

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT for

3no dwellings

Land at 'Trees'

Gosmore Road, Hitchin

For Mr & Mrs Judge



Dec 2024

PENTANGLE
DESIGN GROUP

Introduction

This statement has been prepared to accompany a planning application for a residential development consisting 3no new detached dwellings at Trees, Gosmore Road in Hitchin

Trees is a large detached house at the northern end of Gosmore Road. It is located on the eastern side of the road opposite Priory Park.

The wider area of this south western edge of Hitchin, including Gosmore Road, Coach Drive, Priory Way, Dale Close and Newlands Lane is characterised of detached houses set in relatively generous plots. Houses along Coach Drive are generally more densely arranged and closer together

There is not a prevalent architectural style or character to the area with a combination of Arts and Crafts, mid 20th Century and other styles being used. Similarly, there are a wide palette of materials used from Traditional clay and slate roofs to concrete tiles and zinc roofs. Walls typically a mixture of render or facing bricks.

The site itself is broadly triangular in shape. Gosmore Road itself borders the site to the West and Coach Drive to the South. It is not located in a conservation area and there are no listed buildings or of local interest nearby.

The scheme has been through pre-application advice applications from NHDC and Herts Highways. This application seeks to address points raised in regards to these applications.



SITE PHOTOS



Top left: Existing house viewed from drive, centre top: rear of existing house; top right: Flank wall of Holmacott, to the north of the site; middle, from left: Existing houses along Coach Drive; view from east towards rear of house and Homacott; boundary with Coach Drive; view across garden towards 8 Coach Drive; Bottom left: View down Gosmore Road looking North; looking south.



The Proposals

Use, Amount and Mix

The proposed use is C3 residential.

A total of three houses are proposed. This is considered to be the minimum to make the site viable for development.

All the houses are two and a half storey, 5 bedroom houses, which is consistent with the general pattern of development in the area.

Layout

The scheme is arranged around a central Shared Surface and Private Drive. The access to the site is moved eastwards compared with its current location, which provides an improved visibility splay, particularly in regard to traffic approaching from the west.

The houses have been positioned to avoid impacting on the outlook of the adjacent houses and are positioned a comfortable distance from nearby houses on Gosmore Road and Coach Drive. They have also been positioned to keep a reasonable distance from the Gosmore Road and Coach Drive boundaries.

The individual houses have been designed to create a family suite across the rear elevation, consisting a kitchen, dining and living space with direct access to the garden. The central areas of the ground floor are given over the utility rooms, staircases and cloakrooms, while the front of the property provides the sitting room and study. On the first floors, bedrooms and bathrooms are provided with an additional suite within the roof space



Scale Character and Appearance

This area of Hitchin, bordered by London Road to the East and the A602 'Moorhens' roundabout to the north, with countryside to the south and west is characterised by substantial detached family homes. Many houses were constructed in the mid to late 20th century, with some older houses scattered around. Many houses have been substantially extended, or replaced and there are a number of infill developments.

There is not a consistent 'style' or character to the houses in the vicinity, with a mix of modern and more traditional styles and a range of materials from traditional brick, render and plain tile, to cedar boarding and zinc cladding.

The proposed houses are two and a half storeys high, similar to the existing house, with dormers and attic accommodation providing additional useful space in addition to the main two floors.



Site Section Looking South East

A simple 'classical' aesthetic has been adopted, with a regular pattern of vertically orientated sash windows, stone detailing and porches, bay window details and natural slate roofs. To the rear of plot 1, an 'orangery' element is provided, enabling some toplit family space.

A traditional palette of materials has been used combining red multi facing brick, natural slate and stone detailing. Sash windows are proposed with a simple vertical bar detail.

The scale of the houses has been reduced since the pre-application submission, with the ridge heights lowered by about a metre by the introduction of crown roof and plot 3 has been reduced in length by 400mm



Site Section Looking North East

Landscaping, Ecology and amenity space.

LANDSCAPING

The existing trees and hedgerows to the perimeter of the site are generally retained, maintaining the mature planted character to the site and surrounding area. Additional trees and shrub planting are proposed as part of the Bio-diversity Net Gain strategy, which will also contribute to the character of the site. These are predominantly provided by the boundary with Gosmore Road, although some additional trees are proposed on the eastern boundary.

An ecological assessment accompanies the application. As well as the new landscaping and garden areas, provision is made for bat and bird boxes, attached to the houses to encourage an increase in bio-diversity on the site.

A tree survey accompanies the application setting out the strategy to ensure the development does not impact on retained trees. It is noted that three trees have been lost since the pre-application submission due to the recent storms.

AMENITY FOR OCCUPIERS

All three houses provide a high standard of space and amenity for the future occupiers. Each has a garden and comfortably exceed national space standards. All habitable rooms will benefit from natural light.

IMPACT ON NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

The nearest property to the site is Holmacott directly to the north. The position of the houses – Plot 1 in particular, has been carefully considered to avoid impacting on the outlook from this house, in particular from its rear first floor window. There are windows on the flank wall looking towards the site, but these are generally obscure glazed.



9 Coach Drive is located to the east on Coach Drive. This is a large bungalow. The distance to this property (17-18m from the rear of plots 1 and 2) , in conjunction with the retained boundary trees and planting, and the lack of any directly overlooking windows mean that the completed houses are considered not to impact on the outlook of this house.

There are a number of houses on the opposite (eastern) side of Coach Drive. These are a minimum of 26m from the nearest point of plot 2 and 27m from the rear elevation of Plot 3. Again, the retained mature boundary planting, in addition to that on Coach Drive means that there is not adverse impact on these properties.

Any windows in flank elevations to the houses at first floor level will be fitted with obscure glazing.

ECOLOGY AND BIO-DIVERSITY.

The application is accompanied by a preliminary roost assessment of the existing house demonstrating that it is not used by bats.

The application includes a Bio-diversity net gain calculation to demonstrate the required enhancement on the site.

The scheme includes provision of wall mounted bat and bird boxes.

Sustainability:

The definition of Sustainability is set out in paragraph 7 of the NPPF. We set out below the three 'dimensions' to sustainable development and how this scheme addresses each one:

- *an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*

The Local plan identifies Hitchin as suitable for development in the form of infilling spaces within the existing town.

- *a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*

The development proposes a range of large family homes, consistent with the properties in the area.

- *an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources*

prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

The houses will be built to exceed current building regulations which set standards for the thermal performance of the building, water use and other environmental factors. It is anticipated that heating will be via air source heat pumps, reducing long term reliance on gas reserves and imports.

A bio-diversity report sets out how the scheme will enhance the biodiversity of the site.

The new roofs can accommodate pV installations on the east, west and south elevations in due course.

VEHICLE CHARGING:

It is proposed to provide provision for charging points to each dwelling to enable the charging of electric vehicles. These will be provided to the garages and positions are indicated on the site plan.

Access

Pre-application advice was received from Hertfordshire Highways in August 2021. The proposals have been developed in response to the points made. The advice is provided in the Appendix.

Vehicular Access

A new access is provided, which is 4.1m wide, allowing two cars to pass and provides the necessary inter-vehicular and pedestrian vision plays. The shared accessway provides space for vehicles up to the size of a 7.5 tonne rigid lorry to turn.

Parking

The houses are each provided with a garage as well as two surface parking spaces each. These are double garage in size, but the above figures assume a single car is parked in each with the remaining space being used for cycles, bins and other storage.

A total of 9 parking spaces are provided on the site in accordance with NHDC's parking requirements.

There is additional space for informal visitor parking by double-parking to the spaces for plots 2 and 3 and on the shared access.

Cycles

Cycles can be stored in the garages provided to each plot, which are sized with space so that a car and other storage can be accommodated. Sheds can also be provided for cycle as well as garden storage.

Refuse and Recycling

It is proposed that refuse and recycling bins will be stored in the gardens or garages most of the time. These will be collected from the roadside in the set out area identified which is within a short distance of the roadside.

Fire and Security

The site access is within 45m of all parts of each house. The pedestrian gate access off Coach Drive provides an alternative access in case of emergency.

Deliveries

The turning head provided provides plenty of space for a standard delivery vehicle to turn.

Pedestrian Access

The houses will be designed in accordance with Part M of the building regulations. The buildings have been designed to provide clear identification of entrances.

Public Transport

Gosmore Road is served by route 88 which runs between Hitchin and Luton. There are bus stops on each side of the road just south of Coach Drive.



PLANNING POLICY

NHDC Local Plan

SP1 Sustainable Development in North Herts

The site is a brownfield site within the settlement envelope of Hitchin and is considered a sustainable location. The provision of cycle parking and the bus services along Gosmore Road mean that occupants and visitors to the houses need not be reliant on the private car.

The houses will exceed the building regulations requirements in regard to their thermal performance, energy use and water consumption

SP2 Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

Policy SP2 of the Local Plan identifies Hitchin as one of the key towns in the District in which general development will be allowed within the defined settlement boundaries

SP6 Sustainable Transport

Provision is made for cycle storage, either within the garages provided or in sheds in the private gardens.

SP9 and D1 Sustainable Design

The site is a brownfield site within the settlement envelope of Hitchin and is considered a sustainable location. The provision of cycle parking and the bus services along Gosmore Road mean that occupants and visitors to the houses need not be reliant on the private car.

The houses will exceed the building regulations requirements in regard to their thermal performance, energy use and water consumption.

D2 House extensions and replacement dwellings

T1 Assessment of Transport Matters

The scheme was subject to pre-application advice from Herts Highways in August 2021. The advice received is provided in the appendix to this statement.

The scheme has been designed in response and to comply with the requirements set out.

T2 Parking

3no parking spaces are provided per dwelling. 1no in the garage to each house and 2no surface spaces.

There are further informal places for visitors to park, either by double-parking on the driveways to plots 2

and 3, or on the shared surface in the centre of the site.

NE4 Biodiversity and geological sites

The proposals include provision for a 10% gain in the bi-diversity of the site. Refer to the report provided.

NPPF

Delivering sufficient supply of homes

The proposals provide a net gain of 2no houses towards the council's commitments and responsibilities in delivering new homes. The requirement for new homes in sustainable locations has been further emphasised in the newly published NPPF.

Proposing healthy and safe communities

The houses are located within an established residential area without any concerns about air quality or risks to health. The houses provide informal natural surveillance of the common areas to discourage criminal activity.

Promoting Sustainable Transport

The site is located within walking distance of the town centre. Provision is made for cycle storage, either within the garages provided or in sheds in the private gardens.

Making Effective Use of Land

The houses replace a single dwelling with 3no new houses, making more effective and efficient use of a brownfield site.

Achieving well designed places

The houses have been carefully designed to provide high quality living accommodation in an attractive setting. The houses follow the prevalent pattern of development in the neighbourhood of detached family homes.

Meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding

The site is not located within an area at risk of flooding. The surface water drainage scheme will ensure the site does not contribute to potential flooding elsewhere. This will be addressed in the detailed drainage strategy.

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

The site retains the existing trees and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site. The Bio-diversity Net Gain report sets out the sites contribution to enhancing the natural environment in the area. Bat and bird boxes will be provided on the houses.

Pre-Application Advice

As noted, pre-application advice was sought with a response received in November 2024.

While the principle of development was accepted, along with the density of development, design approach of the dwellings; amenity for occupants and neighbours; parking and highways; landscaping and trees, the planning officer raised concerns about the cumulative scale of the proposals as well as the closeness of some of the buildings to the outer boundaries on the site with both Coach Drive and Gosmore Road.

These points have been taken on board and the key change is in the site layout with all three garages pulled away from the boundaries, plot 2 is rotated parallel with plot 1, pulling plot 2 away from the Coach Drive boundary. Plot 3 has been reduced in length by 400mm and this has been repositioned to provide more space on both the Coach Drive and Gosmore Road boundaries.

The ridge heights of all the houses have been reduced by approx. 1m and the garages reduced in height a little too.

The cumulative effect of these changes makes the scheme more compact.

While the Pre-application advice suggested that two dwellings on the site might address the concerns raised, it is considered that a scheme of only two dwellings will not be viable and in practice would result in no gain in dwellings on the site.

Conclusions.

The proposals create three new attractive houses that will contribute towards the housing need of the town and the wider district. The site is located within the Development envelope and is within walking distance of town centre facilities and therefore considered a highly sustainable location for new housing.

The houses are sympathetic in scale, density and appearance with both the nearby dwellings and the wider neighbourhood and have been carefully designed to avoid impacting adversely on the on existing nearby properties. The provision of parking, access and amenity will all in accordance with, or in excess of NHDC guidelines. The scheme has been through the NHDC pre-application process and the points raised in the advice received have been responded to.