

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

ADDRESS: Broad Fields, Station Road, Ashwell, Baldock, SG7 5RJ

PROPOSAL: Erection of One Detached Four-Bedroom Dwelling

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1. Introduction

This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Oakwood Planning & Design Ltd in support of a full planning application for the erection of one detached dwelling at Broadfields, Station Road, Ashwell.

The application seeks permission for the development of a single detached four-bedroom dwelling within part of the existing residential curtilage of Broadfields, facilitated through the demolition of the existing attached side garage and the reconfiguration of the front driveway arrangement.

The proposal follows formal pre-application discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council under reference **25/03235/PRE**, where the Local Planning Authority considered the principle of residential development at the site and concluded that, notwithstanding the site's position outside the defined settlement boundary, a well-designed single dwelling on the site would be capable of support. This is a significant material consideration in the assessment of this application.

The pre-application process considered two alternative development scenarios, namely a single detached dwelling and a pair of semi-detached dwellings. Following the Council's clear preference for the single dwelling option and having regard to the site's local context and established plot pattern, the applicant has progressed the single dwelling option only.

This statement therefore sets out the planning, design, access and technical justification for the proposed development and demonstrates why the proposal represents an appropriate and sustainable form of residential infill development.

2. Site Description and Context

The application site forms part of the existing residential curtilage of Broadfields, a detached dwelling situated on the southern side of Station Road, Ashwell. The site currently comprises domestic garden land together with an attached side garage structure, which is proposed to be removed as part of the development.

Broadfields occupies a spacious plot and forms one of a row of established dwellings along this part of Station Road. The site itself sits directly between Broadfields and the neighbouring dwelling known as Eastholme, forming a clear and contained gap within an otherwise established residential frontage.

Whilst the site lies outside the formal settlement boundary of Ashwell as defined within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, the immediate context is clearly residential in character. The site does not read visually or physically as open countryside, nor does it project into the wider rural landscape. Rather, it forms part of a coherent built grouping of dwellings.

This distinction is important. The proposal does not seek to extend built form outward into undeveloped land, but instead seeks to make efficient use of an underutilised parcel of land enclosed by existing development.

The Council's own pre-application assessment accepted this position and acknowledged that the site could reasonably be viewed as a modest infill opportunity in the plainest sense of the word.

3. Proposed Development

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of one detached two-storey dwelling.

The proposed dwelling has been carefully designed to respond to both the physical constraints and opportunities presented by the site, as well as the character and appearance of surrounding development.

The development comprises a four-bedroom family dwelling arranged over two floors. At ground floor level, the property provides a formal lounge, entrance hall, WC, cloakroom, utility room and a large open-plan kitchen, dining and living area positioned to the rear, providing direct access to the rear garden. At first floor level, the dwelling provides four bedrooms, including a master bedroom with en-suite, an additional en-suite bedroom, a family bathroom and a landing area incorporating office space.

The proposed layout has been designed to provide practical and modern family accommodation whilst ensuring that the built form remains proportionate to the plot and sympathetic to its surroundings. Externally, the development will involve the removal of the existing side garage attached to Broadfields and the creation of a revised front parking and turning arrangement to serve both the existing and proposed dwellings. The proposal has been deliberately kept modest in its overall scale and footprint and reflects the lower density pattern of development established along this part of Station Road.

4. Principle of Development

The site lies outside the defined settlement boundary of Ashwell and therefore falls within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, where Policies SP2 and CGB1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan apply. It is acknowledged from the outset that the proposal does not strictly accord with the spatial strategy of the development plan in policy terms. However, planning decisions must be based on the development plan as a whole and also take into account all material considerations.

In this case, there are several compelling material considerations which weigh strongly in favour of the proposal.

Firstly, the Council has already considered the principle of development through the formal pre-application process and concluded that the site is capable of accommodating a single dwelling in principle.

Secondly, the Council accepted that the site constitutes Previously Developed Land (PDL) in planning terms, having regard to the NPPF definition and relevant case law, including *Dartford Borough Council v Secretary of State*.

This is important because national planning policy places clear emphasis on making effective use of previously developed land.

Thirdly, the site represents a genuine infill plot between two established dwellings. Development would not extend the built edge of the settlement, nor would it result in sporadic or isolated countryside encroachment.

The Council's pre-application advice explicitly acknowledged these points and concluded that a single detached dwelling would be the preferred and most appropriate form of development on the site. That conclusion is highly material and carries substantial weight.

5. Housing Land Supply and the Tilted Balance

At the time of issuing the pre-application advice, North Hertfordshire District Council confirmed that it could only demonstrate between 2.6 and 3.3 years of housing land supply.

This is significantly below the required five-year housing land supply.

In these circumstances, paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework is engaged, meaning that the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies. This is particularly relevant here because policies which seek to restrict housing delivery, including settlement boundary policies, must be afforded reduced weight where housing supply policies are out of date.

The proposal would contribute toward housing supply through the delivery of an additional family dwelling in a sustainable and established residential location.

Whilst modest in scale, such contributions remain important in the context of an identified housing shortfall.

There are no overriding constraints at the site which would disapply the tilted balance.

6. Design and Layout

The design of the proposed dwelling has evolved directly from the Council's pre-application advice whilst also responding to the physical constraints of the site, most notably the presence of the overhead electricity cables crossing part of the plot.

These overhead cables significantly influence the developable area and have therefore been a key factor in determining the footprint and overall form of the proposed dwelling. The layout seeks to maximise the efficient use of the available space whilst ensuring the dwelling remains appropriately positioned in relation to the existing property and neighbouring development.

In response to these constraints, the dwelling has been designed as a traditional cottage-style property comprising a predominantly one-and-a-half-storey form with a two-storey front projecting gable. This approach allows additional accommodation to be provided where it can be most effectively accommodated whilst maintaining a modest overall scale.

The projecting front gable reflects a traditional architectural feature commonly found within the surrounding area and provides visual continuity with the existing dwelling, which also incorporates a front gable element. This creates a cohesive relationship between the two dwellings and reinforces the established character of Station Road.

The decision to limit the majority of the dwelling to one-and-a-half storeys is also an important design response to the relationship with the neighbouring property. As the proposed dwelling extends further to the rear than the existing house, a conventional two-storey design across the entire footprint would have resulted in increased eaves and ridge heights, thereby creating a more substantial built form. By adopting a one-and-a-half-storey arrangement across the principal rear element, the overall height and bulk of the building are reduced, helping to lessen its visual presence and minimise any perception of overbearing impact when viewed from neighbouring properties.

The proposed materials have also been carefully selected to soften the appearance of the development and provide greater architectural interest. Rather than relying solely on brickwork, the

dwelling incorporates a complementary palette of traditional materials, including areas of render and timber weatherboarding. These materials help break up the massing of the elevations, reduce the perceived scale of the building and create a more varied and attractive appearance. Collectively, the proposed material palette provides a high-quality traditional design that integrates comfortably with the surrounding residential character while avoiding the appearance of a standard, uniformly brick-built dwelling.

Overall, the proposed dwelling represents a carefully considered design that balances the site's physical constraints, neighbouring relationships and local character to create a high-quality addition to the streetscene.



IMG. 1 INDICATIVE PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION CGI (NOT TO SCALE)

7. Residential Amenity

The proposed dwelling has been designed from the outset to safeguard the living conditions of both neighbouring occupiers and future residents.

The siting of the dwelling has been carefully considered to respect the established building line and maintain appropriate separation distances from the adjoining properties. Equally important, the overall scale and form of the building have been specifically influenced by residential amenity considerations.

Rather than proposing a full two-storey dwelling across the entire footprint, the principal rear section has been designed as one-and-a-half storeys. This reduces both the eaves height and overall ridge height when compared with a conventional two-storey design, thereby lessening the perceived bulk and helping to minimise any overbearing impact on the neighbouring dwelling, particularly given the greater rear projection of the proposed building.

The proposed material palette also contributes positively to the perception of scale, with the use of render and weatherboarding helping to visually break up the elevations and soften the overall appearance of the dwelling.

As a result of its carefully considered siting, scale and design, the proposal will not give rise to unacceptable overlooking, overshadowing, loss of outlook or an overbearing relationship with neighbouring properties.

The Council's pre-application advice similarly concluded that, based on the proposed siting and anticipated scale of development, it would be difficult to sustain an objection on residential amenity grounds.

Internally, the dwelling has been designed to provide a high standard of accommodation, with well-proportioned rooms, good levels of natural light, functional internal layouts and a generous private rear garden, ensuring an excellent standard of amenity for future occupiers.

8. Nationally Described Space Standards

The proposed dwelling has been carefully designed to ensure full compliance with the Nationally Described Space Standards.

The dwelling provides accommodation suitable for a four-bedroom, seven-person household and exceeds the minimum gross internal area requirements prescribed by the standards.

Each bedroom has been designed to meet the required minimum floor areas and widths, ensuring practical and usable living space for future occupants. In addition to this, the dwelling incorporates sufficient built-in and general storage provision to meet the minimum storage requirements.

This compliance is important as it ensures the development delivers high-quality, functional and sustainable living accommodation capable of meeting modern family needs.

The proposal therefore accords with the objectives of good design and healthy living environments as promoted by both local and national planning policy.

9. Access, Parking and Highway Safety

The proposal will utilise the existing established vehicular access from Station Road. No new access is proposed.

This is a significant benefit, as it avoids unnecessary new points of vehicular conflict along the highway and makes efficient use of existing infrastructure. The existing access benefits from acceptable visibility splays in both directions and has already been accepted by the Council as suitable in principle.

The development proposes a revised shared front driveway arrangement to serve both the host dwelling and the proposed new dwelling.

The new arrangement has been designed to ensure sufficient parking provision for both dwellings, together with turning space allowing vehicles and delivery vans to manoeuvre within the site and exit in forward gear.

The removal of the existing side garage forms an integral part of this arrangement and allows for a more efficient and practical access layout.

Overall, the development will not result in any material highway safety concerns.

10. Overhead Power Lines

The Council's pre-application advice identified the presence of overhead power lines crossing part of the site and raised concern that the indicative pre-application layout showed development directly beneath the conductors.

The Council advised at that stage that relocation of the lines may be required.

However, it is important to note that the pre-application layout was indicative only and did not represent the final siting of the dwelling.

The current proposal has been specifically designed to address this issue.

The submitted layout positions the proposed dwelling with a minimum horizontal separation distance of 3 metres from the nearest conductor. This accords with standard utility operator guidance relating to development adjacent to overhead lines and ensures that the building sits outside the recognised no-build zone.

Accordingly, the previous concern raised at pre-application stage has been fully addressed.

The development can now be safely constructed and occupied without requiring the relocation or diversion of the overhead cables.

This represents a significant improvement over the pre-application concept.

11. Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been undertaken in support of the proposed development.

The PEA concludes that there are no overriding ecological constraints to the development, no requirement for further protected species surveys, and confirms that there are no Priority Habitats present within the application site.

The application qualifies for the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) exemption for small development sites. The application site extends to less than 0.2 hectares and, as confirmed by the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, does not contain any Priority Habitat. Accordingly, the development meets the criteria for exemption from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements set out within Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Although the development is exempt from the mandatory requirement to deliver a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, ecological considerations have nevertheless informed the design of the proposal. Existing vegetation will be retained where practicable, and the development will incorporate new soft landscaping and private garden planting to provide continued habitat opportunities and contribute positively to the ecological value of the site.

12. Conclusion

The proposed development represents a well-considered and logical infill opportunity within an established residential frontage.

Whilst the site lies outside the formal settlement boundary, the Council has already confirmed through formal pre-application advice that the principle of a single dwelling on the site is capable of support.

The proposal has evolved directly in response to that advice and addresses all key matters raised, including site layout, design, parking, amenity and overhead power line constraints.

The development will make effective use of previously developed land, contribute toward housing supply, preserve the character of the area and provide high-quality accommodation in accordance with national space standards.

Taken as a whole, the proposal represents sustainable development and there are no adverse impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh its benefits.

Planning permission should therefore be granted.