



PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Site: LRO 23 Conquest Close
Hitchin
SG4 9DP

For: TEG Properties Ltd

Project Ref: 26024

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Plans and Documents Accompanying the Application

Planning, Design and Access Statement, prepared by Barker Parry
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, prepared by Sound Ecology
Biodiversity Net Gain Report & Statutory Metric, prepared by Sound Ecology
1181-PL01 Location Plans
1181-PL02 Site Plan As Existing
1181-PL03 Habitat Site Plan As Existing
1181-PL04 Site Plan As Proposed
1181-PL05 Plot 1 and 2 House Plans As Proposed
1181-PL06 Plot 1 House Elevations As Proposed
1181-PL07 Plot 2 House Elevations As Proposed
1181-PL08 Waste and Fire Site Plan As Proposed

1.0 **Introduction**

1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Applicant, TEG Properties Ltd, to support an application for full planning permission at Land rear of 23 Conquest Close for:

"Erection of two 2-bedroom bungalows and associated works"

1.2 This Statement seeks to demonstrate that the proposed scheme will deliver two new dwellings to help meet local housing needs whilst retaining the character and quality of the area. This application makes effective use of redundant urban land and will not lead to any demonstrable harm which would outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

1.3 Section 2 of this Statement outlines the context of the Site, including its designations and planning history. Section 3 sets out the details of the proposed works, whilst Section 4 summarises the relevant local and national policy. A planning assessment can be found at Section 5, and the conclusions of this Statement are discussed at Section 6.

2.0 Site Context

The Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 Hitchin is one of four main settlements within North Herts, housing over 70% of the District's population. The Application Site is located in the southern part of the town close to Stevenage Road. It is approximately a 15-minute walk (5-minute cycle) to the town centre and a 10-minute cycle (25-minute walk) to Hitchin railway station. The 2024 Google Map image at Figure 1 below shows a satellite view with the Site extent approximately outlined in red. This is shown more clearly at Figure 2 overlaid on NHC's online map.
- 2.2 The Application Site comprises an area of redundant land to the rear of dwellings fronting Stevenage Road and Conquest Close. The access is a shared access which serves the parking and garaging for these existing dwellings. The main part of the site predominately comprises scrubland and is in the same ownership as 23 Conquest Close.

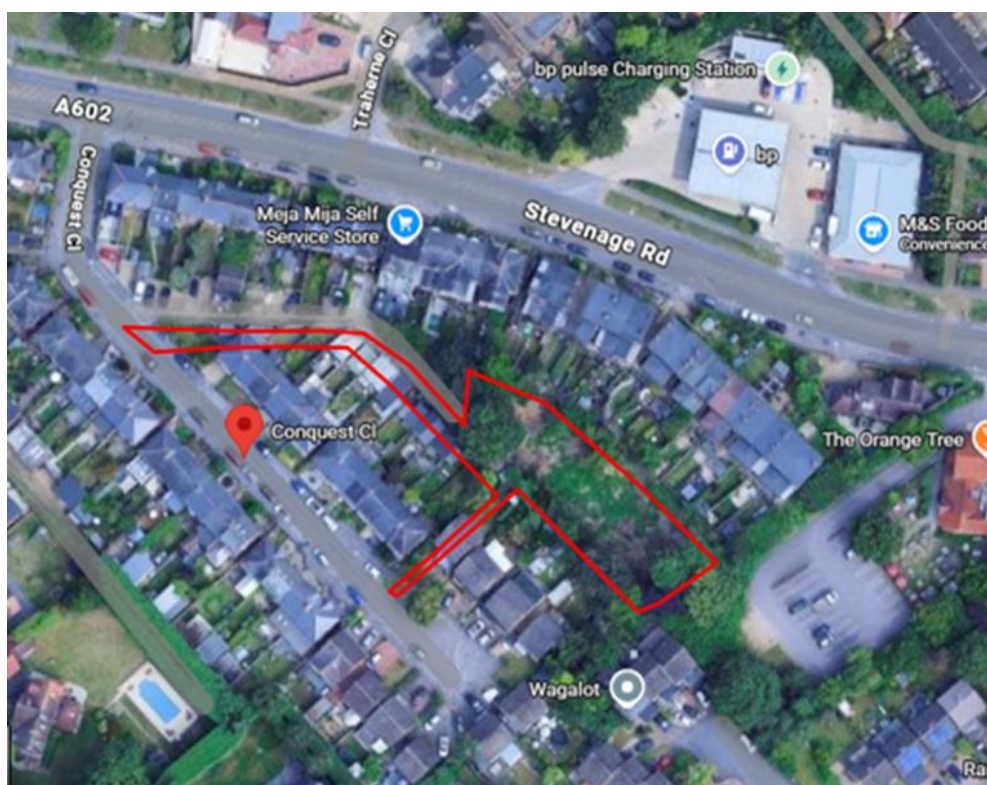


Figure 1 - Google Earth image of the Site, outlining approximate extent



Figure 2 – Site Extent overlaid on NHC's Online Map

Planning Designations

- 2.3 The Site is located within the settlement boundary of Hitchin. It is not subject to any other specific planning designations as shown on the extract of NHC's Policies Map at Figure 3.
- 2.4 The Site does not fall within Hitchin Conservation Area, although a small section of the Conservation Area is located approximately 240m to the west at Hitchin Hill Path as can be seen on Figure 3 below. These dwellings are also Grade II listed. The Site is not considered to be with the setting of any of these heritage assets due to the separation distance and intervening built form.
- 2.5 The Site is within Flood Zone 1 and is also not at risk from surface water flooding under any annual likelihood event.

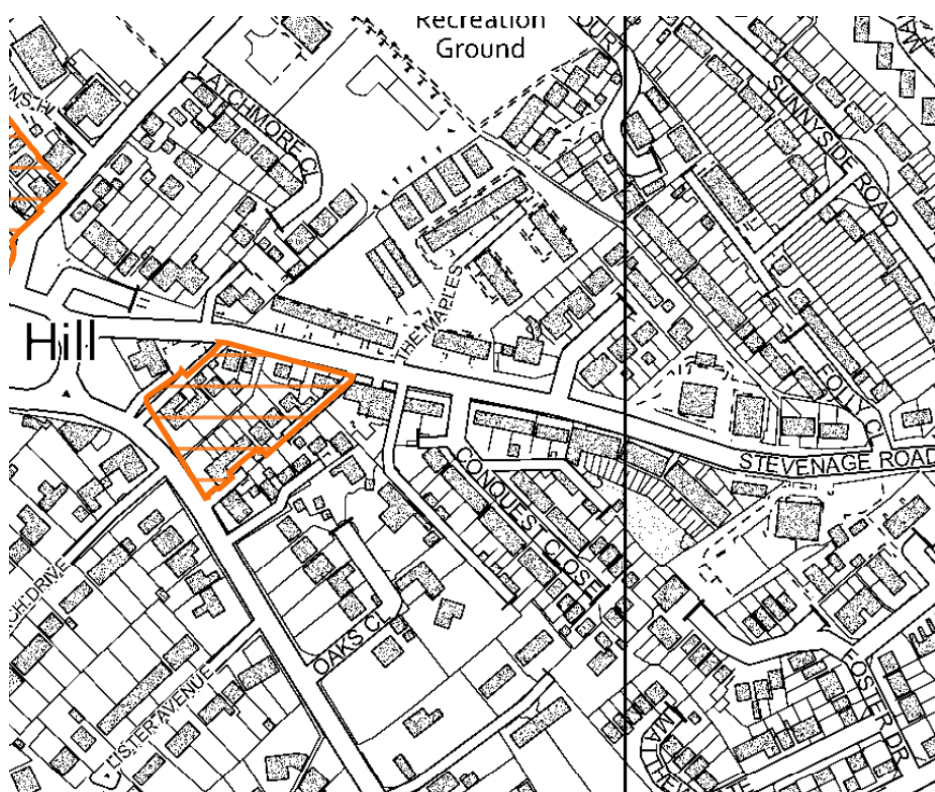


Figure 3 – Extract of the Hitchin Conservation Area Map with site indicated in red

Planning History

- 2.6 The site has been subject to a number of applications for housing.
- 2.7 On 12 December 2014, planning permission was granted for two no 2-bedroom detached bungalows, bin storage and associated landscaping and parking (LPA Ref. 14/02688/1).
- 2.8 On 23 January 2020, planning permission was refused for the erection of three chalet bungalows including associated car parking (LPA Ref. 19/02050/FP). Reasons for refusal related to the cramped form of development, amenity, insufficient parking and information of biodiversity compensation.
- 2.9 On 28 January 2022, an application was refused for the erection of one bungalow and one chalet bungalow including associated car parking and

landscaping (LPA Ref. 21/00354/FP). This refusal was upheld at appeal on 9 October 2023. The Inspector found that safe and suitable vehicular access, most notably for fire tenders, had not been demonstrated and that the layout was contrived with the dwellings having small, cramped gardens.

- 2.10 The current application is most similar to the previous 2014 approval with a layout that enables on-site vehicle turning and dwellings being sited side-by-side fronting the access with generous rear gardens in a spacious manner.



Figure 4 – Comparison between 2014 approval (top) and current proposal (bottom)

3.0 **Development Proposals**

3.1 Full planning permission is sought for:

"Erection of two 2-bedroom bungalows and associated works."

3.2 The proposed scheme comprises the following elements:

- Removal of existing dilapidated sheds on the site.
- Erection of a two, 2-bedroom, one-storey dwellings with roof PVs.
- Provision of two car parking spaces per a dwelling, with vehicular access via the existing access road extended into the site, with a turning head.
- Provision of bin store and cycle parking for each dwelling.
- New dedicated pedestrian access from the new dwellings to Conquest Close created within curtilage of no 23 Conquest Close.

3.3 The proposed scheme is very similar to a scheme previously approved at the site in December 2014.



Figure 5 – Extract of Proposed Site Plan showing scheme layout

4.0 **Relevant Planning Policy**

The Development Plan

4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for development must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 For the purposes of this application, the relevant Development Plan document is the North Herts Local Plan (NHLP), adopted in 2022.

4.3 The following are considered to be the most relevant policies against which to assess the proposal:

- Policy SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire – Outlines that the LPA will maintain the role of key settlements within and adjoining the District as the main focus for housing.
- Policy T2: Parking – the LPA will support residential development that accords with the minimum parking standards and has regard to the relevant SPD.
- Policy D1: Sustainable design – development proposals will be required to respond positively to the site's local context, have regard to the Design SPD, and meet or exceed nationally described space standards.
- Policy D3: Protecting living conditions – unacceptable harm to living conditions should not be caused by development proposals. Where living conditions would be affected by a proposed development, the Council will consider where there are any measures to mitigate the harm to an acceptable level.

4.4 The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is underpinned by the aim of achieving sustainable development. The following chapters are of particular relevance to this proposal:

- Chapter 2 – Achieving sustainable development
- Chapter 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Chapter 11 – Making effective use of land

4.5 In approaching decision-making, the NPPF is clear that LPAs should take a positive approach and work proactively with applicants to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

4.6 Presently, proposals for new housing in North Hertfordshire are to be assessed with the tilted balanced under Paragraph 11d) engaged due to the LPA's lack of a five-year housing land supply. This means granting planning permission unless:

- i. the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

4.7 Paragraph 73 also recognises that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, are essential for SME housebuilders to deliver new homes, and are often built-out relatively quickly. Further that LPAs should support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.



5.0 **Planning Assessment**

Principle of Development

- 5.1 The Site lies in the settlement boundary of Hitchin, one of the District's largest settlements within which new development is focused and encouraged. The Site presently has no formalised use and is vacant. Therefore, the principle of making effective use of redundant urban land for additional housing should be supported.
- 5.2 The Site is also within a highly sustainable location with immediate access to bus stops and shops on Stevenage Road, including the M&S Food store and the off licence, newsagents and grocer at Meja Mija. Additionally, it is an approximately 15-minute walk (5-minute cycle) to the town centre and a 10-minute cycle (25-minute walk) to Hitchin railway station. Both local and national policy strongly supports the principle of the intensification of existing urban sites to provide an uplift in housing within a sustainable urban area. As such, this weighs positively in favour of the proposed scheme.
- 5.3 Housing need and delivery is also an ongoing issue within the district. The latest NHC publication of the five-year housing land supply (5yhls) position (November 2025) recognised that the authority can only demonstrate a 2.6-year supply of housing against the five-year requirement. This is a substantial shortfall below and is reflective of the poor housing delivery in the district.
- 5.4 This continues to place housing delivery as a critical issue and the lack of 5yhls that paragraph 11d) of the NPPF is engaged in the determination of this application. The following sub-sections demonstrate that there are no adverse impacts arising from the development which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF, having particular regard to key policies for directing development

to sustainable locations, making effective use of land and securing well-designed places. This overall planning balance exercise is set out at Section 6.0 and demonstrates that the proposed scheme should be granted under the tilted balance.

Design & Sustainability

- 5.5 Policy D1 of the Local Plan outlines that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which respond positively to the Site's local context and take all reasonable opportunities, consistent with the nature and scale of the scheme to meet a range of criteria, including to create or enhance the public realm and design-out opportunities for crime. Policy D3 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.
- 5.6 The development involves the erection of two rendered bungalows with hipped, tiled roofs and chimneys. This creates the overall appearance of a classic detached bungalow sets within generous plots.
- 5.7 Each of the dwellings benefits from bi-fold doors from their open plan living area onto a rear patio area and all habitable rooms have sufficient windows for good levels of natural light. The dwellings benefit from entrance hallways with built in storage.
- 5.8 Both dwellings are designed with PV panels on the roof for on-site sustainable energy generation. This comprises 4 panels on Plot 1 and 7 panels on Plot 2.
- 5.9 Given the modest height and scale of the dwellings with all accommodation at ground floor level, the new built form will not materially affect the outlook from any surrounding properties, including their rear gardens.

5.10 The commentary from the previous appeal is noted, which states that the previous narrow layout of bungalows were shoehorned into the Site in a manner which did not conform to the character and appearance of the area and resulted in a contrived development with the dwellings and private gardens being cramped by surrounding properties. It was noted that this arrangement would be mitigated marginally by the fact the proposed dwellings are single-storey bungalows, thereby reducing the scale of the development. However, the appeal scheme was an entirely different layout to that now proposed. The appeal scheme had dwellings located with awkward arrangement close to boundaries and with side gardens. The current layout is more similar to the 2014 approval, where the dwellings sit adjacent to one another in a more traditional layout, with generous front and rear gardens and side elevations facing surrounding rear gardens in a better form of development. Additionally, the appeal scheme was not subject to the tilted balance, as is the case now, and it cannot be said that there is any design harm arising which would outweigh the benefits of the scheme.

5.11 Overall, it is considered that the proposed scheme comprises gentle densification of this urban site to make the most efficient use of land whilst respecting and maintaining the character and appearance of the area. The proposals would therefore comply with Policies SP9, D1 and D3 of the Local Plan.

Residential Amenity

5.12 Policy D1 requires that proposals for residential schemes meet or exceed the nationally described space standards (NDSS), whilst having regard to the Council's Design SPD.

- 5.13 The below table sets out a comparison between the proposed units in terms of type and size against the relevant required NDSS standard. This demonstrates that both dwellings exceed the minimum standards, the proposed plans also show that all bedrooms exceed minimum standard and internal storage if provided. As such, the proposed scheme will provide a high quality of internal accommodation.

No.	Size/Type	Required min. GIA	Proposed GIA	Garden Size
1	2B4P	70sqm	73sqm	240sqm
2	(1-storey)		75sqm	180sqm

Table 1 – Comparison of Accommodation Provision against NDSS

- 5.14 Each dwelling will also benefit from a large, private, east facing rear garden area which are considered generous for the size of properties proposed. These gardens will fully meet the needs of the occupants' outdoor living requirements such as for children's play, patio for entertaining, lawn area for leisure and recreation.
- 5.15 The dwellings are arranged with outlook to the front over generous front garden areas and outlook from the rear onto private gardens with good length/depth. As such, the homes will benefit from very good levels of daylight and sunlight.
- 5.16 Overall, the proposed scheme proposed a high quality of accommodation in accordance with Policy D1 of the Local Plan.

Access and Parking

- 5.17 Four car parking spaces are to be provided, two per home. This provision fully accords with Appendix 4 of the Local Plan. A secure cycle store is proposed for each dwelling which will provide space for two bicycles per each 2-bed unit in accordance with Appendix 4 of the Local Plan.

5.18 Access to the Site is from the established private lane which presently provides rear parking access to surrounding residential properties. A turning head is shown within the proposed sites which will enables cars and vans to turn and leave the Site in forward gear. The addition of two houses with a total of four car parking spaces is not considered to generate a material increase in vehicle movements on this established lane. The 2021 appeal decision is noted for its commentary on highway safety, however these comments largely stemmed from the fact that swept path analysis for fire vehicles showed that they would be physically unable to enter and exit the appeal site in a forward gear. This application is provided with confirmation that the proposed dwellings would be served by sprinkler systems. Further that there is a fire hydrant on Conquest Close well within 90m radius of the dwellings and the dwellings are within a 45-metre hose distance via the pedestrian access.

5.19 A dedicated pedestrian and cycle access to the two new dwellings from Conquest Close is proposed to be created within the curtilage of no 23. This will create a safe walking and cycling route and also enable the refuse service to take place from the main section of Conquest Close.

Ecology & Biodiversity Net Gain

5.20 The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (BNG) by Sounds Ecology, the conclusions of which can be summarised as follows:

- No priority or irreplaceable habitats will be impacted by the development.
- No evidence of Protected and priority (NERC s41) species was recorded.
- The Site has no bat roost suitability nor suitability for supporting any other protected species.
- It can reasonably be assumed that nesting birds are present

- No detrimental impacts on species or habitats are anticipated, and no further surveys are merited.
- As no further surveys are required, the PEA should be considered equivalent to an Ecological Impact Assessment.
- A Precautionary Working Methods Statement (PWMS) for site clearance and construction work will help avoid potential low-level risks to wildlife.
- The proposals will incorporate new habitat opportunities for wildlife likely to occur within the local area.

5.21 The submission is also supported by a Biodiversity Net Gain Report by Sounds Ecology and a completed Statutory BNG Metric. These confirm the following:

- Due to the loss of self-set trees, the metric shows a 39% loss of habitat, equating to 0.95 units. Hedgerow units will deliver a 70% gain on-site, but the trading rules for habitat units are not met as 0.95 medium distinctiveness habitats were lost.
- The development proposal will require 1.19 units to be purchased off-site to achieve a 10% gain and satisfy trading rules.

5.22 The imposition of the Statutory Biodiversity Gain Condition will ensure this off-site provision is secured prior to any commencement of works on-site.

Trees

5.23 Whilst there are some existing on-site trees required for removal to facilitate the development, the BNG Assessment advises that these are predominantly self-seeded trees of moderate arboricultural value. Only 1 tree of good quality if required for removal (T2) which is a sycamore. The Site is not within a Conservation Area or subject to any TPOs and none of the previous applications at the Site raised an objection to tree removals. As such, it is not

considered that these trees make a meaningful contribution to the amenity value of the area to warrant their removal objectionable. Five new native trees are shown on the proposed plans to compensate for the removals which is considered and appropriate and proportionate approach. Protection of retained trees during construction can be secured by condition.



6.0 **Summary and Planning Balance**

6.1 This application is for the development of redundant urban land to provide two new dwellings to help meet severe local housing needs.

6.2 The proposal is also supported by national policy which encourages the effective use of underutilised urban land, especially where land supply for housing is constrained.

6.3 The proposal also benefits from the titled balance under paragraph 11d) and this statement has demonstrated that the proposal:

- Will deliver a net gain of 2-dwellings in an urban area to help meet local housing needs – substantial positive weight.
- Will provide two-bungalows particularly suited to the elderly or those with additional accessibility needs – significant positive weight.
- Makes best use of high sustainable urban land to increase density – substantial positive weight.
- Will provide sufficient amenity, parking and bin storage for future residents – moderate positive weight
- Will provide economic benefits during construction- moderate positive weight.
- Has a non-optimal access arrangement but adequate servicing and fire arrangements have been demonstrated, and the proposal will not have a severe impact on highway safety – moderate negative weight.
- Will not have an unacceptable detrimental impact on the residential amenity of surrounding residential properties – natural weight.
- Will not result in any impact upon protected species - neutral weight.

6.4 As such, there is no demonstrable harm arising from the proposed scheme which would outweigh the substantial weight which must be given in favour.

- 6.5 This Statement has demonstrated that both local and national policy have been followed and complied with and, overall, the development proposal is economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. As such, the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies and planning permission should be granted.