

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

School House Garden.

Proposal for 2 new 3-bedroom dwellings and 1 new 1-bedroom dwelling

to

Land adjacent School House, School Lane Offley SG5 3AT

On behalf of the trustees of

Salisbury & Burroughs Educational Foundation (SBEF)



Aerial View of site (Courtesy of Google Maps) (existing highlighted)

Design and Access Statement

1 Design Process

1.1 Assessment of Site Context (physical, social and economic characteristics of site and area)

Physical

Site

School House is situated on the Eastern Side of School Lane and is adjacent to Offley Endowed Primary School. The school, a small village church school, serves both the village of Offley and Lilley.

The Village of Offley is surrounded by attractive rolling Hertfordshire countryside and lies two miles west of Hitchin.

The proposed site – formerly part of the garden of School House lies within Offley Village Boundary. The site abuts School Lane to the West. To the East Offley School and to the South an un made access track leading to open farmland. The track also part serves a terrace of vernacular late Victorian cottages 1-6 Hill Top Cottages. These cottages, to the South, are in the Northern section of the Great Offley Conservation area.

Travelling north along School Lane the road curves to the RH side and the site is mainly concealed by hedging

Social

The Site area is about 540sq m (0.054 Hectares)

The Site is owned by The Trustees of Salusbury & Burroughs Educational Foundation (SBEF)

The Charity Commission overview of the foundation is

'Makes grants to Church of England Schools in Offley and Cockernhoe. Gives financial assistance to persons of either sex, who are resident in Offley and who have not attained the age of 25 years; for outfits, clothing, tools, instruments or books in order to prepare for, or to enter, a profession, trade or calling.'

The Purpose of this application is for the trust to optimize the use of the land entrusted to the SBEF.

The new dwellings will provide rented accommodation for the SBEF can generate income to distribute via grants in accordance of its charity status.

Site Use

The site was formerly in the curtilage of School House.

Site Access

Site Access can be achieved from the existing crossover and gate to School Lane.

Vegetation

There is a mixed hedgerow that abut School Lane. The remaining area is grass. The vegetation is further described in the BNG

Flooding

The Site is within Zone 1 meaning there is a low risk of Flooding.



South View Elevation



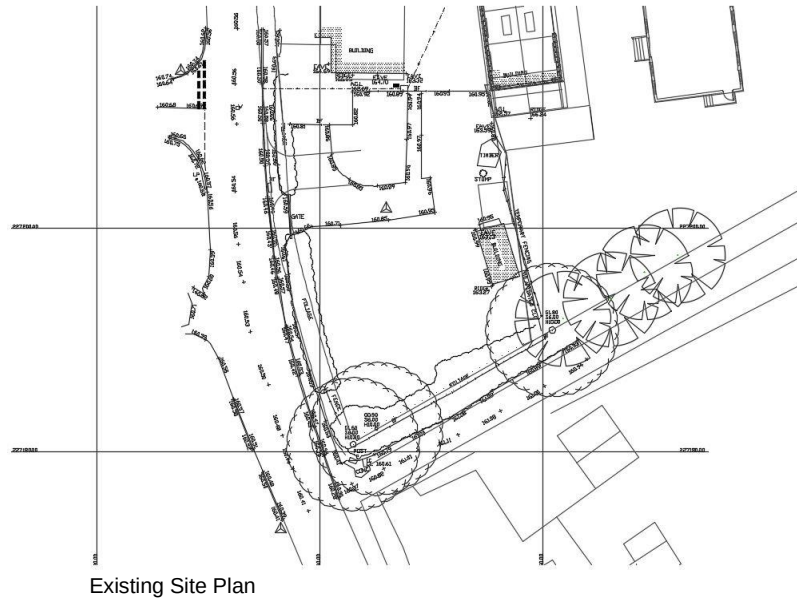
Street Elevation South view



North View Elevation



View entrance gate



The proposed development on the land is located within the built-up part of Offley. In accordance with Planning Policy SP2 Category A village infill housing developments would be acceptable in principle in such areas where such developments can take place without damage to the character or appearance of the locality.



Street view to East



Street view to North

Economic and environmental

The creation of well-crafted and well-designed homes will contribute to the local economy and wellbeing of the area. Offley is a desirable residential location. Each home will have good outdoor space /private garden with Off Street parking including an area for EV charging within the front area. The front area will also house the ASHP units. The site is a sustainable location being within 50m of the village school close to other local amenities Village Hall and local pub

The quality development is designed to use minimal energy. The new homes will be highly insulated to exceed the current Building Regulation requirement (Walls, floor and roof construction all to have U Values of less than 0.15W/m²K) Natural light will be optimised with well-placed openable windows to give natural ventilation and achieve good cross ventilation as all houses will have dual aspects.

Low Carbon traditional materials and construction techniques will be the core to this development.

The front hedge will be retained and part replanted to allow for improved vision splay road access onto School Lane.

1.2 What existing planning policies apply

Current planning policies as set out in the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 (NHLP)
Main relevant policies: SP2 Development in Category A Village.
SP9 and D1 Sustainable Design.

Relevant sections from The National Planning Policy Framework

1.3 Involvement/Consultations- Who has the scheme been discussed with and results

The scheme has been discussed with the Trustees and there was a previous planning consent in 26/08/2016 for two dwellings that was not implemented. Post 2016 we understand North Herts Planning encouraged SBEF to reapply with more units.

In July 2024 application 24/01580/FP was submitted for the erection of two three bed dwellings and two 1-bedroom apartments. This planning application was refused on 1/11/24 for the following reasons.

1. By reason of the siting of the development close to the highway boundary, the number of units proposed and the restricted site area, the proposed development would result in an overdevelopment of the site that would have an adverse impact on the visual amenities and general character of the area. As a consequence, the proposals would fail to achieve a high standard of environment required by the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SP9 and Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.
2. The proposed layout does not provide adequate levels of car parking (in terms of number of spaces and dimensions) to meet the standards set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Car Parking at New Development' and the Hertfordshire County Council's Place and Movement Planning Design Guidance (2023). Consequently, it is likely that the development will give rise to additional on street car parking and congestion that would have a negative impact on pedestrian and highway safety in the vicinity of the site. The development would fail to comply with Policy SP9 and Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.
3. The proposed development does not make adequate provision for the storage of refuse and recycling bins in accordance with standards adopted by the North Herts District Council waste services department. The development would fail to meet the requirements of Policy SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan.
4. The proposed development would result in overlooking at close quarters of the primary school playing fields / play space and a consequent loss of privacy and potential safeguarding issue for children attending the school. The development would be contrary to the provisions of Policy SP9, Policy D1 and Policy D3 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.
5. The proposed development would result in sub-standard accommodation by reason of the inadequate size of the flats and houses and the limited size of the communal amenity area and / or private amenity areas. Furthermore, it is likely that the proximity of mature trees and hedgerow would result in significant shading of the proposed amenity areas to the detriment of the living conditions of the proposed occupiers. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy SP9, Policy D1 and Policy D3 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

Regarding the reasons for refusal, we have revised the application to address all the issues and each reason is responded to in the Evaluation 1.4 below.

1.4 Evaluation- referring to assessments and consultations above

Evaluation Responding to the previous application 24/01580/FP

1. By reason of the siting of the development close to the highway boundary, the number of units proposed and the restricted site area, the proposed development would result in an overdevelopment of the site that would have an adverse impact on the visual amenities and general character of the area. As a consequence, the proposals would fail to achieve a high standard of environment required by the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy SP9 and Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

RESPONSE / EVALUATION

The distance of the development from the kerbside / highway boundary has been increased to 5.2m (previously 3.7m) The set- back from the highway is now greater than the adjacent School House which is 5m.

The number of new dwellings has been reduced to three. This reduced quantum of development.

The reduced number of dwellings and further set back from the highway addresses the aspirations of HNHLP policy SP9 and Policy D1 and additionally responds to NPPF paragraphs 124-130 'Make effective use of land'

The principle of the development is confirmed in planning report dated 1/11/24 para 4.3.3

2. The proposed layout does not provide adequate levels of car parking (in terms of number of spaces and dimensions) to meet the standards set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document 'Car Parking at New Development' and the Hertfordshire County Council's Place and Movement Planning Design Guidance (2023). Consequently, it is likely that the development will give rise to additional on street car parking and congestion that would have a negative impact on pedestrian and highway safety in the vicinity of the site. The development would fail to comply with Policy SP9 and Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

RESPONSE / EVALUATION

The number of units have been reduced to three. The required number of car park spaces is reduced. Only five car park bays are needed. (4 spaces for the two three bed house plus 1 space for 1 bed house) The parking bays sizes are increased to 2.5 x5 m to comply with Parking SPD.

The Highway Authority has no objection ref planning report dated 1/11/24 para 3.3

3. The proposed development does not make adequate provision for the storage of refuse and recycling bins in accordance with standards adopted by the North Herts District Council waste services department. The development would fail to meet the requirements of Policy SP9 and D1 of the Local Plan.

RESPONSE / EVALUATION

The provision for bin space has been increased to allow for x4 wheelie bins per dwelling. Refer drawing 736/11-02PC. We have clarified the paving and suggest owners' wheel their bins to the boundary for collection.

Compost bins are shown in each garden to promote home composting.

Waste and Recycling North Herts have been consulted 23/7/25. On 04/09/25 Martin Trotter responded to confirm the proposals for waste collection was satisfactory (refer attachment Waste and Recycling 250904.pdf)

4. The proposed development would result in overlooking at close quarters of the primary school playing fields / play space and a consequent loss of privacy and potential safeguarding issue for children attending the school. The development would be contrary to the provisions of Policy SP9, Policy D1 and Policy D3 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

RESPONSE / EVALUATION

The first-floor windows on the east elevation overlooking the Primary School play space have been removed other than the bathroom which will have obscured glass and will be fixed shut.

There will no be no overlooking of the school

5. The proposed development would result in sub-standard accommodation by reason of the inadequate size of the flats and houses and the limited size of the communal amenity area and / or private amenity areas. Furthermore, it is likely that the proximity of mature trees and hedgerow would result in significant shading of the proposed amenity areas to the detriment of the living conditions of the proposed occupiers. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy SP9, Policy D1 and Policy D3 of the North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

RESPONSE / EVALUATION

The unit sizes and bedrooms have been adjusted to allow for two 4 person dwellings and a 1-bedroom house for two people.

The accommodation areas are no longer sub-standard. The number of occupiers has now been defined.

Regarding communal amenity area and private amenity areas. All the private gardens face south. As such the shading of the vegetation is limited to the garden only and all the Patios will have good afternoon and early evening sunshine. During the winter months the existing indigenous trees and hedging will lose their leaves as the vegetation is deciduous – This will allow for more winter sunlight. In the summer when the south sun is at a higher azimuth the vegetation being in leaf will have the advantage of summer shading and better cooling. The proximity of the vegetation will not be detrimental to the sunlight falling inside the habitable space.

The orientation of the roof is south. This maximizes the benefit for a PV installation and energy generation.

The new homes with a South Orientation optimise the Passive design and Fabric performance.

When a successful Planning application is granted for three dwellings further appraisals will be carried out for timber frame construction. There is no reason why this scheme cannot achieve a 'Silver Award' or better under North Herts Sustainability SPD

The homes will provide a good standard of accommodation. There is a clear hierarchy of spaces (cf Oscar Newman 'Defensible Space') as defined in the pattern of Public Space - the highway and pavement, semi-public space - the mews courtyard and parking area, semi private space – the front Porch. Private space – the home and garden. This achieves secure and good 'place making' houses.

The new dwellings will be sustainable by virtue of being very well insulated with Air source heat pumps and finally adaptable for 'Lifetime' Homes.

As stated in the Vision 3.6 of North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031
'A mixture of quality new homes including affordable houses with a choice of tenure catering for the needs of North Hertfordshire's residents and, where appropriate, the wider housing market, will be provided in appropriate sustainable locations.

The new homes echo the proportions of the 19th Century Hill Top Cottages

In accordance with Planning Policies developments can take place without damage to the character or appearance of the locality. The development as designed is considered to be respectful to the adjoining conservation area.

The proposal will offer comfortable 'green living'. The ground floor south doors open out onto the garden for healthy living. The development does not prejudice crime prevention and all the windows and doors on the both floors will be lockable to satisfy insurance requirements.

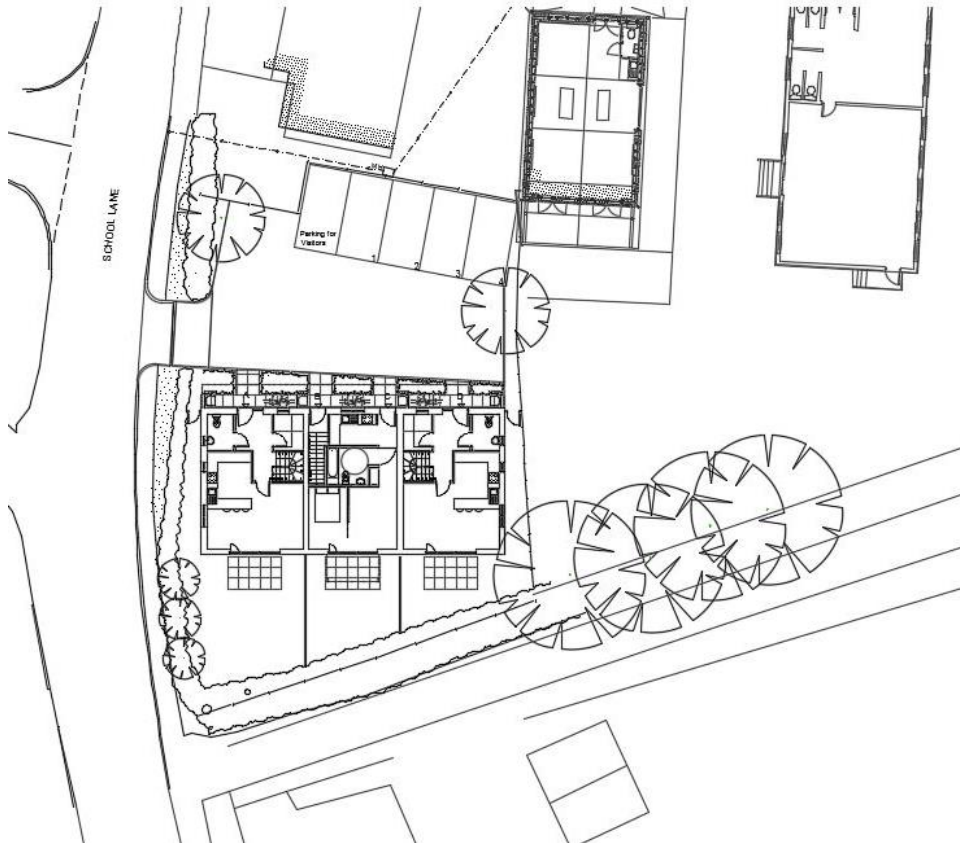
1.5 Design – How has the evaluation influenced the design?

As above the layout has been revised to create better homes.

The roofs will be slate and walls a red clay brick is proposed for the external material. Well-proportioned triple glassed casement windows will give good light and ventilation.

The homes will harmonize with the surrounding houses and landscape. The village character of the site and surrounding properties is fully respected and will form a well-designed sustainable cluster of housing.

Referring to planning report dated 1/11/24 para 4.3.8 there is no objection raised to the choice of materials.



Proposed Site Plan

2 Physical characteristics of proposed Development

2.1 Use –How does it fit in the area

The materials and design are similar to the nearby Hill Top Cottages which are within the Conservation Area.

There is no loss of mature trees

The new homes will enrich Offley's varied housing. The proposed dwellings will have a contemporary 'vernacular' character being neither modern nor dully traditional in appearance, they will be in harmony with the adjacent properties and by using quality materials which all weather gracefully.

The scale, materiality and landscaping of the proposed homes will complement and enhance this area of the village.

In response to the planning report dated 1/11/24 para4.3.9 the scale has been reduced (only 3 dwellings) and the set back from the road increased to over 5m. The hedge will now be more dominant.

Additionally with regards to para 4.3.6 in the planning report ' The close proximity of the side elevation of the terrace block' There is no regular or consistent form to developments in Offley and the relationship facing onto to the Road. This is confirmed in the Greater Offley Conservation Area Character statement September 20119 Para 2.1.9 *'Occasional buildings are set behind hedges, which lessens their visibility from the road. The buildings around Westbury Farm Court either front directly onto the street or are set behind walls, although there is no through road here and they are generally less publicly accessible. Buildings are generally in long, thin plots separated by fencing and planting. At the north end of the Conservation Area buildings rise from the rear of the pavement behind small forecourts, that are bounded by fencing, railings or are planted*

The consistent feature to this development is the retention of the hedge. This retains the semi-rural nature and appearance.

2.2 Size of development and why is it appropriate.

The area of the site is about 540sqm

House A 3 bedroom 4 person house is 84 .6sqm

House B 1 bedroom 2 person house is 58.4sqm

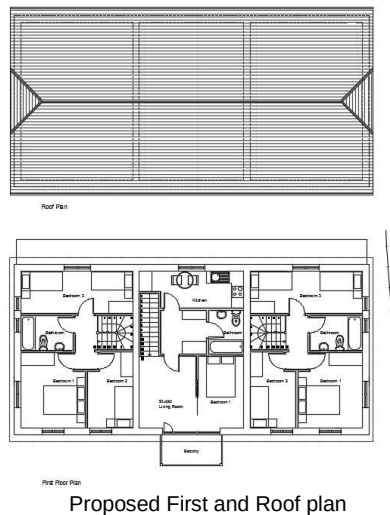
House C 3 bedroom 4 person house is 84 .6sqm

These meet the Government Technical Housing standards – national described space standards (2015) being 3 bed 4 person house 84sqm and 1 bed 2 person two storey house 58sqm

This gives a mix of home types.

The size of the proposed homes is in line with family/ single person properties within the area and suitable for the density of this area. The NPPF Section 11 – Making Effective use of land, para 124 encourages brown field sites. Para 125c gives substantial weight to sites like Old School Garden as with in an existing settlement.

The smallest Garden (House C) – Private amenity space is over 39sqm. There are no known requirement sizes but the triangular shape is 7.4m wide x 3.3m at the midpoint. The overshadowing from the hedge is further discussed in 1.4 point 5 above.



Proposed First and Roof plan

2.3 Layout - Where will the development be on the site

As described previously (1.4 point 5), the layout gives a single access point onto School Lane with 'Mews' style parking and pleasurable south facing gardens. The houses running at right angles to School Lane avoids front gardens, additional openings in the School Lane hedgerow and most importantly maximizes a southerly elevational for all the homes.

The homes are thus oriented and shaped externally to evoke a mews setting in the semi-public area and private garden zones to maximise privacy. Also refer 1.4.5 above



West Elevation



North Elevation



South Elevation



East Elevation

Proposed Elevations

2.4 Scale – relative to existing buildings and or features.

The proposed new dwellings have been carefully redesigned. To limit the impact of the West elevation the setback has been increased to 5.2m (adjacent existing School House is set back 5m) The number of dwellings has been reduced to three. The scale is considered appropriate as much of the existing adjacent housing is two storey ref Planning report para 4.3.5. School House as referred to in the planning report 4.3.16 is minimally affected. Overlooking issue with the school 4.3.17 have also been addressed. The site levels will be similar to existing. The average existing level is 160.85, The new Patio level will be at 161.00 and proposed FFL 161.150.

2.5 Landscaping

The general area around the site is well landscaped with grass verges, hedgerows and the occasional trees providing a distinctive semi- rural character. The proposal will retain the existing hedgerow and add additional planting as fully described in the BNG. The existing hedgerow will be partially trimmed to improve the entrance vision slays. Additional sympathetic planting and the entrance have been designed to create a visual boundary between the School Lane and the development.

The site lies in Flood zone 1 with a low risk of flooding, paving would be kept to a minimum and the scheme will incorporate Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS) design methods including permeable paving and water butts.

2.6 Appearance

The proposed dwellings will have traditional slate roofs with red clay bricks. The materials will not be out of discord to the site and neighbouring properties. (Again, refer planning report dated 1/11/24 para 4.3.8 there is no objection raised to the choice of materials.)

Crafted contemporary details including timber horizontal louvres panels for ventilation, Porches and eaves details have been incorporated within a traditional framework to create characterful, bright and enjoyable life time homes.

The large south facing bi fold glazed doors will again enhance the bright sun lit living kitchens and maximise the view of the gardens.

We believe the three new homes to be positively contributing to the village overall appearance and character.

2.7 Heritage assets and potential impact on the setting of the adjacent conservation area.

In the planning report dated 1/11/24 there is a request to access the impact of the development on the Adjacent Conservation area. The boundary line of the Greater Offley Conservation area is to the south side of the unmade track. The site lies outside the Greater Offley Conservation area. The main feature when walking north from the conservation area are the hedgerows. The hedgerows will be retained and are an important 'green' asset. It is not considered the proposed development would have any adverse effect on the Heritage assets in the conservation area. All these are on the opposite side of School Lane. The potential impact on the adjacent conservation area is less than minimal harm.

2.8 Refuse provision.

The refuse Provision is shown on drawing 736-11-02PC and is confirmed as satisfactory by Waste and Recycling North Herts on 04/09/25 by Martin Trotter (refer attachment Waste and Recycling 250904.pdf)

2.9 Highway Access and Parking

As recorded in Planning report 4.3.19 The Highway Authority has no objection to the proposed access arrangements.

The car parking - Only five car park bays are needed. (4 spaces for the two three bed house plus 1 space for 1 bed house) The parking bays sizes are increased to 2.5 x5 m to comply with Parking SPD. For visitors parking as there are no garages there should be an allowance 0.25 spaces per dwelling. It is not unreasonable for visitors parking 1 space to be provided in School Lane and other off-street parking as per footnote 1 and 2 in the SPD.

For visitors Parking there is the potential for double parking with a guest's car being parked in front of two resident's bay. As there is already an access point it should not lead to further congestion around the school.

3 Access arrangements

3.1 Policy approach.

The properties will be designed to provide access as required under Part M of Building Regulations.

The entrance reuses the existing cross over which currently has a five-bar gate.

3.2 Consultation

This application addresses the issues raised in the previous application and refers to the planning report dated 1st November 2024 prepared by Tom Rea and signed by Sam Dicocco. The revised application has been agreed and discussed with the Trustees SBEF.

3.3 How access is achieved (links to roads footpaths etc)

There is an existing access to the site via a five-bar gate.

In the previous planning Application, The Highway Authority has no objection to the proposed access. School Lane is an unclassified Road. On plan 736/11-01 the 33m vision splay has been plotted. The cars can turn in the area so always exit the mews in a forward direction. A section of the hedge will need cutting back and replanting. The entrance reuses the existing cross over

Each home will have parking space as 2.9 above. There is space for secure parking of two bicycles per dwelling. Pedestrian access will be provided via paved entrance paths. A position has been allocated for refuse bin storage and collection.

4. Conclusion

Considering the location, size and sympathetic design of the proposed new homes, we believe this proposal would be a positive contribution to the housing of Offley. It is a development that enriches the local area through the construction aesthetically pleasing buildings.

It is hoped the planners will now be able to agree with the above comments and be able

to give the scheme planning approval.

As stated in the Vision 3.6 of North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

'A mixture of quality new homes including affordable houses with a choice of tenure catering for the needs of North Hertfordshire's residents and, where appropriate, the wider housing market, will be provided in appropriate sustainable locations.

The houses are for the Offley community being promoted by the local charity 'Salisbury & Burroughs Educational Foundation' (SBEF) accord with this vision.

16th October 2025
Hox Design Architects

Rev C 16/10/25 Updated for revised application.

John Clarke

From: Waste and Recycling <WasteandRecycling@north-herts.gov.uk>
Sent: 04 September 2025 14:23
To: John Clarke
Subject: RE: Three new dwelling School Lane Offley SG5 3AT waste Recycling Proposals

Good afternoon,

Sorry for the delay of a response, seeing from the maps provided the bin storage communal area is by the boundary of the property which from a waste perspective gives ample space and allowance for the collection team to collect and return the bins from this location.

Thank you.

Kind regards

Martin Trotter



Celebrating 50 years



Martin Trotter
Shared Service Contract Officer –
Waste

www.north-herts.gov.uk
www.eastherts.gov.uk



From: John Clarke <john.clarke@hoxdesign.co.uk>
Sent: 04 August 2025 10:54
To: Waste and Recycling <WasteandRecycling@north-herts.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Three new dwelling School Lane Offley SG5 3AT waste Recycling Proposals

Waste and recycling

Further to my email 23/7/25 can you please let me know when I will get your response as we wish to submit the planning application very shortly.

Best and thanks

John

John A Clarke
Hox Design Architects
Unit 2, 5 Drysdale Street
London N1 6ND
0207 739 2050
[Redacted]

www.hoxdesign.co.uk

From: John Clarke <john.clarke@hoxdesign.co.uk>
Sent: 23 July 2025 18:37
To: 'Wasteandrecycling@north-herts.gov.uk' <Wasteandrecycling@north-herts.gov.uk>
Cc: Richard Alvarez [REDACTED]
Subject: Three new dwelling School Lane Offley SG5 3AT Refuse Proposals

Dear Sirs

We are about to submit a planning application for the attached site

I understand North Herts now require space for 4 bins per dwelling.
Your appendix B form has been completed.
The refuse Bin Collection information is shown on drawing 736/11-02PC

The location is shown on 736/1-00

Can you please confirm the proposal is satisfactory based on your guidelines for a successful application

Please confirm receipt and when we can expect a response to the proposal

Best regards

John

John A Clarke
Hox Design Architects
Unit 2, 5 Drysdale Street
London N1 6ND
0207 739 2050
[REDACTED]
www.hoxdesign.co.uk

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