

1 Ashwell Street,
ASHWELL,
Herts,
SG7 5QF

North Herts Planning Control Offices,
Gernon Road,
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY,
Herts,
SG6 3JF

Dear Sirs,

The Ruddery, Ashwell Street, ASHWELL - 25/03050/FP – Erection of 4 Dwellings Including Parking and Landscaping

We wish to make a formal comment on the above application proposals which we have viewed in some detail on the Council's website.

We live at no. 1 Ashwell Street which lies directly north east of site 2 of the proposals which includes plots 3 and 4, two detached 3 bedroom dwellings with associated garage/carport block and parking.

We strongly support no further development along Ashwell Street - a rural track with limited and low density housing, in keeping with the rural openness of the area. We note that the proposed development lies within the defined settlement limits of Ashwell where there is a presumption in favour of residential development that does not expand those boundaries, and supports limited infilling, although we question whether the proposal meets the definition of "limited".

We note that the applicant confirms in the Design and Access Statement that due diligence has been exercised by way of two submissions for pre-application advice, and it is claimed that amendments have been made to the proposals in order to accord with that advice. Since pre-application advice is not in the public domain, we cannot comment with any authority as to whether indeed this is the case.

We feel strongly that the development plots 3 and 4 with two detached dwellings would not be appropriate.

Since we are not as closely affected by plots 1 and 2, we will reserve any comment on this aspect of the application beyond the overall objection described above.

The reasoning for objecting to plots 3 and 4 is summarised by way of the following:

- The plot is narrow, being constrained by the existing well-established access track from Ashwell Street to no. 3, resulting in a contrived form of development, shoehorning in two properties.
- This results in two dwellings on the residential plot being cramped and not in conformity with the context and grain of this part of Ashwell Street.
- Separation between the two properties is nominal and again not sympathetic with the spaciousness and openness of our property (no. 1), the neighbouring property to the west of plots 3 and 4, nor no. 105 Small Gains Lane to the south western boundary.

- As a matter of design, we believe that it is disappointing that the two properties are a mirror of each other and do not reflect the individuality of the houses at this end of the street.
- Whilst we applaud the siting and the staggered relationship of the properties in this section of Ashwell Street, as graphically demonstrated within the DAS, which has responded to NHC's desire to see development tapering back Eastwards to reduce the impact on the rural setting, maintaining uncluttered views of the open countryside beyond, we strongly believe that this site is only appropriate for a single dwelling.
- Separation to our boundary is minimal and clearly a result of over ambitious overdevelopment of a site of limited width. The current proposal positions one property immediately adjacent to our boundary disrupting the established pattern of development and eroding the open gaps between buildings. We would suggest that a minimum 2m separation from our boundary, with the new dwelling in the same location as currently proposed, respecting the tapering splay, would be more appropriate. Separation to the opposite boundary is already more than adequately achieved by virtue of the existing access track.
- We note that there will be a loss of trees, which is regretful especially given the mature and established vegetation on this plot. We would ask that this be kept to a minimum and note that a detailed landscaping scheme has been provided which we would ask to be conditioned as an obligation.

In summary, whilst we believe and understand that residential development on this site is potentially policy compliant, we submit that it is patently clear that the current proposal for plots 3 & 4 represents overdevelopment and should be restricted to a single detached dwelling. This would also overcome our criticism of the uniform design.

I trust that the above comments are found to be constructive and will help inform the Planning Authority's decision making.

I would be obliged to be informed of the Council's ultimate decision.

Your faithfully

Oliver and Nicola Gearing