

Planning Statement

Planning application

Conversion of stables into a dwelling and demolition of
outbuildings

Fen Farm, Rabley Heath Road, AL6 9UA

DLA Ref: 2024/487

January 2025

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1.0 Background

- 1.1.1 This report relates to a planning application for the conversion of stables into a dwelling at Fen Farm, Rabley Heath Road.

1.2.0 Scope

- 1.2.1 This document comprises an overarching Planning Report. Sections 2 to 4 consider the physical, economic, social and historical context of the site, identifying the relevant local, regional and national planning policy framework; Section 5 sets out the details of the proposal; and Section 6 details the consultations undertaken prior to the submission of the application. All these sections inform the evaluation of the proposal in Section 7 against the identified planning policy framework. The overall conclusions are set out in Section 8 and which are summarised below at paragraph 1.3.0.

1.3.0 Summary

- 1.3.1 The proposal seeks the re-use of the existing outbuilding, which is of substantial construction. The proposed development would also result in the demolition of 157.2m² of built footprint on the site, which would be of a significant benefit in the openness of the Green Belt, therefore meaning the proposals are in accordance with Paragraph 154(h)(iv) of the NPPF.
- 1.3.2 The site is not located within an isolated location and is adjacent to a number of residential properties along Rabley Heath Road, as well as there being a footpath in the vicinity which provides a means of access to the services and facilities within the village of Codicote.
- 1.3.3 The application follows a positive pre-application response from the Council, whilst also providing the relevant technical work to accompany this submission.
- 1.3.4 The proposals would constitute sustainable development in accordance with Paragraph 8 of the NPPF.
- 1.3.5 The proposed dwelling would have a positive impact in meeting the housing targets as set out by the Council.
- 1.3.6 The proposed dwelling would not be out of character to the street scene, would not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring occupiers, and would provide a good standard of accommodation for future occupiers.
- 1.3.7 The proposed development would utilise an existing and safe form of access, providing a suitable level of parking as well as space for vehicles to manoeuvre effectively.

2.0 SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1.0 Location

2.1.1 The site, shown in Figure 1 below, is located to the south of Rabley Heath Road, to the west of the large village of Codicote.



Figure 1 - Site location

2.2.0 Application Site

2.2.1 The application site consists of a large two storey detached dwelling that was approved and constructed by virtue of approved application reference 10/00134/1. The site also consists of a large detached garage, a large detached stable block and barn, as well as number of other associated outbuildings and structures.

2.3.0 Context

2.3.1 The character of the area is predominantly characterised by residential dwellings within a broadly rural area. The site is bound on either side by residential dwellings, with an open field located to the north on the other side of Rabley Heath Road.

2.4.0 Planning Constraints

2.4.1 The only planning designation upon the site is that it is located with the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, is not within a Conservation Area, nor are there any Listed Buildings in close proximity to the site.

2.5.0 Local Services & Accessibility

2.5.1 The site is located less than 100m to the east of a public footpath that leads into the designated settlement of Codicote as shown in Figure 2 below. Codicote has a good range of services and facilities within the village, including a school, a pharmacy, a doctors surgery,

and a number of different shops and pubs. Codicote also has a number of buses that run through the village, providing a regular service to nearby towns and large villages including Welwyn Garden City and Hitchin.

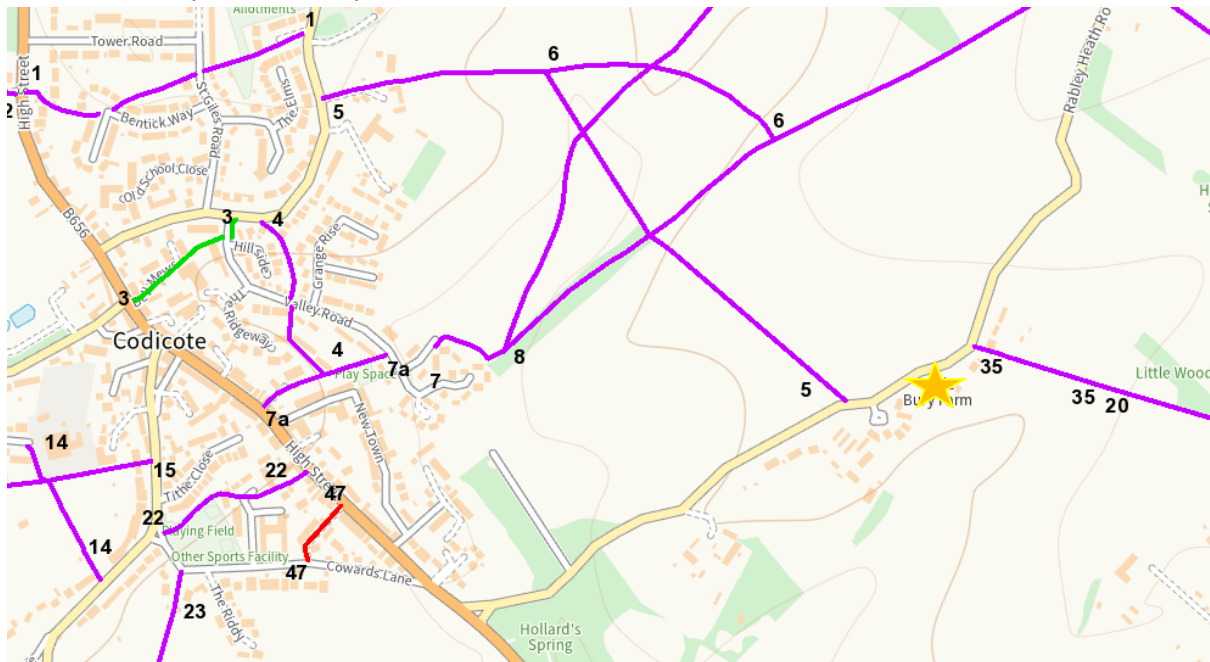


Figure 2- site shown within the Hertfordshire County Council Rights of Way map

3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1.0 Application Site

3.1.1 The relevant history of the application site is summarised in Figure 3.1.0 below.

LPA Ref	Proposal	Outcome
09/01267/1	Erection of one four bedroom dwelling with detached garage following demolition of existing dwelling	Approved
10/00134/1	Erection of one four bedroom dwelling with detached garage following demolition of existing dwelling (as variation to planning permission 09/01267/1 granted on 30 September 2009)	Approved
12/01033/1	Erection of a Barn for the storage of hay (as amended by drawings received 2/07/12).	Refused

4.0 POLICY CONTEXT

4.1.0 National Policy / Guidance

4.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024, sets out the Government’s planning policies for England. Chapters 2 (Achieving sustainable development), 5 (Delivering a sufficient supply of homes), 11 (Making effective use of land), 12 (Achieving well-designed places), and 13 (Protecting Green Belt Land) are of particular relevance to this application.

4.2.0 North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

Policy No.	Title
SP1	Sustainable Development in North Herts
SP2	Sustainable Hierarchy
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SP8	Housing
D1	Sustainable Design
T1	Transport
T2	Parking
HS5	Accessible and Adaptable Housing
D3	Protecting Living Conditions

4.3.0 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Vehicle Parking at New Developments November 2011;
Design SPD July 2011;
Sustainability SPD 2024.

5.0 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

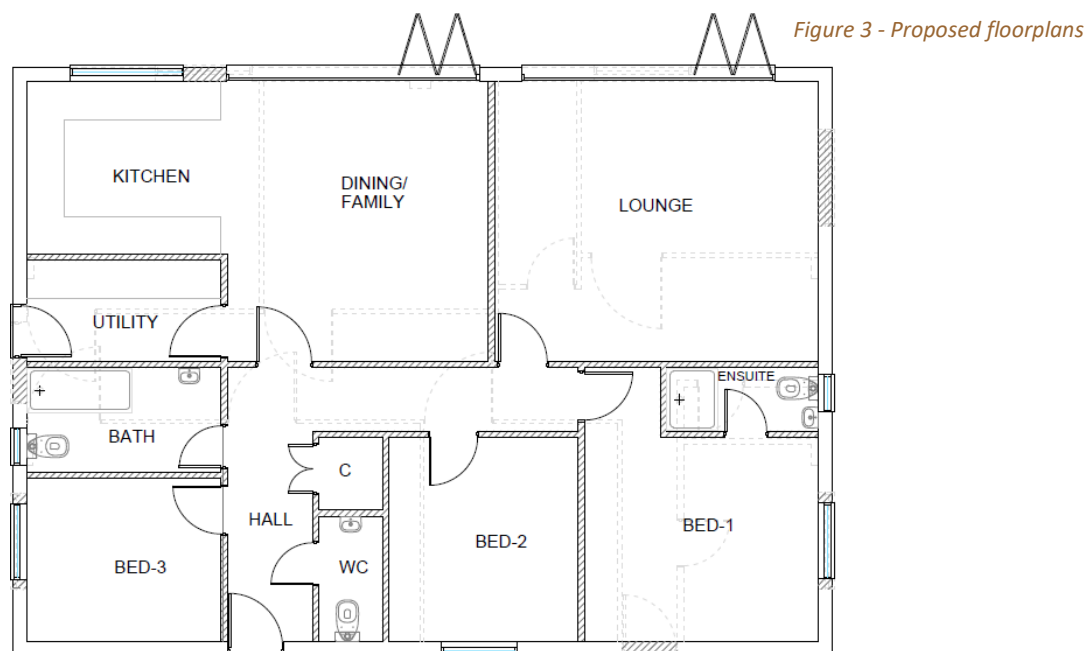
5.1.0 Use

5.1.1 The proposals seek to retain the existing C3 residential use on the site, increasing the number of residential dwellings from one to two.

5.2.0 Layout

5.2.1 The site layout would result in the removal of 6 outbuildings, which are located in the eastern part of their site, with their built footprint measuring 157.2m². The existing stables would be converted into a dwelling, providing an area of private amenity space to the rear and side of the property.

5.2.2 Internally, the new dwelling would consist of three bedrooms (one as an en-suite), a lounge, a kitchen/dining room, a utility room, a w/c, and a bathroom. The proposed floorplans are shown in Figure 3 below.



5.3.0 Appearance & Scale

5.3.1 The proposed dwelling would retain a similar appearance to its existing design given it's the conversion of the existing stables. Its materials could be altered if required, something which can be secured via condition if needed.

5.4.0 Landscaping

5.4.1 The proposals would not result in the loss of any existing landscaping features on the site, whilst the proposed scheme would provide opportunities for improvements to landscaping. This could be in the form of hedgerow boundaries and planting in the rear garden, both of which could be secured via a condition if required.

5.5.0 **Access & Parking**

5.5.1 Both dwellings would utilise the existing access onto Rabley Heath Road. Within the site the existing parking and turning area would be retained to provide sufficient parking spaces for both the existing and proposed dwellings.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1.0 Pre-application enquiry

- 6.1.1 On the 21st October a pre-application response was received for the conversion of a stables to a dwelling and demolition of outbuildings at the application site. The key points of the pre-application response were as follows:

“Paragraph 155 is relevant, and its exceptions are set out below:... d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;... The principle of development maybe supported by the re use of the building as set out within exception d).

The intensity of the residential use would remain largely the same and vehicle movements are unlikely to be significantly higher than existing. I consider this to be acceptable in the green belt. For these reasons, the proposal may not constitute inappropriate development and could be compliant with Local Plan policy SP5 and the provisions within Section 13 of the NPPF.

The property is not within a village boundary, the site is not considered remote given its proximity to Codicote, a Category A Village or Welwyn just over the border.

Any future application would need to make sure that at least two parking spaces for vehicles.

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.

Conclusion *Conversion and change of use of the existing stable building with the removal of the other outbuildings on the site, subject to design, scale and boundary and residential furniture within the proposed garden the proposal may be supported.”*

6.2.0 Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 6.2.1 To accompany the application, a preliminary roost assessment was undertaken by ACP. The report confirmed that *“Due to the lack of evidence of bat presence and high levels of internal light ingress, the suitability of bat roosts being present on-site is negligible. The proposed work is considered unlikely to cause disturbance that would significantly affect the ability for bats to survive, breed, reproduce, nurture young and hibernate if bat roost(s) are found within the building. Therefore, no further surveys have been recommended.”*

6.3.0 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 6.3.1 To accompany the application, a biodiversity net gain assessment has been undertaken by ACP. The report confirms that the proposals will result in a 23.13% gain in habitat units. The report confirmed that *“the Proposed Development is considered to comply with national, regional or local planning policies and offers ecological improvement to the site and surrounding area.”*

7.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the analysis set out in Sections 2 to 5, I consider that the application proposal raises the following issues, which I will consider in turn below:

1. Principle
2. Layout & Design
3. Highway Safety & Access
4. Ecology

7.1.0 Issue No 1: Principle

- 7.1.1 As noted in section 2.3.0 of this report, the application site is located within the Metropolitan Green Belt wherein there is a presumption against inappropriate development. This is also echoed in Policy SP5 of the Local Plan which states “*we will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated*”

Conversion of stables/outbuilding

- 7.1.2 The NPPF states in Paragraph 154 that there are forms of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt. One of the exceptions listed is *h) provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it: iv) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.*
- 7.1.3 The existing stable building that is proposed to be converted is used for equestrian purposes that are ancillary to the main dwellinghouse. This building is of permanent and substantial construction and therefore meets the exception set out at Paragraph 154 (h(iv)). Nevertheless, to meet the other requirement of the NPPF it needs to also preserve openness. In terms of the considered intensity of use, it was noted in the pre-application response that “*The intensity of the residential use would remain largely the same and vehicle movements are unlikely to be significantly higher than existing*”, something which is agreed upon by the applicant. In terms of physical openness, material consideration must also be given to the outbuildings and structures that are proposed to be demolished as part of the application proposals. These 6 outbuildings to be demolished range in size from 5m² to 57m². In total the proposals would result in the reduction of 157.2m² of built footprint, which would be a significant benefit in the openness of the Green Belt. In addition to this hardstanding, as well as other associated structures and paraphernalia would be removed from the site. Pictures of the outbuildings that are proposed to be demolished are shown in Figure 3 below.
- 7.1.4 As the proposals would involve the re-use of an existing permanent and substantial building within the Green Belt, whilst also preserving, and benefiting, openness through a

significant reduction of 157m² of built form, the development would be in accordance with Paragraph 154(h)(iv) of the NPPF and therefore considered as not inappropriate development within the Green Belt.



Figure 2 - Pictures of the buildings, structures and hardstanding areas that would be removed



7.1.5 Location

The application site is not an isolated location and is within walking distance to the village of Codicote. This is demonstrated in Paragraph 2.5.0 of this report, as well as being acknowledged in the Councils pre-application report stating *“the site is not considered*

remote given its proximity to Codicote, a Category A Village or Welwyn just over the border". The application site is also located within a cluster of existing dwellings along this part of Rabley Heath Road.

7.1.5 Sustainable development

The proposal comprises of sustainable development and meets the objectives as set out in Paragraph 8 of the NPPF. As noted in the pre-application enquiry, *"the development would provide economic benefits through the employment of local tradespersons in relation to the building's construction, and in the longer term, future occupiers would contribute to the local economy by utilising local facilities"*. It would provide social benefit as it would *"make use of an existing access to the site and would add a single dwelling to the Council's supply of housing"*. The scheme would also provide environmental sustainability as the dwelling would *"be constructed to a high standard in compliance with current building regulations that would require the provision of EV charging, a high efficiency boiler, and low flow water fittings"* as well as providing a 23.13% gain in biodiversity on the site.

Housing need

- 7.1.6 The Local Plan Policy SP2 states that during the Local Plan period the Council aims to provide 13,000 new homes within the District. Although the pre-application proposal would only be for one dwelling, this would still have a positive impact on the Council meeting these housing targets.

7.1.7 Conclusion

In summary, the conversion of the existing outbuilding into a residential dwelling would meet the exceptions of not inappropriate development in the Green Belt as per Paragraph 154 of the NPPF, therefore the Principle of development in this location is considered acceptable.

7.2.0 Issue No 2: Layout & Design

- 7.2.1 NPPF paragraph 131 advises that the creation of high quality 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. Likewise, paragraph 135 seeks to ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history; and establish or maintain a strong sense of place. These elements of good design are echoed in Policy D1 of the Local Plan and the Councils supplementary design guide.

- 7.2.2 The proposal would involve relatively modest alterations to the existing building meaning its rural character and low-key appearance would be maintained. The difference between the existing and proposed elevation as seen from the street scene would be minimal, as shown in Figure 4 below. The proposal would also remove of a number of outbuildings and structures that detract from the street scene, therefore acting to improve the visual appearance of the wider site. The proposed domestic curtilage would be relatively modest and well contained by suitable landscaping.

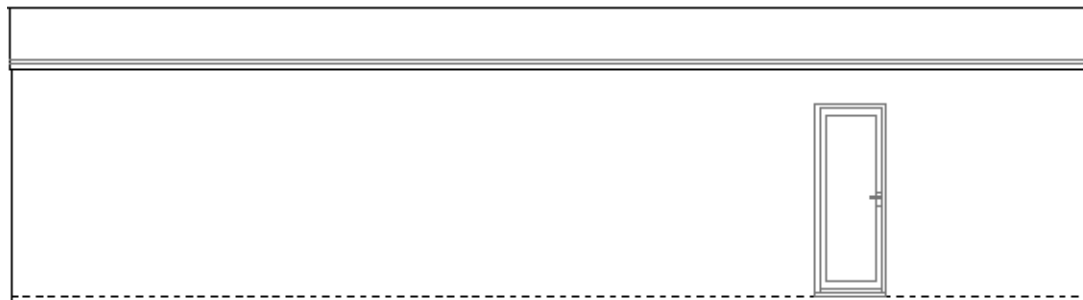
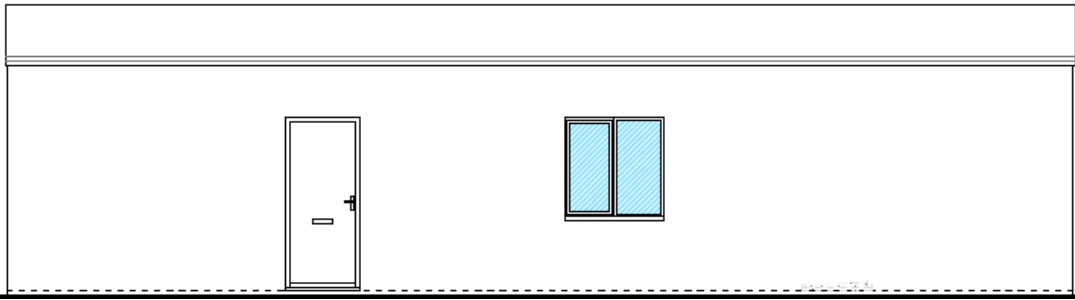


Figure 4 - Current elevation facing the street scene above and proposed below

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- 7.2.3 The proposed dwelling would be single storey, located circa 5m away from the existing property, so would not give rise to any issues of overlooking or overbearing impact to the existing dwelling. The amount of activity associated with a single dwelling would not give rise to any concerns in respect of noise and disturbance to any neighbouring occupiers. It is therefore considered that the amenity of neighbouring occupiers is preserved.
- 7.2.4 Future occupiers would be afforded good living conditions, with a convenient and usable internal layout that comfortably meets the nationally described space standards. The dwelling would have a total amenity area to comfortably meet the Local Plan requirements. The main living areas would be dual aspect and so would be afforded good levels of natural light and outlook. It is therefore considered that the proposed dwelling would provide a good standard of accommodation for future occupiers.
- 7.3.0 **Issue No 3: Highway Safety & Access**
- 7.3.1 The proposed dwelling would utilise the existing vehicular access onto Rabley Heath Road as per the current dwelling on the site. Both dwellings would share the large area of hardstanding to the front of the site which provides ample room for parking and space for

vehicles to manoeuvre as to exit the site in a forward gear. The proposed parking provision would be sufficient and therefore in accordance with Policy T2 of the Local Plan.

7.4.0 Issue No 4: Ecology

7.4.1 To accompany the application, a preliminary roost assessment was undertaken by ACP as per the guidance from the Council in the pre-application enquiry response. The report confirmed that *“Due to the lack of evidence of bat presence and high levels of internal light ingress, the suitability of bat roosts being present on-site is negligible. The proposed work is considered unlikely to cause disturbance that would significantly affect the ability for bats to survive, breed, reproduce, nurture young and hibernate if bat roost(s) are found within the building. Therefore, no further surveys have been recommended”*. The application has also been submitted with a biodiversity net gain assessment, which confirmed that the proposals will result in a 23.13% gain in habitat units. The application proposals are therefore acceptable in terms of their impact on ecology.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

8.1.0 Background

8.1.1 This report relates to a planning application for the conversion of stables into a dwelling at Fen Farm, Rabley Heath road. The proposal is promoted in the following circumstances:

- The proposal seeks the re-use of the existing outbuilding.
- The application follows a positive pre-application response from the Council, whilst also providing the relevant technical work to accompany this submission.
- The proposed development would result in the demolition of 157.2m² of built footprint on the site, which would be a significant benefit in the openness of the Green Belt.
- The proposals would be in accordance with Paragraph 154(h)(iv) of the NPPF.
- The site is not located within an isolated location and is adjacent to a number of residential properties along Rabley Heath Road.
- There is a public footpath opposite in the vicinity which provides a means of access to the services and facilities within the village of Codicote.
- The proposals would constitute sustainable development in accordance with Paragraph 8 of the NPPF.
- The proposed dwelling would have a positive impact on meeting the Council's housing target.
- The proposed dwelling would not be out of character to the street scene, would not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring occupiers, and would provide a good standard of accommodation for future occupiers.
- The proposed development would be acceptable in parking and highway safety terms.

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