

Building Futures Together

Bishop's Stortford Mencap Limited

Grove Cottage, 151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford,
Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX

Demolition of existing building and construction of
replacement Class D1 (Non-residential institution)
building

Design and Access Statement

P23-0900

November 2023

The Barker logo is a dark blue square with the word "Barker" in white, bold, sans-serif font. It is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, partially overlapping a decorative graphic of overlapping diagonal stripes in shades of blue and yellow.

Barker

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Grove Cottage
151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire,
CM23 3JX

Prepared For and on Behalf of:
Bishop's Stortford Mencap Limited

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Design and Access Statement

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1 - Introduction

1 Introduction

This statement has been written to support the submission of an application for the demolition of the existing building and construction of a replacement Class D1 (non-residential institution) building at Grove Cottage, 151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX.

Grove Cottage, the home of Bishop's Stortford Mencap, is a registered charity established in 1966 by a group of parents who found that there was a gap in services for children who had additional needs. Since 1975 the organisation has been operating from 151 London Road. The house next door was purchased in 1994 as the organisation continued to expand.

The primary function of the organisation has remained the same since its inception. Grove Cottage provides social and educational activities for people of all ages with a learning disability to develop their potential, help them avoid social isolation by supporting lifelong friendships and to provide respite to their family and carers. This mission has resulted in Grove Cottage becoming unique - the only Royal Mencap organisation to provide care throughout the full life course, from its Special Needs Nursery to support for young people and older adults.

Grove Cottage currently has approximately 200 members, ranging from 3-80 years. Members are drawn from a wide geographical area across Essex and Hertfordshire.

Current on-site services include an Ofsted registered Special Needs Nursery (rated Good), three regular clubs for children, young people and adults plus holiday clubs during school holidays. In addition, seven groups meet weekly off-site. The shift to holding clubs off site was led by Covid. Before Covid, 7 of the clubs were held on site whilst only 3 were held off site. It has been decided to continue running the clubs off site until the building works have been completed to limit disruption and changes in routine which can be extremely difficult for some members.

The activities are delivered and supported by 37 staff and over 120 volunteers. The activities run cover a wide range of interests from performing arts, physical activity, life skills and social clubs. During an average week (pre-covid) it would have around 100 club visits to its centre at 151 London Road, as well as approximately 50 visits by members to satellite activities which take place at Thirst Café and Northgate Primary School.

Speech and language therapy professionals hold regular sessions with children on site and external health and social care workers regularly meet with staff and parents in the building. Demand for services is high with waiting lists in place for some clubs.

Planning History

Application Number: 3/19/2018/FUL

Demolition of existing use class D1 building and detached garage and construction of replacement class D1 (non-residential institution) building for day nursery and day centre, including office and ancillary uses. Creation of 3 off street car parking spaces at

Grove Cottage, 151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX

Status: Granted 20th March 2020

Project Reference: P23-0900
REVISION: Original

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Application Number: 3/11/1662/AD

Signage at

Grove Cottage, 151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX

Status: Granted 8th December 2011

Application Number: 3/10/0318/AD

1100mm by 700mm projecting sign (retrospective) at

Grove Cottage, 151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX

Status: Granted 29th April 2010

Application Number: 3/08/1867/FP

Alterations to elevations, bollards to front paved area at

Grove Cottage, 151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX

Status: Granted 19th December 2008

Application Number: 3/93/0875/FP

Change of use from residential to non-residential institutional use with partial demolition, extension and new garage at

Grove Cottage, 151 London Road, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire, CM23 3JX

Status: Granted 6th October 1993

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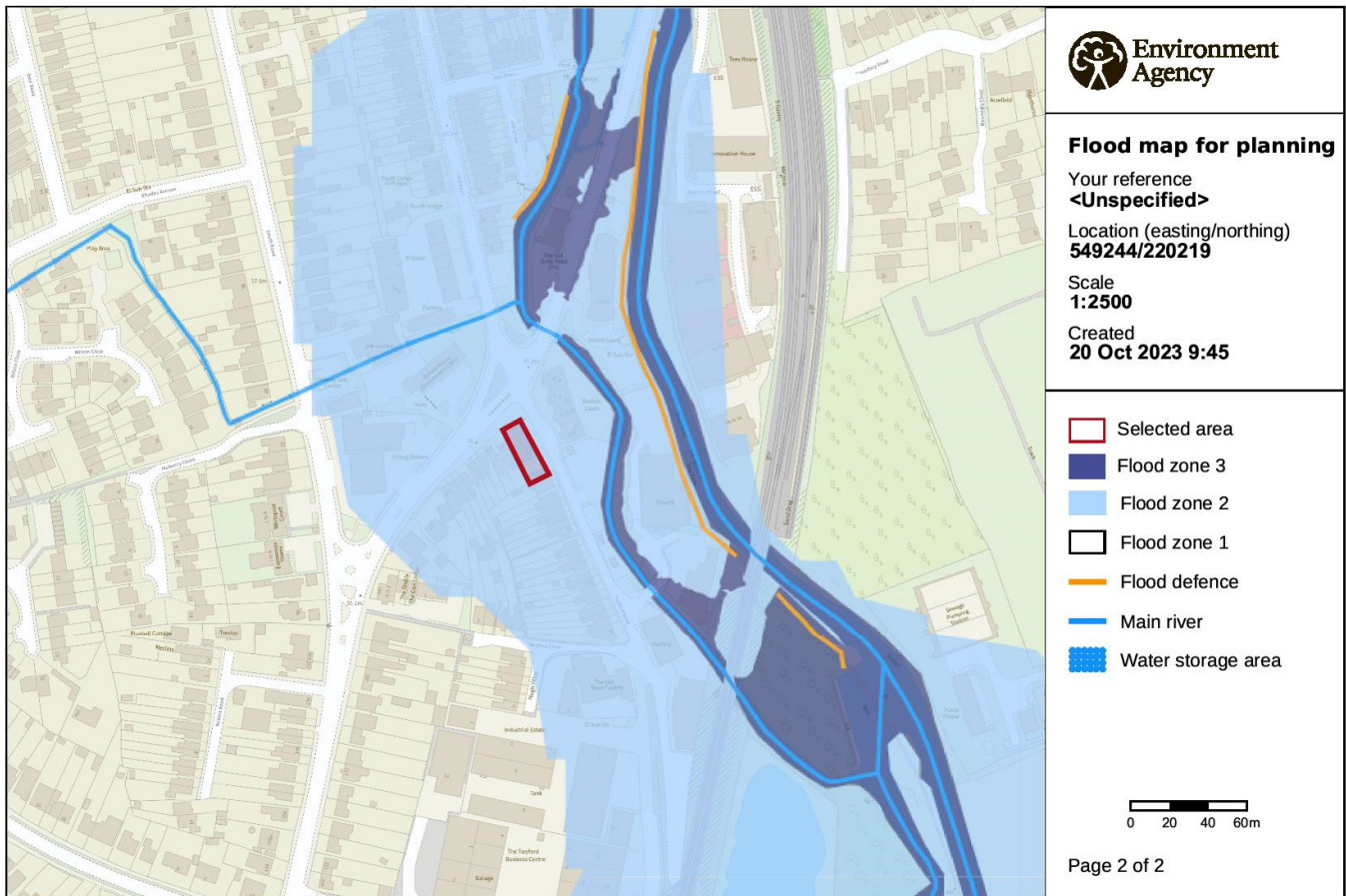
2 Design Statement

2.1 Location

Grove Cottage is based at 151-153 London Road, Bishop's Stortford. The site is 500 square metres in size and the current building provides 270 square metres of floorspace. Originally a pair of Victorian cottages, a substantial flat roof extension to the rear was added in 1993 which provides much of the activity space. The first floor is currently used exclusively for staff and administration purposes.

The building sits on the corner of London Road and Twyford Road. Surrounding development is varied in scale, form, and appearance. To the rear (south) is a row of Victorian terraced properties, whilst directly adjacent on London Road is a detached two storey property, built in 2004 which accommodates two flats. This is set some 6.2 metres behind the established building line. To the east, on the opposite side of Twyford Road is a three storey block of flats, "Rushes Court", built in the 1980's and on the far side of London Road, is a petrol station and Oxford House, an elevated 1960's two storey flat roofed office block occupied by the NHS.

In addition, the site is within flood zone 2 according to the Environment Agency flood map.



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2.2 Use

A busy hub of activity for over 50 years, the current building is no longer fit for purpose. The fabric is outdated, its size puts limitations on the services that can be provided, and Grove Cottage is unable to meet current demand.

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The existing building is prone to functional obsolescence and is approaching economic obsolescence. As a conversion from a former Victorian pair of cottages, the building has limited first floor accommodation with inadequate access thereto. The ground floor has limited disabled access and restricted scope for improvement or alteration. Owing to the nature of its use, it is in desperate need of modernisation and renewing to provide a purpose-built new facility.

In terms of energy efficiency, the existing building is poorly insulated and has inefficient wet central heating. There are increasing maintenance and energy costs, and it is very inefficient to run.

There is one main room in Grove Cottage where most activities take place. This means that only one service can be offered at a time. The nursery uses the space during the daytime, Monday to Friday, and adult services use the space in the evenings. To do this, nursery resources are packed away each night and boxes of equipment for social club sessions, and chairs and tables laid out before members arrive for evening clubs. Nursery equipment then must be set up again before children arrive the following morning.

Weekend clubs for school aged members are also offered, including Cottage Chill, a group for members with more complex needs or who require one to one support. There are waiting lists for some of the weekend clubs, and it is only possible to offer monthly or twice monthly slots to those who do attend due to space restrictions and demand.

The Covid 19 pandemic has further heightened the challenges of balancing services for children and adults in just one shared space, particularly due to the need for distancing and enhanced cleaning. Activities offered by Grove Cottage were adapted to meet the changing covid restrictions. During lockdowns, services included doorstep visits, zoom calls and the distribution of activity packs. As restrictions lifted, socially distanced support groups were put in place, along with other day services including the Music Man Project Hertfordshire and the reestablishment of Performing Arts, Get Active and nursery.

The pandemic has allowed Grove Cottage to 'test the water' in terms of delivering daytime services to adults and to explore external venues which may be used whilst the new building is being constructed.

2.3 Amount

The size and layout of the proposed building has been based on the importance of delivering a building that meets the unique needs of the end users followed by the spatial limitations of the site and its context. The design needs to deliver a building that provides disabled access throughout, something the current building does not. It needs to accommodate separate entrances for safeguarding, sufficient space for circulation, several different activity spaces, staff and administrative facilities and adequate space for toilet and changing facilities to ensure dignity for those using them, again something which the current facility does not provide. Internal floor heights have been determined by the requirement for hoists and servicing to enable the building to be as sustainable and energy efficient as possible. A good sized easily accessible outdoor space is deemed a fundamental amenity for both the nursery and other members of Grove Cottage.

The existing building has a total gross internal area of 241m². In addition to this there is the garage/ store with a gross internal area of 25m². The proposed building will have a total gross internal area of 449m². This increase of 185m² internal area will allow the space needed to provide the services required. Externally there is currently a 115m² outdoor play area, with the demolition of the existing garage the proposed outdoor space will increase to 153m².

2.4 Layout

This application proposes a contemporary, two storey, flat roofed red brick building on the corner of Twyford Road and London Road. Two separate entrances are proposed, one for the nursery to the east on Twyford Road and one for the adult learning space to the north on London Road. This ensures the proper safeguarding and security for the different building uses. The ground floor mainly consists of the nursery space with access to the outdoor play area to the south. The first floor is dedicated to the adult learning zone with two offices. There is also an access hatch located

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here providing access to the flat roof space containing PV panels, air source heat pumps and a mechanical ventilation unit with heat recovery. There is a parapet wall enclosing the roof space.

With regards to parking, it has been deemed that providing an improved outdoor space for the nursery is of upmost importance and therefore no on-site parking is proposed. Instead, alternative solutions have been sought to ensure that an appropriate level of parking is available for staff and users within close walking distance of the site and a Travel Plan has been submitted to support the application which sets out all the measures proposed. In short, it is proposed that the existing on street drop off bay on Twyford Road be extended to provide for 2 further spaces. In addition, informal agreements are in place with several local businesses/community buildings which will provide off-site parking for staff and a dedicated off-site space for the minibus. Finally, cycle parking, including an electric bike charging facility, is proposed for both staff and visitors along with showering facilities.

2.5 Scale

The proposal seeks the reduction in height of the previously approved Planning application (3/19/2018/FUL). This will not have any impact on the scale or volume of the surrounding area. Careful consideration has been given to the overall mass of the building, the juxta position of the neighbouring properties and the different building heights that already exist in the area. The current proposal is lower in height than the previously approved Planning Application (3/19/2018/FUL).

2.6 Landscaping

The tight town centre site means that currently there are no landscape features on the site. Whilst there are limited opportunities to create new landscape features a biodiverse green roof is proposed above the store and cycle racks as well as biodiverse planting and new habitats for birds and insects in the play area. A planter with seating surrounding it is also proposed to the front of the building. Such features will be an improvement on the existing building which has none of these features.

2.7 Appearance

Once the functional requirements of the building were established, the starting point was to look at the local context of the site which is a mixture of residential, community and commercial buildings. In general, the building forms reflect their use whether that is a dwellinghouse, an office, petrol station or church. The proposal follows this rational and aims to create a well-crafted modern building in brickwork that seeks to give an appropriate presence to this well-known community building whilst at the same time respecting the amenities of the immediate residential neighbours and the context within which it is sited.

Although simple in form and contemporary in appearance, the use of red brickwork and a soldier course at the parapet level give a nod to the traditional red brick buildings found in the town. The facades are articulated in a series of simple bays with traditionally recessed windows and brickwork panels referencing some of the fine Victorian and Georgian buildings that can be found in Bishop's Stortford. The main entrances to the building are pushed deeper into the elevations providing further modulation of the façade at ground floor as well as giving shelter. The use of brickwork lettering to advertise Grove Cottage is a simple and timeless addition and provides further interest to the building.

The two entrances, located on Twyford Road and London Road, both positively address the street and are quite distinct having been picked out in brightly coloured glazed brickwork to signify the different parts of the building as well as providing further interest.

With regards to the proposed external amenity space, in contrast to the existing building, easy direct access for the nursery children will be provided via glazed sliding doors. This will provide a unique sensory environment and expand

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the opportunities for outdoor play and learning. The walled garden will also provide a secure environment for the children while at the same time giving privacy to and from the neighbouring gardens. At first floor, the glazing, which is non opening, is shaded by a series of fixed blade, timber, or similar, louvres. These will be carefully positioned to prevent overheating and maintain the privacy of the adjoining gardens.

The result is a building, as required by Paragraph 130 of the NPPF, that will function well, whilst adding to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development. The proposed building is visually attractive and is sympathetic to local character. It optimises the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount of development and is a place that is safe, inclusive and accessible which will promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Overall, therefore it is concluded that the proposal constitutes the provision of a well-designed contemporary building in a location where no building form or style dominates, as required by Paragraphs 126 and 130 of the NPPF and District Plan Policy DES4.

2.8 Sustainable Construction, Energy and Water

Chapter 14 of the NPPF and East Herts Development Plan both place emphasis on addressing climate change and the need for sustainable design and construction to improve the environmental sustainability of new development.

Furthermore, the emerging climate policies in the Bishop's Stortford-All Saints, Central, South and Part of Thorley Neighbourhood Plan- First Review, are also a material consideration.

The existing building is poorly insulated with parts of it being of single skin construction. The wet central heating system is outdated and there are limited opportunities to make improvements to the thermal efficiencies of the building. The redevelopment of the site and the provision of a purpose-built building provides the possibility to significantly improve on the current situation both in terms of water efficiency and reducing carbon emissions.

The Hertfordshire Building Futures toolkit has been used to inform the design to date and will continue to be an important reference as the design develops. Taking a Fabric First approach to reduce the energy demand of the new building, the external envelope of the building has been designed in a such a way as to reduce heat loss and excessive solar gains while at the same time allowing adequate daylighting as far as possible. This will be done by improving on Building Regulations standards for thermal insulation and airtightness. The thermal mass of the masonry facades and concrete floors will also help to retain heat and modulate temperature variations. In addition to this, there will be solar shading to the south facing facade that also provides privacy to building users and prevents overlooking of the residential properties. All new lighting will be LED and controlled with absence detectors and daylight switching.

In addition to minimising energy use through the building fabric a series of energy efficient servicing solutions are proposed. These include using air source heat pumps to provide heating, PV cells on the south facing roof to minimise electricity use and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery to provide adequate fresh air to the spaces while reducing heat loss via the exhaust air.

With regards to water consumption this will be reduced by incorporating water saving devices such as aerated taps and dual flushing WCs and leak detection. Sanitary appliances will be chosen that minimise water use. Rainwater recycling will also be considered, and rainwater collection will be incorporated to help water the new planting. Surface water runoff will be minimised by rainwater collection. If possible, a water permeable play surface will be chosen for the garden.

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With regards to construction and specifically materials and waste, it is intended that, where possible, local materials will be used, and waste will be minimised with consideration being given to reusing existing materials where viable. This will form part of the brief for the chosen building contractor and will be explored in more detail at that stage.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development has been designed in such a way to maximise its environmental sustainability and it will be a significant improvement over and above the existing building. It is therefore concluded that the proposed development is in line with national and local policy in this respect.

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3.1 Highways, Access, and Parking

No alterations are proposed to the public highway, other than the introduction of an increased on-street drop off zone on Twyford Road, where currently double yellow lines exist to protect access to the existing garage. This access would no longer be needed as no vehicular access is proposed onto the site. Two level pedestrian entrances into the building have been proposed for members and staff; one off London Road and one off Twyford Road and sufficient space exists to ensure that these access points are safe. Furthermore, vehicles including the minibus will no longer need to access the on-site ad hoc parking spaces across the public pavement removing its dual use and improving the current situation. Level access will be provided to the rear amenity space and an internal lift will enable the whole building to be accessible for all.

The existing facility has limited space for off street parking. The existing garage accessed off Twyford Road is used for storage rather than parking and whilst space for 5 vehicles exists there is no formal parking provision for staff or members available at the site. Notwithstanding this it is acknowledged that for a building of this size a significant number of off-street parking spaces would be required to meet current local parking standards. The site's sustainable location and the extant 2020 planning permission are however both material considerations. The latter establishes that the provision of 3 off-street parking spaces, one of which would specifically accommodate the minibus is acceptable in this location. Sufficient space exists on the site to provide these spaces again, but this would be at the expense of an appropriately sized secure outside space, an essential amenity, for the nursery. Consideration has therefore been given to alternative parking solutions and a travel plan has been prepared, following Herts County Council Travel Plan Guidance (March 2020,) to develop a package of measures to encourage a modal shift in travel by both staff and members. A Resident Parking Scheme, which Grove Cottage has 3 passes for, already exists along Twyford Road and other surrounding streets, restricting uncontrolled on-street parking in the area. In addition, there is a drop off area directly next to the existing entrance on Twyford Road which can accommodate up to 4 vehicles at any one time. This has a 30-minute limit and is currently used to drop off and collect members with parents and carers staying only a few minutes. It is proposed that this drop off area be extended to provide an additional 1 to 2 spaces. In addition, informal agreements have been established to provide additional off-site, off-street parking at the following locations:

- 1) IT Vet has three spaces, one of which will be used to accommodate the minibus. This is located on London Road (B1383) and is a short walk from Grove Cottage.
- 2) Oxford House has nine spaces at the front of the building plus a large car park at the side of the building available after 5pm weekdays and all weekend. Oxford House is situated less than 100 metres from Grove Cottage. This parking capacity will absorb any vehicular traffic at or near Grove Cottage for all evening and weekend activities.

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3) Twyford Road Baptist Church has two spaces. This is located a two-minute walk from Grove Cottage.

With regards to the minibus, which is used to take members on day trips and to off-site activities such as swimming, it is proposed that this be housed off site at IT Vet on London Road. This is a very short distance from Grove Cottage and the minibus will be driven to the site to pick up and return members from the drop off zone directly outside the building. With regards to cycling, there will be secure staff cycle parking facilities accessed via the garden and visitor cycle parking facilities provided to the front along with appropriate showering facilities. In addition, electric charging points are proposed for cycles. These provisions in tandem with the measures that have been set out in the Travel Plan which include the introduction of car sharing and cycle to work schemes will ensure that the proposed development will not result in any undue impact on parking in the area as well as providing for a meaningful modal shift in travel patterns. It is therefore considered that the proposed development in this respect is acceptable.

3.2 Neighbour Amenity

Turning first to any impact the proposed development would have on the occupiers of 157 London Road. The existing building on the site is located forward of the principal elevation of this neighbouring property by some 6.2m, with a separation between the two buildings of approximately 2m. The proposed building would occupy a similar footprint to the building it replaces, located forward of the principal elevation by 6.1m and retaining the existing 2m separation with no. 157. The height to the top of the proposed parapet wall would be lower than the height of the proposed ridge under than the recently approved scheme, measuring approximately 7670mm and sitting in line with the ridge line of 157 London Road. The majority of openings on the west elevation looking onto 157 London Road are located on the ground floor, one of which is for the access WC so would be obscured glass, the other 2 windows would be located in the sensory room but would look onto the boundary wall/fencing. The only window on the first floor facing onto 157 London Road will be a high-level window also with obscured glass located in the access WC/ changing. It is therefore considered that the proposed building would not significantly impact upon the living conditions of no. 157 London Road.

With regards to no. 2 Twyford Road, this property has no openings facing the site. The juxta position of this property in relation to the proposed building ensures that that there will be no impact in terms of loss of light, overshadowing or similar. With regards to privacy, whilst the proposal introduces an element of glazing, the use of external fixed louvres at first floor level on this elevation will ensure that no overlooking will take place into the rear garden of this property as well as ensuring an appropriate level of privacy for members using this space.

With regards to Rushes Court, this three-story block of flats is situated on the far side of Twyford Road. The proposed building will be lower in height than this as it will only be two stories with a parapet surrounding the roof and approximately 700mm lower in height than the existing property. The proposed building will also be lower than the building design approved in 2020. It is therefore considered that that the distance between the two properties remains sufficient to ensure that that there will be no significant loss of light, overshadowing or similar over and above the existing situation. Likewise, with regards to privacy, it is considered that the proposed development will not significantly impact this.

Finally turning to any undue noise and nuisance that may result from the scheme. The scheme proposes the same use as the existing building and therefore the status quo will remain. It is noted that the previous scheme included an hours of use restriction for the rear external space. The NPPF is clear that "Planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects." Currently the existing garden is used regularly by the nursery and on occasion by the evening and weekend clubs. Given the proposed development is for the same

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use, the times activity clubs are held (the latest currently finishing at 9pm) and that there is an existing garden in the same location used by members without restriction it is considered unreasonable for such a tight restriction to be imposed. Further discussion on this matter would be welcome.

It is acknowledged that careful management of construction will need to take place to ensure that it does not unduly impact on neighbouring properties. Therefore, prior to construction a management plan will be produced which will detail how air pollutants, dust and noise will be minimised during the building phase. A construction traffic plan will also be included, and residents will be regularly updated on the progress of the scheme. A dedicated member of staff at Grove Cottage will be made available to residents should any issues arise during the construction phase.

4 Conclusion

To conclude, this application proposes a well-designed state of the art contemporary building in a sustainable location which will sit comfortably in its context. There will be no demonstrable harm to highway safety or access, parking, neighbour amenity or flooding. It will replace an existing unsustainable building that has reached both functional and economic obsolescence.

Most importantly, the new building will provide a modern purpose-built facility which meets the unique needs of its members and their families, whilst ensuring that the future of Grove Cottage, a much loved, essential community resource in Bishop's Stortford, will be safeguarded for many years to come.

Accordingly, considering all of the above material considerations, which weigh in favour of the proposal, in accordance with both national and local planning policy, the Local Planning Authority is hereby respectfully requested to grant this application subject to appropriate conditions.

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Appendix A: Architectural drawings



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Architectural Drawings:

- GBS001-BA-A1-GF-DR-A-3014 - Location Plan and Block Plan
- GBS001-BA-A1-GF-DR-A-3010 – Existing Ground Floor Plan
- GBS001-BA-A1-01-DR-A-3011 – Existing First Floor Plan
- GBS001-BA-A1-RF-DR-A-3013 – Existing Roof Plan
- GBS001-BA-A1-ZZ-DR-A-3012 – Existing Elevations
- GBS001-BA-A1-GF-DR-A-3200 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- GBS001-BA-A1-01-DR-A-3211 – Proposed First Floor Plan
- GBS001-BA-A1-RF-DR-A-3212 – Proposed Roof Plan
- GBS001-BA-A1-ZZ-DR-A-3214 – Proposed Elevations
- GBS001-BA-A1-ZZ-DR-A-3215 Proposed Sections

Appendix B: Photographs

The logo for Barker, featuring the word "Barker" in white, bold, sans-serif font on a dark blue rectangular background. The background of the entire page is dark blue with a yellow and light blue diagonal stripe pattern in the bottom right corner.

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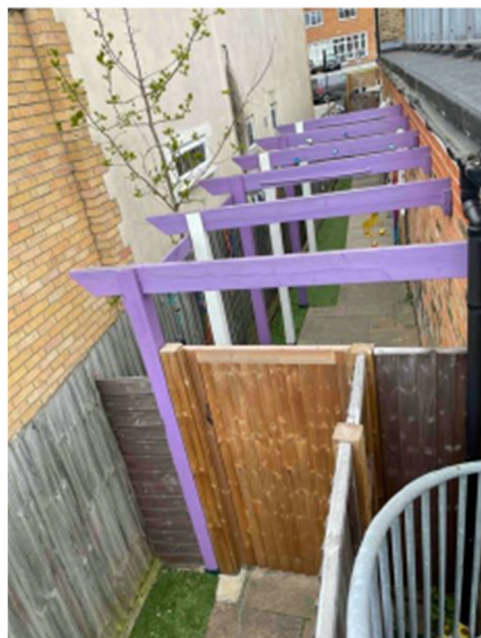
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