

Pentangle Design Group

Planning and Design Statement

For the replacement Dwelling, including basement, swimming pool(s) and Garden Pergola and Kitchen at
35 Grays Lane, Hitchin

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November 2025
Revision A

1.0 Introduction

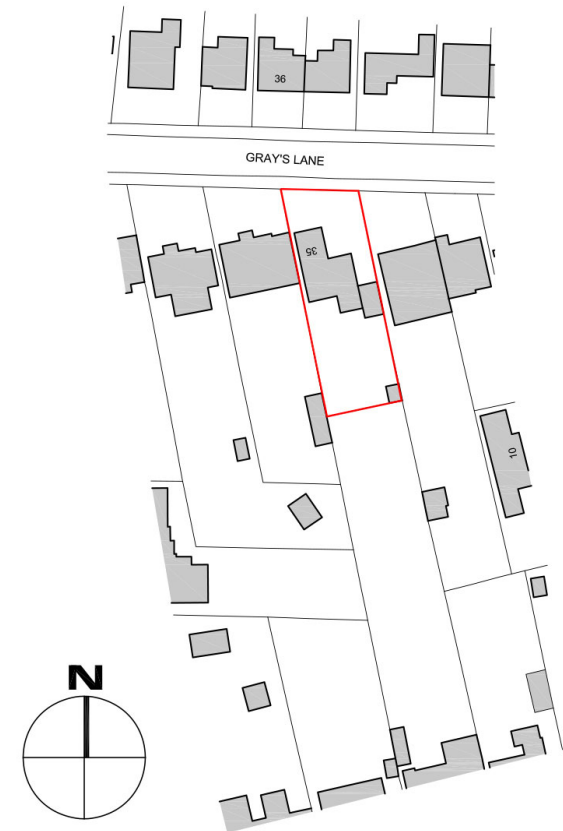
This Design & Access Statement supports a full planning application for a replacement dwelling at 35 Grays Lane, Hitchin.

The proposal seeks to replace the existing house with a high-quality, energy-efficient family home designed in a neo-Georgian architectural language, incorporating a basement level and a second storey contained within the roof form.

The application is accompanied by the following specialist reports prepared by others:

- Energy Statement
- Flood Risk Statement
- Drainage Strategy
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

The statement demonstrates how the proposed development responds positively to the site context, local character, planning policy, and good design principles, while delivering a sustainable and attractive home for future occupants.



2.0 Local Characteristics

Grays Lane is characterised by a mixture of detached properties of varied architectural styles, generally set back from the road with generous front gardens and mature landscaping. The area exhibits:

- A predominance of traditional forms with pitched roofs.
- Variety of street scene properties; predominantly with a double aspect nature with attached garage
- Materials including red brick, render, tile hanging and clay roof tiles.
- Varied but generally spaciouly wide plots where the properties fill the site width.

A rhythm of houses that, while not uniform, creates a pleasant suburban character.

It is noted that the street scene includes primarily detached and semi-detached homes. There are plots where flats are located within the street scene

The replacement dwelling has been carefully designed to respect this established context. Its scale and proportions are consistent with neighbouring homes, and the proposed form sits comfortably within the existing street scene while offering an uplift in architectural quality.



Image Above (top):

Plot to the west of application site, note double aspect and design

Image Above (Bottom):

Property on the Grays Lane, included to demonstrate the broad variety of architectural styles immediately within the context



Image Above:

Plots immediately to the right (East) of the proposal site.

Note the double aspect and garage position/ composition.

Both plots extend the full width of the site plot allowing for side access to the east of each unit.

Central feature architectural element, announcing the front

entrance has been included within the design.

The right-most plot in this image has recently been approved and provides habitable accommodation to the ground, first and second floor, much like this application and proposal

3.0 Proposals

The proposal seeks approval for a replacement two-storey dwelling with a basement and second floor within the roof.

The key aspects of the design include:

- Neo-Georgian architectural style, using red brickwork, stone cappings and brick arch detailing.
- High-quality powder-coated aluminium sash-style windows, design to compliment and be appropriate for the façade.

A restrained and elegant frontage framed by symmetrical window arrangements.

A tiled pitched roof form with a crowned roof element which enables accommodation in the roof without excessive massing.

Windowed dormers, clad in lead

are proposed in a uniform fashion at second storey level.

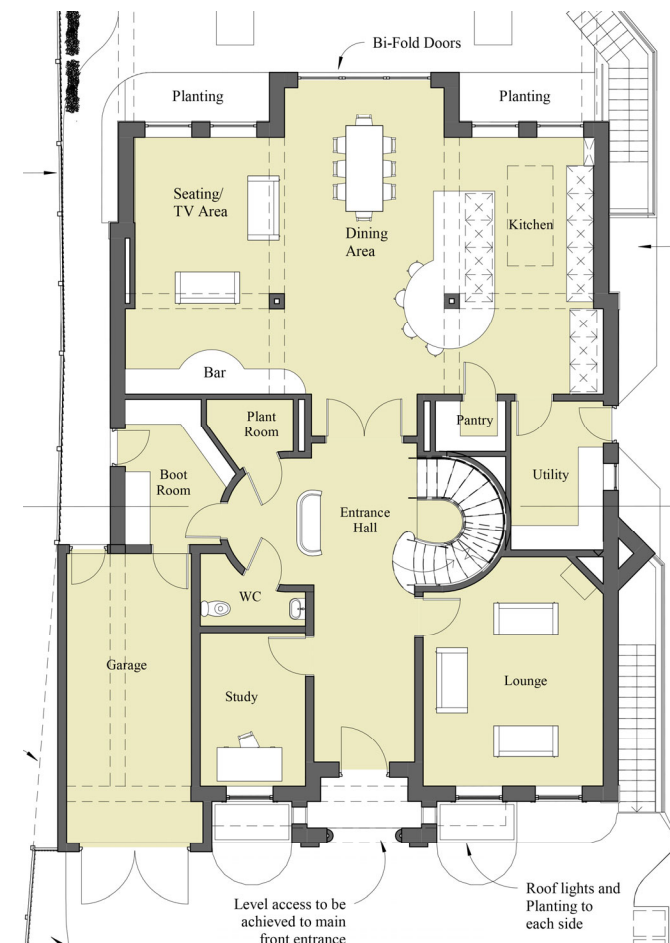
A basement providing leisure, storage or ancillary accommodation.

Car parking is retained on site using the existing "in" and "out" gate arrangement, allowing safe vehicle circulation. A garage, with internal measurements of: 3.0m x 7.0m, as required under the SPD for North Herts.

The garage has been purposefully designed to integrate into the classically symmetrical design, but not be such that it jars with the geometry.

The positioning of the proposed dwelling is such that it does not intrude on neighbouring properties or the boundaries.

The building will primarily utilise a timber frame construction to maximise thermal performance and reduce embodied carbon.



5.0 Trees and Landscape

The proposals respond to respect root protection areas for those trees retained.

It has been necessary to remove vegetation and create a clearing within the existing garden which had been neglected for many years prior to the recent change in owners of the property.

While unnecessary loss of vegetation has been a principle guide to the proposals, much of the foliage has been deemed unexceptional and not retainable in its quality and provision to the wider scheme.

A landscape plan accompanies this application and provides:

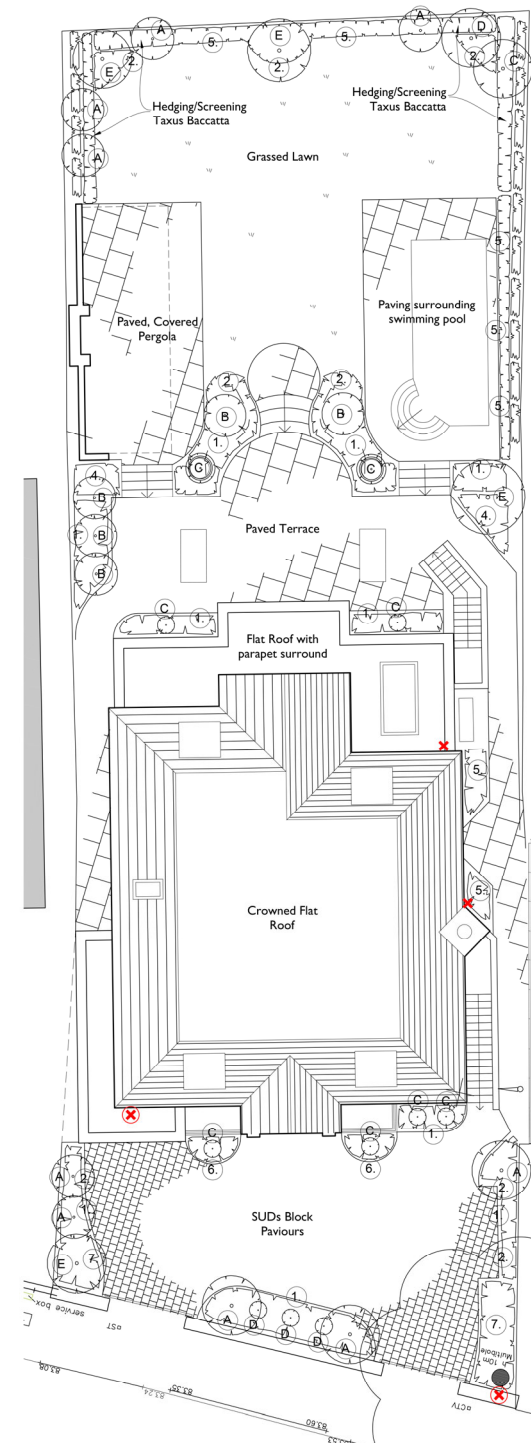
- Retention of trees and foliage where feasible.
- New soft landscaping enhancements including lawned areas, shrub planting, quality trees and ornamental trees.

- Improvements to biodiversity consistent with the recommendations of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Hard landscaping, including driveways, is designed to be sympathetic to the setting while maintaining drainage performance by being of SUDS category and being freely draining.

Within the garden areas the landscape design is such that there are pockets of controlled planting suitable for the locations and for the design intention including evergreen planting around the pool area and interesting pleached trees chosen for their yearly flowering cycle bringing interest to the garden.

An Arboricultural Report is submitted alongside this application and reaffirms the principles as laid out in the proposals as well as detailed explanation of what can, will and will not be retained as part of this scheme.



6.0 Highways Considerations

The property benefits from an established vehicle access arrangement with separate "in" and "out" access. These accesses each benefit from an existing and established drop kerb to each cross-over.

These cross-overs are intended to remain in place and have been utilised as part of the replacement front boundary wall design.

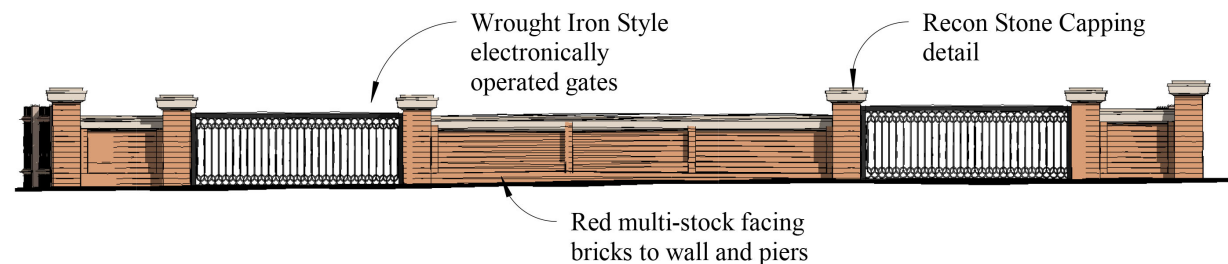
Gates have been designed into the scheme ensuring:

- Safe ingress and egress to Grays Lane.

- Controlled access into and out of the proposed dwelling plot
- Minimal vehicle conflict on the highway.

Sufficient on-site parking suitable to meet local standards for a dwelling of this scale has been designed into the proposals

The development does not intensify vehicle movements beyond the current residential use and therefore has no adverse impact on the local highway network.



7.0 Scale and Street Scene

The dwelling has been designed to sit comfortably within its plot and the surrounding context.

The design and scale of the width has taken into account the general arrangement of dwellings on the Grays Lane, taking note that most dwellings typically fit the width of the plot with an access down one side for rear garden access.

In the design of the dwelling, other key considerations included:

- The ridge height, which has been designed to be consistent with both neighbouring properties. The ridge is proportional to both dwellings and does not overly dominate the street scene by the nature of the pitch to the front elevation.
- The massing is broken up with the use of a principal storey above ground floor

and a modestly scaled roof form accommodating the second storey.

- The massing is further broken up the central gable feature as well as the single storey garage element projecting out at ground floor
- The basement ensures additional accommodation needs are met without increasing the above-ground bulk.
- The front elevation maintains residential proportions and enhances the character of the area through high-quality detailing.

The rear of the property has been designed so that there is a single storey ground floor element only, design so that neighbouring amenity is not overshadowed



8.0 Use and Amount

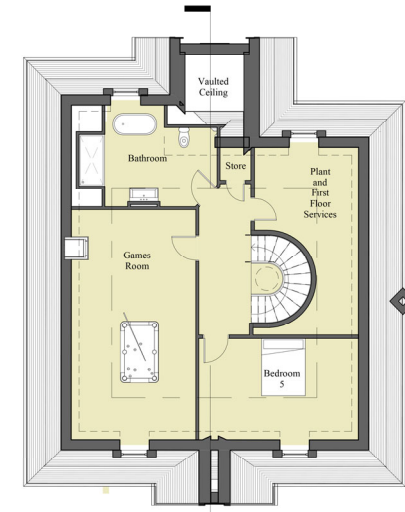
The proposed development remains in residential (C3) use, replacing an existing dwelling with a new family home.

The amount of development has been determined by:

- The need to provide a modern home with sufficient living and bedroom space.

- The opportunity to deliver additional space within the basement and roof without over-development.
- Maintaining generous garden spaces to front and rear.

The proposal does not represent over-intensification and remains in keeping with the established suburban character.



9.0 Internal Layout and Personal Access

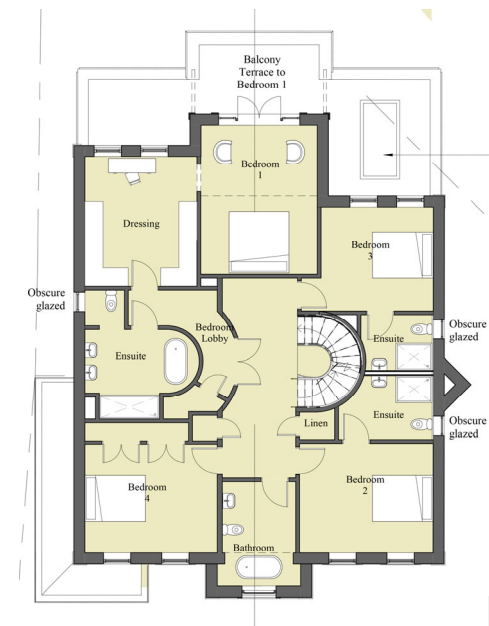
The internal layout provides a logical and functional arrangement of rooms supporting modern family living. Key features include:

- Clear separation of living, kitchen/dining, and utility spaces on the ground floor.
- Bedrooms on upper levels, including accommodation in the roof with

appropriate headroom and daylight levels.

- Basement areas for ancillary or leisure use, designed with safe and compliant means of escape.

Personal access to the building is level and convenient, ensuring inclusivity in accordance with Approved Document M guidance.



10.0 Access / Sustainability

The development incorporates several sustainability measures:

The sustainability strategy for the development follows a fabric-first approach, supported by low-carbon building systems and future proofed infrastructure, ensuring long-term environmental performance without compromising architectural quality.

- Timber frame construction for improved thermal performance and reduced embodied carbon.
- High-performance aluminium frame glazing systems, incorporating triple glazed elements where appropriate.

G value and U values will be carefully considered in this aspect of the development.

- High levels of insulation with careful airtightness detailing will be employed with the construction detailing of the design

- The reduced use of concrete and mortar also supports sustainable construction principles, particularly in relation to the basement structure.
- Waste generation and material sourcing are better controlled through the use of timber frame construction.
- Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) for low-carbon heating and hot water.
- Utilising local employment and materials
- EV charging points will be installed within the garage
- An MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) system will be incorporated into the construction strategy, typically recycling 80-95% of internal heat from extracted air
- A Building Management System, making the home smart in all aspects, including heating and

lighting will also be incorporated into the home system, enabling direct control and understanding of the buildings performance.

- Passive design strategies, including glazing placement and performance have been incorporated to ensure passive daylighting as well as a strategy for reduced overheating and cooling in the property.

The proposal therefore achieves a strong balance between heritage-inspired architecture and modern environmental performance.

As can be seen by the accompanying Energy Statement, it has been possible to achieve a 65% carbon reduction; an improvement of 35% from the recommended North Herts Policy requirements.

11.0 Amenity for Residents

The new dwelling provides excellent amenity for the future occupants through:

- Generous internal room sizes, including extended ceiling heights and extended window proportions ensuring the home provides healthy living standards
- High levels of natural light and ventilation.

Again, through integration of large glazing and the MVHR system

- Private rear garden space significantly exceeding minimum standards.

Including incorporating a variety of planting and trees which will also enhance the wildlife environment

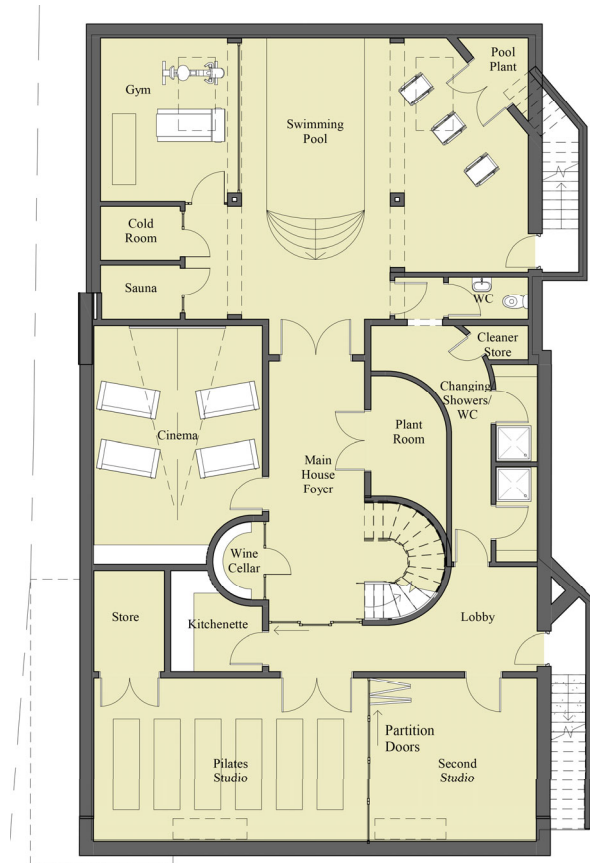
- Good privacy distances to neighbouring properties

including no overlooking to neighbours through obtrusive side aspect glazing

- Acoustic benefits from the timber frame and high-performance glazing.
- A retained non-intrusive amenity to neighbours by incorporating cinema, gym and swimming amenity to the basement area where high-performance acoustic solutions will be installed, preventing undue noise and annoyance.

By locating all leisure and plant-intensive uses below ground level, the proposal ensures there is no visual, acoustic or amenity impact beyond that of a conventional family dwelling.

Overall, the proposal delivers a comfortable, high-quality home that meets modern expectations.



12.0 Proposed Site Plan

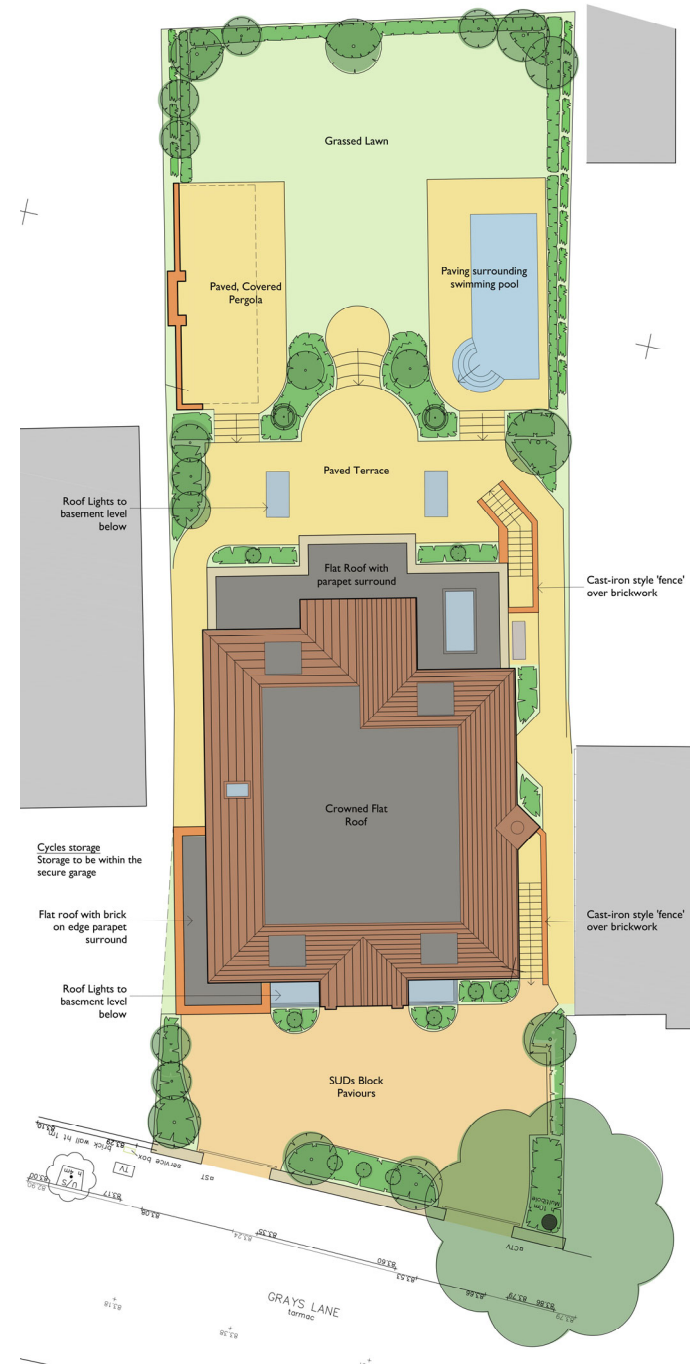
The accompanying site plan included within this submission illustrates:

- Building footprint, orientation and relationship to boundaries which are carefully set back to ensure building distances are appropriate to neighbours as well as preventing any undue overshadowing.
- Retained access points and driveway layout which utilises established highways access
- Position of retained and new landscaping, including reduced levels of paving, reducing overlooking to

neighbouring gardens

- External amenity areas, including grassed areas, location of the kitchen garden/ pergola and garden swimming pool
- Parking and driveway locations
- Planting and new tree locations including proposed varieties
- Bird and bat box locations

The arrangement has been developed to respond sensitively to site constraints and ensure efficient use of the plot as well as an intentional philosophy to improve the plot, the context and create wildlife habitats.



13.0 Relevant Local Planning Policy

The following policies are relevant to the redevelopment of residential plots and replacement dwellings:

Policy SP1 – Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Supports development that enhances the sustainability and quality of the district.

A replacement dwelling with improved energy performance and modern construction aligns strongly with this objective.

It is hoped that the authority will agree that this document provides strong evidence in support of this policy

Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability

Requires high-quality design that respects character, delivers sustainable construction, and enhances the built environment.

These proposals achieves this through:

- Sensitive massing, use and selection of materials.
- Timber-frame construction.
- Integration of low-carbon technology.
- Use of local employment for construction
- Building design and orientation of glazing

Policy D1 – Sustainable Design

Requires development to deliver high environmental performance, including efficient use of resources.

The proposal's timber frame, ASHP and high insulation levels respond positively, including those reasons cited throughout this document

Policy NE3 – Biodiversity

Requires development to protect and where possible enhance biodiversity.

This application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and includes landscaping improvements.

Where it has not been possible to retain trees and shrubbery within the site, supporting evidence and reasons have been provided for removal of these.

The new scheme has been designed to further enhance biodiversity within the site.

Policy D2 – House Extensions, Replacement Dwellings and Outbuildings

Replacement dwellings should:

- Be appropriate to the scale and character of the site and surroundings.
- Not be materially larger in scale unless justified.
- Respect spacing, privacy and amenity.

The proposed dwelling, though enhanced architecturally, sits comfortably in the street scene and maintains appropriate massing thanks to the use of the roof space and a basement to avoid excessive above-ground bulk.

While the existing property is recognized as a single storey dwelling (bungalow), it is believed that this is not the best use of the plot – ie, would be considered under-utilisation of the site.

These proposals submit a suitable family dwelling, in-line with this policy providing good

accommodation for a large family seeking a good quality home with additional 'benefits' within that dwelling.

The scale of the visible proposed dwelling is commensurate with adjacent dwellings and those found locally.

The existing dwelling is of poor quality and remains uninhabitable due to poor maintenance. The dwelling is deemed to be of low architectural quality as well as not being fit for renovation.

There is damp, mold and dilapidated structural construction throughout meaning that retaining the existing building for maintenance is not financially viable.

The replacement, therefore, within a modern, high-standard dwelling fits in this location.

Spacing of the development is no more onerous than any dwelling on Grays. It is submitted that the spacing on the width of the site is 'better' through careful design

Policy D3 – Protecting Living Conditions

Ensures that new development protects neighbouring amenity in terms of privacy, sunlight, daylight and noise.

The proposal maintains appropriate separation distances and garden depths.

The neighbouring amenity remains unaffected by the proposals and submits that the amenity is improved through a proposed reduction in paving and garden levels to the rear of the site.

Policy NE7 – Reducing Flood Risk

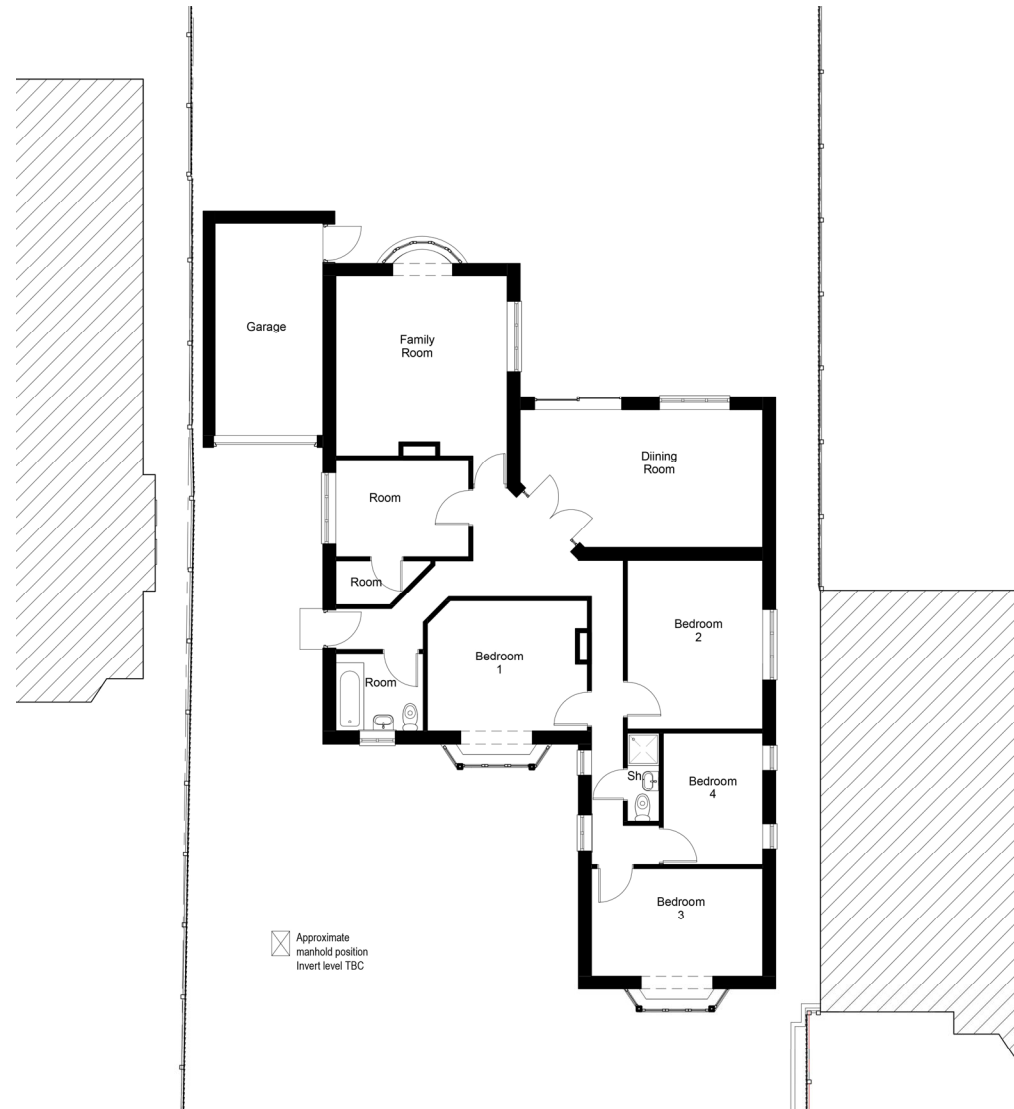
Requires a flood risk assessment for relevant sites and appropriate mitigation.

The accompanying specialist report addresses this fully.

Policy T2 – Parking

Requires parking provision in accordance with local standards.

The proposal retains the existing “in” and “out” arrangement and provides parking fully in line with expectations for a dwelling of this scale.



14.0 Relevant National Planning Policy

The following NPPF sections are relevant to replacement dwellings and the enhancement of existing housing stock:

NPPF Paragraphs 7–12 – Achieving Sustainable Development

These paragraphs reinforce that planning should support sustainable development by improving the quality of the built environment, ensuring a mix of homes, and enabling well-designed places.

A replacement dwelling that significantly improves energy efficiency, architectural quality and long-term usability aligns fully with these aims.

These proposals also submit a larger family home with improved design and quality from the existing dwelling on the site

NPPF Paragraphs 124–131 – Achieving Well-Designed Places

The NPPF encourages developments that optimise site potential, improve the quality of housing, and respond to local character while allowing for innovation.

The proposal achieves this by:

- Delivering a high-quality dwelling design which utilises the plot.
- Provision of a architecturally interesting and characterful dwelling fitting well into the grays Lane street scene
- Using modern construction techniques (timber frame, ASHP) which enhance the quality of the home
- Enhancing the appearance of the site and its relationship to the street scene and the properties to

the east and west.

- Innovating on the 'standards of living' through provision of additional amenity elements within the scheme, including basement cinema, swimming pools, gyms and work-out studio
- Optimized use of a dwelling plot

NPPF Paragraph 130 – Upgrading Existing Housing Stock

This paragraph highlights the importance of development that:

- Functions well over its lifetime, which will be the intention of the dwelling, including allowances for improvement of the layouts, if required in the life-span of the dwelling through floor spans that allow internal wall flexibility
- Allowance of generous room sizes, including generous connecting halls and landings which would enable access to those who might require enhanced space standards
- Improvement on the housing stock generally
- Improves established neighbourhoods through design and architectural character

- Adds to the overall quality of the area.

A replacement dwelling that significantly outperforms the existing property in sustainability and design positively meets this objective.

NPPF Paragraph 159–169 – Flood Risk

Supports proposals that avoid increased risk from flooding and require site-specific assessment where necessary.

This application is accompanied by a comprehensive Flood Risk Statement and drainage strategy.

NPPF Paragraphs 119–121 – Efficient Use of Land

Replacement dwellings are supported where they make effective use of land without overdevelopment.

The proposal respects the established spacious character of the area.

15.0 Response to the Pre-App

A pre-app was acknowledged on the 2nd October 2025 with a return date set for the 13th November.

Unfortunately, the report was not made available ahead of this application submission.

These proposals have been developed having full regard to the key matters typically raised by the Local Authority, including scale, massing, neighbouring amenity, highways, flood and drainage as well as design quality.

These proposals have therefore been submitted in a comprehensive and robust form to support an efficient and timely determination of this application.

It is understood that any supplemental or subsequent adjustments to this application will be available due to the report having not been made available.

The applicant remains open to proportionate refinements where required and agreed.

16.0 Conclusions

The replacement dwelling at 35 Grays Lane represents a well-considered, high-quality proposal that:

- Respects and enhances local character, through considered, well-placed and thoughtful architectural design
- Delivers a sustainable, energy-efficient and performative modern home.
- Retains the existing access configuration and provides adequate parking, including the integration of EV charging points
- Protects existing good quality trees where possible and improves landscape

setting for the context of the dwelling as well as for habitat purposes.

- Sits comfortably in the street scene due to carefully controlled scale and architectural detailing.

The proposal complies with relevant local and national planning policies and will make a positive contribution to the built environment. Approval is therefore respectfully sought.

With the above in mind, the drawings associated with this application along with the supporting evidence, we welcome the Local Planning Officer to welcome these proposals and grant approval.

A.0 Appendix A

Existing Dwelling frontage



A.1 Appendix B

Tree/ Garden Photos – note the ill health nature of the planting



A.2 Appendix C

Tree/ Garden Photos – note the ill health nature of the planting

