

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Including

Sustainability Statement

Residential Development for 3 no. dwellings and detached garages following
demolition of existing house

'Trees', Gosmore Road, Hitchin SG4 9AN

For Mr & Mrs Judge

Pentangle Design Group

Project ref: 3707

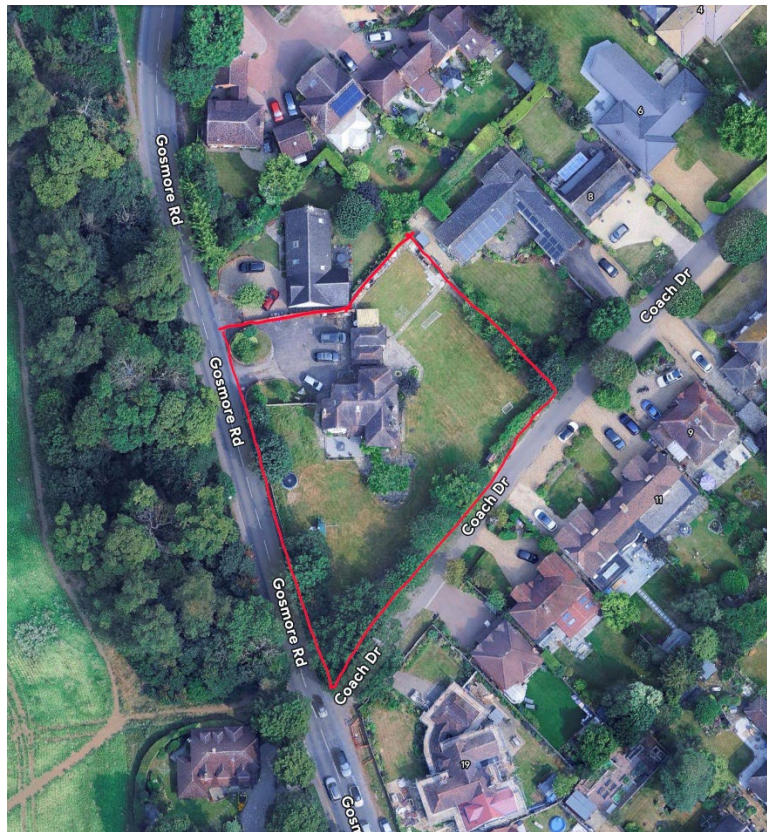
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1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement accompanies a planning application for the demolition of the existing dwelling at 'Trees', Gosmore Road, Hitchin and the construction of three new detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping.



The application follows the refusal in June 2025 of an earlier application for the same site (LPA reference 25/00423/FP). The scheme has since been substantially revised in response to the Council's reasons for refusal and through subsequent pre-application engagement with North Herts District Council (NHDC). This Statement explains the revised proposals, identifies the changes since the refused scheme, and demonstrates how each of the Council's concerns has been addressed.

Since those discussions the extent of the application site has been reviewed. The site to which this application relates is below the 0.2 hectare threshold at which statutory Biodiversity Net Gain applies. The application site boundary, the adjoining land in the same ownership, and the consequences for biodiversity are explained at Sections 6.2 and 6.7.

2. Site and Surroundings

'Trees' is a large detached house located on the eastern side of Gosmore Road at its junction with Coach Drive, towards the south-western edge of Hitchin. The site is broadly triangular, bounded by Gosmore Road to the west and Coach Drive to the south. It lies within the Hitchin settlement boundary as defined in the adopted North Herts Local Plan, and is opposite Priory Park.

The site is not within a conservation area. There are no listed buildings or buildings of local interest in the immediate vicinity. The strip of mature trees on the opposite side of Gosmore Road is protected by Area Tree Preservation Order TPO/031.

The wider area — including Gosmore Road, Coach Drive, Priory Way, Dale Close and Newlands Lane — is characterised by detached dwellings set in generous plots. There is no single prevailing architectural style or material palette in the locality: dwellings include Arts and Crafts, mid-twentieth century and contemporary forms, with roofing materials ranging from natural slate and clay tile to concrete tile and zinc, and walls in render or facing brick. Many dwellings have been substantially extended or replaced over time, and there are several infill developments nearby.

The site itself is well screened by mature trees and hedgerow on its perimeter, particularly along the Coach Drive and eastern boundaries.

The application site comprises the existing dwelling, its curtilage and all of the land required to carry out the development proposed, including the new vehicular access, the shared surface, the three plots and their gardens, and the retained and reinforced planting to the north-eastern boundary with No. 8 Coach Drive. It extends to approximately 1,987 m², as shown edged red on the Location Plan, drawing 3707/01.

Land adjoining the site to the west, south-west and south-east is in the same ownership and is shown edged blue. It forms no part of the development proposed and is described at Section 6.2.



Clockwise from top left: View of existing house from drive; view of house from back garden; south west boundary to coach drive; view of house from north; existing houses on opposite side of Coach Drive



Clockwise from top left: View of Holmacott from the site; view towards no.8 Coach Drive from the site; View looking south down Gosmore Road; view looking north along Gosmore Road, towards site.

3. Planning History and Reasons for Refusal

A previous application for three new dwellings on this site (NHDC reference 25/00423/FP) was refused on 30 June 2025. The two reasons given were:

- 1. The proposed development, by reason of its size, scale, design, siting and appearance, would be excessive and out of character with the site and locality, resulting in harm to their character and appearance. The proposal does not comply with Policy D1 of the Local Plan, and Section 12 of the NPPF.*
- 2. The proposed development, by reason of its size, scale, design and siting, would result in harmful loss of privacy and overbearing visual impacts to No. 8 Coach Drive which would be harmful to the amenity of that dwelling. The proposal does not comply with Policy D3 of the Local Plan.*

It is important to note what the Officer's Report did not find harmful. The principle of three dwellings on the site was accepted under Policy SP2. The Highways Officer raised no objection. Future living conditions for the new occupants were considered acceptable. Trees and landscaping, parking and ecology (subject to standard conditions) were also considered acceptable. Impacts on Holmacott to the north-west, and on dwellings on the opposite side of Coach Drive were not considered harmful.

The Council Ecologist did, however, raise concern about the previous Biodiversity Net Gain calculation, which showed a 12.86% loss of habitat units, and about the failure to provide the 12m of complementary habitat required by Local Plan Policy NE4 around retained trees and hedgerows.

The revised scheme has been developed to respond directly to the two reasons for refusal and to the Ecologist's comments, while retaining the elements of the previous scheme that were found acceptable.

4. Pre-Application Engagement Following the Refusal

Following the refusal, Pentangle Design Group engaged in pre-application discussion with NHDC to test the revised approach. The dialogue covered the reduction in massing, the removal of habitable roof accommodation, the repositioning of Plot 2 to address the impacts on No. 8 Coach Drive, and the revised landscape and biodiversity strategy.

NHDC has indicated that the revised approach addresses the concerns underpinning the refusal. The current application has been prepared on that basis.

Further correspondence took place with the Council's Senior Planning Officer in April 2026 regarding the extent of the application site and the application of statutory Biodiversity Net Gain following the change to the small sites threshold. Having consulted the Council's Ecologist, the Officer confirmed on an informal basis that a site area below 0.2 hectares would not be required to deliver statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, and asked that two matters be clarified: the status of the land to the rear of Plot 1, and the future maintenance of the land shown edged blue.

Both matters are addressed at Section 6.2. It is acknowledged that the Officer's view was given informally and does not bind the Council.

5. Response to the Reasons for Refusal

The table below summarises the key changes between the refused scheme and the revised scheme. A more detailed description of the proposals follows in Section 6.

Aspect	Refused scheme (25/00423/FP) → Revised scheme
Storey height	All three plots reduced from 2.5 storeys (with habitable roof accommodation, dormers and crown roofs) to 2 storeys with traditional hipped roofs. No habitable accommodation in the roof.
Application site area	The red line is drawn to include all land required to carry out the development, including the boundary planting to No. 8 Coach Drive relied upon for screening. The site extends to approximately 1,987 m ² . Adjoining land in the same ownership, shown edged blue, is retained by the applicant and forms no part of the development.
Bedrooms / floor area	Reduced from 5 bedrooms per plot to 4 bedrooms per plot. Total internal floor areas reduced significantly: Plot 1 from approx. 344 m ² to approx. 201 m ² ; Plot 2 from approx. 358 m ² to approx. 202 m ² ; Plot 3 from approx. 382 m ² to approx. 241 m ² .
Roof form	Flat crown roofs replaced by full hipped pitched roofs in keeping with the prevailing roof forms of the locality. Rear dormers omitted.
Plot 2 — impact on No. 8	Rear dormer omitted. Two-storey rear element reduced in height. Combined effect significantly reduces overlooking, overbearing and visual dominance from the rear garden of No. 8 Coach Drive.
Position of dwellings on site	All three plots positioned to provide more comfortable separation from site boundaries. Plot 1 garage detailing reviewed to avoid the previous 'wrap-around' effect against Holmacott.
Biodiversity and landscape	The application site is below the 0.2 hectare threshold and the statutory biodiversity gain condition does not apply. The scheme nonetheless retains the mature perimeter trees and hedgerows, reduces the number of trees to be removed from six to five, provides substantial new native tree, hedge and shrub planting, and reduces the extent of built footprint and hard surfacing compared with the refused scheme.
Ecological enhancement	Wall-mounted bat and bird boxes have been replaced with integrated features in the built fabric of the dwellings, including swift bricks and integrated bat tubes, in line with the Council Ecologist's recommendation and neighbour representations.

6. The Revised Proposals

6.1 Use, Amount and Mix

The proposed use is C3 residential. Three detached family dwellings are proposed, each with four bedrooms, replacing the existing single dwelling. Three dwellings are considered the minimum necessary to make the redevelopment viable while maintaining the spacious and sylvan character of the locality.

6.2 Layout

The scheme is arranged around a central shared surface and private drive accessed from a single new vehicular access on Gosmore Road. The new access is positioned slightly to the east of the existing access to provide an improved visibility splay, particularly for traffic approaching from the west. The existing access is to be closed off.

The three dwellings have been positioned to:

- Maintain a comfortable separation from existing neighbouring properties — in particular Holmacott to the north and No. 8 Coach Drive to the north-east;
- Provide greater separation from the Gosmore Road and Coach Drive boundaries than the refused scheme, reinforcing the more spacious character of the area at the junction;
- Retain as much existing tree and hedgerow cover as practicable, particularly around the perimeter of the site.

Each dwelling is provided with a generous private garden, off-street parking, an integrated or detached double garage, and a garden shed for storage.

Application site boundary and adjoining land

The red line application boundary has been drawn to include all of the land required to carry out the development: the new access and shared surface, the three plots and their gardens, the parking, garages and bin collection area, and the retained and reinforced planting to the north-eastern boundary with No. 8 Coach Drive on which the scheme relies for screening. The application site extends to approximately 1,987 m².

The land shown edged blue to the west, south-west and south-east of the site, including the area to the rear of Plot 1, is in the same ownership. It forms no part of the development proposed. It contains no buildings, no hardstanding, no parking, no drainage infrastructure and no part of the access; it is not proposed as garden land to any of the three plots; and no element of the assessment of this application depends upon it.

As to its future maintenance: the applicant intends to occupy Plot 3 and will retain the blue land in his own ownership. He will plant and maintain it privately as amenity land associated with his own occupation of the site. It will not be transferred to the purchasers of Plots 1 or 2, will not be offered for adoption by the Council or any other body, and no management company, maintenance charge or legal agreement is proposed or necessary. Planting shown on this land on drawing 3707/06 is indicative and is provided for context only.



6.3 Scale, Character and Appearance

The most significant change from the refused scheme is the reduction in scale. All three dwellings are now two storeys high with traditional hipped pitched roofs in natural slate. The flat crown roofs and rear dormers of the previous scheme have been removed entirely, and there is no habitable accommodation in the roof spaces.



This represents a substantial reduction in the bulk and visual prominence of the dwellings as compared with the refused scheme. Ridge heights of the houses have been further reduced and are now lower than that of the existing dwelling and broadly comparable the immediate locality.

A simple, lightly classical aesthetic has been retained, with a regular pattern of vertically proportioned sash-style windows, reconstituted stone detailing, porches and bay window features. The material palette — red multi facing brick with reconstituted stone detailing, natural slate roofs and powder-coated aluminium windows — is consistent with the more traditional houses found in the area, while reading as a contemporary scheme rather than a pastiche.

Each plot is individually expressed within a coherent overall family of three dwellings. To the rear of Plot 1, an 'orangery' element provides a single-storey toplit family space.

6.4 Impact on Neighbouring Properties

Holmacott (north-west)

The Officer's Report on the refused scheme concluded that the impact on Holmacott was acceptable. The revised scheme retains the same broad arrangement in this part of the site, with the Plot 1 garage positioned away from Holmacott's rear garden and oblique to its first-floor windows. The reduced height of Plot 1 (now two storeys) further reduces any visual impact.

No. 8 Coach Drive (north-east) — directly addressing the Policy D3 refusal reason

The previous scheme was refused in part because the rear of Plot 2 — in particular its rear dormer at 10.5m from the boundary — was found to cause harmful loss of privacy and overbearing visual impact on the rear garden and inner south-east elevations of No. 8 Coach Drive.

In the revised scheme:

- Plot 2 has been reduced from 2.5 storeys to 2 storeys.
- Plot 2 has been moved away from the boundary with no. 8 so that the distance is the same as the adjacent Plot 1.
- The rear dormer that was the principal source of overlooking has been removed entirely. There is no habitable accommodation in the roof of Plot 2.
- The existing mature trees and hedgerow on the boundary with No. 8 are retained and lie within the application site, together with reinforced native planting along that boundary. Details of that planting, and its subsequent retention and maintenance, can be secured by condition. A proportion of the boundary planting is deciduous; the reduction in the height and bulk of Plot 2 and the omission of the rear dormer are therefore the primary response, with the planting providing supplementary screening. This can be further supplemented by trellis to the separating fence.

The combination of these changes — reduced height, omission of the rear dormer, omission of habitable roof accommodation, retention and reinforcement of boundary planting — directly addresses each of the elements identified by the Officer in support of the Policy D3 refusal reason.

The diagram below, showing the view from Coach drive towards the development demonstrates that screening of approx. 3m will be sufficient to prevent overlooking from first floor windows into the garden



Reliance on boundary planting as privacy mitigation is well established in appeal decisions. In APP/M3645/W/22/3311144 (5 Queens Park Road, Caterham, 28 September 2023) the Inspector found no harmful loss of privacy where dense boundary planting was present and further planting was secured by a landscaping condition. In APP/L3245/W/20/3259915 (Crimond, Church Stretton, 10 February 2021) the Inspector held that existing boundary planting assisted in preserving a neighbour's privacy and should be retained or replaced, and framed the landscaping condition accordingly. In APP/D3640/W/25/3358775 (5 Tekels Park, Camberley, 2 July 2025) the Inspector was satisfied that screen planting secured by a soft landscaping condition would protect the privacy of the host dwelling, although that appeal was dismissed for reasons unrelated to privacy.

In this case the planting is a secondary consideration. The principal response to the second reason for refusal is the removal of the rear dormer and the reduction of Plot 2 from 2.5 storeys to two, together with the increased separation from the boundary with No. 8.

Dwellings on the opposite side of Coach Drive

The Officer's Report on the refused scheme found no harm to these dwellings, and the revised scheme — which is smaller in scale and further from the relevant boundaries — maintains that position.

6.5 Future Living Conditions

All three dwellings provide a high standard of internal space and amenity. Each comfortably exceeds the Nationally Described Space Standards. Each habitable room is naturally lit, with primary living rooms and bedrooms positioned to receive good levels of daylight. Each dwelling is provided with a generous, usable private rear garden.

The Officer's Report on the refused scheme concluded that future living conditions were acceptable; the revised scheme retains and improves on this position.

6.6 Landscaping

The existing trees and hedgerows around the perimeter of the site are retained as far as practicable, maintaining the mature, sylvan character of the site and the wider locality. The number of trees to be removed is reduced from six on the refused scheme to five; the trees affected are identified in the amended Arboricultural Impact Assessment by Harrison Arboriculture.

The trees identified for removal are predominantly Category C and Category U trees, including young trees and a small number of trees in poor condition. Their loss is mitigated by new tree planting elsewhere on the site as part of the Biodiversity Net Gain strategy and on-site landscaping.

The amended Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Protection Plan and preliminary Method Statement accompany this application and demonstrate that the retained trees can be protected throughout demolition and construction.

Substantial new planting is proposed within the application site, comprising new native trees (minimum 2m high, rootballed), new native hedge and shrub planting to the boundaries, and planting within the plot gardens, all as shown on drawing 3707/06. Further planting is proposed by the applicant on the adjoining land in his ownership. A landscaping condition in the terms contemplated by the Officer on the refused application would be acceptable to the applicant.

6.7 Ecology, Biodiversity and Site Area

The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Preliminary Roost Assessment (Coyne Environmental Ltd). The Roost Assessment of the existing dwelling found no evidence of bats or other protected species using the building, and no further surveys are considered necessary.

Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain

The application site extends to approximately 1,987 m², which is below the 0.2 hectare threshold. The statutory biodiversity gain condition therefore does not apply to this application, and the relevant exemption is identified on the application form. This was raised with the Council's Senior Planning Officer in advance of submission and confirmed, informally and following consultation with the Council's Ecologist, in April 2026.

Biodiversity and the Council Ecologist's comments

The absence of a statutory requirement does not reduce the biodiversity performance of the scheme, and Local Plan Policies NE4 and SP12, and the natural environment policies at Chapter 19 of the NPPF, continue to apply. The proposals respond directly to the concerns raised by the Council's Ecologist on the refused application:

Tree loss is reduced from six trees to five. The more significant trees around the southern corner and the perimeter are retained and will be protected throughout demolition and construction in accordance with the Tree Protection Plan.

The mature perimeter trees and hedgerows within the site are retained, and the planting to the boundary with No. 8 Coach Drive is reinforced.

Substantial new native tree, hedge and shrub planting is provided within the site, with further planting on the adjoining land in the applicant's ownership.

Wall-mounted bat and bird boxes are replaced by features integrated into the built fabric, as the Ecologist recommended. Each dwelling will incorporate at least one swift brick — responding also to the representations received from neighbours on the previous application — and integrated bat tubes or bricks.

The built footprint and extent of hard surfacing are reduced compared with the refused scheme, increasing the proportion of the site in soft landscaping.

The 12 metres of complementary habitat around retained trees and hedgerows sought by Policy NE4, and referred to in the Ecologist's consultation response on the refused application, is better achieved by the revised scheme than by the refused scheme, as a result of the reduced footprint, the increased separation from the site boundaries and the additional perimeter planting. Final planting details and the specification and positions of the integrated ecological features can be secured by condition.

6.8 Amenity Space

Each dwelling has a generously sized private rear garden directly accessed from the kitchen / dining / living area. The gardens comfortably exceed local guidance for amenity space provision. The arrangement provides good levels of privacy between the dwellings and from neighbouring properties, supported by the retained and reinforced boundary planting.

7. Sustainability Statement

Sustainability has been a guiding consideration throughout the design of the revised scheme. The dwellings have been designed to deliver economic, social and environmental benefits in accordance with the three overarching objectives of sustainable development set out at paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026), and to respond to North Herts District Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency in 2019 and the requirements of Local Plan Policies SP1 (Sustainable Development), SP9 (Design and Sustainability), D1 (Sustainable Design) and D4 (Air Quality).

The headline sustainability credentials of the scheme are as follows.

7.1 Sustainable Location

The site is brownfield, within the settlement boundary of Hitchin — the District's largest town — and within walking distance of Hitchin town centre, its shops, primary and secondary schools, healthcare facilities, employment, leisure and main line rail station. The site is on a bus route (88) connecting Hitchin to Luton, with bus stops a short walk from the site. The locational sustainability of the site is therefore high, and supports a low-car or non-car lifestyle for future occupants. The principle of residential development on the site has already been accepted under Policy SP2.

7.2 Energy and Carbon

Each of the three dwellings will be heated and supplied with hot water by an air source heat pump (ASHP). No fossil-fuel based heating is proposed, and no gas connection is required. The location of each ASHP is shown on the proposed plans, set away from neighbouring boundaries and behind acoustic screening where appropriate to minimise noise impacts. The use of ASHPs in lieu of gas boilers materially reduces the operational carbon footprint of the dwellings over their lifetime, and aligns with the direction of national policy under the Future Homes Standard.

The dwellings will be designed to meet, and where reasonably practicable to exceed, the fabric and energy efficiency requirements of the Building Regulations applicable at the time of construction (currently Approved Document Part L 2021 as amended). The detailed fabric specification will be developed at the Building Regulations stage, but the design approach — compact built form, traditional cavity construction with high-performance insulation, high-performance powder-coated aluminium glazing, and a continuous insulated thermal envelope — supports a strong fabric-first response.

Each roof has been designed and oriented to accept photovoltaic (PV) panels on east, west and/or south-facing slopes. Whether PV is installed at construction or at a later stage will be confirmed during detailed design; in either case the roofs are designed to be PV-ready in terms of orientation, structural capacity and provision for cable runs and inverter locations.

Each dwelling will be provided with a dedicated electric vehicle charging point in the garage, supporting the transition to electric vehicles in line with national policy and the requirements of Approved Document S of the Building Regulations.

7.3 Water Efficiency

The dwellings will be designed to meet the standard water efficiency requirement of 125 litres per person per day under Approved Document G of the Building Regulations, through the specification of low-flow fittings, dual-flush WCs and water-efficient appliances. Rainwater downpipes are arranged to allow connection of water butts in each garden for non-potable garden use.

7.4 Surface Water and Flood Risk

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 (the lowest probability of fluvial or tidal flooding). Surface water from the new buildings and hard surfaces will be managed within the site through a sustainable drainage strategy, to be agreed with the Lead Local Flood Authority and developed at the detailed design stage. Permeable paving is proposed for the shared surface and parking areas, and substantial retention of soft landscaping (with a significant proportion of the site remaining as garden) reduces the run-off rate from the developed site compared with a conventionally surfaced scheme. The development will not increase flood risk on or off the site.

7.5 Climate Resilience and Adaptation

The scheme has been designed with regard to the changing climate and the need for the dwellings to remain comfortable and resilient over their lifetime. Specific measures include:

- Passive overheating mitigation — vertically proportioned windows with reasonable rather than excessive glazed areas, deep window reveals provided by traditional brick construction, and the substantial perimeter tree canopy retained on the site, all of which moderate solar gain in summer.
- The omission of habitable accommodation in the roof space (a key change from the refused scheme) significantly reduces the risk of summer overheating in upper-floor rooms.
- Cross-ventilation paths through the dwellings supported by openable windows on multiple elevations.
- Generous on-plot tree planting and reinforced perimeter planting, providing shade and reducing the urban heat island effect.
- Permeable hard surfacing and SuDS-led surface water drainage to manage more intense rainfall events.

7.6 Sustainable Materials and Construction

The proposed material palette — red multi facing brick, natural slate, reconstituted stone detailing and powder-coated aluminium windows — has been selected for its visual fit with the locality, but each material has also been chosen with regard to longevity and low maintenance. Brick, natural slate and powder-coated aluminium are durable, recyclable and have a long service life, reducing whole-life embodied carbon by extending the building's useful life and avoiding short-cycle replacement of finishes. Timber, where used, will be specified from FSC- or PEFC-certified sources.

The contractor will be required to operate to the Considerate Constructors Scheme (or equivalent) and to prepare a Construction Management Plan and Site Waste Management Plan covering: protection of retained trees and root protection areas; site access, deliveries and parking; hours of working; dust, noise and vibration control; segregation and reuse of demolition arisings (in particular brick and slate from the existing dwelling, where reusable); and recycling of construction waste. These matters can appropriately be controlled by planning condition.

7.7 Sustainable Travel

The scheme provides cycle storage within each garage and/or garden shed, supporting cycling as a primary mode of travel for shorter trips. The site is well connected by foot, cycle and bus to Hitchin town centre and railway station, supporting the modal shift away from private car use sought by Policies SP6 and T1.

7.8 Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure

As set out in Section 6.7, the application site is below the 0.2 hectare threshold and statutory Biodiversity Net Gain does not apply to this application. The scheme nonetheless delivers a clear biodiversity improvement over both the existing site and the refused scheme. Mature perimeter trees and hedgerows are retained, reinforcing the green infrastructure of the locality; tree loss is reduced; substantial new native tree, hedge and shrub planting is provided within the site and on the adjoining land in the applicant's ownership; and integrated swift bricks and bat tubes are provided in the built fabric of the dwellings.

7.9 Social and Economic Sustainability

The scheme delivers three high-quality family dwellings in a District where housing supply is constrained — NHDC accepted in the previous Officer's Report that it cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The construction phase will support local employment, and use of local materials and trades will be prioritised where practicable. The scheme replaces a single under-performing dwelling with three modern, energy-efficient family homes, contributing to the long-term housing stock of the District.

8. Access

Pre-application advice was originally received from Hertfordshire County Council Highways in August 2021, and the access arrangements developed in response to that advice. The Highways Officer raised no objection to the refused scheme on highways grounds. The access arrangements are unchanged from the refused scheme, and the development is therefore considered to remain acceptable in highways terms.

8.1 Vehicular Access

A new vehicular access is provided onto Gosmore Road, 4.1m wide, allowing two cars to pass and providing the necessary inter-vehicular and pedestrian visibility splays. The existing access is to be closed off and re-instated as soft landscaping. The shared accessway provides space for vehicles up to a 7.5 tonne rigid lorry to turn within the site.



8.2 Parking

Each dwelling is provided with a double garage and two surface parking spaces. This comfortably exceeds NHDC's parking standard, which the Officer's Report on the refused scheme confirmed to

be a minimum of two spaces per dwelling. The garages are sized to accommodate a car with additional space for cycle, bin and other storage.

The Officer's Report on the refused scheme noted that, although no dedicated visitor parking was provided, the level of parking per dwelling was sufficient to accommodate most visitors. The revised scheme retains that position, with informal visitor parking available within the shared access and turning area and on the individual driveways.

8.3 Cycle Storage

Cycle storage is provided within each garage, sized to accommodate a car alongside cycle and other storage. Garden sheds are also provided to each plot which can accommodate cycles if preferred.

8.4 Refuse and Recycling

Refuse and recycling bins will be stored in the gardens or garages. A bin collection area is provided near the site access on collection days, in line with the arrangement found acceptable on the previous application.

8.5 Fire and Security

The site access is within 45m of all parts of each dwelling, complying with Building Regulations Part B. A pedestrian gate access onto Coach Drive provides an alternative emergency egress.

8.6 Pedestrian and Inclusive Access

The dwellings will be designed to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations. Entrances are clearly identifiable and approached by level or gently graded paths.

8.7 Public Transport

Gosmore Road is served by bus route 88 between Hitchin and Luton, with bus stops on either side of the road just south of the Coach Drive junction.

9. Planning Policy

The principal policies relevant to the determination of the application are set out below. Where the policy was specifically considered in the Officer's Report on the refused scheme, the Officer's position is noted.

North Herts Local Plan

SP1 — Sustainable Development in North Herts

The site is brownfield, within the Hitchin settlement boundary, and within walking distance of the town centre and its services. It is a sustainable location for residential development.

SP2 — Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

Hitchin is identified as a town under Policy SP2 where the majority of new development will be located, including residential. The Officer's Report on the refused scheme accepted the principle of development in this respect.

SP6 — Sustainable Transport

Cycle storage is provided to each dwelling. The site is on a bus route and within walking distance of Hitchin town centre.

SP8 — Housing

The proposal contributes a net two additional dwellings to the supply of housing in the District. The Officer's Report acknowledged that NHDC is unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. The implications of this under the National Planning Policy Framework published in August 2026 — which replaces the tilted balance formerly at paragraph 11(d) — are set out below.

SP9 and D1 — Design and Sustainability

Compliance with Policy D1 is the subject of the first reason for refusal of the previous application. Section 5 and Section 6.3 of this Statement set out in detail how the revised scheme — with reduced scale, omission of habitable roof accommodation, traditional hipped roofs and increased separation from the site boundaries — directly addresses the Officer's findings under Policy D1.

D3 — Protecting Living Conditions

Compliance with Policy D3 is the subject of the second reason for refusal. Section 6.4 sets out how the revised scheme has been designed specifically to address the impacts of Plot 2 on No. 8 Coach Drive that led to the refusal: omission of the rear dormer, reduction in storey height, omission of habitable roof accommodation, obscure-glazed flank windows, and reinforced boundary planting.

Future living conditions for occupants of the new dwellings were considered acceptable by the Officer in the previous application; the revised scheme maintains and improves on that position.

D4 — Air Quality

The site is not in an Air Quality Management Area. The use of air source heat pumps in place of gas-fired heating, and the provision of EV charging to each dwelling, support good air quality.

NE2 — Landscape

The mature perimeter trees and hedgerows that contribute to the sylvan character of the locality are retained where practicable. The Officer's Report on the refused scheme found no objection on landscape grounds and considered the balance of new hard and soft landscaping acceptable.

NE4 and SP12 — Biodiversity, Green Infrastructure

The application site is below the 0.2 hectare threshold and the statutory biodiversity gain condition does not apply to this application. The scheme nonetheless retains the mature perimeter trees and hedgerows, reduces tree loss from six trees to five, provides substantial new native planting within the site, and incorporates integrated swift bricks and bat tubes in the built fabric of the dwellings in line with the Council Ecologist's recommendation. The matters raised by the Ecologist on the refused application — tree loss, the 12 metres of complementary habitat sought around retained trees and hedgerows, and the form of the ecological enhancements — are addressed by the revised scheme, as set out at Section 6.7.

T1 and T2 — Transport and Parking

The Highways Officer raised no objection to the refused scheme on highways grounds. The access arrangements are unchanged. Parking provision exceeds the policy minimum, and the Officer's Report accepted that the level of parking per dwelling was sufficient to accommodate most visitors.

National Planning Policy Framework

A revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in August 2026, replacing the December 2024 edition. Its policies are a material consideration which must be taken into account in decision-making from the day of publication (Annex A, paragraph 1), and they therefore apply to the determination of this application. The Framework restructures national policy into thematic plan-making and decision-making policies in place of the previous paragraph numbering, and the references below are given accordingly. The tilted balance formerly at paragraph 11(d) no longer forms part of national policy.

S3 and S4 — Presumption in favour of sustainable development

The site lies within the settlement boundary of Hitchin as defined in the adopted North Herts Local Plan, a matter confirmed in the Officer's Report on the refused application. Policy S3(1)(a) accordingly directs that policy S4 is applied. Policy S4(1) provides that development proposals within settlements should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the Framework.

None of the circumstances identified at policy S4(2) as likely to indicate that the benefits of approving development are substantially outweighed arises in this case. The site is not allocated or safeguarded for another use in the development plan; it is not existing recreational land, Local Green Space, a Protected Landscape, or an area of particular importance for biodiversity or geodiversity; it is not undeveloped land used as a cemetery or burial ground, or for water storage or flood risk management; and the proposal does not conflict with any national decision-making policy which requires refusal in specified circumstances.

HO7 — Meeting the need for homes

Policy HO7 requires that substantial weight be given to the benefits of providing homes which will contribute towards meeting the evidenced accommodation needs of the community. The scheme delivers a net gain of two family dwellings. The Officer's Report on the refused application recorded that the Council is unable to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. While the supply position no longer operates as the trigger for a tilted balance, it remains directly relevant to the weight to be attached to the delivery of new homes under policy HO7.

L3 — Achieving appropriate densities

Policy L3(2)(a) provides that residential development proposals within settlements should contribute to an increase in the density of the area in which they are situated. It confirms that, while the

existing character of an area is to be taken into account in accordance with policy DP3, character should not preclude development which makes the most of an area's potential. The Officer's Report on the refused scheme found that the increase in density from one dwelling to three was not out of character with the locality, given the groups of dwellings on smaller plots and at higher densities nearby to the north and south. That finding is unaffected by the revisions now made, which reduce the built form on the site while retaining three dwellings.

DP3 — Key principles for well-designed places

Policy DP3(1) requires development proposals to respond to their context — the history, character and features of the site and its setting — so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings, through the arrangement of development plots and buildings and the use of materials and architectural features. The revisions described at Sections 5 and 6.3 of this Statement have been made for precisely that purpose: two storeys in place of two and a half; traditional hipped roofs in natural slate in place of flat crown roofs and rear dormers; no habitable accommodation within the roof; substantially reduced internal floor areas; ridge heights below that of the existing dwelling; and increased separation from the site boundaries. The material palette of red multi facing brick, reconstituted stone detailing, natural slate and vertically proportioned windows is drawn from the more traditional houses found in the locality.

The scheme also reflects the principles at policy DP3(2) so far as they are relevant to a development of this nature and location: Climate, through low carbon heating, fabric performance exceeding the requirements of the Building Regulations, and roof orientation suitable for photovoltaic installation; Nature, through the retention of the mature perimeter trees and hedgerows, substantial new native planting, and ecological features integrated into the built fabric; Movement, through a location within walking distance of Hitchin town centre and on a bus route, with cycle storage to each dwelling; and Identity, through a coherent palette of materials and a consistent family of three individually expressed dwellings.

Other relevant policies

Chapter 15 (Promoting sustainable transport). The site is in a sustainable location for the purposes of policy TR3, within walking distance of Hitchin town centre, its schools, services and main line railway station, and served by bus route 88. Parking and cycle provision exceed the policy minimum. The Highway Authority raised no objection to the refused scheme and the access arrangements are unchanged.

Chapter 19 (Conserving and enhancing the natural environment). The mature perimeter trees and hedgerows are retained, tree loss is reduced from six trees to five, and substantial new native tree, hedge and shrub planting is provided. Species selection, positions and long term maintenance can be secured by condition in accordance with policy N3.

Chapter 5 (Meeting the challenge of climate change). The dwellings are heated by air source heat pumps in place of gas, electric vehicle charging is provided to each dwelling, and the roofs are orientated to accommodate photovoltaic installation.

Policy P3 (Living conditions and pollution). Living conditions for future occupiers, and for the occupiers of neighbouring properties, are addressed at Sections 6.4 and 6.5 of this Statement. The site is not within an Air Quality Management Area.

The overall balance

The adverse impacts which led to the refusal of application 25/00423/FP have been directly and substantially addressed by the revisions described in this Statement, and the matters raised by the Council's Ecologist have been addressed in full. Set against the limited residual effects of the revised scheme is the delivery of three family dwellings within the settlement boundary of the District's

largest town, to which substantial weight attaches under policy HO7, in an authority unable to demonstrate a five year housing land supply. The benefits of the development are not substantially outweighed by any adverse effects when assessed against the national decision-making policies in the Framework. Policy S4(1) accordingly indicates that planning permission should be granted.

10. Conclusions

The revised proposals provide three new family dwellings on a brownfield site within the settlement boundary of Hitchin, well-served by local facilities and public transport.

The scheme has been comprehensively redesigned in response to the Council's reasons for refusal of application 25/00423/FP and following pre-application engagement with NHDC. The two reasons for refusal are addressed directly:

- On Policy D1 (size, scale, design and appearance) — the dwellings are reduced from 2.5 storeys with habitable roof accommodation to two storeys with traditional hipped roofs; floor areas are substantially reduced; flat crown roofs are omitted; and separation from the site boundaries is increased.
- On Policy D3 (impact on No. 8 Coach Drive) — the rear dormer to Plot 2 is omitted, the storey height is reduced, flank windows are obscure-glazed, and boundary planting is retained and reinforced.

In addition, the application site is now below the 0.2 hectare threshold and statutory Biodiversity Net Gain does not apply. The scheme nonetheless retains the mature perimeter trees and hedgerows, reduces the number of trees to be removed from six to five, provides substantial new native planting, and incorporates integrated bat and bird features in the built fabric of the dwellings, directly addressing the comments of the Council's Ecologist on the refused application.

All other aspects of the scheme that were considered acceptable by the Officer on the refused application — the principle of development, the access arrangements, parking provision, ecology, future living conditions, landscape impact, and impacts on Holmacott and the dwellings on the opposite side of Coach Drive — are retained.

The revised scheme is considered to comply with the policies of the development plan, taken as a whole, and to deliver three high-quality family dwellings of the kind needed in the District. It is respectfully submitted for approval.

11. Drawing Register and Supporting Documents

Drawings

Drawing No.	Title	Revision
3707/01	Location Plan	B
3707/02	Existing Site Plan	-
3707/03	Existing House – Plans and Elevations	-
3707/04	Existing House – Plans and Elevations	-
3707/05	Proposed Demolitions	C
3707/06	Proposed Site Plan	R
3707/07	Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations — Plot 1	F
3707/08	Proposed Elevations and Section — Plot 1	E
3707/09	Proposed Plans and Elevations — Plot 2	E
3707/10	Proposed Elevations and Section — Plot 2	E
3707/11	Proposed Floor Plans and Elevations — Plot 3	E
3707/12	Proposed Floor Plan and Elevations — Plot 3	E
3707/13	Detached Garage – Plans and Elevations	B
3707/22	Site Section looking South East	C
3707/23	Site Section looking North East	C
3707/27	Perspective View from Gosmore Road	

Supporting documents

- Design and Access Statement (this document)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement (Harrison Arboriculture, amended)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Coyne Environmental Ltd)
- Preliminary Roost Assessment (Coyne Environmental Ltd)
- Landscape and planting proposals (shown on drawing 3707/06)
- Completed application form, ownership certificate and CIL Additional Information Form