

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT



Land rear of Radcliffe Arms, 31 Walsworth Road, Hitchin,
Hertfordshire SG4 9ST

April 2025





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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning, Design and Access Statement has been prepared by INTOUCH PLANNING LTD, on behalf of the applicant, to support an application for full planning permission for the erection of a semi-detached pair of dwellings, at land rear of The Radcliffe public house, 31 Walsworth Road, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9ST. This application is for a renewed permission, pursuant to planning permission granted in July 2022. The proposal is exactly the same as that last permission.
- 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 Radcliffe Arms public house is a detached, two storey corner building, at the junction of Walsworth Road and Verulam Road. It is located within the Hitchin Conservation Area. The building is not listed and is not proximate to any listed buildings. The public house has a garden to rear, with land beyond which has been in separate ownership for several years, since the first approved scheme. That scheme was for a semi-detached pair of new dwellings, with access from Verulam Road, granted permission in 2017. This was followed by a similar scheme granted in 2022, which this application replicates.
- 2.2 With regard to neighbouring properties of the site itself, the pair of 27 and 28 Verulam Road are located to the north, with No. 28 bordering the site. The public house lies to the south, Nos. 32 to 36 Walsworth Road are located to the south-east, with the properties of Convent Close on the opposite side of Verulam Road. The following images show the location of the site as aerial



view at Figure 1, with photographs of the site and surroundings at Figures 2 to 5.



Figure 1 – The application site and surroundings



Figure 2 – View of site frontage from Verulam Road





Figure 3 – View from within site towards Verulam Road



Figure 4 – View of Nos. 27 (left) and 28 (right) Verulam Road





Figure 5 – View towards the site and public house from Verulam Road

3. Planning history

3.1 The planning history for the site itself is:

21/03184/FP - *Erection of two semi-detached 4-bed dwellings following demolition of outbuildings. Widening of existing vehicular crossover (as amended 15.07.2022) – Planning permission granted (This now current application seeks to renew this exact permission).*

3.2 This followed the grant of planning permission for a pair of semi-detached four bedroom dwellings, under reference 17/01756/1, with description as: *Erection of two 4 bed semi-detached dwellings following demolition of outbuildings. Creation of two vehicular crossovers. (As amended by plan nos 01A, 02A, 03A and 04A).*



4. The proposal

- 4.1 The proposed development comprises erection of a pair of two storey, four bedroom semi-detached dwellings. The overall building as the pair would measure 10.2 metres in width, 13.2 metres in maximum depth, with a pitched roof ridge of 9 metres in height, with two flat roof dormer windows to front and conservation rooflights to rear.
- 4.2 The handed layout to each dwelling would provide entrance hall, living room, kitchen / diner and cloakroom at ground floor, two bedrooms and bathrooms at first floor, with two bedrooms and a bathroom to second floor. Materials are proposed of red heritage brickwork to elevations (to match in texture and colour for the locality), with natural Spanish slate roof tiles and lead sheeting to dormer cheeks.
- 4.3 Chimney stacks to both gable ends are proposed, with matching red heritage brickwork. Bay windows are featured to the front elevation, with continued canopy over the entrance doors. Fenestration is proposed of white painted timber frames to front and part side elevations (with stone headers and cills), with white aluminium windows and doors to side and rear elevations. The front entrance doors and the doors of the bin stores are proposed in Agate grey painted timber.
- 4.4 Vehicular access to the dwellings is provided from Verulam Road, to provide two parking spaces per dwelling in tandem layout. A single dual width crossover is proposed to replace the existing crossover. A new relocated street tree is proposed to replace the existing, due to the new crossover position. Amenity space is proposed to the rear of each dwelling. The frontages are proposed in low brick wall, with front paths, planting and dedicated brick bin stores. A cycle store is detailed to each rear garden. The works would follow demolition of the current outbuilding of the site.



4.5 The proposal consists of the following drawings and documents:



Drawings:

288-003F - Proposed site and ground floor plan

288-004D - Proposed first and second floor plan

288-005E - Proposed elevations

288-006B - Existing and proposed street scene elevations

288-008B - Location and existing site plan

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Noise Assessment Report

Remedial Method Statement - Version 2

Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation

4.6 The following images are extracts from the principal drawings for the development, of the proposed site plan, floor plans, elevations and street scene view.



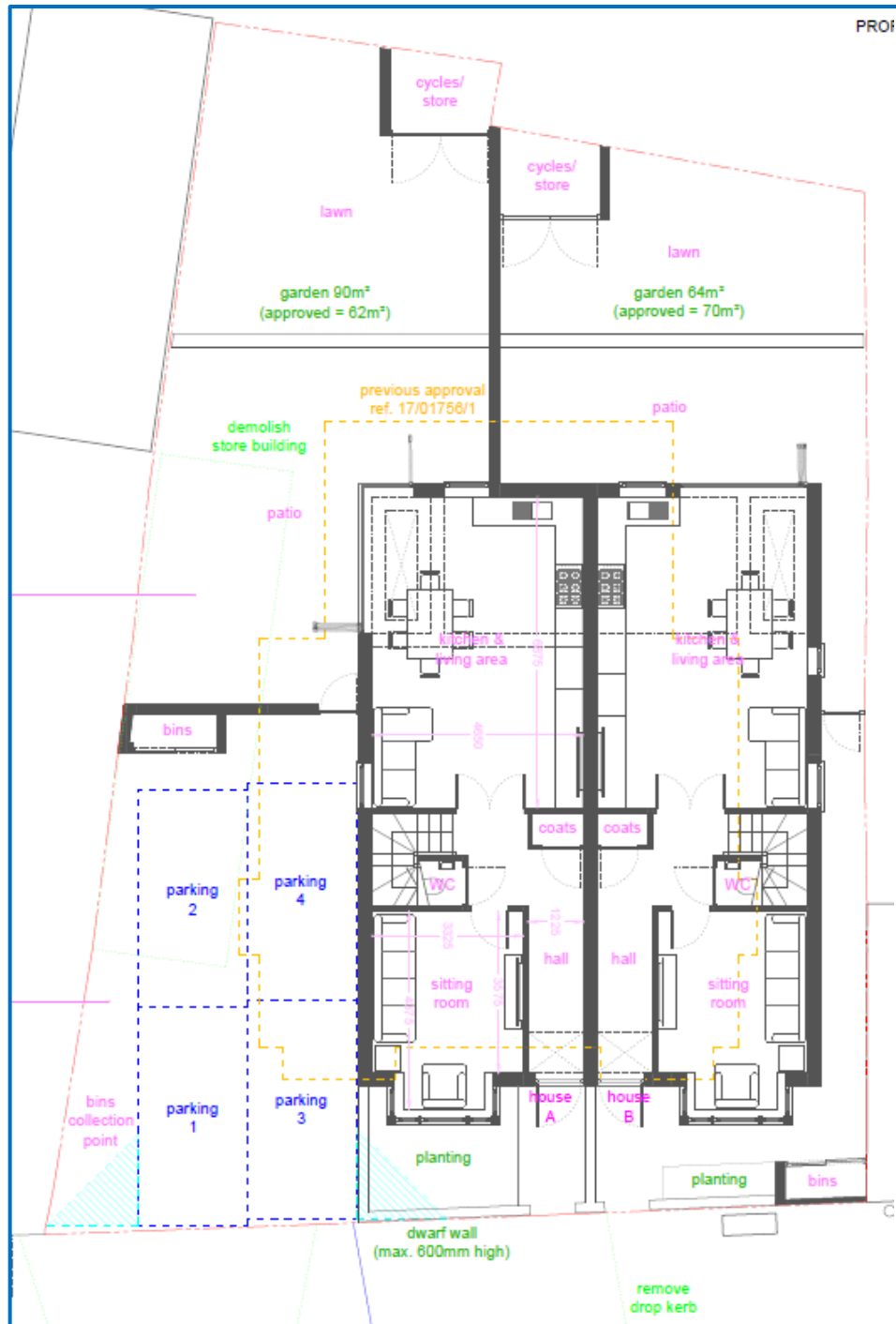


Figure 6 - Proposed ground floor / site plan



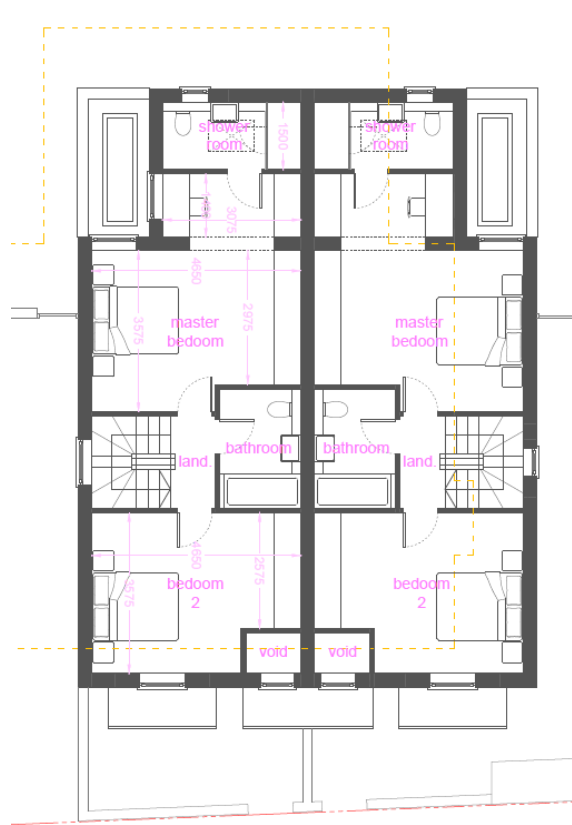


Figure 7 - Proposed first floor plan

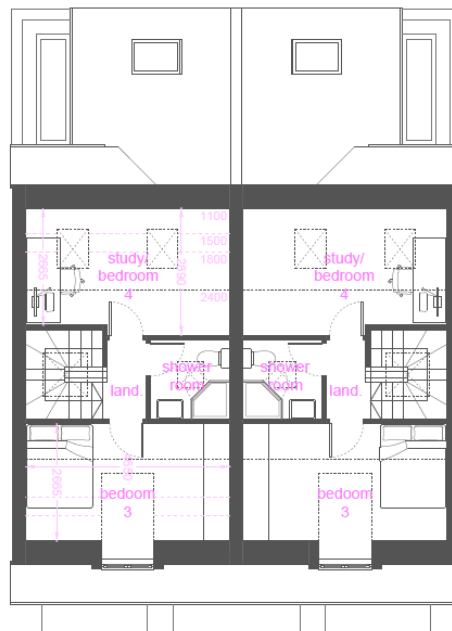


Figure 8 - Proposed second floor plan





Figure 9 - Proposed front elevation, with bin stores and front wall shown



Figure 10 - Proposed rear elevation





Figure 11 - Proposed side elevation, facing 28 Verulam Road

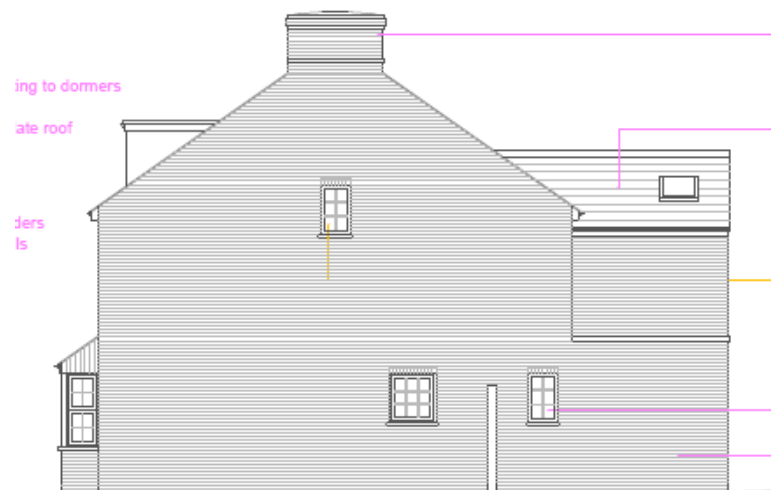


Figure 12 - Proposed side elevation, facing the public house





Figure 13 - Proposed street scene elevation to Verulam Road

5. Relevant planning policy

5.1 The following policies within the Local Plan are considered to be of relevance to this application, followed by the NPPF:

5.2 North Herts Local Plan

Policy SP1 - Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy

Policy SP8 - Housing

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

5.3 Supplementary Planning Documents

Design

Sustainability

Vehicle Parking at New Development



5.4 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- Section 2. Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4. Decision-making
- Section 5. Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 11. Making effective use of land
- Section 12. Achieving well-designed places
- Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- Section 16. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

The relevant planning considerations in this case are discussed in the following sections.

6. Principle of residential use

6.1 The application site lies well within the main urban area of Hitchin, being a short walk or cycle journey to the town centre. In accordance with SP2 and SP8 of the Local Plan, the principle of residential development is acceptable, subject to all other material considerations. The principle of two dwellings for this site was accepted with the grant of planning permission for the two previous schemes, granted in 2022 and in 2017. This continues to remain and this application is the exact same as granted in 2022.

6.2 The overarching policy Framework of the NPPF states a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The three objectives of sustainable development, as prescribed by the NPPF, being economic, social and environmental, are considered to be fully met by the development.

7. Living conditions for occupiers

7.1 In regard to this key issue, the proposal would provide a high standard of residential amenity and living conditions for its occupiers. The dwellings would



exceed the minimum internal space standards as prescribed by the DCLG Technical housing standards - nationally described space standard. For these 4 bedroom, 5 person units, 103 square metres (sqm) are required and 144 sqm are provided. This is shown in the full table from the Technical housing standards below.

Number of bedrooms(b)	Number of bed spaces (persons)	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
1b	1p	39 (37) *			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0
	8p	125	132	138	

Figure 14 – Minimum floorspaces of the National described space standard

- 7.2 All bedrooms exceed the minimum width and floor area. The open plan kitchen / diner, with separate lounge, would provide light and modern day living spaces. Integrated storage areas are included, with sufficient circulation space provided throughout. A high standard of natural light and outlook would be provided to all habitable rooms of the dwelling.
- 7.3 In regard to amenity space, 90 sqm would be provided to the left hand dwelling and 64 sqm for the right hand dwelling. This would provide each set of occupiers with high quality and private amenity space. This is considered acceptable in this case, given the very central location, with good access to local parks for further amenity space. Similar sized amenity areas were accepted on the previous approved scheme. The garden for house 1 would be screened off from the parking by a 1.8m height brick wall to match the elevational brickwork of the dwellings.



- 7.4 Overall, the layout and amenity for occupiers would be of a high standard and in accordance with the Local Plan and Section 12 of the NPPF.

8. Impact upon neighbouring living conditions

- 8.1 With regard to any impact of the development upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, there would be no adverse impact. The position on the plot is the same as the previously approved scheme. Therefore, no sense of dominance or overbearing impact would result for the occupiers of the adjacent property of 28 Verulam Road.
- 8.2 The only flank window proposed at first floor facing 28 Verulam Road, would be a landing window and a dressing room window. These would be obscure glazed and non-opening below 1.7m from internal floor level. The privacy of this neighbouring property would therefore be fully retained.
- 8.3 In regard to properties to the rear of the proposed dwellings, these are properties in Radcliffe Road, with their rear gardens backing onto the site. No overlooking from first or second floor windows would occur. The closest windows would be obscure glazed bathroom windows and the recessed windows would serve bedrooms at ample distance from the rear of these properties.
- 8.4 Overall, the new dwellings would have no impact of any loss of light, loss of privacy or any overbearing impact. The development would have no material harm upon occupier living conditions of any neighbouring properties. The proposal complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan and with Section 12 of the NPPF.



9. Design and appearance

- 9.1 In regard to the specific design, Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:

“Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping”.*

- 9.2 The proposal is considered to meet the above three requirements of this national policy, through its high-quality design and high quality materials. The overall proportions are in keeping with the adjacent dwellings in the road. The dwellings would have a comfortable appearance in the street scene of Verulam Road and as viewed from the nearby junction with Walsworth Road and Highbury Road. This is demonstrated on the street scene elevation drawing, showing the proposed dwellings in context with its neighbouring buildings of 28 Verulam Road and the public house.

- 9.3 The development would indeed function well in providing family sized dwellings for the District, with its high-quality design adding to the overall quality of the area, for the lifetime of the development. The scheme is considered to be visually attractive as a result of the good architecture.

- 9.4 The scheme therefore takes the opportunity to enhance the character of the area, compared to the closed off yard area of the site as existing. As such, it is considered that the proposal would cause no harm and would instead enhance the character and appearance of the area. Overall, the design,



form and appearance are in accordance with the provisions of Section 12 of the NPPF and Policies SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan.

10. Heritage assets

- 10.1 The site is situated within the Hitchin Conservation Area, as a designated heritage asset. Secondly, the public house is designated as a 'positive building' in the Hitchin Conservation Area Character Appraisal. Within a Conservation Area, the NPPF requires consideration to be given to the impact of the proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset. Local Plan Policy HE1 also requires applications to justify and detail the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated asset(s).
- 10.2 The proposed development of this semi-detached pair is the same as the approved scheme. This part of the conservation is characterised by two and two half storey development and in some cases three storey. Buildings are sited close to the road frontages. There are no listed or locally listed buildings immediately adjacent the site, however the Hitchin Conservation Area Assessment (2011) identifies several 'positive buildings', including the Radcliffe public house and Nos. 25 - 28 Verulam Road to the north of the site. The Hitchin Article 4 Area lies to the south of the public house and comprises properties along Walsworth Road and Trevor Road. Opposite the site is Convent Close comprising a cul-de-sac of modern residential properties that lies outside of the Conservation Area. As the site is within the Conservation Area, any new development should preserve the significance of the heritage asset and make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 10.3 The application site did contain a detached storage building of utilitarian appearance and of no architectural merit, which is since demolished. The site frontage is defined by a high brick wall and vehicular access into the site.



The proposal to provide a pair of traditionally designed semi-detached dwellings, set close to the road frontage, with simple landscaped boundary treatment, would also be in keeping with the character and grain of development, particularly that of Verulam Road. The provision of roof windows, chimneys and other vernacular treatments as shown on the submitted plans, would be consistent with the Victorian / Edwardian properties north of the site.

- 10.4 Residential plot sizes in this area are, in the main, relatively small given the urban location, which the proposal is in context with. The ridge heights of the dwellings, at 9 metres would be marginally above those dwellings to the north and although the public house has a lower ridge height, the separation distance of some 12.5 metres between the southern flank elevation of the proposed dwellings and the main rear elevation of the public house, is such that the differential in ridge heights would not be striking or incongruous.
- 10.5 The scale and massing of the proposed dwellings is illustrated on the proposed street scene drawing. This demonstrates that the development would be in context and scale with the built form and vernacular of the immediate area. The footprint of the proposed dwellings includes a rear projection inset from the main flank walls. This plan form is a common feature of Victorian dwellings and is similar to the historic dwellings in the locality.
- 10.6 The proposed development is therefore considered to improve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The scheme would provide a far more active frontage, with development that responds to local character than the current high boundary wall. The development would be highly sympathetic to its surroundings and to the Conservation Area as a whole.
- 10.7 To conclude, the proposal is considered to at least preserve, and arguably enhance the character and appearance of the Hitchin Conservation Area, having no harm upon any other designated heritage asset. Therefore, the



scheme does not conflict with any provisions of the Local Plan, or Section 16 of the NPPF.

11. Access, parking and cycle provision

- 11.1 In terms of access, there is an existing access from Verulam Road, which historically served the rear storage yard and outbuilding for the public house.
- 11.2 The scheme details a single wider crossover to be installed to serve both dwellings, with tandem parking arrangement, as approved on the Highway Authority, subject to replanting of the affected tree. This is indeed proposed as a new tree to the pavement as denoted on site plan. This has the benefit of creating a single crossover to the highway instead of needing two crossovers. The existing crossover would be closed off, as previously approved.
- 11.3 In regard to parking provision, the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Parking at New Development, requires that residential schemes provide vehicle parking on the basis of a minimum standard of 1 space per dwelling for one bedroom dwellings and 2 spaces for two bedrooms or more. The scheme provides two parking spaces which complies with the standards for these four bedroom dwellings. The site is clearly a highly sustainable location, being a very short walk or cycle journey from Hitchin town centre. An electric charging point for each dwelling would be installed adjacent the side brick wall, as required by condition of the previous permission. A cycle store for at least three cycles each is provided to the rear garden areas of both dwellings.
- 11.4 In summary, access, vehicle parking and cycle provision are therefore considered to be acceptable for the proposal in this highly sustainable location, causing no harm to the safe and free flow of the local highway network.



12. Landscaping

- 12.1 In regard to landscaping, the new plots would feature shrub planting to the frontage, with lawn and shrubs to the rear gardens, beyond the first sections of patio. Although modest in area, the new landscape planting will provide habitat and encourage ecology to the site, increasing the biodiversity of the site as a result, from the current site which is devoid of planting and biodiversity. The scheme accords with Section 15 of the NPPF in this regard.

13. Waste and recycling

- 13.1 Occupiers would store household waste and recycling bins in the purpose designed enclosed bin stores and present them to Verulam Road on collection days. The storage and collection of waste and recycling is therefore considered to be acceptable for the proposed development.

14. Land contamination and noise

- 14.1 In regard to any potential for land contamination, submission of reports for phase 1 and 2 ground investigation reports (under references 18/02634/DOC and 20/2194/DOC), have been previously approved. A remediation method statement is now submitted for approval, pursuant to this previous condition.
- 14.2 In regard to noise for occupiers, a Noise Assessment was submitted and approved following the 2017 permission and 2022 (also submitted with this current application). The proposed scheme would be carried out with the same recommended and approved measures for sound insulation and noise control measures.



15. Sustainability and Energy Statement

- 15.1 In regard to the Sustainability SPD, the development of the two dwellings will be constructed from cavity wall brickwork construction, which has a proven longevity and low maintenance compared to some modern materials. The brick and block construction will give the dwellings a high thermal mass, which is able to moderate excesses in temperature and store energy received from solar gain. Timber to be used in the construction will be from sustainable and renewable sources.
- 15.2 In addition to this, the dwellings will have a fabric first approach with the building envelope designed with a very good thermal performance which will exceed the requirements for minimum U values set out in the current Building Regulations.
- 15.3 Heat source will include an air source heat pump and solar PV panels are to be considered to the roofs, in order to offset electricity power demand from the national grid. Low flow water fixtures to faucets, showerheads and dual flush toilets will be installed. This will significantly reduce water consumption to less than 100 litres per person per day. Furthermore, electric vehicle charging points will be installed close to the frontages of each dwelling.

16. Affordable housing and planning obligations

- 16.1 The scheme is for two additional dwellings. No affordable housing or planning obligations are required with this level of scheme. The Community Infrastructure Levy is not yet adopted by the Council.



17. Summary

- 17.1 In summary of the proposal, this is the exact same scheme as the current permission granted in 2022. The location of the application site is highly sustainable being close to Hitchin town centre, with its plentiful amenities for everyday needs. The proposal for two residential dwellings on the site, meets the three objectives of sustainable development, being environmental, social and economic, as prescribed by the NPPF.
- 17.2 The proposal comprises well-designed dwellings, which are sensitive to the surrounding built form in their siting, size and design, arguably enhancing this part of the Hitchin Conservation Area. The proposals would have no harm upon nearby occupier living conditions. The site provides on-site parking adequate for the dwelling size and in this central Hitchin location.
- 17.3 Living conditions for proposed occupiers would be of a high standard, both for internal floorspace, outlook and privacy, together with high quality external amenity spaces. The storage of refuse and recycling is also provided and can be adequately collected from the kerbside.
- 17.4 The development would enhance the overall character of the area, through the change to an active frontage of this current closed off site, with high-quality design and materials. The proposal is therefore compliant with the Development Plan and with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 17.5 The development would have no adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and provides two family homes in a sustainable location. Therefore, the development is in accordance with the Framework in terms of achieving high-quality design and sustainable development.
- 17.6 The benefits of the scheme are the provision of two dwellings towards the Council's supply of housing land, together with the social and economic benefits of housing in a highly sustainable location, supporting local



businesses and services. The planning balance is considered to be that there are no adverse impacts of the development, which in no way 'significantly and demonstrably' outweigh the benefits of the development. With this being the case and with the development being the same as the last permission in 2022, the development is again acceptable for the grant of planning permission accordingly.

