

Planning and Design and Access Statement
Proposal for an Additional Dwelling on Land Adjacent to 60,
Birchanger Lane, Bishop's Stortford CM23 5QA

1.0 The Site and Local Context

1.1 The site lies within the Development Limits of Birchanger as designated in the Local Plan wherein the proposed development is acceptable in principle. It is not subject to any specific policy or land-use designation in the Local Plan or any national statutory protective designation.

1.2 No.60 is an end of terrace two-storey house with three bedrooms. It is situated within a wholly residential built-frontage made up of two-storey houses. To the side of the house and part of its plot is an area of hardstanding which is used for off-street parking. Immediately adjoining this is a parcel of land under the ownership of no.58, Birchanger Lane which provides off-street parking for that property. These two pieces of land together are what constitutes the application site. Several shed-like outbuildings across both parcels of land would be removed.

2.0 The Proposal and Relevant Planning History

2.1 Construction of a detached two-storey houses with two bedrooms. It would be sited on the part of the plot to the side of no.60, as referred to in paragraph 1.2 above.

2.2 The scheme as presented is based upon a pre-application submission (reference: UTT/22/1535/PA). The key aspects of the Local Planning Authority's response are summarised as follows:

- The proposed development is acceptable in principle.
- The site is within designated Development Limits.
- The site is within the Green-Belt. This is later contradicted with a statement that Birchanger village is excluded from the Green-Belt. This makes more sense because it is a settlement contained within a Development Limits

boundary that the Green-Belt does not 'wash over' on the Local Plan proposals map.

- The Council is only able to demonstrate a deliverable housing land supply of 3.5 years rather than the required 5 year supply.
- The proposed development should respect the scale, height, orientation, building line, general linear pattern of the built-frontage and the materials used in neighbouring houses.
- Direct access on to Birchanger Lane is not favoured.
- No adverse comment in relation to Private amenity-space or off-street parking provision.
- If the proposed dwelling were to be too tall in relation to neighbouring property no.60 it could cause overshadowing of that property.

2.3 It is also proposed that two sets of French doors be inserted into the side elevation of no.60 for access to amenity and parking areas and for improved light and outlook. This alteration does not require planning permission but would, nevertheless, be a component of the overall scheme. Further enhancement of the site circumstances would occur by a reduction in its level of approximately 400mm as a result of removing existing hardstanding.

3.0 Relevant Planning Policy

National Level: The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021

3.1 At paragraph 7 of the NPPF it states that: ***“The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.”*** It goes on at paragraph 10 to state that there should be a ***“... presumption in favour of sustainable development.”*** It then states at paragraph 38 it that: ***“Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.”*** At paragraph 68 it states that:

“Small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities

should (amongst other things): Support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes.”

3.2 The NPPF does not directly address matters of dwelling design or residential amenity but at section 12 it does set out some very general, common-sense principles providing direction to achieving good design outcomes.

3.3 With regard to parking, the NPPF does not dictate minimum or maximum parking standards. It takes a more flexible and responsive approach in effectively directing at paragraph 107 that if provision be required at all, it be determined on a site-by-site basis taking into account a range of factors that will vary according to any given situation.

Local Level: Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005 (UDLP)

3.4 The saved policies of the UDLP listed below, are those most relevant to consideration of the planning merits of the proposed development. They have been acknowledged in its conception, with the objective being an acceptable degree of compliance as appropriate, in light of all other specific material considerations and circumstances pertaining:

S3: *'Other Development Limits'*

GEN1: *'Access'*

GEN2: *'Design'*

GEN6: *'Infrastructure Provision to Support Development'*

GEN 7: *'Nature Conservation'*

GEN8: *'Vehicle Parking Standards'*

ENV3: *'Open Spaces and Trees'*

H1: *'Housing Development'*

H3: *'New Houses within Development Limits'*

Guidance Documents

3.5 Essex County Council documents *'The Essex Design Guide'* (2018), *'The Urban*

Place Supplement (2007) and *Parking Standards-Design and Good Practice (2009)* have also been adopted by the Council to inform the application of design, place-making and transport related policies of the Local Plan. Locally applicable modifications to this latter document were adopted in February 2013. Other adopted documents that have some aspects of relevance to the proposed development are *'Building for a Healthy Life'* (adopted 2021) and *'Birchanger Parish Plan'* (adopted 2006).

4.0 Design and General Planning Considerations

4.1 The proposed development has been positively designed to accord with the strategic, aesthetic, character, functionality and sustainability expectations of adopted policies and guidance listed in part 3 of this statement. The conception of the proposed development has been guided by four principal aims:

- Sustainable addition to local dwelling stock.
- Making the best use of land within a designated 'Development Limit' by raising density in manner appropriate to and respectful of the local development pattern and design context.
- Adherence to good design principles and practice.
- Respect for the amenity of neighbouring residential property occupiers.

4.2 The proposed development be of intrinsically pleasing traditional architectural appearance and, whilst being detached rather than being an addition to the neighbouring terrace, would be of scale, proportions and height compatible with these aspects of the individual houses making up the terrace. Its detached nature is intended to preserve the architectural form and design integrity of the adjacent terrace and to provide a visual 'full-stop' or 'book-end' to the terrace at the junction of Birchanger Lane and High Close, rather than a visually weaker and less interesting linear continuation of the adjacent terrace. The proposed house also would pay appropriate respect to the front and rear building-lines of the neighbouring terraced houses and to their front elevation orientations towards Birchanger Lane. External materials of construction would pick up on those aspects of the existing terraces thereby ensuring harmonious

assimilation into the street-scene.

4.3 In terms of the actual space that the proposed house would occupy, this is not a fundamentally important spatial component of the built-frontage. It is simply part of a wider than average residential plot in an otherwise quite tightly developed street-scene. It is not a notable ‘visual punctuation’ gap that needs to be fully preserved for its own sake. Nevertheless, the proposed block layout-plan shows that the proposed dwelling would still be separated from the side elevation of no.60, Birchanger Lane by approximately three metres. This would leave a visually meaningful gap thereby avoiding any sense of a cramped appearance between the two buildings.

4.4 Careful siting and significant separation of the proposed development in relation to neighbouring residential properties, particularly no.60, would ensure no prejudicial impact on the amenities of their occupiers by over-bearing physical presence, material reduction in ambient daylight or over-looking and loss of privacy. The proposed new house would be similarly immune from adverse effects by existing properties.

4.5 Some new hard-surfacing would be laid to provide off-street parking to serve no.60 and the proposed house as per the block layout-plan. This would be comparable to that which is already allowable under the terms of Permitted Development. All new hard-surfacing could be porous in nature and aesthetically appropriate to the locality. This matter can be controlled to the Council’s satisfaction by the imposition of a planning condition if this be deemed to be necessary and reasonable.

4.6 Policy GEN2: ‘Design’ does not contain size prescription for the provision of private amenity-space. It says at Part F of the policy that the layout and design of new development must have regard to adopted supplementary guidance relating to matters of layout and design. Use of the word ‘regard’ suggests applying guidance in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of a site and its wider

context rather than imposing a ‘one size fits all’ approach to every situation. The Urban Place Supplement and the latest (2018) version of the Essex Design Guide do not appear to recommend a private amenity size of more than 40 m² for new dwellings. The latter document even states that: ***“Previous guidance has specified a range of minimum garden sizes correlating with the number of bedrooms in a dwelling – but the new best practice guideline emphasises a focus on small, walled outside yards of around 25 sq m.”***

4.7 Private amenity-space of approximately 57 m² would be provided for the proposed house whilst approximately 64 m² would be retained to serve the existing house. These would be regular shaped, useable spaces that would essentially conform to the prevailing pattern/arrangement for gardens that serve the terraces of this short section of Birchanger Lane whereby principal amenity spaces are at the fronts of the houses.

4.8 Waste and recycling bins for both the existing and proposed houses would be discreetly storable adjacent to them in the same manner that is common to all houses in the neighbouring terraces. Other Council issued recycling boxes and bags can be stored within the individual houses.

5.0 Access

5.1 Birchanger does not possess a comprehensive range of facilities, amenities and services with which to meet the varied and multi-dimensional needs of its inhabitants. However, the reality of it already being an established developed settlement is recognised by policy H3: ‘New Houses within Development Limits’ which indicates that in these places new dwellings can be permitted. This is contingent on, amongst other things, there being reasonable access to amenities and services without complete reliance on the private motor-car. There are three bus services running on Birchanger Lane providing public transport access to the towns of Bishop’s Stortford and Saffron Walden and to Stansted Airport. There are main-line train stations at Bishops Stortford and Stansted Airport both providing frequent and reliable public-transport into central London and

Cambridge. Occupiers of the proposed house would therefore have the ability to access a full range of facilities and services, including educational, cultural, community, shopping, and employment opportunities, without over-reliance on the private motor car. This would accord with the objectives of national policy and those local policies concerned with making development as sustainable as possible.

5.2 Adopted parking standards require a minimum of two off-street parking spaces to serve dwellings that have two or three bedrooms. The site would provide two off-street parking spaces to serve the existing house, two off-street parking spaces to serve the proposed house and two off-street parking spaces to serve no.58, Birchanger Lane (one of which, being adjacent to a side wall of the proposed house, would be 3.9 metres in width), the owner having donated land towards creating the site for the proposed house. The submitted block-plan shows the layout of proposed parking spaces. Compliance with the adopted standards and the spirit and purpose of policy GEN8: '*Vehicle Parking Standards*', would be achieved.

5.3 Space for secure cycle storage/parking for the existing house and the proposed house would be available within the boundaries of each property. Precise details to be agreed under the terms of a planning condition as necessary and reasonable.

5.4 The proposed development would be constructed in compliance with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations to allow reasonable access and use to all persons, regardless of disability, age or gender.

6.0 Trees

6.1 No trees or vegetation of high public amenity value would be lost from the site as a consequence of the proposed development.

7.0 Biodiversity

7.1 There are no species of protected flora and fauna known or suspected to exist on the site. The proposed house would be sited in a position currently devoted to hardstanding. This does not provide important wildlife habitat and nor is there valuable wildlife habitat elsewhere on the site.

8.0 Statement of Community Involvement

8.1 The occupiers of immediately neighbouring properties have been considered in the design and siting of the proposed development with the objective being to ensure that their residential amenities would not be affected to a material and harmful degree. No consultation with neighbours has taken place in the knowledge that all adjoining property owners/occupiers will be directly consulted for their views by the Council as part of the planning application process.

9.0 Flood Risk Assessment

9.1 The application site lies within Environment Agency designated Flood Risk Zone 1 where little, if any, risk of flooding has been identified. No special protection or amelioration measures are necessary.

10.0 Conclusion

10.1 The proposed development would comply with the objectives of national policy guidance relating to delivery of additional sustainably located dwelling units, sustainability in broad terms, efficient use of land within existing settlements and good design, and with all directly relevant regional and local area planning policies. No planning interests of acknowledged importance would be harmed by it. The Council is at liberty to impose any conditions it deems reasonable and necessary to ensure satisfactory initial development and satisfactory on-going functional use of the site. A grant of planning permission would be appropriate.