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Our Ref: 25/02492/PRE

Contact: Melissa Tyler
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Date: 17 December 2025

FAO: Gareth Leech

Dear Sir/Madam

Pre Application Advice : Replacement dwelling
35 Grays Lane, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 2HH,

Please quote the following reference: 25/02492/PRE on all correspondence.

I refer to your request for pre-application advice regarding the aforementioned site; I am writing to you following an assessment of the supporting documents submitted and a site visit.

I would emphasise that this document does not constitute a formal determination and is without prejudice to any subsequent planning application.

The following assessment is based upon the following submitted details:

- Application form
- Site Location Plan;
- Existing and proposed Floorplans and elevations

For your information the relevant government guidance and policies from the development plan are as follows:

North Herts Local Plan 2011 – 2031

Policy SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport

Policy SP7: Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions

Policy SP8: Housing

Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability

Policy SP10: Healthy communities

Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability

Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, landscape and biodiversity

Policy SP13: Historic Environment

Policy T1: Assessment of Transport matters

Policy T2: Parking

Policy HS5: Accessible and adaptable housing

Policy D1: Sustainable Design

Policy D3: Protecting living conditions

Policy D4: Air Quality
Policy NE2: Landscape
Policy NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites
Policy NE7: Reducing flood risk
Policy NE8: Sustainable drainage systems
Policy NE11: Contaminated land

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
Section 11 – Making effective use of land
Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

2.3 Supplementary Planning Documents

Vehicle Parking at New Developments SPD - November 2011
Design SPD - July 2011
Sustainability SDP - September 2024

Site

35 Grays Lane is a large detached bungalow.

Proposal

Pre-application advice is sought for the replacement of the existing bungalow with a three storey dwellinghouse.

Key Issues:

The key issues in consideration of the proposal include the principle of the proposed development in this location, the acceptability of the design of the proposed development and its impact on the character and appearance of the area, the impact of the development upon the living conditions of neighbouring properties, the standard of amenity for future occupiers, and the impact of the development upon car parking provision.

Principle of Development

The site is located within the Settlement of Hitchin where Local Plan Policy SP2 supports the development of housing within the settlement boundary. The site is considered sustainable and appropriate in principle for development to meet the majority of the development needs of the District in accordance with Policy SP2 of the Local Plan. The development would be for the replacement of an existing dwelling with a larger two storey dwelling. The principle of development in this location is considered acceptable.

Character and appearance, layout, size, scale and design

Design is central to good planning. The achievement of high quality, sustainable design is required by Government guidance. Planning policies should promote high quality, inclusive design in layouts and buildings in terms of function and impact. Design which does not make the most of opportunities to improve the character and quality of an area should be refused. Policy SP9 (Design and Sustainability) considers that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and that proposals will be supported if the development is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context.

The objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include those seeking to secure the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places (Section 12 – Achieving well-designed and beautiful places). Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that “*Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable communities*”. In this regard, Policy D1 and D2 of the North Herts Local Plan are consistent with the objectives set out within the NPPF.

Policy D1 of the North Herts Local Plan sets out that planning permission will be granted for development proposals that respond positively to the site’s local context, create or enhance the public realm, and reduce energy consumption and waste.

This part of Grays Lane features a variety of dwelling types, sizes, and designs. The existing dwelling is a detached bungalow set back from the public highway by a large driveway.

I raise some concerns with the scale and bulk of the proposed replacement dwelling, based on the plans submitted. The bulk of the dwelling would have some harm on the streetscene in my view given the large crown roof which is contrary to local context..

You may wish to reduce the height of the eaves and ridge height to sit within the neighbouring properties better.

No indication of the proposed materials other than an impression on the submitted plans. I would hope to see materials that reflect the area of Hitchin and not slate roof as not in keeping with this part of Hitchin.

Amenity of Future Occupiers/Neighbours

Paragraph 130 (f) of the NPPF states that “*decisions should ensure that developments... create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and wellbeing, with a high standard of amenity of future and existing users*”. This is largely reflected in Policies D1 and SP9 of the Local Plan. A criterion of Policy SI2 is that appropriate noise mitigation measures, to potentially include insulation and appropriate orientation of living spaces, should be provided. The main noise generating development in the vicinity of the application site is Wymondley Substation. A Noise Assessment Report must be submitted with any future application. The Council’s Environmental Health Officer would be consulted and consider the proposed mitigations, which would be given significant weight, in line with LP Policy SI2.

Local Plan policy D3 Protecting Living Conditions states that:

“Planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions. Where.....the living conditions of an existing development would be affected by a proposed use, the Council will consider whether there are mitigation measures that can be taken to mitigate the harm to an acceptable level. If the Council is not satisfied that mitigation proposals would address the identified harm, development proposals will not be permitted.”

Based on the plans submitted, the development would not likely result in any significant unacceptable impact upon the light, privacy or amenity of nearby neighbouring properties.

However, there are some minor concerns which can likely be addressed following the submission of a full application. Firstly, the proposed balcony at first floor on the rear elevation, I would have concerns about the potential impact of overlooking given the proposed dwelling would sit between the neighbouring dwellinghouses and the proposed dwellinghouse is tight to the shared boundaries and the relatively small rear garden in comparison to the neighbouring properties. I would like to see the balcony removed from any future planning application.

Given the increased height of the replacement dwelling, there is likely to be some additional impact upon the front elevation of No. 33 with the projection of the garage close to the shared boundary. This increase in height may result in an overbearing impact upon the occupiers of the neighbouring dwelling. I would request a streetscene plan showing the proposed heights and relationship of the neighbouring properties, showing any changes in ground levels. I would like to see a daylight and sunlight plan also given that the neighbouring dwellings and the host property are staggered and I would be mindful of the depth at first floor and potential impact on the neighbouring properties.

Furthermore, it is recommended that any side facing windows, particularly those at first floor level, are obscure glazed in order to minimise the potential for overlooking and loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers.

It is considered that the proposed development would not result in any unacceptable impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers provided the concerns raised above are addressed either on plan or within the design and access statement prior to submitting an application.

Future living conditions

Based on the plans submitted, the development would provide sufficient living accommodation within the replacement dwelling. Bedrooms and other habitable rooms would benefit from sufficient access to natural light. Furthermore, the development would provide an acceptable level of privacy for future occupiers. The site would provide a large garden to the rear of the plot. The proposal is considered acceptable.

Access, Parking and Highways

The site would be accessed off the existing driveway from Grays Lane and would feature an integral garage and minimum of two parking spaces on the front drive. This would be sufficient to meet the minimum parking requirements set out in the North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031. Details of delivery routes and procedures during the construction phase are likely to be covered by a Construction Management Plan condition approved pre-commencement.

Landscaping

A comprehensive landscaping scheme would be welcomed in any subsequent application, or these details could be reserved via condition.

Biodiversity and Ecology

Policy NE4 requires all new developments to deliver measurable net gains of biodiversity and therefore, any future application must include an ecological survey of the site with demonstratable measures being put in place to provide a net gain in on-site biodiversity. Any application should be supported by an ecological enhancement plan to ensure that some degree of BNG is achieved on site.

Climate Change Emergency

On 21 May 2019, the Council passed a Climate Emergency motion which pledged to do everything within the Council's power achieve zero carbon emissions in North Hertfordshire by 2030. As one of the first councils to pass this motion, NHDC is leading the way on climate action. This declaration asserted the Council's commitment toward Climate Action beyond current government targets and international agreements. Climate action has been a long-term corporate priority area for the Council, and has been pursued through our objective to Prosper and Protect North Hertfordshire:

This objective informs our commitments to:

- ☐ Green space provision.
- ☐ Representing the Climate Change interests of North Hertfordshire residents on county and regional plans, policies and aspirations.
- ☐ Supporting initiatives that increase the energy efficiency of residents' homes, reduce resource waste, and increase our sustainability for the longer term.
- ☐ Protecting our physical heritage.
- ☐ Finding environmentally sustainable solutions to the challenges

Along with the inclusion of EV charging points which are now a requirement on all new dwellings, other mitigation should be considered in order to make a positive contribution to the mitigation of the climate emergency in line with the new Sustainability SPD. This might be achieved through layout and design of the proposed dwelling, maximising solar gain where possible. This would be seen as a positive attribute of any scheme alongside the inclusion of renewable energy technology. A detailed Energy Assessment will be required in any subsequent planning application, identifying which sustainable measures will be incorporated into the scheme.

Conclusion

It is considered that the principle of the proposed development would be acceptable. There are a number of concerns that relate to the scale, height including the large crown roof and depth at first floor of the replacement dwelling, the inclusion of a balcony and the impact this could have of the replacement dwelling on the occupiers of neighbouring dwellings.

It is recommended that a planning application be submitted. It is also recommended that the concerns relating to neighbouring amenity are addressed within the full planning application.

Any subsequent planning application should be supported by a robust and comprehensive Design and Access Statement, Planning Statement, Landscaping Plan/Details, Bio-diversity Net Gain Statement, and an Energy Statement. Consultation with the Highway Authority is encouraged to ensure the proposed access is acceptable in highways terms.

Any advice given by Council Officers for pre-application enquiries does not constitute a formal response or decision of the council with regards to future planning permission or other consents. The above comments are not binding on any future decision of the Local Planning Authority.

Kind regards

Melissa Tyler

Senior Planning Officer MRTPI

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