



**North
Herts**
Council

Officer Louise Robeson

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Our Ref:

Your Ref: 23/00407/FP

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Conversion of Node Court to 8no. dwellings.
Conversion of Midden building to residential
and the erection of 6no. terraced dwelling-
houses as development to facilitate the
restoration of Node Court together with
associated car parking, landscaping,
boundary treatment and ancillary works.

Land at Node Court, Drivers End, Codicote,
Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG4 8TR.

The application site is a previously damaged
Grade II Listed building located west of
Knebworth at the north-eastern extent of the
village Codicote.



North Herts Local Plan 2011 - 2031

Policy SP1: Sustainable development in North Hertfordshire

The proposed development is in accordance with criterion b), c i) in terms of supporting vitality and growth of villages and delivering an appropriate mix of homes which contribute towards the targets and aspirations in the Local Plan through the creation of high-quality developments. The proposed development would deliver a number of homes that would contribute to the overall housing numbers in the Local Plan.

Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt

The development site is situated within the Green Belt, strategic parcel 7 (sub parcel 7b). The Local Plan situates that development within the Green Belt may only be permitted under special circumstances.

Policy 6: Sustainable Transport Policy

The proposed site is in a rural area with the only local facility being a gardening centre. There is a bus stop at the end of the Driver's End Lane for access to Bus Rout 314 as well as Cycle Route 12 within 900m of the application. A wider look shows a train station 3.5km from the site with access to Cambridge and London. However, the area primarily relies on car journeys to access nearby services. 34 car parking spaces will be provided at Node Court which meets the minimum standard for the number of dwellings. In terms of electric vehicle (EV) charging provision- each dwelling must include an EV domestic charging point.

Policy SP7: Infrastructure requirements and developer contributions
Contributions towards infrastructure will be required.
Policy SP8: Housing
The proposed development will provide 15 new dwellings, with no affordable units (see HS2 below). The application comprises 4x2-bed, 2x3-bed, and 1x4-bed homes, alongside 3x2-bed and 5x3-bed flats. This meets the criteria for a broadly even split between smaller (1- and 2-bed) and larger (3+ bed) properties stated in the policy.
Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability
The policy 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.
Policy SP11: Natural resources and sustainability
The proposed development is in accordance with criterion b), c), and e) in terms of placing development in an area of low flood risk and the applicant has consulted a strategy report specialist regarding SuDs to minimise the runoff rate. However, the LLFA (see report for details) state that they have concerns with flood risks to the site as well as adverse effects on the surrounding area. With regards to clause d, environmental health (contaminated land) has placed required conditions for an environmental risk assessment to determine any presence of contamination which could affect the site.
Policy SP12: Green infrastructure, landscape, and biodiversity
The site is a brownfield site allowing the development to enhance the local landscape with minimal damage to the biodiversity. The additional green infrastructure such as planting over old tarmac allows the site to enhance the provision of new and improved open space. The implementation of EV charging points at all spaces allows for climate change mitigation. However, building within the Green Belt weakens the countryside and has negative impact on the surrounding environment.
Policy SP13: Historic Environment
The site is a Grade II listed building. In considering the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the site, great weight is given to the asset's conservation and the management of the setting. Effects are mitigated by design attempts to be in keeping with the historic value of the site, and to restore the damage done to the site to enhance and conserve its heritage. Further details are provided in the NHDC Building Conservation Comments pertaining to this application.
Policy T1: Assessment of transport matters
A transport statement has been submitted with the application in line with the requirements of Policy T1.
Policy T2: Parking

The parking provision meets the requirements set out in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan.

Policy HS2: Affordable housing

The proposed development will provide 15 dwellings with no affordable housing, but the applicant does accept contributions by way of a S106 contribution. The site states they are not viable due to the high building costs. Housing Development Officer outlines that funding for the provision of affordable housing is not on S106 sites. However, the proposed site enables development to the listed building, hence affordable housing is not required. For further information, see viability reports.

Policy HS3: Housing mix

The proposed scheme is made up of 8 dwellings through the conversion of Node Court, conversion of Midden House to residential use and the development of 6 terraced houses. This provides an appropriate mix of housing types and sizes through 6x2-bed, 2x3 bed, and 1x4-bed homes as well as 3x2-bed and 5x3-bed flats. Paragraph 8.21 in the supporting text suggests that on edge of settlement sites there might be an initial assumption that there 60% of the dwellings should be larger (3+ bed). While this site provides an even split between smaller (1- and 2-bed) and larger (3+ bed) housing, there is no recent evidence around local housing need, but a 2023 housing survey identified a need for smaller affordable dwellings including for older residents looking to downsize.

Policy D1: Sustainable design

The Environmental Health (Air Pollution) statement that accompanies this application ensures that efforts are made to reduce CO2 through EV charging points. There is also a SuDs strategy and thatched roofs to enhance the potential of the site.

The design plan outlines the replacement of much of the soft tarmac currently in place with lawns to increase environmental standing.

Policy D3: Protecting living conditions

The proposed site has a negligible impact on traffic conditions for the surrounding area due to the small number of dwellings. As the development results in the improvement of existing buildings there shall be slight increase in the issues started in paragraph 9.19.

Policy D4: Air quality

The development of this site sits alongside conditions from the air quality consultant. The site adheres to the policy providing the condition that EV charging points are provided for each dwelling to minimise air pollution.

Policy NE2: Landscape

The design and access statement takes into consideration the surrounding local character as well as the management of the landscape. Further information provided by David Clarke, Chartered Landscape Architect, in the Arboriculture Survey and Impact Assessment.

Policy NE6: New and improved open space

The original open setting of the area is to be preserved. The proposed site is within the Green Belt and so would be reducing the openness of the area. However, by developing upon a brownfield site allows for minimal damage to be done and improves the provision quality of the current space. Measures will be taken to integrate the facilities into the landscape,

Policy NE7: Reducing flood risk

The proposed development site is considered a local flood risk to the development. Further comments have been made by the LLFA who object to the proposal as the impact from the development could adversely affect flood risk from elsewhere. Revised plans have been submitted since this objection and the LLFA have said that they will review their decision.

Policy NE8: Sustainable drainage systems

Due to the previous fire damage of the current site, the drainage infrastructure is poor and does not provide appropriate provision for the site. Additionally, the increase in hard surfaces will result in further surface run off.

The plan intends to improve drainage and includes a SuDs report for surface water disposal and thatched roofs to reduce run off. However, the LLFA objected to the proposal due to the adverse flooding affects which would be applicable to the site and elsewhere. For more details see LLFA comments.

Policy NE9: Water quality and environment

The proposed development site is taking measures to maintain water quality including the SuDs report. However, the statement by the LLFA suggests the development is inappropriate in concerns to flooding.

Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets

The policy requires that planning applications which relate to a designated heritage asset, or its setting are accompanied by a Heritage Assessment. A Heritage Impact Assessment has been submitted with the application.

The site is a Grade II listed building. The development proposed does not clearly outweigh the harms that come with the asset's significance and importance. The NHDC conservation comments await clarification on the design before making a full decision but suggest reasons for refusal.

Policy HE2: Heritage at risk

As the proposed development site is a Grade II listed building, the application was submitted with a Heritage Impact Assessment. This allows the features of the original building to be restored and enables the development of a current site. The report highlights some concern regarding the design of some of the dwellings but does enhance the building from its current compromised condition.

Conclusion

The proposed development is a Grade II listed building that is within the Green Belt.

This is a development of a brownfield site with development that enables the enhancement of previous historic features and restores the building from its current compromised condition.

The proposed development will provide homes in keeping with the maintenance of the environment and the heritage site. While the site does not provide affordable housing its benefits to the buildings current state outweigh this negative.

The applicant submitted a SuDs strategy and considered surface runoff, however the LLFA has objected regarding flood risk to the site as well as adverse impacts to elsewhere.

The application has revised some of the design elements of the scheme to address the reservations expressed by the NHC Conservation, who are awaiting design confirmations.