

APPEAL STATEMENT

Site: 11 Kingswood Avenue, Hitchin, SG4 0PA

Application Ref: 26/00109/FP

Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement detached dwelling

Introduction

This statement is submitted in support of an appeal against the refusal of planning permission for the redevelopment of 11 Kingswood Avenue.

The proposal seeks to replace an existing semi-detached dwelling of non-standard construction with a high-quality, energy-efficient detached dwelling that reflects modern living standards.

The application was refused on the grounds of concerns relating to the scale of the development and its impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

This statement demonstrates that the proposal accords with both local and national planning policy and reflects the established pattern of development within Kingswood Avenue.

Site Description & Context

The application site is located within a residential street characterised by a mix of semi-detached and detached dwellings, varied architectural styles, and a wide range of materials including both render and brick.

Many properties along Kingswood Avenue have been subject to extensions and alterations, resulting in a diverse and evolving streetscape. As a result, the street no longer exhibits a uniform or consistent architectural character, but instead reflects incremental change over time.

The existing dwelling is of non-standard construction, which limits its long-term viability and mortgageability. This is a material consideration, as it impacts both the usability and sustainability of the existing housing stock.

Policy Context

Local Plan

Policy D1 – Sustainable Design requires development to respond positively to its context and reinforce local distinctiveness.

Policy SP1 – Sustainable Development supports proposals that improve environmental performance and housing quality.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 135 requires development to be sympathetic to local character, while also making clear that planning decisions should not impose rigid stylistic conformity.

Paragraph 157 supports the transition to a low-carbon future and encourages energy-efficient development.

Established Pattern of Development

There is clear and compelling evidence of significant alterations and increases in scale along

Kingswood Avenue, demonstrating that the character of the street has evolved substantially over time.

At No. 17 Kingswood Avenue (Ref: 17/04366/FPH), planning permission was granted for part single and part two-storey side and rear extensions following demolition of existing structures. This resulted in a substantial increase in footprint and massing, creating a built form visually comparable to a detached dwelling.

At No. 1 Kingswood Avenue (Ref: 26/00347/FPH), permission was granted for a two-storey side and front extension alongside additional single-storey extensions, materially increasing the scale and prominence of the dwelling.

At No. 14 Kingswood Avenue (Ref: 21/03473/FPH), permission was granted for front and rear extensions, further demonstrating acceptance of built form expansion.

At No. 36 Kingswood Avenue (Ref: 22/01014/FPH), permission was granted for a side extension following demolition of existing outbuildings, reinforcing the pattern of redevelopment.

At No. 13 Kingswood Avenue (Ref: 19/02125/NCS), a rear extension was confirmed as permitted development, contributing to the cumulative increase in built form.

Importantly, at No. 3A Kingswood Avenue (Ref: 04/00364/1), planning permission was granted for the construction of a new attached dwelling. This is a significant precedent, demonstrating that the Local Planning Authority has accepted the introduction of a new residential unit within the street, not solely extensions to existing dwellings.

In addition, numerous other properties along the street have undergone loft conversions, side extensions, and rear additions.

Implications of These Precedents

These examples demonstrate a consistent pattern whereby original dwellings have been significantly enlarged in both footprint and volume.

The cumulative effect of these developments is that the original modest scale of the street has been substantially altered. The prevailing character is now defined by variation, rather than uniformity.

In many instances, properties now exhibit a scale and massing comparable to, or exceeding, that of the proposed development.

Furthermore, the approval of a new dwelling at No. 3A confirms that intensification and redevelopment within the street has already been accepted in principle.

The proposal should therefore be viewed as a continuation of this established pattern, rather than a departure from it.

Scale and Overdevelopment

The Council's refusal cites concerns regarding scale and overdevelopment. However, when

assessed against the established context, these concerns are not substantiated.

The proposal has been informed by pre-application discussions, during which scale and spatial relationships were carefully considered. The design was subsequently amended to improve separation distances and reduce visual impact.

The proposed dwelling is comparable in scale and massing to nearby properties that have been significantly extended, particularly Nos. 1 and 17.

The site is of sufficient size to comfortably accommodate the proposed dwelling, and the layout ensures that the building sits appropriately within the plot.

The perceived 'uniform gap' between dwellings is not a defining or protected characteristic of the street. Many properties have altered this relationship through extensions and additions, and spacing between buildings varies across Kingswood Avenue. The proposal maintains appropriate separation distances and does not result in unacceptable harm.

The development avoids any sense of visual coalescence and would not appear cramped, dominant, or overbearing.

For these reasons, the proposal cannot reasonably be considered overdevelopment.

Character and Appearance

Street Character

Kingswood Avenue is defined by a varied and evolving character. There is no single prevailing architectural style or consistent form that defines the street. Instead, the character is derived from variation resulting from extensions, alterations, and redevelopment over time.

While the officer's report refers to a uniform pattern of development, this does not accurately reflect the current street scene, which includes a mix of detached, semi-detached, and altered dwellings.

Roof Form

Roof forms along the street are varied, including both hipped and gable designs, often altered through extensions and loft conversions. The proposed roof form reflects this variation and does not introduce an uncharacteristic feature.

Materials

The street includes a mix of rendered dwellings, brick-faced properties, and combinations of both. This variation contributes to the diverse character of the area.

The proposed development reflects this context and does not introduce an incongruous material palette. Instead, it responds appropriately to the surrounding built environment.

NPPF Position

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF makes clear that planning decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles. In this context, the Council's concerns regarding character and appearance are not supported by national policy.

While the officer's report refers to a 'consistent' and 'uniform' pattern of semi-detached dwellings, this does not accurately reflect the current character of Kingswood Avenue. The street has evolved significantly over time, with numerous approved extensions, alterations and examples of varied built form, including detached and end-terrace developments. The

cumulative effect of these changes has eroded any strict uniformity, resulting in a varied and mixed streetscape. As such, the proposal should be assessed against the existing, evolved character of the area rather than an historic or idealised uniform form.

Sustainability Benefits

The existing dwelling is of non-standard construction, has poor energy performance, and is inefficient by modern standards.

The proposed development would deliver a significant improvement in sustainability. It would incorporate modern insulation, improved airtightness, and low-carbon technologies such as solar panels. As a result, the new dwelling is expected to achieve a high level of energy efficiency.

This aligns with both local policy and national guidance, particularly NPPF Paragraph 157, which supports the transition to a low-carbon future.

Housing Quality and Viability

The existing dwelling is not readily mortgageable due to its non-standard construction, limiting its accessibility within the housing market and reducing its long-term viability.

The proposed development would provide a high-quality dwelling of standard construction, improving both usability and market accessibility. This represents a clear enhancement to the quality of housing provision on the site.

Response to Refusal Reason

The Council's reason for refusal relates to concerns regarding the scale of the development and its impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

In response, it is considered that the proposal has been designed with full regard to its context and reflects the scale of surrounding properties that have been extended and altered over time.

Planning permissions granted at Nos. 1, 3A, 14, 17 and 36 Kingswood Avenue clearly demonstrate that the Local Planning Authority has accepted significant increases in scale and massing within the street. These developments have materially altered the character of the area and established a new baseline for acceptable built form.

Notably, the approval of a new dwelling at No. 3A demonstrates that the Council has previously accepted not only enlargement but also the creation of additional residential units within the street, further undermining concerns that the proposal would be out of character.

The proposed development does not exceed this established scale and instead aligns with the pattern of enlargement and redevelopment seen throughout Kingswood Avenue.

In terms of siting, the proposed dwelling maintains appropriate separation from neighbouring properties and avoids any terracing effect or visual coalescence. The development would sit comfortably within the plot and would not appear cramped or overbearing.

With regard to character, Kingswood Avenue exhibits a varied and evolving streetscape, with no single defining architectural style. The proposal responds positively to this context and would not appear incongruous when viewed alongside neighbouring properties.

Planning Balance

There is no identifiable harm arising from the proposal. The scale is consistent with

surrounding development, the character aligns with the varied street context, and there have been no technical objections from consultees such as Highways or Environmental Health. Set against this are clear and significant benefits, including substantial improvements in sustainability, the replacement of non-standard housing, and the delivery of a high-quality, viable family home.

Conclusion

There is no identifiable harm arising from the proposal. The scale is consistent with surrounding development, the character aligns with the varied street context, and there have been no technical objections from consultees such as Highways or Environmental Health. Set against this are clear and significant benefits, including substantial improvements in sustainability, the replacement of non-standard housing, and the delivery of a high-quality, viable family home. The proposal represents sustainable development and should be approved.