

17 GRAY'S LANE, HITCHIN, SG5 2HG ***PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT*** ***October 2025***



1.0 Introduction

This planning statement supports the application for the proposed extension to 17 Grays Lane, Hitchin. The proposal seeks to enhance the existing detached dwelling with prior piecemeal extensions and conservatory with a cohesive single-storey rear extension. The design has been carefully considered to respect the character and appearance of the surrounding area and to provide a high-quality addition to the property.

2.0 Relevant Planning History

- 14/02996/1HH: Two-storey side extension with extension to existing loft space.
Approved 09 January 2015.
- 08/00976/1HH: Rear conservatory.
Approved 15 May 2008.
- 88/00635/1: Erection of single-storey side and rear extension.
Approved 12 April 1988.
- 83/00192/1: Outline application for erection of detached dwelling.
Approved 11 February 1983.

3.0 Site and Context

The application site comprises a detached two-storey residential property typical of the surrounding area which is characterised by a mix of dwelling types and styles which are predominantly, though not exclusively, detached and generously spaced houses with pitched roofs.

The property sits on the corner of Gray's Lane and Walsh Close and is set back from Gray's Lane, with a front hardstanding area providing off-street parking for 2 vehicles plus parking space undercroft. This application does not increase bedrooms and will not impact parking.

The property is not located within a Conservation Area, nor is it a listed building.

It is surrounded by houses that were built at a later date, in a more modern style, than some of the older properties on Gray's Lane. Design elements include brick bands, quoins and simple window detailing.

Materials are typically red brick and render, with some vertical weather boarding, and clay / tile roofing.

The neighbouring property 15 Gray's Lane has been extended to the side and rear in recent years.

There are some trees on both Gray's Lane and Walsh Close, this application will not impact these trees.

4.0 Access

Both vehicular and main front door pedestrian access to the site are from Gray's Lane and this remains unchanged. An existing side gate pedestrian access from Walsh Close will remain. In addition, a new side door is proposed into the utility room from Walsh Close, if acceptable to the council this will allow for muddy boots and bikes to enter the house without disturbing the main living areas.

5.0 Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of three existing visually unattractive extensions to the rear of the property, to be replaced with a single, well-designed single-storey rear extension.

The key features of the proposal are as follows:

- A more Cohesive Design: the new extension will create a more unified and visually attractive solution.
- Renewable Energy approach: the new extension will enable an array of discrete Photovoltaic Panels from which to power air/ground source heat pumps providing renewable heating and hot water to the property.
- Improved Energy Efficiency: The new structure will be built to modern standards, with high levels of insulation to meet current Building Regulations.
- Sustainable Materials: The project will prioritise the use of locally sourced and sustainable materials where feasible.
- Respectful Massing: The floor level of the new extension is stepped down from the main house. This, combined with a lower roof section along the boundary, is designed to minimise the overall height and massing of the extension, thereby reducing any potential impact on the adjoining property, No. 15. The 45 degree ruling has been used to limit roof height and design in order not to be viewed as over bearing on the neighbours or street scene.

- **Natural Light:** The design incorporates north-facing rooflights to maximise natural light into the new and existing spaces, including the dining room and utility room, whilst avoiding solar gain overheating risk. All south-facing roof sections are proposed to be fitted with photovoltaic cells, pitched for optimal year-round energy generation.
- **Overheating Mitigation:** A pergola is proposed along the rear elevation to provide shading to the glazed rear doors and windows on the southern aspect, mitigating the risk of overheating during summer months.
- **Sustainable Construction:** The design proposes the use of exposed and expressed Glulam timber beams in place of steel beams where possible, reducing the embodied carbon in construction.

6.0 Planning Assessment

This section assesses the proposal against key policy documents: the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The proposed extension represents a sustainable form of development that will improve the living conditions of the existing dwelling while respecting the character of the surrounding area and the amenity of neighbouring properties.

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

• Policy SP1: Sustainable Development

The proposal improves living conditions whilst respecting local character and neighbour amenity. It replaces three poor-quality extensions with a cohesive, well-designed solution.

• Policy SP11: Natural Resources and Sustainability

Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced through high insulation to current Building Regulations. The proposed scheme employs renewable energy via south-facing photovoltaic cells optimised for year-round generation coupled with heat pumps. Sustainable materials including Glulam timber beams (lower embodied carbon than steel) are included in the design. Pergola shading is proposed to prevent overheating and energy efficiency is maximised by north-facing rooflights for natural light

• **Policy D1: Sustainable Design:** This policy requires development to respond positively to the local context. The proposed extension is of a high-quality design that respects the existing building and the surrounding area. The extension is proportionate to the host dwelling, and the proposed materials will complement the existing property and neighbouring buildings. New windows on to Walsh Close increase natural surveillance and help mitigate any potential anti-social behaviour.

• **Policy D2: House Extensions, Replacement Dwellings and Outbuildings:** This policy requires extensions to be sympathetic to the existing house in terms of height, form, proportions, and materials. The proposed single-storey rear extension has been designed to be subservient to the main dwelling and is of a scale and design that is in keeping with the character of the original house. The stepped floor, and roof design keeps new roof levels to a minimum in respect of neighbouring properties. There is an appropriate distance between the proposed extension and the windows of adjoining properties.

• **Policy D3: Protecting Living Conditions:** This policy seeks to protect the living conditions of existing and future residents. The proposal has been carefully designed to minimise any impact on neighbouring properties. The stepping down of the extension's roofline along the boundary and the careful positioning of windows will ensure that there is no undue loss of light or privacy to adjoining residents.

- Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets: While the property is not a designated heritage asset, it is located in an area with a rich historic character. The proposal has been designed to be sympathetic to the local context and will not harm the setting of any nearby heritage assets. The use of high-quality materials will ensure that the extension makes a positive contribution to the street scene.

- Policy T2: Parking: There is no change to the existing parking arrangements, or number of bedrooms and therefore the development fully complies with the Council's parking standards.

7.0 Conclusion

The property 17 Gray's Lane is in much need of updating, this proposed single-storey rear extension achieves a high quality of design in terms of layout, functionality and external appearance. It will provide enhanced living accommodation for the occupants, while preserving the amenity of neighbouring residents. The use of sustainable materials where possible and energy-efficient design ensures that the proposal is environmentally responsible. It is sensitive to the character of the existing dwelling and the surrounding area, and compatible with planning policy.

For the reasons set out in this statement, we respectfully request that the Council grant planning permission for this application.

