

Design & Access Statement



56 Wilshere Crescent
Hitchin
Hertfordshire
SG4 0PQ

March 2026

Context

The site is located to the east of Hitchin, within convenient walking distance of the town centre and railway station. The surrounding area is characterised by modest semi-detached residential properties set within generous plots.

The application property comprises a three-bedroom semi-detached dwelling, set well back from the highway, with a spacious frontage and good sized rear garden.

Use

The property is in established use as a single residential dwelling (Use Class C3).

However, the existing internal arrangement provides limited flexibility to accommodate modern living requirements, particularly in relation to home working. The proposal seeks to enhance the functionality of the dwelling by creating additional, adaptable living space that supports both family life and home-based working.

The development will therefore improve the overall usability and long-term sustainability of the property without altering its residential use.

Description of Development

The application seeks planning permission for the erection of a single-storey rear extension, together with associated internal alterations.

The proposal does not involve any changes to the existing access arrangements.

Access

Access to the site will remain unchanged and is taken from Wilshire Crescent.

The site is sustainably located, with good access to public transport, including Hitchin railway station and nearby bus routes. It is also within walking distance of local schools, Hitchin College, and the town centre.

The proposal does not give rise to any highway safety concerns.

Layout and Design Approach

The existing dwelling is modest in scale, and its current layout limits its ability to accommodate contemporary living patterns.

This revised scheme has been carefully informed by the reasons for refusal of the previous application (ref. 26/00061/FPH). In particular, the design has been amended to reduce the overall bulk and massing of the extension and limit external works.

The proposal has been designed to sit comfortably within the plot, maintaining an appropriate relationship with neighbouring properties. The reduced scale and revised design ensures that the development does not result in material harm through loss of light, privacy, outlook, or increased sense of enclosure.

Appearance

The proposal has been designed in accordance with Policy D2 of the Local Plan, ensuring that it responds positively to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and surrounding area.

External materials will match the existing property, including brickwork and detailing, ensuring a cohesive and high-quality appearance. The extension will incorporate a flat roof design with two roof lanterns, which helps to minimise overall height and visual bulk and mimics that of other similar extensions within the immediate vicinity.

Response to Previous Refusal

The previous application (ref. 26/00061/FPH) was refused on the grounds of the extensions bulk feeling obtrusive, impact on neighbouring privacy due to raised decking, and the inclusion of a side window.

These concerns have been fully addressed in the revised proposal as follows:

- The overall height and width of the extension have been reduced, resulting in a more proportionate and subservient form of development
- The extension has been set further away from the shared boundary, reducing its visual impact and sense of enclosure
- The previously proposed side window has been omitted to prevent overlooking
- The raised decking and associated balustrading have been removed entirely
- Existing ground levels have been retained, avoiding any increase in overlooking or loss of privacy

It is also noted that only a single third-party representation was received in relation to the previous application, concerning the side window and potential overlooking. This element has been removed as part of the revised scheme. No objections were raised in

respect of the scale or massing of the extension, which have nonetheless been reduced as part of this submission to address the Council's concerns.

These amendments ensure that the proposal overcomes the previous reasons for refusal and results in a significantly improved scheme.

Impact on Character and Surroundings

The surrounding area includes a number of properties that have been extended at ground floor level, with rear extensions forming an established pattern of development.

Whilst some examples extend to a greater depth and width, the current proposal has been deliberately designed to remain modest and proportionate. The reduced scale, width and massing ensure that the scheme does not appear overbearing and retains a sense of openness within the rear garden environment.

The proposal is therefore consistent with the prevailing character of the area while avoiding the more dominant forms of development seen elsewhere.

Landscaping and Levels

The existing front and rear landscaping will remain largely unchanged.

Importantly, the proposal retains the existing ground levels, steps, and retaining features. This approach minimises site intervention and avoids the introduction of raised platforms that could lead to overlooking or loss of privacy.

A small number of additional steps are proposed in front of the rear sliding doors to provide a gradual and practical transition between internal and external levels without giving rise to overlooking or privacy concerns.

Conclusion

The proposed development represents a carefully considered and significantly revised scheme that responds directly to the reasons for refusal of the previous application.

The extension has been reduced in scale and redesigned to minimise its impact on neighbouring amenity, while maintaining a high-quality and functional addition to the dwelling.

The proposal respects the character of the area, preserves neighbouring amenity,

and accords with relevant local planning policies. It is therefore considered to be an acceptable form of development, and approval is respectfully sought.