

Hillcrest and land at Tussocks, The Causeway, Therfield, Hertfordshire

Design and Access Statement

June 2024



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Date issued:

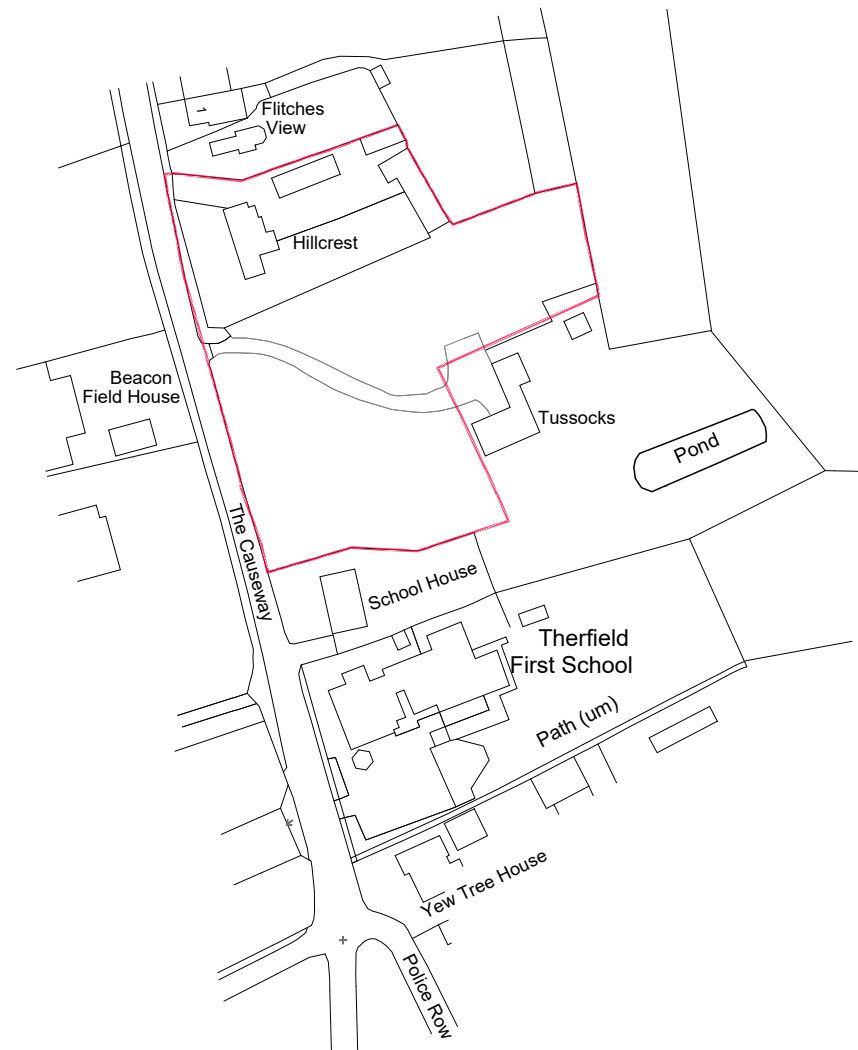
October 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 This Design and Access Statement accompanies a full planning application for erection of 7 No. dwellings at two existing residential properties known as Hillcrest and Tussocks, to the east of The Causeway within the village of Therfield. The proposals would demolish the existing dwelling and ancillary outbuildings at Hillcrest and develop the part of the garden area surrounding Tussocks. The existing house at Tussocks will be retained and which falls outside of the red line of the application site.

1.2 The application site falls within the settlement boundary and Conservation Area of the Therfield, which is a Category A village located to the south west of Royston. The village has a first school and pre-school, public house, village hall and churches and a population of 556 and 217 dwellings in the parish as at the 2011 census.

1.3 This document sets out the background to the project and design policy considerations, a review of the surrounding context, and summarises the process and considerations that have been taken into account in designing the scheme.



LOCATION PLAN | 1:1250
ORNANCE SURVEY LICENCE NUMBER 100053143

2. Design Planning Policy

2.1 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted on 8th November 2022 and forms part of the statutory Development Plan for the District that is used to determine planning applications.

2.2 The Planning Statement submitted with the application sets out the more detailed planning policy consideration of the development, whereas this Design and Access Statement focuses on the design policies contained within the adopted Local Plan and other design guidance provided by the Council.

2.3 Adopted Local Plan Policy SP9 sets out the strategic planning guidance in relation to achieving good design, highlighting this as a key aspect of sustainable development. This Policy seeks to support new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context.

2.4 Adopted Local Plan Policy D1 provides more detailed design guidance and states that development should:

- a) Respond positively to the site's local context;
- b) Take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme, to:
 - i. create or enhance public realm;
 - ii. optimise the potential of the site by incorporating Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS);
 - iii. reduce energy consumption and waste;
 - iv. retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate new planting;
 - v. maximise accessibility, legibility and physical and social connectivity both internally and with neighbouring areas;
 - vi. future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle;
 - vii. design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour; and
 - viii. minimise the visual impact of street furniture and parking provision;

2.5 The policy also requires that development proposals should have regard to the Council's Design SPD and also residential schemes must meet or exceed the nationally described space standards and optional water efficiency.

2.6 The Council's Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was adopted in 2011 and is a guide for the future development of the towns, villages and rural areas in North Hertfordshire. Whilst the Design SPD is around 12 years old and as it is not prescriptive in terms of standards or requirements, the guidance continues to be relevant and encourages developers and designers to think about the context of the site and how their development might contribute to and enhance the local area. This should ensure high quality development throughout the district regardless of scale or location.

2.7 A design checklist is included with the SPD and raises questions that cover the following main headings:

1. Character (sense of place and history)
2. Continuity and Enclosure (distinguish between public/private space)
3. Quality of Public Realm (sense of well-being and amenity)
4. Ease of movement (connectivity and permeability)
5. Legibility (ease of understanding)
6. Adaptability (ease of change)
7. Diversity (ease of choice)
8. Quality of Private Space
9. Sustainability

2.8 The Design SPD also provides further information about Therfield that can be taken into account, and includes details about: history of the village; built form; landmarks and important views; massing and materials; the village's sense of place; and, design principles to take into account.

2.9 The SPD states:

History

381. *Therfield is a visually attractive village with many properties dating back before the start of the 19th Century. Tuthill Manor is possibly the oldest property currently standing in the village, which dates back to the Middle Ages. The rectory and the church are also of particular note although the church is thought to have been rebuilt three times. The village has remained fairly small in size with very little development occurring in recent years.*

382. *Therfield Heath, the large area of greenspace located south west of Royston, is located a mile to the North of Therfield. This is a SSSI and one of the largest examples of Chalk Grassland in the East of England.*

Built Form and Layout

383. *Set below the ridge south of the Heath, the buildings in Therfield line Pedlars Lane, The Causeway and Police Row to meet at the centrally located green. Surrounding the green is a pub and a school. The Church of St Mary is located just to the west of the village centre, which is surrounded by some of the oldest properties in the village.*

384. *The small settlement of Hay Green is located to the south of Therfield. This includes a substantial development of "Garden City" type semi-detached properties, but is separated from Therfield by the cricket pitch.*

385. *Many properties in Therfield are older than 19th Century, however there has been some more modern infill in recent times which has not detracted from the existing character as design would appear to have been an important characteristic. Therfield Conservation Area covers the majority of the built area of the village adding protection to the character of the settlement.*

2. Design Planning Policy (cont.)

Landmarks and Views

386. There are four visual character areas in Therfield as defined by Policy 7 of the Saved Local Plan (2007);

- “Tuthill Manor / Church” protects the open nature and mature trees to the west of the village;
- “Village Meadow” as it suggests protects the large open meadow to the north of the village.
- “Village Centre” protects the area which includes open space, greens and trees and;
- “Eastern Edge” protects the trees, large gardens and agricultural buildings at the village edge which provide an important setting to the village.

Massing and Materials

387. The oldest buildings in the village are character-type properties with generally thatched or red tiled roofs, set in large plots away from the road. There are also groups of 19th Century cottages, built with yellow brick and grey slate roofs set slightly back from the road.

Sense of Place

388. The village is relatively small and the older properties are generally quite large. The character of the village has been maintained as development would appear to have been largely resisted and that which has occurred has been sensitively accommodated. Some development has occurred through conversion of older, larger buildings into several smaller properties and conversely some smaller properties have been combined to make larger properties.

389. Through use of open space and the convergence of the three main routes the village centre is well defined. The location of the pub and the school reinforce this central location providing a sense of legibility and understanding.

Design Principles

390. The design principles for Therfield are:

- Development south of Therfield should be resisted as this will cause coalescence with Hay Green.
- The open nature of the village centre should be maintained.
- The historic character of Therfield should be protected, especially the development to the south and south west of the village where the older buildings are located.

2.10 The proposed development in this application has taken on board the guidance contained within the Design SPD and in particular has factored in the design principles set out in paragraph 390. The development site at Tussocks will not result in coalescence with Hay Green; the proposed layout and design seeks to maintain the open nature of the village; and the proposals seek to protect the historic character of the village.

2.11 The submitted Heritage Statement with this application sets out the consideration of the impact of the proposed development on the heritage asset, which the site falls within, which is the Therfield Conservation Area. This Design and Access Statement takes the findings of this Heritage Statement into account along with the Council’s Therfield Conservation Area Character Statement .

2.12 The Character Statement highlights that the Conservation Area was designated in 1969 and its boundary was amended in 1979. The report was prepared for the purpose of appraising the character of the Conservation Area, highlighting key features, a statement of special interest, and a list of designated and non-designated heritage assets and key views.

2.13 Overall, the development proposed at Hillcrest and land at Tussocks, The Causeway, in this application has taken on board the policy guidance set out in this section

and Access Statement through reviewing the site and surrounding context; appraised opportunities and constraints; considered various important factors such as site levels and existing landscaping; and, provide indicative details of how the scheme could be designed.

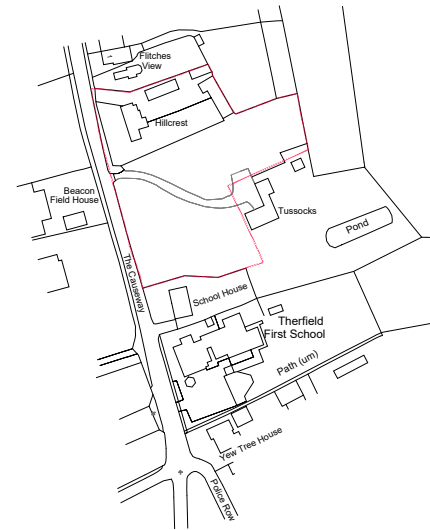
3. Assessment

Physical Nature and Character of the Application Site

3.1 The proposed application site is located to the east side of The Causeway, which is the main road that leads out from the centre of the village.

3.2 Hillcrest (bottom left image) is a detached property to the north of the application site comprising a detached two storey property, with outbuildings located to its rear.

3.3 Land at Tussocks (bottom right image) forms part of the garden for a 1970s detached house located within the centre of the plot (the house itself is located outside of the application site boundary).



LOCATION PLAN 1:1250
ORNIANCE SURVEY LICENCE NUMBER 100053143



3. Assessment (cont.)

Contextual Study

3.4 The application site is located to the north of the more historic centre of the village located around the village green and south of the village. There is however a number of established character zones that can be identified along The Causeways, that influence the layout and design of the proposed scheme.

3.5 These character zones can be identified as:

The Causeway to the north of the application site (top image) – This comprises a row of properties along a linear line of housing that fronts onto The Causeway. Directly to the north of the application site is a detached property known as Hitches View. This property is of no real architectural merit, but creates a more ad hoc character directly adjoining the application site.

To the north of this neighbouring property are an established row of properties that front The Causeway, known as Fordham's Terrace. These properties comprise three terraces each with 3 properties, with a similar design including a central gable. These properties establish a specific character along The Causeway as you head northwards out of the village and overlook the open land to the west of The Causeway.

The Causeway to the south of the application site (middle image) – To the south of the application site is a detached property known as School House, and to the south of this property is Therfield First School. As you move into the village centre there is a higher density of buildings, with a more built up frontage around the village green. The buildings tend to be located nearer to the roadside within the central part of the village. School House to the south of the application site is wider frontage property, but with a symmetrical front design in relation to window position and openings and chimneys.

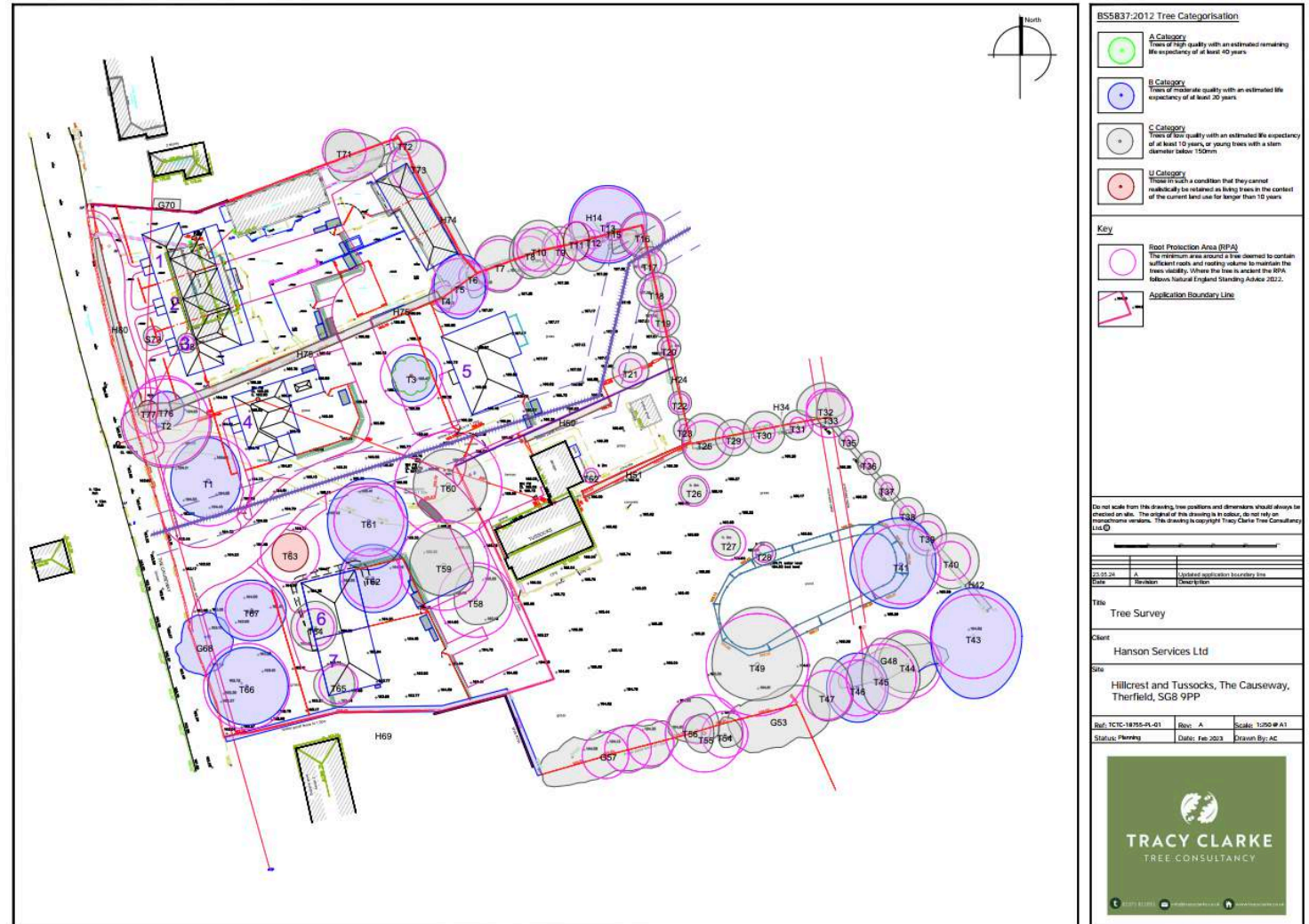
West of The Causeway and Pedlars Lane (bottom image) – The area is characterised by spacious detached properties with generous frontages to the road side, large back gardens and detached garages. To the south of this character area is the village chapel that does front onto The Causeway, but this is more reflective of the approach presented by the school opposite and the more built up part of the village centre.



3. Assessment (cont.)

Landscape Character

3.6 An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been prepared for the site and has categorised existing trees within the application site. Through undertaking this tree survey the higher categorised trees have been retained within the proposed scheme, and will form a landscaped open frontage to the development.



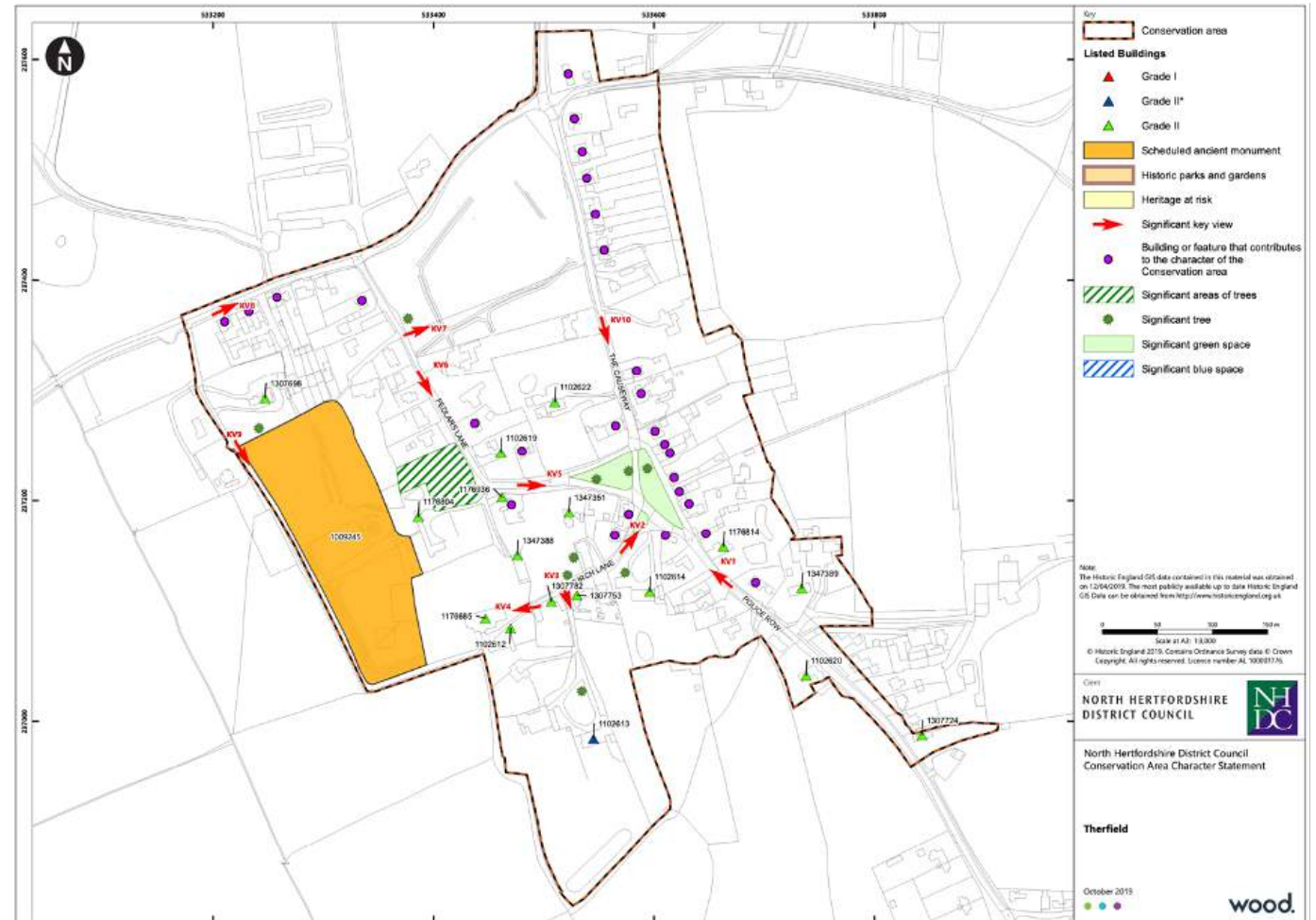
3. Assessment (cont.)

Heritage Assets

3.7 A Heritage Statement has been included with the application and this highlights a number of key matters to take into account in designing the scheme at Tussocks.

- A 'key view' identified looking southwards along The Causeway.
- The frontage view of Tussocks within the street scene.
- The linear line of properties to the north of the site along The Causeway.
- The symmetrical arrangement of the Fordham Terraces to the north.
- The position and symmetrical appearance of School House to the south.
- Prevalent materials on The Causeway include pale yellow brick of Fordham's Terrace and the School House.

3.7 These key aspects have been taken into account in designing the scheme, its layout, design features and materials.



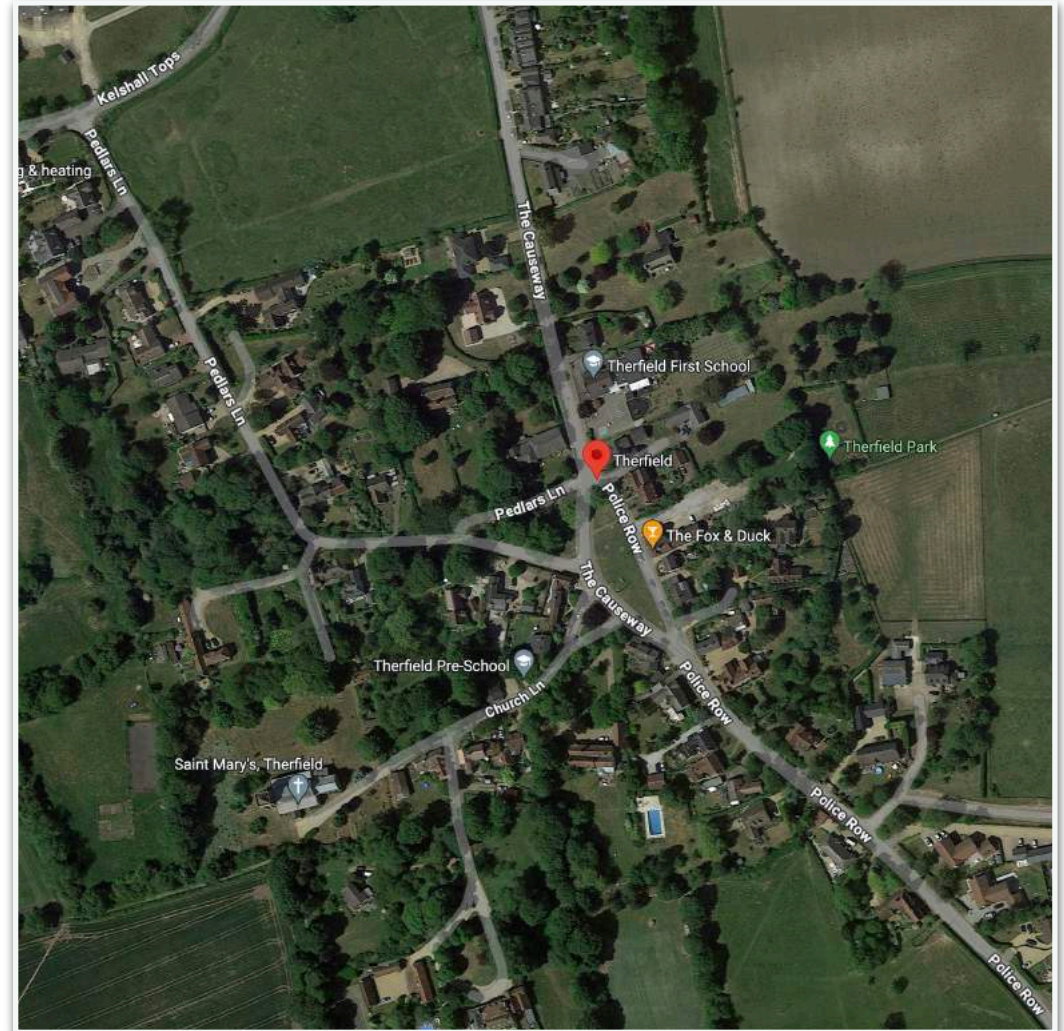
3. Assessment (cont.)

Local Amenities and Sustainable Location Credentials

3.8 The site is located on one of the main access roads into the village and is located within close walking distance to the following village services and facilities (shown on the image):

- Therfield First School
- Therfield Pre-School
- Therfield Chapel
- The Fox & Duck public house
- Therfield Fordham Memorial Hall
- Saint Mary's Church
- Therfield Cricket Club
- Therfield Park

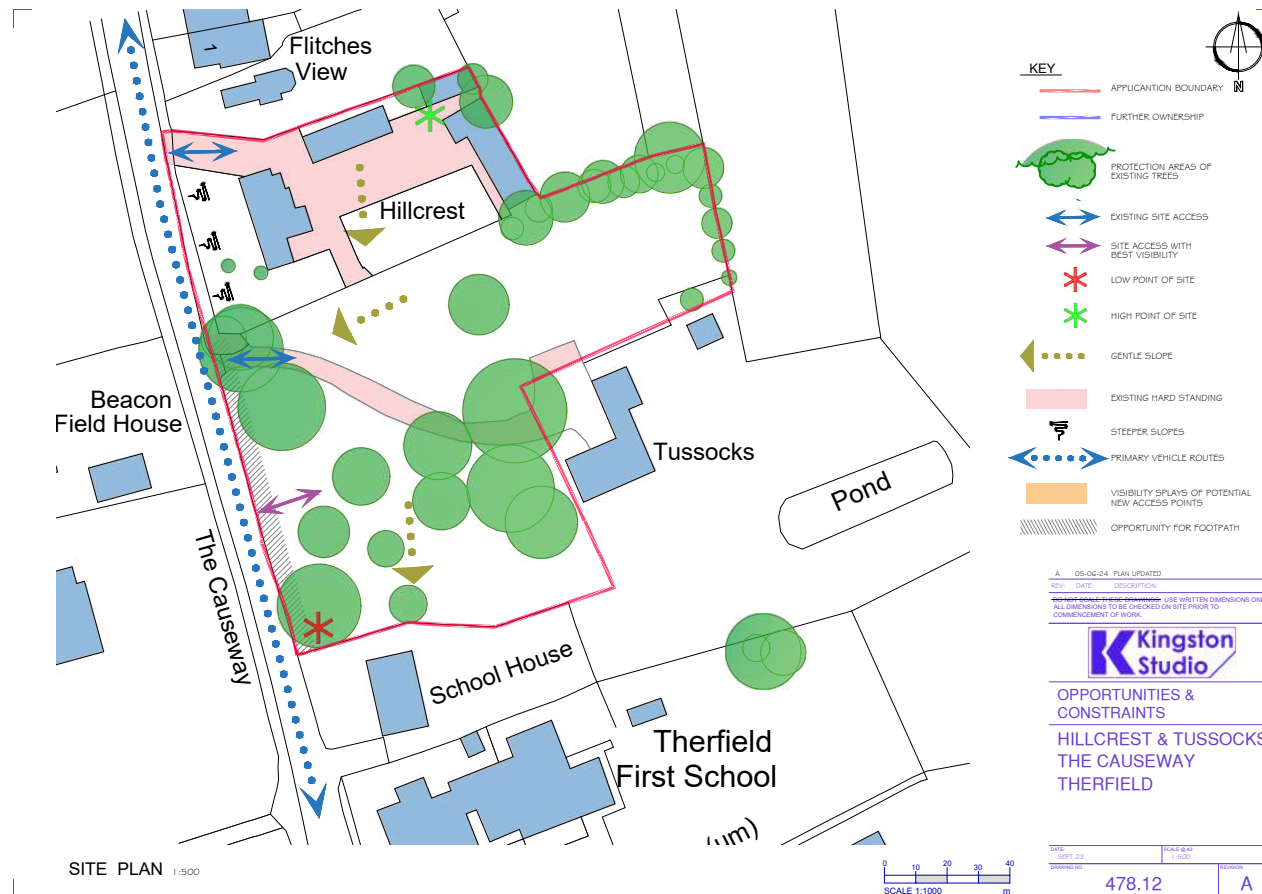
3.9 The application site is therefore located in a sustainable and accessible location to the north of the village centre.



4. Evaluation

Constraints and Opportunities

4.1 The plan below highlights a number of key constraints and opportunities that are presented by the site. How the site slopes down to main road to the west of the site (The Causeway), positioning of buildings both within the site, and location of existing trees create both constraints but also opportunities and have been taken into account in designing the scheme. The arrangement buildings within Hillcrest create the opportunity to provide a higher density courtyard development, while the more spacious character of Tussocks with a greater number of trees provide more of an opportunity for lower density development, reflective of the surrounding area. The plan also highlights where an opportunities exists to improve access into the site from Tussocks.



5. Design

Layout

5.1 Specific reference has been paid to the layout and context of surrounding built form and the importance of protecting the character and appearance of the village's Conservation Area. The layout has been discussed with the Council's Planning Case Officer and Conservation Officer, and they are supportive of the proposed layout for 7 no. dwellings. The design has also been landscape-led, which responds to the existing landforms and topography. Existing mature trees and hedges will be retained around the site and has formed a basis for the low density nature of the scheme.

5.2 From a review of the surrounding context, it is considered important to maintain the frontage building alignment with the properties to the north of the application site along The Causeway and also School House to the south of the application site. It is also felt that the site frontage needs to maintain an open feel to the scheme, with deeper landscaped setbacks from the main road.

5.3 The depth and width of the site allow for consideration of development towards the central part of the site. The existing house at Tussocks that is to be retained and existing outbuildings to the north of the application site at Hillcrest, provide a second alignment of buildings set behind the frontage development. The scheme seeks to reflect this alignment within the proposed new dwelling at Plot 5 and carport structure to the north of the existing dwelling at Tussock.

5.4 Vehicular access will continue to be from The Causeway, but has been relocated to the centre of the site to create a safer access and egress to and from the main road.



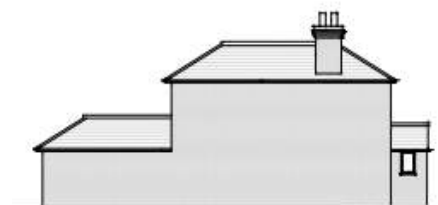
5. Design (cont.)

Scale, Mass and Form

5.5 The proposed dwellings will comprises a mix of two storey housing similar in height to existing properties along The Causeway, and reflects existing properties scales, mass, form and architectural detailing. The form of development therefore respects the general character of the area and so the proposals do not appear an overdevelopment of the site.



WEST ELEVATION 1:100
PLOT 1, 2 & 3



NORTH ELEVATION 1:100
PLOT 4



WEST ELEVATION 1:100



NORTH ELEVATION 1:100
PLOT 5



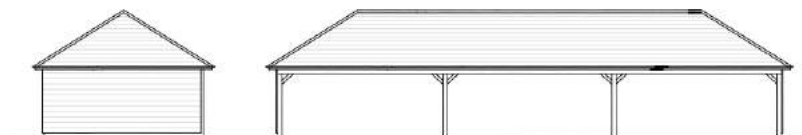
WEST ELEVATION 1:100



NORTH ELEVATION 1:100
PLOTS 6 & 7



WEST ELEVATION 1:100



NORTH ELEVATION 1:100 WEST ELEVATION 1:100

5. Design (cont.)

Scale, Mass and Form (cont.)



C 04-06-24 SCHEME UPDATED
B 08-03-24 SCHEME UPDATED
A 10-10-23 PLANNING ADDED

DO NOT SCALE THESE DRAWINGS. USE WRITTEN DIMENSIONS ONLY.
ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE CHECKED ON SITE PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF WORK.

Kingston Studio
STREET SCENES

HILLCREST & TUSOCKS
THE CAUSEWAY
THERFIELD

DATE	10/01/24	SCALE	1:250
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5. Design (cont.)

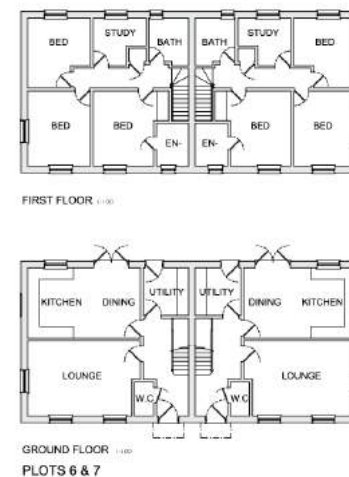
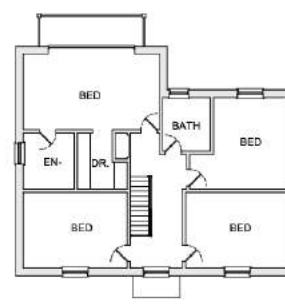
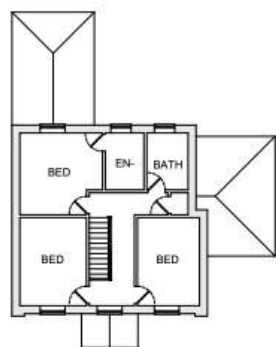
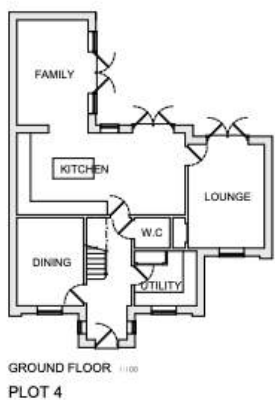
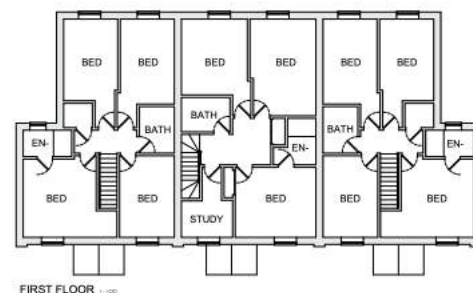
Unit Mix and Internal Design

5.6 The unit mix and sizes of development proposed in this application will include:

- 4 No. three bed dwellings
- 3 No. four bed dwellings

5.7 The internal sizes of the dwellings will meet the national prescribed standards.

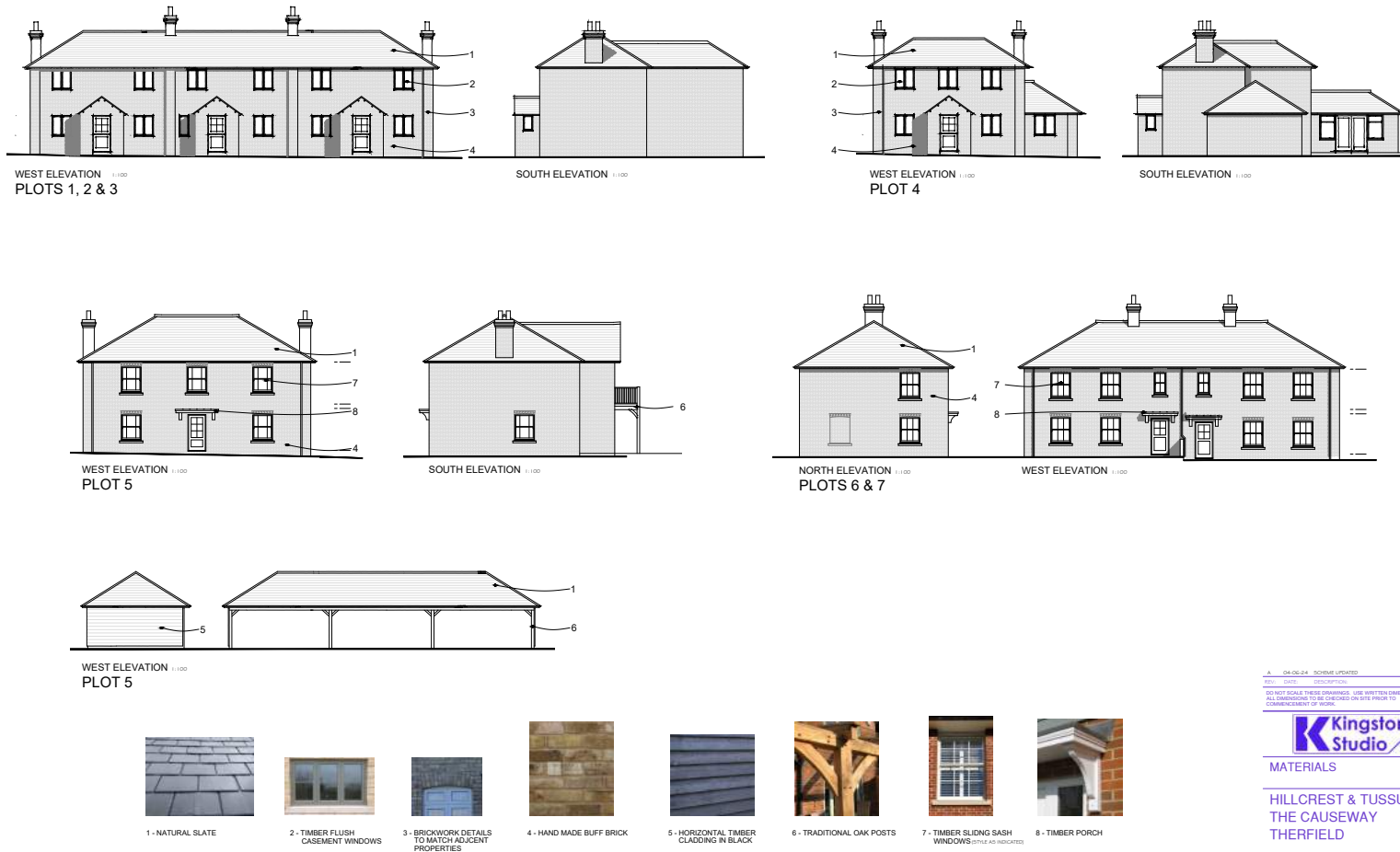
5.8 At least 50% of dwellings will be built to M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard.



5. Design (cont.)

Materials and Elevation Treatments

5.9 The following drawing shows the materials to be used for the proposed development, which will be in keeping with the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.



A 04/06/24 - SCHEME UPDATED

REV. 0001 - 04/06/24

DO NOT SCALE THESE DRAWINGS. USE WRITTEN DIMENSIONS ONLY. ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE CHECKED ON SITE PRIOR TO COMMENCEMENT OF WORK.

Kingston Studio

MATERIALS

HILLCREST & TUSSUCKS
THE CAUSEWAY
THERFIELD

DATE: 04/06/24
BY: PJ
SCALE: 1:100
478.10
A

5. Design (cont.)

Access

5.10 Vehicular access to the site will be relocated to the centre of the site, this has allowed for improved highway visibility and also will present an opportunity to create more of an entrance to the site and views through to the central part of the development. A new pedestrian footpath is proposed along The Causeway in front of Tussocks and also extends northwards through the front of Hillcrest. This will improve pedestrian accessibility along The Causeway.

Parking Strategy

5.11 Each of the properties will have direct access to parking from their properties and the amount of parking proposed (at least 2 No. parking spaces) will be compliant with the Council's parking standards. Two visitor parking spaces have been provided either side of the access driveway between plots 4 and 6, allowing visitor and service vehicles to park off The Causeway.

5.12 Provision is also made for cycle storage within the properties along with electrical charging points for vehicles.

Refuse Strategy

5.13 Each of the properties will have space to store bins and a bin collection points have been provided on site to allow refuse vehicles to collect bins on collection day.



5. Design (cont.)

Landscaping, Ecology and Biodiversity

5.14 The scheme has been designed to retain as many of the trees within the site and boundary hedgerows around the application site as possible , to provide a landscape led approach to the design of the layout and scheme.

5.15 Setbacks and open space has also been retained at the frontage of the site to protect key views along The Causeway and to ensure the proposed scheme create a high quality design frontage onto the main road.



6. Conclusion

6.1 This Design and Access Statement accompanies a full planning application for a residential development comprising demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings at Hillcrest and erection of 7 No. new dwellings at Hillcrest and land at Tussocks to the east of The Causeway, within the village of Therfield.

6.2 The scheme has been informed by a thorough assessment of the existing site and surrounding area, planning opportunities and constraints. The layout has also been discussed with the Council's Planning Case Officer and Conservation Officer, who are in support of the proposed scheme.

6.3 The intention of the development is to create an integrated and well-designed scheme, which contributes positively to the Conservation Area as well as providing housing and land supply mix in the local area.

6.4 The principle of good design underpins the proposal, as does the aim to enhance the visual character of the site. Additionally, through a contextual review of the surrounding area and understanding the local design considerations, it has been important to retain a low density scheme that protects the key view along The Causeway southwards into the village along with protecting the landscaped eastern edge of the village.

6.5 The proposals are suitable for the site in terms of land use, amount of development, access, layout, and appearance. The sites uniqueness is demonstrated as a:

- Fully enclosed site within the settlement boundary.
- The low density will be keeping with the surrounding area, creating sensitive development that seeks to protect a key view of the Conservation Area.
- Relocation of the vehicular access to the centre of the application site will not only meet highway standards, but will improve highway safety with improved visibility to and from The Causeway.
- Improved pedestrian accessibility provide by the new footpath along The Causeway.
- The scheme has been landscaped led and existing trees and hedgerows have been retained helping to protect and enhance biodiversity opportunities on the application site.
- Local Guide principles have been adhered to, creating a high-quality designed scheme.
- The application site represent a sustainable location and construction.

6. Conclusion





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