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DESIGN & ACCESS **STATEMENT**

Address

Land adjoining 38 The Ridgeway,
Cuffley, Herts, EN6 4AX

Proposal

Erection of a detached dwelling

April 2021

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The site that is the subject of this formal planning application has been the subject of two pre-application enquiries during 2020. The first in March 2020, sought Level 1 advice relating the principle of erecting a single dwelling within the land alongside No 38 The Ridgeway. In that case, the issue of principle related to the residential development of the site and its appropriateness in the Green Belt. By letter dated 12th May 2020 the applicant's agent was advised by the Council's Senior Development Management Officer that;

The application site is washed over by the Metropolitan Green Belt. Paragraph 145 of the NPPF outlines that local planning authorities should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate development, apart from a limited number of exceptions. One of these exceptions is 'limited infilling in villages'.

Having regard to the submitted drawings and character of the location, I consider that the proposal would be limited infilling in the village of Cuffley for planning policy purposes. As such, the proposal would represent appropriate development in the Green Belt. As appropriate development in the Green Belt, an assessment of Green Belt openness and the purposes of including land within it is not required.

- 1.2 The second enquiry was a Level 3 request, submitted in August 2020, which included details of the proposed dwelling. In his response to the details on 14th December 2020 the Council's Senior Development Management Officer confirmed the Level 1 advice that the principle of erecting a dwelling on this site remained acceptable and went on to assess the impact of the proposed dwelling on the character of the area, neighbour amenity, landscaping and biodiversity.

- 1.3 On visual impact the advice was that:

The dwelling would have a regular footprint and be three storeys in height (inclusive of habitable loft space) with a crown roof hipped on all sides. The design appears to imitate a neo-classical architectural style. It would have a very grand and decorative appearance.

Policies D1 and D2 of the District Plan require the standard of design in all new development to be of a high quality and that all new development respects and relates to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed. These policies are expanded upon in the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance (SDG). The SDG outlines, amongst other things, that new development should respond to building forms and patterns of existing buildings in the detailed layout and design to reinforce a sense of place and use materials and building methods/details to enhance local distinctiveness. The NPPF supports local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents.

While the design of dwellings on this part of The Ridgeway do vary, all are traditional in appearance. I consider that the proposed dwelling would appear garish and obtrusive in its context, in conflict with the above policies. In my view, the proposed dwelling would not be sympathetic to local character.

The proposed entrance gates should also be reduced in height and have a more subtle appearance. Many of the front hard boundary treatments in the immediate locality (including the entrances gates at No.38 The Ridgeway) do not benefit from planning permission. This is in the interest of Green Belt appropriateness and the respecting area's established character - void of the unauthorised front boundary treatments.

1.4 On neighbour amenity the advice was that *the proposed dwelling would not appear unduly dominant or result in any adverse loss of natural light received to neighbouring properties.*

1.5 On Landscaping:

The footprint of the proposed dwelling would be within the root protection area of several A category (high value) trees, some of which appear to be outside the boundary of the site. These trees are visible from the road and contribute to the verdant character of the area.

The Council's Tree Officer has reviewed the submitted information and considers that the development is very likely to have a significant detrimental impact on these trees. Harm to these trees would severely detract from the landscape character of the area, in

conflict with Policies D2, D8, R17 of the District Plan and the NPPF. These policies require, among other things, that development maintains the area's character and that existing landscape features are retained and protected.

1.6 On biodiversity:

Policy R11 of the District Plan requires development to demonstrate how it would contribute positively to the biodiversity of the site. This includes the protection and retention of key landscape features. The NPPF outlines that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by minimising impacts on a providing net gains for biodiversity. As it stands, given the likely impact of the development on trees, there would also be conflict with the above policies.

1.7 The conclusion of this Level 3 pre-app proposal was that at officer level, an application for the details submitted for the dwelling would be refused. However, that opinion was followed by a list of suggested changes that the Senior Development Management Officer felt should be made to the details, to improve the likelihood of a formal planning application being received favourably.

1.8 The list of suggested changes in order to increase the likelihood of planning permission being granted comprised: -

Remove the triangular pediment and the tone down the appearance of the dwelling.

Reduce height of front hard boundary treatment to 1.2 metres and omit decorative features.

Reduce width of dwelling and re-position so as to be outside the root protection area of A and B category trees. If re-positioning, ensure the established building line is also respected.

Re-locate double garage to opposite side of frontage so as to not be within the root protection area of A and B category trees.

Demonstrate net gains for biodiversity.

2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE

2.1 The site concerned comprises the large side garden to the south-east of No 38 The Ridgeway, between Nos 38 and 36. The

properties lie, in linear fashion, along the north-western side of the road, on the outskirts of Cuffley.

- 2.2 It is a long rectangular area of land running the full length of the plot. To the south-east of the site, the curtilage of No 36 has been the subject of a planning permission granted in May 2019, in the face of a significant level of local objection, for the erection of 6 x 5 bedroom dwellings following the demolition of No 36, supporting structures and associated ancillary buildings. That development was in the form of a cul-de-sac snaking north-eastwards along the length of the plot, with the dwellings facing north-westwards directly towards No 38, and the site that is the subject of this application. In reporting that development to the Planning Committee, the view was taken that despite shortcomings such as the development of a more suburban character than is present in the area, overall, given that the 6 dwellings were said to provide a reasonably significant benefit to the Council, it was felt that there was greater aggregate weight for the development rather than against it. The change that these 6 houses will make to this part of The Ridgeway will be noticeable, and should be factored into consideration of this single building plot, consistent with the prevailing character of development along The Ridgeway.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 This shown on drawings 270-001 to 270-010 Rev A. Drawings 002-010 all involve revisions to the earlier pre-app drawings, and will be addressed individually, where relevant to the changes from the earlier scheme.
- 3.2 The application involves the erection of one dwelling sited as shown on drawing 002C. It is a 5 bedroom dwelling set over 3 floors, with a linked double garage on the north-western side of the frontage of the plot, as shown on drawings 003B (ground floor), 004B (first floor) and 005B (second floor).
- 3.3 The elevations are shown on drawings 007A and 008A, with a long section on drawing 009A and comparison existing and proposed street elevations shown on drawing 010A.

4.0 MATERIAL ISSUES

- 4.1 Given the pre-app support for the principle of erecting a single dwelling within this part of the garden of No 38, the principal considerations in the case of this detailed application will centre upon the extent to which the proposal addresses all of the changes suggested by the Senior Development Management Officer in his letter of 14th December, under ref: 6/2020/2076/PA. These will now be looked at in the order that they appear on the list within that letter.
- 4.2 The triangular pediment has been removed and the appearance of the dwelling toned down, as shown on drawing 207-008A. The design and appearance of large dwellings along this part of The Ridgeway vary considerably, with no one style pre-dominating nor any common palette of external materials or architectural features. A neo-classical architectural style of the type proposed here would add to, rather than detract from, the variety of houses along the road, set back behind their hedgerow frontages.
- 4.3 The officer's subjective assessment of the pre-app design was that it was 'garish and obtrusive in its context', and unsympathetic to local character. We find this criticism of the design of this dwelling at odds with the Council's support for the more contemporary style and totally uncharacteristic linear layout of the 6 houses to replace No 36 The Ridgeway, in terms of their location in this locality.
- 4.4 In a recent case involving a replacement dwelling at No 23A The Ridgeway, almost opposite No 38, the case officer noted that:

This part of The Ridgeway is characterised by large detached dwellings lining both sides of the road. These dwellings are set well-back from the road and contained within generously sized and well landscaped plots. Dwellings also feature a variety of architectural styles and materials. The resulting variation in scale and appearance of neighbouring properties allows for some flexibility in the design of the proposed development. The siting, height and spacing around the proposed dwelling would respect the dwellings along its row. The dwelling would not appear cramped within its plot or unduly prominent from the street scene.

The same consideration applies here in terms of the flexibility in the design of new houses along this part of The Ridgeway.

- 4.5 The height of the front hard boundary treatment has been reduced to 1.2 metres, as shown on drawing 207-010A and the decorative features omitted.
- 4.6 The width of the dwelling has been reduced, as shown through the green broken edged outline comparison with the pre-app scheme, on drawings 002C and 003B.
- 4.7 The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Report prepared by Crown Tree Consultancy, together with the accompanying Tree Constraints Plan and Tree Data Schedule. Together, these look at the condition of the trees, their amenity value, life expectancy and retention category, the constraints that might influence future development and, at Section 4 of the Report, advice on dealing with tree related constraints.
- 4.8 Compared to the original proposed layout, the impact on trees has been significantly reduced. The portions of root protection areas affected are now so small that it is considered that the impact of the development upon tree health would be negligible and well within tolerable limits.
- 4.9 The Council's Tree Officer considered that the pre-app development was very likely to have a significant detrimental impact on high value trees within the site and that harming them would severely detract from the landscape character of the area; contrary to policies that require, among other things, that development maintains the area's character and that existing landscape features are retained and protected.
- 4.10 It was considered that the removal of trees from within the garden of No 36 to allow the construction of the 6 new houses would have little overall impact on the character of the landscape in the area. The majority of the boundary trees and hedges were to be retained to form a natural screen to and from the site. In our view, similar observations apply to this development. The revised siting away from the existing trees means that the development will not have a significant detrimental impact on these trees.
- 4.11 The proposed dwelling has been re-positioned so as to be outside the root protection area of A and B category trees and the revised

siting away from the trees ensures that the established building line is also respected, as shown on drawing 207-002C.

- 4.13 The double garage has been relocated to the opposite side of the frontage, so as to not be within the root protection area of A and B category trees. As perhaps a statement of the obvious, the applicant is, for obvious reasons, keen to ensure the retention of as much as possible of the existing landscaping that separates his property (old and new) from the new linear development to be built in the curtilage of No 38.
- 4.13 Policy R11 of the District Plan requires development to demonstrate how it would contribute positively to the biodiversity of the site. The protection and retention of the key landscape features within the application site will ensure that positivity.

5.0 SUMMARY

- 5.1 This application responds, in principle and in detail, to the comments expressed by the Council's Senior Development Management Officer in response to two pre-application submissions. The second response offered suggestions that were likely to increase the prospect of planning permission being granted for the erection of a single dwelling on the land alongside No 38 The Ridgeway, between that dwelling and the linear development of 6 detached houses on the adjoining site. That development permitted, in 2019, is likely to fundamentally change the grain of development and overriding character of this part of The Ridgeway.
- 5.2 The erection of a dwelling along the same building line as No 38, with its revised design and positioning within the site, responding to the Planning Officer's suggestions, would have a significantly lesser impact than the 6 houses, and we believe is now acceptable in both principle and in detail.
- 5.3 Should the Council disagree on any aspect of the development, and require clarification or further modification to the proposal then we would appreciate being given the opportunity to respond, before a decision is taken upon the application.

**Hertford Planning Service
February 2021**