



JMS PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

IN SUPPORT OF A
PLANNING APPLICATION
BY SHELL UK OIL PRODUCTS LTD
IN RESPECT OF DEVELOPMENT

AT

SHELL HITCHIN
BEDFORD ROAD
HITCHIN
HERTS
SG5 2TY



Client: Shell UK Oil Products Ltd
Project: Development at Shell Hitchin
Date: February 2026

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of Shell UK Oil Products Ltd in support of an application for full planning permission for the demolition of the existing sales building and the canopy link and erection of new sales building, replacement of pumps, installation of jet washes, retention of car wash, creation of new car parking spaces and associated works at Shell Hitchin, Bedford Road, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2TY.
- 1.2 The national need for additional and enhanced service station facilities is widely recognised and accepted. There continues to be strong competition between fuel retailers, particularly the big four supermarkets, which combined with the increasing costs of compliance with environmental regulations puts those remaining service stations under intense pressure.
- 1.3 Information from the Fuel Market Review 2025 (released June 2025) suggests that there are 12 more service stations open across the UK now, compared to September 2024, taking the total to 8,349. However, overall numbers have fallen by 36% since 2000. Meanwhile, the total number of vehicles on the road continues to grow and at the end of 2024 was 41.7 million license vehicles with each forecourt supplying on average 4,994 vehicles. Service stations are a vital necessity and can often function as a community hub and are facing significant threats in a harsh economic climate. Service stations have been likened to post offices and local shops as vital community facilities which are rapidly disappearing.
- 1.4 This Report continues in Section 2 by providing a summary of the site and surrounding area, with Section 3 providing a brief summary of the planning history for the site. Section 4 sets out the full details of the proposal. Section 5 provides a detailed summary of the planning policy at national and local level.
- 1.5 Section 6 sets out the justification for the proposal in the context of the national requirements, local need and the policy position. Section 7 covers the Design and Access Statement. Conclusions on all matters are drawn in Section 8.



SECTION 2: SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site is an established service station located on Bedford Road, which forms part of the A505 on the western side of Hitchin town centre. The A505 provides connections northwest towards Letchworth and Baldock, and southeast to the A602 at Park Way. The A602 is a key route linking Hitchin with Stevenage and the A1(M), forming part of the strategic road network in North Hertfordshire. The A505 itself is an important route within the district, facilitating movement between Hitchin and surrounding settlements and providing access to the wider strategic network.
- 2.2 The site consists of an existing service station with the forecourt to the centre/eastern boundary of the site and the existing sales building (with a GEA of 83 sqm) towards the northern boundary of the site. The forecourt contains six pump islands arranged in a starter gate formation with a canopy above that links to the sales building. Towards the southern boundary of the site is an existing car wash and tank farm. The existing plant room is towards to the northwestern corner of the site.
- 2.3 The site has one access positioned at the southeastern corner and one egress point located at the northeastern corner. Traffic generally flows through the site in a one way direction. There is no formal parking provision on site.
- 2.4 To the north of the site is a KwikFit, to the east is Bedford Road and beyond that is a football club, to the south is a hotel and to the west is a vehicle repair shop with residential dwellings beyond.
- 2.5 According to the adopted Policy Map, the site is within Hitchin settlement boundary.
- 2.6 The site is not subject to any ecological or heritage constraints.
- 2.7 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is not subject to surface water flooding, according to the Flood Risk Map for Planning.
- 2.8 Images are provided below to provide context of the site.



Photograph 1: Aerial View of the Site and Surrounding Area (Source: Google Maps)



Photograph 2: 3D Image Showing View from the East of the Site (Source: Google Maps)



SECTION 3: PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 A planning search has been undertaken for the site using North Herts Council's website. This has identified the following planning applications.

Reference Number	Proposal	Decision & Date
16/00256/1	Retention of ATM and waste bin to shop front.	Granted 13/04/16
16/00257/1AD	Retention of two internally illuminated fascia signs to ATM	Granted 12/04/16
13/02784/1DOC	Discharge of Condition 4 - Verification report for planning application 12/02678/1 granted 22.01.13.	Granted 16/01/14
12/02014/1DOC	Condition 7: The development hereby permitted shall not be commenced until such time as a scheme to install the underground tank(s) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The scheme shall include the full structural details of the installation, including details of: excavation, the tank(s), tank surround, associated pipework and monitoring system. The scheme shall be fully implemented and subsequently maintained, in accordance with the scheme, or any changes as may subsequently be agreed, in writing, by the local planning authority.	Granted 19/03/13
12/02013/1DOC	Condition 6: Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods shall not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the Local Planning Authority, which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.	Granted 19/03/13
12/01963/1DOC	Condition 3(i) A site investigation scheme, to provide information for a detailed assessment of the risk to all receptors that may be affected, including those off site; ii) The results of the site investigation and detailed risk assessment referred to in (i) and, based on these, an options appraisal and remediation strategy giving full details	Granted 18/03/13

Reference Number	Proposal	Decision & Date
	of the remediation measures required and how they are to be undertaken; iii) A verification plan providing details of the data that will be collected in order to demonstrate that the works set out in the remediation strategy in (2) are complete and identifying any requirements for longer-term monitoring of pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action.	
12/02678/1	Variation of Condition 4 imposed on application 11/02584/1 granted 29 March 2012 to allow the verification report to be submitted and approved in writing within 3 months following the completion of the site works. Application 11/02584/1 granted permission for the Installation of a new 120,000 litre double skin steel tank farm following replacement of existing tank storage. New above ground offset fill point with associated pipework and tanker fill area. New forecourt canopy with new pump dispensers together with drainage alterations and resurfacing works associated with this type of redevelopment. (Amended description).	Granted 22/01/13
11/02584/1	Installation of a new 120,000 litre double skin steel tank farm following replacement of existing tank storage. New above ground offset fill point with associated pipework and tanker fill area. New forecourt canopy with new pump dispensers together with drainage alterations and resurfacing works associated with this type of redevelopment	Granted 29/03/12
86/01611/1	Internally illuminated free standing pole sign & 2 directional signs	Granted 07/11/86
86/00348/1AD	Internally illuminated forecourt pole sign.	Granted 10/04/86
86/00292/1	Redevelopment of service station involving erection of sales building, new car wash, petrol; pumps, canopy, underground storage tank and alteration to existing access following demolition of existing building.	Granted 10/04/86



Reference Number	Proposal	Decision & Date
85/01290/1	Redevelopment of service station involving erection of replacement sales building forecourt canopy, self service pumps, underground petrol storage tanks and formation of new access	Refused 19/09/85
82/01017/1	Re-siting of existing pole sign	Granted 02/08/82
79/00647/1	Installation of 6,000 gallon underground spirit storage tank	Granted 24/07/79

- 3.2 According to the planning history, the site has a long established use as a service station since at least the late 1970's.
- 3.3 The site has not been subject to any recent planning applications, with the most recent permission granted in 2016 for the retention of an ATM and waste bin. The fuel tanks were replaced around 2013.
- 3.4 Accordingly, nothing on the site's planning history would presume against the redevelopment of the application site for continued roadside uses. Indeed, the lack of recent investment into the built form suggests that the redevelopment is needed and to ensure the needs of the modern motorists are met.



SECTION 4: THE APPLICATION PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing sales building and part of the canopy and erection of new sales building, replacement of pumps, installation of jet washes, retention of car wash, creation of new car parking spaces and associated works at Shell Hitchin, Bedford Road, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2TY.
- 4.2 The proposal includes the demolition of the existing sales building and plant room and removal of the canopy link. It also includes the removal and replacement of three pumps (which does not require planning permission). Other minor changes include replacing the offset fills and drainage channel.
- 4.3 In terms of the forecourt, as mentioned above there will be several changes. The three existing pumps and to be replace with new pumps. The canopy is to be partially removed as this was linked to the existing sales building, which is to be relocated on site. The pump islands will continue to provide refuelling facilities for six vehicles.
- 4.4 The existing sales building is to be demolished and a new sales building is proposed of 150 sqm (GEA) with a sales area of 81 sqm, which will be located to the western boundary of the site. The sales building will be single storey and modern in appearance, utilising lightweight materials to create a clean and crisp appearance. The sales building makes extensive use of glazing to the forecourt, allowing visitors to the site and passers-by to witness activity occurring within this area of the building thereby assisting in creating visual interest, whilst also allowing staff to have a view of the forecourt, ensuring safety and security at all times.
- 4.5 The sales building will also provide an accessible toilet for customers and paying facilities for fuel. The back of house areas will include a store area, prep area, staff room and office. Attached to the building will be a plant room. Security bollards will be located at the front elevation of the sales building. A bin store is also proposed adjacent to the new sales building.
- 4.6 Two car parking spaces and one air/screen wash/vacuum bay is to be provided adjacent to the existing car wash, which is to be retained.
- 4.7 Two jet washes with associated equipment is proposed towards the northern boundary of the site.
- 4.8 The proposal does not include any changes to the existing access/egress arrangements to/from Bedford Road.



SECTION 5: PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1 This Section of the supporting Statement sets out national and local planning policy framework relevant to the proposed planning application.

National Planning Guidance

- 5.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in February 2025 and constitutes guidance for local planning authorities and decision takers and is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications (paragraph 2).
- 5.3 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (paragraph 7). Reference has recently been added to the 17 Global Goals for sustainable development set by the United Nations.
- 5.4 Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three overarching objectives to sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
 - A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - An environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 5.5 These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in this Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. (paragraph 9).



- 5.6 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10). For decision taking, this means:
- Approving development proposals that accord with the Development Plan without delay, and
 - Where there are no relevant Development Plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless;
 - The application of policies in the framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - Any adverse of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination (paragraph 11).
- 5.7 The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan as the starting point for decision making (paragraph 12).
- 5.8 Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. (paragraph 39).
- 5.9 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing (paragraph 48). Local Authorities may give weight to relevant policies and emerging plans according to the stage at which they are at, the extent of unresolved objections and the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the framework (paragraph 49).
- 5.10 Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in



areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential (paragraph 85).

5.11 Planning policies should:

- a) Set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to the national industrial strategy and any relevant Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;
- b) Set criteria, and identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
- c) Pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics;
- d) Seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and
- e) Be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, and allow for new and flexible working practices and spaces to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

5.12 Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors (paragraph 87).

5.13 Planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should:

- a) Define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters;
- b) Define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, as part of a positive strategy for the future of each centre;
- c) Retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones;
- d) Allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses over this period should not be compromised by limited site availability, so town centre boundaries should be kept under review where necessary;
- e) Where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available for main town centre uses, allocate appropriate edge of centre sites that are well



connected to the town centre. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, policies should explain how identified needs can be met in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre; and

- f) Recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites (paragraph 90).
- 5.14 Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered (paragraph 91).
- 5.15 When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored (paragraph 92).
- 5.16 When assessing applications for retail and leisure development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date plan, local planning authorities should require an impact assessment if the development is over a proportionate, locally set floorspace threshold (if there is no locally set threshold, the default threshold is 2,500m² of gross floorspace). This should include assessment of the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal and the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and the wider retail catchment (as applicable to the scale and nature of the scheme (paragraph 94).
- 5.17 Paragraph III confirms that planning policies should provide for any large scale transport facilities that need to be located in the area, and the infrastructure and wider development required to support their operation, expansion and contribution to the wider economy. The footnote to this paragraph notes that such facilities will include roadside services but that the primary purpose of these services should be to support the safety and welfare of the road user (and most such proposals are unlikely to be nationally significant infrastructure projects). The site is within a well located area and the proposed development will support the safety and welfare of road users, as well as provide positive economic impacts for the local economy.
- 5.18 Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the needs for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions

(paragraph 124). The site already has an established service station use, however, the proposed development will not cause any adverse impacts on the environment and residential properties nearby.

5.19 The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process (paragraph 131). The design of the redevelopment of the site is at a high standard.

5.20 Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) 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;
- b) Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience (paragraph 135).

All of these points have been addressed during the design process of the scheme.

5.21 Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals (paragraph 137). Development that is not well designed should be refused especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance taking into account local design guides and codes (paragraph 139). The character of the area has been considered during the design process.

- 5.22 Paragraph 189 asserts that great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.
- 5.23 Existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established. Where the operation of an existing business could have a significant adverse effect on new development in its vicinity, the applicant (or 'agent of change') should be required to provide suitable mitigation before the development has been completed (paragraph 200).

Development Plan Policy

- 5.24 To the extent the Development Plan policies are material to an application for planning permission, a decision must be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise (Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 5.25 The Development Plan relevant to the application site comprises of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022), Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan (2007), Hertfordshire Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document (2012), Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Document (2014) and made Neighbourhood Plans. The site is not subject to any Neighbourhood Plan.
- 5.26 According to the adopted Policy Map, the site is within the Hitchin Settlement Boundary.
- 5.27 North Herts is still in the early stages of its Local Plan Update, with the authority continuing the full review of the adopted 2022 Local Plan. The council's update page confirms that the review is underway, evidence is being refreshed, and engagement is continuing through the PlaceMaker platform. A Regulation 18 draft has not yet been published, and the previously signalled late 2025 consultation has not occurred, meaning the update remains at a formative stage. The 2022 Local Plan therefore continues to carry full weight, and the review is several years from submission, examination and adoption, pending publication of the first draft and confirmation of a revised timetable.
- 5.28 The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and guidance are also relevant:

- Sustainability SPD (2024)
- Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD (2011)
- Design SPD (2011)

Development Plan

- 5.29 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan is the only document within the Development Plan which is of relevance to the proposal.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan

- 5.30 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan was adopted in November 2022. The Local Plan sets out the long term vision for the district by identifying how and where new homes, jobs and infrastructure will be delivered. The plan encourages high-quality sustainable design and consideration for the natural environment.
- 5.31 The following policies from the Plan are relevant for this proposed development and have been considered during the design process:
- Policy SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire
 - Policy SP3: Employment
 - Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability
 - Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability
 - Policy ETC3: New retail, leisure and other main town centre development
 - Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters
 - Policy T2: Parking
 - Policy D1: Sustainable design
 - Policy D3: Protecting living condition
 - Policy NE2: Landscape

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Sustainability SPD

- 5.32 The Sustainability SPD provides information regarding the Council's sustainability expectations for development in North Herts, and offers good practice guidance to residents and developers when developing proposals and submitting planning applications.

Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD

- 5.33 The SPD provides guidance on parking provision at new developments in line with national policy that promotes local decision making on appropriate parking standards. It adopts a policy stance that the Council does not wish to use parking standards to restrict car ownership (evidence suggests this does not work) but it does wish to influence car usage.



Design SPD

- 5.34 The Design SPD is a guide for the future development of the towns, villages and rural areas in North Hertfordshire. The Design SPD is not prescriptive in terms of standards or requirements as it encourages developers and designers to think about the context of the site and how their development might contribute to and enhance the local area. This should ensure high quality development throughout the district regardless of scale or location.



SECTION 6: PLANNING ISSUES

6.1 This section of the Planning Statement sets out the general planning matters which require consideration in the determination of this application. Accordingly, the following general planning matters are considered below:

- The principle of development on the site;
- Quantitative need and benefits of the improved facility;
- Job creation benefits;
- Retail impacts;
- Sustainability credentials;
- Amenity;
- Highways;
- Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain;
- Flooding/Drainage; and
- Contamination.

Principle of Development on the Site

- 6.2 The principle of the redevelopment on the site should be accepted given that the site is an existing long-established service station and roadside use which provides an important facility for motorists travelling on Bedford Road. The site is in need of an upgrade in order to meet customers' needs and bring the facility up to modern day standards. The proposal includes a new and improved sales building, retains the existing car wash, and introduces two new jet washes, ensuring continued provision of valued ancillary services alongside an enhanced forecourt offer.
- 6.3 The proposed development will comply with the NPPF which supports development that makes efficient use of land, taking into account the availability and capacity of infrastructure and services. The NPPF also recognises and promotes the need to support all business ventures including new and expanding business and to ensure that planning policies are flexible enough to support business needs. The importance of supporting the safety and welfare of road users is acknowledged and this proposal assists in this goal.
- 6.4 The site is within an urban location, situated within the settlement boundary, located on the A505. The proposed development will continue providing a necessary facility for residents in Hitchin and other neighbouring areas, as well as motorists who pass by on the A505.
- 6.5 The proposed new sales building will seek an uplift in the retail floorspace of 67 sqm (GEA), from 83 sqm (GEA) to 150 sqm (GEA). The proposal will create an improved sales building to the benefit of customers, creating a more pleasant environment to pay for fuel and shop. The existing shop is compact and cramped and is not an ideal environment for customers or those working within



it. The enlarged sales building will help to address this, whilst providing enhanced customer toilets, including accessible facilities.

- 6.6 The formalisation of parking on site will be beneficial for customers, with spaces located in close proximity to the sales building, and will remove the existing ad hoc parking from the site with associated operational benefits.
- 6.7 As mentioned previously, the application site is an established service station located on Bedford Road, which forms part of the A505. The A505 provides connections northwest towards Letchworth and Baldock, and southeast to the A602 at Park Way. The A602 is a key route linking Hitchin with Stevenage and the A1(M), forming part of the strategic road network in North Hertfordshire. The A505 itself is an important route facilitating movement between Hitchin and surrounding settlements and providing access to the wider strategic network. The provision of motorist facilities for drivers is important for the safety and convenience of road users, and the site serves a valuable role on the local highway network. The partial redevelopment of the site will ensure the needs of all motorists are met and deliver environmental improvements over the existing arrangement.
- 6.8 Overall, the continued use of this service station site with further upgrades should be embraced as it will improve local services within the area and make the best use of an existing developed site. The proposals will buck the general trend in the decline of service stations countrywide. The proposal accords with the principles of sustainable development, the Development Plan and the NPPF.

Quantitative Need and Benefits of Improved Facility

- 6.9 It is important that adequate facilities are provided for road users to ensure that their basic needs are met and to enable them to comfortably and safely continue their journeys. The provision of new and enhanced facilities will better meet the needs of those travelling on the local highway network and provide them with the facilities they would expect from a modern service station facility. The redevelopment includes a new sales building, the replacement of the existing fuel pumps, the retention of the existing car wash, and the introduction of two new jet washes, ensuring that motorists benefit from a comprehensive and modernised range of services.
- 6.10 As noted above, sales buildings are an important part of service stations meeting the needs of road users and this proposal seeks to upgrade the facility, to better meet the needs of customers and staff. Whilst the offer within the sales building will continue to function broadly as existing, the environment internally will be significantly improved and enhanced in line with customer requirements and expectations including the provision of improved WC facilities.



- 6.11 The new improved sales building will have further benefits for local residents and users of the A505, providing an enhanced offer for sustenance and top-up shopping trips in an accessible location.
- 6.12 Overall, the proposal will bring significant enhancement to an existing service station, ideally positioned to serve motorists on the A505. The proposal will ensure that their needs are fully met. Given the general trend and declining numbers of service stations set against the increasing number of cars on the road, the opportunity to offer an enhanced service station to meet a local need should be embraced. The combination of a new sales building, upgraded pumps, and improved vehicle cleaning facilities reinforces the site's role in supporting motorists and maintaining a high quality roadside offer.

Job Creation Benefits

- 6.13 The enhanced proposal will provide a valuable source of jobs, retaining the existing jobs on site and potentially creating further job opportunities. Many of these jobs will be suitable for local residents, particularly residents who wish to be flexible in the hours they work. The proposal will therefore bring a wide range of economic benefits and accord with the role and focus as contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and adopted Development Plan.
- 6.14 In addition to the actual jobs created by the development, further jobs will be created in the construction phase of development. There will be other spin off linkages to the benefit of the local area during the construction period itself as, for example, on site construction staff utilise shops and services in the local area during the period of construction. Therefore, there will be short term and long term positive economic impacts to the local area.

Retail Impacts

- 6.15 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires an impact assessment only for those developments involving an additional 2,500 sqm gross or more floorspace.
- 6.16 Policy ETC3 (New Retail, Leisure and Other Main Town Centre Uses) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 applies to proposals for main town centre uses located outside designated centres, including sites within settlement boundaries but not within defined town centres. ETC3 requires such proposals to demonstrate compliance with the sequential test and, where the development exceeds the minimum floorspace threshold, to be supported by an impact assessment. For Hitchin, the policy sets a threshold of 2,500 sqm gross floorspace for requiring an impact assessment.



- 6.17 The proposed replacement sales building will have a gross external area of 150 sqm, which is significantly below the threshold. As such, a retail impact assessment is not required. The proposal is also modest in scale and replaces an existing established retail function within the service station, meaning no material change in retail role or catchment is anticipated.
- 6.18 Notwithstanding this, in light of the very limited scale of the proposal, which merely enhances the existing sales building facilities and improving the environment for staff and customers, means no new use is introduced to the site and the site will continue trading broadly as existing. It is not considered that there will be any significant diversion of trade from any single centre or particular retail or commercial unit which is protected under retail policy that would cause a significant adverse impact. Accordingly, it is not considered that there will be any adverse impact arising from the proposal.
- 6.19 A sequential assessment is not required as the proposal seeks to provide a new sales building that will replace an existing sales building on site, and the principle of the use is already established on the site.
- 6.20 On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposal accords with the relevant national and Development Plan policy, including ETC3 with regards to retail matters.

Sustainability Credentials

- 6.21 The new building will incorporate sustainable design through a series of measures that are likely to include:
1. Waste and use of recycled material in construction:
 - a) Materials to be selected for robustness, reducing embodied energy through a longer life span;
 - b) The waste hierarchy will be applied – design, reduce, reuse, recycle, dispose; and
 - c) Waste segregation and recycling put in place to minimise waste to landfill.
 2. Solar gain and orientation: Glazing is used for natural daylighting;
 3. Temperature control:
 - a) Automatic entrance doors used to retain heat; and
 - b) High air tightness levels required.
 4. Green technology within fit-out:
 - a) Low energy efficient lighting;
 - b) Low energy appliances are used; and
 - c) Half-hourly energy metering employed.
- 6.22 The sustainable design measures for this proposal will be compliant with Policy D1 (Sustainable Design), which requires development to respond positively to its



context and to take reasonable opportunities to reduce energy use and waste and to incorporate appropriate sustainable design measures.

Amenity

- 6.23 It is acknowledged that the site is in an urban location located on Bedford Road/A505. The background environment here, in terms of noise and general amenity, is dominated by the A505.
- 6.24 It is also appreciated that there are residential dwellings to the west, beyond the vehicle repair shop.

Visual Amenity

- 6.25 In terms of visual amenity, the proposal is minor in nature and will have minimal visual impact given the site is an already developed area of land occupied by a service station with associated infrastructure. The modernisation of the facilities will result in improved visual amenity.

Noise

- 6.26 The proposals will not result in any unacceptable effects on neighbouring amenity in terms of noise. The works represent the modernisation and partial redevelopment of an established service station, with the operational characteristics of the site remaining consistent with the existing lawful use. The development does not introduce activity that would be out of keeping with the established commercial nature of the site or its long-standing function.
- 6.27 The surrounding area is characterised by commercial uses, including a KwikFit to the north, Bedford Road and a football club to the east, a hotel to the south, and a vehicle repair workshop to the west, with residential dwellings set further beyond. Given this commercial context and the existing activity along the A505, the proposals will not change the overall noise environment or affect the amenity of nearby occupiers. The development therefore accords with Policy D3 of the Local Plan, which seeks to ensure that new development does not harm the amenity of existing occupiers.

Highways

- 6.28 Minor changes are proposed to the existing forecourt to improve internal circulation, including the introduction of two designated parking spaces and a dedicated air, water and screen wash bay. The existing access and egress arrangements will remain unchanged, as shown on the submitted plans.
- 6.29 The revised layout has been designed to ensure safe and efficient vehicle movement across the site, with tracking demonstrating that the new layout



operates effectively and that the relationship between the car wash exit and the new sales building functions safely and without conflict.

- 6.30 For service stations, the *Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD* the maximum car parking standards is 3 spaces per 4 employees plus 3 waiting spaces per bay. The proposal does not exceed this requirement, and the level of parking provided is appropriate for the operational needs of the site.
- 6.31 The proposals accord with Policies T1 (Assessment of Transport Matters) and T2 (Parking) of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The retention of existing access points, the improved internal circulation and the provision of compliant on site parking ensure that the development will not give rise to adverse highway impacts and that parking provision is appropriate to the use.

Ecology and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.32 The application site comprises entirely of hard landscaping meaning there is no soft landscaping, vegetation, or habitat features present within the site boundary. As such, the site does not support any meaningful biodiversity value and does not contain features capable of supporting protected species or priority habitats. There are therefore no ecological constraints that would restrict or influence the proposed redevelopment.
- 6.33 The 'Biodiversity Net Gain; Exempt Developments Guidance' states that a development is exempt from BNG if it does not impact a priority habitat and affects less than 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat or 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows. As there is no soft landscaping on site and it is not identified as priority habitat, the site qualifies for the de minimis exemption. Therefore, development is not subject to BNG requirements.
- 6.34 Notwithstanding this, the redevelopment will deliver qualitative improvements to the site through modernisation of the forecourt and provision of updated infrastructure, without any loss of biodiversity value.

Drainage

- 6.35 The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is not subject to surface water flooding, according to the Flood Risk Map for Planning. Therefore, a Flood Risk Assessment or Drainage Strategy is not required for this development.

Contamination

- 6.36 The site is an established service station and the proposed development does not involve any change of use. The nature of the works therefore does not give rise to any new contamination risks beyond those already associated with the existing lawful operation.



- 6.37 The earlier application for tank replacements (LPA Ref: 11/O2584/1) was subject to a condition requiring a verification plan to demonstrate completion of the approved remediation strategy. Those works were carried out in accordance with the agreed approach, and no outstanding contamination issues are expected on the site.
- 6.38 The application is accompanied by a suite of contamination reports, which provide further detail on ground conditions.



SECTION 7: DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

- 7.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Shell UK Oil Products Limited and is submitted in support of an application for full planning permission for the demolition of the existing sales building and removal of canopy link and erection of new sales building, replacement of pumps, installation of jet washes, retention of car wash, creation of new car parking spaces and associated works at Shell Hitchin, Bedford Road, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2TY.
- 7.2 The Design and Access Statement requirements of the site have evolved from an appraisal of the site's context against the background of its location, the proximity to the highway network and operational requirements.
- 7.3 In accordance with the requirements to formally state how design and access issues have been considered (under Section 61 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2014) this document addresses the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the development in relation to location, use, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping in relation to the site's context.
- 7.4 The Design and Access Statement should be read in context with the planning application's supporting reports, drawings and accompanying material.

Site Evaluation

- 7.5 There are a number of key issues which have informed the design solution for the site's development. Effectively, it balances the site's opportunities and constraints arising from the assessment of the site to deliver a development that achieves a high quality design, is sustainable, is economically viable and enhances the established locality. The principal constraints can be identified as:
- The need to upgrade the service station's sales building to meet the operational needs of the operator and the requirements of the customers;
 - The introduction of an updated forecourt to complement the upgraded facilities; and
 - The need to retain the access/egress arrangements from/to Bedford Road.
- 7.6 There are a number of opportunities afforded by the potential redevelopment of the site that are a relevant material consideration in evaluating the proposals. In summary these are:
- The site offers an excellent location in terms of visibility and accessibility for motorists travelling along the highway network;
 - The opportunity to provide enhanced service station facilities;



- Make best use of an existing site in Hitchin for the benefit of motorists;
- The modernisation of the forecourt to improve circulation on site; and
- The replacement of the existing infrastructure to ensure it meets current environmental standards and is more efficient.

Planning Policy

7.7 A detailed evaluation of the planning policies relevant to this planning application is provided in Section 5 of this Statement. However, in summary, the following policies and SPDs are of particular relevance to the Design and Access Statement, and they form this report:

- Paragraphs 7, 8, 10, 11, 124, 131 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024);
- Policies SP9, T2, D1 and NE2;
- Sustainability SPD;
- Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD; and
- Design SPD.

Design Considerations

Use

- 7.8 The site is an existing operational service station. The proposed development consists of a new sales building, jet washes and retention of a car wash, as well as other associated works.
- 7.9 The existing service station is sui generis use, and the service station is a long-established use on site. Accordingly, the principle of the proposal is acceptable in planning policy terms considering the wider established use and the context of the site.

Layout

- 7.10 The proposed layout of the scheme is shown on the accompanying planning application drawings. The forecourt and existing car wash will remain in the same locations, however, the new sales building will be located to the rear of the site, with jet washes provided where the existing sales building is currently located.
- 7.11 The layout has been carefully developed, taking into account the site boundaries, the need for safe and efficient access for domestic vehicles or delivery vehicles, and the aim of creating an attractive and practical environment. The proposal is considered to accord with relevant policies in the Local Plan.

Scale



- 7.12 The replacement sales building is single storey. An uplift in floorspace is proposed from 73 sqm existing GIA to 130 sqm GIA. This is considered to be of an appropriate scale having regard to the site extent, location and constraints and the history of the site. The replacement sales building is required to meet the needs of customers and the operator.

Appearance

- 7.13 The design of the replacement sales building is functional and reflects the modern style of service stations, adopting a simple uncluttered design. The proposal will create an attractive shopfront of a high quality with inviting interior. Large glass windows along the front elevation will allow actively to be seen inside thereby creating visual interest within the development and creating a clean, welcoming environment which is modern, attractive and uncluttered. This will be an improvement on the existing sales building which is dated in appearance and in need of upgrade.
- 7.14 Overall, the appearance of the building is clean, crisp and modern and entirely suitable to its service station use. The proposal is of a high quality and functional design, whilst respecting the site boundaries and adjacent neighbours. It is considered to accord with the NPPF and local plan policies which relate to design quality.

Materials

- 7.15 The proposed materials are shown on the Proposed Building Elevations and reflect the modern and functional requirements of a service station. The introduction of a glazed frontage creates an attractive modern feel to the building, whilst also making the site and building appear lighter and more airy.

Landscaping

- 7.16 The site is urban in character, entirely made up of hard landscaping. The site will be continue to be made up of hard landscaping.



Accessibility

- 7.17 The Applicant is committed to a policy of equality, inclusion and accessibility for those who live and visit the site and has strived to exceed all required standards and achieve a development which promotes inclusion and accessibility.
- 7.18 The provision of an accessible and inclusive environment has been an integral theme throughout the design process from its initial conception to its current form. The concept of inclusive design seeks to remove barriers which create undue effort, separation and special treatment which enables everyone to participate equally regardless of gender, disability or age.
- 7.19 The use of the site as a service station is well established by the planning history of the site and the current access arrangements upon it.

Inclusive Access

- 7.20 In respect to inclusive access, all of the service station operators agree that it is not merely physical barriers that can cause difficulties for customers. Employees of all the major national chains receive Disability Awareness Sessions as part of their basic training, to understand the challenges customers with disabilities may face, and to ensure that their needs are met.
- 7.21 For operational and design reasons the site will remain level, with level access provided to the facilities. Services are therefore provided with access that meets the needs of those who are less able bodied, as well as those with pushchairs.
- 7.22 The proposal includes the provision of WC facilities including an accessible toilet.

Community Safety

- 7.23 Consideration has been given to creating an attractive, safe environment through the development of a high quality public realm with a forecourt and parking area which is overlooked by the sales building and road network. The site layout ensures natural surveillance across the site and protects the safety of users and the wider community. Overall, the site will provide a high quality development with good community safety.

Conclusions

- 7.24 The proposal responds positively to the site's opportunities and constraints and consideration has been given to layout, scale, appearance and landscaping. Access to and within the site has been carefully reviewed and retained as existing. It is considered that, based on the above, an appropriate and site sensitive design solution has been found.



SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The proposal seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing sales building and the canopy link and erection of new sales building, replacement of pumps, installation of jet washes, retention of car wash, creation of new car parking spaces and associated works at Shell Hitchin, Bedford Road, Hitchin, Herts, SG5 2TY.
- 8.2 The National Planning Policy Framework identifies the need for planning positively for community facilities and motorist services that support the safety and welfare of road users. Service stations are a vital necessity and provide an important role ensuring that motorists travel safely, particularly as the number of vehicles on the roads continues to increase and the number of service stations have decreased over past decades, thereby increasing the demand on existing service stations.
- 8.3 The principle of the redevelopment on the site should be accepted given that the site is an existing long-established service station and roadside use which provides an important facility for motorists travelling on Bedford Road. The site is in need of an upgrade in order to meet customers' needs and bring the facility up to modern day standards. The proposal includes a new and improved sales building, retains the existing car wash, and introduces two new jet washes, ensuring continued provision of valued ancillary services alongside an enhanced forecourt offer.
- 8.4 Detailed consideration has been given to the layout of the site to ensure the operation of the site and traffic flows through it are optimised. Access into and out of the site remains as existing, meaning there will be no change or impact on the existing highway network.
- 8.5 Retail impact is not a consideration which is material to the application. The site is an existing service station, and the use will stay broadly as existing, seeking to improve an existing community and motorist facility.
- 8.6 The site has no ecological constraints and the site is BNG exempt.
- 8.7 The proposals will not give rise to any unacceptable noise effects. The development modernises an established service station and will continue to operate in a manner consistent with its long-standing commercial use. The surrounding area is already characterised by commercial activity, and the proposals sit comfortably within this context whilst maintaining appropriate separation from nearby residential properties. The scheme therefore complies with Policy D3 of the Local Plan.



- 8.8 On the basis of the above it is requested that planning permission is forthcoming for this proposal.