



Planning Statement incorporating a Design & Access Statement

Planning Application on behalf of Oakbridge Homes

Demolition of existing redundant structures and erection of 9 dwellings with associated parking and amenity space and a new access from Station Road
Resubmission following withdrawal of LPA Ref No 18/01874/FP
Land adjacent No 54 Station Road, Ashwell

DLA Ref: 2019/110
March 2019

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1.0 Background

- 1.1.1 This report is submitted on behalf of Oakbridge Homes to support a revised planning application for the erection of 9 detached dwellings on land adjacent to No 54 Station Road, Ashwell. The application is submitted following the withdrawal of application LPA Ref No: 18/01874/FP and is based on a revised layout and supported by additional information.

1.2.0 Scope

- 1.2.1 This document comprises an overarching Planning Report incorporating a Design and Access Statement. Section 2 considers the physical, economic, social and historical context of the site; Section 3 identifies the relevant local, regional and national planning policy framework; Section 4 sets out the relevant planning history; and Section 5 provides details of the proposal. All these sections inform the evaluation of the proposal in Section 6 against the identified planning policy framework. The overall conclusions are set out in Section 7 and which are summarised below at paragraph 1.3.0.

- 1.2.2 This report provides an overview of the proposal and should be read in conjunction with the following documents.

Report	Author	Date
Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) Statement	EAS	February 2019
Arboricultural Implications Assessment & Method Statement	Andrew Belson Arboricultural Consultant	March 2019
Archaeological Evaluation	Archaeological Solutions Ltd	January 2019
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	Middlemarch Environmental Ltd	March 2019
Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment	Middlemarch Environmental Ltd	March 2019

1.3.0 Summary

1.3.1 Whilst the Site abuts, but is beyond the defined Ashwell Settlement Boundary as detailed in the Adopted Local Plan, it is nevertheless considered that the principle of the proposal is wholly acceptable, as was accepted in the pre and post submission discussions with the LPA relating to the previous proposal. This view is based on the following factors:

- the inclusion in the emerging Local Plan of the Site within the Ashwell Settlement boundary and the identification of Ashwell as a 'Category A' village wherein general development will be allowed;
- the acceptance that the adopted Local Plan is now effectively time-expired and that the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, such that the planning balance shifts in favour of the grant of permission, with permission to be refused *only* if any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits; and
- the sustainable and well related location of the Site adjacent to housing development and with good access to local services, so as to deliver clear social and economic benefits through the provision of housing to meet an identified need in an appropriate location.

1.3.2 In the required balancing exercise, there are not considered to be any adverse impacts resulting from this amended proposal. In particular it is noted that:

- the layout of the design has been amended to provide a more loose knit and informal arrangement, which together with the spacious, landscaped setting would be appropriate in this edge of settlement location within the Conservation Area, whilst delivering a distinctive and attractive development; and
- additional or updated information is submitted with the application to inform an assessment of the environmental implications of the proposal, with no such undue impact apparent.

2.0 SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1.0 Location

The application site is located adjacent to No 54 Station Road, Ashwell. It is sited on the western side of Station Road close to its junction with Ashwell Street to the south, on the eastern edge of the village.

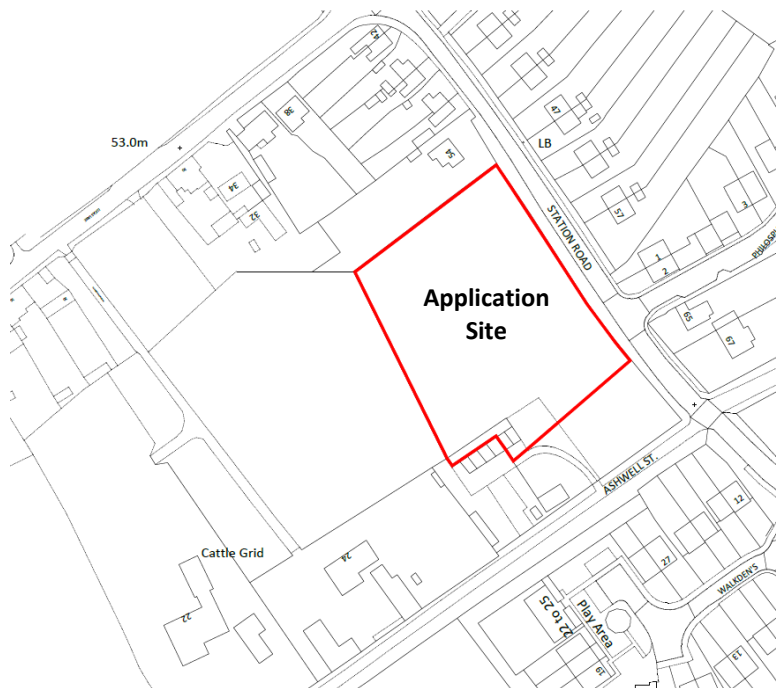


Fig 2.1.0: Location Plan

2.2.0 Application Site

2.2.1 This broadly rectangular site has a frontage along Station Road of approximately 100m and is circa 60m in depth. The site comprises grassland and slopes gently downwards from north-west to south-east and is currently used as grazing land. It is generally open but includes some abandoned pig sheds in the south western corner which are in a poor state of repair and some isolated trees. There is mature tree and hedge growth to the site perimeter, or in the case of the south-eastern boundary on the adjoining land which has a frontage onto Ashwell Street.

2.3.0 Context

2.3.1 The site adjoins the side boundary of the double fronted detached house at No 54 Station Road to the north, beyond which is a short frontage of 6 more compact semi-detached cottages (Nos 42 to 52 -evens), leading to the junction with Lucas Lane. To the east, the opposite side of Station Road comprises a fairly uniform frontage of semi-detached hipped roof properties, set back from the highway. As noted, to the south, the site adjoins further grazing land fronting onto Ashwell Street. To the west the site adjoins further open land which appears to form part of the extensive residential curtilage of Townsend House which also fronts onto Ashwell Street. This in turn adjoins the modern large detached property at No 22 Ashwell Street.

2.4.0 Proposals Map

2.4.1 The LPA's interactive proposals map - based on the saved policies of the adopted District Plan No 2 - shows the Site abutting the settlement boundary of the 'Selected village of Ashwell to the north and east, such that it is within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt (RABG). It also abuts an area of Archaeological Significance to the south and west. The site is included within the Ashwell Conservation Area.

2.4.2 The proposals map of the emerging Local Plan (District Local Plan 2011-2031 – Proposed Submission Version) shows the site *within* the proposed Ashwell settlement boundary, as outlined in green on the annotated extract below. The Inspector's proposed Main Modifications (November 2018) does not include any proposal to alter this. The site remains within the Conservation Area (brown outline).

2.5.0 Accessibility

2.5.1 The site is easily accessible by public transport. A bus stop is located approximately 75m north of the site on Station Road and is served by the number 90, 91 and 202 bus routes with services to Letchworth. The nearest railway station is located at Ashwell and Morden approximately 2 miles from the site and provides frequent access to London and Cambridge amongst other locations.

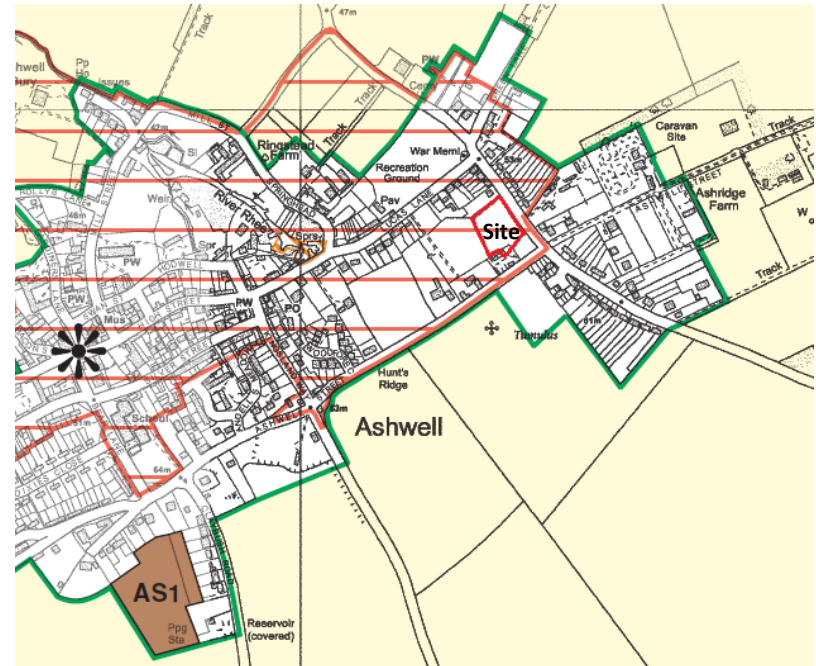


Fig 2.4.0: Extract from the proposals map of the Local Plan (District Local Plan 2011-2031 – Proposed Submission Version)

2.6.0 Local Services

2.6.1 The village of Ashwell has an existing population of approximately 1,800 people and is well supported by a number of key local services, including a school, shops, public houses, village hall and church, the majority of which are within 1 kilometre of the application site. The walking distance to these local services and facilities is set out below.



Fig 2.6.0: Aerial view showing location of village services

	Local Facility	Approximate distance from Site
1	Bus Stop	75m
2	The Three Tuns Pub (with accommodation)	470m
3	St Marys Church	900m
4	Ashwell Stores	780m
5	Ashwell Village Hall	1200m
6	Ashwell Primary School	910m
7	Pharmacy	595m
8	Ashwell Garage	280m
9	Ashwell Recreation Ground	150m

3.0 POLICY CONTEXT

3.1.0 National Policy / Guidance

- 3.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The following sections are considered directly relevant:

Section	Title
2	Achieving Sustainable Development
4	Decision making
5	Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
9	Promoting sustainable transport
12	Achieving well designed places
15	Conserving & enhancing the natural environment
16	Conserving & enhancing the historic environment

- 3.1.2 The National Planning Policy Guidance contains detailed guidance on the application of the NPPF.

3.2.0 Development Plan

- 3.2.1 This comprises the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations 1996 (Saved Policies September 2007). The following policies are considered to be directly relevant.

Policy	Title
6	Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt
7	Selected Villages beyond the Green Belt
55	Car Parking
57	Residential Guidelines and Standards

3.3.0 Emerging Local Plan

- 3.3.1 This comprises the North Hertfordshire District Local Plan 2011-2031 – Proposed Submission Version. The Full Council approved the submission of the plan for examination on 11th April 2017 and it was subsequently submitted to Government on 9th June 2017. In November 2018, following the hearing sessions into the Local Plan, the Inspector published his proposed Main Modifications. Consultation on the Main modifications runs from Thursday 3rd January to Thursday 11th April 2019.

- 3.3.2 Policy SP2 - Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution - identifies Ashwell as a 'Category A' village, wherein Policy SP2 states that general development will be allowed within the defined settlement boundaries thereof. As noted elsewhere the Submission version included the Site within the Ashwell Settlement boundary. The Inspector's proposed Main Modifications do not seek to amend the status of Ashwell as a 'Category A' village, nor does it seek to amend the proposed Ashwell settlement boundary.

3.3.3 The following polices of the emerging Plan are considered relevant to the proposal.

Policy No.	Title
SP1	Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
SP2	Settlement Hierarchy
SP8	Housing Policy
SP9	Design and Sustainability
SP12	Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape
SP13	Historic Environment
T1	Assessment of Transport Matters
T2	Parking
HS3	Housing Mix
D1	Sustainable Design
D4	Air Quality
NE1	Landscape
HE1	Designated Heritage Assets
HE4	Archaeology

3.4.0 **Supplementary Planning Documents**

3.4.1 The following guidance is considered relevant:

- Vehicle Parking At New Developments (November 2011)
- Design SPD (July 2011)

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

4.1.0 Application Site – LPA Ref No: 18/01874/FP

- 4.1.1 A previous application for the erection of 9 detached dwellings (6 x 3 bedroom & 3 x 4 bedroom units) was submitted on 12th July 2018, based on the layout below.



Fig 4.1.0: Proposed Layout – Application LPA Ref No: 18/01874/FP

- 4.1.2 The proposal had been subject to pre-submission consultations with the LPA and a detailed written response was received on 24th May 2017 (LPA Ref 17/00613/PRE). The location of the site beyond the settlement boundary and within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt (RABG) wherein adopted policies would not support the principle of market housing. Reference was also made to the location of the site within the Ashwell Conservation Area. Nevertheless - and despite the fact that at the time of writing the LPA considered that they **could** demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites as required by the NPPF, they concluded as follows:

“However in this case given the nature and scale of the proposed development I consider that there are benefits associated with the scheme which would demonstrably outweigh the harm occasioned to the asset. In my opinion a carefully considered development is unlikely to be injurious to the significance of the heritage asset and I conclude that the modest benefits which might accrue from the delivery of nine dwellings would be sufficient to outweigh any harm. The site is within the Settlement boundary in the emerging plan and is considered to be a sustainable location.”

- 4.1.3 Despite the above, due to specific concerns raised by consultees during the consideration of the application - as summarised in the table below- the application was withdrawn on 18th October 2018.

Fig 4.1.3: Summary of Consultee responses LPA Ref No: 18/01874/FP

Consultee	Comments
Landscape & Urban Design	<p>Trees It was accepted that the trees to be lost are generally assessed as C1, which are of lower quality and whose retention is desirable but their loss could be mitigated by the planting of new trees and shrubs as part of landscape proposals for the scheme.</p> <p>It was however noted that the proposal will require pruning and/or special measures within their RPA (Root Protection Areas) of 3 other trees.</p> <p>Layout Mindful of the sites Conservation Area location, the following comments were provided:</p> <p><i>“The proposed layout resembles a suburban street with detached dwellings on either side. This is a village location within the Conservation Area and the design of the development should take into consideration the designated asset and its setting. The layout should reflect its village location and create a distinctive character for the development. I would prefer to see one or two of the dwellings positioned at the end of the access road to create a focal point when entering the site allowing the remaining dwellings to be grouped around a reduced length of access road. It might mean that some plots have side gardens rather than rear gardens but could increase the amount of soft landscaping available and reduce the amount of hard surfacing. Consideration should be given to including semi-detached properties which would increase the types of dwellings available and help create a scheme that reflects its location.”</i></p> <p>Notwithstanding the above, the LPA case officer responded as follows in a covering email to DLA Town planning dated 10th October 2018 :</p> <p><i>“Paragraph 6 (of the Landscape & Urban Design Officers comments) suggests re-locating one or two of the dwellings at the end of the internal access road to create a focal point. I can see the visual merits of this approach, although I am conscious that doing so would be likely to cause overlooking and loss of privacy of the rear garden of Townsend House 24 Lucas Lane at the rear of the site. I would therefore not wish to see the layout of the scheme changed to this extent. “</i></p>
Hertfordshire Ecology	<p>Recommended that the applicant engages a suitably qualified Ecologist to undertake a preliminary Ecological assessment (PEA), so that the planners can be assured that ecology and biodiversity have been taken into account when planning the development.</p>

Consultee	Comments
Environmental Protection	Required the imposition of a pre-commencement condition in respect of Land Contamination and a pre-occupation condition in respect of the provision of an Electric Vehicle (EV) ready domestic charging point.
Historic Environment Advisor HCC	<p>The site lies within Area of Archaeological Significance 31 as identified in the Local Plan and it is considered that the location has <i>'considerable potential for the presence of archaeological remains'</i> and that at present <i>'not enough information is available to determine whether remain of sufficient importance to meet NPPF para 194 (footnote 63) are likely to be present'</i>.</p> <p>It was thus recommended that the following investigations be undertaken:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An archaeological geophysical survey 2. An archaeological trial trenching evaluation.
Sustainable Drainage Systems Officer HCC	Required the submission of a Surface Water Drainage Assessment in order to inform as assessment of the flood risks resulting from the proposal.
Area Highway Development Control Manager HCC	Confirmed that the general scale and location of the proposals is acceptable but requested further details in respect of the access and servicing arrangements.

4.1.4 In addition to the above, it is noted that the LPA's Case Officer in recommending that the application should be withdrawn to resolve the above issues, nevertheless commented as follows in their email to DLA Town Planning of the 8th October 2018:

"I don't however see critical issues relating to the principle of the development, the scale and design of the scheme and neighbour impacts."

4.2.0 **Other Relevant Sites**

4.2.1 Two recent appeal decisions relating to residential schemes in North Herts District are considered relevant as detailed below.

4.2.2 **Case No1: Land off Holwell Road, Pirton - PI Ref: APP/X1925/W/17/3184846** This outline proposal for the erection of up to 99 dwellings was dismissed on 18th January 2019. In doing so the Inspector nevertheless stated at paragraph 15 as follows:

"It is common ground that the NHDLP is now effectively time-expired and that its provisions for housing supply do not reflect up-to-date need. The main parties agree that the 'tilted balance' outlined by paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF should apply. I accept that position."

4.2.3 **Case No 2: The Station Inn, Station Approach, Knebworth – PI Ref APP/X1925/W/18/3205685** This proposal for the erection of a three storey building to provide 9 x 2 bedroom flats, and the conversion and extension of a store to one bed house was allowed on 16th January 2019. In doing so the Inspector stated as follows at paragraph 33 as follows:

"Despite its laudable work to address the situation through its emerging LP, there is no dispute between the parties that the

Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing. Consequently, those policies which are most important for determining the application are to be considered out-of-date. Not only does this reduce the weight that I can attach to them it also engages the default position identified in paragraph 11 d) ii of the Framework. The effect of this is that the planning balance shifts in favour of the grant of consent. Only if the Council is able to demonstrate harm which "significantly and demonstrably" outweighs the benefits of the development should consent be refused."

4.2.4 The footnote to paragraph 33 noted that the Statement of Common ground identified a supply of deliverable housing sites equivalent to between 2.7 and 3.7 years.

5.0 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

5.1.0 Use & Amount

5.1.1 Full planning permission is sought for the erection of 9 detached dwellings (3 x 4 bedroom units & 6 x 3 bedroom units) as set out in the schedule of accommodation below.

Fig 5.1.0: Proposed Schedule of Accommodation

Unit No	Accommodation	Floorspace
1	4 bedroom	177.3m ²
2	3 bedroom	144.9m ²
3	3 bedroom	144.9m ²
4	3 bedroom	144.9m ²
5	3 bedroom	144.9m ²
6	4 bedroom	186.2m ²
7	3 bedroom	144.9m ²
8	3 bedroom	144.9m ²
9	4 bedroom	177.3m ²

5.2.0 Access

5.2.1 A new access would be created from Station Road, to be located towards the centre of that frontage. In accordance with the Highway Authority's comments relating to the previous application the access would be provided with visibility splays of 2.4m by 43m in both directions direction and kerb radii of 6m for the bellmouth into the site. The access would be provided as a shared surface.



Fig 5.3.0:
Proposed Layout

5.3.0 **Layout**

5.3.1 The houses would be set in a loose knit arrangement around the central access road, with fluid building lines (See Fig 5.3.0 above). A small area of informal open space is proposed adjacent to the western site boundary.

5.3.2 Further to the withdrawal of LPA Ref 18/01874/FP, the layout has been amended with Plot No 6 to the south-western corner of the site, now set at an oblique angle relative to Plot Nos 7 to 9.

5.3.3 The properties would be set well back from the access road by at least 7m, with curtilage parking provided to the front of the properties, in addition to the proposed garages. Rear garden depths of at least 13m would be achieved for all the dwellings.

5.4.0 **Appearance and Scale**

5.4.1 The dwellings would be of coherent, traditional pitched roof design, incorporating vertical and horizontal articulation to include projecting gable or hipped sections, varied ridge lines and chimneys.

5.4.2 A mix of facing brick and rendered finish would be utilised, to include contrasting brick detailing and Tudor style timber detailing to the facing gable ends. The dwellings would have tiled roofs.

5.4.3 All the properties would include integral / attached single garages other than Plot No 6, which would have a double garage.



Fig 5.4.0: Streetscene – southern frontage

5.5.0 **Landscaping**

5.5.1 The majority of trees within and adjoining the site are to be retained. As detailed in the updated Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Method Statement and Arboricultural Implications Plan, only 4 trees will be removed as a result of the proposal. All 4 trees are graded as C1, which is to say they are of low quality and value. The creation of the site access will also require the removal of a small section of boundary hedge Group B.

5.5.2 New indicative replacement planting is shown to the front of the proposed dwellings and to the site boundaries to augment that existing.

5.6.0 **Drainage**

5.6.1 A Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) Statement is submitted with the application and which proposes a combination of soakaways and permeable paving to drain the site.

6.0 **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

Based on the analysis set out in Sections 2 to 5, it is considered that the application proposal raises the following issues, which are considered in turn below:

1. Principle
2. Dwelling Mix
3. Context
4. Amenity
5. Movement
6. Environment

6.1.0 **Issue No 1: Principle**

6.1.1 The Site is located outside the defined Ashwell Settlement Boundary as detailed in the Adopted Local Plan – albeit it does abut it to the north and east. As such it the site is located within the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt (RABG), wherein saved Local Plan Policy 6 strictly controls development and it is accepted that the application proposal for 9 detached houses does not fall within the defined exceptions. Notwithstanding the above, in the light of the circumstances outlined below, it is considered that the principle of the proposal is wholly acceptable.

6.1.2 **Factor 1 – The Emerging Local Plan** The Submission version of the emerging Local Plan was submitted to Government in June 2017 and includes the Site within the Ashwell Settlement boundary. Policy SP2 thereof identifies Ashwell as a ‘*Category A*’ village wherein general development will be allowed within its defined settlement boundaries. This reflects the current status of Ashwell in the Adopted Plan as a Selected Settlement, with saved Policy 7 allowing development which would maintain or enhance the character or visual quality of the village or the surrounding area.

6.1.3 As noted elsewhere, the Inspector’s proposed Main Modifications do not seek to amend the status of Ashwell as a

‘*Category A*’ village, nor does it seek to amend the proposed Ashwell settlement boundary. In these circumstances and with reference to paragraphs 48 to 50 of the NPPF, given the advanced stage of the Plan and the relatively modest nature of the proposals, it is considered that significant weight can be given to the emerging Plan.

6.1.4 **Factor 2 - Housing Supply Position** As evidenced by the 2 recent appeal decisions referred to in Section 4.2.0 above at Holwell Road, Pirton and Station Approach, Knebworth, the LPA accepts that:

- The adopted Local Plan is now effectively time-expired and that its provisions for housing supply do not reflect up-to-date need.
- The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, with the supply of deliverable housing sites equivalent to between 2.7 and 3.7 years.

6.1.5 As was also accepted in both appeals, these factors have implications for decision taking. Accordingly in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the NPPF, paragraph 11d requires that the planning balance shifts in favour of the grant of permission, with permission to be refused *only* if any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. It

will be demonstrated elsewhere that there are no such adverse impacts which would outweigh the social and economic benefits associated with the provision of housing to meet the identified need.

- 6.1.6 **Factor 3 – Sustainable Location** NPPF paragraph 78 states in part as follows:

“To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.”

- 6.1.7 Regardless of the exact location of the settlement boundary, it must in any event be accepted that the Site is not remote or isolated. Rather it is adjacent to residential development to the north east and west and is well related to the excellent range of local services. With reference to Figure 2.6.0 above, these include a Convenience Store, Chemist, Primary School and a Recreation Ground, all of which are within 1km of the site and can be safely accessed by foot. In addition the nearest bus stops are located 75m from the site. In these circumstances and given the acknowledged shortfall in supply, the provision of additional housing in a well related location adjacent to a ‘Selected Settlement’ / ‘Category A’ village must be welcomed.

6.2.0 Issue No 2: Dwelling Mix

6.2.1 The proposed development contains a mix of three and four bedroom dwellings. It is considered that this is appropriate for the location and is in line with the Council's own evidence.

6.2.2 Ashwell is within the Stevenage Housing Market Area (HMA). The Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, August 2016, shows that within the Stevenage HMA there is a need for 75.9% of new houses to be 3 bed and 13.3% to be four bed, with the need for 2 bed dwellings be 8.2% and 5+ bed dwellings at just 1%. This proposal therefore contributes to the areas of greatest need.

6.3.0 **Issue No 3: Character and Context**

6.3.1.0 **Policy Backdrop**

6.3.1.1 Local and national policy and guidance all identify the need for new development to relate to local character and context as an essential element of achieving good design. To this end NPPF paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments, amongst other things, are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

6.3.1.2 Similarly Guideline 1 of saved Local Plan Policy 57 (Residential Guidelines and Standards) in noting that each housing site is unique, requires that the layout, design and so character of each new development must relate to that site's physical shape and existing features, and the character of the surroundings, whether urban or rural.

6.3.1.3 Guideline 1 also requires that special account be taken of sites located at the edges of towns or villages and within or adjoining Conservation Areas, both of which are considerations on this occasion. NPPF paragraph 200 states with regard to developments within Conservation Areas that proposals that

preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

6.3.1.4 The character of the new development must also be considered as detailed at paragraph 82 of the adopted Design SPD:

“There are many aspects to character and as well as the character that already exists, new development will have its own character and its value and impacts should also be a consideration.”

6.3.1.5 This ties in with the other elements of good design identified at NPPF paragraph 127, such as the need for developments to be visually attractive and to establish a strong sense of place.

6.3.2.0 **Evaluation**

6.3.2.1 The Site is located within the Ashwell Conservation Area, on the eastern edge of the village. The site has itself an open, landscaped character and which is a key component of the local character given the substantial landscaped gardens of neighbouring properties such as Townsend House; the close proximity of the Lucas Lane Recreation Ground and the open agricultural fields found to the south.

- 6.3.2.2 In addition – as is evidenced by the extract from the Ashwell Village Map appended to the adopted Design SPD - there is significant residential development in the locality of varying design, age and density including that identified as pre 1st World War; Garden City suburban; lower density mixed residential, higher density post-war; and modern infill.
- 6.3.2.3 Mindful of the comments raised by the LPA's Landscape & Urban Design Officer and the Case Officer, the proposal has been designed to respond to these disparate elements and achieve and appropriate sense of place.
- 6.3.2.4 The low density layout retains the open, landscaped quality of the site and surrounding area and prevents the creation of hard edges, notably to the Station Road and Ashwell Street frontages. The existing boundary screening is essentially retained other than a small section of the hedge required to create the access and elsewhere is augmented. The loss of landscape features within the site is restricted to only 4 trees all of which are graded as being of low quality and value. There is in any event significant new compensatory planting within the site. These elements will combine to ensure that the development does not dominate either long or short views and retains a generally verdant and open character.



Fig 6.3.2.2: Extract from Ashwell Village Plan – Design Supplementary Planning Document July 2011

6.3.2.5 The informal layout has been amended, with Plot No 6 to the south-west now set at an oblique angle relative to the adjacent plots. Together with Plot Nos 4 and 5 to the north this serves to create a focal point at western end of the development and provides a more loose-knit pattern of development appropriate to this edge of settlement location and which is also supported by the generally fluid building lines and open-fronted plots.

6.3.2.6 The traditional pitched roof design of the proposal is compatible with the identified variety of dwelling age and design found in the locality. In many ways however - due to its contained landscaped character - the site sets its own context. To this end the varied but coherent design approach - to include a range of property size and height - will ensure that the development has a clear identity, but will not result in the creation of bland frontages. The use of a varied but limited palette of materials will further support this aim. It is noted that the LPA's Case Officer previously commented that design approach acceptable (See 4.1.4 above).

6.3.2.7 In all the above circumstances, it is considered that the proposal will preserve the relatively open, landscaped character of this part of the Conservation Area, whilst also providing a form of development compatible with disparate neighbouring residential elements. The proposal also comprises a distinctive

and attractive development so as to comply with national and local policy requirements.

6.4.0 Issue No 4: Amenity

6.4.1 Saved Local Plan Policy 57 - Residential Guidelines and Standards - includes a number of standards relating to residential amenity. The proposal would comply with these fully as detailed in the table below.

Fig 6.4.0: Evaluation of Residential Amenity Standards

Issue	Requirement	Provision / Evaluation
Floorspace	<p>Guideline 5 states that within a dwelling, the total space and the size of rooms should meet the reasonable requirements of the expected occupants and serve their intended purposes.</p> <p>Reference is also made to the DCLG Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard. For 2 storey accommodation, where all the bedrooms are doubles, there is a requirement for 3 bedroom properties to have a minimum GFA of 102m² and 4 bedroom properties to 124m².</p>	On the basis that 3 bedroom houses would each have a GFA of 144.9m ² , whilst the 4 bedroom units would be either 177.3m ² or 186.2m ² and all the units would include integral/attached garages, the proposal would comply fully with this requirement
Orientation	Guideline 6 requires that reasonable levels of sunlighting and daylighting should be achieved in the design and layout of dwellings. The DoE Manual 'Sunlight and Daylight' will be used as a guide.	The spacious layout and good degree of separation from the neighbouring dwellings would ensure that all the dwellings would achieve a satisfactory outlook and good levels of sunlight and daylight.
Privacy	Guideline 7 stipulates that a distance of 30 metres between the rears of dwellings may achieve a minimum degree of privacy if a 2 metre wall or fence is used as a screen.	On this occasion the proposed dwellings would not have a rear-to-rear relationship either within the site or with any neighbouring dwellings. It is considered that the future scope for such relationships is limited, but in any event the deep rear gardens of which range from 13m to 22m would preclude any such impact.
Amenity Space	Guideline 8 states that as rough guide private amenity spaces should have an area of 75m ² .	All the dwellings would have generous and useable private rear garden areas, with the smallest (Plot No 7) being 143m ² so as to comply fully with this criterion.

6.5.0 **Issue No 5: Movement**

6.5.1.0 **Background**

6.5.1.1 In the context of local and national policy and guidance, account is taken of the following 3 factors:

1. Site Access
2. Traffic Generation
3. Parking

6.5.2.0 **Factor No 1: Site Access**

6.5.2.1 Further to the comments of the Highways Authority (HA) made in respect of the previous withdrawn application, the proposed access would be provided with visibility splays of 2.4m by 43m in both directions direction and kerb radii of 6m for the bellmouth into the site. The access would be provided as a shared surface as required by the HA and which accords with the requirements of NPPF to give priority first to pedestrian and cycle movements. Details of these and other matters, to include swept path analysis to demonstrate that waste collection vehicles are able to turn around and egress to the highway in forward gear, can be made the subject of a pre-commencement condition.

6.5.3.0 **Issue No 2: Traffic Generation**

6.5.3.1 NPPF paragraph 109 states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. On the basis that the HA confirmed that the general scale and location of previous applications was acceptable, it is assumed that subject to the provision of satisfactory access arrangements, as detailed above, there would be no such impact. Given the modest scale of the proposal, these conclusions are accepted.

6.5.4.0 **Factor No 3: Parking**

6.5.4.1 Saved Local Plan Policy 55 requires the provision of a minimum of 2 parking spaces for 3 bedroom houses, and 3 parking spaces for four-bedroom+ dwellings. The Council more up-to-date Parking SPD however requires that all dwellings of two or more bedrooms have 2 parking spaces. In addition the SPD includes a requirement for visitor parking at a rate of 0.25-0.75 per dwelling, with the higher rate being used where all the houses have garages. The emerging Local Plan duplicates the requirements of the SPD.

6.5.4.2 All the dwellings would have at least one garage space and one on the driveway. The driveways of Plot Nos 1 to 7 are either

long enough or wide enough to accommodate more than one car, so visitors can park on the driveway of the property they are visiting. There would be ample space for visitors to Plot Nos 8 and 9 to park on the access roads adjacent to these properties. In the above circumstances it is considered that sufficient space is provided within the development to meet the proposals demand for parking spaces. As noted, all the properties would include garage accommodation which could also be utilised for the secure storage of bikes.

6.6.0 Issue No 6: Environment

6.6.1.0 Background

6.6.1.1 Additional or updated information is submitted with the application to inform an assessment of the environmental implications of the proposal as detailed below.

6.6.2.0 Drainage

6.6.2.1 In response to the comments of the Sustainable Drainage Systems Officer, a Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) Statement is submitted with the revised application, the key conclusions of which are:

- The proposed residential development is located in Flood Zone 1, and in an area at 'very low' risk of surface water flooding.
- Infiltration tests were carried out and demonstrated good rates across the site. As such, a drainage strategy based in infiltration has been proposed for the site. The proposed drainage strategy demonstrates that the proposed development can be sustainably drained using such methods in compliance with both national and local policy.

6.6.3.0 Trees

6.6.3.1 As detailed under Issue No 3, the existing boundary screening is essentially retained and augmented whilst the loss of landscaped features within the site is restricted to 4 trees graded as being of low quality and value. There is in any event

significant new planting within the site to adequately compensate.

6.6.3.2 With regard to the impact to the retained trees, it is acknowledged that the Landscape & Urban Design Officer noted that there were some limited minor incursions into the Root Protection Areas (RPA) of the retained trees. Notwithstanding this the updated Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Method Statement concludes that adequate protection can be provided through management principles and construction specifications.

6.6.4.0 Archaeology

6.6.4.1 Further to the issues raised by HCC's Historic Environment Advisor an Archaeological Evaluation is submitted with the proposal. The key findings are as follows:

- The geophysical survey (Costa, B., 2018) revealed no anomalies of possible archaeological origin.
- The evaluation revealed features within three of the four trenches and the features were diverse comprising a pit, a post hole and linears (ditches and a gully). The profiles of the features were often irregular and the features contained no finds. At least some of the features may have formed naturally.

- Small scale environmental sampling recorded an absence of carbonised remains indicating that it was not receiving debris from domestic or agricultural processing activities.

6.6.5.0 Ecology

6.6.5.1 In response to the comments of Hertfordshire Ecology, a Preliminary Ecological Assessment and a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment have been prepared. The recommendations of each are summarised below.

6.6.5.2 **Preliminary Ecological Assessment** The following key recommendations are highlighted and which will be incorporated into the proposal:

- Biodiversity enhancement measures should be incorporated into the landscaping scheme to work towards delivering net gains for biodiversity.
- A walkover survey to assess the condition of the grassland in relation to reptiles should be undertaken prior to works commencing. The grassland on site is considered to be sub-optimal for reptiles as it was managed by grazing until recently and has a short sward length. However, if the grassland is left unmanaged prior to works commencing, there is potential for reptiles to colonise the site in the

interim. Therefore, it is recommended that the grassland is continued to be managed to maintain a short sward length.

- The clearance of the rubble pile and the brash pile which may provide potential suitable habitat for reptiles should be undertaken under the supervision of an experienced ecologist. This should be completed when reptiles are active. This is weather dependent but generally extends between March and October inclusive.

6.6.5.3 **Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment** The following recommendations will be implemented:

- The former stable building has been identified as having low potential to support roosting bats and accordingly it is recommended that at least one survey (consisting of either a dusk emergence survey or a dawn re-entry survey) be undertaken during the peak season for emergence/re-entry surveys (May to August) to determine the presence/absence of roosting bats within the structure.
- The mature ash tree (3926) and the mature walnut tree (3938) which would be removed as part of the proposal have been assessed as having high potential for roosting bats. It is thus recommended that at least three nocturnal emergence and/or dawn re-entry surveys be undertaken during the bat

activity season to determine the presence/ absence of roosting bats within the trees.

- Bats are likely to use boundary trees and hedgerows for foraging and commuting. In accordance with best practice guidance relating to lighting and biodiversity any new lighting should be carefully designed to minimise potential disturbance and fragmentation impacts on sensitive receptors, such as bat species.
- In line with the NPPF, the development should aim to enhance the site for bats. Bat boxes should be installed to provide roosting habitat for species such as pipistrelle.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1.0 Background

7.1.1 This report is submitted on behalf of Oakbridge Homes to support a revised planning application for the erection of 9 detached dwellings on land adjacent to No 54 Station Road, Ashwell. The application is submitted following the withdrawal of application LPA Ref No: 18/01874/FP and is based on a revised layout and supported by additional information. The application is promoted on the basis of the following main conclusions

7.2.0 Planning Balance

7.2.1 The Site abuts, but is beyond the defined Ashwell Settlement Boundary as detailed in the Adopted Local Plan. It is nevertheless considered that the principle of the proposal is wholly acceptable, as was accepted in the pre and post submission discussions with the LPA relating to the previous proposal. This conclusion is drawn in the light of the following factors:

- The emerging Local Plan now includes the Site within the Ashwell Settlement boundary and identifies Ashwell as a 'Category A' village wherein general development will be allowed. On the basis that the Inspector's proposed Main Modifications to the Plan do not seek to amend these

proposals, given the advanced stage of the Plan and the relatively modest nature of the proposals, it is considered that significant weight can be given to the emerging Plan in accordance paragraphs 48 to 50 of the NPPF.

- As evidenced by recent appeal decisions the adopted Local Plan is now effectively time-expired and that its provisions for housing supply do not reflect up-to-date need. Moreover the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing, with the supply of deliverable housing sites equivalent to between 2.7 and 3.7 years. Accordingly NPPF paragraph 11d requires that the planning balance shifts in favour of the grant of permission, with permission to be refused *only* if any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.
- Regardless of the exact location of the settlement boundary, it must in any event be accepted that the Site is not remote or isolated, but rather is adjacent to residential development to the north east and west and is well related to the excellent range of local services. It would thus deliver clear social and economic benefits through the provision of housing to meet an identified need in an appropriate location.

7.2.2 In the required balancing exercise there are not considered to be any adverse impacts resulting from the proposal in the following circumstances:

- An appropriate mix of dwellings is provided to satisfy the identified need.
- The layout of the design has been amended to provide a more loose knit and informal arrangement, which together with the spacious, landscaped setting would be appropriate in this edge of settlement location within the Conservation Area, whilst delivering a distinctive and attractive development. To this end the proposal accords with local and national design policy and guidance.
- A wholly acceptable standard of environment would be achieved in full accordance with adopted standards.
- Safe access can be provided for all users, whilst the scale and location of the proposal were previously regarded as being acceptable by the Highway authority. Parking is provided in accordance with adopted standards
- Additional or updated information is submitted with the application to inform an assessment of the environmental

implications of the proposal, with no such undue impact apparent.