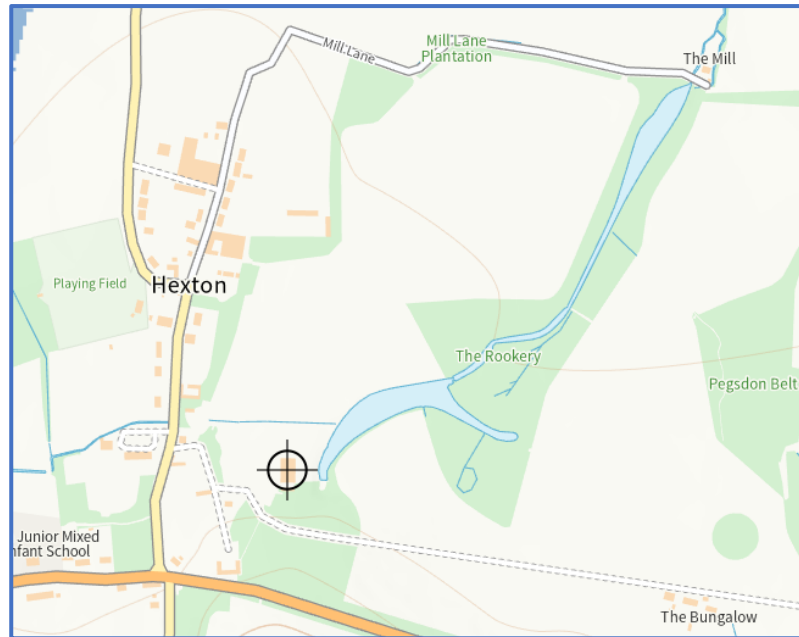


Figure 10 - Flood Risk: Rivers and surface water

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 In conclusion of the proposed development, the scheme comprises appropriate development in the Green Belt, by being not materially larger in overall size when compared to the existing outbuilding and extensions of the Manor to be removed.
- 13.2 The development would therefore have no harmful impact upon Green Belt openness, or the rural setting of the area. Consequently, the proposal is in accordance with local and national planning policy for replacement of an existing building in the Green Belt.
- 13.3 The highly sympathetic and complementary design and form to the Manor, in combination with the use of matching materials, would represent high quality design, with only an enhancement of the current site, thereby having no harm upon the character and setting of the site, or the visual quality of the AONB.



13.4 The development would have no harm upon the living conditions of any neighbouring properties. No heritage assets would be adversely affected in their setting or special character, with only an enhancement to result for the setting of the host listed building.

13.5 The proposal is therefore compliant with Policies of the North Herts Local Plan, supplementary guidance and with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. The development is therefore considered to be acceptable for the grant of planning permission and listed building consent accordingly.

