



Land at Green Lane, Ashwell

Planning Statement

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Prepared on behalf of Osprey Homes | September 24

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	3
2. Site and Surrounding Area	4
3. Pre-application Engagement	6
4. Proposed Development	8
5. Planning Policy Context	10
6. Consideration of Planning Issues	16
7. Planning Benefits	26
8. Conclusion	27

APPENDICIES

Appendix One – Site Location Plan

Appendix Two – Pre-application Response

Appendix Three – Consultation letter and Layout

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Boyer, on behalf of Osprey Homes ('the Applicant') for submission to North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), in support of a Full planning application for residential development at land at Green Lane, Ashwell.

Description of Development

- 1.2 The description of development, as set out on the application form, is as follows:

"Erection of 7 homes, with associated access, landscaping and parking."

Accompanying Documentation

- 1.3 This submission is accompanied by a number of drawings and reports, which demonstrate that the proposals comply with the development plan and other material considerations.
- 1.4 A list of the application drawings and documents which have been submitted in support of this application can be found in the accompanying cover letter.

Structure of the Planning Statement

- 1.5 The Planning Statement deals with the development proposed by the Full planning application in the context of Government advice and the development plan. The relevant policy documents are assessed in Section 6 of this Statement.
- 1.6 This Planning Statement is structure as follows:
- **Section 2** sets out the context for the proposed development, including a description of the site, its surroundings, characteristics, and planning history;
 - **Section 3** sets out an overview of the pre-application advice received from NHDC and Hertfordshire County Council (HCC);
 - **Section 4** provides a description of the proposed development;
 - **Section 5** provides an overview of national and local planning policy and guidance considered relevant to the determination of the planning application;
 - **Section 6** provides an assessment of the proposed development against the identified planning policy framework;
 - **Section 7** sets out the planning benefits of the scheme; and
 - **Section 8** provides a summary of the proposed development and conclusions.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Site Description

- 2.1 Land at Green Lane, Ashwell is located to the north-east of the village of Ashwell in North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC), within the defined settlement boundary. The site is rectangular and has a site area of 0.38 hectares. The site comprises maintained grass and trees forming part of a private rear garden to an existing residential property. The site is relatively level and includes three small sheds. A site location plan can be found at **Appendix One**.
- 2.2 The site is largely enclosed by a significant tree and hedge line, and beyond the western, northern and eastern site boundaries are arable agricultural fields. The southern boundary abuts a residential parcel with the dwelling set back from the boundary, and the eastern boundary runs alongside Green Lane.
- 2.3 The site is currently accessed from Green Lane which connects to Station Road.
- 2.4 The Site falls within Flood Zone 1 which is the lowest risk of flooding, and a review of the Government's flood map for planning service shows it is not in an area at risk of surface water flooding.
- 2.5 The site is not located within a Conservation Area, does not contain any Listed Buildings and does not fall within any environmental designations.
- 2.6 The Garden of Remembrance and Cemetery is found adjacent to the west corner of the site.

Surrounding Area

- 2.7 The site is within walking distance of Ashwell village centre which hosts a number of services and facilities including: medical services (doctor and dentist surgeries) and pharmacy, Ashwell Primary School, nurseries/playgroups, 3 x public houses, cafes, Ashwell Village Hall, Ashwell Village Museum, Ashwell URC Church, village stores and bakery, and recreational play spaces including Ashwell Recreation Playground, Tennis Club and Grass Track and Playing Fields.
- 2.8 A network of footways (the 'twitchells') serves the village which provide links to the village centre and beyond.
- 2.9 The nearest bus stop ('War Memorial') is located at the top of Green Lane, approximately 140 metres south from the site. The number 90 and 91 buses stop here, which provide public transport connections between Letchworth, Baldock, Ashwell & Morden Railway Station and Royston. The buses run Monday – Saturday, providing five services per day.
- 2.10 Ashwell and Morden Rail Station is located 2.8km to the south east of the site. This is accessible by a 12 minute cycle or 7 minute journey on the number 90 or 91 bus. The site is therefore in a sustainable location with easy access to bus and train links.

2.11 Whilst the site does not fall within a Conservation Area, it sits adjacent to the Ashwell Conservation Area. The Conservation Area covers the majority of the central part of the village, and contains numerous listed buildings. There are a number of Listed Buildings within the village with the closest being:

- Tombstone In New Cemetery to Wolverlry Attwood Fordham- Listed Building Grade II. (c. 50 metres away).
- Tombstone In New Cemetery to Mary Morwenno Bolitho, Wife of Philip Le Grand Gribble- Listed Building Grade II. (c. 50 metres away).
- Ashwell War Memorial- Listed Building Grade II. (c.150 metres away).
- 34 Lucas Lane- Listed Building Grade II. (c. 220 metres away).
- Roman villa 1000yds (910m) NE of Ashwell village- Scheduled Monument. (c. 295 metres away)

Planning History

2.12 A review of the Council's website and public access has shown that there is limited planning history of the site, which is set out below in Table 1.

Table 1. Planning History

Application Reference No.	Description	Decision (Date)
86/00093/1	9 detached houses with garages	Appeal dismissed (23.04.1987)
89/00218/1	Single storey rear extension	Approved (21.03.1989)
90/01250/1	First floor rear extension	Approved (08.10.1990)
11/02230/1TCA	Reduce Beech Tree by 25% and shape to balance	No objection (17.10.2011)

2.13 It is also noted that the site which lies on the opposite side of Green Lane has recently been subject to two Outline planning applications, which are set out below:

- 15/00691/1 - Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved, except for access) - residential development comprising of 14 dwellings with associated access off Green Lane. This application was refused on 1 July 2015 and later dismissed at appeal due to its failure to provide a safe and suitable means of access and its severe residual cumulative impact on highway safety.
- 16/02863/1 - Outline Planning Application (all matters reserved, except for access) - residential development comprising of 9 dwelling with associated access off Green Lane. This application was refused on 17 March 2017 and later dismissed at appeal, again due to severe harm to highway safety.

3. PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT

North Hertfordshire District Council

- 3.1 In December 2023, a request for pre-application advice was submitted to NHDC for a Full application for a new development to creation 5 high-quality dwellings with associated access, landscaping and parking.
- 3.2 A response was received in February 2024 and can be found at **Appendix Two**; a summary of the response is set out below.
- The development would be located within the settlement boundary and therefore considered windfall development. Development of the site would be supported in principle;
 - The proposed 5 bed dwelling could be made into smaller units to better follow the Neighbourhood Plan policy which seeks for development to include a significant proportion of one, two and three bed dwellings;
 - The layout and design of the proposal was seen to be positive and reflect the rural character of the village;
 - It was considered that the proposal would not give rise to any materially adverse harm upon the reasonable living conditions and well-being of neighbouring dwellings;
 - The broad details of landscaping appeared to be reasonable; however further details in a comprehensive landscape setting would be required to support any application;
 - Any planning application would need to address the loss of biodiversity; and
 - A detailed Energy Assessment will be required to accompany the application, identifying which sustainable measures will be incorporated into the scheme.
- 3.3 In conclusion, the pre-application advice supported the principle of development of the site. It was encouraged that separate advice was sought from the Highways Authority to ensure the proposed access is acceptable in highways terms.

Hertfordshire County Council (Highways)

- 3.4 On 12 March 2024, a meeting was held with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) Highways, and the project team, to discuss the development proposals and the access.
- 3.5 In the meeting, pedestrian safety was highlighted as a key matter, and it was agreed that a number of pedestrian refuge areas could be implemented on the western side of Green Lane to ensure that the proposals are found acceptable.
- 3.6 A question was raised whether HCC would accept an increased number of homes (from five to seven). It was recommended that, providing the pedestrian refuges were implemented, they would not oppose the increase in dwellings.

Community Engagement

- 3.7 Community engagement was undertaken in the form of a letter and accompanying layout plan. The letter set out the background to the site and what was proposed. This can be seen in **Appendix Three**.
- 3.8 The letter was sent to 28 neighbours (residents on Green Lane including The Maltings) and to the Parish Council. A deadline of 31 July was originally proposed; this was extended to 9 August at the request of a number of residents.
- 3.9 5 responses were received. A summary of the responses is set out below:
- 1 response received set out that rights of access to Green Lane would not be granted by the neighbours. This is a legal issue, with the application serving notice on the necessary site owners and does not affect the grant of planning permission.
 - 1 response received expressed concern regarding how any additional traffic would affect their property. At the neighbours request a meeting was held with them and a representative of Osprey Homes on 7 August 2024 to discuss the proposals in further detail.
 - 3 response received suggesting comments will be made once the application has been formally submitted.
- 3.10 Whilst limited responses have been received so far, the applicant considers the scheme as submitted is of a high-quality design and character suitable for this location and are keen to progress a scheme which provides significant benefits for the village.

4. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 This Full planning application seeks planning permission for

“Erection of 7 homes, with associated access, landscaping and parking”

4.2 The proposed development is explained in detail in the Design and Access Statement, however the key elements of the proposals are summarised below.

4.3 The housing mix for the development is set out in Table 2:

Table 2. Proposed housing mix

Plot	Bedrooms	Floor area (sq.m.)
1	3	92
2	3	92
3	4	158
4	4	181.4
5	3	88.4
6	2	76.2
7	2	76.2

4.4 Each property would benefit from individual private gardens and would be significantly set back from Green Lane with a landscape buffer running along the road.

4.5 All homes would comply with Nationally Described Space Standards, benefit from an air source heat pump and comply or exceed the Building Regulations part L requirements.

4.6 Each home would be two storeys, set back within the plot, and of a traditional high-quality design. Each home will be of a unique design, which together will create a cohesive and characterful development, and will be in keeping with the local character and vernacular. Materials to be used include red and buff brickwork, painted render, tile hanging and plain tiled or slated roofs.

4.7 Each home will have a minimum of two designated parking spaces on their plot in the form of driveways and garages with the two larger homes comprising three spaces. The size of each parking space is in accordance with standards set out in policy. Three unallocated/visitor spaces are also provided.

4.8 Safe and secure cycle parking is provided either in garages, rear gardens or a dedicated store.

4.9 EV charging points are provided for each home.

4.10 Superfast broadband will be provided to each of the dwellings.

4.11 The development will be accessed from Green Lane with a new access proposed. A pedestrian link to Green Lane is also proposed on the south eastern boundary of the site.

- 4.12 To ensure that the access is safe and acceptable in highway terms, two pedestrian refuges are proposed to ensure pedestrians feel safe walking down Green Lane to access the rest of the village. Two passing bays will be provided to allow for vehicles meeting on the road without causing issues. The bays have been designed to allow for a refuge vehicle to pass a larger car. In addition, a turning head will be provided at the site entrance, allowing for larger vehicles to be able to turn on the lane, improving the current situation.
- 4.13 The majority of boundary trees are to be retained with substantial new planting around the boundaries to ensure the development is set within a high-quality landscape setting.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 This section outlines the relevant planning policy framework, against which the proposed development has been prepared and against which it should be determined.

The Development Plan

- 5.2 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far material to the application, and to any other material considerations.
- 5.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that regard is to be had to the Development Plan and that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.4 The Development Plan which is relevant to this application comprises the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.
- 5.5 The site is located within Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan area, thus the Made Neighbourhood Plan for Aswell also constitutes the Development Plan for this application.
- 5.6 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) and various Supplementary Planning Documents are also material considerations.

Local Planning Policy

North Hertfordshire Local Plan

- 5.7 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 was adopted in November 2022. The Local Plan sets out how and where new homes, jobs and infrastructure will be delivered in the district.
- 5.8 The relevant local planning policies against which this planning application should be determined are summarised below.
- 5.9 *Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire* states that the Council will:
- Maintain the role of key settlements as the main focus for housing, employment and development of previously developed land where possible;
 - Ensure the long-term viability of the District's villages by supporting growth which provides opportunities for new and existing residents;
 - Grant planning permission for proposals which deliver an appropriate mix of homes, create high-quality developments, protect necessary infrastructure; protect key elements of North Hertfordshire's environment; and secure any necessary mitigation measures that reduce the impact of development; and
 - Support neighbourhood plans and other local planning initiatives.

- 5.10 *Policy SP2 Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution* sets out that the plan makes provision for at least 13,000 new homes. Furthermore, the policy identifies Ashwell as a Category A village, in which general development will be allowed within the defined settlement boundaries.
- 5.11 *Policy SP7 Infrastructure Requirements and Developer Contributions* requires that development proposals make provision for infrastructure that is necessary as a result of the proposals, this includes on-site and/or off-site improvements and maintenance and/or operating costs.
- 5.12 *Policy SP8 Housing* sets out how the Council will meet their housing needs. At point f) the policy supports a range of housing tenures, with a broadly even split between smaller and larger properties.
- 5.13 *Policy SP9 Design and Sustainability* states that the Council will support new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context. Proposals will adopt the Government's additional technical standards for the size of new homes, water efficiency, and accessibility (in specified circumstances).
- 5.14 *Policy T1 Assessment of Transport Matters* supports planning permissions which do not lead to highway safety problems; mechanisms to secure sustainable transport measures or improvements to existing highway network are secured; and suitable transport statements and supporting documents are provided where required.
- 5.15 *Policy T2 Parking* requires that parking for residential development is provided in accordance with the standards as set out in Appendix 4 of the Plan. These standards are summarised in Table 3. It should be noted that the standards do not specify a requirement for homes of more than 3 bedrooms.

Table 3. Car Parking Standards (Use Class C3)

Number of Bedrooms	Car Parking Standard	Minimum Cycle Parking Standard	Visitor / Unallocated
2-3	2 spaces per dwelling	1 secure covered space per dwelling	Between 0.25 and 0.75 spaces per dwelling (0.75 if no garages)

- 5.16 *Policy D1 Sustainable Design* sets out design criteria which all proposals must follow. The criteria include to respond positively to the site's local context, and meet or exceed the nationally described space standards.
- 5.17 *Policy D3 Protecting Living Conditions* states that planning permission will be granted for proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.

- 5.18 *Policy NE4 Biodiversity and Geological Sites* requires proposals to appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity, in accordance with the hierarchy and status of designations.
- 5.19 *Policy NE8 Sustainable Drainage Systems* states that planning permission will be granted where the most appropriate sustainable drainage solutions are used, which aims to mimic the natural drainage patterns and follow the SuDS hierarchy.

Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan

- 5.20 The Neighbourhood Plan for Ashwell was 'Made' in April 2022, and now forms part of the Development Plan for NHDC.
- 5.21 Below is a summary of the development policies in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan which are relevant to this application:
- 5.22 *Policy ASH1 Location of Development* focuses future development within the extended settlement boundary, where it complies with all relevant policies in the Development Plan and NPPF.
- 5.23 *Policy ASH2 Housing Mix* sets out the housing mix which is supported by the Plan. The policy supports proposals which provide a significant proportion of one, two and three bedrooms.
- 5.24 *Policy ASH3 Character of Development* states that the design of new development should demonstrate how it has taken the local context into account. Developments should make a positive contribution to the village and enhance the Conservation Area where possible.
- 5.25 *Policy ASH4 Design of Development* sets out design criteria which new development must show that they have responded positively to, including:
- Following the National Design Guide and principles of Building for a Healthy Life;
 - Adhere to space and access standards in Technical Housing Standards, Building Regulations (Part M) and the Hertfordshire Sustainable Design Toolkit;
 - Following the guidance in the Ashwell Village Design Statement; and
 - Traffic generation and parking does not adversely affect vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- 5.26 *Policy ASH6 Environmentally Sustainable Design* supports developments which seek to maximise design principles for energy efficiency and sustainability.
- 5.27 *Policy ASH9 Natural Landscape and Rural Character* at point B(iii) ensures that adequate provision for trees and hedgerows during all phases of development should be demonstrated.
- 5.28 *Policy ASH13 Broadband Provision* requires all new residential properties to be served by superfast broadband connection.

- 5.29 *Policy ASH19 Accessible Paths in the Village and Rural Areas* at point B requires that as appropriate to their scale, nature, and location, developments should ensure safe pedestrian access for all.
- 5.30 *Policy ASH20 Residential and Public Car Parking* states that proposals which add new dwellings should include the provision of adequate, sensitively designed off-street parking in accordance with the Council's adopted standards and guidance. The design of parking should be of sustainable construction.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- 5.31 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) that are relevant to this application include:
- Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD – November 2011
 - Design SPD – July 2011
- 5.32 Vehicle Parking at New Developments sets out guidance for the design and layout of parking spaces, cycle parking and electric vehicle infrastructure. Whilst the now adopted Local Plan sets out the parking standards required from each development, the SPD provides more information on deviations from the standards, and design of the parking spaces.
- 5.33 The Design SPD contains advice for developers and applicants when submitting planning applications. Local guidance and design principles are also provided for towns and villages, such as Ashwell, and it contains a checklist to ensure that the key urban design principles have been considered for proposals.

Material Considerations

The National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- 5.34 In the determination of this planning application, it is considered that the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 (NPPF) constitutes a material consideration.
- 5.35 Within the NPPF there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development which is central to the Government's approach to the planning system and the emphasis on the need to plan positively for appropriate new development.
- 5.36 Throughout the NPPF, the Government outlines that it is necessary to promote sustainable development with regard to three overarching objectives which are: economic, social, and environmental considerations. These three objectives are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways to deliver sustainable development.
- 5.37 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 states that “(6) *if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise*”. This is repeated in sections 11 and 47 of the NPPF which advises that decision making should be in accordance with an up-to-date development plan without delay unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 5.38 Planning conditions and obligations are discussed in paragraphs 55-58 of the NPPF. Local authorities have the ability to consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning obligations. In instances where they are considered necessary, they should be kept to a minimum and only be imposed where they are necessary and considered relevant to planning and the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.
- 5.39 Chapter 5 of the NPPF refers to significantly boosting the supply of homes. Paragraph 69 c) states that local planning authorities should support the development of windfall sites through policies and decisions, giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.
- 5.40 Chapter 8 promotes healthy, inclusive and safe communities through achieving places that are safe and accessible and which enables and support healthy lifestyles, as outlined in paragraph 92.
- 5.41 Chapter 9 promotes sustainable transport. Paragraph 110 requires that development applications should ensure they have taken appropriate opportunities to promote sustainable transport modes, safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users, design of transport elements is in line with adopted standards, and that any significant impacts on the transport network can be mitigated.
- 5.42 Chapter 11 promotes an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes. Paragraph 124 d) states that decisions should support the development of under-utilised land.
- 5.43 Chapter 12 is about achieving well-designed places, and decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, sympathetic to the local character and history, establishes a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site, and create safe, inclusive and accessible places.

Planning Policy Guidance

- 5.44 The PPG constitutes a set of regularly updated online guidance, provided by the Government to support effective plan-making and decision-taking. Topics which are considered relevant to the determination of this application are:
- Effective use of land
 - Healthy and safe communities
 - Housing supply and delivery
 - Travel Plans, Transport Assessments and Statements
 - Biodiversity Net Gain
- 5.45 Since 2 April 2024 there is a national requirement for all development to deliver a 10% net gain of biodiversity.

Other Material Considerations

- 5.46 The Ashwell Village Design Statement was originally created in 2000, but later updated in 2018 as the Neighbourhood Plan was drafted. The statement sets out guidelines to be used by residents or developers to help produce designs for new developments. The Statement seeks to ensure that new developments are of a high standard of design and use appropriate materials, ensuring that they make a positive contribution to the setting and appearance of the village.
- 5.47 This Statement has been taken into account in the design/layout of the proposal.

Five Year Housing Land Supply

- 5.48 The need to plan for and provide adequate land for housing is underpinned by the Government's strategy housing policy objectives. It is therefore a policy requirement and an important material consideration in the determination of this application, in the context of North Hertfordshire as a whole.
- 5.49 North Hertfordshire's latest housing land supply position is located in their position paper entitled 'Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update strategy' dated May 2024 and confirms they are able only to identify a 3.9 year supply. This falls significantly below their required amount of housing.

6. CONSIDERATION OF PLANNING ISSUES

- 6.1 This section provides an assessment of the proposed development against the relevant planning policy framework, and other material considerations.
- 6.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 sets out a requirement that planning applications are to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

Principle of Residential Development

- 6.3 This application seeks Full planning permission for the erection of 7 high quality homes within a landscape setting with a new access from Green Lane.
- 6.4 The Local Plan identifies Ashwell as a Category A village. These are villages which contain primary schools, have defined boundaries (within which development will be allowed) and have sites allocated to meet the District's overall housing requirement. Policy SP2 in the Local Plan allows for general development within the defined settlement boundaries.
- 6.5 The adoption of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan extended the defined settlement boundary for Ashwell to include the application site. Policy ASH1 of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan focuses development within the extended settlement boundary, where it complies with all relevant policies in the development plan and the NPPF.
- 6.6 The NPPF at paragraph 124 d) promotes and supports the development of under-utilised land. The site for this application currently comprises the garden to No.7 Green Lane. The size of the garden is unproportionate to the rest of the village, and far beyond any private amenity space requirements. The proposals for 7 dwellings on the site would preserve the residential use of this area, and provide a much more efficient use of the land with an appropriate mix of homes, in accordance with the housing needs of the village.
- 6.7 Land at Green Lane, and the village of Ashwell is considered an appropriate location for growth due to the existing village amenities, and the sustainable modes of transport which are available, such as the close distance to the bus stops on Station Road and Ashwell and Morden train station, which is accessible by sustainable means.
- 6.8 As noted in Section 5, North Hertfordshire are able to demonstrate only a 3.9 year housing supply. The provision of 7 high quality homes in a highly sustainable location would therefore assist in the Council's supply of housing. In accordance with the NPPF paragraph 14, there are no impacts which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the significant benefits providing additional homes to the District's supply of housing
- 6.9 This is a small sized windfall site within the settlement boundary and the proposals can be delivered immediately once planning permission has been granted. It is considered that the principle of development is acceptable on this site, subject to other material considerations that are covered below.

Housing Strategy

Housing Mix

- 6.10 Policy ASH2 in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan states that housing development should contribute towards meeting the existing and future housing needs of the neighbourhood area. The policy supports development proposals which include a significant proportion of one, two, and three-bedroomed properties. As the proposal is only for 7 dwellings, affordable housing is not required to be provided.
- 6.11 Following the advice received at pre-application stage from NHDC and HCC, the proposal has evolved to better align with policy ASH2. Instead of providing two 5-bedroom properties, plot 5 has changed to provide two 2-bedroom and one 3-bedroom homes. The proposed housing mix is set out in Table 4:

Table 4. Proposed housing mix

Plot	Bedrooms
1	3
2	3
3	4
4	4
5	3
6	2
7	2

- 6.12 This housing mix better reflects the housing needs of Ashwell, as set out in their Neighbourhood Plan. The supporting text of policy ASH2 makes it clear that the current need is to provide homes for young people people/families and places where older people can “right-size”. A large majority of the homes provided are smaller properties, which are suited for both of these age groups.
- 6.13 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) Part 2 Update for North Herts District and Stevenage Borough Councils (November 2023) demonstrates that with market housing in North Herts there is highest demand for 3 bedroomed properties (48%), followed by 4+ bedrooms (30%) and 2 bedrooms (15%). Table 5 sets out the total market housing need in NHDC as set out in the 2023 SHMA update.

Table 5. Overall need for Market Housing in North Herts 2022-2031 (North Herts and Stevenage Borough Councils SHMA Part 2 Update 2023)

Bedrooms	Amount	Percentage
1	335	7%
2	677	15%
3	2,191	48%
4+	1,343	30%
Total	4,546	100%

- 6.14 The proposed development roughly follows the SHMA figures, with 42% 3-bedroomed properties, 29% 4+ bedroomed properties, and 29% 2 bedroomed properties. The housing mix proposed is therefore in line with the overall need for market dwellings in North Herts Borough Council, whilst actively seeking to comply with the requirements of the Neighbourhood Plan
- 6.15 It is considered that the proposed mix makes the most efficient use of the land in this location, on the edge of the settlement, providing properties which can meet the existing and future housing needs of the neighbourhood area, whilst ensuring that the dwellings are appropriately sized and designed for the location.

Density

- 6.16 The density of the scheme has been carefully considered with both the immediate and wider village in mind. Seven dwellings will be provided on the site which is 0.38 hectares. Although this density (23 dwellings per hectare) is higher than the immediate surrounding area, it is not considered out of keeping with the rest of Ashwell village. The proposed density ensures that the scheme comprises an efficient use of land.

Quality of Residential Provision

- 6.17 Policies D1 and ASH4 require that all dwellings meet the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). Table 6 sets out each house and how they meet or exceed the gross internal area required by the NDSS.

Table 6. NDSS requirements and proposed GIA

Plot	Bedroom / No. People	NDSS requirement	GIA Proposed
1	3B / 4P	84 sq.m	92 sq.m.
2	3B / 4P	84 sq.m	92 sq.m.
3	4B / 5P	97 sq.m	158 sq.m.
4	4B / 5P	97 sq.m	181.4 sq.m.
5	3B / 4P	84 sq.m	88.4 sq.m.
6	2B / 3P	70 sq.m	76.2 sq.m.
7	2B / 3P	70 sq.m	76.2sq.m.

- 6.18 The scheme is compliant with the NDSS and is therefore also in line with policies D1 and ASH4, allowing for ample space for the future occupiers of the development.

Accessibility

- 6.19 Local Plan Policy HS5 requires that 50% of all dwellings should be built to the M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable standard. In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan Policy requires that developments are in line with the access standards in Technical Housing Standards and Building Regulations (Part M).

- 6.20 All proposed 7 homes would comply with M4(2) requirements, which exceeds the requirements of Policy HS5.

Design and Layout

- 6.21 Local Plan Policy D1 states that the design of new buildings should respond positively to the local context of the site and take all reasonable opportunities to retain existing vegetation and propose appropriate planting and future proof for changes in technology and lifestyle. Policy D1 also sets out that all residential developments must meet or exceed the nationally described space standards. Equally, Policy SP9 supports new developments which are well designed, located, and responds positively to local context.
- 6.22 Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policy ASH4 require development to demonstrate a high-quality of design which responds and integrates well with their surroundings.
- 6.23 The design of the development has incorporated a traditional design and bespoke design features. The dwellings have been carefully and sympathetically designed to reflect the character of the village, and are utilising a range of traditional materials including buff brick, weatherboarding, clay tiled and natural slate roofs as well as design features such as bay windows, simple porches, detailed fascias and chimneys. The materials proposed have been taken from those suggested in the Ashwell Village Design Statement. Each dwelling would be unique in its design and form, with bespoke features which reflect the styles and materials found elsewhere in the village, in line with points (iv) and (v) of policy ASH4.
- 6.24 The dwellings are set back within the plot, maintaining the current tree and hedgerow belt along the frontage of Green Lane, ensuring that the setting of this area is retained. The boundaries of each of the plots have also been carefully considered to ensure they are in keeping with the construction style of the immediate surroundings, and as such estate fencing and native hedging is proposed to keep the rural feel of the area, in accordance with policy D1.
- 6.25 The site sits outside of the area covered within the Conservation and Character Areas in Ashwell Village, shown in the Neighbourhood Plan. Nevertheless, Policy ASH3 requires development proposals to “conserve and enhance the Conservation Area, the Character Areas V1 to V5 [...] and key views and assets identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement 2019”. The site sits adjacent to ‘V2 Eastern Area’ character area, which has been acknowledged in the design of the proposed development, through the proposed layout of the homes being set back from the road and the retention of trees and hedgerows.
- 6.26 In terms of residential amenity, the homes have been designed appropriately to avoid any overlooking of private spaces. The Design SDP requires private dwellings to have adequate space to meet the needs of the occupants and encourages a range of garden sizes. Each home and its private outdoor space has been carefully designed to meet those needs.
- 6.27 It is therefore considered that the proposals meet the requirements of Local Plan Policies SP9 and D1, Neighbourhood Plan policies ASH3 and ASH4, the Design SPD and Ashwell Village Design Statement.

Access and Parking

- 6.28 Local Plan Policy T1 states that planning permission will be granted provided that:
- development will not lead to highway safety problems;
 - mechanisms to secure any necessary sustainable transport measures are secured;
 - suitable transport statements are provided; and
 - it is demonstrated how sustainable modes of transport are integrated in the development.
- Policy T2 and Appendix 4 of the Local Plan sets out the Parking Standards for new developments.
- 6.29 Policy ASH19 (b) in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan seeks to ensure that new developments provide pedestrian access for all (as appropriate to the scale of development). Policy ASH20 (c) requires all new parking to be of sustainable construction.

Highways Impact

- 6.30 The site will be accessed via a new single access off Green Lane, this access will be slightly to the north of the existing gated access to the site.
- 6.31 To support the access, 2.4m x 25m visibility splays will be provided which are suitable for 20mph speed.
- 6.32 A package of Green Lane improvements are proposed to ensure the development is acceptable in highway terms. These improvements include:
- Localised widening of Green Lane in the vicinity of the access to allow a car and refuse/emergency vehicle to pass;
 - Localised widening of Green Lane toward southern end of the site frontage to allow a car and refuse/emergency vehicle to pass;
 - Provision of 2 pedestrian refuge areas; and
 - Turning head provided at the access for large refuse vehicles (there is currently no turning provision on Green Lane).
- 6.33 There have been two unsuccessful planning applications for a separate site on the opposite side of Green Lane. Both were for different and larger schemes and had transport issues raised. The first scheme included reasons for refusal relating to the inadequate width of Green Lane for two-way traffic and the narrow width of Green Lane which is unable to accommodate large vehicles.
- 6.34 The second scheme raised the same concerns and raised safety concerns relating to vehicles parking near the Green Lane, Station Road T-junction.
- 6.35 The proposed Green Lane improvements, as set out above, overcome the highway concerns raised through the applications for the site on the other side of Green Lane. To ensure

concerns are overcome, pre-application engagement was undertaken with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), as discussed in **Section 3**.

- 6.36 The Transport Statement clearly demonstrates that the site is located within a sustainable development, with the site a 750m walk from the centre of Ashwell village. Furthermore, the Transport Statement sets out the distance to a number of services and facilities, including retail, health, leisure and education.
- 6.37 Bus stops are located on either side of Station Road, within a 140m and 250m walk. The bus stops, combined with the location of Ashwell and Morden Station which is 2.8km away (5 minute journey on the bus) ensure that Land at Green Lane is a sustainable location which can prioritise sustainable travel modes and walking.

Vehicle Movement

- 6.38 In order to estimate proposed traffic generation, trip rates have been derived from the TRICS database. This demonstrates that there would be 3 two-way movements in both peak hours in the day. This would cause negligible impact on the highway network.

Parking

- 6.39 Parking arrangements are compliant with the requirements set out in the Local Plan and Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD.
- 6.40 With regards to car parking, the SPD requires a minimum of 2 spaces per house. Five of the proposed homes have 2 spaces and two homes have 3 spaces. Parking is provided in a mixture of garage and driveway provision. In addition there are 2 visitor spaces proposed.
- 6.41 With regards to cycle parking, the SPD states that no cycle parking is required if a house has a garage or has a secure curtilage area for the bike. Five of the homes (plots 1-5) have garages and cycle storage is provided within the garages; the cycle store for plot 7 would be within a secure store in the back garden and plot 6 would have secure storage at the northern end of the new access road.
- 6.42 It has been demonstrated that the proposals will not have an adverse highway impact. The proposals improve the existing layout of Green Lane, and provide safe access to the site for all modes of transportation, including pedestrian and cyclists. The proposed development is therefore in line with policies T1 and T2 of the Local Plan, ASH19 and ASH20 of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan and the Hertfordshire Vehicle Parking SPD.

Ecology

- 6.43 Local Plan Policy NE4 states that planning permission will only be granted where development proposals appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity. A measurable net gain in biodiversity should be delivered.
- 6.44 An Ecological Appraisal has been prepared to accompany this application.
- 6.45 The Ecological Appraisal found that there are no statutory or non-statutory designated areas that are located within or adjacent to the site. The Ashwell Springs Site of Special Scientific

Interest (SSSI) at its closest point is 370 metres from the site and the Therfield Heath SSSI is c. 4.5km away, meaning that the site is within the Impact Risk Zone of the SSSI. In such circumstances, it is likely that Natural England will be consulted upon.

- 6.46 The majority of the site comprises of well managed modified grassland and associated garden habitats. The UK Habitat Classification Survey has confirmed that the majority of the site is of limited nature conservation interest.
- 6.47 There is a small area of semi-mature broadleaved woodland on the eastern boundary of the site and is alone considered to have low local interest; however it comprises part of a larger network of trees, hedgerows and scrub which together have features of up to moderate local nature conservation value. The proposals will retain as much of this woodland as possible.
- 6.48 The Ecological Appraisal concludes that there is limited potential for dormouse, otter and water vole and great crested newts. Whilst there is some opportunity for nesting and/or foraging of birds, there is similar habitat abundant in the wider area and the site is unlikely to support an exceptional assemblage in a local context.
- 6.49 Bat, badger and reptile surveys were undertaken in November 2023 with the reptile survey in June 2024.
- 6.50 The Phase 1 bat roost scoping survey identified that there are only very low or negligible potential for roosting bats within the site. The open areas of species rich grassland and bare ground provide limited opportunities for bats in isolation, but opportunities for foraging and commuting bats are enhanced by the adjacent treelines, woodlands edges and hedgerows along the site boundaries. There are 2 small buildings to be removed to allow for the development, both of which have very low potential for supporting roosting bats.
- 6.51 The badger survey found there were no badger setts recorded within or adjacent to the site. However, badgers are mobile creatures and it is therefore recommended that the site is resurveyed prior to commencement of development to ensure the status of badgers has not changed.
- 6.52 The reptile survey recorded no reptiles on the site and therefore concluded that the site does not support reptiles on a regular basis. No mitigation specific to reptiles is thus required to accommodate the proposed development. The report recommends that the need for mitigation is reviewed prior to commencement of development, and that consideration to the inclusion of suitable reptile habitat can be included in the proposed landscaping scheme.
- 6.53 The Ecological Appraisal provides a number of recommended measures for habitat retention, protection, creation and enhancement and concludes that the proposed development would not likely result in the reduction of ecological interest of the site or its surroundings.
- 6.54 A 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is required on the site. A Biodiversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken, based upon the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metrix Calculation Tool. The calculations demonstrate that the proposals would result in a loss in

biodiversity units for broad habitats of -0.3809 units. To achieve the 10% net gain, an offset of 0.6165 biodiversity units is required.

- 6.55 With regards to linear habitats, the proposals result in a 5.0405 unit gain which represents a 111.52% increase compared to the baseline value.
- 6.56 In light of the loss of biodiversity broad habitats, during the course of the application, Osprey Homes will engage with NHDC ecology team to discuss whether there is a strategic scheme seeking contributions to offset the biodiversity loss.

Landscape and Trees

- 6.57 Local Plan Policy NE2 supports planning proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area or landscape character area. Proposals should be designed to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features and consider the long-term management and maintenance of the features. Neighbourhood Plan Policy ASH9 at point Biii seeks to ensure that development provides adequate protection for trees and hedgerows throughout all stages of development. Trees of Arboricultural significance should only be removed if deceased, and replaced with a tree of similar potential size.
- 6.58 An Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) has been prepared by Bernie Harverson and is submitted in support of the application. The AMS includes a Tree Survey which sets out the types of trees on the site, their condition and the required works.
- 6.59 The tree survey has identified that the site hosts a variety of tree species including, but not limited to, Maple, Hawthorn, Ash, Holly, and Elder. These trees vary in size and quality, and the proposed development has sought to retain and protect these trees where possible. 4 trees and 3 groups of trees have been identified to be of poor quality, and would therefore need to be removed regardless of the development proposals. In addition, 4 trees and 5 groups of trees are proposed to be removed to facilitate the development.
- 6.60 The design of the development has carefully considered the existing trees on the site and has retained as many as possible, ensuring that they remain a focal feature of the site, especially on the frontage to Green Lane. Where trees are required to be removed, additional tree planting is proposed to mitigate any detrimental impact of the development.
- 6.61 A methodology for the protection of the trees to be retained has been produced. The AMS concludes that provided that the methodology is followed, there would not be any detrimental impact to the ongoing health and stability or visual amenity of the trees to be retained.
- 6.62 A Landscape layout supports the planning application and demonstrates the extent of new proposed landscaping. Along the site boundaries, a new mixed native hedgerow is proposed to the north and southern boundaries with native shrubs used to fill existing gaps along the front boundary along Green Lane. New trees are proposed along the front boundary (to fill in gaps) and southern boundary and within some rear gardens. There is substantial existing/proposed planting along the front boundary of the site (within the site) which will help to retain the rural and verdant character of the site.

Drainage

- 6.63 Local Plan Policy NE8 states that planning permission will be granted where the most appropriate sustainable drainage solutions are used, which aims to mimic the natural drainage patterns and follow the SuDS hierarchy.
- 6.64 The site lies completely within flood zone 1 and is therefore not considered to be at risk from flooding from rivers or the sea. Furthermore, the site has no recorded history of surface water flooding.
- 6.65 A surface water and foul drainage strategy accompanies this application. With regards to surface water runoff, permeable paving will be used on the access road and parking spaces to allow surface water runoff to drain through into the ground. Permeable construction techniques will be used to remove any contaminants before the water is discharged into the ground. Surface water runoff from roofs will be collected and discharged via underground pipes to catchpit manholes, and then onto soakaways in rear gardens.
- 6.66 The soakaways are designed to be linked to allow them to take advantage of best rates of infiltration.
- 6.67 Foul drainage from the development will be collected together and pumped to existing AWA (Anglian Water) manhole via a new private pump station which is to be located on site.
- 6.68 The drainage proposals therefore comply with Policy NE8.

Energy and Sustainability

- 6.69 Policy D1 in the Local Plan requires development proposals to take all reasonable opportunities to reduce energy consumption and waste (point iii). Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policy ASH6 supports development proposals which seek to maximise design principles for energy efficiency and sustainability.
- 6.70 An Energy Statement has been prepared by Abbey Consultants and is submitted in support of the application. The statement addresses adopted policies and demonstrates how the proposed buildings comply with the current Building Regulations Part L 2021.
- 6.71 Through the integration of a range of passive and active design and energy efficiency measures through out the buildings, the development will reduce regulated CO2 emissions. The building fabric standards have sought to go beyond what is required by Building Regulations part L and energy efficiency measures have allowed the development to go beyond the minimum standards of Target Fabric Energy Efficiency.
- 6.72 Additional measures have been employed to achieve an improvement over the Target Emission Rates. These include individual air source heat pumps to be installed, providing a low carbon energy solution to meet the space heating and hot water demands. In addition, the buildings have been design and situated to maximise solar heat gains.
- 6.73 The Energy Statement concludes that these measures lead to a combined saving of 5.84 tonnes of CO2 per year, compared to the Building Regulations Part L baseline. In total, this

represents a 71% betterment beyond what is required by the Building Regulations, and in line with Policy D1 of the Local Plan and ASH6 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

7. PLANNING BENEFITS

- 7.1 The proposed development reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the NPPF and provides planning gains across all three of the overarching objectives of sustainable development; economic objective; social objective; and environmental objective. In accordance with paragraph 8 of the NPPF, the proposed development of the Site will secure net gains across each of the three sustainable development objectives as follows:
- 7.2 **Economic gains:** the development would made a significant contribution to NHDC's ongoing obligation to deliver housing and facilitate development within the wider housing market area. The development would also bring economic benefits to the local area both during, and after, construction. Not only would the proposed development provide new residential dwellings, which would provide residential accommodation for workers within the local economy, but the construction of the dwellings themselves would create jobs. The proposed development would also bring additional residents to the area and with them increased demand for local goods and services, securing their future and bringing a boost to the local economy.
- 7.3 **Social gains:** delivery of much needed housing in the local area through the provision of a high-quality scheme to benefit existing and future residents in the local area. An appropriate mix of housing is proposed in accordance with the needs set out in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.4 **Environmental gains:** the development would provide an efficient use of land within the settlement boundary without causing any ecological or arboricultural harm. Improvements would be made to Green Lane for both pedestrians and vehicle users. In accordance with policy, EV charging points would be provided for each home and a 10% biodiversity net gain would be achieved.

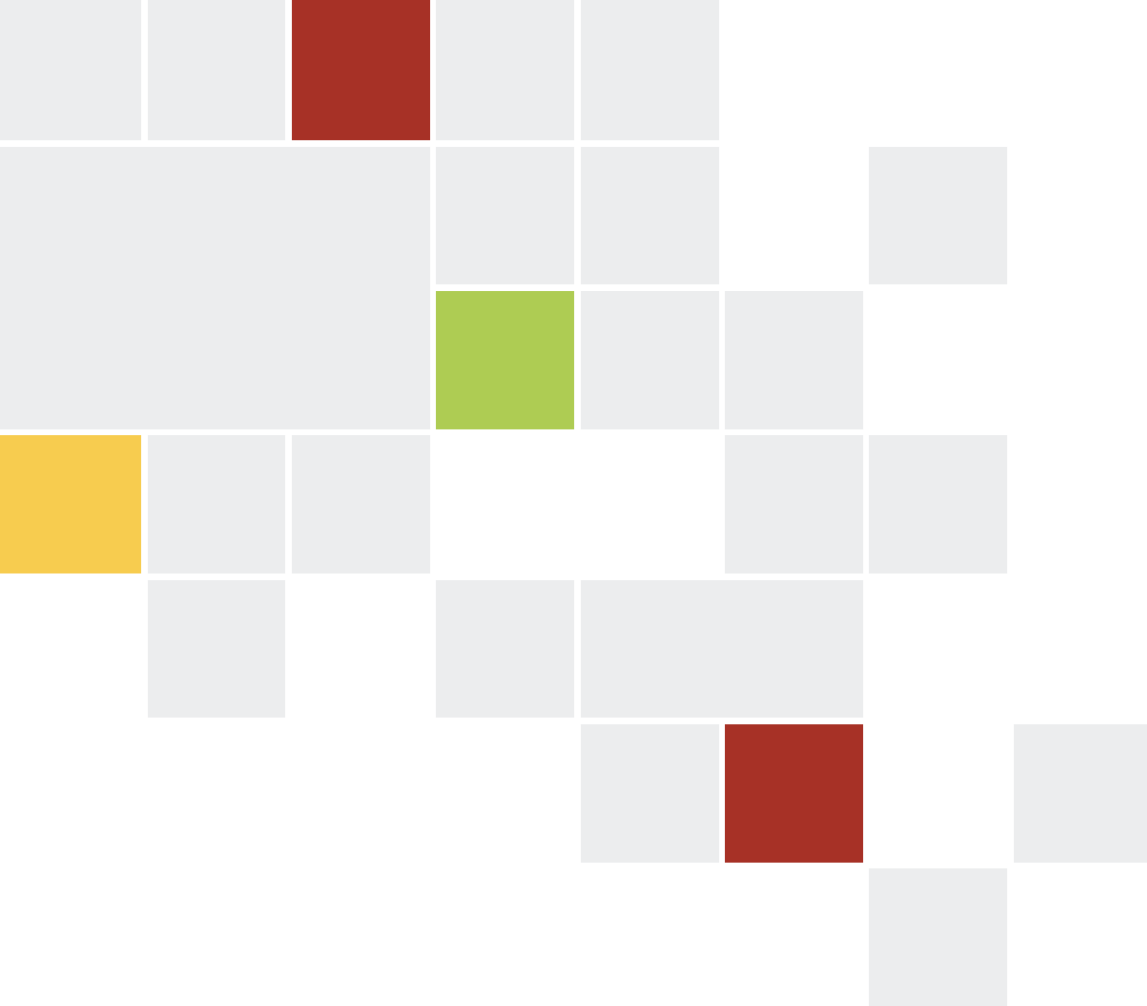
8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Full planning permission is sought for the development of 7 dwellings at Land at Green Lane, Ashwell.
- 8.2 The formal description of development is as follows:
- “Erection of 7 homes, with associated access, landscaping and parking.”*
- 8.3 The site is in a sustainable location, and within the settlement boundary for Ashwell. It also benefits from access to a range of services and sustainable modes of transportation.
- 8.4 The scheme has been carefully considered and provides an appropriate response to the site's context and constraints. The proposals have developed following pre-application advice from both NHDC and HCC. A substantial number of key benefits would be provided through this development, such as delivering much needed housing, high quality design and character of the development, achieved alongside wider socio-economic benefits.
- 8.5 Overall, the proposed development comprises a suitable and sustainable development. It has been demonstrated through this Planning Statement and the suite of plans and reports that support the application submission that there are no adverse impacts of the proposals. Furthermore, there are no specific policies within the NPPF that indicate the proposed development should be restricted.
- 8.6 As such, in light of the planning benefits (Chapter 7) and the limited harm resulting from the proposed development (as assessed in Chapter 6), planning permission should be granted without delay.
- 8.7 The planning application and proposals contained therein are therefore commended to North Hertfordshire District Council for due consideration.

APPENDIX ONE – SITE LOCATION PLAN

APPENDIX TWO – PRE-APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPENDIX THREE – CONSULTATION LETTER AND LAYOUT



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