
Date: 16th May 2025

To,

North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Householder application for conversion of garage into habitable accommodation and associated changes at 24 Springhead Lane, Hitchin SG4 0LJ

This covering letter accompanies an application for a Householder Planning Application for the proposed garage conversion with associated changes to the front and side elevation at 24 Springhead Lane, Hitchin, SG4 0LJ.

1. INTRODUCTION

This application proposes to install one window to the ground floor side elevation and one window to replace the front garage door, to facilitate the use of the garage as a study room and guest bedroom. These uses will be incidental to the use of the house as a single-family dwelling.

The site is located within the newly constructed residential development (LPA ref: 20/00073/FP) behind North Herts College in Hitchin. The planning permission removed permitted development rights for the development. As a result, full householder planning permission is sought for the works.

This statement demonstrates that the proposed development complies with local and national policy in respect of design, amenity and all other materials considerations.

The application is supported by the following documents:

- Site location plan
- Existing site plan - 24SL-FP100 Rev00
- Proposed site plan - 24SL-FP200 Rev00
- Existing ground floor plan - 24SL-FP101 Rev00
- Existing first floor and second floor plan - 24SL-FP102 Rev00
- Existing roof plan - 24SL-FP103 Rev00
- Proposed ground floor plan - 24SL-FP201 Rev01
- Proposed first floor and second floor plan - 24SL-FP202 Rev00
- Proposed roof plan - 24SL-FP203 Rev00
- Existing and proposed front elevation - 24SL-FP210 Rev00
- Existing and proposed side elevation (south-east) - 24SL-FP211 Rev00

- Existing and proposed rear elevation - 24SL-FP212 Rev00
- Existing and proposed side elevation (north-west) - 24SL-FP213 Rev00

2. SITE AND CONTEXT

The Site is a three-storey, three-bedroom, semi-detached townhouse located to the south of Springhead Lane at the edge of the new residential development. A driveway to the side of the house allows parking space for two vehicles, with access to the rear garden via shared stepped access.

Image 1 below shows the site in context with its neighbouring property at 26 Springhead Lane along with the stepped access at the rear for the garden.



Image 1: Parking provision for 24 Springhead Lane

The ground floor comprises a hallway, utility room, toilet, storage cabinets and the garage area which is the subject of this application. Habitable rooms, including an open plan kitchen/diner, living room, two family bathrooms and three bedrooms are accommodated at the first and second floors.

The site is not Statutorily Listed, nor it is located within a Conservation Area.

According to government data and projections, the site is at a 'Very Low' risk of surface water flooding at least until 2060 or flooding from rivers, sea or groundwater flooding.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Relevant Development Plan policies and other material planning considerations for the proposed development are set out below.

North Herts Local Plan (NHLP) 2011-2031

The following policies from the recently adopted Local Plan are considered relevant to the proposed development:

- Policy D1: Sustainable design
- Policy D3: Protecting living conditions
- Policy T2: Parking

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023 (Amended February 2025)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied to development proposals. In approaching decision-making, the NPPF recommends that Local Planning Authorities should take a positive approach and work proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.

Chapter 12 of the NPPF provides relevant guidance on achieving well- designed and beautiful places. Paragraph 135 particularly advises that planning decisions should ensure that developments function well over time, are visually attractive, and optimise the potential of the site.

Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD September 2011

This document states that a 2+ bedroom house would require a minimum of two allocated parking spaces.

4. PROPOSAL

The applicant intends to use part of the garage as a study room and a guest bedroom. The garage is currently not been utilised to park a car, so will not result in the loss of parking at the property.

A new window measuring 1.2m in width and 1m in height is proposed for the side wall and will allow appropriate levels of ventilation and daylight into the new guest bedroom whilst maintaining privacy. The front study room window will match the front window of the next-door property (26 Springhead Lane) and will be 2.3m wide and 1.4m in height. This window will be the same width as the garage door and will maintain the proportions of existing garage opening. Both windows will be double glazed units with white PVCu frames to match existing windows, with brick detailing around the perimeter of the opening to add interest to the side and front elevations of the house.

5. ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development and Amenity

The use of the garage as a study and a bedroom would not cause any detrimental harm to the amenity of the occupiers of the neighbouring dwellings. Given the garage would be used for a different purpose incidental to enjoyment of the single-family dwelling, the only other consideration could potentially be noise impact, however the wall is not shared with the adjoining neighbour at No.22 and No.26, therefore no impact would be had in this respect.

Replacement of the garage door with a window on the ground floor will provide views of Springhead Lane and will not cause any loss of privacy. On the contrary, it may provide overlooking to the street as part of passive surveillance and activation of the façade that could assist with security of the neighbourhood.

In addition to the front window, a new window is proposed on the side elevation of the applicant's house. The side elevation fronts the shared drive with the immediate neighbour to the south – 26 Springhead Lane. This property is a different house typology and has a garage with a standard window height overlooking the shared drive (See Image 1 above). The proposed side window of the applicant's house has been set back along the wall length from the front in a staggered location to the garage window of the neighbour (see Site Plan – as proposed drawing). As a result, the placement of the proposed windows would not cause loss of privacy to the neighbouring property.

Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Policy D3 of the NHLP in respect of not causing harm to living conditions and is therefore deemed acceptable in principle.

Design and appearance

Policy D1 of the NHLP requires that new development proposals should respond positively to the site's local context; take opportunities to future proof for changes in lifestyle and design-out opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour; and have regard to the LPA's Design SPD.

As can be seen in Image 2 below, the side elevation of No.24 is brick- dominant with only one window installed at the second floor, potentially creating a sense of enclosure and amplification of massing in the immediate location. The addition of one window at ground floor level would essentially “break up” the large amount of brickwork on this elevation, meaning the property would be seen as less bulky and oppressive when viewed from the north-east.



Image 2: Side elevation of the applicant's house

Further, the Design SPD states, that dwellings should “provide adequate internal space that can be used efficiently by the occupants”. It goes on to say that adequate natural lighting and ventilation should be provided to minimise the need for artificial lighting and heating/cooling. The insertion of window would allow the space to be used efficiently, allowing for natural light and ventilation to flow through the room.

It is therefore considered that the proposal is in accordance with Policy D1 of the Design SPD.

Parking

Two car parking spaces would be retained for the property; therefore, the level of parking would be in accordance with Policy T2: Parking of NHLP. This was evidenced as being acceptable by virtue of two recent approval within the wider site under reference 24/00431/FPH and 24/02588/FPH.

Application 24/00431/FPH is for 22 Springhead Lane - the attached property to the applicant's property. This application was for the insertion of two ground floor windows to existing side elevation to facilitate the conversion of garage into gym. In approving the application, the Officers Report stated “The site will have at least two parking spaces remaining, which complies with Council minimum standards and is acceptable. The proposal complies with Policy T2 of the Local Plan”.

Application 24/02588/FPH is for 5 Brockett Drive. This application was for insertion of front and rear ground floor windows following removal of existing garage doors to facilitate garage conversion. The officer's report stated that ‘The site will have two parking spaces remaining, which complies with Council minimum standards and is acceptable. The proposal complies with Policy T2 of the Local Plan.’

6. SUMMARY

Householder planning permission is sought for the installation of 1 window in place of the front garage door and 1 window on the side elevation at ground floor level, to facilitate the use of an under-utilised garage as a study and a guest bedroom.

This letter sets out the proposal's compliance with relevant policy, specifically in terms of neighbour amenity, design and parking.

We therefore request that the planning permission is granted. Please let us know if you have any questions or need any further information.

Best regards,



AJAY SHAH

BArch | MAS ETHZ | LEED AP | Retrofit Coordinator

Director

For and on behalf of A+L Architecture Studio

