

PLANNING, DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT

The Old Generator House, Hexton Manor,
Hexton Hertfordshire SG5 3JH



September 2024



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD regarding a planning application for erection of a 3 bedroom dwelling, following demolition of an existing outbuilding, within the Hexton Manor Estate. The building is known as 'The Old Generator House' and is located off Mill Lane, within the Hexton Manor Estate, Hexton, Hertfordshire SG5 3JH.
- 1.2 The Statement provides an assessment of the planning policy framework relevant to the proposal, as well as other relevant material considerations and explains the design process and principles based on a contextual understanding of the site and the locality.

2. Site description

- 2.1 The wider site comprises a large detached main dwelling building of Hexton Manor itself, which is grade II listed, with various substantial outbuildings, separate cottages, lake, extensive gardens, walled garden and internal access roads, as part of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.
- 2.2 The site is in a secluded location within the village of Hexton, albeit close to the village amenities. The building that is the subject of this application is known as the 'Old Generator House'. This is a tall building with pitched gabled roof. The building is located near to but set back from the road frontage of Mill Lane, located to the west of the Hexton Manor Estate overall site.
- 2.3 In regard to planning policy designations, the building is within the Green Belt. The building is not a curtilage listed building to the main Hexton Manor, as confirmed in previous planning history for the building. The site is within the Hexton Conservation Area and within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The grounds of Hexton Manor are designated as a historic



park and garden. The following images show the location plan of the site, followed by photographs of the building.

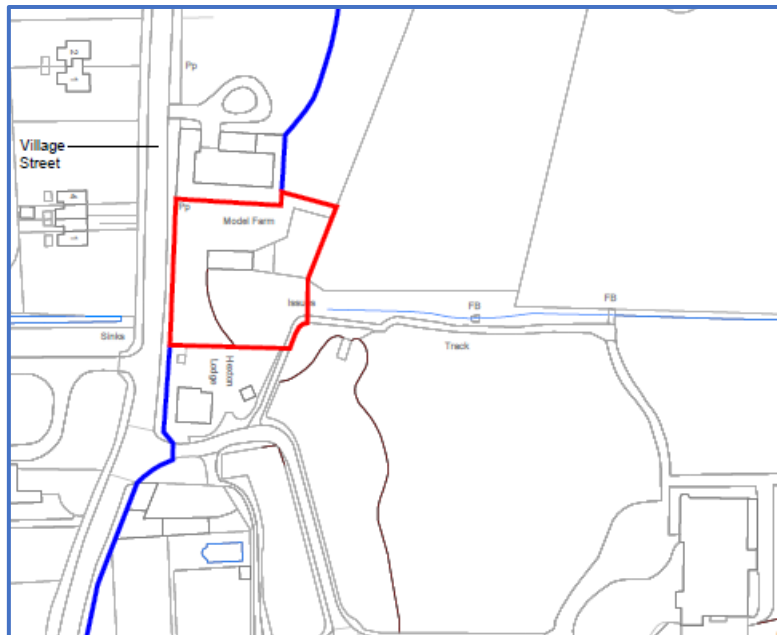


Figure 1 – Location of the application site and surroundings



Figure 2 – View of The Old Generator House





Figure 3 – Internal view of The Old Generator House

3. Planning history

- 3.1 The recent planning history for the site is as follows.
- 3.2 19/02051/FP - Change of use and conversion of vacant farm workshop to create two small apartments for occupation by the estate under game-keepers. Provision of vehicular access and parking area. – Planning permission granted. Development not implemented.
- 3.3 23/01598/PRE - Pre-application advice - Conversion of three outbuildings into three extended residential dwellings with associated parking and landscaping – Advice confirmed no objection to the principle of extension and conversion of this outbuilding to a separate dwelling, with acceptable internal and external amenity, parking and landscaping. Impact upon heritage assets and the AONB likely acceptable.



- 3.4 23/02726/FP - Change of use and conversion of existing outbuilding to one 3-bed dwelling to include single storey side and rear extensions, parking and landscaping - Planning permission granted, extant and not implemented.

4. The proposal

- 4.1 The proposal consists of erection of a 3 bedroom dwelling, following demolition of the current building. The scheme is essentially for a re-build version of the recently approved scheme for conversion and extension of the current building, to the same 3 bedroom dwelling.
- 4.2 The dwelling layout would provide entrance, lounge / diner, kitchen, cloakroom and one bedroom with en-suite to ground floor, with two bedrooms and bathrooms to first floor.
- 4.3 The materials would be of buff brickwork plinth, with render above, together with slate tiles. Timber fenestration is proposed, with conservation rooflights.
- 4.4 Amenity space for the dwelling is proposed within the modest curtilage, with parking provision as two spaces. A new access is proposed from Mill Lane, with a vehicle turning area provided.
- 4.5 Minor works for hard and soft landscaping are proposed, formation of private lawned garden area, with additional tree and hedgerow planting to boundaries.
- 4.6 The proposal consists of the following plans:
2023/25/01 - Proposed floor plans and elevations
2023/25/02 - Proposed site plan
2023/25/03 - Existing floor plans and elevations
2023/25/04 - Existing Location and site plans







Figure 6 - Proposed ground floor plan (left) and first floor plan (right)

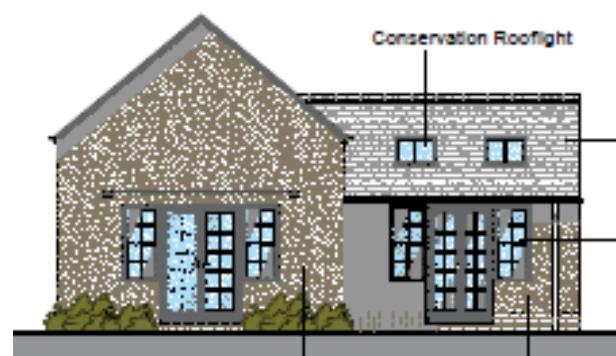


Figure 7 - Proposed front elevation





Figure 8 - Proposed south elevation

5. Relevant planning policy

5.1 The relevant planning policies at the local and national level, are as follows:

5.2 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031

Policy SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy

Policy SP8 - Housing

Policy SP5 - Countryside and Green Belt

Policy SP9 - Design and Sustainability

Policy T1 - Assessment of transport matters

Policy T2 - Parking

Policy HS5 - Accessible and Adaptable Housing

Policy D1- Sustainable Design

Policy D3 - Protecting Living Conditions

Policy HE1 - Designated heritage assets

Policy HE4 - Archaeology

Policy NE3 - Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design

Vehicle Parking at New Development

5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 2. Achieving sustainable development



- Section 12. Achieving well-designed places
- Section 13. Protecting Green Belt land
- Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

6. Principle and Green Belt

- 6.1 In regard to the actual principle of replacing this building with a dwelling, this is entirely acceptable due to the fall back position of the approved scheme for conversion and extension of the existing building. This proposal is for the same size dwelling but just a re-build instead of conversion.
- 6.2 The application site lies within the Green Belt, being just outside of the Hexton settlement envelope and is washed over by this designation. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) advises that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 149 explains that the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in the Green Belt, except for listed exceptions.
- 6.3 One relevant exception is the extension or alteration of a building, provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. For the actual re-use of the existing building, this is also an exception allowed for, provided that the building is of permanent and substantial construction and that it preserves Green Belt openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
- 6.4 It is under these exceptions that the last scheme was granted for extension and conversion of the current building. However, as the new proposal does not directly meet any of the exceptions for development in the Green Belt, very special circumstances are required in this case.



- 6.5 This now extant permission is a material consideration of considerable weight. The proposed building would almost entirely replicate the approved scheme. The only difference being a slight increase in the current ridge height of 300mm, to allow for a slightly more spacious first floor area. This marginal increase would be virtually unnoticeable in the general public views from the highway and, no discernible impact upon actual Green Belt openness. In design terms, the slightly steeper pitch gives a more attractive roofscape compared to the existing roof.
- 6.6 Other circumstances are that the re-build of the existing actually provides slightly increased available floor area, due to reduced wall thickness of the new build, compared to conversion inner wall and insulation requirements. Secondly, the building will be significantly more thermally efficient, therefore more energy efficient, compared to the conversion scheme, with a higher level required under the Building Regulations for a new dwelling compared to conversion and extension works. Lastly, there is potential movement and damp issues in the current building to resolve when utilising the existing building, which would not be an issue with a re-build on the same position.
- 6.7 In regard to the assessment of any harm upon the openness of the Green Belt, the building is set back from the highway. Being of proportionate additions to the current building but as a whole re-build, the dwelling would result in no harmful impact upon the actual wider openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.8 The garden and parking area is formed from the natural curtilage around the building, with only that required to provide a high standard of amenity for occupiers as a single dwellinghouse. The dwelling is not at all extensive in size or impact, having no harm upon Green Belt openness from either the built form, or the external layout. The resulting building as a dwelling would sit entirely comfortably within the very open and spacious overall site of the Estate and as viewed from Mill Lane.



- 6.9 The development would also not conflict with any of the five purposes of Green Belts. There would be no sprawl of a built up area, it would not lead to the merging of towns, there would be no encroachment into the countryside, there is no historic town to be affected in its setting and lastly, the development would not prevent urban regeneration of land.
- 6.10 In view of the above, the proposal is considered to constitute appropriate development within the Metropolitan Green Belt, by way of the Very Special Circumstances in this case of the fall back position of the extant scheme. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Section 13 of the NPPF, together with Policy SP5 of the Local Plan.

7. Design and character

- 7.1 In regard to the design of the dwelling, this is considered to be of high quality and entirely suitable for the context in this case. The proposal is almost the exact same resulting building as the extension and conversion scheme. The design and form of the extensions and overall building was considered acceptable on the last application for conversion and extension of the current building.
- 7.2 The materials of the dwelling would be of buff brickwork plinth, with matching render, together with slate tiles. Timber sliding sash windows are proposed, with timber framed doors and conservation rooflights. The scheme is therefore considered to be in accordance with the Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan.
- 7.3 In regard to national planning policy, the NPPF advises that the creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Also, that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, as it creates better places in which to live and work and, helps make development acceptable to communities. It is strongly asserted that the proposed development would create a high quality development of a single dwellinghouse, making a positive contribution to the character of the area.



- 7.4 The layout of the dwelling would provide occupiers with excellent natural light levels and outlook, with private amenity space. The dwelling also exceeds the minimum floorspace requirements of the national space standards, giving a high standard of living conditions and residential amenity. The proposal would be visually attractive as a result of the good architecture and matching materials to the building. The scheme is sympathetic to its surrounding historic built environment, as a result of the considered design.
- 7.5 In regard to the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), it is considered there would be no impact upon the AONB in this case, being of suitable sized resulting enlargement of the existing building, within the site of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.
- 7.6 The proposal would conserve the AONB's special qualities, distinctive character and biodiversity, tranquillity and remoteness, in accordance with national planning policy and the overall purpose of the AONB designation. The sensitive size and design and site layout have regard to the Chilterns Building Design Guide and technical notes, by being of high-quality design which respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, its traditional built character and reinforces the sense of place and local character. The proposal therefore accords with the requirements of Local Plan Policy NE3 for the Chilterns AONB.
- 7.7 Overall, the proposal is completely sympathetic, with high quality materials to result in an attractive dwelling, with no harm upon the visual amenity of the street scene. As such, the design and appearance of the proposal is considered to be in accordance with the provisions of Policies D1, SP9 and NE3 of the Local Plan, the Design SPD and with Section 12 of the NPPF.

8. Impact upon neighbouring living conditions

- 8.1 The dwelling would be well spaced away from other residential properties. The closest dwellings are the barn conversion of Model Farm to the north and



Hexton Lodge set to the south. As can be from the Proposed site plan, the dwelling would sit comfortably away from both of these properties, having no harmful impact on either set of occupiers here.

- 8.2 The development would therefore have no detrimental impact on the living conditions of any nearby occupiers. The proposal complies with D3 of the Local Plan and, with Section 12 of the NPFF.

9. Heritage assets

- 9.1 In regard to heritage assets, the building is not curtilage listed to the main listed building of Hexton Manor, as a grade II listed building. As was confirmed in previous applications. Other listings within the overall Manor Estate are the Medieval Cross Base adjacent Hexton Manor, which is also grade II listed, with the Walls to the Walled Gardens also being grade II listed. There is then also the nearby Pump on Roadside Opposite Dairy Cottages, which is also grade II listed.
- 9.2 The building is located within the Hexton Conservation Area, as well as the Manor itself. The grounds of Hexton Manor are designated as a historic park and garden.
- 9.3 The main listed building of Hexton Manor would not be affected in its setting or special character by the proposals. Nor the listed Medieval Cross, the Walled Garden, or the roadside Pump feature. The new building would almost entirely replicate the recently approved extension and conversion scheme. As such, it is considered to have no differing or discernible impact upon the designated historic park and garden of the overall Hexton Manor Estate.
- 9.4 The character, appearance and overall setting of the Conservation Area would also be preserved by the proposal. The replicated building, with high quality design and materials, would have no harmful impact upon the Conservation Area.



- 9.5 Should it be considered by the LPA that 'less than substantial harm' would result, it is asserted that this level of harm is outweighed by the provision of an additional dwelling for the District's housing supply and there being no discernible visual difference to the approved scheme.
- 9.6 In regard to all designated heritage assets of the building and overall site, the proposals are considered to have no harmful impact and would preserve the setting of the Conservation Area, the special character and setting of the listed buildings and features, together with the preservation of character of the host building. There would therefore be no harmful impact upon heritage assets and the scheme does not conflict with any provisions of the Local Plan, or Section 16 of the NPPF.

10. Access and parking provision

- 10.1 In regard to access, the approved scheme proposed to simply utilise the existing internal access roads of the Estate. However, this application proposes a new access and crossover from Mill Lane. The details are exactly the same as the same new access approved on application reference 19/02051/FP – '*Change of use and conversion of vacant farm workshop to create two small apartments for occupation by the estate under game-keepers. Provision of vehicular access and parking area*'. – Planning permission granted. Development not implemented. Therefore, this access was previously approved by the highway Authority. The development would have no adverse impact upon the safe and free flow of the highway network.
- 10.2 In regard to storage of bins for waste and recycling, these would be stored adjacent to the dwelling in a suitably designed bin store. The bins would be presented to the highway on collection days only. Therefore, access within the overall site for a refuse collection vehicle is not required for the new dwelling.



- 10.3 In regard to parking provision, the proposed dwelling layout provides at least two spaces, which accords with the requirements of the Parking SPD. Ample turning area is provided.
- 10.4 An electric vehicle charging point would be installed, adjacent the parking area. A cycle store would be located in the rear garden. Access and parking provision are therefore considered to be acceptable for the proposal.

11. Trees, ecology and landscaping

- 11.1 In regard to trees of the site, there are many trees along the boundaries and within the overall site of Hexton Manor Estate. No trees are required to be removed for the proposed dwelling, which is in the same position on site as the existing building.
- 11.2 In regard to ecology, the grass areas around the building have been regularly mown. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was submitted with the last application. This concluded a bat survey was required and this was undertaken and submitted. No roosts are in the building and the same condition for a Barn Owl and Breeding Bird Mitigation Plan, can be applied to this scheme. In order to offer enhanced opportunities for wildlife, bird and bat boxes are proposed to the nearby mature trees. Also, supplementary tree and hedge planting is proposed along the existing boundaries where required. These and other measures are expected to deliver an ecological net gain for the site, in accordance with Section 15 of the NPPF, as was agreed on the last application.
- 11.3 Landscaping will be of an enhanced standard with driveway and parking areas formed in gravel. The private garden would be laid to lawn with shrub borders, giving occupiers a high quality and spacious amenity area.



12. Flood risk

- 12.1 In regard to flood risk of the site, as shown in the image below from the Environment Agency flood risk mapping, the whole Hexton Manor Estate site is located well away from any area of flood risk. Being in Flood Zone 1 (FZ1), this is the zone of lowest flood risk. The site is also not in an area identified by the Environment Agency as having critical drainage problems. It is reasonable to conclude that the site is not at risk of flooding and that the proposed development would not result in an increase in flooding. The following image shows the flood risk for the site, from the Environment Agency mapping.

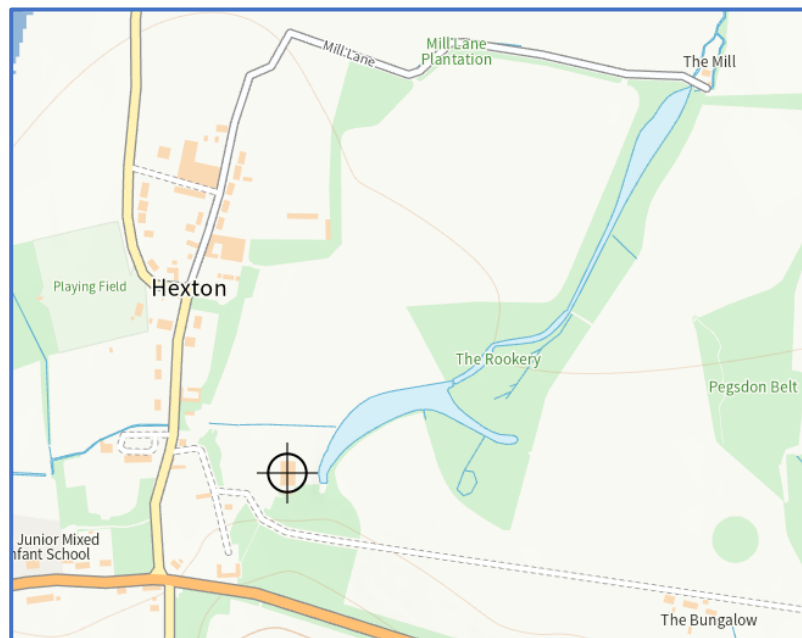


Figure 9 - Flood Risk: Rivers and surface water

13. Conclusion

- 13.1 In conclusion of the proposed development, the scheme comprises essentially the same resulting building as the last approved scheme, only as a re-build instead of conversion. There are several benefits to this approach compared to working with the current building.



- 13.2 The development is almost entirely identical to the size and form of the approved scheme, which is an established fall back position. This significant material consideration qualifies as the required Very Special Circumstances in this case, to justify the replacement of the current building with the proposed dwelling. As with the approved scheme, the proposal would have no harmful impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and the rural setting of the area. Consequently, the proposal is in accordance with local and national planning policy for development in the Green Belt.
- 13.3 The highly sympathetic and complementary design, form and layout, in combination with the use of matching materials, would represent high quality design and therefore is not considered to result in any harm upon the character and setting of the site, or the visual quality of the AONB.
- 13.4 A high standard of amenity would be afforded to occupiers and the development would have no harm upon the living conditions of any neighbouring properties. Ample parking for occupiers and visitors is provided. No trees would be affected and there would be only ecological enhancements for the site. No heritage assets would be materially affected in their setting or special character.
- 13.5 There are therefore no identified elements of material harm from the proposal, to outweigh the benefits of this scheme, which would provide one dwelling towards the District's housing supply. The proposal is therefore compliant with Policies of the North Herts Local Plan, supplementary guidance and with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. The development is therefore considered to be acceptable for the grant of conditional planning permission accordingly.

