

Heritage Statement

For

Proposed Two 3-Bed Self-Build Houses.

at

Land North of
Gosmore End House,
Hitchin Road,
Gosmore,
Hertfordshire.
SG4 7QH

August 2025

Context and Proposals

This Report has been carefully prepared as a result of the intention to build two new 3-bed detached dwellings. The 0.14 hectare site is situated within the Gosmore Conservation Area (GCA). In all Conservation Areas, generally speaking, a more considered approach towards development applies than elsewhere, with the objective of a preserving, or where possible, enhancing the character or appearance of the area in accordance with Section 277 of the Planning Act.

This Report demonstrates an understanding of the architectural and historic character of the main Gosmore village area, including the older buildings in their context along this section of both Hitchin Road and the wider village.

However, in this instance, there will be little noticeable impact following the development proposed to be constructed in this space, which is just beyond the main historic centre of the Gosmore village. The main character of the Conservation Area is of a settlement centred on the village green, and to a lesser extent, the green space located between the Hitchin Road and Maydencroft Lane in front of the redeveloped Gosmore End Nursing Home (now Iris Court). Those areas do have the character of a rural village, reinforced by the open green spaces, trees, and hedges, and a variety of old, and some new buildings. This proposal is sympathetic to, and will bring about an enhancement to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

The main Conservation Area contains a selection of historic houses, many of which are of a reasonable architectural quality built using a variety of building materials. Seventeen are listed, with their elevations contributing to an enrichment of the overall character and appearance of the village.

These two proposed 3-bed houses will be on a secluded plot to the North of the new modern Care Home and clear from any listed properties. The proposed site is located between the rectangular segment of land which falls between Hitchin Road and Care Home driveway. The only historic building in the immediate context of the site is Gosmore House; but as it is located on the opposite side of Hitchin Road, it is therefore considered there will be no detrimental effect whatsoever.

Part of Gosmore village was first designated as a Conservation Area during the 1980s. Buildings within this area are of varying degrees of significance. An assessment of the heritage asset is required to ensure the impact of this proposal to construct two new 3-bed dwellings, towards the edge of the conservation area part of the village is positive for the space. This Statement demonstrates how the proposal is informed and will cause no adverse effect on the preservation, or the architectural & historical character of Hitchin Road, nor the wider Gosmore village.

The overriding principle of the scheme is to promote an approach, which is sensitive to the conservation context of the village and the surrounding landscape of the surrounding farm fields. It is important to ensure the proposed two 3-bed dwellings remain in keeping with the needs of local residents whilst paying due attention to local vernacular and contemporary style. These proposals will ensure the site can be optimised into full use, as it is highly desirable to expect all development proposals to be unified within the setting of Hitchin Road, Gosmore.

Overall Objectives

The purpose of the Report is to assess the positive impact on the village and its heritage assets. This Heritage Statement identifies the broad principles which encompass the character and sense of the place, describing ways in which new development can support these aspects whilst successfully avoiding any harm to anything nearby which is of value.

The initial assessment presents a description of the heritage interests and significance of the heritage assets, none of which are adversely affected by the proposed development, whether directly or indirectly. It provides an overview of the historic development and minor significance of the infill site and an evaluation of the impact of heritage assets by the proposal to develop two new 3-bed detached houses. The Report examines the negligible degree to which the proposal affects the visibility in which this heritage asset is more widely appreciated, without any subsequent impact on the village and Conservation Area. The proposal will enhance the Conservation Area, as it is considered important that once complete, these two 3-bed dwellings are consistent with the historic pattern of development within the rural village grain of development as identified by the recently adopted Local Plan 2011-2031, especially now that a settlement boundary around Gosmore village has been established.

Whilst the site is located within the Gosmore Conservation Area; under the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework this is, nevertheless, considered a designated heritage asset. According to the NPPF the document provides sufficient information about this small Conservation Area site, and its significance (or lack of) to the character and appearance of this small part of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, it is hoped that this will assist the Local Authority's duty to have special regards to the desirability of improving the setting of adjoining buildings, whilst still preserving the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Proposal

In terms of relationship to the Conservation Area, following an initial assessment, possible design issues concerning height, scale, bulk and materials have been fully appraised, and the architecture informed on stages of the design to ensure the form is not incongruous, but instead brings a visual enhancement along this small section of the Gosmore village.

As the site is located next to the large grounds and is accessed through the shared neighbouring Care Home driveway, the impact of the proposal on the setting has therefore been carefully appraised. This context has led to the preference for a modest design and style, which will fit very well with other adjoining buildings now under construction in the Conservation Area.

Relevant issues concerning the orientation and position of the new dwellings have been informed by the local character. Indeed, the Local Planning Authority can be assured that the style and materials have been chosen which best respond to the local context of other recent residential permissions.

This has been done by acknowledging some of the common prevailing themes of the village and the surrounding area, and then incorporating them, where feasible, into the design. The design also pays attention to building lines and a suitable scale and mass, so as to respect the character of the infill plot, whilst not affecting any architectural significance of the much larger nearby buildings.

Only part of the important historic centre of Gosmore is designated as a Conservation Area. Important buildings within this heritage asset are of varying degrees of significance. An assessment of the heritage asset is important in allowing the impact of these new modest proposals on the conservation of the village to be better understood. This Statement demonstrates how the proposal is informed and will ensure that the spatial, architectural and historical character of both Hitchin Road and the wider Gosmore Village will not be adversely affected in any way.

The purpose of the Report is to further a positive impact through a better use of this infill site which these proposals will have on the heritage asset. Notwithstanding, even though the site is just beyond the core of the Conservation Area, nevertheless it is still important that this Heritage Statement identifies the broad principles which encompass the character, and sense of place, describing ways in which new development can support these aspects, without harming what is of value.

The initial assessments present a description of the heritage interest and significance of the heritage asset, very much affected in a positive way by the proposed development. It also intends to provide an overview of the historic development and significance of the wider village, whilst evaluating what minimal impact on the heritage assets will result from this small proposed development.

The Report examines the minor degree to which the proposal affects the visibility in which heritage asset is appreciated, and because of its discrete position set back off the new Care Home driveway, there is a negligible impact on the wider village or Conservation Area.

Essentially, the discreet and attractive design of a pair of two new 3-bed dwellings facing outwards (West) towards the open gardens and beyond the Conservation Area will have a positive visual impact on this Conservation Area location. The entire proposal is further beyond and away from the Gosmore village green than the recently extended nine dwellings at Letter-Box Row. The roofline of the proposed two 3-bed dwellings is lower than the newly reconstructed Iris Court Care Home to the South.

In terms of local context, Gosmore also has a number of other “terraces” i.e. smaller properties originally built to provide low-cost accommodation for rural workers. For instance, Maydencroft cottage was originally also built as a terrace of three cottages. Opposite the Bull Public House is another short terrace of four small cottages, built right on the lane, & with only tiny back yards. Adjacent to the Village Green (next to what was formally Goose Mere Pond - unfortunately now dried up), Letterbox Row consisted of 9 x 1-bedroom terraced cottages previously with small gardens, which have all more recently (2021) been extended to provide 9 x 2-bed cottages with tiny gardens.

Methodology

This Report is based on information collected from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including historic mapping. The observations made on the site have been reviewed in the context of documentary research. The collation of existing written and graphic information has been assessed in order to identify the likely character, extent and significant of known historic or potential archaeological, interest, resource, including the local, regional or national significance.

In addition, this assessment has relied upon some attached photographs, and the September 2019 North Hertfordshire [District] Conservation Area, Character Statement.

Housing has played a significant role in local social history, as well as individual dwellings making their own contribution to the street scene. As the site is in the Conservation Area, examination is made of any inherent quality and its contribution (if any) to the Conservation Area. Following this, it is now possible to determine the degree to which the beneficial use of the infill site for Two new 3-bed Self-Build dwellings is entirely feasible, as the site lies within a Category A village, close by to the historic town of Hitchin, and where efficient future use of land will be needed/recognised in order to meet communities' future housing needs, and indeed to help towards the Local Council's Objectively Assessed Housing delivery of future targets.

An evaluation has also been made as to how the new development will look, with attention given to matters of location, scale, mass and materials.

National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed development is discreetly located within the wider designated space in the Conservation Area. Notwithstanding, the proposal within the setting of any heritage asset is required to include a thorough site analysis which demonstrates how the proposal will respect and enhance the asset. This Report is to be read alongside submitted drawings, plans, both the accompanying Design & Access Statements, and the Tree Report.

Reference to the Gosmore Conservation Area appraisal described the area's history, fabric, and character, with an understanding of its origins, how & why it has changed over time, and the former condition of its constituents elements and materials.

The NPPF constitutes the government's current National Guidance in policy regarding new development within the historic environment. Sections of the revised NPPF rightly aim to deal with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Whilst the NPPF places emphasis on heritage "significance", at the same time, the revised document states that Local Authorities should also look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas, and within the setting of heritage assets, not only to enhance their significance, but to encourage socio-economic opportunities and to take advantage of what the (recently adopted) Local Plan 2011 – 2031 also rightly seeks to encourage; specifically, windfall/infill sites such as this in order to meet Local Plan targets/needs.

Local Policy

The heritage impact assessment will support the proposal for two new Self-Builds on the site, as part of the planning application. It will supplement the work already undertaken in the application approach, and the design drawings will result in an assessment of significance and visual sensitivities around the site. This information has been used to support the design approach of the new build and to appraise the development as suited to the context of the setting.

The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 will be read alongside the adopted Core Strategy. The key policy HE1 - Designated Heritage Assets, established the need for the significance of the heritage assets, including the setting, to be assessed. Any such assessment would be expected to justify and detail the impacts of any proposal upon the significance (if any) on this part of the designated heritage asset; the clear objective being to improve the District's places, whilst preserving their conservation and significance.

Development policies

The quality of North Herts environment is reflected in its built heritage. As well as a rich and diverse historic environment with buildings, areas and landscapes contributing to the special character of the District, this must be judged alongside the need for new homes within Category A villages.

Location and Description

The Parish of St Ippolyts is set in predominantly agricultural countryside just to the south of the historic market town of Hitchin, with plenty of natural vegetation and Parkland. The Parish comprises the two x Category "A" villages of Gosmore and St Ippolyts, plus the hamlets of Ashbrook, Little Almshoe, St Ibbs, Thistley, and the former New England.

Historical Development of Gosmore

Early civilisation in the area is indicated by traces of bronze-age burial mounds, and a later, local Roman Road and Tumulus. The Manor of Almshoe, in the South of the Parish, was recorded in the Domesday Survey as having land for one plough, three bordars (cottages) and "pannage" (woodland) for 60 pigs. The traditional date for the church's foundation at St Ippolyts is 1087 and this is borne out of architectural evidence. That includes a blocked Norman Window. The church built under the patronage of Elstow Convent dedicated to St Hippolytus, a Roman theologian.

Maydencroft Manor (listed Grade II*) is a late mediaeval former open hall house with 16th and 17th century extensions. The Manor had Royal associations when King Henry VIII, who having inherited it from grandmother Margaret, and is reputed in his younger days to have occasionally stayed there, using it as a hunting lodge.

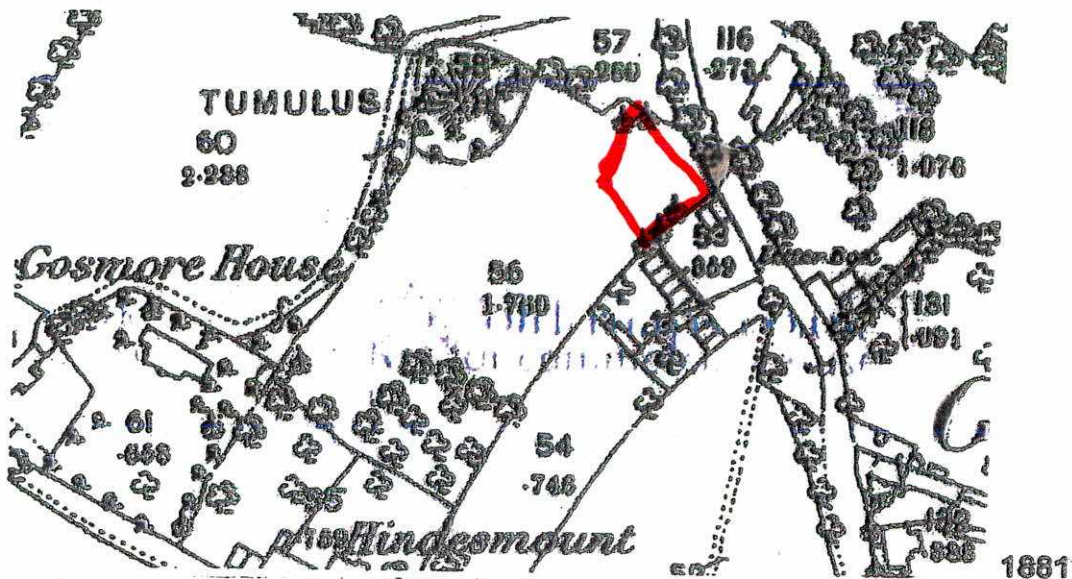
The village of Gosmore was first established from the 14th century onwards; originally named after the pond "*Goose Mere*" it appears to have grown up around the crossroads where High Street, Maydencroft Lane, Preston Road and Waterdell Lane meet. During the 17th century, Yeoman Farmers left bequests of land and dwellings in trust for the poor people in the Parish.

The buildings in Gosmore suggest a small village surrounded by larger farm buildings, which have gradually become part of the village itself, as new residential development expanded. The main activities in the Parish were farming or related jobs. At first, under the feudal rules laid down by the Manor Court of Almshoe and Maydencroft (the latter functioned until 1929, and was often held in the Bull in Gosmore) and later at the will of individual owners as the common land was gradually privatised culminating in the Enclosure Act.

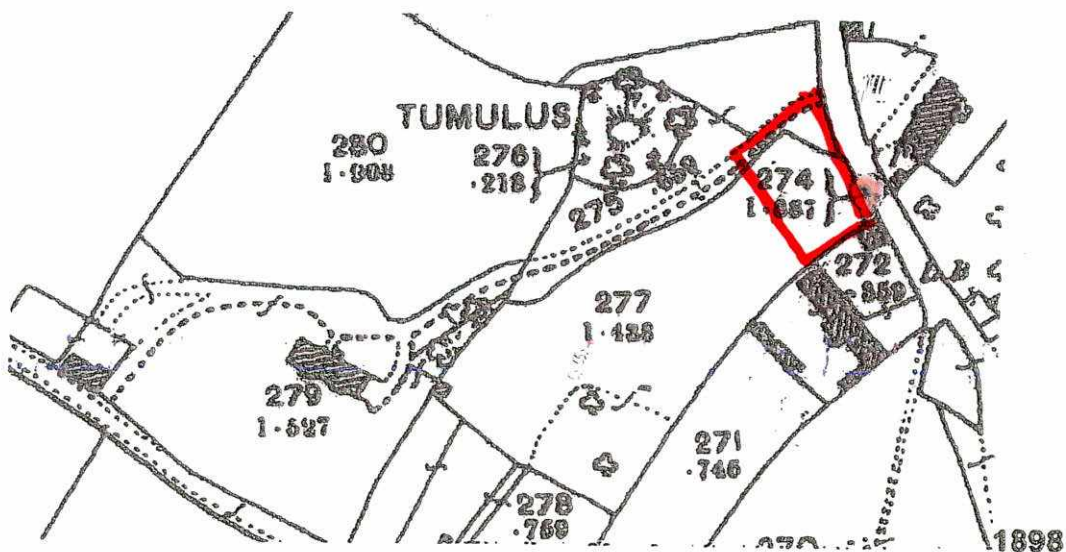
At the beginning of the 20th century, unfortunately many people had left to find work in the towns. This resulted in local initiatives to try and attract people back to Gosmore. For example, in 1914, Gosmore Green was established by the pond (now dry) which had given the name *Goose Mere* to the village. In 1921 the first council houses were built, and piped water replaced the well water which unfortunately had previously led to outbreaks of cholera. This was followed by electricity, and the building of the Parish Hall in 1939. In recent years, old houses have been extended, and many new private ones built, including the Broad Meadow estate in the 1980s, and at Townsend Place, where new Housing Association bungalows were built in 2000.

Summary of the history of the site.

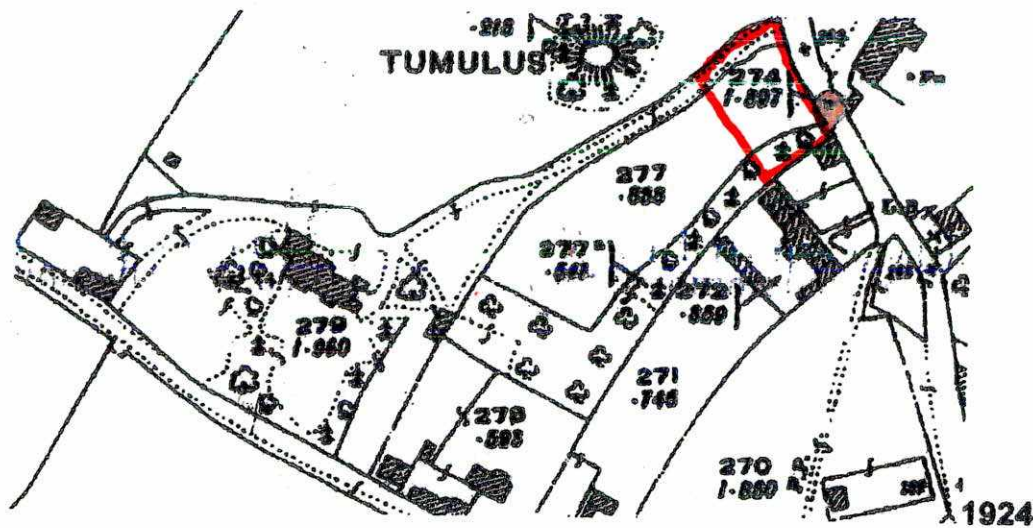
The proposed site formed part of the grounds first seen on a map in 1881. Initially named as Gosmore House, and the original house was constructed fronting onto Maydencroft Lane. The 1881 map shows the main entrance and driveway between Gosmore House and (what is now) the Old Coach House with a track for agricultural workers to the West of the Tumulus leading to Hitchin Road. The original Coach House can be seen to the South-West of Gosmore House.



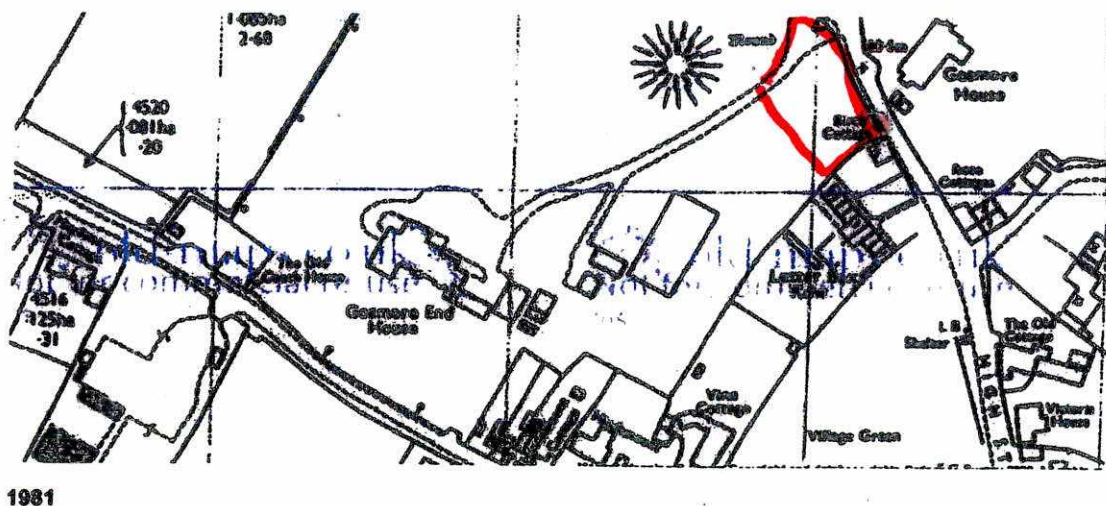
By 1898 that original Georgian house (Gosmore House) had been demolished by Kate Curling. The name Gosmore House was then transferred to the (now) pink house opposite in Hitchin Road. The newly renamed Gosmore End House was constructed on older existing cellars, but this time, with its front door facing towards Hitchin Road and with a new driveway and entrance established where it is today. The Old Coach House was also demolished, and the current Old Coach House rebuilt in its place with an "in & out" driveway going by this proposed application site. A new driveway to the East of the Tumulus was built with the entrance from Hitchin Road moved to its current position.



By 1924, Kate curling had added a new west wing and north facing library. Further stables were added in the North-West corner of the [new] Old Coach House curtilage.



And by 1981, Gosmore End, House is shown with further additions; the Old Coach House had been sold off separately, and the additional stable in its North-West corner demolished to be replaced by a residential concrete pre-fabricated garage/carport nearer to Maydencroft Lane.



Now, in separate ownership, the owners of Gosmore End House, blocked off the private driveway (where previously it went through to The old Coach House) & planted new trees along this boundary.

Also, note, Gosmore House has been formally renamed and included on 1981 map.

Gosmore Conservation Boundary and General Character.

Gosmore Conservation Area was designated by North Hertfordshire [District] Council in 1970; But unfortunately the conservation boundary has not ever been amended since. Of primary importance, the Gosmore boundary includes listed properties along the High Street and Hitchin Road running North from the junction of High Street, Maydencroft Lane, Waterdell Lane and Preston Road.

Gosmore Conservation Area lies to the south of Hitchin, only a short way from a large estate of modern detached housing on the south side of the town. The Conservation Area is surrounded on three sides by agricultural fields, although to its East, there is residential development, extending well beyond the Conservation Area boundary right up to the London Road, separating the adjoining village of St Ippolyts.

At the centre of the Conservation Area, the Gosmore village green is an attractive public space surrounded by hedgerows and trees on its eastern and southern borders. The most significant building in the Conservation Area in terms of size and mass is the new Iris Court Care Home. Although much of this new building is well screened by its boundary wall and existing trees. Beyond that to the East, the village green is the most significant green space at the centre of the village which is defined by a planted boundary to Maydencroft Lane. On the other side, it is defined by timber bollards, low hedging, plants, some trees to the High Street with a generous grass margin separating the hedgerow.

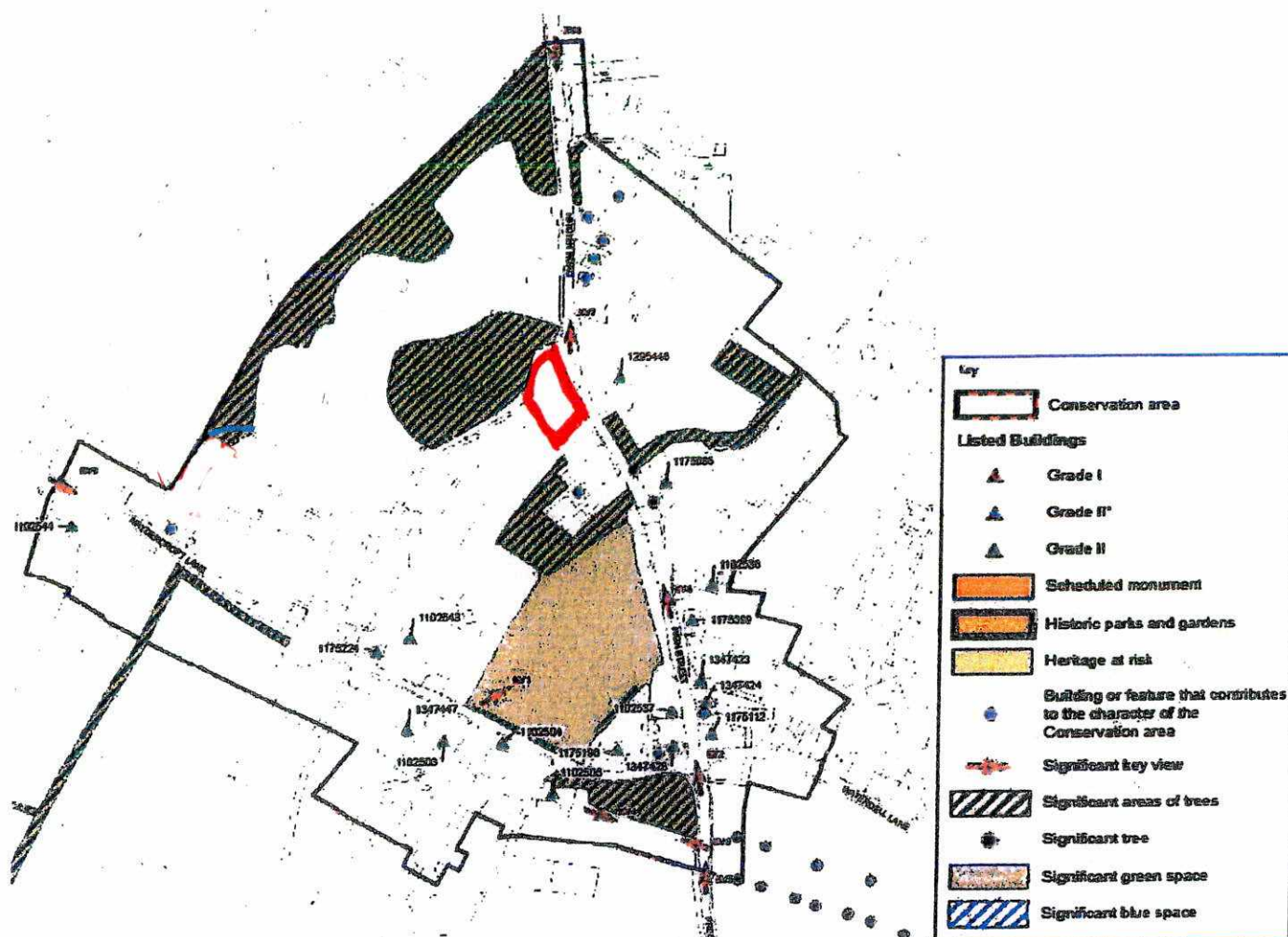
The roads in Gosmore Conservation Area are generally narrow and loosely defined by hedges, boundaries and properties. The wide grass verge along the West side of Hitchin Road, leading to the High Street is perhaps better thought of as part of the village green despite a hedge separating it from the green. Along the other side of the village green which runs up to Maydencroft Lane, is separated from it by a line of trees and other planting. Note, there are no pavements within the Conservation Area,

Sections of the road along both Hitchin Road and Maydencroft Lane, are “abridged” by trees, rising from shallow grassed margins to the road. As the Conservation Area is approached along Hitchin Road, hedges characterise the boundaries of this lane, punctuated with walls, fencing, and areas clear of planting, providing limited views of some houses and their front gardens. As the centre of the village is reached, the building density increases whilst the brick and weather boarded farm buildings and Avenue Farm reinforce the village’s agricultural heritage.

The understanding of the village as a single layered settlement with some infill development is an important and defining characteristic of Gosmore village.

The radial form of development along the High Street, Hitchin Road, and Maydencroft Lane is magnified by the trees and hedges, giving a strong natural setting to the village. Gosmore contains intimate, straight edges, often associated with a typical village but there are subtle changes in street alignment, conveying a sense of organic development over time. The character of the village today is influenced by the same trees and hedges which both effectively screen-out views of the surroundings from the street, but then are readily able to soften any impact of new building in the landscape. Gosmore has a rural almost bucolic character, as given by the many framed views along the streets, which show planting and the rise of buildings from the margin of the road. Houses are typically set behind planted gardens and even recent housing along Mill Lane, Maydencroft Lane and the High Street are all set back from the road behind preserved planted front gardens.

Gosmore Conservation Area Assessment Map (below) shows the built character of a rural village, reinforced by open green spaces. An assessment of the quality of the existing buildings within the village provides an indication of the typical prevailing scaling and massing. It also helps to determine the local vernacular and the range of local building characteristics; detailing and materials are similarly used to define the local environment.



Gosmore Conservation Area, Assessment map

The Conservation Area has a mixed character and overall, there are a range of buildings in terms of size, mostly in residential uses, with 17 listed buildings. These are a mix of houses, a farm, cottages, a barn, a barn conversion, and a former Beer House, representing the earlier activity in the village.

Only with the exception of Avenue Farmhouse (Grade II*) on Maydencroft Lane, all the other listed buildings are Grade II. Avenue Farmhouse is important as a late mediaeval building, with a timber frame, encased in brick, and the East wing largely brick built in dark red Brick with black headers. Only the dressings and arches are in light (contrasting) red brick.

Throughout Gosmore, there are also a number of other prominent red brick buildings, showing a variety of styles but of similar date, with occasionally mildly similar architectural detailing. These are interspersed with larger, timber frame buildings, from an agricultural barn to the large pink painted residence - now renamed - Gosmore House.

The majority of buildings in the Conservation Area are in brick, although in a variety of styles and ages. Later buildings complement this character, and modern brick buildings are of a more uniform redbrick, but with some panels of render, entirely rendered facades, or steeply sloping roof forms, bay windows and tile hung facades. Thus, there is a diverse range of housing styles throughout the village settlement.

Other examples of surviving timber-frame include the Olde Cottage on the High Street, View Cottage and Avenue Cottage, along with Whitbank and Jenny Cottage along Maydencroft Lane. Some timber-framed houses are encased in brick; for example, the original three (separate) bays of Maydencroft Cottage on Maydencroft Lane, which were all timber framed and encased in brick.

There are a greater number of large brick buildings within the Conservation Area. Examples include the (rebuilt) Bird-in-Hand, a 20th century building in brick; alongside Victoria House, a 19th-century plum & blue brick building; and, the earlier 18th century, Rose Cottage.

Hindsmount along Maydencroft Lane (also formerly part of the Curling's Gosmore End Estate) has wide ground floor windows on the principal elevation and an interesting near circular light above the front door.

Gosmore therefore, can be said to derive its significance from the survival of a wide range of traditional residential buildings; typical of an old agricultural settlement, sitting in an attractive landscape. The agricultural base character of the village is firmly established along Maydencroft Lane where a group of farming buildings also populate the roadside at Avenue Farm. Whilst the listed cottages and Public Houses also provide a reference to the social activity connected to the earlier farming tradition.

The 20th century has seen little encroachment to the North part of the Conservation Area. As modern brick buildings are part of a uniform red brick with some panels of render, entirely rendered facades or steeply sloping roof forms, bay windows, and tile hung facades. The proposed site for two new 3-bed dwellings is discreetly tucked behind the front boundary wall & fence to the North, and the enormous new care home to the South. This has several advantages in as much as it will help to further consolidate the newly defined Green Belt boundary separating the Category "A" village of Gosmore from the adjacent countryside beyond/to the West.

The Old Coach House with the original Gosmore End House (now demolished) itself still remains, but significantly altered from when the stables had first been rebuilt in the early 20th century. Initially, poorly converted in the 1960s, thankfully the current owner has significantly upgraded the property from 2006 onwards.

Listed buildings within the Conservation Area. - (See Appendix at back).

The contribution of trees, hedges and green spaces to the appearance within the street is significant. The southern end of the village has strong landscape character which makes an impressive entrance to the village. This is mainly due to the presence of trees on the west side of Preston Road at the junction of High Street and Maydencroft Lane.

The Picturesque quality is framed in the view from High Street, North towards Rose Cottage and Hitchin Road. In the views which incorporate the green open space at the centre of the village, that taken across the village green is most important, especially in a north easterly direction towards the listed buildings on High Street. No views are mentioned which directly include the application site to the North of Gosmore End Nursing Home; most likely because there are no public views taken from within its ground.

In fact, the only view within range is that taken from the Conservation Area boundary on Hitchin Road looking South & East. In this view, the treed character is present.

Only immediately at the Care Home driveway entrance (very briefly) does the view open towards the space to the South, where it's possible to view the attractive existing newer buildings beyond the application site. However, the space is entirely shaped by the trees, flanking the fields on its South side.

Much of the overall character, of Gosmore village is the visual experience of buildings seen behind their natural or built front borders. At Hindsmount for example, the whole of the building is revealed, indicating a tiled roof, regularly scaled bays and a main chimney stack. Instead, by contrast, actually the proposed two 3-bed dwellings will be less visible than most. Whereas the majority of the larger size homes/buildings such as Victoria House, Avenue Farmhouse, and Olde Cottage are rightly better viewed in their entirety.

Similarly, from the North end of the Conservation Area, the only view on the West side of Hitchin Road, is that from which the approach to the shared entrance (of Gosmore End House & Iris Court & the application site) is made, apart from Birch Cottage, little realisation of any other building viewed from here.

Spatial Quality.

The village lies within a swathe of fields. Maydencroft Lane is a narrow, relatively quiet road that has a true feeling of a rural Lane. In parts, it is bounded by banks, ditches and hedges, and other rough vegetation, giving an uneven sense of enclosure. At the centre, on the junction with High Street, trees face onto the road on the West side of Preston Road, expressing the village quality at this important node. Views out of the lane into the surrounding countryside, are only really taken on the South side of the Street; the general pattern of buildings enclosed by their front hedges, means it is not possible to see the fields from the road; only the area to the West of the entrance to Gosmore Bury, along Maydencroft Lane can open fields subsequently be made out.

The experience of the open fields and countryside is even more evident in views taken from Hitchin Road to the North of the Conservation Area. From here, it is possible to see over and through the bush and make out the expanse of grassland and the trees which are sighted all around. By far the most important element in defining the village setting, is the junction with Maydencroft Lane and the High Street as it orientates the observer in a Northerly Southerly or Westerly direction. The buildings which front to the junction on Maydencroft Lane and the High Street clearly show this is the node of former historic development which is entirely different in character from the proposed application site.

The cluster of buildings of Avenue Farm also contribute to a sense of place. The barn, which sides onto Maydencroft Lane in particular, makes a contrasting juxtaposition to the street scene at this point. But, it is only in the centre of the Conservation Area, where the group of buildings of Rose Cottage, Victoria House, and the Olde Cottage are regarded as focal points. It is when approaching from the South facing towards the Bull Public House, where it is considered the gateway building into the Conservation Area, revealing the village green at its centre. Whereas, further along Hitchin Road, views out to the wider countryside are constrained by the presence of buildings, and the density of trees and greenery between, behind and before the houses. Only in a few select places such as the West side of Gosmore Bury can views of the wider country side be seen. Similarly, only beyond the Old Coach House when exiting Gosmore village, are views of open fields reached, but sadly rather spoilt by the modern straw barn and manure heap alongside. Further along Maydencroft Lane, a number of modern small- scale horse stables can be seen.

At the application site, the character of the setting is dominated by the large new care home which can now be seen above the front hedge along Hitchin Road. Formerly, the important green space which formed the front garden of the original 19th Century Gosmore [End] House, shows how a street, which originally fed into the village from an early age, was to become merged into the land that now forms the Southern part of the Conservation Area, and the consequent disconnect with what remains the more traditional and picturesque majority of the Gosmore Conservation Area around the village Green

None of the dwellings along Hitchin Road, nor any of the listed buildings throughout the village are affected by the construction of these proposed two 3-bed dwellings. Indeed, the limited views from the fields West of Gosmore will be improved by the proposals, as to a minor extent this will help to block-off/moderate the large modern mass recently created by the newly built care home (see photographs set out in the accompanying Design & Access Statement).

An appraisal of the architectural styles along Hitchin Road and Maydencroft Lane show some diversity and very mixed architectural quality. Newly built properties at Gosmore Ley and Maydencroft (Aquatic) Gardens have been blended in extremely successfully. The overall effect is gained by a mix of such cottages, farm, buildings, and houses. The trees and hedgerows complement the narrow lane giving character to the setting. Hitchin Road itself does not have a regular pattern or characteristic grouping which any building can be said to either contribute towards or detract from.

The views, either side of the Old Coach House, being a large brick building whose form was previously used for stabling and horse accommodation is seen in the current uneven floor levels. As previously assessed, it has one large ground floor and one large first floor bedroom which extends into the roof area. From either side (East and West) of the Old Coach House parts of the new Iris Court Care Home are more visible, as are the new garages recently constructed. Further along, Maydencroft Cottage sits on an elevated plot over two stories, with a horizontal character given by its many bays and the rhythm of the windows now creating a unified feature. It is set back on the South side of the lane, beyond, which are the new Maydencroft (Aquatic) Gardens development, consisting of eight recently completed houses (2022). As everything is set well back, due to the trees all along the roadside, there will be little visible connection between those nine newly extended properties at Letterbox Row, and the proposed two 3-bed dwelling application site.

The Conservation Area Appraisal states that a view taken from Hitchin Road in a westerly direction over the grounds to the front of the new care home is a contribution to the character of a Conservation Area; (but only just & only very marginally!). Views within the main part of the Conservation Area are primarily *local* ones and only concern immediate and direct compositions which are based on:-

- (i) individual buildings - (Gosmore House; Avenue Farmhouse; & Gosmore Bury); or,
- (ii) pairs of buildings (Hindsmount/Hindsmount Cottage; & 21-22 Maydencroft Lane); and,
- (iii) small groups (Olde Cottage, Victoria house, Rose Cottage; 1- 5 Maydencroft Lane, and Letterbox Row).

The Conservation Area Appraisal also pays attention to the land within the village, but actually only identifies the village green itself as being of a special quality. The ground to the North of Iris Court Care Home is noted as another green space, but as it's not publicly accessible and can only be really observed through the hedge along Hitchin Road, the general reference in the appraisal is quite rightly considered secondary within the Conservation Area.

Assessment of Significance.

This small 0.14 hectare application site, due to its setback position is unassuming and overshadowed by the extensive trees further South and East, and the enormous new care home.

Further, due to the two 3-bed Terraced cottages being set back, and their clever alignment within the plot, the adjacency of vegetation means that little appreciation for any elevations will ever be afforded from the road.

When viewed from the street, (Hitchin Road), the plot in its current form makes no contribution to either the street scene, or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. There is no historic or architectural value, such that it was not even worthy to receive mention in the Conservation Area Appraisal.

Whatever significance the site/plot may have had in the past as a small part of the setting of the former Gosmore End House, now the plot no longer has any significant historical or architectural value. However, the construction of two pretty 3-bed dwellings will have the very beneficial effect of screening/reducing the impact of the enormous new care home next door, which in turn will make a very positive contribution in the future to this part of the Conservation Area.

Subject site and its contribution to the street scene.

This section of Hitchin Road is characterised by detached buildings, and it is effectively the landscaped character only which contributes to the character of this section of the village and the Conservation Area. Indeed, the degree to which the plot contributes to this visual experience is muted and at best very limited given that partial views can only be made out on the North side of the enormous new care home driveway.

Likewise, along Maydencroft Lane, the new semi-detached houses at 21 & 22 Maydencroft Lane have significantly improved this part of the Conservation Area; as has the new dwelling at Wisteria Cottage being set well forward to the road, before Hindsmount cottage, and then Hindsmount. Currently under construction are three larger executive houses on the former Vine Cottage plot. (NHDC reference 18/03348/FP).

Development in the landscape.

The subject site is a previously developed small area on the South side of Hitchin Road. The site itself is effectively a rectangular shape plus the shared driveway access to the existing Care Home.

By being situated within the Category A village of Gosmore and within the Conservation Area, the site has the potential for playing a role in promoting the links between key destination points and transit points in signposting the road ahead and the approach towards the centre of the village.

The degree of landscape significance created by this small site space is considered to be very low, whilst the potential for improving, and the positive impact on the Conservation Area is of such an extent that it in itself remains a positive reason for encouraging the re-use of land together with best use of land by integrating, well designed new buildings to create much needed new Self-Built homes.

In the village context, the size and arrangement of more significant surrounding plots reflect their historic origins, with some providing a response to 20th century social and economic pressures as seen through discreet additions. Examples of recent consented development in what was then the Green Belt include a three bedroom dwelling & relocation of site access, following demolition of existing outbuildings at the rear Gosmore House (18/01950/FP); a single storey front and part single and part two storey side and rear extensions at Birch Cottage (10/01020/1/HH); Maydencroft Aquatics eight new homes (17/02289/1); Millstone, Mill Lane (18/00900/FP) Chimneys - Mill Lane (20/01235/ FP); and, the beautiful new dwelling at Gros Puits, Mill Lane (15/02897/1).

As listed buildings are plentiful (17 in number) for a village this size, they remain significant both for their frequency and their survival. Most are in a good state of repair, and are used on a daily basis. These homes contribute to the area's predominant 17th, 18th, and 19th-Century agricultural and memorial character, and make an important contribution in their own right as independent structures.

Whilst other unlisted buildings of merit, such as the Old Coach House and 1-5 Maydencroft Lane are in reasonable condition and make a further positive contribution to the overall character of Gosmore, this brownfield site proposed for these two new 3-bed dwellings is not of comparable importance. Indeed, whilst the site remains included in the Conservation Area next door to the enormous new care home, it actually makes a negative contribution to the Conservation Area at present, whereas, the proposal will allow new infill dwellings within a Category A village, and help to improve the appearance when viewed/approaching from the adjoining Green Belt countryside to the West.

Further, the degree to which Gosmore's significance as a historical village is not enhanced at present; the site's inclusion in the Conservation Area is thus considered tenuous. Consequently, whilst the site does not constitute any positive contribution to the heritage aspect, it is arguable that its current condition actually detracts from the adjoining settings. Therefore, a proposal which sits within this natural setting ought to be acclaimed for having the tenacity for integrating new building(s) within the setting.

Setting of buildings and view framework.

A major consideration of this proposal is the modest scale and form and development, and it's miniscule impact on the street scene, in addition to the improvement to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The area is a quiet and relatively enclosed, and whose natural context is given by the abundance of surrounding trees and vegetation to the South. An overall sense of rural intimacy continues to exist, owing to the narrow line and medium level of development. Modest spaces exist between houses, allowing glimpses of views of the surrounding shrubbery & trees behind a normal visual experience. In such a setting, the houses generally appear secondary to the nature and surrounding landscape.

In fact, the underused character of the space contrasts with the active buildings in the adjacent surroundings. Other buildings along Hitchin Road enjoy a better contextual relationship with each other and share a closer proximity to each other, which has a positive effect on the setting of the Conservation Area.

Commentary on setting.

The village like qualities and individual views mostly make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the village Conservation Area. The use of buildings along Maydencroft Lane, High Street, and Hitchin Road provide the mainstay setting to the Conservation Area.

The linear nature of these roads offer a degree of enclosure and views of individual buildings can typically be gained only from short to occasional mid-range.

Over time, the setting of a heritage asset may change as a surrounding context changes; only the understanding of an asset may differ between different views with obviously some views contributing much more than others. It is pertinent that buildings such as Victoria House, Gosmore House, and Rose Cottage, whilst in close proximity to the site are not directly visible from each other. As such, they may have a historic or aesthetic connection which amplifies the experience of the significance of each. Furthermore, Birch Cottage is the only property within the immediate context of the site. Gosmore House may be close by, but as it's on the other side of Hitchin Road, due to the tree growth, there is only very minor inter-visibility between the two.

Important views in the neighbourhood relate to the primacy of spaces within the area. Those along Hitchin Road are principal receptor points, providing select views onto buildings and natural features.

The area is balanced by the openness perceived over the wall and hedges in front of the enormous Iris Court Care Home which contrasts well with the modest scale of the two 3-bed dwellings proposed to be a modest one & a half storeys.

Streetscape qualities and individual use make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the village, and whilst the proposed two 3-bed terraced cottages will enjoy a contextual relationship with each other, and share special qualities, they will remain virtually unnoticeable when viewed from anywhere else in or adjacent to the Gosmore Conservation Area.

Justification.

It is important to secure a new scheme which will balance well with the surrounding buildings. The proposed site is off Hitchin Road, where it will have a physical and spatial relationship with the buildings in this immediate location.

The local context provides sufficient design cues for what may be acceptable, as it is noted that buildings are two storeys, generally well proportioned; brick and square headed windows are a common theme along the road.

The proposed development is orientated facing predominantly West and East with only side windows facing North onto Hitchin Road, adding some architectural interest.

The two new dwellings will add to the natural character of the land, being very well proportioned; coherent to the adjacent buildings, purposefully designed specifically with no overlooking windows in either the end gables. All habitable rooms will intentionally face East and West to avoid overlooking.

Thus, as the two new 3-bed dwellings will be almost invisible from Maydencroft Lane or Hitchin Road; and the benefit of having attractive new brickwork and small plain clay tiles will help to mask the enormous impact created by the new care home from views from the wider adjoining countryside.

Furthermore, tidying up the infill site will lead to a positive improvement on this edge of Conservation Area location, and at the same time, provide much-needed, low-cost, Self-Build housing, available to rent in a Category A village where demand for such accommodation very significantly outstrips supply.

This windfall opportunity is fully in-line with the requirements of the recently adopted North Hertfordshire [District] Council's Local Plan 2011-2031, which relies heavily on some additional windfall and infill sites to deliver planned housing targets. Furthermore, these two new dwellings are to be Self-Built, this will also help the Council in meeting its legal obligation to plan for and achieve an adequate number of new Self-Built dwellings.

Summary.

The proposal has been carefully considered in relation to Section 16 of the NPPF, which states that, when considering the impact of any proposal on the significance of the designated heritage assets, great weight should be given to the assets conservation. This is backed up by the Local Plan which states that development affecting heritage assets and their settings should conserve their significance by remaining sympathetic to form, scale, materials and details.

Here, it is highly desirable to introduce a sensitive and reflective design which observes the simple character of local buildings, as well as the Conservation Area. The proportion of built form is attractively balanced within the site to create a development which sits in harmony within the existing plot boundaries.

The two new 3-bed dwellings will be arranged, so as to work within the existing plot ratio and appropriate density of the Conservation Area. The pitched roof and gables have been angled so that any possible impact of height on neighbouring building is thus reduced.

Conclusion.

Being in an area of only limited architectural character, this development has been assessed according to the impact it could have on the setting and existing character of Maydencroft Lane and Hitchin Road. This sympathetic design succeeds by achieving a layout which compliments and adds value to the built form, and which can be barely seen from either street. Within the Category A village of Gosmore, new housing proposals are to be welcomed and encouraged, and will complement and contribute positively to the character of this edge of Conservation Area setting. This will provide a more attractive vista when viewed from the adjoining Green Belt countryside.

The overall design is based on a similar theme elsewhere in Gosmore, where both two and three bedroom homes have been developed, previously. The main structure is also to be built of the same bricks with attractive plain clay tiles to match neighbouring properties; this best reflects the general manner of most of the other new buildings in the village, keeping to a simple pallet of high quality materials.

The two new 3-bed dwellings will enhance this edge of Conservation Area location. The roofline is designed so that it blends below the ridge of Gosmore End House and Birch Cottage; due to being scaled according to the distance from the road, it will not be overpowering, but will create a congruous form. Equally, the two new 3-bed dwellings will incur no deviation on the built hierarchy as Hitchin Road moves in a Northerly direction. With regards to new development, the height of the two new 3-bed dwellings is guided by existing levels of two storeys, therefore reflecting the scale of local buildings. The new exterior of the homes will act to enhance the area's character, and still be appropriate to the setting, whilst improving the appearance from the road. This will enhance the setting for the important buildings in the wider context, and further help to "nourish" the appearance of the wide variety of adjoining built forms.

The design refers positively to the heritage of Gosmore, whilst recognising the space constraints, density, and character/development patterns of the rural setting. The overall design will gain merit through it being an appropriate location for new development in the Category A village, and particularly because of their design, which is based on traditional architecture and its use of materials, will sit very well within the locality. The same materials have previously been very successfully deployed at new builds for 21, 22, 23, 24 & 25 Maydencroft Lane, Gosmore End House, Gosmore End Cottage, Gosmore End Lodge, 12 Mill Lane, and the very attractive existing garages adjacent to the site.

It is our carefully considered view, overall these proposed three-bedroom Self-Build dwellings which will initially be available to rent, will enhance the character and appearance of this Conservation Area location.

RCM/MAM. August 2025