

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Proposed erection of a detached dwelling house at Ashcroft, Slip Lane, Old Knebworth,
Knebworth SG3 6QG



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For Tracey Sullivan
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The statement is structured as follows:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Background and site description
- 3.0 Proposed Development
- 4.0 Planning History
- 5.0 Planning Policy
- 6.0 Analysis
- 7.0 Planning Balance
- 8.0 Conclusions

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 GC Planning Partnership Limited have been appointed by Ms Tracey Sullivan to produce this Planning, Design and Access Statement to support an application for full planning permission relating to the erection of a detached dwelling house within the side garden to Ashcroft, which is a semi-detached dwelling house within the settlement Old Knebworth and Old Knebworth Conservation Area.

1.2 This proposal has been the subject of pre-application consultation with the Council, which shall be addressed in detail later in this statement. The submission addresses the response from officers.

1.3 In addition to this statement, the application is accompanied by the following:

- Scaled plans of the site and the proposed development
- Heritage Statement
- Tree Survey Report

- Ecological Survey Report
- Traffic Speed and Volume Report

1.4 The Statement includes a description of the proposal, its setting, considers the planning history and planning policy, and provides a justification for the proposal.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site is located at the junction of Slip Lane and Park Lane, Old Knebworth. Old Knebworth is 'washed over' by the Green Belt. The site lies within the Green Belt and Old Knebworth Conservation Area.
- 2.2 The Lytton Arms pub and takeaway is located about 270m to the north east along Park Lane, where there are bus stops for the bus route that runs along Park Lane giving access by public transport to Stevenage and Luton. The village of Codicote is about 1.5m to the south west and the settlement of Knebworth 2km to the east.



Location of the site

- 2.3 The site forms part of the garden to Ashcroft, which is a semi-detached two-storey dwelling house with attic and detached double garage. There is an existing access serving Ashcroft, and a second gated access near the junction of Slip Lane and Park Lane. It is proposed to close off this second access and

open-up a new access to serve the proposed dwelling. The side garden to Ashcroft is heavily screened with trees and shrubs.

- 2.4 There are dwellings to the east, south and west on the opposite side of Park Lane. There is a field to the north on the opposite side of Slip Lane, with dwellings beyond.



View of Ashcroft from the side garden



View along Slip Lane from the junction with Park Lane and existing entrance that would be closed-off



View from Park Lane of dwellings to the south of the Application Site

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 It is proposed at this point to erect a two-storey dwelling house on the site, which is the side garden to Ashcroft.



Proposed front elevation

Design

- 3.2 The dwelling would have the character and appearance of a traditional dwelling of classical proportions and symmetry. There is no overriding style and character to dwellings in the immediate area. However, the proposed design, scale, and materials would reflect Ashcroft and the adjoining dwelling Highfield Cottage (formerly Berek Cottage)
- 3.3 The proposed dwelling house would accommodate four bedrooms, three at first floor level and the fourth in the attic. There would also be a further room in the attic, which is proposed for storage, which would provide a useful domestic storage area.

- 3.4 The dual pitched roof would have conservation style roof lights in the front roof slope and small flat-roofed dormer windows in the rear roof slope. The proposed dwelling would follow the building line of Ashcroft and the adjoining dwelling, Highfield Cottage, immediately to the east.



View of Ashcroft from Slip Lane

- 3.5 There would be parking for three cars and a turning area so that vehicles may enter and leave the site in a forward gear and an electric vehicle charging point fitted to the side of the proposed dwelling. There would be a considerable amount of space around the dwelling including a wide gap between the side elevation of the existing dwelling and the proposal. Cycle parking would be provided on site within a shed in the rear garden.

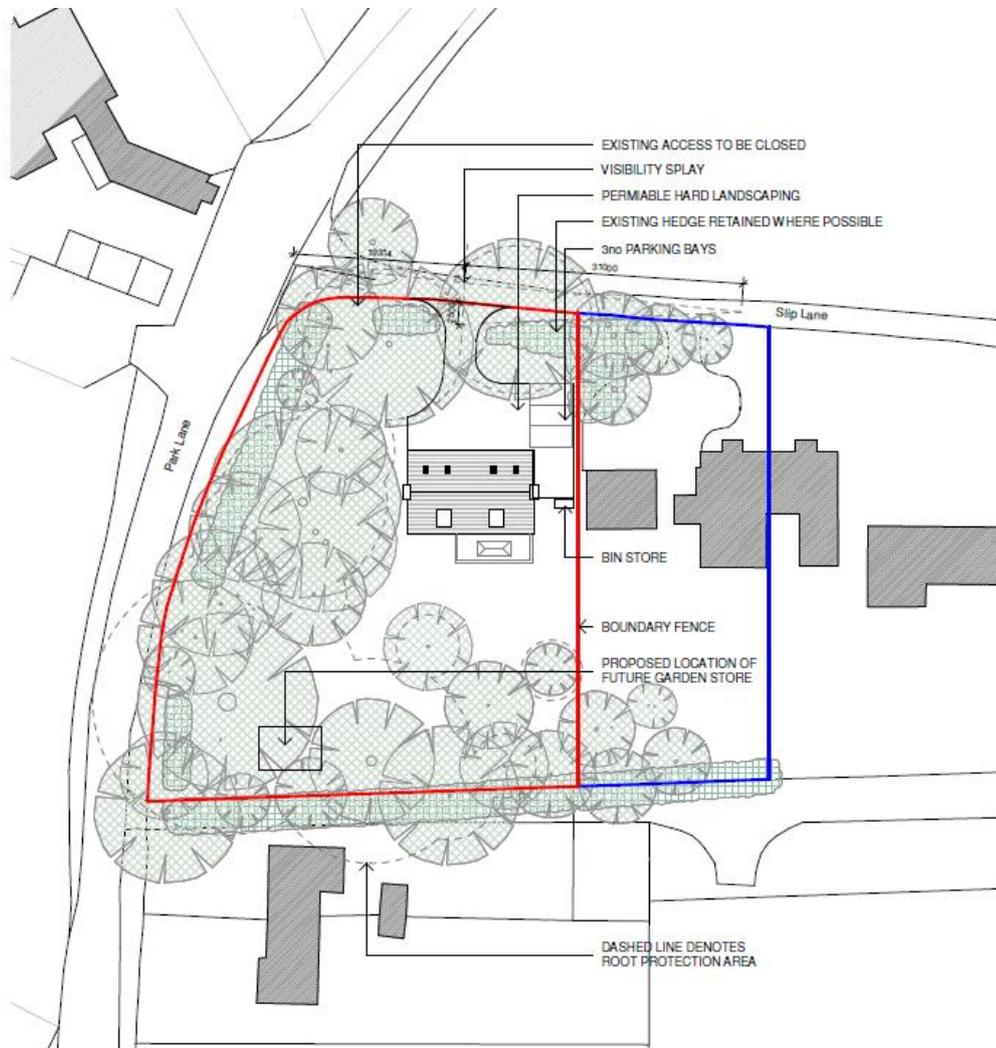
Sustainable construction

- 3.6 Although the proposed dwelling would be of a traditional design, it would be well insulated and energy efficient. The aim will be to exceed current building regulations regarding carbon emissions, principally through high quality insulation and energy/water efficient devices.

Proposed external materials

3.7 The proposed materials would seek to reflect those of Ashcroft, Highfield Cottage and Park Gate House and the proposed traditional design. The proposed roof lights would be small conservation style.

- Walls – red multi brick
- Roof – Plain clay tile
- Windows – sliding sash timber
- Doors – timber or composite



Proposed site layout

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

Planning Permissions on the Site

- 4.1 1700493/1HH – Single storey side and rear extensions and ancillary works at Ashcroft, Slip Lane, Old Knebworth – Granted permission on 21 April 2017.

- 4.2 06/00724/1HH – First floor rear extension, single storey side extension and pitched roof to existing front porch. Detached double garage following demolition of existing – granted permission on 29 June 2006.

Planning Approvals in the Vicinity

- 4.3 18/00989/FP – Creation of vehicular crossover at Park Gate House, Park Lane, Old Knebworth

- 4.4 14/00132/1 – Relocation of cricket club facilities with two pitches, club house access road and car parking with associated work at Knebworth Park Cricket Club, Knebworth Park, Old Knebworth

- 4.5 10/01343/1 – Alterations, extension and conversion of outbuilding including rear gable projection, insertion of rooflight to rear roof slope; two storey front extension to facilitate conversion of part of ground and first floor to a one bedroom self-contained staff dwelling – Park Gate House, Park Lane, Knebworth.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY

The North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 (DLP2)

5.1 **Policy: 2 Green Belt** - In the Green Belt, as shown on the Proposals Map, the Council will aim to keep the uses of land open in character. Except for proposals within settlements which accord with Policy 3, or in very special circumstances, planning permission will only be granted for new buildings, extensions, and changes of use of buildings and of land which are appropriate in the Green Belt, and which would not result in significant visual impact.

5.2 **Policy 3 - Settlements within the Green Belt** - In settlements within the Green Belt, the Council will not normally permit development proposals, except for:

1. that strictly necessary for the housing and employment needs of agriculture, forestry, leisure and local services in the rural areas that cannot practicably be met outside the Green Belt; or
2. the local facilities and services needs of the settlement within which the development is proposed; or
3. the meeting of an identified rural housing need in compliance with Policy 29; or
4. a single dwelling on a small plot located within the built core of the settlement, which will not result in the outward expansion of the settlement or have any other adverse impact on the local environment or other policy aims within the Green Belt.

5.3 **Policy 26: Housing Proposals** – addresses housing provision between 1986 and 2001 and is therefore out of date.

5.4 **Policy 57: Residential Guidelines and Standards** sets out guidelines for the design, layout, mix of dwelling sizes, floorspace, orientation, privacy, amenity space, landscaping, noise, car parking and garaging, and servicing.

National Planning Policy Framework – February 2019 (The Framework)

- 5.5 The Framework is an important material consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission as it sets out the Government’s national planning policies.
- 5.6 Paragraph 8 identifies three overarching objectives of the planning system to achieve sustainable development. These are: economic, social and environmental.
- 5.7 Paragraph 10 confirms that at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.8 Paragraph 11 confirms that for decision-taking this means (c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or (d) where there are no relevant development plan policies or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
- i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.
- 5.9 Footnote 7 confirms that paragraph 11d applies where local planning authorities cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of housing.

- 5.10 It is understood that the Council does not currently have a five-year supply of housing land. Therefore, the provisions of paragraph 11 of the Framework apply.
- 5.11 Paragraph 59 confirms that the Government's objective is to significantly boost the supply of housing.
- 5.12 Paragraph 68 confirms that small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirements of an area and are often built out quickly. At least 10% of the housing requirement of the area should be accommodated on sites no larger than 1 hectare.
- 5.13 Paragraph 78 confirms that 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.
- 5.14 Paragraph 79 confirms that planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside.
- 5.15 Paragraph 196 confirms that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 5.16 Paragraph 197 indicates that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be considered in determining the application.

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

5.17 The Council has adopted SPGs and SPDs that are relevant to this proposal. The most relevant to this development are:

- Design 2011 (SPD)
- Vehicle Parking at New Developments 2011 (SPD)

5.18 These documents have been considered in the design of the proposed development. The minimum car parking standard is 2 parking spaces for a dwelling with more than 2 bedrooms.

Submission Local Plan 2011 -2031 (SLP)

5.19 The local plan was submitted to the secretary of state in November 2017. Hearings took place between November 2017 and March 2018. Main modifications have been published. The submission local plan is therefore at a relatively advanced stage. Further hearings were scheduled for March 2020, but these have been cancelled due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. There is general consistency with the Framework. In the circumstances, moderate weight can be attached to relevant policies of the Submission Local Plan identified below.

5.20 **Policy SP1 – Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire** supports the principles of sustainable development.

5.21 **Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt** – supports the principles of the Green Belt and recognises the intrinsic value of the countryside. This policy proposes a comprehensive review of the Green belt and confirms that the Council will only permit development proposals in the Green Belt where they would not result in inappropriate development.

5.22 **Policy SP9 – Design and Sustainability** confirms that good design is a key aspect to sustainable development and supports new development where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context, amongst other things.

5.23 **Policy SP13 – Historic Environment** confirms that the Council will balance the need for growth with the proper protection and enhancement of the historic environment. It seeks amongst other things to maintain a strong presumption in favour of the retention, preservation and enhancement of heritage assets and their setting.

5.24 **D1: Sustainable Design** confirms that planning permission will be granted provided that development proposals meet several criteria, including (a) responding positively to the site's local context.

5.25 **D3: Protecting Living Conditions** stipulates that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions.

5.26 **Policy HE1- Designated Heritage Assets** indicates that planning applications relating to Designated heritage assets shall be accompanied by a Heritage Assessment/Justification Statement that:

- i. Assesses the significance of heritage assets, including their setting;
- ii. Justifies and details the impacts of any proposal upon the significance of the designated heritage asset(s); and
- iii. Informs any necessary mitigation measures to minimise or mitigate against any identified harms.

Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (as applicable);

- a. Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance;

- b. Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified; and
- c. Will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use.

Where substantial harm to, or loss of significance, of a designate heritage asset is proposed the Council shall refuse consent unless it can be demonstrated that the scheme is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss.

6.0 ANALYSIS

6.1 Old Knebworth is a settlement in the Green Belt in the current Saved Local Plan. This settlement does not have a defined settlement boundary. This is also the case in the Emerging Local Plan, which identifies it as a Category B Village. However, as a category B village Old Knebworth is a suitable location for small scale housing development, which will assist in maintaining or enhancing its vitality. Whilst a settlement does not need to have any facilities for new housing to maintain or enhance vitality, there is a public house, village green, cricket club, church and Knebworth House and Country Park within or adjacent to the village.

6.2 The proposal for a dwelling on this site has been the subject of pre-application consultation with Council Officers in April 2020. The response indicated that as of 1 April 2019 the Council had a 1.3 year land supply, this has improved to 2.2 years as of 1 April 2020, but remains significantly below the required minimum five-year supply, which is a material consideration and potentially affects the planning balance.

6.3 From an assessment of this site and a review of planning policies there are four main issues raised by this proposal, first, the principle of the proposed development, secondly; the effect upon the historic environment, thirdly the effect upon the character and appearance of the area; and fourthly the effect upon highway safety. Other issues are considered in detail and include the effect upon trees and biodiversity.

6.4 Before consideration of the impacts of the proposed development, the planning benefits from the proposal are identified to carry out the Planning Balance assessment towards the end of this statement.

Planning Benefits

Social Benefits

- 6.5 The proposal would make a modest contribution to the local housing stock and contribute to the viability of the village of Old Knebworth in a modest and sustainable way. Whilst the proposal is for a single dwelling house, given the shortfall in housing land supply it is considered that this is a benefit to which moderate weight should be attached.
- 6.6 It is proposed that the dwelling would be occupied by the Applicant, Mrs Sullivan, and her family. This development would therefore release the existing dwelling (Ashcroft) onto the local housing market.
- 6.7 The Council does not currently have a five-year supply of affordable housing land. Therefore, the tilted balance in favour of the proposal set out at paragraph 11 of the Framework is potentially engaged.

Economic benefits

- 6.8 The development would bring about economic benefits from the construction and fitting out of the building. It would provide an opportunity for a smaller local house builder. The future occupiers would also contribute to the local economy in terms of their spending and taxation. The Council would benefit from the new homes bonus. In the light of the current severe recession that is a consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic, significant weight should be given to the economic benefits of the development, in the light of the 'New Deal' set out by the Prime Minister at the end of June 2020.

Principle of the proposed development

- 6.9 The site lies within Nup End, which forms part of the settlement of Old Knebworth. The settlement is 'washed over' by the Green belt. Therefore,

Saved Policy 2 of the Local Plan applies, which confirms that except for proposals within settlements that accord with Policy 3, or in very special circumstances, planning permission will only be granted for new buildings which are appropriate in the Green Belt, and which would not result in significant visual impact. Policy 3 allows *‘a single dwelling on a small plot located within the core of the settlement, which will not result in outward expansion of the settlement or have any other adverse impact on the local environment or other policy aims within the Green Belt.’*

- 6.10 The emerging local plan identifies Old Knebworth as a Category B village where limited infill that does not extend the built core of the village is permitted.



View within the garden to Ashcroft looking northwest towards Park Lane

- 6.11 The Framework confirms at paragraph 143 that inappropriate development in the Green Belt is by definition harm to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. However, Paragraph 145

confirms that limited infilling in villages would not be inappropriate development.

- 6.12 Saved policy 3 – Settlements within the Green Belt confirms that the Council will not normally permit new development within the Green Belt. However, there are exceptions to this strict policy of restraint. Criterion (iv) of this policy allows for a single dwelling on a small plot located within the built core of the settlement, which will not result in outward expansion of the settlement or have any other adverse impact on the local environment or other policy aims within the Green Belt.



Adjacent dwellings to the south fronting Park Lane



Dwellings along Slip End to the East

- 6.13 The Council's pre-application response confirms that Officers consider that the application site is within one of the clusters of development that constitute the settlement of Old Knebworth, would not result in the outward expansion of the settlement and would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt in-line with paragraph 145 of the Framework. It was also confirmed that the proposal would be acceptable in principle and compliant with Policies 2 and 3 of the Local Plan and Policy SP5 of the Emerging Local Plan.
- 6.14 The proposed dwelling would be located within the side garden to Ashcroft. Although well screened by established boundary planting the site is adjacent to residential properties.
- 6.15 It is considered that the proposal would comply with the requirements of criterion (iv) of saved Policy 3 . It is proposed to erect a single dwelling on a small plot within the core of the settlement. It is at the junction of Slip Lane and Park Lane and would not result in the outward expansion of the settlement. There have been developments in the vicinity of the application site, referred to in section 4 of the statement that has consolidated the immediate area as part of the settlement of Knebworth. The proposed development would be infill within the village and would be one of the identified exceptions to the policy of restraint identified at paragraph 145 of the Framework. Therefore, the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and very special circumstances are not required to justify the proposed dwelling house in this location.
- 6.16 The Council does not currently have a 5-year supply of housing. In terms of the latest Housing Delivery Test figures published by the Government these confirm that the 45% delivery target has not been achieved and therefore the 'presumption in favour' applies, whereby planning permission should be

granted unless the site is protected by policies of the Framework or the adverse impacts demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

6.17 Paragraph 68 of the Framework confirms 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.

6.18 In addition, the site is adjacent to housing development at Nup End and is therefore not in an isolated location where the Framework stipulates that new housing should be resisted. Paragraph 78 of the Framework confirms that to promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. The site is a short walk along Park Lane to the Lytton Arms, and other facilities within and adjacent to the village. The site is also within easy cycling and walking distance of Codicote and Knebworth, albeit there is not a roadside footpath between Old Knebworth and Codicote.

6.19 It is considered that the proposed development would contribute to meeting the housing requirement of the area and the current shortfall in housing land supply. In addition, the proposed development would contribute to maintaining the vitality of Old Knebworth.

6.20 In the circumstances it is contended that the proposal is acceptable in principle in this location.

Effect upon the Historic Environment

6.21 The site lies within the Old Knebworth Conservation Area, within the setting of Park Gate House on the opposite side of Park Lane, which is a Grade II listed building and the setting of Knebworth Park, which a Grade II* Registered Park and Garden

6.22 The significance of Designated Heritage Assets is identified in the Heritage Statement that accompanies the pre-application enquiry.

6.23 The Heritage Statement confirms that the Old Knebworth Conservation Area is a heritage asset of highest significance as it contains the Grade II* listed Knebworth House, and that Registered Grade II* Knebworth Park is also a designated heritage asset of highest significance. The nearby Grade II listed Park Gate House is identified as designated heritage assess of less than highest significance.



View of Park Gate House from Park Lane

6.24 The effect of the proposed development on the significance of Designated Heritage Assets is identified in the submitted Heritage Statement. This confirms that with careful design and materials a dwelling in this location would have a neutral impact upon the significance of Old Knebworth Conservation Area and the significance of nearby listed buildings and Knebworth Park due to development within their setting. The application site is well-screened and not important to the character and appearance of the

conservation area - it has not been identified as an important open space in the conservation area appraisal.

6.25 Paragraph 196 of the revised Framework stipulates that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. Confirmation was sought from officers in the pre-application consultation whether they agree that the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of Park Gate House would be preserved and that the test of paragraph 196 would not be engaged. It was confirmed that *“there is a case to suggest that that the development could have a neutral impact on the designated heritage assets so that paragraph 196 of the Framework is not engaged. Even if less than substantial harm was considered to apply I believe that it would be at the lower end of the scale in terms of that harm and that the public benefit of one additional dwelling would in this case outweigh that limited harm.”*

6.26 The planning benefits of the proposed development have been identified, within the context of the need to significantly boost housing supply, and a local shortfall. This is a clear priority set out by the Government at paragraph 59 of the Framework. In addition, paragraph 68 confirms that small sites can make an important contribution to meeting housing requirement. Given the application of paragraph 11(d) of the Framework, it is considered that even if the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of the identified designated heritage assets, this harm would be very small and would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified public benefits.

6.27 Emerging Local Plan Policy HE1 addresses designated heritage assets and confirms that planning permission for development proposals affecting

Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they (a) Enable the heritage asset to be used in a manner that secures its conservation and preserves its significance; and (b) Incorporate a palette of materials that make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, where it is appropriate and justified and (c) will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the designated heritage asset, and this harm is outweighed by the public benefits of the development, including securing the asset's optimum viable use. Criterion (c) has been added by Main Modifications since the previous decision. Given the location adjacent to existing housing, and the need to boost the supply of housing in locations that are not isolated, it contended that the proposal would constitute the optimum viable use for this plot of land.

6.28 The proposed dwelling house would enable the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings to continue to be used in a manner that secures their significance. The proposed dwelling would be of a high-quality design and contextually appropriate materials that would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Therefore, it is contended that the proposal would comply with Emerging Local Plan Policy HE1.

6.29 In conclusion, the character of this part of the conservation area would remain as a mix of residential properties, agricultural land, and parkland. The effect upon the setting of the nearby listed buildings has been carefully considered and it was found that the proposal would cause little (neutral) impact upon the heritage significance of these assets.

Effect upon the character and appearance of the area

6.30 The proposed dwelling would be of a high-quality design set in a spacious plot, within a setting of similarly sized dwellings within spacious plots. Given the character of Nup End, there is no predominant style that would be contextually appropriate to adhere to. The dwelling would have design

details and materials of a high quality to respect the location of the site within the conservation area.

- 6.31 The application site is well screened by boundary hedge and trees from views from the road and neighbouring dwellings.



View within the garden looking towards Park Lane

- 6.32 It is proposed to provide a new access to Slip Lane and close off an existing access to the garden to Ashcroft at the junction of Slip Lane with Park Lane. The house would relate to its surroundings through the quality of the built form, detailed design, materials and landscaping.
- 6.33 Parking would be provided within site to the front of the dwelling which is characteristic of the immediate area. This approach combined with landscaping and enhanced boundary treatment would ensure that the proposed development would provide adequate on-site parking but not in a way that would dominate the appearance of the site.
- 6.34 The generally rural character and appearance of the area would be retained.

- 6.35 Therefore, it is considered that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area and comply with DLP2 Policy 57, which seeks to achieve good design by ensuring that new buildings are sensitive to the of surrounding buildings, and the use of the right materials.

Highway Safety

- 6.36 The proposal would introduce a new access to serve this dwelling house onto Slip Lane. It is proposed to close the existing access to the side garden to Ashcroft at the junction Slip Lane with Park Lane.



Existing access at the junction of Slip Lane and Park Lane

- 6.37 Slip Lane is an unclassified local access road subject to a derestricted speed limit. A vehicle volume and speed assessment has been carried out and the results accompany the application. This identifies that both traffic volumes and speeds are low.

- 6.38 Pre-application advice has been sought from the Highways Authority. The Principal Highways Officer at Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) confirmed that a vehicle access should not be located within 15m of a junction and therefore it is not proposed to utilise the existing access at the junction of Slip Lane with Park Lane. The proposed access would be over 15m from the junction. The proposed access would conform to Manual for Streets standards. The pre-application response from HCC confirmed that a single lane access will be sufficient to serve the proposal and that although there is no requirement to provide a turning areas one would be beneficial due to the narrowness of the lane. Visibility splays of 31m x 2.4m were suggested given the low speed and volume of traffic.
- 6.39 No objections to the proposal were raised by highways officers.
- 6.40 There would be on-site parking for 3 cars. The proposed parking would accord the Council's adopted minimum parking standards detailed at Table 4.1 of the adopted SPD – Vehicle Parking at New Development, which indicates a minimum of 2 car parking spaces per dwelling. Cars would be able to enter and leave the site in a forward gear.
- 6.41 Secure cycle parking would be provided within a shed to the rear garden.
- 6.42 Paragraph 109 of the Framework stipulates that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety and the cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.
- 6.43 In conclusion on this issue, the proposal would not result in harm to highway safety. Therefore, the proposal would comply with LP Policy 57 and SPD on Vehicle Parking at New Development.

Flood Risk

6.44 The site is in Flood Risk Zone 1, which is an area of lowest risk of fluvial flooding. The site is in an area of very low risk of flooding from surface water as indicated on the Planning Flood Risk Map. Therefore, the site is a sequentially preferable location for housing development from the perspective of flood risk.

Effect upon Trees and Biodiversity

6.45 A Tree survey has been carried out by RGS Arboricultural Consultants, this accompanies the application and shows that the proposed dwelling would be sited outside the root protection areas of trees and would not prejudice the future of trees that are proposed to be retained.

6.46 The survey identifies 14 individual trees, 5 groups of trees and 2 hedgerows. The retention category of the trees is identified in the report.

6.47 The report confirms that one moderate quality tree (T2), one low quality tree(T13) and one low quality group (G1) will need to be removed. The removal of an Ash tree (T2) and G1 are proposed to be removed in the vicinity to the proposed entrance to the site as they would be within the visibility splay. They also impede visibility from the existing access to Ashcroft and it is proposed to remove them in any event. However, replacement tree and hedgerow planting would be undertaken in a location outside the visibility splay along the frontage with Slip Lane.

6.48 An ecological survey has been undertaken by Philip Irving MCIEEM. The assessment confirms that there is no evidence of any protected species present on the site and that the proposed development would have no significant biodiversity impact.

6.49 Biodiversity would be enhanced by the provision of increased nesting opportunities in the form of bird boxes and the provision of additional planting around the boundary to the site. The access would involve the clearance of a small section of hedgerow along the frontage with Slip Lane. This would be replanted a little further in along that boundary with a mixture of native hedgerow shrubs.

7.0 PLANNING BALANCE

- 7.1 The development plan comprises the Saved policies of the District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations.
- 7.2 The proposed development would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, therefore very special circumstances are not required to justify the proposed development, which is acceptable in principle in this location within the settlement of Old Knebworth.
- 7.3 The Council cannot currently demonstrate 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The absence of a five-year housing land supply triggers paragraph 11(d) of the revised Framework 2019, which means that the balance in favour of planning permission being granted except where the benefits are “significantly and demonstrably” outweighed by the adverse effect, or where “specific policies” of the Framework indicate otherwise.
- 7.4 The adopted Local Plan is out of date. The proposed dwelling would be deliverable in the short-term, increasing supply and choice in the local housing market.
- 7.5 There would be social and economic benefits. The site is within walking distance of the services and facilities of Old Knebworth.
- 7.6 The proposal would deliver a high-quality scheme, adding to housing choice in the area. The dwelling would be occupied by Ms Sullivan who currently resides at Ashcroft, who would occupy the proposed dwelling releasing the existing dwelling to the housing market.
- 7.7 The character and appearance of the conservation area would be preserved. With careful design and use of materials the proposal would not harm the

significance of the conservation area or the Grade II listed building known as Park Gate House and Knebworth Park and Garden as designated heritage assets.

- 7.8 The proposal would enhance biodiversity.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The policies of the Framework on the delivery of sustainable rural housing development carry significant weight and specific policies do not indicate that development should be restricted.
- 8.2 It contended that the proposed development would be sustainable rural development. The proposal would not be inappropriate development within the Green Belt as it would constitute limited infill within the village of Old Knebworth.
- 8.3 The proposal would not be harmful to the significance of the Old Knebworth Conservation Area and to the significance of the nearby listed building and registered park through effect upon their setting. Therefore, policies of the Framework do not indicate that planning permission should be refused, but the decision balanced against the benefits of delivering an additional dwelling in this village.
- 8.4 There are significant material considerations that weigh in favour of the proposal. The tilted balance of paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged and the adverse impacts of granting planning permission would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal when assessed against policies in the Framework.
- 8.5 In accordance with planning law and policy planning permission should be granted.