

<u>Location:</u>	<b>Redwood Deards End Lane Knebworth Hertfordshire SG3 6NL</b>
<u>Applicant:</u>	<b>Mr Anthony Sarno</b>
<u>Proposal:</u>	<b>Hybrid application for one 5-bed dwelling with detached garage following demolition of existing dwelling and outline application for the erection of 8 dwellings (all matters reserved except for access).</b>
<u>Ref. No:</u>	25/02999/HYA
<u>Officer:</u>	<b>Melissa Tyler</b>

**Date of expiry of statutory period: 12/02/2026**

**Extension of statutory period: 20/03/2026**

**Reason for Delay: consultation responses**

**Reason for Referral to Committee – The site area for this application for development exceeds 0.5ha and therefore under the Council’s scheme of delegation, this application must be determined by the Council’s Planning Control Committee.**

## **1.0 Policies**

### **National Planning Policy Framework**

Section 2: Achieving sustainable development

Section 4: Decision making

Section 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities

Section 9: Promoting sustainable development

Section 11: Making effective use of land

Section 12: Achieving well-designed places

Section 14: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

### **North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031 Local Plan and Proposals Map**

Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire

Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution

Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport

Policy SP8: Housing

Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability  
Policy SP10 - Healthy Communities  
Policy SP11: Natural Resources and Sustainability  
Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity  
Policy HS3: Housing mix  
Policy T1: Assessment of Transport Matters  
Policy T2: Parking  
Policy D1: Sustainable Design  
Policy D3: Protecting Living Conditions  
Policy NE1: Landscape  
Policy HE4: Archaeology

### **Supplementary Planning Document.**

Design SPD 2011  
Sustainability SPD 2024  
Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development SPD

### **Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan 2019 -2031**

Policy KBDS2 Density of Housing Development  
Policy KBBE1: Housing Mix  
Policy KBBE2: Sustainable Buildings  
Policy KBBE3 Accessibility and Adaptability  
Policy KBBE4 Design  
Policy KBBE5 Masterplanning and Placemaking  
Policy KBBE6 Site KB1 Land at Deards End  
Policy KBEF1: Biodiversity  
Policy KBEF2: Energy Conservation  
Policy KBEF3: Flooding and Drainage  
Policy KBT1: Sustainable Modes of Travel

#### **2.0 Site History**

2.1 23/02920/PRE Residential development comprising of 5no two storey dwellings with garages, vehicular access, landscaping and associated works

#### **3.0 Representations**

##### **Statutory Consultees**

#### **3.1 Knebworth Parish Council – OBJECTION**

*This is a hybrid application comprising a full application for a replacement dwelling in a conservation area, and an outline-only application for a new road in a conservation area and housing on a site located within the KB1 local plan area. For the avoidance of doubt the Parish Council objects to both applications for the reasons outlined below.*

*There are issues of compliance with both the Local Plan and Knebworth's Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031. Plot 1 of the application lies in the conservation area, and the further dwellings form part of the KB1 development already allocated for housing development. The application includes a substantial 6m wide access road to be built in a conservation area, without demonstrating how it is preserving or enhancing the area. The proposed access road, junction and path are detrimental to the Conservation area.*

### Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan

*It would be much better if the part of the site shown for up to 8 homes with the KB1 site allocation area is considered as part of the much larger master planned development of KB1. In this context, the appropriate housing density abutting the conservation area, would be considered. Legibility would be improved and if granted permission in isolation to KB1 could potentially impact the design of KB1.*

*Neighbourhood Plan Policy KBDS2 Density of Housing Development says that "Housing densities should respect site boundaries, trees and hedgerows in situ, existing properties and the character of surrounding areas." The application does not meet any of these criteria. Showing a crowded site with development potentially right up to the boundaries.*

*The boundary is a mature hedgerow and there are hedgerows within the site, dividing up the plot, which should be retained.*

*Density is one aspect of character. The existing homes within the Conservation Area are on large plots. 8 homes on the site would result in greater plot densities than the homes immediately adjacent in the Conservation Area. The rebuilt home on the remainder of the site once the access road to the rear is built would also have a smaller plot.*

*Knebworth Neighbourhood plan policy KBBE6 (Site KB1 Land at Deards End) is relevant to this site. The policy states that this site should "be developed at densities that respect local character and Knebworth's Garden Village Context" The site could be more sensitive developed as part of KB1.*

*Although the proposal for 8 homes does not constitute a major development, Policy KBBE5 Master planning and Placemaking says that "...residential development should be legible, safe, accessible, encourage social interaction and provide a choice of walking and/or cycling routes." Eight of the nine homes to be built are within KB1 and developing the application site in isolation would raise safety issues and will not create a legible solution.*

### NHC Local Plan

*NHDC Local Plan HS3 Housing Mix states planning permission for new homes will be granted provided that "The scheme would provide a density, scale and character of a development appropriate to its location and surroundings" The proposal would not be at an appropriate density and thereby would impact on the character of the Conservation Area.*

*The second bullet point of Policy KB1 has a specific requirement for "Sensitive design and / or lower density housing at east of site to respect the setting of Deards End Lane Conservation Area and listed buildings" This policy is relevant to the application and should be used by North Herts Council the proposed development.*

*The application has not demonstrated or assessed how it meets the above policy requirements, despite referencing them. The Planning Committee felt that the density exceeds that of the existing Conservation Area properties, and this should be thoroughly examined and challenged.*

### New Access Road for 9 Homes

*There is a safety concern for active travel associated with the creation of the access road. The access road onto Deards End Lane and the accompanying works necessary to make a safe egress point on to the lane would have a major impact on the Conservation Area as follows:*

*Providing the access site splay would impact hedging along the front of Trees  
The pre-app on a previous proposal for 11 dwellings on the site requested a buildout into Deards End Lane. The plans in the Transport Statement are inconclusive on whether this is being achieved and who owns the gap between the property boundary and the highway boundary.*

*Transport Statement (para 2.6) suggests a potential new footpath on the east side of Deards End Lane may be required, along with potential embankment retaining features. This would require extensive works to the existing verge/embankment and put the existing hedge (identified as an important hedge in the Deards End Lane Conservation Area Appraisal at risk. Additionally, drainage would need to be carefully considered given the new kerb line for any footway and footway surface itself would require draining.*

*If the rear of the site was to be built as part of KB1, vehicular access would be provided to the site without impacting on the Conservation Area. If the whole development was designed to fit with the Masterplan for KB1, there would be the potential to create a pedestrian/cycle access from the site to Deards End Lane, which would not require the extensive works necessary to provide a safe vehicular access.*

### **3.2 Herts Highways -.OBJECTION**

*Notice is given under article 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority recommends that permission be refused for the following reasons:*

*The proposal fails to provide sufficient improvements to pedestrian connectivity between the site and surrounding infrastructure which will affect the ability to promote walking and use of public transport and reduce the reliance on the private car as represented in national and local policy. Contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) paragraphs 115 to 117 and Policy 1 of Hertfordshire's 4th Local Transport Plan (2018).*

### **3.3 North Herts Environmental Health -**

#### **Noise – condition**

*The application is not supported by a noise assessment. A noise report for a nearby development (66 Park Lane) resulted in mitigation measures being incorporated into the design due to noise from the nearby A1M. Whilst this development is a little more distant from the carriageway, given the topography I think it would be prudent to have an assessment for this proposal to ensure that satisfactory internal and external noise levels are achieved. Ideally, this would be 'up front' but could be secured via a condition. Given the nature and scale of the development, I also recommend condition*

## **Air Quality – comments**

*Application of the guidance to a development of this scale and location defines the site as being a MINOR scale development and so the following condition is recommended to ensure that appropriate local air quality mitigation is provided.*

## **Land Contamination – Condition**

*Given the location, nature and scale of the development, I recommend that conditions are placed on any decision notice, should you be minded to grant approval*

## **Consultees:**

### **3.4 Conservation Officer – Objection**

*The proposal will have an impact upon the setting of nearby listed buildings, the character and appearance of DELCA and the setting to DELCA. The extent of harm would be moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum*

### **3.5 North Herts Ecology – conditions**

*Having read through the submitted documents there would be no ecological objection to the proposal. The October 2025 Preliminary Ecological Review (PER) does not predict any harm to habitats or species. The Statutory Metric provided with the application indicates a 14.69% gain in habitat units and 10.44% gain in hedgerow units respectively thereby meeting the mandatory requirement for 10% BNG*

### **3.6 Neighbour Representations**

**Representations received from Neighbours – (All representations are available on the website in full**

**Summary of Objection representations from 30 neighbours:**

#### **1. Highway Safety and Traffic Impact**

The predominant concern relates to highway safety on Deards End Lane. Objectors describe the lane as narrow, historic, and in parts single-track, with poor visibility, blind bends, no footways, and limited passing places. It is used by vehicles, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, wheelchair users and mobility scooters.

Residents state that traffic levels have increased substantially in recent years, with the lane functioning as a “rat run” to avoid congestion on surrounding roads and the A1(M). It is reported that approximately 7,500 vehicle movements per week already occur. Concerns are raised that the proposed additional dwellings, together with construction traffic and service vehicles, would materially worsen congestion and safety risks.

Particular concern is expressed regarding the proposed 6m-wide T-junction access onto Deards End Lane, located near the existing junction with Park Lane and close to narrow and blind sections of the road. Residents consider the junction to present unacceptable danger due to limited visibility and turning movements.

Many representations also raise concerns that the proposed access could facilitate future vehicular connections to the wider KB1 strategic development (circa 200 dwellings), potentially transforming the lane into a through-route serving a much larger estate. Objectors argue this would fundamentally change the character and function of the lane and exacerbate safety issues.

Concerns are also raised regarding reliance on traffic survey data from February 2020, which residents state may not reflect typical traffic levels.

## **2. Impact on the Conservation Area and Heritage Assets**

Deards End Lane lies within a designated Conservation Area and contains a number of listed buildings. Residents state that the lane is characterised by mature trees and hedgerows, spacious detached dwellings set within large plots, and a rural, leafy character.

- \* The demolition of “Redwood,” a building within the Conservation Area, is unjustified and would result in harm to heritage significance.
- \* Allowing demolition due to disrepair would set an undesirable precedent.
- \* The replacement dwelling’s scale, design and materials are considered unsympathetic to the prevailing architectural character.
- \* The introduction of a 6m-wide engineered access road would represent an urbanising intervention, requiring removal of historic hedgerows, embankments and verges.
- \* The development would erode the spacious, low-density character of the area by introducing higher-density housing on what is currently garden land.

It is contended that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would adversely affect the setting of nearby listed buildings.

## **3. Conflict with Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan and KB1 Framework**

A number of representations cite conflict with policies in the North Herts Local Plan and the Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan, particularly in relation to:

- \* Heritage protection (including Policies SP13 and HE1).
- \* Design and local character (Policy D1).
- \* Transport and highway safety (Policy T1).
- \* Natural environment and biodiversity (Policies SP12 and ENV3).

Objectors argue that the proposal represents piecemeal development of the KB1 allocation and does not accord with the published KB1 masterplans, particularly in relation to access strategy. It is suggested that access to the proposed dwellings could instead be achieved via the internal KB1 road network, avoiding impact on the Conservation Area.

Concerns are also expressed that approval could set a precedent for further intensification along the lane.

## **4. Biodiversity and Green Infrastructure**

Residents state that the site currently functions as a wildlife corridor linking to adjacent fields. Objections reference sightings of species including hedgehogs, deer, foxes, grass snakes, slowworms and birds of prey.

It is argued that the submitted ecological information understates wildlife presence and that development would fragment habitat, remove soft verges and boundary treatments, and result in biodiversity loss.

## **5. Drainage and Surface Water**

Concerns are raised regarding the adequacy of drainage provision. Objectors state that the lane already experiences drainage issues and that the application does not demonstrate sufficient Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), discharge rates, or long-term maintenance arrangements. It is contended that the development could increase surface water runoff and flood risk.

### **3.7 Hertfordshire Swift conservation groups – Comment**

This development is suitable for Swift bricks to be integrated into the walls of the new buildings, as set out in the recent updates to the NPPF and NPPG as well as the Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Strategy. Please consider securing Swift bricks by way of a condition, the suggested wording being as follows:

*"No development shall take place until written details are approved by the LPA of the model and location of 9 integrated Swift bricks, to be fully installed prior to completion of exterior works to the buildings and retained thereafter", in accordance with Local Plan policy NE4"*

## **4.0 Planning Considerations**

### **4.1 Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The site includes "Redwood House", a large, detached house located on the western side of Deards End Lane and land to the rear of Redwood House, which currently has tennis courts, stables and menage. The land to the rear is part of a larger site allocation in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan called 'KB1'. The part included in this application is owned by the Applicant with the other part of 'KB1' owned by Countryside Partnership (part of the Vistry Group).

### **4.2 Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Planning permission is a hybrid application with the following development:

- Demolition of Redwood House replaced by a new 5-bedroom dwelling, its footprint slightly repositioned in the site, bringing the front line forward closer to the road with detached garage;
- New access road constructed along the southern boundary of the site leading to 8 new dwellings on land to the rear of Redwood House;
- Each property would have car parking, and associated landscaping and access;
- The 8 new dwellings to the rear would range between 3-5 bedroom (to note all matters reserved except for access).

## **4.3 Key Issues**

### **4.3.1 The key issues are:**

- Principle of development and Policy compliance
- Sustainability
- Design and layout, visual impact on the character of the area
- Impact on neighbouring properties
- Standard of proposed accommodation for future occupiers
- Highway access and car parking
- Biodiversity net gain, Landscape and Ecology
- Planning Balance

### **Preliminary Matters**

4.3.2 Part of this application is for outline planning permission with all matters reserved apart from access. Therefore, details relating to design, landscaping, layout, and scale are not submitted for detailed consideration at this point, as these matters would be addressed in a subsequent reserved matters application. However, these reserved matters will be considered in a general sense to advise the subsequent application.

### **Introduction to principle of development and Policy compliance**

4.3.3 The North Hertfordshire Local Plan was adopted in November 2022 and is now part of the development plan, where full weight shall be given to relevant policies. The Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) was made in May 2022 and forms part of the development plan and therefore full weight is given to policies of the KNP. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration attracting significant weight.

4.3.4 Policy SP1 of the Local Plan supports the principles of sustainable development and seeks to maintain the role of key settlements as the focus for housing and to ensure the long-term vitality of villages by supporting growth which provides opportunities for existing and new residents and sustains key facilities. The policy elaborates on this stating that planning permission will be granted for proposals that deliver an appropriate mix of homes, create high quality development that respects and improves their surroundings and provides for healthy lifestyles, provides for necessary infrastructure to support an increasing population, protects key elements of the District's environment including biodiversity, important landscape, heritage assets and green infrastructure and mitigates the impact on climate change.

4.3.5 Knebworth is defined in Local Plan Policy SP2 as a Category A village where general development will be permitted within the recently defined settlement boundary. The proposed development is within the defined settlement boundary for Knebworth. The Category A villages, normally containing primary schools, also have defined boundaries within which development will be allowed, and sites have been allocated to meet the District's overall housing requirement. These villages are excluded from the policy designation (either Green Belt or Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt – see Policy SP5) which affects the surrounding countryside. Development of the site for housing would therefore be supported in principle under Policy SP2.

### Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan (May 2022)

4.3.6 The Knebworth Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) forms part of the statutory development plan for North Hertfordshire and must be read alongside the strategic policies of North Hertfordshire District Council and the adopted North Hertfordshire Local Plan (2011–2031).

4.3.7 Within the KNP it outlines that new development proposals must:

- Deliver an appropriate housing mix (in line with KBBE1).
- Respect density expectations (KBDS2).
- Demonstrate high-quality design (KBBE4).
- Provide landscaping buffers to protect rural character.
- Ensure safe access and parking arrangements.
- Address drainage and infrastructure capacity.

### Allocated Site - Policy KB1 – Land at Deards End – 200 homes

4.3.8 Policy HS1 – Local Housing Allocations requires proposed residential developments to broadly accord with the Local Housing Allocations with site specific policy considerations successfully addressed. Unless site specific circumstances suggest otherwise, developments should reflect wider housing mix expectations set out in the Local Plan.

4.3.9 The site allocation includes: -

- Transport assessment to consider cumulative impacts of sites KB1, KB2 and KB4 on key junctions and rail crossing points for all users, securing the necessary mitigation or improvement measures.
- Sensitive design and/or lower density housing at east of the site to respect setting of Deards End Conservation Area and listed buildings
- Transport assessment (or equivalent) to demonstrate highway impacts, including construction traffic, will not significantly affect Deards End Lane railway bridge (SAM) - Preliminary Risk Assessment to identify any contamination associated with previous uses including mitigation
- Appropriate noise mitigation measure to potentially include insulation and appropriate orientation of living spaces

4.3.10 The application site forms an integral part of the wider KB1 housing allocation within the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, which is intended to be delivered comprehensively in accordance with an agreed masterplan. The purpose of this approach is to ensure that development across the allocation is properly coordinated, particularly in relation to access, movement, landscape structure and the timely provision of supporting infrastructure. The current proposal has been brought forward in isolation and in advance of any agreed master planning framework for the KB1 site as a whole. As a result, I am not satisfied that the development would integrate appropriately with the remainder of the allocation or that it would not prejudice the ability to deliver the site comprehensively. Allowing development to proceed in this piecemeal manner would risk undermining the planned spatial strategy for KB1 and could compromise the efficient and sustainable development of the allocation in the long term. On this basis, I consider that the proposal conflicts with the site-specific requirements of the Local Plan and national policy objectives which seek to secure well-planned, coordinated development.

### Five-Year Housing Land supply

- 4.3.11 Though the Local Plan is still within its date range of 2011 – 2031, the Council does not have a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land (5YHL). In 'The Five-Year Housing Land Supply Update' dated November 2025 (pages 17-19) it concludes with two options. Both concluding we cannot demonstrate a 5YHL. Table 10 shows that we can demonstrate a five-year land position of 2.6 years against our adopted housing requirement. This figure falls below the five-year requirement. And Table 11 shows that we can demonstrate a five-year land position of 3.3 years using the Governments New Standard Methodology. This figure also falls below the five-year requirement. The tilted balance set out at paragraph 11 (d) of the NPPF would be engaged. Therefore, there is a presumption in favour in terms of harm and benefits should be applied, whereby planning permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the NPPF that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the proposal; or the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the NPPF taken as a whole.
- 4.3.12 The principal benefit is that the development would approve a net of 8 new dwellings on land that can be relatively easily developed, resulting in an improvement to the District's housing land supply position.
- 4.3.13 Overall, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable within the settlement boundary of Knebworth. The site is now within the settlement boundary for Knebworth under the Local Plan, where general development will be allowed. Therefore, there is no conflict with Policy SP2 of the Local Plan.

### **Sustainability**

- 4.3.14 The overarching purpose of the planning system is to contribute to achieving sustainable development, as stated in Section 2 of the NPPF. This is considered against the three objectives of sustainable development, the economic, social, and environmental objectives.
- 4.3.15 Firstly, in terms of the economic objective, the proposed development would see the delivery of jobs during the build/construction phase and additional spending locally from future occupiers, which is a modest benefit.
- 4.3.16 Secondly, in terms of the social objective, this would add additional dwellings to the districts housing figures, whilst the scheme is modest in size, significant weight is attached as a planning benefit, given that the Council does not have a 5-year supply of housing.
- 4.3.17 In terms of the environmental objective, it is acknowledged that future occupiers of this proposal would be reliant on private vehicles for most of their needs. This issue is covered in more detail in the section below on highway matters. The site is within a category 'A' village which has primary school and some local facilities.
- 4.3.18 An Energy Statement has been submitted with the application. The design intentions follow energy saving hierarchy with a fabric-first approach and efficient electric systems (air source heat pumps) and proposed on-site photovoltaics (for the outline development - to be agreed as part of a reserved matters application) to reduce operational carbon. Overall, these environmental benefits are deemed appropriate relative to the scale of development proposed.

4.3.19 As such, it is considered that the proposal accords with the three strands of sustainability and attributed due weight in the planning balance.

#### **Impact on Heritage Assets – Knebworth Conservation Area**

4.3.20 Policy SP13 of the Local Plan states that “*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight will be given to the asset’s conservation and the management of its setting*”. This reflects paragraph 205 of the NPPF which stipulates that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, such as conservation areas. Policy HE1 of the Local Plan states that “*Planning permission for development proposals affecting Designated Heritage Assets or their setting will be granted where they: 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*”. This is reinforced by paragraph 208 of the NPPF.

4.3.21 The application site lies partially within the Deard’s End Lane Conservation Area. Whilst only part of the site is within the Conservation Area (DELCA), that is the existing dwellinghouse Redwood – which makes no positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, the remainder of the site is within its setting along the eastern boundary of the Conservation Area.

4.3.22 Following consultation with the Conservation Officer, he states that he raises no objection to the loss of Redwood and there is a good case to suggest that a well-designed dwelling that is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment that would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, is achievable here but not necessarily when considered alongside the formation of a new access road.

4.3.23 However, the Conservation Officer has raised an objection to the proposed development as follows:

*Deards End Lane Conservation Area [DELCA] is a Designated Heritage Asset and was designated on 2 April 1984. The key characteristics of DELCA are that the lane is predominantly bordered by high hedges and mature trees, creating an enclosed ‘garden village’ character. There is no perception of development in depth when viewed from the lane. Whilst Redwood makes no positive contribution to the character or appearance of DELCA, the replacement dwelling by reason of its width on a narrower plot and the amount of glazing and height of the left-hand gable would have a mildly erosive impact on the area failing to adhere with 135 c) and 210 of the NPPF. Further, the proposed access would open up the frontage contrary to the established enclosed verdant character and there is some uncertainty regarding the impact of visibility splays on the planting in front of ‘Trees’ and of the development’s impact on particular G004 and T008. I also consider that if more development at KB1 is ultimately served off the new access as suggested on the submitted layout, that this potentially may have a further erosive and harmful impact upon the character and setting of DELCA and upon the wider setting of listed buildings to the south. The proposal will fail to satisfy the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of para 135(c) and Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011- 2031. The degree of harm would be moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum. Whilst the delivery of 8 dwellings may well be regarded as a public benefit this would not in my opinion outweigh the harm identified.*

- 4.3.24 I would concur with the above reason and conclude that the proposal will have an impact upon the setting of nearby listed buildings, the character and appearance of DELCA and the setting to DELCA. The extent of harm would be moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum.
- 4.3.25 Therefore, the proposed development would conflict with Policy HE1 of the Local Plan and Section 16 of the NPPF, which requires development proposals to conserve or enhance the setting and significance of designated heritage assets. The harm to the setting and significance the Conservation Area, should attract great weight. Under the provisions of Local Plan Policy HE1 and paragraph 208 of the NPPF this harm should be weighed against the public benefits that would arise from this proposal, which is considered towards the end of this report.

### **Design and layout, visual impact on the character of the area**

- 4.3.26 Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted provided that development responds positively to the site's local context in addition to other criteria. Policy SP9 of the Local Plan further considers that new development will be supported where it is well designed and located and responds positively to its local context. These considerations are echoed in Section 12 of the NPPF.

#### Full plans – replacement dwellinghouse and access

- 4.3.27 The replacement 5 bed dwellinghouse has a much-reduced footprint to the existing and has been moved slightly nearer the northern boundary with No. 1 Deards End Lane but remains a similar building line with the neighbouring properties and the existing dwelling. The access would be located along the southern edge of the site. The dwelling has a height of 9 metres and is marginally taller than the neighbouring properties but has a similar massing. The proposed single garage located at the front of the replacement dwelling house has a low hipped roof, however this is located close to the existing tree on the shared boundary with No. 1. Three car spaces are located at the front of the garage. There are other examples of low-profile garages on the front boundary but are well screened from the highway behind mature hedgerows and trees. The front boundary at the moment of Redwood is open however a hedgerow did exist here in previous years. It is proposed that a new hedgerow on the front boundary is to be added. This will help screen the garage. However, the proposed sightlines may result with the hedge being positioned more within the site.
- 4.3.28 As stated by the Conservation Officer above, the proposed replacement of Redwood with a well-designed dwelling that is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and that would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness, raises no objection. Whilst the proposed dwelling on Plot 1 may be seen as a visual improvement on what exists, both Planning Officer and Conservation Officer is unconvinced by the amount of glazing and the height of the left-hand forward projecting gable. Omitting this gable and reducing the width of this dwelling would make a more positive contribution to the area if applying para 135 c) of the NPPF.

#### Outline - 8 dwellinghouses

- 4.3.29 The submitted Design and Access Statement and plans provide an indication of how the site could be delivered in terms of the layout, appearance and scale of dwellings and the wider site. However, as already stated the application is submitted in outline only and seeks permission at this stage for access only, which leaves the consideration of appearance, layout and scale of the development for a later date under reserved

matters. In any case, it is considered reasonable to provide a basic assessment in this regard. Means of access covers accessibility for all routes to and within the site, as well as the way they link up to other roads and pathways outside the site.

4.3.30 Considering that KB1 requires “Sensitive design and / or lower density housing at east of site to respect setting of Deards End Lane Conservation Area and listed buildings”, I am not convinced that this is fully achieved here. The submitted layout (albeit all matters reserved apart from access) raises several issues:

- There is little by way of a soft edge buffer close to listed buildings thereby the development potentially impacting upon their setting and consequently affecting their significance.
- I do not see the necessity for the turning head returning behind no.1 Deards End Lane or indeed for the other aspects of the road layout suggesting that more development within KB1 may be accessed off Deards End Lane rather than from Park Lane.
- I concur with KPC concerns that there is a clear intention to develop part of site KB1 in isolation from the development of the rest of KB1. If this site is considered as part of KB1 then maybe a robust landscape ‘buffer’ could be more readily incorporated into the Masterplan ensuring that the impacts of development west of the DELCA are minimised so as to preserve more fully the established ‘garden village’ aesthetic.

4.3.31 Insufficient information has been provided to show how the proposal would integrate satisfactorily with the remainder of the KB1 allocation in respect of access arrangements, movement and connectivity, layout, scale and form of development, landscape and green infrastructure, and the timely and coordinated delivery of supporting infrastructure.

### **Impact on neighbouring properties**

4.3.32 Policy D3 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will be granted for development proposals which do not cause unacceptable harm to living conditions. Policy D1 seeks to ensure that residential development will meet or exceed the nationally described space standards.

4.3.33 As this application is a hybrid application full consideration to impacts on neighbouring properties for the 8 new dwellings would be considered at a reserved matters application. However, given the distances between the scheme and nearby dwelling houses, the proposed boundary treatment, flat topography, and the scale and layout, it is considered that this proposal would not give rise to any materially adverse harm upon the reasonable living conditions and well-being of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings.

4.3.34 In terms of terms of the replacement dwelling, the proposed residential use of this site would not result in any materially adverse impacts upon the reasonable living conditions and well-being of occupiers of neighbouring properties and the living conditions of future occupiers would be acceptable. This is in accordance with Section 12 of the NPPF and Policy D3 of the Local Plan.

## Highway access and car parking

- 4.3.35 Policy T1 of the Local Plan states that permission will be granted for development that does not lead to highway safety problems or cause unacceptable highway impacts, where necessary sustainable transport measures and improvements to existing highway networks are secured, where schemes are supported by the necessary supporting transport documents and for major developments, how schemes would be served by public transport, pedestrian routes etc.
- 4.3.36 The site is located on an unclassified road, Deards End Lane which is a narrow width highway with a grass verge to the front of the site with no footpaths. A replacement dwelling in such a location would normally be acceptable under full planning permission using the existing access provided as there is no intent to build out onto highways land. However, the proposal includes improvements to the access—widening it to 6 meters to serve the additional development at the rear. Although, it needs to be noted that a replacement dwelling, without a footway, would be acceptable under normal circumstances. It should also be noted that a 6m wide access is too wide for a single dwelling, the max. allowed is 5.4m.
- 4.3.37 Highways have commented in that there appears to be little to no scope in terms of space within Deard's End Lane to provide a min. 2m wide footpath for such a development of 8 dwellings to be successful in highway connectivity terms. Or, 9 dwellings if the replacement dwelling is included, but this is not an existing situation. The applicant cites in the Planning Statement that 23/02946/OP, & 25/01658/RM was successful but it is noted there is a public footpath to the opposite side of Park Lane that provides sufficient pedestrian connectivity to the wider public services.
- 4.3.38 Hertfordshire Highways have made representations and objected to the proposed application for the following reason
- The proposal fails to provide sufficient improvements to pedestrian connectivity between the site and surrounding infrastructure which will affect the ability to promote walking and use of public transport and reduce the reliance on the private car as represented in national and local policy. Contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) paragraphs 115 to 117 and Policy 1 of Hertfordshire's 4th Local Transport Plan (2018).*
- 4.3.39 This would therefore run contrary to the provisions of Policy T1 of the Local Plan 2011-2031 and Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4).

## Parking and bins

- 4.3.40 Local Plan Policy T1 requires that the development should not result in highway safety problems or to cause unacceptable impacts on the highway network, whilst Policy T2 requires that new development meet the car parking requirements. Regarding parking, the parking standards require for each new house of two or more bedrooms to have two parking spaces and between 0.25 – 0.75 visitor parking with the higher number where there are no garages and the lower number where garages are provided. The exact number and location of spaces will be dependent on the final details at the reserved matters stage.

4.3.41 Each house must provide bin storage and cycle parking for each plot. The provision of these stores are supported as providing secure cycle parking is in accordance with the parking requirements, and a bin store will prevent the bins from being left cluttering the parking area. These details would be subject to a reserved matters application.

#### **Biodiversity net gain, Landscape and Ecology**

4.3.42 The North Herts Senior Ecologist was consulted on the application and recommended conditions. The October 2025 Preliminary Ecological Review (PER) does not predict any harm to habitats or species. The Statutory Metric provided with the application indicates a 14.69% gain in habitat units and 10.44% gain in hedgerow units respectively thereby meeting the mandatory requirement for 10% BNG.

4.3.43 Policy NE1 of the adopted Local Plan advises that proposals would be granted so long as they do not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area taking account of any suitable mitigation measures necessary to achieve this, are designed and located to ensure the health and future retention of important landscape features and have considered the long-term management and maintenance of any existing and proposed landscaping.

4.3.44 Landscaping details are also a reserved matter at this stage, but the illustrative plan does show the broad extent of hard and soft landscaping across the site, including the provision of roads, footways and parking spaces and the provision of private gardens for all dwellings, and retained/enhanced trees and landscape buffers on the boundaries. Further consideration of the proposed removal of current trees and retained landscaping and any perimeter screening planting should be considered in future landscaping reserved matters applications where that planting would benefit the amenity of the occupiers of future and that of adjoining premises.

4.3.45 The submitted Arboricultural Report states the following:

*Some of the trees such as orchard G004 will occupy a part of the garden of corner plot number 7. Whilst this orchard has been neglected for a number of years, with some careful management, it should continue to provide the property and potentially the whole future community with sustainably produced fruit, for decades to come.*

and

*Another important, existing, category B tree, T008, will occupy a prominent position in the proposed development by offering good amenity in the grounds of the communally maintained grounds, on the verges of one of the proposed plots. Although the access road will be located somewhat near this tree, it will be far enough away so that it does not interfere with its RPA at all.*

4.3.46 However, a few queries have arisen when looking at the indicative layout. It would appear that T008, shown to remain, has the garaging and parking spaces for Plot 2 to be located in same place. It would also appear not all the trees would be retained within orchard G004 in regards to plot 3 and it would need to be clarified which trees would be removed in any reserved matters application.

## **Planning Balance**

- 4.3.47 The proposal would deliver moderate economic, social, and environmental benefits through the delivery of 8 dwellings towards the districts housing supply with the ecological enhancements through at least 10% BNG. Overall, the provision of the proposed development in this location within a Category A village, which would contribute towards maintaining the vitality of the village, is a planning benefit to which significant weight is attributed.
- 4.3.48 The site is allocated for residential development in the adopted North Herts Local Plan under Policy KB1. The site is within the settlement boundary of Knebworth, one of the District's five larger villages, within which 13% of new housing will be delivered. There is no objection to the principle of residential development on this site, which is attached significant weight, and the suitability of development is considered against the site-specific policy criteria.
- 4.3.49 The proposed development would conflict with Policy HE1 of the Local Plan and Section 16 of the NPPF, which requires development proposals to conserve or enhance the setting and significance of designated heritage assets. The harm to the setting and significance the Conservation Area, should attract great weight. Under the provisions of Local Plan Policy HE1 and paragraph 208 of the NPPF this harm should be weighed against the public benefits that would arise from this proposal. In accordance with paragraph 208 of the NPPF, the identified extent of harm would be moderate on the less than substantial harm continuum to the heritage significance of the listed buildings and the Deards End Lane Conservation Area and must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 4.3.50 In Highways terms the proposal fails to provide sufficient improvements to pedestrian connectivity between the site and surrounding infrastructure which will affect the ability to promote walking and use of public transport and reduce the reliance on the private car as represented in national and local policy. Contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) paragraphs 115 to 117 and Policy 1 of Hertfordshire's 4th Local Transport Plan (2018). This would therefore run contrary to the provisions of Policy T1 of the Local Plan 2011-2031 and Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4).
- 4.3.51 In terms of whether the tilted balance should apply, as the Council currently cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of housing for applications, the titled balance as set out at NPPF Paragraph 11 is potentially engaged. However, it is considered that the proposal would cause a moderate level of harm on the 'less than substantial harm' continuum to the significance of nearby listed buildings and the DEL Conservation Area. The NPPF stipulates that great weight should be attributed to this harm. The moderate public benefits that would arise from this proposal does not outweigh that harm. Therefore, the proposal conflicts with policies that protect areas or assets of particular importance (in this case designated heritage assets) and this provides a clear reason for refusal. As such, under the provision of footnote 7 of paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the presumption in favour of granting planning permission under paragraph 11d) becomes disengaged.

## **4.4 Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 It is concluded that the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset would not be outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal and the proposal would conflict with policies of the NPPF which set to conserve and enhance the

historic environment. The proposal would fail to provide sufficient pedestrian connectivity onto Deards End Lane.

#### **4.5 Alternative Options**

None applicable

#### **4.6 Pre-Commencement Conditions**

4.6.1 The agent has confirmed agreement to the pre-commencement conditions.

#### **4.7 Climate Change**

4.7.1 The NPPF supports the transition to a low carbon future and the increased use of renewable energy sources. North Hertfordshire District Council has declared itself a Climate Emergency authority and its recently adopted Council Plan (2020 – 2025) seeks to achieve a Council target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and protect the natural and built environment through its planning policies. Local Plan Policy D1 seeks to reduce energy consumption and waste.

4.7.2 An Energy statement has been submitted and the details would be sort under a reserved matters application.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

#### **6.0 Recommendation**

6.1 That planning permission be **REFUSED** following reasons:

1. The application site forms part of the wider residential allocation at KB1 as identified in the North Hertfordshire Local Plan. The proposal has been submitted in advance of a comprehensive and agreed masterplan for the whole of the KB1 allocation. In the absence of such a masterplan, the development fails to demonstrate that it would not prejudice the comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development of the allocated site as a whole. In particular, insufficient information has been provided to show how the proposal would integrate satisfactorily with the remainder of the KB1 allocation in respect of access arrangements, movement and connectivity, layout, scale and form of development, landscape and green infrastructure, and the timely and coordinated delivery of supporting infrastructure.

The proposal would therefore result in piecemeal development that would undermine the planned approach to the delivery of the KB1 allocation, contrary to the site-specific requirements of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, the spatial strategy of the Plan, and the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework which seek to secure well-designed, comprehensive and sustainable development.

2. The proposal fails to provide sufficient improvements to pedestrian connectivity between the site and surrounding infrastructure which will affect the ability to promote walking and use of public transport and reduce the reliance on the private car as represented in national and local policy. Contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) paragraphs 115 to 117 and Policy 1 of Hertfordshire's 4th Local Transport Plan (2018).
3. Deards End Lane Conservation Area [DELCA] is a Designated Heritage Asset and was designated on 2 April 1984. The key characteristics of DELCA are that the lane is predominantly bordered by high hedges and mature trees, creating an enclosed 'garden village' character. There is no perception of development in depth when viewed from the lane.

The replacement dwelling by reason of its width on a narrower plot and the amount of glazing and height of the left-hand gable would have a mildly erosive impact on the area failing to adhere with 135 c) and 210 of the NPPF. Further, the proposed access would open up the frontage contrary to the established enclosed verdant character and if more development at KB1 is ultimately served off the new access as suggested on the submitted layout, this potentially may have a further erosive and harmful impact upon the character and setting of DELCA and upon the wider setting of listed buildings to the south. As a result, the proposal fails to satisfy the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of para 135(c) and Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.