

PLANNING, DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

Hexton Manor, Hexton Hertfordshire SG5 3JH



December 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 planning application for replacement of an outbuilding with a single dwelling, within the Hexton Manor Estate. 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 wider site comprises a large detached main dwelling building of Hexton Manor itself, 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 The site is in a secluded location within the village of Hexton, albeit close to the village amenities. The building that is the subject of this application is known as the 'Kennels', being as this use for the previous decades. The building is single storey with a low pitched roof and large lean-to front extension element. It is located adjacent the existing cottages, to the eastern part of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.
- 2.3 In regard to planning policy designations, the building is within the Green Belt. The building is not a curtilage listed building to the main Hexton Manor and is not within the Hexton Conservation Area. The site is within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. 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.



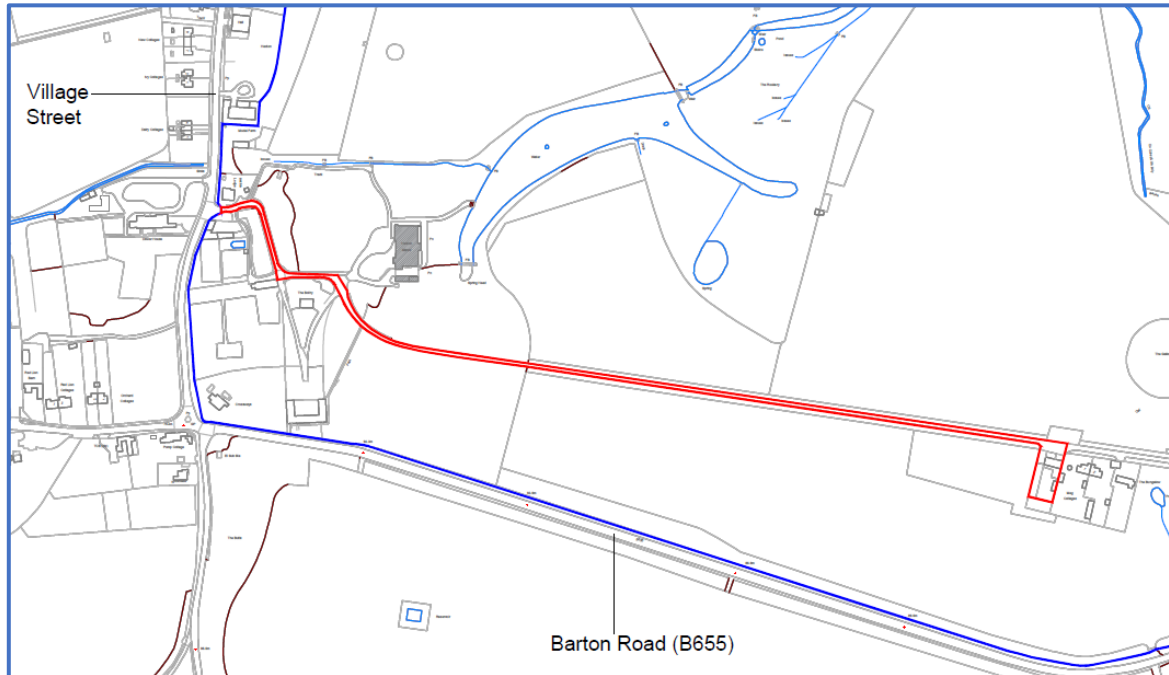


Figure 1 – Location plan extract of the application site and surroundings



Figure 2 – View of front elevation of Kennels building





Figure 3 – View of rear elevation of Kennels building

3. Planning history

- 3.1 The recent planning history for the site building is as follows.
- 3.2 23/02727/FP - Change of use and conversion of existing outbuilding to one 3-bed dwelling to include single storey front and rear extensions following demolition of existing front extension with parking and landscaping – Planning permission granted, not yet implemented.

4. The proposal

- 4.1 The proposal consists of replacement of The Kennels building with a single dwelling. The dwelling layout would provide entrance hall, kitchen, lounge, dining room and cloakroom at ground floor, with three bedrooms and bathroom at first floor.



- 4.2 The dwelling would measure 13.6 metres in width, 8.45 metres in maximum depth and 7.2 metres in ridge height. The pitched roof would have a central front gable feature, with through eaves dormer windows to front and rear.
- 4.3 The materials would be of rendered walls, with part exposed timbers at first floor, and plain clay roof tiles. Timber fenestration is proposed, painted in white.
- 4.4 Amenity space for the dwelling is proposed within the modest curtilage, with parking provision as two spaces. A turning area is provided for all vehicles including service vehicles, within the existing private access roads of the Estate.
- 4.5 Minor works for hard and soft landscaping are proposed, formation of private lawned garden area, with additional tree and hedgerow planting to boundaries.
- 4.6 The proposal consists of the following plans:
2023-27-101 - Proposed plans and elevations
2023-27-102 - Existing plan and elevations
2023-27-103 - Location and existing site plan
- 4.7 The following images are extracts from the principal drawings for the development, of existing and proposed site plans, proposed floor plans and elevations.



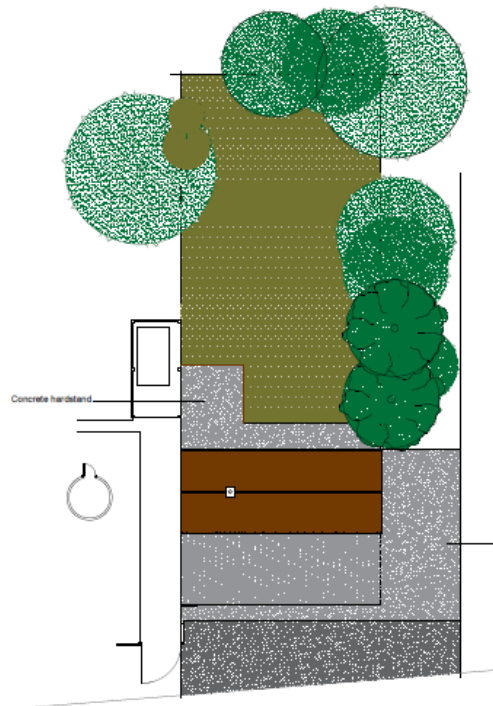


Figure 4 - Existing site plan extract

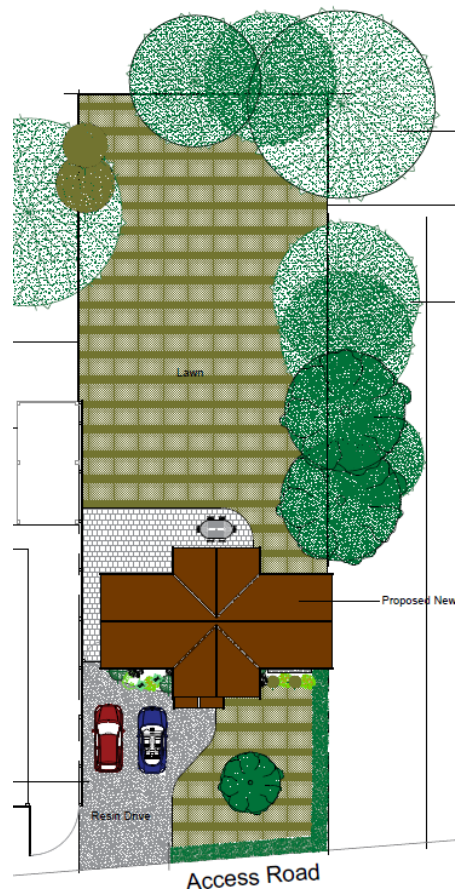


Figure 5 - Proposed site plan extract



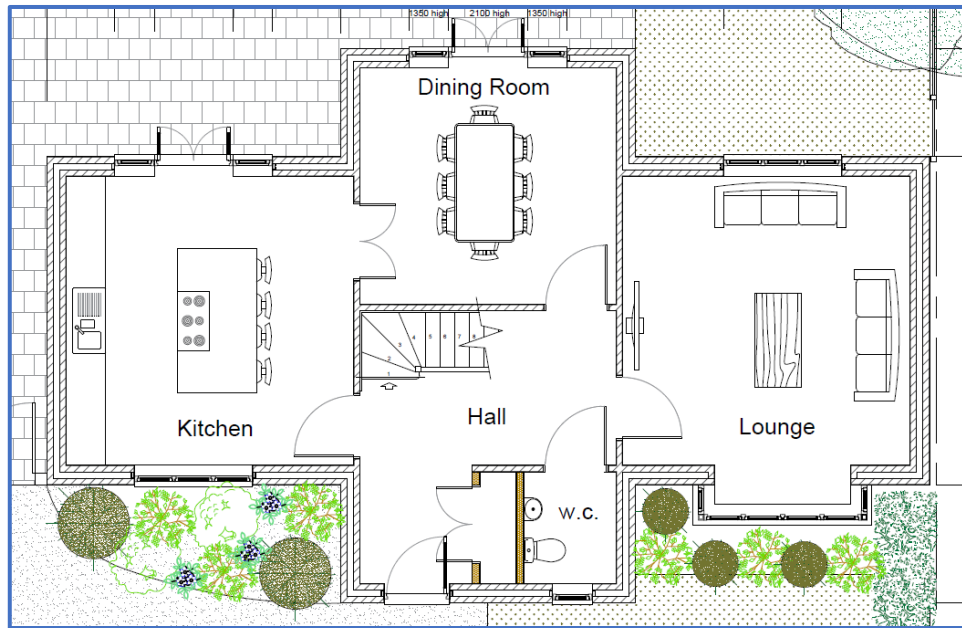


Figure 6 - Proposed ground floor plan

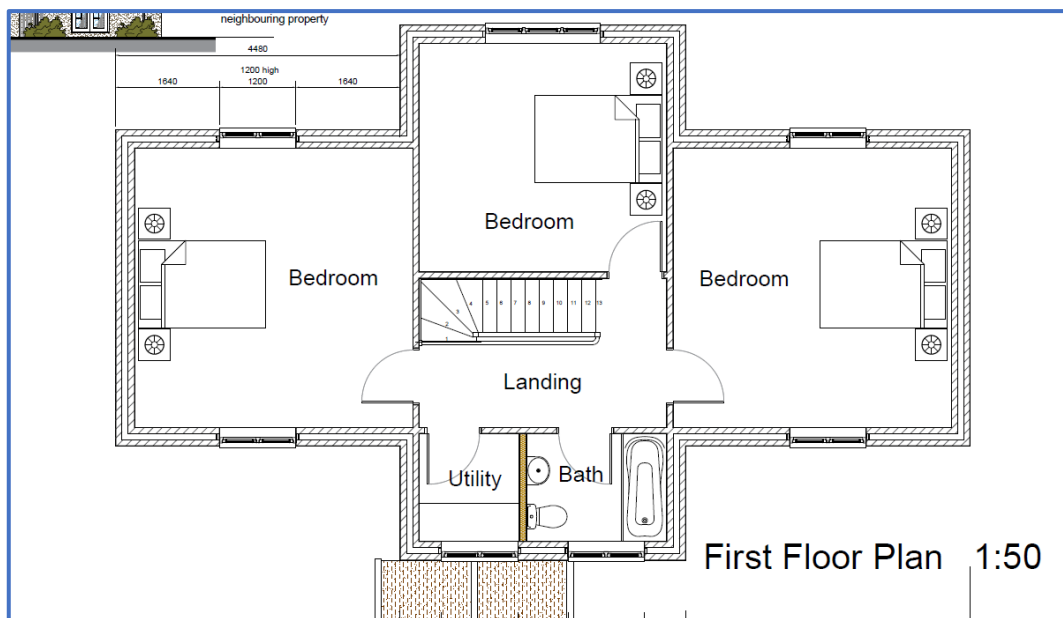


Figure 7 - Proposed first floor plan





Figure 8 - Proposed front elevation

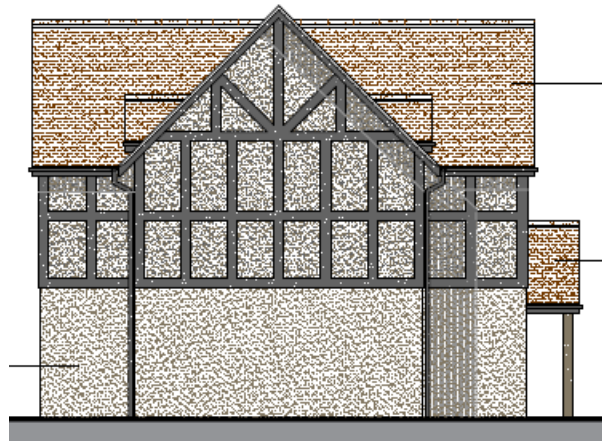


Figure 9 - Proposed side elevation



Figure 10 - Proposed rear 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 SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy

Policy SP5 - Countryside and Green Belt

Policy SP8 - Housing

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

Policy T1 - Assessment of transport matters

Policy T2 - Parking

Policy HS5 - Accessible and Adaptable Housing

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 2. Achieving sustainable development

Section 12. Achieving well-designed places

Section 13. Protecting Green Belt land

Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment



6. Principle and Green Belt

- 6.1 In regard to the actual principle of a separate dwelling on this site, this is acceptable in this case. This is due to the recent permission for extension and conversion of the current building to a three bedroom dwelling, which is the same as the proposed new dwelling.
- 6.2 This scheme would supersede the recent planning permission, for this dwelling to be built, instead of the building converted to a dwelling. Therefore, the actual principle of a new dwelling on this site and in this location, is considered wholly acceptable in this case.
- 6.3 The application site lies within the Green Belt and is 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. Paragraph 154 explains that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, except for listed exceptions.
- 6.4 One relevant exception is part d) which states, "the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;".
- 6.5 In assessing whether a replacement building is materially larger, the proposed increase in volume, footprint and floor area are commonly used indicators, as well as the visual impact of the proposal. The following section sets out the overall sizes of the existing and proposed buildings, for floor area, footprint, volume and height. These are set out as follows.



6.6 Existing Areas and Volumes:

Floor area = 171.1 sqm

Footprint = 179.6 sqm

Total Volume = 526.8 m³

Maximum Height = 5.3 m

Proposed Areas and Volumes:

Floor area = 142.4 sqm

Footprint = 84.3 sqm

Total Volume = 553.7 m³

Maximum Height = 7.2 m

The volume increase from the existing building to the proposed building = 5%.

6.7 As can be seen from the above figures for existing and proposed floorspace and volume, the resulting building would be only an increased volume of 5%, compared to the existing building. This is due to the footprint reduction of over 50%, a 29 sqm reduction in floorspace. These reductions in footprint and floorspace allows for the increased height of just 1.9 metres, to arrive at this only marginal 5% increased overall volume.

6.8 The replacement building would therefore not be materially larger than the existing, with only a 5% increased volume. This accords with the above exception. In regard to the requirement to be also in the same use, the 'current' building can effectively be considered to be in use as a dwelling, due to the extant permission for its conversion to a single dwelling. This now improved design of overall dwelling is proposed instead of the conversion dwelling. Therefore, the scheme also accords with this requirement and, accords with this overall exception of Green Belt policy.

6.9 In regard to the assessment of any harm upon the openness of the Green Belt, the building is secluded from any public viewpoint and the nearest highway of



Hitchin Road. Being of minor increased volume, the dwelling would result in no harmful impact upon the actual wider openness of the Green Belt.

6.10 The garden and parking area is formed from the natural curtilage around the building, with only that required to provide a high standard of amenity for occupiers as a single dwellinghouse. The dwelling is not at all extensive in size or impact, having no harm upon Green Belt openness from either the built form, or the external layout. The new dwelling would sit entirely comfortably within the very open and spacious overall site of the Estate.

6.11 In regard to the five purposes of the Green Belt, these are defined in the NPPF as follows:

"Green Belt serves five purposes:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land".*

6.12 The development would not conflict with any of the above five purposes of Green Belts. There would be no sprawl of a built up area, it would not lead to the merging of towns, there would be no encroachment into the countryside, there is no historic town to be affected in its setting and lastly, the development would not prevent urban regeneration of land.

6.13 It is therefore concluded the development constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt, being wholly within this exception as prescribed by Paragraph 154 d) of the NPPF, in combination with the extant planning permission for conversion of the current building to a dwelling. The replacement of the current building with this residential dwelling, would also preserve Green Belt openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.



The proposal therefore forms an exception to inappropriate development under local and national planning policy.

- 6.14 In view of the above, the proposal is considered to constitute appropriate development within the Metropolitan 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 dwelling, this is considered to be of high quality and entirely suitable for the building and context in this case. The design is to closely replicate the form and character of the adjacent pair of cottages, which are of the same two storey form, gabled roofs and detailing.
- 7.2 The materials would be of render and exposed timber detailing for elevations, together with clay roof tiles. Timber windows and doors are proposed. These materials match those of the adjacent cottages, which will read as a cohesive set of dwellings in design and appearance.
- 7.3 The proposal therefore relates very well to the scale, character and appearance of the immediate context of these dwellings, being entirely fitting 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 national planning policy, the NPPF advises that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Also, that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, as it creates better places in which to live and work and, helps make development acceptable to communities.
- 7.5 It is strongly asserted that the proposed development would create a high quality development of a single dwellinghouse, making a positive contribution to the



character of the area. This is achieved by the design responding well to the immediately adjacent cottages context, as part of the Hexton Manor Estate.

7.6 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states,

"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;

b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;

c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);".

7.7 It is considered the development would function well and, would add to the overall quality of the area for the long term. The layout of the dwelling would provide occupiers with excellent natural light levels and outlook, with private amenity space. The dwelling also exceeds the minimum floorspace requirements of the national space standards, giving a high standard of living conditions and residential amenity. The proposal would be visually attractive as a result of the good architecture and matching materials to the adjacent cottages. The scheme is sympathetic to its surrounding historic built environment, as a result of the considered design.

7.8 In regard to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is considered there would be no impact upon the AONB in this case, being of a minor increase in overall volume from the existing building, within the private site of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.

7.9 The development is appropriate in scale having regard to national policy, in this case for exceptions for development in the Green Belt. The proposal would conserve the AONB's special qualities, distinctive character and biodiversity, tranquility and remoteness, in accordance with national planning policy and the



overall purpose of the AONB designation. 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.

- 7.10 Overall, the well-designed dwelling is completely sympathetic to the existing context, with high quality matching materials, 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 building would be well spaced away from other residential properties. The closest dwellings are the adjacent semi-detached cottages. As can be seen from the Proposed site plan, the dwelling would sit comfortably away from these properties, having no harmful impact on either set of occupiers here.
- 8.2 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 building is not curtilage listed to the main listed building of Hexton Manor, as a grade II listed building. As was confirmed on the last approved application. 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 nearby Pump on Roadside Opposite Dairy Cottages, which is also grade II listed.

- 9.2 The building is located outside of the Hexton Conservation Area. The grounds of Hexton Manor are designated as a historic park and garden.
- 9.3 The main listed building of Hexton Manor would not be affected in its setting or special character by the proposals, due to the significant distance from this building. Nor the listed Medieval Cross, the Walled Garden, or the roadside Pump feature. The new dwelling is considered to have no discernible impact upon the designated historic park and garden of the overall Hexton Manor Estate. Furthermore, no impact upon the nearby Scheduled monument would result at this distance and being a very similar sized overall building to the existing kennels building.
- 9.4 The character, appearance and overall setting of the Conservation Area would also be preserved by the proposal. The new dwelling would arguably only enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, with a high quality design and materials.
- 9.5 Should it be considered by the LPA that 'less than substantial harm' would result, it is asserted that this level of harm is outweighed by the provision of an additional dwelling for the District's housing supply.
- 9.6 In regard to all designated heritage assets of the building and overall site, the proposals are considered to have no harmful impact and would preserve the setting of the Conservation Area, together with the special character and setting of the listed buildings and features. 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 Hitchin Road. The dwelling would be accessed from the internal access road of the Estate, with no new accesses or crossovers required onto the public highway. The development would have no adverse impact upon the safe and free flow of the highway network.
- 10.2 In regard to storage of bins for waste and recycling, these would be stored adjacent to the dwelling in a suitably designed bin store. The bins would be presented to the highway on collection days only. Therefore, access within the overall site for a refuse collection vehicle is not required for the new dwelling.
- 10.3 In regard to parking provision, the proposed dwelling layout provides at least two spaces, which accords with the requirements of the Parking SPD. Ample turning areas are provided for occupier and service vehicles, with ample informal spaces for visitor car parking from the spacious nature of the overall site.
- 10.4 An electric vehicle charging point would be installed, adjacent the parking area. A cycle store would be located in the rear garden. Access and parking provision are therefore considered to be acceptable for the proposal.

11. Trees, ecology and landscaping

- 11.1 In regard to trees of the site, there are many trees along the boundaries and within the overall site of Hexton Manor Estate. No trees are required to be removed for the proposed dwelling, being a reduction from the existing building footprint.
- 11.2 In regard to ecology, the grass areas around the building have been regularly mown. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is submitted which concludes there are no protected species present. Biodiversity Net Gain is not required in this



case, given the actual reduction in existing hardsurfaced footprint, from the current building.

- 11.3 In order to offer enhanced opportunities for wildlife, bird and bat boxes are proposed to the nearby mature trees. Also, supplementary tree and hedge planting is proposed along the existing boundaries where required. These and other measures are expected to deliver an ecological net gain for the site, in accordance with Section 15 of the NPPF.
- 11.4 Landscaping will be of an enhanced standard with driveway and parking area formed in gravel. The private garden would be laid to lawn with shrub borders, giving occupiers a high quality and spacious amenity area.

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.



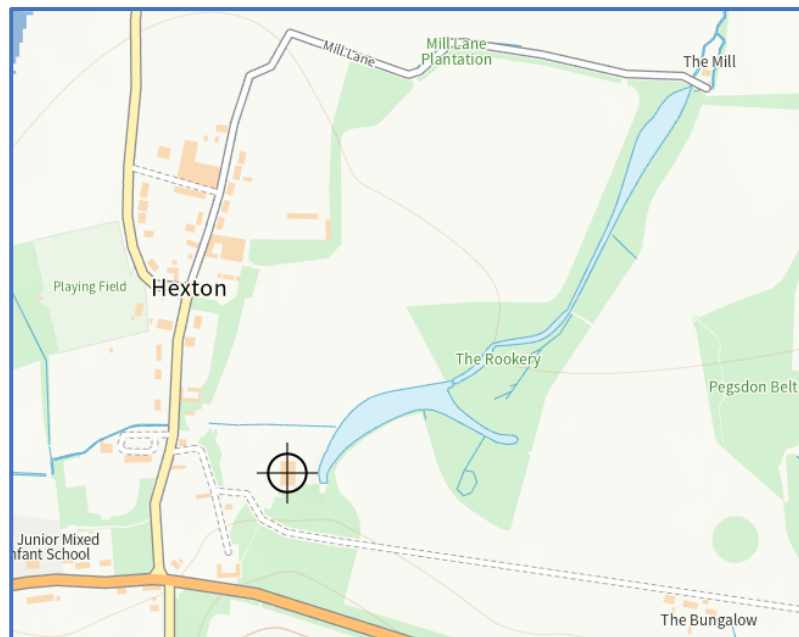


Figure 11 - Flood Risk: Rivers and surface water

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 In conclusion of the proposed development, the scheme comprises a new build single dwelling, instead of implementing the extant recent planning permission for conversion of the current building to also a three bedroom dwelling.
- 13.2 The replacement building would not be materially larger than the existing, with only a 5% increased volume. As such, the proposal constitutes appropriate development in the Green Belt, having no harmful impact upon its openness and the rural setting of the area. Consequently, the proposal is in accordance with local and national planning policy for replacement of this building in the Green Belt.
- 13.3 The highly sympathetic and complementary design, form and layout, in combination with the use of matching materials to the adjacent cottages, would represent high quality design and therefore is not considered to result in any harm upon the character and setting of the site, or the visual quality of the AONB.



- 13.4 A high standard of amenity would be afforded to occupiers and the development would have no harm upon the living conditions of any neighbouring properties. Ample parking for occupiers and visitors is provided. No trees would be affected and there would be only ecological enhancements for the site. No heritage assets would be affected in their setting or special character.
- 13.5 There are therefore no identified elements of harm from the proposal, to outweigh the benefits of this scheme, which would provide one dwelling towards the District's housing supply. 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 conditional planning permission accordingly.

