

Land North of Milksey,

Graveley



Design & Access Statement

January 2025



Methodology

The structure and detail of this document follows guidance set out by the National Design Guide (NDG) and National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), adopted in July 2021 & updated in December 2024. This document provides the following guidance on Design & Access Statements:

What is a Design and Access Statement?

A Design and Access Statement is a concise report accompanying certain applications for planning permission and applications for listed building consent. They provide a framework for applicants to explain how the proposed development is a suitable response to the site and its setting, and demonstrate that it can be adequately accessed by prospective users. Introduction and Purpose Design and Access Statements can aid decision-making by enabling local planning authorities and third parties to better understand the analysis that has underpinned the design of a development proposal. The level of detail in a Design and Access Statement should be proportionate to the complexity of the application, but should not be long.

What should be included in a Design and Access Statement accompanying an application for planning permission?

A Design and Access Statement must:

- (a) Explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development;
- (b) Demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account. A development's context refers to the particular characteristics of the application site and its wider setting. These will be specific to the circumstances of an individual application and a Design and Access Statement should be tailored accordingly. Design and Access Statements must also explain the applicant's approach to access and how relevant Local Plan policies have been considered. They must detail any consultation undertaken and how the outcome of this consultation has informed the proposed development. Applicants must also explain how any specific issues which might affect access to the proposed development have been addressed.

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Introduction

This statement has been prepared jointly by FINC Architects in connection with the consultant team on behalf of Gade Homes to accompany a Full Planning Application on the Land North of Milksey, Graveley. It is to be read in parallel with all other drawings and documents submitted in support of this application.

This DAS is intended to provide the reader with a concise understanding of the site and surroundings. It also explains the various issues associated with the site and how these have been overcome or encompassed within the overall design to provide the opportunity for a new high quality residential development. It also explains how the site would be accessed on foot and by car ensuring the proposed development is well connected to surrounding areas.

Description of Proposal

Full planning application for 24 units including 35% affordable housing, provisions for public open space and associated landscaping, drainage and highways infrastructure.

The proposed development is explained via different types of drawings that play different roles within the outline application.

This document demonstrates the evaluation and assessment of the site's constraints and opportunities, and how this analysis has informed the design response of the submitted scheme.

Background – Planning Context

Applications should align with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The statutory Development Plan for North Hertfordshire includes:

- North Hertfordshire Local Plan (NHLP, 2022)
- Any approved Neighbourhood Plans

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) are also material considerations in planning decisions. The NPPF promotes sustainable development and good design under the Building Beautiful Places initiative, encouraging local authorities to significantly boost housing supply.

The application site is proposed as a housing allocation site (reference GR1) within the local plan.

The site currently has approval for a development featuring 10 dwellings (17/04017/FP). Following this approval, GADE submitted a Pre-Application for an increase to 24 dwellings for this site which the LPA officer had shown support for this in the formal Pre-Application response (23/02923/PRE).

The application site is adjacent to another development site which has recently been given a resolution to grant under planning ref. 23/00186/FP.

Strategically, this site represents a natural urban extension to Graveley's northern edge, accessible via existing residential roads and within walking distance of the village school and amenities. A comprehensive assessment against the Local Plan, NPPF, SPDs and Neighbourhood Plan is included in the Planning Statement accompanying this detailed application.



Figure 1: North Hertfordshire Local Plan
Source: North Hertfordshire Council



Character Study

A preliminary character assessment has been undertaken to guide the future design and architectural treatment of the proposed housing.

This assessment seeks to understand the existing housing densities and typologies within Graveley. This analysis not only establishes an understanding of the varying density of development and built form character present in the village but also provides a strong foundation for the selection of appropriate building forms for the site.

The Character Study also focused on materials found commonly in the surrounding area. Having undertaken the character study the following characteristics were observed.

1- Historic Core

The building materials that are found in the Historic Core consist of clay roof tiles, hung roof tiles, red brick, painted and brick and small parts of render. Gables are often present within the street scenes.



Figure 2: Aerial Image of Graveley
Source: Google Earth



Figure 3: The Grange
Source: Google



Figure 4: Oak House
Source: Google



Figure 5: 32 High Street
Source: Google



Figure 6: 33 Fife House
Source: Gade Homes

2- Other Development In The Local Area

Graveley displays many different styles of housing and development, each with different characteristics. This varying language enables our proposal to conform to the local character through the use of gabled and hipped tiled roofs, brick and rendered external walls and single storey projections such as dormer windows and entrance canopies.



Figure 7: _
Source: Google



Figure 8: _
Source: Google



Figure 9: _
Source: Google



Figure 10: _
Source: Google



Figure 11: _
Source: Google



Figure 12: _
Source: Google





Site Assessment

The application site lies on the northwestern fringe of Graveley, bordered by Milksey Lane to the south and High Street to the west. It's roughly 1.3 kilometers away from the A1(m).

There is a mixture of boundary planting consisting of mature trees and hedgerows to all boundaries. This along with the existing level change from the High Street limits views into the site.

There is existing residential development to the East, with the main centre of the village located to the south. There is also a new residential development, immediately to the south (planning reference 23/00186/FP), which will further link the proposals to the village centre.

The site itself currently consists of an open field with a unused barn/stables buildings and menage.

The village of Graveley is entirely surrounded by Green Belt. However, as part of the new Local Plan process the settlement boundary of Graveley was redefined to incorporate this site.

As a result, the application site has been removed from the Green Belt.

Graveley is mostly covered by a Conservation Area, however the proposed site is outside of this, albeit a small portion of the southern end of the site.

The site is connected to the surrounding road network via High Street (B197).



Figure 13: Aerial Image of Graveley
Source: Google

Local Road, Footpath and Cycle Networks

High Street (B197) extends Northwards towards Letchworth Garden City, Baldock, and Junction 9 of the A1(M).

High Street (B197) extends Southwards towards the centre of Graveley, Stevenage and Junction 8 of the A1(M).

Existing public transport facilities exist by means of 2no. Bus stops which are located on Graveley High Street c.300m South of the application site and 2no. Bus stops which are located on B197 c.500m North of the application site.

Milksey Lane is adjacent to the Western boundary and a secondary road connecting the existing use to the High Street.

Further to the west of the site is a Public Bridleway/Byway that runs North/South and connects the Village of Graveley with Stevenage to the South and Letchworth Garden City to the North via the 'Great North Way'.

In line with the local communities request, a proposed link to connect the high street and bridle way 021 and footpath 018 has been provided opposite plot 8. For further details, please see the layout plan on page 13.

KEY:

	Road		A1(M)
	Footpath		Proposed Link



Figure 14: Road and Footpath Network Plan
Source: Google + FINC Architects



Process and Engagement

Pre-Application Advice

A Pre-Application was submitted by Gade for the site on the 24th of January 2024, and in April 2024, North Herts Council provided a formal Pre-Application response (23/02923/PRE).

In assessing the proposal the LPA carefully considered a number of relevant policies in the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework including:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2023)
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031)
- Design Supplementary Planning Document (2011)
- Vehicle Parking at New Developments (2011) (SPG)
- Hertfordshire County Council – Local Transport Plan (2018)

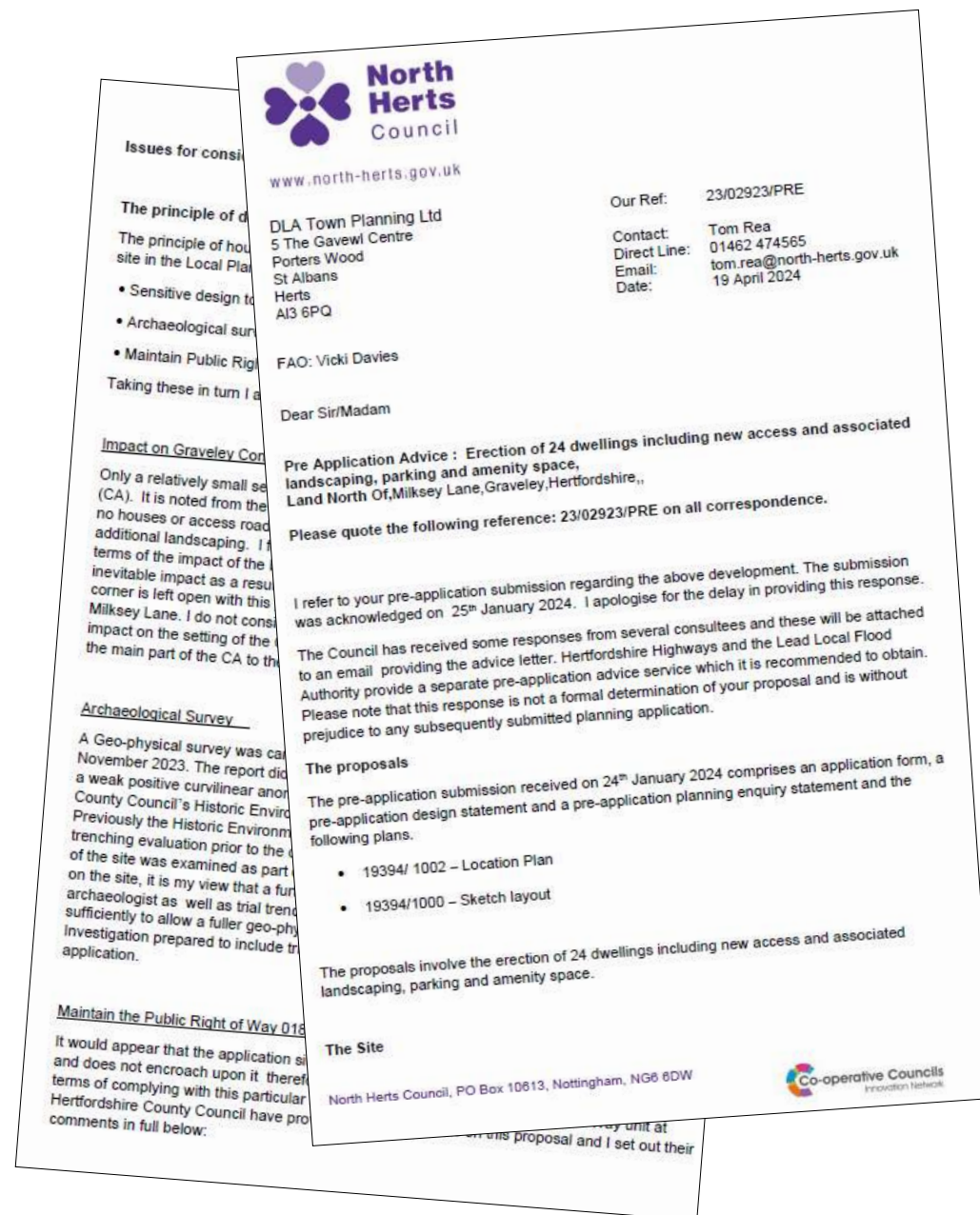
The LPA accept that the principle of housing development is accepted on this site given its allocation as a housing site in the Local Plan under Policy GR1. Policy GR1 sets out the following site-specific criteria:

- Sensitive design to minimise impacts upon Graveley Conservation Area
- Archaeological survey to be completed prior to development
- Maintain Public Right of Way (Graveley 018) through the site.

The LPA concluded:

“the design would respect the landscape character of the CA. And will not have any significant impact on the setting of the CA because of its relatively contained nature and separation from the main part of the CA to the south”.

“A further geo-physical survey and an archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation should be prepared to accompany any future applications”



"The application site for this 24 unit scheme excludes the public footpath 018 and does not encroach upon it therefore it would appear that there would be no concerns in terms of complying with this particular requirement of Policy GR1."

The LPA also commented that although the proposal presents an increase of 200% on the dwelling for the site in Policy GR1, "the proposal for 24 dwellings would equate to a density of around 14 dwellings per hectare which is low by normal urban standards. The site is not within an urban area but rather an edge of village location so I consider that 14 dph is about right for this site taking into account its peripheral location and its rural setting."

The LPA concluded the decision by stating:

"The site is now part of the category 'A' settlement of Graveley and the site has been allocated for housing in the Local Plan (Site GR1) and therefore there is no objection in principle to the proposed development. Furthermore, a housing proposal for 10 dwellings on approximately 85% of the housing site allocation has been approved (subject to a Section 106 Agreement) by the Local Planning Authority in November 2023."

And

"The Council supports residential development on the site as part of its housing strategy and would welcome the provision of affordable housing as proposed. The increased density over and above the scheme resolved to be approved as well as the provision of affordable housing are seen as significant benefits of the proposals. Subject to matters of detail regarding design, landscaping, biodiversity, drainage infrastructure and the in principle agreement of the developer to reasonable Section 106 matters, I can see no objections in principle to the proposals as set out."



Figure 17: Draft Layout
Source: Woods Hardwick

The Pre-Application featured a sketch layout plan (as shown above), and following the Pre-Application response the design team have taken onboard comments to evolve the design to that shown on the following pages.



Design

Proposed Site Layout

Following a number of iterations, the proposed layout is presented on the following page. The landscape-led layout has evolved alongside our consultants reports and illustrates the collaborative nature of the project.

The site layout comprises some key areas, relating to the immediate landscape and physical context in those parts of the site. These areas can be simplified to include the following:



Key Focal Locations - These buildings here have been designed to improve the access to different sections of the site where dwellings are edging the green corridors or moving from the main spine road, into the development parcels. Key detailing is utilised in these areas to improve the aesthetic.



Public Open Space - Large areas of POS are illustrated across the site, evenly distributed to allow all residents generous access to outdoor areas. The majority towards the north where development has been faced towards to improve the views.



Existing Vegetation - Key areas of the site have large volumes of beautiful vegetation that will be retained and enhanced in order to increase the aesthetic of the site while reflecting the natural shapes of the streets proposed.

The improved layout proposes a change to the entrance to the site, which has been moved northward to improve the relationship with the immediate context. This was done following the advice of the arboricultural consultant.

Adjusting the entrance to a location with less topographic level constraints will significantly reduce the amount of retainment required. This, and distancing the entrance further north, reduces the impact on the Graveley CA as well as minimising the impact on the boundary planting and vegetation.



Site Entrance Gateway - The entrance to the site is one of the most important areas, where the dwellings are facing onto the road, angled directly at the entrance point. These larger dwellings utilise the detailing and form to create a key focal point towards the south, outline with existing and proposed vegetation to soften the location.



Primary Arcadian Streets - The adopted roads accessing and traversing the site are tree lined to promote active travel and Arcadia style development, reflecting the directly surrounding nature, while being respectful of the immediate environment.



Existing vegetation retained and enhanced to respect ecological value

Development along two main roads

Site Access

Attenuation basins located strategically in the lowest areas of the site

Figure 18: Site Layout
Source: FINC Architects



Proposed Site Layout

The proposed layout is presented in the figure adjacent.

The layout has evolved through discussions with the wider design team and the pre-application response. The design illustrates the collaborative nature of the project.

The key elements of the layout are as follows:

- 24 dwellings provided through a mixture of dwelling types, sizes and tenures;
- Affordable housing has been supplied in accordance with local policy requirements;
- Essential urban design principles have been maintained, such as back-to-back plotting, consistent building lines, ensuring dwellings overlook key areas of public open space and corner turning plots where possible;
- High-quality strategic and private landscaping to enhance the environment and soften the development edges;
- Layout configured to emulate a distinctive sense of place and destination.

Existing landscape features have been retained where possible and enhanced with new planting.



Figure 19: Site Layout
Source: Google Earth

Proposal – Materiality & Fenestration

The proposed development has been designed in accordance with the local vernacular. The historic core of Graveley lies to the south of the proposed site, separated visually and physically from the site. However, key architectural cues are relevant and need to be respected throughout the proposal.

Materiality and fenestration design are very key aspects across the site. Pulling inspiration from the local area to implement on the proposed site.



Main Brick



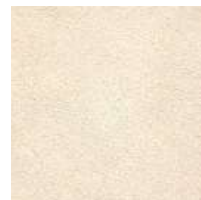
Red Multi Brick

Feature Brick



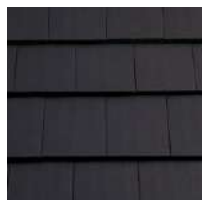
Smooth Blue Brick

Render



Off-White or Cream

Roof Tile



Dark Grey Tiles

Cladding



Dark Timber, or similar,
Cladding (supplier TBC
by client)

Figure 20-24: Material Samples
Source: Google



Figure 25-29: Material & Built Form Examples
Source: Gade Homes



Built Form

The NDG states that well-designed places have:

- “compact forms of development that are walkable, contributing positively to well-being and placemaking;
- recognisable streets and other spaces with their edges defined by buildings, making it easy for anyone to find their way around, and promoting safety and accessibility; and
- memorable features or groupings of buildings, spaces, uses or activities that create a sense of place, promoting inclusion and cohesion”

Proposed Dwellings

The approved Framework document has built upon the NDG and the guidelines it presents, and goes on to state the site should utilise “Landmark buildings at gateway and key locations to create a sense of arrival and mark vistas from road approaches”, which our proposal has followed and utilise with various statement dwellings at key locations.

This detailing stays in-keeping with the local area and will create a smooth transition between the local vernacular and the proposed site. The dwellings have been designed to fit within the context of Graveley Village and to generate a seamless extension to the village, maintaining its character and sense of place.



Figure 30: Plot 13
Source: FINC Architects



Figure 31: Plot 1 & 9
Source: FINC Architects

Proposed Streetscenes

The approved Framework document states we are “creating a distinctive sense of place and memorable character for the Site will be greatly influenced by the relationship between the buildings, streets, open spaces, and the quality of the public realm”, which our proposal accords with. Each street displays a sense of local character and provides a range of interesting sights as users wander the site whether they are in a vehicle or on foot.

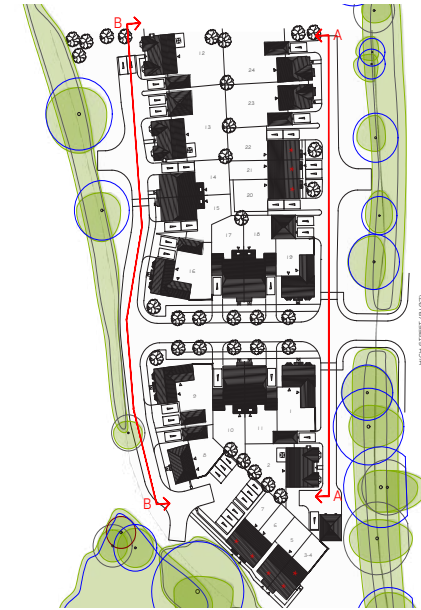


Figure 32: Streetscene Location Plan
Source: FINC Architects



Figure 33: Streetscene A-A
Source: FINC Architects



Figure 34: Streetscene B-B
Source: FINC Architects



Proposed Tenure Plan



Figure 35: Tenure Plan
Source: FINC Architects

Proposed Housing Mix Plan



Figure 36: Housing Mix Plan
Source: FINC Architects



Technical

Sustainability

The proposal has been designed to maximise energy efficiency, through its siting, design and orientation. The Proposed Development therefore follows the nationally recognised energy hierarchy of:

- Reducing energy demands in the first instance ('Be Lean');
- Before using energy efficiently and cleanly ('Be Clean'), and only then;
- Using renewable and low carbon technologies ('Be Green'), where possible.

In addition, the buildings will be constructed with a 'fabric first' approach to energy efficiency, exceeding the Building Regulations with regards to energy consumption. The fabric efficiency of the proposed dwellings has been designed to reduce heat demand and energy needs. This includes providing high levels of insulation and low air permeability, with consideration for thermal bridging junctions. The diagram below illustrates this approach.

The proposed development seeks to supply energy efficiently by using only electric based heating and hot water systems, including the use of Air Source Heat Pumps, meaning the development will be designed to be fossil fuel-free.

In compliance with the North Hertfordshire Design Guide, electric charging points will be provided across the site.

A sustainable surface water drainage system is proposed throughout the site and forms part of the proposed extensive open space, as part of the wider development. This will ensure that any surface water run-off within the development is appropriately managed.

Furthermore, the materials chosen for construction, including hard and soft landscaping elements, will be carefully chosen to ensure that they are high-quality, durable and that 'whole life costs' are manageable. Sustainable choices will reduce initial manufacturing environmental impacts, long-term maintenance costs and waste from construction, whilst maximising resilience and buildings lifespans.



Figure 37: ASHP Indicative Image
Source: Google

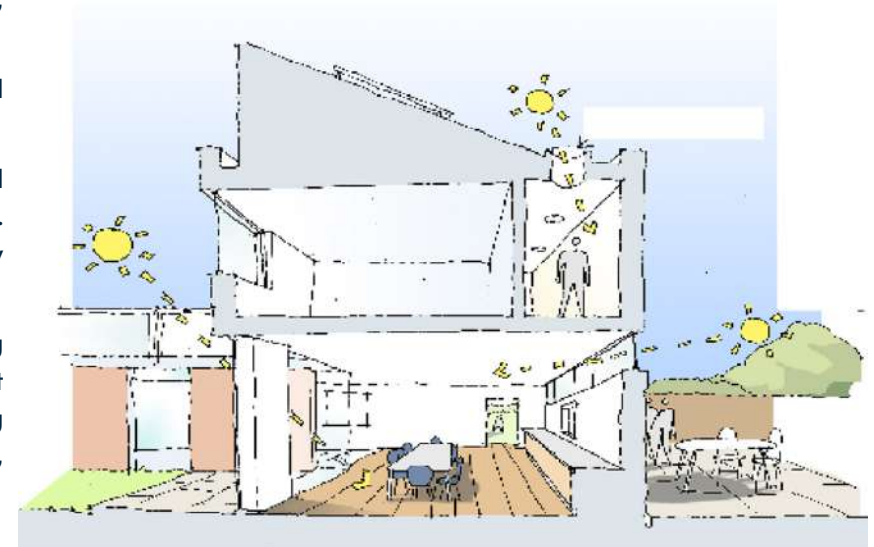


Figure 38: Fabric First Sustainability Concept
Source: FINC Architects

Conclusion

This Design and Access statement has been produced in support of the detailed planning application for 24 dwellings on the land North of Milskey, Graveley. It proposes a high-quality residential development that achieves a sense of place, whilst taking into account the sites constraints and context of the local area.

This document has explained how the proposals make use of a site identified as available, developable and how it has been designed specifically to meet local housing need in a convenient and accessible location.

This has resulted in the proposals detailed within this document for a high-quality landscaped development, with excellent connectivity, place-making and integration into the area.

The development provides a much-needed variety of new open market housing, affordable housing and maisonettes.



Figure 39: Proposed Site Layout
Source: FINC Architects



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