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Planning Design and Access Statement

Replacement Extensions and Internal
Alterations

The Engine, 50 Back Street, Ashwell, SG7
5PE

Prepared by
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On Behalf of
Mr and Mrs Coldstream

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support of a submission for planning permission in respect of replacement extensions and internal alterations to The Engine, 50 Back Street, Ashwell, together with demolition within the Conservation Area.
- 1.2 The application seeks full planning permission and has not been subject of pre-application advice on the grounds that the proposals offer a clear improvement on the status quo, and represents no overall increase in floor area.
- 1.3 The subject property has been owned by the applicants, Mr and Mrs Coldstream for some ten years and it has proved to be an enjoyable home in which to bring up a family.
- 1.4 Whilst from the point of ownership the inadequacies and quirkiness were acknowledged and accepted, especially noting its previous life as a village pub, over time these features have turned to irritants.
- 1.5 The construction is now well past its sell by date and structural faults became more evident last year, to the extent that an Engineer's structural report was commissioned in October 2024.
- 1.6 The report identified that the building which mainly related to the troubled rear structures were of mixed uninsulated 9" solid brickwork and timber frame. Damp to external walls was prevalent and the structure inadequately founded requiring underpinning and a new plinth wall.
- 1.7 Additionally, a sizeable void had formed under the kitchen floor slab which simply overlaid the dirt below.
- 1.8 Also, although not of structural significance, the plethora of changes in floor level and awkward partitioning at ground floor together with the dangerous split staircase at first floor are now becoming a problem for the occupants.
- 1.9 The realisation was that to put all the above and more to right would be at a considerable cost and still not meet their present day needs.
- 1.10 Hence, the common sense conclusion was "if we are going to have to spend all this money, we may as well get it right".

2.0 Site/Property Description

- 2.1 “The Engine” (Former Public House) at 50 Back Street, Ashwell is not listed but does lie firmly within Ashwell’s extensive Conservation Area.
- 2.2 The house stands on the corner of Back Street and Wilsons Lane.
- 2.3 The overall plot size is c. 543m².
- 2.4 The house is ranged on two floors with numerous additions and extensions over the decades totalling some 295m².
- 2.5 It would be fair to say that the extensions and alterations have not been carried out in a considerate or cohesive manner, just having regard to the changes of use over many decades. Originally a farmhouse, with hay barn added, more latterly a village pub and now a family residence.
- 2.6 It should be noted from the 1991 photograph that there was a massive barn behind “The Engine” which has since been demolished.
- 2.7 The existing ground floor plan clearly shows a random layout simply making best use of a Topsy-turvy arrangement and with no less than nine changes in level on this floor alone.
- 2.8 The internal confusion is reflected externally with a variety of incompatible materials and structural solutions all lacking any attempt to unify these elements. An eyesore would be a kind description.
- 2.9 As noted in the introduction, this has been, and is intended to be, a long term family home for the Coldstreams and they have all been very much part of the village, its activities and vibrancy. They have no desire to relocate but simply now want a home that serves them better in both function and appearance, and is future proofed for later life. Rationalising erratic levels, as far as possible, will go some way to achieving this.

3.0 Development Proposal

- 3.1 Before going into details, in general terms, the aim is to remove the less pre-possessing and structurally inadequate elements and replace them with a building that is a) structurally sound b) meets the spatial brief c) brings environmental standards, with specific reference to damp proofing and insulation, up to at least prevailing Building Regulation Standards and d) enhances the appearance for both the applicants' enjoyment but also to the benefit of the Ashwell Conservation Area.
- 3.2 Application plan EBC 02 clearly indicates the existing floor plans at ground and first floor, together with graphically showing the awkward layout and the inordinate changes in floor level, as noted in 2.8.
- 3.3 The plans also clearly show the areas proposed to be demolished which, due to being in excess of 115 m³, form part of this application.
- 3.4 The elements to be lost relate largely to those identified as having a structural or environmental issue.
- 3.5 EBC 03 graphically shows the existing elevations, and whilst the principal elevation onto Back Street is calm and complements the Conservation Area, the rear presents a wholly discordant aspect. This is best appreciated by a first-hand visit. However, the application photographs tell the same story.
- 3.6 EBC 13 is the selected layout, following collaborative dialogue with the applicants, and rationalises the spaces and staircase whilst in tandem removing ugly problematic structures. However, rationalising the numerous changes in level has only partially been resolved, mainly due to budgetary constraints, but this can be lived with.
- 3.7 EBC 14 indicates that the street elevation is not affected in any way with rear extension ridge maintained at the same level as now, below that of the principal roof. Every effort has been made to maintain the new ridge at a similar level to existing, resulting in a relatively shallow pitch. However, it is clear that the proposal creates an inarguable enhancement to the property.
- 3.8 Materials are all clearly scheduled and provide a complementary appearance whilst adding some interest by way of more contemporary materials and details, which also help to avoid costly and unsustainable maintenance.
- 3.9 Although Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) does not apply, the applicants will be looking to taking a responsible approach to any garden or landscaping works, which will be considered after the inevitable disruption of the construction works.

- 3.10 Similarly, with regard to energy and sustainability, whilst clearly a wholesale change to the dwelling's services and systems would be unreasonable, the works will, in this respect, be more than covered by the prevailing Building Regulations.

4.0 Summary

- 4.1 The proposal is a simple one and seeks only to replace existing structures and extensions together with the enlarged Library and internal alterations.
- 4.2 In the sum of all the parts, the proposal provides for the applicants' updated spatial needs whilst overall providing a building more fitting of the Ashwell Conservation Area.
- 4.3 The proposed floor area of 289m² provides a modest reduction in floor area over the existing.
- 4.4 The new construction will provide an infinitely more sustainable envelope to the building with greater thermal efficiency whilst at the same time eradicating damp and serious structural problems.
- 4.5 The proposals are fully compliant with both Local and National Policies.
- 4.6 Accordingly, it is considered that there are no substantive planning reasons for not granting planning permission, however, under North Herts Proactive Policy, it is requested that any queries or concerns be raised in a timely manner, with the applicants' agent, Amy Moss, in order to receive an equally timely response.