



Design and Access Statement for the Erection of Three New Dwellings

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Design & Access Statement

for

The Erection of Three New Dwellings

at

Garages and land adjacent to flats 37- 48 Lambs Close, Cuffley, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire

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1. INTRODUCTION

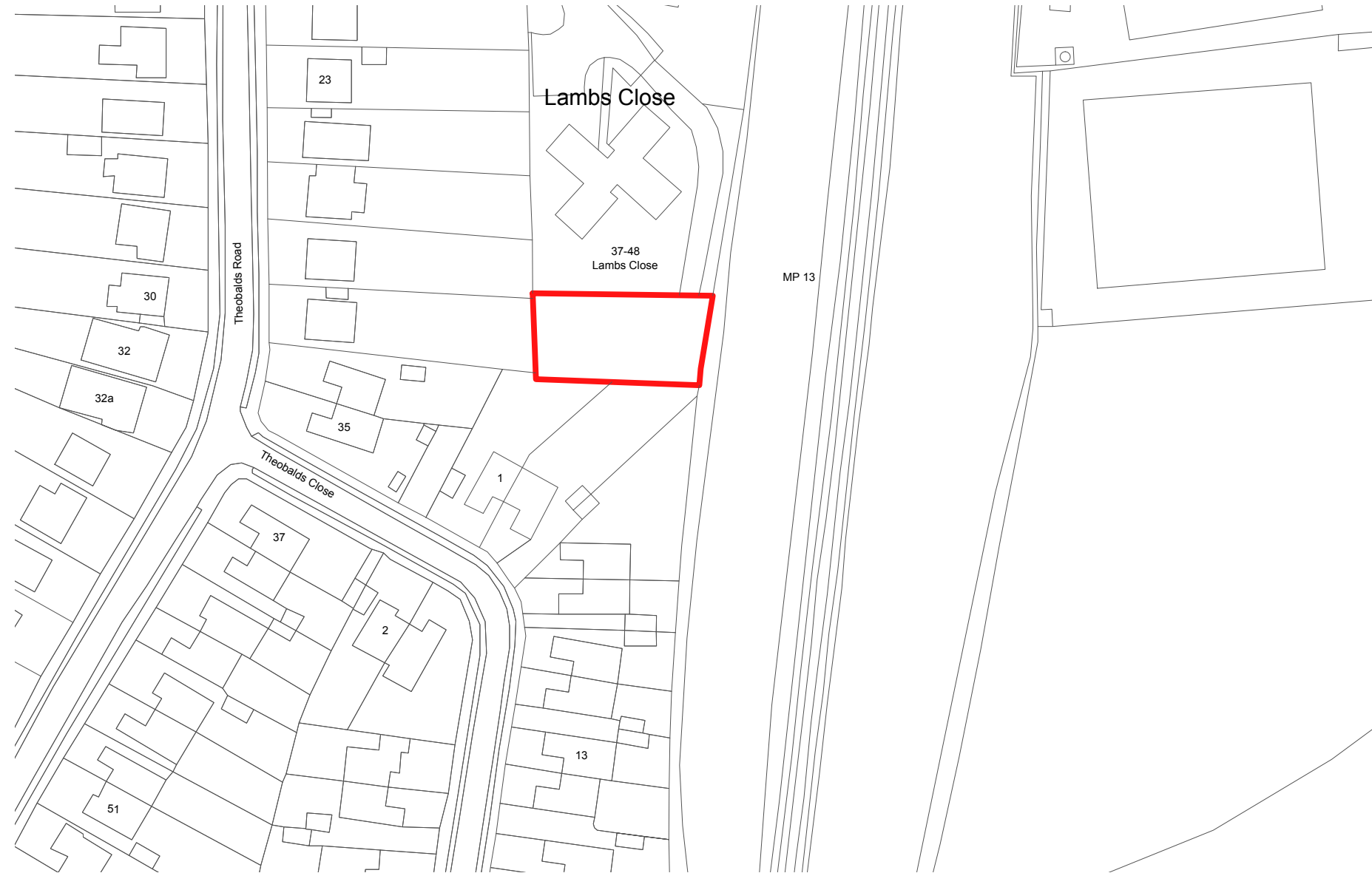
1.1 This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the erection of three new dwellings. A previous application for two flats was granted permission under reference 6/2015/2173/FULL on the site of the garages and land adjacent to flats 37- 48 Lambs Close, Cuffley, Potters Bar, Hertfordshire. 25 parking spaces would be provided in total, four for the proposed flats and 21 for the existing flats in Lambs Close.

1.2 The application site comprises a block of 11 garages and 13 open parking spaces together with access and turning space in a gated plot of land set to the rear of a large block of flats at the southern end of Lambs Close. The plot is well screened on its southern, eastern and western boundaries by mature trees and vegetation. Two of the trees – oaks – are protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

1.3 Lambs Close is characterised by four large blocks of flats with parking and landscaping. It is an unremarkable enclosed street scene.

1.4 The site is not within a Conservation Area and the garage block is not listed.

1.5 This planning application is being submitted further to the grant of permission for the erection of two, two bedroom flats on the site together with associated parking and the retention of parking for the existing flats in Lambs Close (ref. 6/2015/2173/FULL). The implementation of this permission has been commenced.



Location Plan

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2. HISTORY

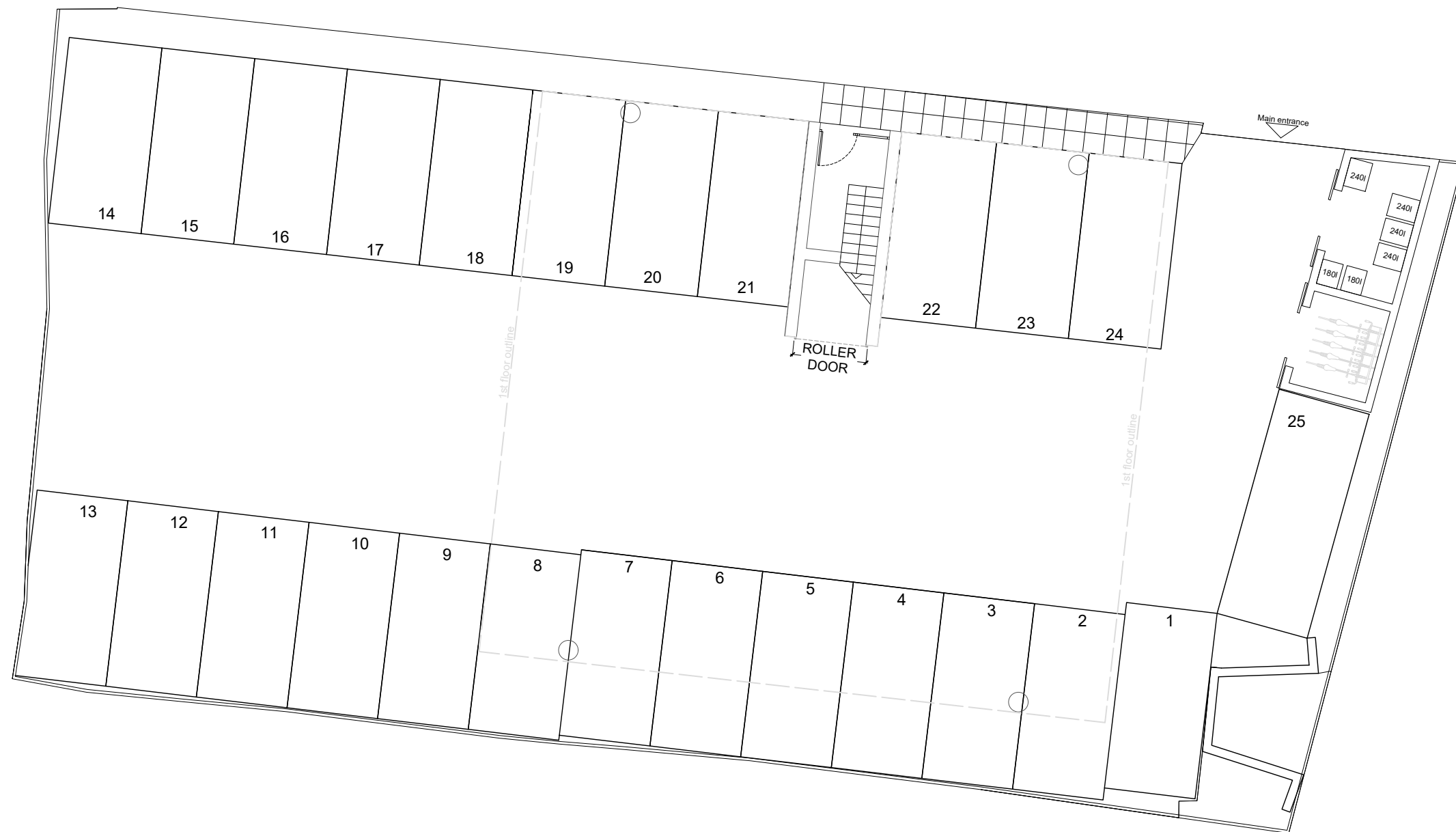
2.1 The relevant history of the site goes back to 1998 when the first of several applications for the demolition of the garages and the erection of a varying number of dwellings or flats were submitted. Each application has been either refused or withdrawn. The applications were refused on a number of grounds – the lack of parking for the development and the loss of the garages on the site, and the impact of the development upon two oak trees the subject of a Tree Preservation Order and the bulk and design of the proposed development.

2.2 Of the refused applications, the two were appealed but dismissed. The appeal following a previous refusal (application S6/2012/1962/FP) was dismissed on the grounds of the impact of the proposed development upon the protected trees on the site.

2.3 However, the Inspector considered that the impact upon these trees and the reasonable ability of the Local Authority to resist any applications to trim those trees was not a reason to have refused the planning application. “The likelihood of harm from such action would not be great and the well-being of the protected trees would not be significantly at risk”, he opined. The Inspector also considered that the development would not have an adverse impact upon the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring and surrounding dwellings or flats. The Inspector though considered that the permanent loss of the garages and parking spaces would have a significantly harmful effect on the amenity of the occupiers of Lambs Close. The appeal was dismissed.

2.4 An appeal decision on an enforcement notice served on the land regarding condition 5 of planning permission S6/1998/272/FP requires that the land be used for the parking of cars, in connection with the existing flats in Lambs Close.

2.5 The planning application for the erection of the two flats on the site (ref. 6/2015/2173/FUL) was accompanied by an application seeking the variation of condition 5 of permission S6/1998/0272/FP to allow the land to be used for the erection of the flats and not purely for parking purposes.



Site Plan

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3. THE PLANNING APPLICATION

3.1 The application is for the erection of 3 new dwellings. The building would be constructed on four supporting columns and would in effect be three storeys in height. 25 parking spaces would be provided for the existing and the proposed flats. 21 of the spaces would be for the existing flats in Lambs Close. The parking area would be entirely screened from the surrounding properties by the existing walls and fences around the car parking area.

3.2 The proposed flats would be accessed by stairs from the car parking area.

3.3 The first floor flats will remain as previously approved, the third flat will comprise of a kitchen, dining and living area, with two bedrooms, one bathroom and an ensuite.

4. THE PLANNING CASE

4.1 The application site is located within the built up area of Cuffley where, in accordance with local and national planning policy, there is no in principle objection to the erection of new dwellings or flats, subject to the detailed local and national policy considerations, and attention to the planning history of the site. The principle of two flats on the site has been established through the grant of the permission reference 6/2015/2173/ FULL). The issues to consider in the determination of this application are whether the third flat would have an acceptable impact upon the character of the area; whether the intensified use of the site would be acceptable in terms of the amenity of the occupiers of the site and the amenities of the occupiers of the surrounding land, parking issues and sustainability.

4. THE PLANNING CASE

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IMPACT ON THE CHARACTER OF THE AREA

4.2 The character of the area is mixed with the blocks of flats in Lambs Close and the semi- detached dwellings and bungalows along Theobalds Close. The well- treed nature of the site and the surrounding area is also a significant feature of the area.

4.3 The proposed third flat on the site would be built above the approved flats but would be set in from the outside wall of these flats. The limited height, bulk and massing of the proposed third flat would not appear cramped within the plot and nor would it appear incongruous within the immediate vicinity of the site considering the size and design of the surrounding built form and the presence of flats there (and their flat roofs). The third flat would be comfortably accommodated on the site and would not appear cramped in any way. It would be built as a 'living-wall' building, with plants and vegetation growing on its external walls. The size and bulk of the additional flat, and the development overall, are such that it would respect the character, appearance and overall feel of Lambs Close. The additional flat would blend in with the wider street scene and would be an unobtrusive addition to the character of the area.

4.4 The proposed development would be of a reasonably modern character and appearance, which the Council found acceptable at the time of the previous application on the site. The proposed third flat on the site would, as a 'living- wall' building, enhance the character and appearance of the overall scheme. The area as a whole is verdant with the existing flats in Lambs Close being well landscaped and the rear gardens of the dwellings in Theobalds Close also having a lot of trees and vegetation in them. The 'living wall' nature of the proposed third flat would blend in nicely with existing well- treed nature of the site and the surrounding area. It would appear as an entirely suitable addition to the area such that the third flat on the site and the development overall would be an appropriate addition to the area.

AMENITY ISSUES

4.5 In terms of the living conditions for the future occupiers of the development, the third flat would provide a high quality living environment. The living accommodation and the bedrooms would be light, airy and spacious. The rooms would be of a suitable size and shape and would permit a flexible layout of furniture. The third flat would not impinge upon the amenities of the occupiers of the two approved flats on the site through overlooking or overshadowing. Noise and disturbance between the flats would not arise through the use of modern noise insulation measures, in accordance with the Building Regulations.

4.6 The distance between the proposed third flat and the surrounding flats and dwellings would be sufficient to ensure that the flat would not appear visually intrusive or overbearing when viewed from the surrounding properties or their communal amenity area/ rear gardens. The building would be sited at the bottom of the rear gardens of the nearby dwellings along Theobalds Close and Theobalds Road (a minimum distance of 35m). Given the screening provided by the trees on the rear boundaries of these properties, there would not be any intrusion into the outlook of those properties or their rear gardens. The outlook and amenity of those properties would not be unduly impinged upon. The third flat would not be intrusive in the outlook from the rooms at the rear of the adjacent bungalows or dwellings. The presence of many trees on the boundaries of the application site would eliminate the possibility of the development having an adverse impact when viewed from the properties along Theobalds Close and Theobalds Road.

4.7 The distance between the proposed third flat (and the development overall) and the dwellings along Theobalds Road and Close and the lack of any habitable room windows facing them is such that overlooking and loss of privacy from the proposed third flat would not arise.

4.8 The proposed development would not impact upon the amenities of the flats' residents in any adverse manner either. The set back nature of the additional flat is such it would not appear overbearing when viewed from the flats. The distance between the proposed development and the orientation of the buildings to each other (as well as the angled nature of the windows in the flats of Block D) is sufficient to render the potential impact of the flat upon these flats acceptable. There would not be any overshadowing of those flats' elevations that are nearest to and facing the proposed development. Moreover, as a consequence of the lack of any habitable room windows in the northern elevation of the proposed flats, the development would not result in any overlooking of the existing flats.

ACCESS, HIGHWAY SAFETY, PARKING AND SERVICING

4.9 The proposed flats would utilise the existing access to the garage site which would be widened and constructed to a standard in accordance with the requirements of Hertfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority.

4.10 At the time of the previous application on the site, the Highway Authority did not raise any objection on highway safety grounds. The increase in the intensity of use of the access to the site created by the proposed third flat would not have an adverse impact upon highway safety, particularly as it would be to a very similar level of use when the garages and parking spaces were in full use. The geometry and layout of Lambs Close is such that vehicles using it do so at low speed. Together with the suitable visibility splays from the application site, the increase in its use would not have an adverse impact upon vehicular or pedestrian safety. The incidence of cars meeting each other travelling in opposite directions along the access road to the site would be limited. In the event that it does occur, a simple reversing manoeuvre by either car would resolve the issue. Danger to the users and occupiers of the site would be kept to a minimum.

4.11 The Planning Inspector's concerns following the refusal of the 2012 planning application on the site centred on the loss of the garages and parking on the site. This has been addressed in this application in their retention through the proposed development being sited above them on four supporting columns, creating a partial undercroft parking arrangement. They would therefore remain on the site and would be easily accessible for their potential users. The parking for the residents in Lambs Close would consequently not be reduced to a detrimental degree by the proposed development the subject of this application.

4.12 At the time of the previous application on the site (ref. 6/2015/2173/FULL), the Council considered that three parking spaces would be acceptable for the two flats approved at that time.

4.13 This application proposes an extra space for the proposed flats. The Council's parking standards are treated as standards rather than maximums. For the flats the subject of this application the requirement would be 1.5 spaces each.

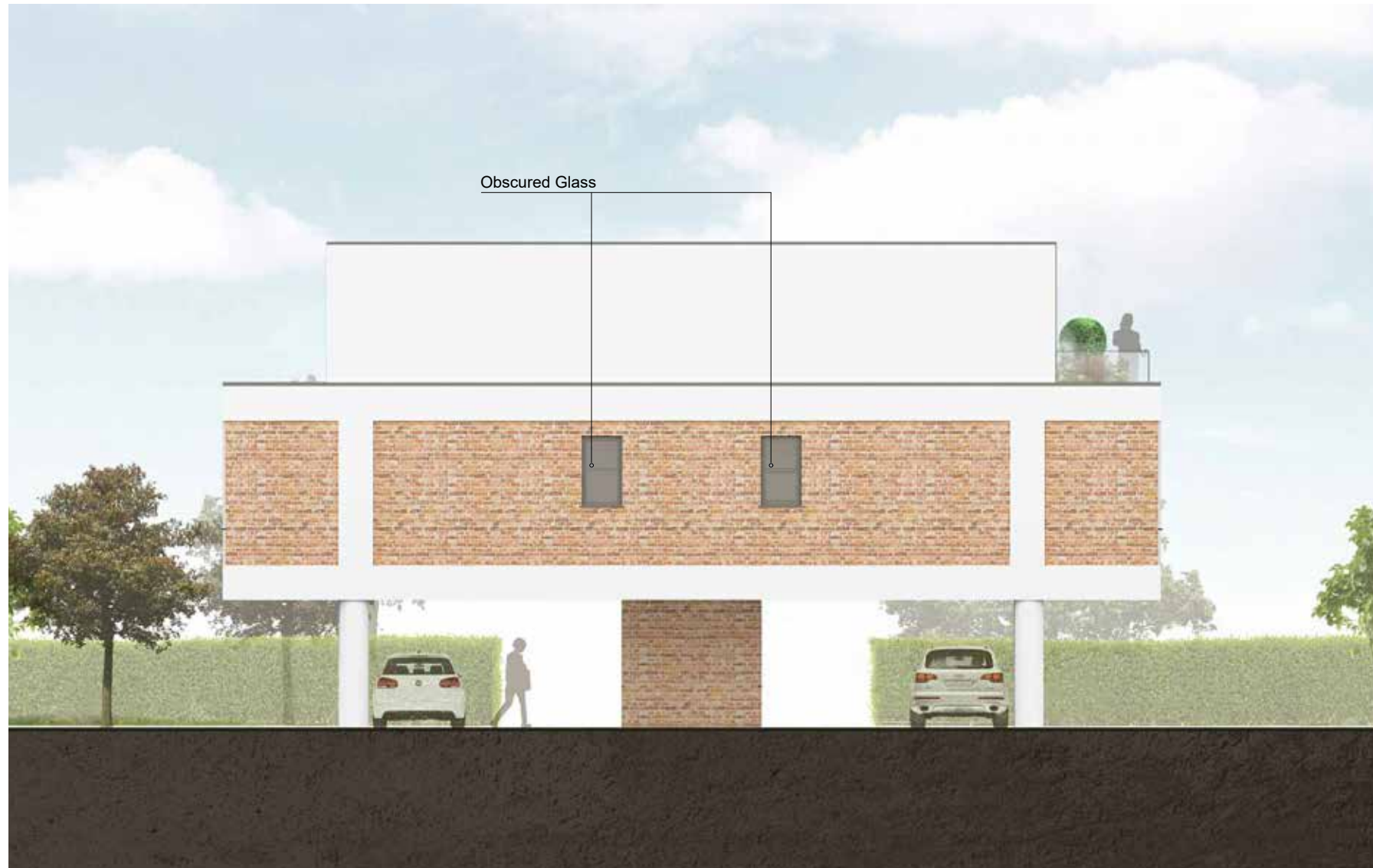
4.14 However, the site is in a sustainable location, a matter of a few minutes walk from the centre of Cuffley with all of the day- to- day facilities that such a village needs. Moreover, the site is very well connected with numerous bus services to the surrounding towns and villages, and the train station, all of which have connections further beyond. The site is therefore very well located in terms of access to means of transport other than the private car. Furthermore, it is likely that given the flats are two bed, that they be occupied by young families. This being the case, it is therefore also likely that the flats give rise to demand for only one parking space each. There provision of the four spaces for the three flats is therefore considered to be acceptable in this case.

4.15 It is also relevant to note that the Council has granted permission for residential developments with parking provision at a lower level than its Interim Standards would require. One case is that at 1 Walnut House, Walnut Grove, Welwyn Garden City (ref. 6/2016/0167/MAJ). Permission was granted on this site for the construction of 18 flats following the demolition of the existing 12 flats on the site with a shortfall of one parking space. A further example is that at Green Close, Brookmans Park (ref. 6/2016/0192/MAJ). On this site, permission was granted for the erection of 12 flats (3 x 1 bed and 9 x 2 bed) with provision for one parking space per flat. This level of parking was considered acceptable as the site is sustainably located with access to local facilities and public transport.

4.16 In terms of fairness and natural justice and the transparency of the planning system, applications with similar issues – in this case, the level of parking – need to be viewed and treated in a similar manner. It should also be borne in mind that the residents of the existing flats in Lambs Close only have one parking space each. It is therefore entirely appropriate that the flats the subject of this application have the same level of parking provision.

4.17 A refuse store would be provided adjacent to the entrance to the site which would be within the minimum refuse carrying distance for the future residents of the site and would be easily accessible by refuse operatives.

4.18 Servicing would be undertaken in the normal manner and would raise no adverse issues, as at the time of the previous application on the site.









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5. SUSTAINABILITY

5.1 The proposed third flat would be built with sustainability and sustainable technologies in mind. It would be built to meet the requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations through the use of a number of sustainable technologies and energy efficiency measures in their construction. The development would incorporate sustainably sourced construction materials, passive design including natural ventilation, double glazing with high air tightness, low energy lighting and solar photovoltaic panels and water efficient fittings.

6. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Policy SD1 of the Local Plan – Sustainable Development – states that development proposals will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the principles of sustainable development are satisfied and that they accord with the objectives and policies of the Local Plan. The statement accompanying this application demonstrates that the proposed development addresses the sustainability criteria contained in the Council’s Supplementary Design Guidance.

6.2 Moreover, the proposal would represent a sustainable form of development in that it would involve a more efficient use of a previously developed site – a third flat – rather than the previously approved scheme of two flats. The National Planning Policy Framework strongly promotes this approach to the planning, recognising that land is a scarce resource.

6.3 Policy R1 – Maximising the Use of Previously Developed Land – states the Council will require development to take place on land which has been previously used or developed. This would be the case with this application. In addition, the development of the size and scale proposed is considered appropriate for the site that may reasonably be permitted on the site without causing adverse issues for the amenities of the occupiers of the surrounding flats and dwellings.

6.4 Policy R17 – Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows – states the Council will seek the protection and retention of existing trees where applicable. The proposed development would not have any adverse impacts upon the existing surrounding trees given that it would extend no further towards them than the approved scheme on the site. The proposed third flat would be set away from those trees and would accordingly, not have any adverse impacts upon them.

6.5 Policy M1 – Integrating Transport and Land Use – states the Council will permit development in locations with accessibility to pedestrian and cycle routes and passenger transport services. This policy would be complied with in that the application site is in a sustainable location, within a ten minute walk of Cuffley High Street which includes a full range of daily shopping requirements, Cuffley Train Station and bus stops with services to the surrounding towns and villages and public transport connections to areas further afield. This further follows the guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework of promoting development in sustainable locations.

6.6 The proposed parking provision for the four spaces for the three flats is entirely appropriate for the reasons outlined in the previous paragraphs of this statement.

6.7 Policy D1 – Quality of Design – states the Council will require the standard of design in all new development to be of a high quality. Policy D2 – Character and Context – requires all new development respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed. Development proposals should as a minimum maintain, and where possible, enhance or improve the character of the existing area. This is the case with the proposed development the subject of this application. The third flat has been designed to reflect the character of the blocks of flats in Lambs Close with their flat roofs, and pay heed to the size of the adjacent dwellings and bungalows in Theobald's Close, and the verdant nature of the area. The relatively modern appearance of the proposed third flat would sit comfortably between the adjacent flats and dwellings. The flat would be of a size and bulk similar to that exhibited by the neighbouring dwellings and bungalows, and appreciably smaller than the neighbouring flats and would be entirely acceptable from the point of view of their impact upon the street scene and the character of the area.

6.8 The proposed third flat would not appear cramped within the plot within the context of the street scene or result in a cramped form of overdevelopment of the site. The set back nature of the flat is such that neither it nor the development as a whole would appear as an intrusive, cramped form of development. It would instead be one which would be an enhancement to the street scene through the modern development, which would complement the surrounding buildings and street scene in pleasing manner. The scale and bulk of the proposal is such that it would not appear cramped within the site. The development would instead be comfortably accommodated on the site.

6.9 There is a reasonably wide palette of materials present within the vicinity of the site. The materials with which the proposed flat would be constructed would enhance the character of the area. The development would fully respect the character, appearance and overall feel of the area. It would blend in with the wider street scene and would be an unobtrusive addition to the built form present in the area.

6.10 Notwithstanding this, the development would have an active frontage with the living/ dining/ kitchen areas of the flat overlooking the entrance to the site. The development would not give rise to opportunities for criminal activity or to a fear of crime.

6.11 With regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, the proposed flat would be in accordance with several of the core planning principles, as contained in paragraph 17 of the document. The development would secure a high quality design and would provide a good standard of amenity for the future occupants of the site and those existing in the surrounding buildings. The development would also represent a sustainable form of development, in the use of renewable forms of energy and the use of environmentally responsible building materials. The proposal would represent an effective use of previously developed existing urban land, in proposing the development of the site for what is considered to be the fullest and most efficient quantum of development reasonably possible on the site, whilst retaining the existing use of the land (the parking for Lambs Close), in a sustainable location. Being in a sustainable location, with easy access to public transport, the proposed development would encourage the use of alternative means of transport other than the private car.

6.12 Paragraph 58 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments optimise the potential of a site to accommodate development, respond to local character, create safe environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life, and are visually attractive. The proposed development the subject of this planning application complies with these criteria. It would optimise the potential of the site and would relate well to local character. It would also be a safe environment for its future occupiers.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 The proposed development would have an acceptable impact upon the character and appearance of the area and the street scene. The amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring residential properties would not be adversely impinged upon. The existing car parking for the flats in the Lambs Close would be retained, at a level found to be acceptable by the Council at the time of the previous application on the site. Sufficient car parking would be provided for the proposed flats too. The development would have no adverse impacts upon highway safety.

7.2 Accordingly, the proposed development is in full compliance with the relevant Local Plan policies and the guidance contained within the NPPF, therefore planning permission should accordingly be granted.