

Meeting: Planning and Development Committee **Agenda Item:**

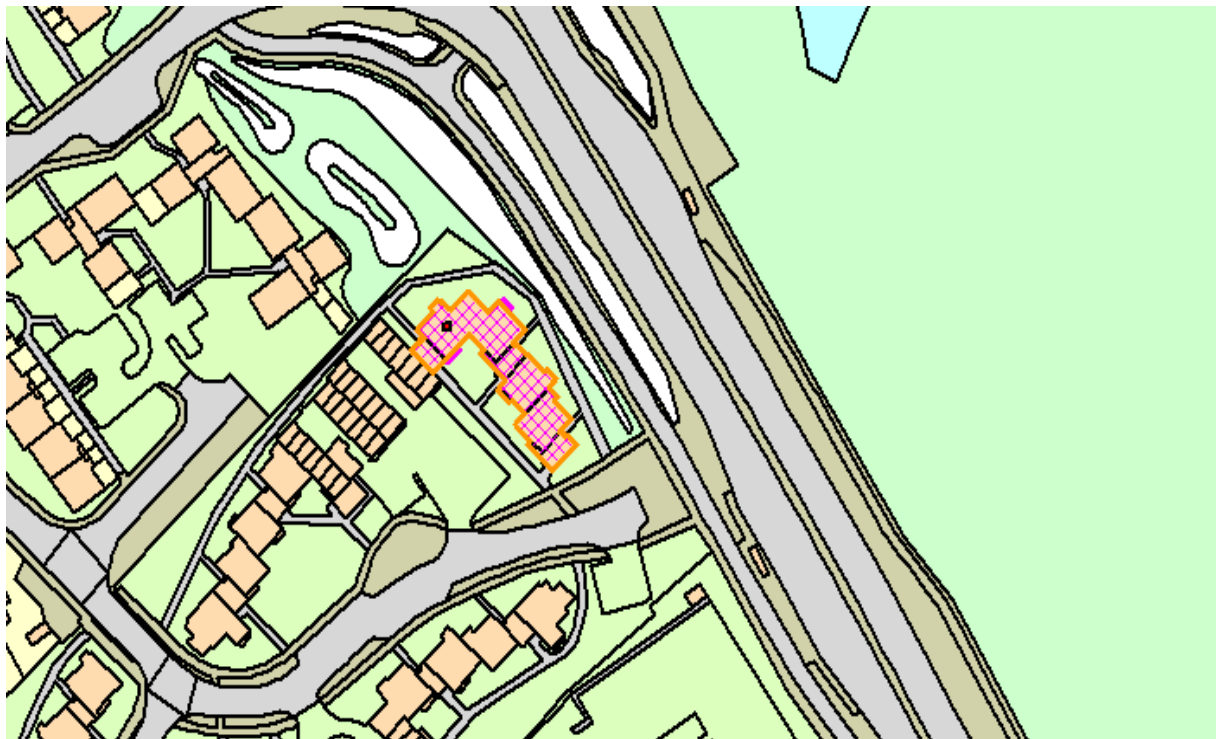
Date: 23 May 2024

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Lead Officer: Zayd Al-Jawad

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Application No :	24/00281/FP
Location :	1-14 Cavalier Court, Ingleside Drive, Stevenage
Proposal :	Replacement cladding, communal entrance doors and windows to flats and communal areas, together with replacement flat roof covering, fascias, gutters, downpipes, external balustrading.
Drawing Nos.:	CD-ADC392-1-14CC-100 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-101 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-200 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-201 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-202 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-203 P1;
Applicant :	Mulalley & Company Ltd (on behalf of Stevenage Borough Council)
Date Valid:	18 April 2024
Recommendation :	GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION



For information purposes only

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 1.1. The application site comprises a three storey, staggered terrace block of fourteen flats located on the northern side of the road at the end of Ingleside Drive. Adjacent to the south-west lies Cranbourne Court and the partially concealed, integrated car park it shares with Cavalier Court. Directly on the opposite side of the road to the south lies Knowle Court, whilst to the east runs the A602, Hitchin Road.
- 1.2. The block of flats in question is divided into four distinct main buildings, all of which are constructed of a red brick course with elements of white and brown horizontal cladding. Each main building is roofed with a flat roof and is fitted with white uPVC windows with and steel external doors. Nine of the properties feature a balcony or ground floor patio on their south-western elevation with the remaining five properties featuring a balcony or ground floor patio on their south-eastern elevation. All of the balconies and ground floor patios are finished with black metal balustrading.
- 1.3. The immediate surrounding area is characterised by flat blocks, typically laid out in staggered rows that are generally of a similar age and style to the application site.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.1 No relevant planning history.

3. THE CURRENT APPLICATION

- 3.1 This application seeks planning permission for the following works:
 - New white uPVC double glazed windows to replace existing.
 - New iron grey, matt finished, aluminium framed communal entrance doors with associated fittings to replace existing.
 - New white uPVC glazed windows to communal areas to replace existing.
 - New white cladding and associated fittings to flats to replace existing horizontal shiplap cladding.
 - New white cladding and associated fittings to communal areas to replace existing horizontal shiplap cladding.
 - New flat roof covering, uPVC fascia's, gutters and downpipes to replace existing.
 - New steel external doors with digi lock access to support rooms.
 - New black metal external balustrading to balconies and ground floor patios to replace existing.
- 3.2 This application comes before the Planning and Development Committee because the applicant is Stevenage Borough Council. Therefore, in line with the Council's constitution, this application is being referred to the aforementioned committee for its decision.

4. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 Following notification of the application via letters to neighbouring properties and the erection of a site notice, no comments were received.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1. No statutory consultations were necessary for this application.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

6.1. Background to the Development Plan

6.1.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that the decision on the planning application should be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For Stevenage the statutory development plan comprises:

- The Stevenage Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031
- Hertfordshire Waste Development Framework 2012 and Hertfordshire Waste Site Allocations Development Plan Document (adopted 2012 and 2014); and
- Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan 2002 – 2016 (adopted 2007).

6.2 Central Government Advice

6.2.1 A revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2023. This made significant changes to the September 2023 version and revised policy with respect to the following:

- maintaining supply and delivery of housing.
- making effective use of land with the allowance of mansard roof extensions to suitable properties.
- significant uplift in the average density of residential development can be seen as being inappropriate if the built form is out of character.
- strengthening policies around achieving well-designed and beautiful places.
- requirement for councils to prepare Local Design Codes.
- no longer a requirement to review or change Green Belt boundaries when plans are being prepared or updated.
- local planning authorities should now give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic.
- change to policies on Biodiversity.

6.2.2 The Council are content that the policies in the Local Plan are in conformity with the revised NPPF and that the Local Plan should be considered up to date for the purpose of determining planning applications. The NPPF provides that proposals which accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay (para.11) and that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted (para.12). This indicates the weight which should be given to an up-to-date development plan, reflecting the requirements of section 38(6) of the 2004 Act.

6.2.3 The Council is now commencing preliminary work into a review of its Local Plan, last adopted in May 2019. This is to ensure the policies within the Local Plan are up to date in accordance with the NPPF as well as ensuring the Council is delivering a sufficient supply of housing and employment.

6.3 Planning Practice Guidance

6.3.1 The PPG contains guidance supplementing the NPPF and with which Members are fully familiar. The PPG is a material consideration to be taken into account together with the National Design Guide (2019) which has the same status as the PPG.

6.4 National Design Guide

6.4.1 The National Design Guide 2021 is Government guidance on the characteristics of well-designed places and demonstrates what good design means in practice. It has the same status as the PPG and should similarly be taken into account when determining planning applications.

6.5 Adopted Local Plan (2019)

6.5.1 The policies set out below are relevant in the determination of this application:

Policy SP8: Good design;
Policy GD1: High quality design;

6.6 Local Plan Partial Review (2024)

6.6.1 The council is currently carrying out a partial review and update of the local plan. On 5 July 2024, a schedule of proposed changes was published for the first stage of public consultation under regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). Paragraph 48 of the NPPF 2023 states that local planning authorities may give weight to relevant policies in emerging plans according to:

- a) the stage of preparation of the emerging plan (the more advanced its preparation, the greater the weight that may be given);
- b) the extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given); and
- c) the degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to this Framework (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).

Where there are emerging policies which are relevant to the application, these will be highlighted in the main body of this report.

6.7 Supplementary Planning Documents

Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document January 2023.

6.8 Community Infrastructure Levy

6.8.1 Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule in 2020. This allows the Council to collect a levy to fund infrastructure projects based on the type, location and floorspace of a development.

7. APPRAISAL

7.1.1 The only issue in the assessment of the application is the impact on the character and appearance of the area. There are no changes to the number of units within the building and no enlargement of the buildings or number and locations of fenestrations so there will be no change to the car parking provision nor any changes to existing impacts on neighbouring properties.

7.1.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that all planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

7.2 Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

- 7.2.1 In terms of design, paragraph 131 of the NPPF (2023) states that achieving high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to the planning and development process and that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Further, paragraph 135 of the NPPF (2023) stipulates that planning decisions should ensure developments function well and adds to the overall quality of the area, not just in the short term but over the lifetime of the development. It also sets out that developments should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.
- 7.2.2 Paragraph 139 of the NPPF (2023) states that permission should be refused especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design (such as the National Design Guide), taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents. Conversely, significant weight be given to:
- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or
 - b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as the fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.
- 7.2.3 Policy GD1 of the Local Plan (2019) generally requires all forms of development to meet a high standard of design which includes form of built development, elevational treatment and materials along with how the development would integrate with the urban fabric, its relationship between buildings, landscape design and relevant aspects of sustainable design.
- 7.2.4 Policy SP8 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) requires new development to achieve the highest standards of design and sustainability which can deliver substantial improvements to the image and quality of the towns' built fabric. Policy GD1 of the Local Plan generally requires all forms of development to meet a high standard of design which includes form of built development, elevational treatment and materials along with how the development would integrate with the urban fabric, its relationship between buildings, landscape design and relevant aspects of sustainable design.
- 7.2.5 The National Design Guide (2019) which was published by National Government is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. It sets out that Buildings are an important component of places and proposals for built development are a focus of the development management system. However, good design involves careful attention to other important components of places. These include:
- the context for places and buildings;
 - hard and soft landscape;
 - technical infrastructure – transport, utilities, services such as drainage; and
 - social infrastructure – social, commercial, leisure uses and activities.
- 7.2.6 A well-designed place is unlikely to be achieved by focusing only on the appearance, materials and detailing of buildings. It comes about through making the right choices at all levels, including:
- the layout;
 - the form and scale of buildings;
 - their appearance;
 - landscape;
 - materials; and

- their detailing.

7.2.7 The Guide further iterates that all developments are made up of these components put together in a particular way. As such, the choices made in the design process contribute towards achieving the ten characteristics and shape the character of a place. For reference, these ten characteristics are as follows:-

- Context – enhances the surroundings;
- Identity – attractive and distinctive;
- Built form – a coherent pattern of built form;
- Movement – accessible and easy to move around;
- Nature – enhanced and optimised;
- Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive;
- Uses – mixed and integrated;
- Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable;
- Resources – efficient and resilient;
- Lifespan – made to last.

7.2.8 Paragraph 40 of the National Design Guide states that well-designed places are:

- Based on a sound understanding of the features of the site and the surrounding context, using baseline studies as a starting point for design;
- Integrated into their surroundings so they relate well to them;
- Influenced by and influence their context positively; and
- Responsive to local history, culture and heritage.

7.2.9 The Council recently adopted an updated Design Guide SPD (Jan 2023). An understanding and analysis of the original New Town design concepts led to some key issues becoming apparent. These have been used as key themes, which run throughout the entirety of this guidance. Considering these concepts at all stages of the development process will provide a good basis for the creation of a successful place; based on the recognised principles of urban design, but also building on the existing fabric of the town without taking away from Stevenage's history as Britain's first Mark One New Town. The themes have been identified as follows:

- Sustainability – incorporate principles of sustainable development from a town-wide perspective to measures incorporated into an individual property;
- Increasing densities – encourage high densities in accessible locations;
- Respecting existing characteristics – respect local characteristics and preserve and enhance existing features, where appropriate;
- Legibility – provide landmark developments at nodal points;
- Design innovation – showcase Stevenage as an example of high-quality design, creating safer places through urban design techniques.

7.2.10 All of the proposed refurbishment works would have a similar appearance to that which is existing with the most prominent changes being the installation of the new white cladding to the various sections on each elevation of the terrace block and the new black metal external balustrading to the balconies and ground floor patios on the south-eastern elevation. The proposal also comprises the replacement of the existing roofing material to the flat roof of the application building. In addition, all of communal entrance doors, windows, fascia's, guttering and downpipes would also be replaced as part of this development.

7.2.11 The proposed refurbishment works would have a positive impact on the overall look of the block of flats and would improve its overall visual appearance without radically altering it or significantly impacting on the character and appearance of the wider area. Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area. In this respect, the proposal accords with Policies SP8 and GD1 of the Local Plan 2019, which together require development to be of a high quality and sympathetic to its surroundings.

7.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

7.3.1 Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 sets out that every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the 'biodiversity gain condition' requiring development to achieve a net gain of 10% of biodiversity value. This is subject to exemptions, an exemption applies in relation to planning permission for a development which is below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:

- does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
- impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

Applicants for planning permission are required to make a statement as to whether the biodiversity gain condition will apply if permission is granted.

7.3.2 The applicant has confirmed in their statement that if granted planning permission, the general Biodiversity Net Gain Condition (as set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended)). This is because the development proposal is below the threshold which will not have an impact on a priority habitat, and it will impact less than 25sqm of onsite habitat and less than 5m of linear hedgerow. This is because the development is limited to the existing footprint of the building only.

7.4 Other Matters

Climate Change

7.4.1 Paragraph 164 of the NPPF (2023) states that in determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights).

7.4.2 Existing Policy FP1 of the adopted Local Plan (2019) stipulates that planning permission will be granted for development that can incorporate measures to address adaptation to climate change. New developments will be encouraged to include measures such as:

- Ways to ensure development is resilient to likely variations in temperature.
- Reducing water consumption to no more than 110 litres per person per day, including external water use.
- Improving energy performance of buildings.
- Reducing energy consumption through efficiency measures.
- Using or producing renewable or low carbon energy from a local source; and
- Contributing towards reducing flood risk through the use of SuDS or other appropriate measures.

7.4.3 The emerging local plan partial review and update contains a suite of new climate change policies (CC1 to CC8). These policies cover a much broader range of topics which are relevant to climate change and also make mandatory some of the measures that are currently only encouraged. Given that the emerging local plan is in the earliest stages of preparation, the extent of objections to the policies is as yet unclear, and their degree of consistency with the NPPF is likewise yet to be tested, emerging Policies CC1 to CC8 should only be afforded limited weight in the assessment of this application.

7.4.4 The proposal will improve the energy efficiency of the flats. When retrofitting buildings, they must be PAS2035 compliant which will ensure that the energy demand within the building is significantly reduced.

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

7.4.5 Consideration has been given to Articles 1 and 8 of the First Protocol of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is not considered that the decision would result in a violation of any person's rights under the Convention.

7.4.6 When considering proposals placed before Members it is important that they are fully aware of and have themselves rigorously considered the equalities implications of the decision that they are taking.

7.4.7 Rigorous consideration will ensure that proper appreciation of any potential impact of that decision on the Council's obligations under the Public Sector Equalities Duty. As a minimum this requires decision makers to read and carefully consider the content of any Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) produced by officers.

7.4.8 The Equalities Act 2010 requires the Council when exercising its functions to have due regard to the need to (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and (c) foster good relations between persons who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act and persons who do not share it. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.

7.4.9 Measures will be put in place during the construction phase of the development to minimise harm to neighbouring properties arising from noise and dust. Accordingly, it is not considered that the development would contravene the Human Rights Act by way of preventing or hindering the right to peaceful enjoyment of a home.

7.4.10 It is considered that the decision has had regard to this duty. The development would not conflict with either Stevenage Borough Council's Equality Policy or the commitments set out in our Equality Objectives and would support the Council in meeting its statutory equality responsibilities. This is because the proposed development will not impact upon person who have protected characteristics.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the development plan and in the absence of any other material considerations which indicate that permission should be refused, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions and informatives:

1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: CD-ADC392-1-14CC-100 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-101 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-200 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-201 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-202 P1, CD-ADC392-1-14CC-203 P1;

REASON:- For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.
REASON:- To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).
- 3 The materials to be used in the development hereby permitted shall be as per the approved plans and associated documents to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.
REASON:- To ensure the development has an acceptable appearance.

The Council has acted Pro-Actively for the following reason:-

- 1 Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

INFORMATIVE

- 1 **Public Information on Planning Applications**

Warning: all information provided on your planning application is now publicly available. Individuals and organisations offering their services may contact you. The Council does not endorse or approve any builders, surveyors, trades persons or other supplier, and advises householders to obtain quotes/references, and check the legitimacy of any contractor who contacts them before making payment.

- 2 **Community Infrastructure Levy**

Stevenage Borough Council adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule at Full Council on 27 January 2020 and started implementing CIL on 01 April 2020.

This application may be liable for CIL payments and you are advised to contact the CIL Team for clarification with regard to this. If your development is CIL liable, even if you are granted an exemption from the levy, please be advised that it is a requirement under Regulation 67 of The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) that CIL Form 6 (Commencement Notice) must be completed, returned and acknowledged by Stevenage Borough Council before building works start. Failure to do so will mean you risk losing the right to payment by instalments and a surcharge will be imposed. NB, please note that a Commencement Notice is not required for residential extensions if relief has been granted.

Stevenage's adopted CIL Charging Schedule and further details of CIL can be found on the Council's webpages at www.stevenage.gov.uk/CIL or by contacting the Council's CIL Team at CIL@Stevenage.gov.uk.

- 3 **Building Regulations**

To obtain advice regarding current Building Regulations please contact Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd. by emailing us at building.control@hertfordshirebc.co.uk or phoning us on 01438 879990.

To make a building regulations application please apply through our website portal at <https://www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk/contact-us/> payment can be made online or by phoning the above number after the application has been uploaded. Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control for fees guidance on 01438 879990.

Hertfordshire Building Control can also be contacted by post at Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd, 4th Floor, Campus West, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6BX.

Once a building regulations application has been deposited with relevant drawings and fee building work may commence. You will be advised in their acknowledgement letter of the work stages we need to inspect but in most instances these are usually:

- Excavation for foundations
- Damp proof course
- Concrete oversite
- Insulation
- Drains (when laid or tested)
- Floor and Roof construction
- Work relating to fire safety
- Work affecting access and facilities for disabled people
- Completion

Please phone Hertfordshire Building Control on 01438 879990 before 10.00am to ensure a same day inspection (Mon - Fri).

4 **Party Wall etc. Act 1996**

Any work that affects a party wall, including foundations dug within 3.0m of a neighbouring building, may be controllable under the Act and may require approval from the adjoining owner(s). Party Wall Act matters are always civil matters and it is neither Stevenage Borough Council's nor Hertfordshire Building Control Ltd's remit to control or enforce Party Wall act matters. Please refer to the Government's explanatory booklet The Party Wall etc. Act 1996, a copy of which is available online at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-party-wall-etc-act-1996-revised-explanatory-booklet>.

5 **Biodiversity Net Gain**

Applications where Biodiversity Net Gain is not required as development is considered De Minimis

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition "(the biodiversity gain condition)" that development may not begin unless:

- a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and
- b) the planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be Stevenage Borough Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not apply.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because the following statutory exemption or transitional arrangement is considered to apply.

1. Development below the de minimis threshold, meaning development which:
 - a) does not impact an onsite priority habitat (a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006); and
 - b) impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat (as defined in the statutory metric).

Where the local planning authority considers that the permission falls within paragraph 19 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the permission which has been granted has the effect of requiring or permitting the development to proceed in phases. The modifications in respect of the biodiversity gain condition which are set out in Part 2 of the Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Modifications and Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 apply.

Biodiversity gain plans are required to be submitted to, and approved by, the planning authority before development may be begun, and, if subject to phased development, before each phase of development may be begun.

If the onsite habitat includes irreplaceable habitat (within the meaning of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) there are additional requirements for the content and approval of Biodiversity Gain Plans. The Biodiversity Gain Plan must include, in addition to information about steps taken or to be taken to minimise any adverse effect of the development on the habitat, information on arrangements for compensation for any impact the development has on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat. The planning authority can only approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if satisfied that the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat is minimised and appropriate arrangements have been made for the purpose of compensating for any impact which do not include the use of biodiversity credits.

More information can be found in the Planning Practice Guidance online at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. The application file, forms, plans and supporting documents having the reference number relating to this item.
2. Stevenage Borough Council Supplementary Planning Documents – Stevenage Design Guide adopted January 2023.
3. Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011 – 2031 adopted 2019.
4. Stevenage Borough Local Plan Partial Review (2024).
5. Responses to consultations with statutory undertakers and other interested parties referred to in this report.
6. Central Government advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 and National Planning Practice Guidance.