

Miss Bella Talwar 74 Stevenage Road, Hitchin, SG4 9DR

Opinion: Strong Objection to 26/00774/FP planning application. Erection of two 2-bedroom bungalows including garage/cycle store and bin storage to serve plots 1 and 2, parking and creation of pedestrian access within curtilage of 23 Conquest Close.

Objection to Planning, Design & Access Statement

We wish to formally object to this application and believe that all documentation from previous applications are taken into account that include:

(a) 12.12.14 – LPA ref. 14/02688/1

(b) 23.01.20 – LPA Ref. 19/02050/FP

(c) 28.01.22 - LPA Ref: 21/00354/FP, North Hertfordshire Planning Control committee on 22.01.2023. Please view the committee meeting appeal on utube via the link (https://www.utube.com/live/c4M4lk_PhCl?si=uKNLGydCQA2Z5zyk) between 45.28mins – 1.04mins. Also, the findings from the Planning Inspectorate High Court Appeal (Ref: APP/X1925/W/22/3302258) for refusal to build.

1. Principle of Development & Reliance on 2014 Approval

Applicant's claim

The Planning Doc places significant reliance on the **2014 approval** and asserts that the current proposal is “most similar” to that scheme and therefore acceptable in principle.

Objection

While a 2014 approval exists, **material circumstances have changed**, and subsequent refusals and a dismissed appeal (2023) demonstrate that this site **continues to present unresolved planning harm**, particularly in relation to:

- Highway safety and emergency access
- Residential amenity for Stevenage Road residents 74,76,78,80,82,84 as material detriment due to the positioning of the plot 2 and the height of the building. Please refer to section 3 for reasons relating to topography. This invades our privacy. The car parking will cause disturbance.
- Cramped and overbearing backland form
- Biodiversity and ecological compensation

The **Inspector's dismissal in October 2023** confirmed that safe and suitable vehicular access especially for fire appliances **had not been demonstrated**, and that the site layout resulted in **a contrived form**. These issues remain materially relevant and unresolved.

Approval in 2014 **does not set a binding precedent**, particularly when later decisions and appeal findings (at High Court level) reach the opposite conclusion.

2. Highway Safety, Emergency Access & Servicing

Applicant's claim

The Planning Doc asserts that:

- The addition of two dwellings will not materially increase movements
- A turning head and sprinkler systems mitigate fire access concerns
- The proposal will not have a severe impact on highway safety.

Objection

This position **directly conflicts with multiple Highway Authority refusals**, including NH/5674/2021, which explicitly states that permission should be refused because:

- The access lane is **sub-standard in width (approx. 2.4–2.6m)**
- Geometry at the entrance is inadequate and rights of way belongs to other reside
- **No safe turning provision exists** for emergency and service vehicles
- Vehicles cannot enter and exit in forward gear
- The layout is detrimental to public and highway safety and contrary to NPPF, Manual for Streets and Roads in Hertfordshire.

The appeal Inspector (2023) echoed these concerns, finding that **safe access for fire tenders had not been demonstrated**, which was a decisive reason for dismissal.

Sprinkler systems **do not negate the statutory requirement for safe physical access** for emergency vehicles, nor do they resolve constraints experienced daily by residents of Conquest Close and Stevenage Road.

3. Residential Amenity, Privacy & Overbearing Impact

Applicant's claim

The Planning Doc states that the modest height of single-storey bungalows will not materially affect outlook, privacy, or amenity for surrounding residents.

Objection

This assessment fails to properly consider the **topography and relationship with Stevenage Road** (74, 76, 78, 80, 82,84,86,88 in particular) properties. Therefore the comment in section 5.9 of the Development plan is incorrect. This breaches Policies

D1 and SP9 and NPPF Section 12 guidance on good design. No material changes in circumstances justify overturning these findings.

Key concerns include:

- Plot 2 is positioned **less than 14 metres** from the rear boundaries and habitual windows of Stevenage Road homes, **well below the typical 18m minimum standard**
- The site is on **elevated ground (approx. 1.5–2 metres higher)** than adjacent gardens, resulting in an **overbearing and intrusive presence especially for 74,76,78, 80, Stevenage Road)**
- The layout provides **insufficient space for boundary maintenance and meaningful screening**, a concern raised repeatedly by Landscape and Urban Design Officers in previous refusals.

Earlier refusals confirmed that similar bungalow schemes would still cause **loss of amenity, privacy invasion, and cramped form**, even without first-floor accommodation. A site visit it recommended and I would be happy to meet with the planning officer to do a ‘walk around’ of the land to demonstrate the lived experience of residents and the concerns raised above from the perspective of residents at 74, 76,78,80,82,84,86,88,90 Stevenage Road.

4. Design, Scale & Overdevelopment

Applicant’s claim

The proposal is described as “gentle densification” that respects character and appearance and avoids overdevelopment.

Objection

Previous applications, some for **identical or fewer dwellings** were refused on the grounds of:

- Cramped internal and external layouts
- Inadequate spacing
- Poor relationship to neighbouring gardens
- Negative impact on the character of the wider locality

The arrangement of two bungalows, with plot 2 directly against the Stevenage Road boundary, with minimal landscaping potential, continues to represent **inappropriate backland overdevelopment**.

5. Construction Impact & Absence of a Secured Construction Management Plan

Applicant's claim

The Planning Doc makes no firm commitment to a detailed Construction Management Plan (CMP).

Objection

Given:

- The **single-lane access**
- Resident parking pressures
- Absence of on-street turning for construction vehicles
- Proximity to homes on both Conquest Close and Stevenage Road

A **robust, secured CMP is essential**, as repeatedly identified by Hertfordshire County Council and planning officers in earlier assessments.

Without it, construction activity would cause **unacceptable disruption, safety risks, noise, dust and parking displacement**, contrary to NPPF principles.

6. Biodiversity, Trees & Green Space Loss

Applicant's claim

The Planning Doc concludes that biodiversity impacts are acceptable and offset via off-site credits and limited tree replacement.

Objection

The site currently functions as an important **urban green buffer** for Stevenage Road residents, contributing to:

- Air quality improvement in an area subject to **Air Quality Management Order No.1 (2012)**
- Mental wellbeing through access to green outlook and gardening space privately

Previous refusals confirmed that biodiversity loss had **not been adequately compensated** and that protected species impacts were **insufficiently evidenced**.

Off-site mitigation does not address the **localised harm** experienced by immediate neighbours.

7. Drainage, Land Stability & Unknown Ground Conditions

Applicant's claim

Drainage risks are not identified as significant.

Objection

There is **insufficient clarity** on:

- Drainage routes across third-party land
- Impact of development on a sloping site
- Historic use of the land as greenspace to view
- Potential land contamination and subsidence risks

These matters have not been adequately assessed and pose **direct risk to adjoining properties** on Stevenage Road.

8. Permitted Development Rights

Objection

Should permission be granted, **all Permitted Development rights must be removed**, consistent with:

- The 2014 approval
- Previous officer recommendations
- The acknowledged sensitivity of this constrained backland site

Without this safeguard, future upward or outward extensions would cause **severe harm to privacy, outlook, and character**.

9. Planning Balance

The Planning Doc relies heavily on:

- Housing shortfall
- Tilted balance
- General policy support for windfall sites

However, national policy is clear that **housing delivery does not override demonstrable harm**. In this case, the cumulative impacts on:

- Highway safety
- Emergency access
- Residential amenity
- Overdevelopment
- Environmental quality

Significantly and demonstrably outweigh the limited benefit of two units, as confirmed by recent refusals and appeal decisions.

10. Access Rights

All previous applications raised a community response with residents from Stevenage Road and Conquest Close. On each occasion the ownership of the land track to the back of No's 15,17,19 and 21 Conquest Close is held by the owners of these properties and not the applicant. The width of this track is not a single track road either.