



North Herts Council
Development and Conservation
North Hertfordshire District Council
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Date: 18 November 2025
Our ref: 11275

For the attention of: Planning Department, planning.control@north-herts.gov.uk

Application ref: 25/02547/FP
Location: Land To The South And East Of Senuna Park, Station Road, Ashwell.
Proposal/Description: Residential development of 36 no. dwellings including creation of vehicular access off Station Road, associated parking, drainage, amenity space and landscaping.

Thank you for requesting advice on this Full planning application from Place Services' landscape advice service. This service provides advice to planning officers to inform North Herts Council planning decisions regarding potential landscape impacts from development. Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have, must be directed to the Planning Officer who will seek further advice from us where appropriate and necessary.

This review is based on a desktop study without a site visit of the above-referenced application and its submitted documents. Our Landscape comments are as follows:

Site Context:

The proposal lies on a site to the east of Ashwell village, in North Hertfordshire. In terms of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan, the proposals sit outside of Ashwell Settlement Boundary. Directly to the west of the site is Senuna Park, a residential development of 28no. dwellings allowed at Planning Appeal in April 2022. To the south and east of the site lies open countryside of arable fields, with a strong field pattern. Directly to the north of the site are playing fields, consisting of football pitches, running tracks and hard standing tennis courts.

Proportionally, a large area of Ashwell is covered by a Conservation Area listing, although the site lies outside of this. The Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan has five Visual Character Areas, and the site lies close to, but further east than, “V2: The Eastern Area”.

The site itself consists of two fields separated by a woodland plantation, known as Millenium Wood. The woodland reaches up to 12m high in places and contains a mixture of deciduous and evergreen trees, such as Pine, Beech, Hawthorn and Field Maple. The site is located directly east of Station Road, which also serves as one of the main highway approaches to Ashwell Village. The landscape here is generally open with expansive views.

Planning Policy Context:

North Hertfordshire Local Plan (Adopted 2022)

Policies considered to be relevant to landscape include Policy ENV3, ENV5, NE1, NE2, NE6, NE7, NE8, SP9 and SP12.

Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (2021)

Policies considered to be relevant to landscape include Policy Ash1 Location of Development, Policy Ash3 Character of Development, Policy Ash4 Design of Development, Policy Ash9 Natural Landscape and Rural Character, Policy Ash10 Natural Wildlife Assets, Wildlife Corridors and Green Infrastructure, Policy Ash19 Accessible Paths in the Village and Rural Areas. Of particular relevance is Policy Ash9, which states:

- A. *Development proposals should maintain and enhance the natural environment, and retain landscape features, in accordance with Natural England’s Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) for the East Anglian chalkland character area and enhance the rural character and setting of Ashwell.*
- B. *Development proposals should demonstrate that they have addressed the following matters:*
 - (i) *respecting the natural topography of a site, preserving and sensitively incorporating existing natural features such as trees, hedgerows and ponds within the site; and*
 - (ii) *being integrated into the landscape according to native ecological principles and including new landscape buffers between existing*

development and the countryside adjacent to development sites, particularly when seen from the village boundary; and

- (iii) ensuring adequate protection for trees and hedgerows during all phases of development to avoid damage, including activities causing soil compaction or severance of roots. Trees of arboreal significance should only be removed if diseased in which case they should be replaced with trees of a similar potential size and native species elsewhere on the site, unless this is clearly not possible.*

C. As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, proposals should provide open space that:

- (i) Is in usable parcels of land and not fragmented; and*
- (ii) Is safe, easily accessible and not severed by any physical barrier; and*
- (iii) Is accessible to the general public; and*
- (iv) creates a safe environment regarding lighting and layout; and*
- (v) is complemented by landscaping.*

D. Landscaping associated with construction and open space designs should be along ecological principles where possible using native species, (wildflower meadows), rain gardens (SuDS) and community orchards, to encourage species like bees and seed eating birds. Open spaces should provide an educational opportunity for people interested in the natural environment.

E. Development proposals which incorporate open spaces should provide for an appropriate legal agreement to ensure proper management of the open space over the lifetime of the development.

Review of the proposal/submitted information:

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

The application has been accompanied by a Landscape and Visual (LVA) undertaken by Barnes Walker Ltd. The Methodology is included within Appendix 1. Overall, we are satisfied with the included methodology for assessing landscape and visual effects.

A site visit and photography to supplement the LVA was undertaken in April 2025 with some deciduous trees without leaf cover, but new growth shown on some hedgerows. Preference is for winter photography without leaf cover to show the ‘worst case’ scenario.

Section 3.0 of the LVA references the National Character Areas (NCA) (2014), North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity) (2011) and the Baseline generally. Within the 2011 North Herts Landscape Study (Character, Sensitivity and Capacity), the application site and parts of the wider study area fall within Landscape Character Area Steeple Morden Plain Area 226. The key characteristics of the area are:

- Medium to large arable fields;
- Spring line feeds streams which flow northwards;
- Flat, low lying to west;
- Gently rolling landform to east;
- Open, exposed character; and
- Geometric pattern of rectilinear fields and roads.

From a visual perspective, the Landscape Study states: *Vast scale open landscape in the west with dispersed farmsteads. Long distance views, long straight roads. More settlement pattern obvious to the east providing smaller scale landscape.*

The LVA also reviews the Landscape Character Area of North Baldock Chalk Uplands Area 226 which is welcomed.

We agree with the judgements of the existing sensitivity of the LCA of the site as Low-Medium and the Landscape Effects of Minor Adverse at Year 1. We have some concerns on the assessment of the Landscape Effects at Year 1 on the townscape of Ashwell Village assessed as Minor / Moderate adverse and consider this could be higher. Generally, we agree with the assessment of landscape effects.

Visual Amenity

Figure 7 Viewpoint Location and Visual Receptor Plan identifies the visual receptors assessed within the LVA. Overall, we judge that the 13no. viewpoint receptors identified are representative of potential views into the application site.

We would have liked to have seen Significant Viewpoint G of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan assessed and consider there may be some impact on this viewpoint by the development proposals. This viewpoint location is considered as viewpoint 10 with the LVA,

however the impact upon SVG is not considered. As a result, we consider the effects of viewpoint 10 and this receptor group could be assessed higher as **Moderate Adverse**.

Due to the imposing nature of Millenium Wood in the centre of the site, the hedgerow to the north of the site, the flat nature of the landscape, and the recently constructed development at Senuna Park, the site is generally visually contained. There is a hedgerow to the eastern site boundary and the sensitivity of the view from PRoW FP108/51 is considered Medium-High, which we are in agreement with. The Visual Effect at Year 1 is considered as Minor / Moderate Adverse, which we consider low.

We do however judge that all other viewpoints have been appropriately assessed.

Landscape Layout with Key and Notes

The proposals show two plots of development, split by Millenium Wood, which runs east to west in the site. The proposed dwellings are generally detached, with a cluster of dwellings near the access road.

There is a good number of trees proposed within the development and preference is for these to be within the public realm to ensure their survival. The Landscape Layout appears to show trees spanning over the proposed access road, but the reality of this is questionable, and upon review of the Tree Preservation plan the existing trees as part of Millennium Wood are shown as removed. This is a significant loss to the tree belt (W001), which is considered Category B. The gardens of development plots 28, 30 and 31 sit directly adjacent to the woodland, and this approach is questioned, as it will most likely result in 'pressure to prune' from any new residents, and the security of the properties is also unclear. If additional security is required, such as fences, this will put further pressure on the existing woodland. The same concerns are also raised with the most northern gardens which abut the hedge which is identified as a Wildlife Corridor in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan.

The gardens to plot 10 appears constrained, and it is unclear whether plots 9 and 11 have any private amenity space.

Within the northern parcel, there are a number of paths to the rear of properties and the security of these is questionable. Connections into the recently constructed Senuna Park are unclear and appears a missed opportunity to link new developments. Furthermore, if residents were to desire to walk or cycle to Ashwell, directly west through Senuna Park would be the quickest and most appealing method to do this.

The proposed 'Play' area does not include any equipment, is enclosed by a large number of trees and has limited passive surveillance. The location of the play area could be better sited to suit more users and contribute to sense of place.

Summary:

Whilst the LVA demonstrates that there is some capacity for an extension to the recent development, the proposed layout misses a number of potential opportunities and creates some conflicts with Neighbourhood Plan Policies Ash9 Landscape and Rural Character, by removing a significant portion of the category B woodland. Also there are concerns around the nature of the proposed Public Open Space in terms of the policy wording of Ash9-C.

There are also concerns around the limited proposed pedestrian and cycle routes and the impact this will have on Neighbourhood Plan Policy ASH19 Accessible Paths in the Village and Rural Areas.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries in relation to this advice.

Place Services – Landscape Team

Email: landscape@essex.gov.uk



Place Services provide landscape advice on behalf of North Herts Council.

Please note: This letter is advisory and should only be considered as the opinion formed by specialist staff in relation to this particular matter.



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