

Introduction, Site History and Location

There are two sites involved in this project, of similar rectangular size of approximately 2/3 of an acre each. They front on to Ashwell Street (locally known as the Ruddery), and lie to the south east side of the existing track, on the edge of the east side of the village. On the opposite side of the track is Ashwell Caravan Park (Diag 1)

Historically the sites were two of five similar plots of land. It is thought that these plots have been set out in this form for several hundreds of years. Old deeds show that The Christy family has had an interest in Site 1 since 1886 and it has been used to grow vegetable crops and in more recent years for grazing animals.

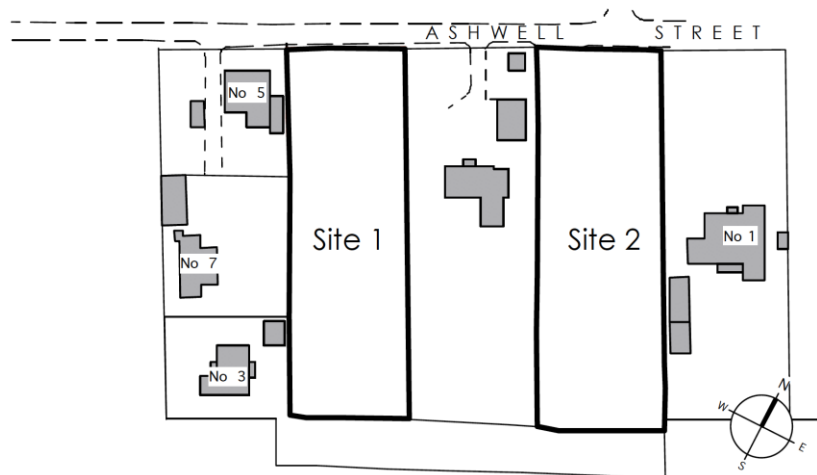


Diagram 1

In 2023, NHDC included these plots in the Development area of Ashwell, therefore development of the sites for housing in principle will be supported under SP2. The applicants have made two previous Pre-applications to NHDC. The first pre-application scheme included three dwellings on Sites 1 and 2, of mixed sizes; Four 4-bedroom detached houses and two 3-Bedroom houses which included substantial ground floor living, potentially suitable for older residents.

NHDC at the time, were critical of the layout, and suggested that it was over development for this part of Ashwell, despite the established housing that exists that fully surrounds the sites. With these comments in mind, a second Pre-Application submitted showed an outline of two houses per site with new buildings nearer the front of the sites retaining land for long rear gardens. NHDC, indicated that this principle was more favourable.

The Design

Layout and Amount

Taking account of the previous Pre-application advice, this current planning application shows a mix of 4 detached houses, two 4 bed detached houses with home office space on site 1, and two 3 bed houses with home office space on Site 2. The 'street scene' was an important factor highlighted in the pre-application advice, and the planning authority were keen to see development tapering back eastwards along Ashwell Street, to create less impact on the existing rural setting. (diag 2.)

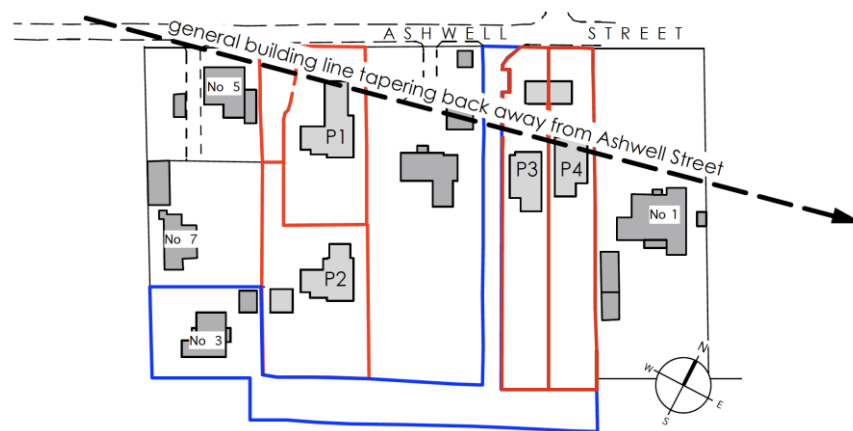


Diagram 2

Site 1: is slightly narrower than Site 2, so rather than setting the houses staggered side by side, (as the layout for Site 2) they have been positioned in tandem (similar to the layout of the existing houses, No's 3, 7 and 5 to the west). There will be a new drive access to House P2. This layout negates overlooking to the existing three houses to the west (No 3, 7 & 5), and provides more space between the boundaries to both the east and the west.

Site 2: both new houses have been positioned closer to the front of the site with longer narrower gardens. The houses have been set away from existing Ashridge farmhouse at No 1 Ashwell Street, to lessen the impact and overlooking.

A garage area for 4 vehicles is sited in the front of the site, behind existing mature trees, which are to be retained. The garages are built in the form of an agricultural timber barn, to retain the rural feel as walkers progress eastwards along Ashwell Street track.

Use

The proposed new houses provide accommodation for families and include home office spaces, for home working. Each house has off street parking and garage space for two vehicles, and cycles. Driveways provide enough room for turning, for cars and larger vehicles, including fire engines. Each garage has EV points fitted, for electric vehicle charging.

Sustainability and Orientation

The new houses proposed are to be built of high quality and of sustainable design with high levels of insulation to reduce energy consumption. This is balanced with problems of over heating in summer months, by including careful fenestration positioning, natural stack ventilation (opening high level roof windows) and internal thermal mass, to moderate internal temperatures.

Both sites slope up to the south. The houses are orientated so that their main living areas and kitchen /dining areas face south, with large windows providing light and solar gain in the winter months. Glass doors lead out onto a terraced area and garden. Fenestration is limited on the North East elevations, to reduce heat loss. The new houses have been located to limit impact and overlooking on existing neighbouring properties

The proposed new houses have been designed to accommodate high standards of insulation, and orientated to make the most of the south facing sun, for light and to supplement heating in the winter months. Over hanging roofs forming verandas over the larger areas of glazing will help with shading and cooling in the hotter summer months.

Each new house will be heated by an external air source heat pump, and electricity generated by roof top solar panels. This together with the high levels of insulation in the construction provides exceptionally high quality sustainable buildings.

Scale

The proposed houses, are of a similar scale to existing houses in this part of Ashwell Street. The roof layout is split up to form a series of roofs to reduce massing , with some first floor rooms using the roof void for first floor accommodation. The overall height of the houses are reduced and will blend in with existing properties in the locality.

Appearance

The houses can be described as 'contemporary vernacular' constructed of traditional building materials; external walls finished in light buff facing brick or horizontal boarding.

Roofs are pitched, either steep pitched plain clay tiles or shallower pitched in slate, as shown on the drawings. The resultant design will compliment many of the traditional building forms and materials that exist in Ashwell.

Windows will be high quality double-glazed sealed units, with high performance weather seals with secure espagnolette type locking.

Access

Site 1 has an existing gate access from Ashwell Street, but this will be moved and widened to form a new shared access to Houses P1 and P2.

Site 2 will retain its existing access onto Ashwell Street, which currently serves the existing House No 3 Ashwell Street. The first part of the drive provides access to the new houses P3 and P4 and will be widened with turning circles increased, where the drive joins Ashwell Street. All driveways can accommodate fire engine access.

Each house has a covered porch and front door leading to a hallway. The porch access will have a gentle slope up from driveways with no steps.

Included are ground floor utility rooms with a 'back door' leading directly into the garden.

All the new houses will have external 'flush' thresholds (in accordance with Building regulations) to provide access for wheel chair users. There are ground floor toilet facilities to all houses.

Houses P1 and P2 have good-sized ground floor home office rooms, which could equally become a ground floor double bedroom, with direct access to the adjacent ground floor cloakroom with shower. This arrangement is adaptable for 'life time living', or care for elderly or family members, that may be unable to use the stairs.

Landscaping

Care has been taken to retain as many existing trees and hedges as possible. A detailed landscape proposal is included in the accompanying set of drawings.

Tim Christy RIBA (Rtrd).
Owner of Site 1.