

M Scott / Architectural Design

Design and Access Statement

(Planning Submission)

for

Erection of 5 no. new family dwellings

At

Land At London Road, Gosmore, Hertfordshire, SG4 7RE.



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of the Client in support of a full planning application for residential development on land north of The Crescent, St Ippolyts. The proposal:

Provides 5 no. new family dwellings, a new access from London Road, off street parking and amenity spaces.

- 1.2. This submission follows pre-application discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council (ref: 25/02648/PRE), which have informed the evolution of the scheme. The design has been carefully reviewed and amended in response to officer feedback, particularly in relation to layout, landscape impact, neighbour relationships, highways and environmental considerations.
- 1.3. The scheme is for a small-scale residential development that contributes to local housing supply, including a mix of house types and tenures. It responds sensitively to the local context and is designed to integrate with the existing residential grain of the area.

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2. Site Context and Constraints

2.1. The site lies on the eastern edge of Gosmore, south of Hitchin and west of St Ippolyts village, approximately:

- 2 miles from Hitchin town centre
- 2.1 miles from Hitchin railway station
- 2.5 miles from A1(M) Junction 8

There is a bus stop on London Road within a 2-minute walk, providing sustainable transport links to Hitchin and Welwyn Garden City.

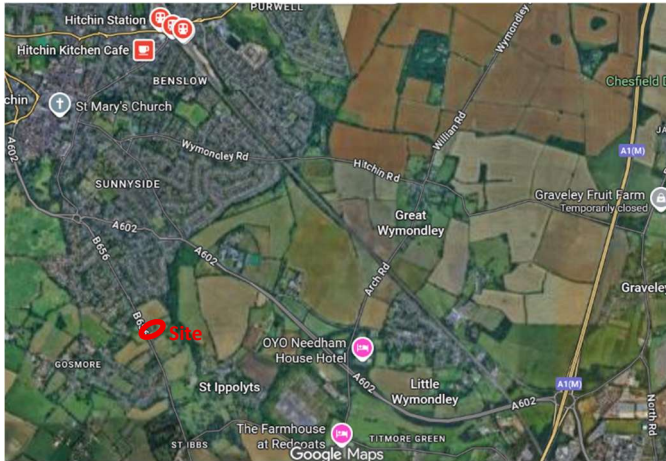


Figure 1 – 2025 Google Maps satellite image of site location

2.2. The site is 0.49 ha and is located to the north of The Crescent and west of London Road. It currently comprises undeveloped grassland bounded by hedgerows and trees. The existing access from London Road already forms part of the established pattern of residential driveways, roads and entrances along this section of the village. It reads naturally as a continuation of the settlement edge, framed by mature hedgerows and trees. The proposal will make use of this existing access point, ensuring minimal change to the current street character and avoiding the introduction of additional openings onto London Road.



Figure 2 – 2025 Google Maps satellite image of approximate application site

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- 2.3. The local character is predominantly two-storey residential, including semi-detached and detached dwellings set back from the road, often with front gardens, driveways, and established hedgerows.



Figure 3 – 2025 Google Maps image looking south-west on The Crescent.

- 2.4. Local amenities include:

- St Ippolyts Stores a 3-minute walk
- St Ippolyts C of E Primary School a 10-minute walk
- Parish Hall (300m)
- Recreation Ground (550m)
- Public House (900m)
- Church (570m)
- Playground (900m)

- 2.5. Site constraints and designations:

- Green Belt: The site is within the designated Green Belt.
- Flood Zone 1: Low risk of flooding.
- Not within a conservation area.
- No designated heritage assets, SSSIs, or AQMA

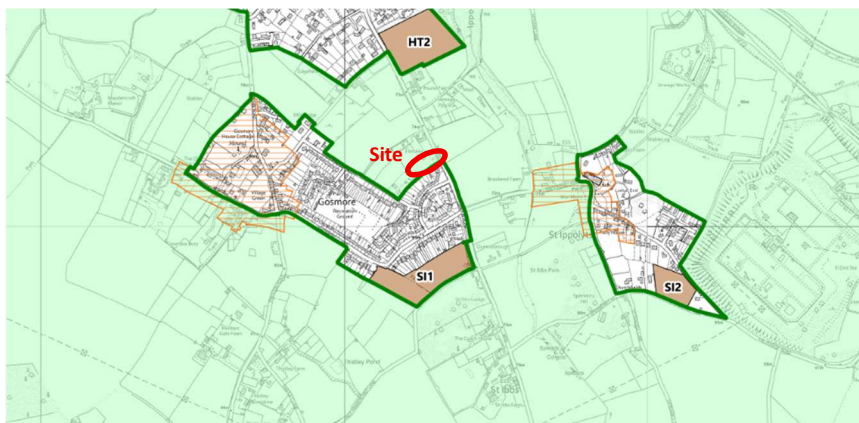


Figure 4 – North Herts Local Plan – Map B

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- 2.6. The only relevant planning history directly related to the application site is a historic planning application dating back to the 1990’s for a bungalow on the site which was refused (planning ref. 95/1064/1). The wider area has some planning history, including:
- Site allocation HT2: Ref: 21/00434/HYA – Hybrid application for residential development of up to 84 dwellings with access from London Road (includes nearby land but not this application site directly).
- 2.7. The proposal has evolved following pre-application discussions with North Hertfordshire District Council (ref: 25/02648/PRE). The scheme has been carefully reviewed and amended to respond to the key issues raised by the Case Officer. The updates are set out in the section below.
- 2.8. Since the pre-application stage, further technical work has also been undertaken to inform the design development, including:
- A full topographical survey, which has informed the layout and levels strategy across the site
 - A detailed arboricultural survey, ensuring the retention and protection of all significant trees
 - A planning noise assessment, addressing the site’s relationship with London Road
 - Ongoing input from a transport consultant to refine access, visibility and parking provision

These assessments have directly influenced the evolved layout and design response.

3. **Response to Pre-Application Feedback**

- 3.1. The table below summarises the principal matters raised during the pre-application process and how these have been addressed within the submitted scheme.

Pre-Application Feedback	Design Response
Impact on character, openness and landscape, including loss of vegetation	The scheme adopts a landscape-led approach, retaining all significant boundary trees and hedgerows, including along London Road. Built form is set within this framework to minimise visual impact. An arboricultural survey has informed the layout, with only limited pruning required including at the site entrance to achieve visibility splays.
Integration with the village and connectivity	The cul-de-sac layout reflects local precedents while maintaining safe pedestrian and cycle access. The proposed shared use road connects to the existing London Road pavement, providing direct access to the established pedestrian crossing near the junction with The Crescent and linking residents to local services and the village network.
Plot 1 relationship with London Road	Plot 1 has been reoriented to front the internal access road, improving its relationship with the development. Direct frontage to London Road was explored but is constrained by an existing substation. The revised position retains boundary vegetation, creates a strong entrance to the site, and reduces noise exposure from London Road.

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Pre-Application Feedback

Design Response

Plot 5 scale, massing and relationship to neighbours

Plot 5 has been significantly revised, including increased plot depth, reduced height to approximately 1½ storeys, and repositioning of the garage adjacent to neighbouring garden boundaries. These changes reduce visual impact and improve the relationship with properties on The Crescent.

Topography and site levels

A full topographical survey has been undertaken. The application includes a street section demonstrating the site gradient. Ridge heights remain below adjacent properties, including the Old Police House and 4 Mill Lane.

Visual impact and wider setting

Retained vegetation and controlled building heights ensure the development remains visually contained. Ridge lines sit below tree heights, reducing prominence in local and longer-distance views.

Impact on setting of St Ippolyts Church

The scale and positioning of development ensures no harm to the setting of the nearby Church of St Ippolyts. The development remains subservient within the landscape and does not interrupt key views.

Noise from London Road

A detailed noise assessment has been undertaken. Mitigation measures include enhanced glazing, ventilation strategies, and acoustic fencing (1.8m high) to Plot 1. The scheme meets BS8233 and WHO guidelines for internal and external amenity.

Highways, access and parking provision

The access has been reviewed by a transport consultant to ensure appropriate visibility splays and safe manoeuvring. Swept path analysis confirms refuse vehicle access. Visitor parking has been increased to 5 spaces, exceeding policy expectations.

Sustainability measures

The scheme includes solar panels on south- and west-facing roofs, air source heat pumps, and high fabric efficiency, aligning with current sustainability guidance.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The layout incorporates on-site biodiversity areas and planting enhancements. Off-site habitat units will be secured to deliver the required 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

- 3.2. Through these amendments, the scheme has been positively refined to respond to the Council's feedback, resulting in a more integrated, landscape-sensitive and policy-compliant development.

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4. Design Layout

4.1. The scheme proposes:

- 5 no. new family dwellings in a cul-de-sac layout
- Vehicular, pedestrian and cyclist access from London Road via the existing site entrance
- Private driveways and front gardens
- Spacious rear gardens
- Two off-street parking spaces per dwelling
- EV charging points, air source heat pumps, and solar panels
- Bin storage located in rear gardens
- Cycle storage located in garages
- Biodiversity-led landscaping with new trees and hedgerows

4.2. The scheme includes a mix of house types:

- Plot 1: 1 x 4-bed 2 storey detached dwelling with double gable and double garage
- Plot 2 and 4: 2 x 3-bed 2 storey detached dwelling with single garage
- Plot 3: 1 x 4-bed 2 storey detached dwelling with double garage
- Plot 5: 1 x 4-bed 1 ¾ storey detached dwelling with double garage



Figure 5 – Proposed Site Plan

4.3. Design and layout:

- The dwellings take inspiration from the local vernacular, incorporating set-backs, pitched roofs, brick and tile palette. The use of traditional materials and balanced proportions reflects the established residential character, while subtle contemporary detailing ensures a high-quality and enduring design.
- The scale and massing are consistent with surrounding properties. Generous separation distances and landscaped frontages echo the rhythm of detached and semi-detached

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dwelling along London Road and The Crescent, allowing the development to integrate seamlessly within its setting.

- The street layout follows local development patterns, providing a clear hierarchy of spaces and maintaining a sense of openness between plots.
- The proposed shared use internal road connects to the existing London Road footway and provides safe access to the established pedestrian crossing near the junction with The Crescent, linking residents to local services and the wider village network.
- The low overall density reflects the edge-of-settlement character of Gosmore, preserving the open, green qualities that define the area.
- Soft landscaping, boundary hedgerows, and well-proportioned front gardens reinforce the area's green and spacious character, helping the scheme sit comfortably within the semi-rural village context.
- This approach ensures that the development appears as a natural extension to the existing residential pattern, rather than an over-intensive form of infill.
-



Figure 6 – Photograph of existing London Road crossing

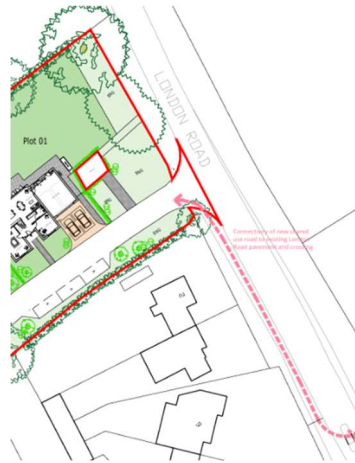


Figure 7 – Connection to existing pavement and crossing

- 4.4. Plot 1 is the largest of the proposed dwellings, with a double gable frontage creating a strong visual marker at the entrance to the site. It is set away from the substation to allow for required access and maintenance, while also enabling soft planting to provide visual separation. This positioning allows for the retention of important boundary vegetation, including two large oak trees, and reduces exposure to traffic noise from London Road.



Figure 8 – Proposed Plot 1 Site Plan



Figure 8 – Proposed Plot 1 Elevations

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- 4.5. The design of Plot 5 has a reduced height of 1¼ storeys, ensuring that its ridge height sits below that of neighbouring properties at 4 Mill Lane and the Old Police House. The layout positions the garage element adjacent to neighbouring garden boundaries on The Crescent, reducing perceived mass and improving the relationship with adjoining properties.



Figure 9 – Proposed Plot 5 Site Plan



Figure 10 – Proposed Plot 5 Elevations

- 4.6. A topographical survey has informed a detailed understanding of site levels, and a street section drawing is included within the application to demonstrate the gradient across the site. Even when accounting for this gradient, the ridge height of Plot 5 remains below that of adjacent properties, including the Old Police House and 4 Mill Lane.



Figure 10 – Proposed Street Section

- 4.7. All dwellings have been designed to provide a high standard of internal accommodation, comfortably exceeding the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). Generous room sizes, logical layouts and ample storage contribute to a high level of residential amenity:
- Layouts include generous, open-plan living areas, cloakrooms, utility rooms and integrated storage, providing practical and adaptable internal arrangements for modern family life.
 - Larger homes also include dedicated study or snug areas, supporting flexible home-working and lifestyle needs.
 - The orientation and window placement maximise natural light and ventilation, creating bright, flexible family homes suitable for long-term occupation.
 - Each dwelling benefits from a spacious private rear garden offering high-quality external amenity space. Plot 1 includes a 1.8m high close-boarded timber boundary fence to the rear garden to assist in mitigating road noise and maintaining appropriate outdoor amenity levels.

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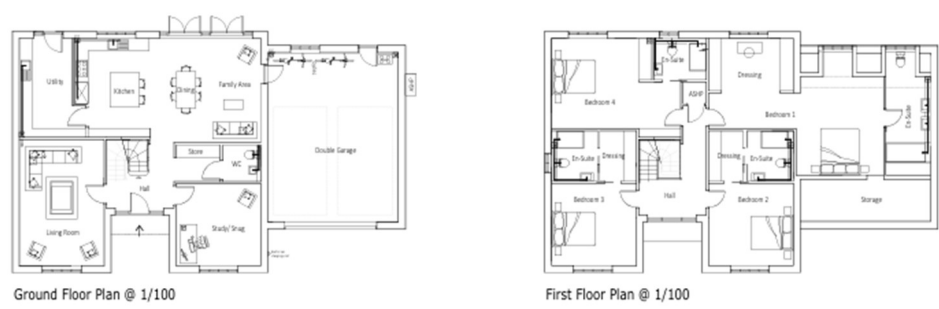


Figure 11 – Proposed Plot 1 Floor Plans

5. **Materials**

5.1. The proposed materials palette has been carefully selected to reflect the local vernacular while delivering a high-quality and durable finish appropriate to the semi-rural context.

Element	Proposed Material	Description / Finish
External Walls	Brick	Old Welwyn red brick
Roof	Slate	Natural slate tiles
Windows	Aluminium	Anthracite grey powder-coated finish
External Doors	Aluminium	Anthracite grey powder-coated finish
Rainwater Goods	Aluminium / uPVC	Black or dark grey finish
Garage Doors	Metal / Composite	To match windows and doors (anthracite finish)
Boundary Treatments	Timber fencing / hedging	Close-boarded timber fencing and native hedgerow planting
Hardstanding / Driveways	Block paving	Permeable block paving
Patios	Paving slabs	Buff paving slabs

5.2. The material palette combines traditional and contemporary elements, ensuring the development responds positively to the character of the area while achieving a cohesive and high-quality architectural appearance.

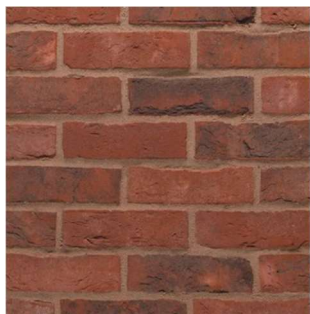


Figure 12 – Old Welwyn red brick

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6. Sustainability

6.1. The development aligns with the Council's Sustainability SPD in delivering energy-efficient homes. Sustainability and energy efficiency are achieved through:

- Predominant south-east orientation to maximise solar gain
- Photovoltaic panels on suitable roof slopes
- Air source heat pumps
- Water efficiency target of 110 litres/person/day
- EV charging points to all dwellings
- Minimised overheating through glazing strategies and shading
- Sustainable drainage via permeable driveways and soakaways

6.2. A strong landscape-led approach has been maintained and reinforced through the design process. The biodiversity and landscape strategy includes retention of all significant boundary trees and vegetation, including mature oak trees. This provides immediate maturity and effective visual screening, reducing visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt, preserving the green edge character, and ensuring the development sits comfortably within the existing landscape framework. Limited pruning may be required at the site entrance to achieve visibility splays and to the rows of conifers.



Figure 13 – Proposed Landscape Site Plan

6.3. On-site Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) areas are integrated within the layout, including:

- New native planting and infill hedgerows along the boundaries, further soften views from adjacent roads and the wider landscape.
- Pollinator-friendly planting to support local biodiversity.
- Installation of bird and bat boxes, as well as invertebrate habitats, to enhance ecological value.

Off-site habitat provision is also proposed to ensure the development delivers the required 10% BNG.

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7. Highways and Parking

7.1. The layout has been refined with input from a Transport Consultant. The scheme provides:

- Two side-by-side or tandem spaces are provided per dwelling in accordance with NHDC parking standards
- Garages exceeding the minimum size of 3m x 7m
- Permeable block paving to driveways
- 5 visitor parking incorporated within street design, exceeding policy expectations in response to local constraints
- Safe and level pedestrian access is provided to all front doors
- The access has been reviewed to ensure required visibility splays are achieved
- Vehicle tracking confirms safe manoeuvring, including refuse vehicles entering and leaving in forward gear

8. Noise

8.1. A detailed noise assessment has been undertaken in response to the site's proximity to London Road. Findings confirm that daytime noise levels are influenced by road traffic and night-time levels reduce significantly.

8.2. Mitigation measures ensure a high standard of internal and external amenity for future residents and include:

- Enhanced glazing and building fabric
- Ventilation strategy to meet BS8233 and WHO guidelines
- 1.8m high acoustic fencing to Plot 1 garden boundary

9. Visual Impact

9.1. The wider visual impact of the development has been carefully considered:

- The retained boundary vegetation ensures the development is well screened in local and longer views.
- Building heights remain below the tree line, reducing visual prominence.

In relation to the setting of the nearby Church of St Ippolyts, the development does not interrupt key views, and the scale and massing remain subservient within the landscape.

10. Relevant Planning Policy

10.1. National Planning Policy Framework (2024):

The proposal aligns with key chapters of the NPPF:

- Chapter 2: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- Chapter 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Chapter 11: Making effective use of land
- Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places

Paragraph 73 supports the delivery of small and medium-sized housing sites within existing settlements. This proposal, while modest in scale, delivers high-quality homes in a sustainable location and contributes positively to local housing need.

10.2. North Hertfordshire Local Plan:

The site lies within the Green Belt, and as such the proposal will need to be assessed against Green Belt policy. A Planning Statement has been prepared by Shrimplin Planning and Development in support of this pre-app which covers planning issues.

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11. Summary and Conclusion

11.1. This proposal represents a carefully considered and evolved scheme for five new family homes that:

- Has been refined in response to pre-application feedback from North Hertfordshire District Council.
- Reflects the local heritage and rural character of Gosmore through the careful use of materials, form and layout.
- Maintains the low-density pattern that defines the area, ensuring the development integrates sensitively with its surroundings.
- Responds positively to the existing residential context, including neighbour relationships, particularly in the case of Plot 5.
- Retains all significant boundary vegetation, minimising visual and landscape impact.
- Enhances biodiversity and green infrastructure through new planting, ensuring the scheme remains visually discreet within its Green Belt setting.
- Incorporates sustainable technologies and low-carbon design measures.
- Provides additional visitor parking and a robust, policy-compliant highway arrangement.
- Addresses noise and environmental considerations through detailed technical assessment and mitigation.
- Delivers much-needed family housing in an accessible and sustainable location.
- Supports the aims of the NPPF and local policy in respect of design quality, climate response and placemaking.

11.2. Overall, the scheme represents a high-quality, landscape-led form of development that has been carefully shaped by site constraints, technical input and constructive engagement with the Local Planning Authority. It achieves a balanced and sensitive response to its edge-of-settlement location, delivering new housing while maintaining the character, appearance and environmental quality of the area. As such, the proposals are considered to form an appropriate and sustainable development and are respectfully submitted for full planning consideration.

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