

CONVERSION OF GARAGE STRUCTURE TO INDEPENDENT PROPERTY

Kings Oak

Hitchin

Hertfordshire. SG4 7BF.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT A

June 2025

1. Introduction

- a) My name is Jon Tankard and I am a Senior Architects with RLP Surveyors Ltd. I have been commissioned by Ms Shipley for this full planning application, following the approval under application 24/02818/FPH Insertion of windows and doors to existing garage to facilitate conversion of garage into habitable accommodation, (as per planning approval 20/02113/FPH approved 19th November 2020) and erection of detached garden store. The application was approved on the 5th March 2025 and is still live until the 5th March 2028. This application looks to progress the potential further by creating a dwelling independent from the host house to which this application refers to.

2. Preamble

- a) Whilst the approved scheme does permit the conversion of the garage to habitable, this is as an annexe of the host dwelling 2 Kings Oak. This application looks to maintain the use as habitable but with independent status. The limiting factors of the conditions were thus :-
- I. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.
Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
 - II. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above. Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.
 - III. The residential annexe hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the dwellinghouse known as No. 2 Kings oak, Hitchin.
Reason: To avoid the creation of a new dwelling contrary to the planning policies applicable to the area and to avoid the occupation of two separate dwellings by persons unconnected with each other as this would result in an unsatisfactory relationship and inadequate standard of amenity for both properties and to comply with Policy HS6 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.
- b) Therefore the purpose of this application is to progress potential of the site in contradiction to the condition 2 in that the building form will change and condition 3 in that the structure will be inhabited, but not as an annexe to 2 Kings Oak.

3. Prevailing Conditions

- a) The site is located to the south of Kings Oak and occupies a site adjacent to the playing field of Kingshott School which extends to the south east of the site. Kings oak is a private road running beyond the school entrance off the A602 which connect Hitchin to the A1. The land is set on a ridge and is surrounded by the urban landscape of the development and the school.
- b) The existing structure was built as part of the Kings Oak development in under permission granted by North Herts Planning in 2015.



A – Site Location Plan

- c) The current urban development is an enclosed urban space of varying densities with a defined 'apparent edge' with filled and unfilled plots. Access is as per the existing, directly off the A502 as demonstrated in photo B.



B – Current access serves the development and the school.

- d) The current double garage space has space for two cars as demonstrated within the photograph B, the elevation demonstrates the area that will be amended under approval 24/02818/FPH, noted in photo C.



C – The site and existing garage conversion confirmed under 24/02818/FPH.

- e) The character of the area is a rather eclectic one with many of the buildings being renovated, workshops and outlying farm buildings. There is a range of styles boundary types, elevation treatments and fenestration, as noted in the following photographs.



D – View from the proposed parking to the north west demonstrating a brick facade with high level gable window.



E – View north west from the proposed parking demonstrating a range of styles, but also the enclosed nature of the site within the tight urban context.



F – View south west directing towards the main road, once again demonstrating a range of styles, but also the enclosed nature of the site within the tight urban context. For orientation the brick corner demonstrates to the far left is the corner demonstrated left of centre in photo



G – The current host dwelling demonstrating large windows and a timber boarded elevation.



H – Housing to the south east of the residential area demonstrating further complex styles with metal facades, dominant gable windows and rooflights.

- f) The photos demonstrate that the evidenced existing urban character is a densely populated urban area contained within the greenbelt with an apparent boundary. The proposed site is set within this boundary, and currently has permission for residential conversion. Both of these conclusions are a material consideration for the justification of this application.

4. Planning History

2 Kingsoak Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7BF

Ref. No: 24/02818/FPH | Received: Tue 10 Dec 2024 | Validated: Wed 05 Mar 2025 | Status: Approved.

2 Kingsoak Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7BF

Ref. No: 22/00677/FPH | Received: Fri 11 Mar 2022 | Validated: Fri 11 Mar 2022 | Status: Approved

Oakfield Farmhouse, Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7JX

Ref. No: 20/02113/FPH | Received: Mon 21 Sep 2020 | Validated: Mon 21 Sep 2020 | Status: Approved

Oakfield Farmhouse, Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7JX

Ref. No: 20/01306/FPH | Received: Mon 22 Jun 2020 | Validated: Mon 22 Jun 2020 | Status: Approved

Throughout this statement we will refer to the approved scheme
24/02818/FPH

5. Outline Design

This application seeks permission to convert the existing garage at 2 Kings Oak which currently has approval as a residential annexe to the host dwelling into a self-contained residential dwelling. We believe this proposal aligns with local and national planning objectives, offers significant benefits, and is within the limitations of the land use under the new NPPF guidance.

a) Efficient Use of Existing Built Environment & Sustainability

- I. **No New Land Take:** This proposal utilizes an existing structure on an already developed plot. This avoids the need for new greenfield development, contributing to sustainable land use and protecting valuable open spaces within the district
- II. **Reduced Carbon Footprint:** Reusing and adapting an existing building significantly reduces the embodied carbon associated with new construction. The energy and resources required for demolition and new build are avoided, aligning with environmental sustainability

goals and is key within the RIBA 2030 climate challenge and the LETTTI standards of sustainable design

- III. **Optimisation of Infrastructure:** The site is already served by existing utilities (water, electricity, drainage) and road access, minimizing the need for new infrastructure investment.

b) Addressing Housing Need (Including smaller/specialist dwellings)

- I. **Contribution to Housing Stock:** While a single unit, this conversion contributes to the overall housing supply within North Herts. Even small-scale additions help to incrementally address the countryside housing shortage.
- II. **Diverse Housing Options:** Such conversions often create smaller, more affordable units, which can cater to a diverse range of housing needs, including:
 - Shared accommodation small family occupants
 - Young professionals
 - Downsizers
 - Elderly individuals seeking independent living close to family
 - Temporary accommodation for carers or extended family.
 - This diversification is crucial for a healthy and balanced housing market.

c) Minimal Impact on Character and Amenity

- I. **Existing Footprint and Massing:** The conversion will largely respect the existing footprint and massing of the garage from the road side with the major works being confined to the area within the current garden of 2 Kings Oak and much to a scale of the external shed structure that was approved in the previous scheme., resulting in minimal visual impact on the street scene or the surrounding area. The amendments to the front elevation align to the conversion within approval 24/02818/FPH, any proposed external modifications to that approval will be carefully designed to be sympathetic to the existing dwelling and the character of the neighbourhood, namely a slight amendment to fenestration and installation of rooflights.

d) Overall Design:

- I. The scheme looks to incorporate the agreed frontage with a single storey extension to the rear with box dormer creating a first floor. Due to covenant restrictions the rear of the first floor dormer cannot overlook the grounds to the east, therefore the rear of the dormer has one window obscure glazed and fixed shut whilst the bedroom is

naturally lit with skylights and a gable window to the south east fenestration.

- II. The front elevation is glazed as per the approved scheme with rooflights to the sloping roof, all materials to match existing.
- III. Internally the ground floor contains bedroom accommodation and reception rooms of open plan kitchen and lounge with utility room, storage and ground floor shower room. The first floor provides a bedroom with bathroom and linen store leading to further eaves storage.
- IV. The national space standards would require a 2-bedroom, 4 person accommodation to utilize a minimum floor area of 79 m², as noted on the drawing we have a floor area of 96m² demonstrating compliance.
- V. Rear door leads to bin store to Local Authority requirements which then provides egress to a collection point shared with 2 Kings Oak where an existing Local Authority bin collection already exists.

e) Preservation of Residential Amenity

- I. **Privacy:** Thoughtful design will ensure no unacceptable overlooking of neighbouring properties, as noted on 2428SK100 in that the ground floor fenestration overlooks the rear garden within its own curtilage, whilst the only first floor window is set to the south east elevation and overlooks the playing field, light to the box dormer is supplied via flat roof rooflights with sloped velux windows to the front roof slope.
- II. **Noise:** As a residential unit, noise generation will be consistent with other residential properties. Acoustic insulation will be incorporated to ensure no disturbance to neighbours.
- III. **Parking:** Adequate off-street parking for both the main dwelling and the converted unit will be retained and provided as demonstrated on 2428SK100, mitigating any potential parking issues on the street. We have as demonstrated, 2 spaces for the proposed dwelling and three for the existing property 2 Kings Oak.
- IV. **Garden/Amenity Space:** Sufficient private amenity space will be provided for the new dwelling, ensuring a good quality of life for future occupants. Current rear garden space is 11.5m x 6.7m of clear garden space.

f) Economic Benefits

- I. **Local Economy Stimulation:** The scale of the conversion project and extensions will utilize local tradespeople and suppliers, providing a modest but positive stimulus to the local economy.

6. Compliance with Planning Policy:

- a) **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** The proposal aligns with the NPPF's emphasis on making efficient use of land, promoting sustainable development, and delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes.
- b) **North Herts Local Plan:** We contend that under the current local plan, the site does not align with the Policy section 6, in that the scheme is not within an ascertained Rural Areas beyond the greenbelt, under these limitations, despite the proposals being limited infilling within an urban context and an existing building, the proposals may not be justified within the Greenbelt policy. We are confident that any specific requirements or concerns outlined in these policies can be adequately addressed through the proposed design and the recent inclusion within the National Planning Policy Framework of the notion of Greybelt. We confirm our thoughts below.

7. Justification for Greenbelt Construction:

We note that the scheme has permission for conversion from garage to residential and under general circumstances should justify as infill dwelling within an urban area within the Greenbelt, however, we further will confirm the potential that the site would be classed as Greybelt under the revised NPPF guidelines set within the amended NPPF of December 2024.

Established within the 1947 Planning Policy Framework, the greenbelt was initially set up to protect the openness of the countryside. It does not (as the name may suggest), provide any protected status for wildlife or the natural environment within that allocation.

The NPPF set the protection of the Green Belt under the five parameters of :-

- A. to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- B. to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- C. to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- D. to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- E. to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Historically these five statements have held control of greenbelt for over 70 years, often to the detriment of small scale additions where communities were looking for housing within their locality, any development that conflicted these principles, was deemed **INAPPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT IN THE GREENBELT**, and was rejected forthright, and due to the overriding nature of the historic protection, would lose at appeal.

However, the amended NPPF of **December 2024** looks to resolve the housing crisis in Rural Areas, by establishing the position of GREYBELT.

The greybelt releases land which was previously held within the greenbelt but was not felt to be benefiting the strategic aims of the greenbelt and whose loss would not be detract from the core requirements of the objectives of the greenbelt, and does not serve – or significantly undermine – purposes (a), (b) and (d) of the green belt.

Government confirms that these can be anything such as :-

- Large Garden.
- Space between houses.
- Land enclosed within existing development.
- Previously developed land.
- Unmanageable arable farmland.

As noted , the land is set within the Kings Oak development boundary, and therefore despite the location within the Greenbelt could be classed as ‘infill’, that aside, the proposals as tabled do not :-

- A. Add to unrestricted sprawl within the greenbelt. The aerial picture 1 clearly demonstrates that the site is within the development and school confines and the perception of the development from the ground perspective is that the site is within the urban context.
- B. Picture 1 demonstrates that the site is within the urban context of Kings Oak and therefore does not create a merging of neighbouring residential areas.
- C. The containment within the urban context restricts the development and therefore cannot encroach onto the open countryside. The aerial picture 1 demonstrates that the site is encompassed by the development urban context.



Picture 1 aerial view of the Kings Oak, the blue line demonstrates the boundary of the development whilst the red line demonstrates the proposed site set within the development boundaries.

- D. By not extending beyond the urban context, and by providing a residence of a character that matches the area demonstrates, the proposals are within character of the area.
- E. The proposal assist in urban regenerations with deliveries to the benefit of the local community such as :-
 - Good sized affordable dwelling to demonstrate a range of dwelling scale within a single urban context.
 - Existing infrastructure and pedestrian links to current retail infrastructure.
 - Access to sustainable public transport.

8. Sustainability:

The building is a conversion of an existing structure with limited extensions to the rear and roof, this will ensure that the embodied carbon contained within the structure will remain in the structure and not be exposed and dumped into landfill to be reinstated with further high carbon structures. Calculation vary but we feel that a realistic assumption of a saving of around 15 Kg of CO₂ in the retention of the existing structure is a realistic figure. The building will be retrofitted with insulation, making the building thermally improved to many of the existing houses, it will be sealed to prevent heat loss and this attached to the small scale of the property it make it ideal for a 'low carbon' heating solution.

- Generally we take a 'shell first' approach as we believe that creating a sealed thermal shell is the basis of any good project, we would also incorporate reflective insulation within the structure to avoid high summer heat loads within the roof structure.
- We will be using items such as Passive Purple within the shell structure which whilst being a water based product with reduced environmental impact, will create an internal sealed shell to control uncontrolled heat loss and gain.
- The shell will be constructed with an internal leaf of high thermal mass structure within the insulated zone, this will allow good heat capacity to reduce heating spikes both in retaining ambient heat in winter and reducing night time excesses in summer.
- Further to that the orientation of the building creating shade over the rear garden and high level circulation rooflight to the south provides the ideal situation for natural stack ventilation allowing the building to naturally cool during the hot summer months.
- The orientation will also benefit the use of PV panels to the southwest roof providing power to the house, controlling the controlled and uncontrolled electrical loads thru the addition of battery storage ensuring that the optimum use of the solar power is utilized during occupancy. Uncontrolled loads will be maintained by ensuring that energy efficient devices are incorporated where possible.
- An electrical heating system will be employed, we will be confirming this at the Working Drawing stage, but the suggestion would be either air source

heat pump for hot water and heating, or a Infrared heating system with electric boiler for hot water. As much of the controlled load will be provided by the electricity stored within the solar battery much of the operation of these elements will be grid free.

- Biodiversity Net Gain has been confirmed, and the addition of trees under the controlled arrangement of condition will be included, further to this a hedge line along the boundary to the south east will provide further biodiversity. Whilst the BNG metric and the conversion of the garden provides a very low BNG requirement, a ground walk around the site demonstrates a treed scrubland and we feel that a native hedge along this boundary will provide extension effects to the surrounding areas outside of the urban area.
- Cycle storage is provided within the secure shed, a secure 'bike bar' will be incorporated to allow a secure lockable solution.
- Given the scale of the project, contractor and material source will be local.
- Power source will be made available should a electric charging point for vehicles be required.
- Rainwater will be harvested in 210 litre water butts which will be used for garden irrigation
- Low water use WC cisterns, wash basins, baths/showers will be installed.

9. Design confirmation:

a) Sustainability.

The site is existing, the main element of the building is existing and therefore the embodied carbon of the existing structure will be retained, whilst embodied carbon of drainage and associated utilities and access roads is not required. Development prevents urban spill into neighboring countryside and maintains biodiversity.

Quality of Design / Impact on Visual Amenity

- b) The effect on neighboring houses is reduced as much of the volume is maintained within the current form.
- c) The existing amenity space to 2 Kings Oak is subdivided with the outlook of the proposed property being to the east, out of the urban context.
- d) Building form is essentially as is to the street scene and the approved scheme and therefore will have no effect to surrounding buildings..
- e) Materials are existing and will match existing in the form of the extension.

Waste Management

- f) Bin store accommodation is demonstrated on the proposed site plan and is situated to allow easy access from the kitchen via a dedicated path, and easy progression from the bin store to the boundary. The bin store will be

designed to conform to North Herts waste requirements and is currently sized to house 4, 240 litre wheelie bins.

Crime Prevention

- g) The scheme will be designed to the full requirements of SBD and the site maintains the current ability of neighborhood overlooking, maintains an improved open frontage. Essentially, as a replacement dwelling with a previously approved scheme, the security is established as a residential street and the proposals will improve the situation with a restricted garden access.

Impact on Highway Safety and Parking

- h) The road is a private highway, the road access is from an existing garage / parking space and therefore there is no change, the proposed parking to 2 Kings Oak further confirms use of existing parking and therefore is deemed acceptable by current use.
Access off the public highway is via an existing entrance and the use is established and therefore is deemed acceptable via current use.

Impact on Trees and Landscaping

- i) Rather than an 'impact', the proposals embrace and enclose the site ensuring tree screening to the boundaries

10. Conclusion

The new proposal has been carried out with the full inclusion of the client owner who is keen to progress on the previously approved scheme to enhance the use of the site by improving accommodation.

The proposed conversion of the garage at 2 Kings Oak represents a sustainable, efficient, and well-considered approach to providing additional housing within an established residential area. We are committed to ensuring the highest standards of design and amenity, and we believe this proposal will integrate seamlessly into the existing neighbourhood without detriment.

As such it is recommended to North Herts Council for approval.