

MADDOX PLANNING
PLANNING
STATEMENT

KIRBY MANOR FARM, NORTHFIELD ROAD
AUGUST 2025

Description of development

Conversion of existing agricultural buildings to provide 8 residential units and associated works

Type of application

Full Planning

Applicant

Mr Sheppard

List of supporting documents

1. Application forms, certificates and notices
 2. Application Drawings, Crawshaw Architects LLP
 3. Design and Access Statement, Crawshaw Architects LLP (November 2024)
 4. Transport Statement, TPS (March 2025)
 5. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), ROAVR Group (April 2025)
 6. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric, ROAVR Group
 7. Nocturnal Emergence Bat Surveys, ROAVR Group (July 2025)
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Development plan

The adopted development plan comprises:

1. North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (November 2022)
 2. Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (April 2022)
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Policies map

The following designations on the policies map are particularly relevant:

1. Areas of Special Control
 2. Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt
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Planning policies

The following adopted and emerging planning policies are particularly relevant:

Policy number	Policy title	Referred to in paragraph number of this statement
North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2022)		
SP1	Sustainable development in North Herts	
SP2	Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution	
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt	3.2, 3.6, 3.10
SP6	Sustainable transport	3.31, 3.33, 3.36
SP9	Sustainable design	3.12, 3.16
CGB1	Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt	3.2, 3.6, 3.10
CGB4	Existing buildings in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt	3.2, 3.6, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.16
HS3	Housing mix	3.24, 3.26
D1	Sustainable design	3.12, 3.16
D3	Protecting living conditions	3.17, 3.19, 3.20
NE2	Landscape	
NE4	Biodiversity and geological sites	3.27, 3.30
T1	Assessment of transport matters	3.31, 3.36
T2	Parking	3.31, 3.34, 3.36
Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan (2022)		
ASH1	Housing development within settlement boundary	3.9
ASH2	Provision of smaller homes near transport and amenities	
ASH4	High quality design that integrates with surroundings	3.13, 3.16
ASH8	Protection of important village views	3.13, 3.16
ASH9	Sensitivity to landscape and natural features	3.13, 3.16
ASH10	Biodiversity net gain (using DEFRA metric) and protection of Ashwell Springs	3.27, 3.30
ASH19	Improvements to footpaths and cycleways	3.36
ASH20	Off-street parking provision for new development	3.32, 3.35, 3.36
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024)		
Section 12	Achieving well designed places	3.12
Paragraph 80	Re-use of redundant and disused buildings in rural areas	
Paragraph 84	Development of agricultural and other rural buildings/businesses	

Paragraph 111	Highway safety and sustainable transport	3.31, 3.36
Paragraph 130(f)	High standard of amenity for existing and future users	3.19
Paragraph 174	Biodiversity and ecological enhancement	3.27, 3.30

In this Statement, the Applicant gives full weight to policies contained in the development plan but, in accordance with section 38(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, if a policy contained in a development plan for an area conflicts with another policy in the development plan, the conflict must be resolved in favour of the policy which is contained in the last document to be adopted, approved, or published.

Other material considerations

Other material considerations (such as national planning policy and supplementary planning documents, area action plans and design briefs) include:

1. National Planning Policy Framework
2. Planning Practice Guidance
3. North Hertfordshire District Council, Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD (2011)
4. North Hertfordshire District Council, Sustainability SPD (2024)

Relevant planning decisions

Reference/address	Description	Status/decision date	Referred to in paragraph number of this statement
24/02712/PNQ	Conversion of existing agricultural buildings to provide 8 residential units.	Prior Approval Given / 23 rd January 2025	1.4, 3.3, 3.11, 3.15, 3.22, 3.25, 3.34
24/01570/PNQ	Conversion of existing agricultural buildings to provide 8 residential units	Withdrawn	
23/02338/PNQ	Conversion of existing agricultural barn to provide 4 residential units (2 x 2bed, 1 x 3bed and 1 x 4bed) with all associated building works.	Prior Approval Given / 24 th November 2023	
23/02019/PNQ	Conversion of existing agricultural barn to provide 4 residential units (two 2-bed, one 3-bed and one 4-bed) with all associated building works.	Withdrawn	
87/01340/1	Erection of first floor side extension	Conditional Permission / 21 st October 1987	
78/00706/1	Erection of single storey extensions to provide games room, shed and boiler room.	Conditional Permission / 9 th June 1978	
77/00888/1LB	Internal alterations and alterations to door opening to rear courtyard	Consent / 4 th August 1977	

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain: 87.54% habitat units and 9,183.58% hedgerow units

Contents of this statement

1. Site and area description
2. Proposed development
3. Considerations
4. Conclusions

Main benefits of the scheme

The proposed development is an excellent opportunity to improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the area and it is in overall accordance with the development plan policies on rural housing delivery, the re-use of existing buildings, design and sustainability, biodiversity enhancement, and transport and parking provision.

Notably, the proposed development will:

- Deliver new housing on a brownfield site in line with national and local planning policy objectives.
- Enhancement of the visual quality of the site by replacing unattractive and deteriorating structures with sensitively designed dwellings that reflect the rural vernacular.
- Deliver a mix of housing that meets local housing need, including a substantial quantum of family sized homes.
- The delivery of measurable BNG that vastly exceeds policy targets, through habitat creation, landscaping, and ecological enhancements.
- Delivers design, landscaping, access and refuse improvements for a residential development which has already been approved under prior approval.
- Creation of local employment opportunities through the construction of the development and provision of management roles during the operational phase.

1.0 Site and area description

- 1.1 The site address is Kirby Manor Farm, Northfield Road, Ashwell, Baldock, SG7 5JQ. The site area is approximately 0.57 hectares.
- 1.2 The site and its buildings are part of an agricultural holding known as Kirby Manor Farm of approximately 80 Hectares located at the north end of Ashwell Parish. It is located outside the village settlement boundary, about 2 miles (3.2 km) to the north of Ashwell village (identified as Category A) and within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt, as classified by the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The Landscape classification of the subject site is designated as: National Character Areas (NCA) - 87 East Anglian Chalk.
- 1.3 The site is accessible via two existing entrances, both coming off Northfield Road to the west of the site. The existing entrance off Northfield Road located to the north of the site is wide and leads directly onto the large hardstanding area, the other is an existing passage approximately the width of a car and is currently blocked off by a farm gate.
- 1.4 The site is located a Flood Zone 1 area and is not within proximity to any listed buildings. The property gained prior approval consent under application reference: 24/02712/PNQ on the 23rd of January 2025. The approval was granted for the conversion of existing agricultural buildings to provide eight residential units.
- 1.5 There are residential dwellings located both adjoining the site to the south, and to the west beyond Northfield Road.
- 1.6 There are no existing highway markings or controlled parking zones.

2.0 Proposed development

2.1 The proposed description of development is:

“Conversion of existing agricultural buildings to provide 8 residential units and associated works”.

Table 1: proposed accommodation schedule

Unit number	Bedrooms and persons	GIA (sqm)	Private amenity space GIA (sqm)
1	3B6P	123.61	295
2	3B6P	105.15	270
3	3B6P	100.54	348
4	2B4P	101.98	357
5	3B6P	118.72	257
6	2B4P	150	456
7	3B6P	150	510
8	4B8P	150	427

2.2 The proposals are as approved within 24/02712/PNQ, albeit seek approval on details that could not be approved within this prior approval by way of procedural application type (for example transportation, landscaping, access, parking, refuse storage and collections, garden amenity and ecology).

Layout

2.3 The development converts four existing agricultural buildings into eight dwellings, retaining their original footprints and arrangement to preserve the farmstead character. Units 1–3 occupy the three-wing single-storey building to the north-west, each providing three bedrooms with private gardens. Unit 4 is formed within the smaller southern barn, with a modest 3.9 metre rear extension on existing hardstanding, creating a two-bed dwelling with its own garden. Units 5–8 are within the largest barn on the eastern side, comprising one two-bed, two three-bed, and one four-bed home in a linear layout, all with private outdoor space. Vehicle access is via Northfield Road leading to an internal road serving parking areas with two spaces per dwelling plus four visitor bays, alongside turning space for service and emergency vehicles. A shared bin store for Units 1, 2, and 4 is incorporated into part of an existing pigsty near the southern access. Gardens are positioned for privacy, and boundary treatments and landscaping define curtilages, screen parking, and soften the development’s presence in its rural setting.

Scale and massing

2.4 The proposed development comprises eight single-storey residential units arranged in a courtyard-style layout. Building heights range modestly to ridge level, with varied rooflines and modest massing that respond to site levels. The massing remains low and dispersed, in keeping with the farmstead context.

External appearance

2.5 The buildings use a mix of natural and modern materials, including slate roof tiles, zinc roofing with a matt grey finish, and timber cladding in black and natural tones. Brickwork and render in brick red are also used across the scheme. Windows and doors are aluminium in black or light grey. Architectural details like vertical and horizontal slats and deep window reveals.

Landscaping

2.6 The landscape plan combines hard surfaces like tarmac and permeable paving for driveways and turning areas, with private gardens and shared green spaces throughout the site. Soft landscaping includes

grassed areas, new tree planting, hedgerows, and mixed vegetation to provide screening and biodiversity. Timber fences and brick garden walls define boundaries and create privacy.

Amenity space

- 2.7 Each home has its own private garden, providing dedicated outdoor amenity space directly accessed from the property. There are no balconies or roof terraces; all amenity space is at ground level. In addition to private gardens, the layout includes shared hardstanding and landscaped areas that offer informal communal space, particularly around the central drive and entrance points.

Access and parking

- 2.8 Parking for units 2 to 8 are via a vehicle entrance from Northfield Road, leading to a shared driveway and turning areas finished in tarmac and permeable paving. Unit 1 has its own private drive with two spaces, the entrance is located further south on Northfield Road. Each unit has allocated on-plot parking with spaces distributed across the site, including designated visitor bays. Level access and generous parking bays are provided. Pedestrian movement is accommodated along the same routes, with clear access to each unit's front door.

Accessibility

- 2.9 The plans show level access to all units from adjacent parking areas, supporting inclusive entry in line with Part M requirements. Parking is located close to each entrance, with level thresholds between parking areas and front doors.

Refuse and servicing

- 2.10 The proposal provides two areas for bin collection and storage, within the northern and south eastern portions of the site. The large hardstanding area and multiple turning areas allow for collection.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section therefore assesses the proposal against the development plan policies outlined above and examines relevant material considerations where appropriate. The assessment draws on the application documents listed at Section 1 of this statement. The main planning considerations are:

- Principle of development
- Design and landscape impact
- Standard of accommodation
- Impact upon neighbouring amenity
- Housing mix
- Biodiversity and ecology
- Highways and access

Principle of Development

- 3.2 Policy SP5d) states that the Council will operate a general policy of restraint in Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt through the application of our detailed policies. Under Policy CGB1, development may be permitted in these areas, but only where it relates to existing rural buildings. Within policy subtext paragraph 6.2, where schemes fall within one or more of the categories (i.e. relating to existing rural buildings), they will be judged against other relevant policies of the Plan. The key relevant Policy CGB4 states that planning permission for the re-use, replacement or extension of buildings in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt will be granted provided that:
- b) Any existing building to be converted for re-use does not require major extension or reconstruction;
c) The resultant building(s) do not have a materially greater impact on the openness, purposes or general policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt than the original building(s); and
d) Any outbuilding(s) are sited as close as possible to the main building(s) and visually subordinate to them.
- 3.3 The proposal fully complies with this policy, in that in respect of criterion b) The proposed conversions retain the existing building footprints and primary structural elements, as confirmed in the prior approval decision (Ref: 24/02712/PNQ). External alterations are limited to works reasonably necessary for residential use, such as replacement of windows, doors, roofs, and external wall finishes, without wholesale reconstruction. The only extension, to Unit 4, measures 3.9 metres beyond the rear wall and is constructed on existing hardstanding that has been in situ for more than 10 years, falling well within Class Q and Local Plan limits. The buildings' original structural frames and layouts are preserved, meaning no major extensions or rebuild are required.
- 3.4 In respect of criterion c), the proposal utilises the existing agricultural buildings without increasing their overall bulk or height. The massing, siting, and arrangement of the buildings remain unchanged, ensuring that the openness of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt is maintained. External materials, such as black-stained and natural timber cladding, brick-red render, and slate/zinc roofing, have been chosen to reflect the rural vernacular while enhancing the existing structures. There is no encroachment into previously undeveloped land, and all new domestic curtilages are contained within existing hardstanding or building footprints. As such, the scheme has no materially greater visual or spatial impact than the original buildings and is consistent with the purposes and policy aims of the Rural Area designation.
- 3.5 Finally, for d), any ancillary structures, including the bin store for Units 1, 2, and 4, are located directly adjacent to the associated buildings. The bin store reuses part of an existing smaller structure (former pigsty) and is visually subordinate in both height and footprint to the main buildings. No outbuilding is sited in an isolated or prominent position, and all are proportionate in scale, ensuring that they remain ancillary to the principal dwellings in both function and appearance.

- 3.6 As such, the proposals are considered to fully comply with Local Plan Policies SP5, CGB1 and CGB4.
- 3.7 As set out in the Council's most recent Housing Land Supply Update (May 2024), the total requirement for housing delivery in the district from 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2029 is 5,990 dwellings. Currently there is a deficit of 1,359 dwellings over the five-year period of 2024/25 – 2028/29. The Council therefore can only demonstrate a five-year land position of 3.9 years against our adopted housing requirement. This figure falls below the five-year figure as required in the NPPF. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF indicates that planning permission should be granted unless (i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or (ii) any adverse impacts of doing so significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against policies in this Framework taken as a whole. These considerations should be given considerable weight in the assessment of any forthcoming planning application.
- 3.8 The delivery of eight Class C3 dwellings would make a positive contribution towards the Council's housing targets. Within this context, and within the context of Section 11 'Making effective use of land' of the NPPF (2024), it is considered that there is an overwhelming need for housing to be delivered in North Herts, and that the net delivery of eight Class C3 dwellings would carry weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 3.9 Neighbourhood Plan Policy ASH1 C) states that Development proposals outside the proposed extension to the settlement boundary shown in Figure 4.1 will not be supported unless:
- (i) They are in accordance with Saved Plan (1996) and Emerging Local Plan policies in respect of appropriate uses in the countryside; or the development preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the area;
- 3.10 As outlined within the proceeding section, the proposals are considered to fully comply with what were the emerging (now adopted due to the latest Local Plan superseding the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan) Local Plan policies (the key ones being Policies SP5, CGB1 and CGB4) in respect of appropriate uses in the countryside and given the minimal alterations, are considered to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the area.
- 3.11 The barns are of permanent and substantial construction, as confirmed through structural assessment and accepted by the Local Planning Authority in granting prior approval under Class Q permitted development rights (Ref: 24/02712/PNQ) for their conversion to eight dwellings. This extant consent represents a clear fallback position, whereby the residential use of the site has already been deemed acceptable in principle, subject to the approved Class Q limitations and conditions. Whilst the proposals comply fully with Policy CGB4 and relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies, significant weight should also be given to the fact that residential development of the barns could proceed under the extant Class Q consent without the need for full planning permission. The current application follows the same broad layout, footprint, and number of units as the prior approval scheme, but allows for a more comprehensive and integrated approach to design, materials, and landscaping that cannot be achieved under the more restrictive Class Q framework. Given this fallback, the present proposals would deliver an equivalent quantum of development with enhanced design quality, environmental performance, and compliance with Local Plan objectives.

Design and Landscape Impact

- 3.12 Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 126–134) encourages development that is both visually attractive and sympathetic to the character and history of its surroundings. In alignment with this, North Hertfordshire Local Plan policies SP9, D1, and CGB4 emphasise design and sustainability. Policy SP9 requires that development respects the character of the site and its surroundings, while Policy D1 demands high-quality design that responds positively to the local context. Policy CGB4 further stipulates that the conversion of rural buildings should not result in a materially greater impact on the countryside.
- 3.13 Similarly, the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan reinforces these principles through Policies ASH4, ASH8, and ASH9. ASH4 calls for new development to integrate seamlessly with its surroundings and maintain a high

standard of design, ASH8 seeks to protect important views within the village and its setting, and ASH9 ensures that development fits sensitively within the landscape and safeguards natural features. Together, these policies establish a strong framework for design-led, context-sensitive, and landscape-conscious development.

- 3.14 The proposal retains the scale, form and layout of the existing agricultural buildings, with minimal external alterations. New materials have been carefully selected to reflect the rural vernacular, including timber cladding and muted roofing materials. Proposed landscaping and boundary treatments (e.g. native hedgerows, post-and-rail fencing) are sympathetic to the countryside setting.
- 3.15 The site is visually enclosed and does not impact any of the key views identified in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. By enhancing the appearance of previously unattractive buildings and surrounding hardstanding, the scheme improves the site's immediate setting. The proposals will result in the cessation of agricultural use at the site, and thus the stopping of noisy and heavy agricultural machinery and associated processes, which were raised by neighbours as existing concerns within 24/02712/PNQ. The design of the proposed upgraded buildings was also approved within 24/02712/PNQ.
- 3.16 The proposal accords with the design objectives of the NPPF, Local Plan Policies SP9, D1 and CGB4, and Neighbourhood Plan Policies ASH4, ASH8 and ASH9.

Standard of accommodation

- 3.17 Planning policy at both national and local levels prioritises the protection of amenity for all users. Paragraph 130(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should ensure that developments create a high standard of amenity for both existing and future users. Reflecting this principle, Policy D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted where development proposals do not cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of occupants. These policies collectively support development that is considerate of its impact on surrounding residents and future users, promoting environments that are comfortable and livable.
- 3.18 The proposals provide eight spacious dwellings, which are at a minimum, dual aspect, and demonstrably exceed the Nationally Described Space Standards in respect of unit sizes. Suitable and satisfactory garden areas are provided for each dwelling, which will provide excellent levels of private amenity for future residents of the development.
- 3.19 The proposal therefore accords with NPPF Paragraph 130(f) and Local Plan Policy D3.

Impact upon neighbouring amenity

- 3.20 Policy D3 states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions. This includes impacts upon neighbouring amenity.
- 3.21 The proposal has been carefully designed to respect the amenity of the adjoining residential dwellings, most notably to the south. The conversion retains the existing building envelopes and their established separation distances from the neighbouring properties, ensuring that there is no increase in built form, height, or proximity that could cause overbearing impact. Openings have been positioned to minimise any potential for overlooking, with primary windows and outdoor amenity spaces oriented away from the immediate southern boundary wherever practicable.
- 3.22 As noted in the Council's prior approval decision (Ref: 24/02712/PNQ), any additional activity at the site will be of a domestic residential nature—such as vehicle movements, garden use, and general day-to-day living—which is not considered to cause unacceptable harm when compared with the existing lawful agricultural use. Furthermore, proposed boundary treatments and landscaping will provide effective visual screening between the new dwellings and the adjoining property, enhancing privacy and reducing any perception of overlooking.

- 3.23 The barns have an extant Class Q prior approval for conversion to eight dwellings, establishing the principle of residential use. The current proposal matches the approved layout and scale, so impacts on neighbouring amenity would be no greater than already approved, while offering improved landscaping, boundary treatments, and design to further protect living conditions.

Housing mix

- 3.24 Local Plan Policy HS3 states that planning permission for new homes will be granted provided that:
- a) An appropriate range of house types and sizes are provided taking into account:
 - i. the overall targets of this plan;
 - ii. the findings of the most up-to-date evidence including the most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment, the Council's Self-Build Register and other relevant evidence of housing need;
 - iii. the location and accessibility of the site; and
 - iv. recent completions, existing permissions and sites in the five year supply; and
 - b) The scheme would provide a density, scale and character of development appropriate to its location and surroundings.
- 3.25 In respect of criterion a), The proposal provides two 2-bed, five 3-bed, and one 4-bed dwellings, reflecting SHMA evidence of local housing need and the rural demand for both family homes and smaller units. This mix has already been approved under the extant Class Q prior approval (Ref: 24/02712/PNQ).
- 3.26 For criterion b), Reusing existing barns maintains a low density and preserves their scale, form, and rural character. High-quality, sympathetic materials and detailing ensure the scheme integrates with its surroundings. The development therefore meets Policy HS3 by delivering an appropriate mix at a scale and density suited to its location.

Biodiversity and ecology

- 3.27 National and local policies place a strong emphasis on protecting and enhancing biodiversity through development decisions. Paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that planning decisions should minimise impacts on biodiversity and deliver measurable net gains wherever possible. Reflecting this at the local level, Policy NE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan supports both the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, with a clear focus on achieving measurable net gains. Complementing these aims, the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policy ASH10 requires all new developments to deliver a measurable net gain in biodiversity, specifically using the DEFRA biodiversity metric, and includes a protective provision to ensure that development does not harm the ecologically sensitive Ashwell Springs. These policies collectively promote a proactive approach to ecological stewardship within the planning process.
- 3.28 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Biodiversity Net Gain Metric and Bat Emergence Surveys have been submitted as part of this planning application. A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation using DEFRA metrics has been undertaken and demonstrates a measurable net gain of 87.54% habitat units and 9134% hedgerow units, vastly exceeding the 10% threshold. Ecological enhancements are proposed including new native planting, bat and bird boxes, hedgehog highways, and wildflower seeding.
- 3.29 The Bat Emergence Survey undertaken identifies that bats may be using the site as a day roost, and therefore recommends ecological responses, including but not limited to: bat boxes, retention of roosting locations where possible and their replacement like for like if not, and bat tubes within the area of any roofline changes.
- 3.30 The proposal accords with NPPF Paragraph 174, Local Plan Policy NE4 and Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policy ASH10.

Highways and access

- 3.31 National and local transport policies aim to ensure that development is safe, accessible, and supports sustainable travel. Paragraph 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development should only be refused on highway grounds if it would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. North Hertfordshire Local Plan policies SP6, T1, and T2 reinforce this approach. Policy SP6 promotes sustainable transport options and safe site access, while Policy T1 requires thorough assessment of transport impacts and the provision of appropriate mitigation measures. Policy T2 ensures that parking is provided in line with adopted standards.
- 3.32 At the neighbourhood level, the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan supports these objectives through Policy ASH20. ASH20 requires that all new development includes adequate off-street parking provision. Together, these policies establish a framework that balances highway safety, sustainability, and practical transport needs.
- 3.33 The submitted Transport Statement confirms that the proposed conversion of the barns to eight dwellings will generate a very modest level of traffic, around four two-way vehicle movements in the AM peak and five in the PM peak, posing no capacity issues for the local road network. Ten years of collision data show no recorded accidents in the vicinity, and the proposed site access from Northfield Road benefits from measured 85th-percentile speeds of approximately 50–51 mph, with corresponding visibility splays of 2.4 m × 150–156 m achievable within the adopted highway, fully meeting DMRB standards. Each dwelling will have two parking spaces, with four additional visitor spaces, in line with the Council’s Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD, and all dwellings will be equipped with EV charging points, contributing to the aims of SP6 in promoting low-emission travel.
- 3.34 The access design, parking provision, and servicing arrangements ensure compliance with Policy 51 by safeguarding highway safety and providing suitable access for all users. Policy T2 is satisfied through provision of parking at the required standard, turning areas for service and emergency vehicles, and a layout that avoids conflict between vehicles and pedestrians. Whilst Hertfordshire Highways previously raised concern about reliance on the private car in this rural location, the LPA has already determined through the Class Q prior approval (Ref: 24/02712/PNQ) that the location is not impractical or undesirable and that the development would have no adverse transport or highway impacts. This fallback position establishes the acceptability of residential use and associated trip patterns, with the current application delivering the same scale of development alongside enhancements in access geometry, EV provision, and landscaping.
- 3.35 The proposal complies with Policy ASH20, in that the proposal safeguards existing rights of way and ensures pedestrian access within the site is safe and unobstructed. Parking is fully contained within the site, two spaces per dwelling plus four visitor bays, avoiding on-street demand and meeting ASH20’s parking objectives.
- 3.36 The proposal accords with NPPF Paragraph 111, Local Plan Policies SP6, T1 and T2, and Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policies ASH19 and ASH20.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The proposed conversion of agricultural buildings to eight residential units at Kirby Manor Farm complies with the relevant policies of the National Planning Policy Framework, the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011-2031), and the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, the Class Q approval fallback is a material consideration that should be given material weight in favour of the application.

Benefits of the proposal

- Deliver new housing on a brownfield site in line with national and local planning policy objectives.
 - Enhancement of the visual quality of the site by replacing unattractive and deteriorating structures with sensitively designed dwellings that reflect the rural vernacular.
 - Deliver a mix of housing that meets local housing need, including a substantial quantum of family sized homes.
 - The delivery of measurable BNG that vastly exceeds policy targets, through habitat creation, landscaping and ecological enhancements.
 - Delivers design, landscaping, access and refuse improvements for a residential development which has already been approved under prior approval.
 - Creation of local employment opportunities through the construction of the development and provision of management roles during the operational phase.
- 4.2 The application is supported and has been informed by several technical reports listed within the introduction that demonstrates the proposal is acceptable and comprises a valid planning application.