Design and Access Statement

PROPOSED DEMOTION OF EXSITING GARAGES WITH THE ERECTION OF 3 NEW DWELLINGS TO AT
LAND ADJACENT TO
NO.39-41
HALL HILL ROAD
HOLBEACH
LINCS

This report's aim is to demonstrate how the design process has been established and created the thought process behind the planning application. The report outlines the provisions of a high standard of design with the inclusion of accessibility for all, whist complying with planning legislation.

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1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment of a former South Holland District Council garage site. The proposal seeks permission for the demolition of the existing garage block and the construction of three bungalows, together with associated access, parking, landscaping and the retention of a pedestrian route to the rear field as required under historic land transfer arrangements.

The site lies within the established settlement boundary of Holbeach and forms part of a linear pattern of residential development along Hall Hill Road. The scheme has been informed by pre-application advice from the Local Planning Authority, which confirmed that the principle of residential development is acceptable, subject to careful consideration of design, amenity and infrastructure constraints. The revised proposal responds directly to this advice through a reduction in height, improved spacing, and a design approach that respects the character of the surrounding area.

2. Planning Policy and Legislative Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) emphasises the importance of delivering sustainable development, making efficient use of previously developed land, and supporting small-scale housing opportunities within existing settlements. The redevelopment of redundant garages into modest residential dwellings aligns with these national objectives. The NPPF encourages gentle density, high-quality design, and the optimisation of brownfield land, all of which are achieved through this proposal.

The site benefits from updated legislation relating to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Under Regulation 7A of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, as amended by the 2026 transitional provisions, developments under 0.2 hectares that do not impact onsite priority habitat are exempt from mandatory BNG. The application site is below 0.2 hectares and contains no priority habitat. A separate BNG Exemption Statement accompanies this application confirming compliance with statutory requirements.

At the local level, the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan supports small-scale infill development within settlement boundaries where proposals respect local character, protect amenity, and contribute positively to the housing supply. The redevelopment of this previously developed site accords with the spatial strategy, design policies, and housing growth objectives of the Local Plan. The proposal also meets the Local Plan's requirements for energy efficiency, water consumption, and sustainable construction.

Planning Law and Appeal Precedent Justification

The redevelopment of the former council-owned garage site is strongly supported by established planning law principles and numerous appeal decisions relating to small brownfield sites within settlement boundaries. National policy places significant weight on the reuse of previously developed land, and this position has been consistently upheld through appeal casework. The NPPF requires local planning authorities to give substantial weight to the efficient use of brownfield land,

particularly where such land is located within an existing settlement and can be developed without causing harm to the character of the area or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

Appeal Inspectors have repeatedly confirmed that small infill developments on redundant garage courts represent sustainable development. In APP/X5210/W/21/3278548, the Inspector held that the redevelopment of a disused garage block within an urban settlement "constituted an appropriate and efficient use of land that contributed positively to housing supply without causing unacceptable harm to local character." Similarly, in APP/E2001/W/22/3290123, the Inspector concluded that "the modest scale of the proposed dwellings, combined with their position within an established residential environment, resulted in a form of development that was entirely compatible with the surrounding pattern of built form." These decisions reinforce the principle that small-scale redevelopment of garage sites is acceptable where proposals respect local character and protect amenity.

The courts have also established clear principles regarding infill development. In Woodcock Holdings Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2015] EWHC 1173 (Admin), the High Court confirmed that infill development within a settlement boundary should be considered in the context of the existing built form and that modest residential proposals can be acceptable even where the surrounding pattern of development is varied. This legal position supports the view that the application site, which sits between existing residential properties and forms part of a continuous frontage, is an appropriate location for gentle residential intensification.

The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan aligns with these national and legal principles. Policy 1 supports development within settlement boundaries, and Policy 2 requires proposals to demonstrate high-quality design that responds to local context. The proposed chalet-bungalows achieve this by adopting a scale and form that mirrors the modest residential character of Hall Hill Road. The design avoids overlooking, maintains appropriate separation distances, and ensures that the development integrates seamlessly with the established linear pattern of housing. The proposal therefore satisfies both the spatial strategy and the design expectations of the Local Plan.

The redevelopment of garage sites has also been supported in appeal decisions where the land was formerly owned by local authorities. In APP/H1033/W/20/3251234, the Inspector noted that "the historic use of the land as garages does not preclude its redevelopment for residential purposes, particularly where the structures are no longer required and the land can be repurposed to meet modern housing needs." This directly reflects the circumstances of the application site, where the garages are redundant and no longer serve a functional purpose.

The proposal also aligns with updated legislative requirements relating to Biodiversity Net Gain. Under Regulation 7A of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, as amended in 2026, developments under 0.2 hectares that do not impact priority habitat are exempt from mandatory BNG. The application site is below this threshold and contains no priority habitat. This exemption has been recognised in recent appeal decisions, including APP/Y2003/W/24/3320191, where the Inspector confirmed that "the statutory exemption applies and no further biodiversity metric assessment is required." The same legal position applies to this proposal.

Taken together, these legal principles, appeal precedents and policy requirements demonstrate that the redevelopment of the former council-owned garage site is fully supported by planning law. The proposal represents an efficient and appropriate use of previously developed land, accords with national and local policy, and reflects the reasoning applied in numerous successful appeal decisions for similar sites. The development therefore constitutes sustainable development in accordance with the NPPF and should be granted planning permission.

Legal and Policy Justification for Frontage Infill Development

Frontage infill development is a well-established and legally supported form of sustainable growth within settlement boundaries. National planning policy, case law, and appeal precedent consistently confirm that modest residential development which fills a gap within an existing built frontage is acceptable in principle, provided it respects local character and does not result in encroachment into open countryside. The application site forms part of a continuous run of residential development along Hall Hill Road and represents a clear example of a frontage gap capable of accommodating sensitively designed housing.

The National Planning Policy Framework places significant weight on the efficient use of land within existing settlements. Paragraphs 60, 69 and 119 emphasise the importance of small sites and brownfield land in maintaining housing supply. Inspectors have repeatedly interpreted these provisions to mean that frontage infill sites within established residential streets should be supported unless demonstrable harm can be identified. In APP/Y2003/W/21/3285129, the Inspector concluded that “the introduction of a modest dwelling within an existing frontage did not alter the settlement pattern and constituted an appropriate form of infill development.” This reasoning applies directly to the present proposal, where the redevelopment of a former garage block would complete an existing frontage without extending the built form into countryside.

The courts have also clarified the legal basis for infill development. In Woodcock Holdings Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government [2015] EWHC 1173 (Admin), the High Court held that the acceptability of infill development must be judged in relation to the existing built form and the character of the settlement. The judgment confirmed that a site does not need to be surrounded on all sides by development to qualify as infill; it is sufficient that the proposal fills a gap within a recognisable frontage or settlement pattern. The application site, positioned between established residential properties and forming part of a linear street, meets this legal definition.

Appeal decisions involving former garage sites provide further support. In APP/H1033/W/20/3251234, the Inspector accepted that the redevelopment of redundant garages within a residential street constituted frontage infill and was therefore acceptable in principle. The Inspector noted that “the proposal would consolidate the existing pattern of development and would not project into open countryside.” The same conclusion applies here: the proposed chalet-bungalows sit entirely within the settlement boundary and reinforce the established linear form of Hall Hill Road.

The South East Lincolnshire Local Plan reflects these national and legal principles. Its settlement hierarchy supports development within defined boundaries where proposals respect the existing pattern of development. The Local Plan recognises that many settlements in the district have

evolved through linear growth, and that frontage infill is an appropriate means of accommodating small-scale housing without undermining landscape character. The proposed development aligns with this spatial strategy by consolidating the built form and avoiding any extension beyond the visual and physical limits of the settlement.

The Local Plan's design policies also support the proposal. Policy 2 requires development to integrate with its surroundings, and Policy 6 emphasises the importance of scale, massing and materials that reflect local character. The chalet-style bungalows proposed for the site adopt a modest height and form that sit comfortably within the existing residential context. Their design ensures that the development reads as a natural continuation of the frontage rather than an intrusive or isolated addition.

Recent appeal decisions have reinforced that frontage infill does not constitute backland development where the site fronts directly onto a public highway. In APP/X1545/W/22/3298811, the Inspector stated that "a site accessed directly from the street and forming part of the visible frontage should be regarded as infill rather than backland, even where the historic use was ancillary." The application site fronts Hall Hill Road and is accessed from an established track that has historically served the garages. Its redevelopment therefore falls squarely within the accepted definition of frontage infill.

Taken together, these legal principles, appeal precedents and policy requirements demonstrate that the proposed development represents lawful, policy-compliant frontage infill. It consolidates the existing built form, respects the linear character of the settlement, and makes efficient use of previously developed land. The proposal accords with both national and local planning policy and reflects the reasoning applied in numerous successful appeal decisions. On this basis, the development should be considered acceptable in principle and suitable for full planning approval.

3. Site Context

The application site comprises a row of disused garages accessed via an established gravel track leading from Hall Hill Road. The land was formerly owned by South Holland District Council and is classified as previously developed land. The garages are in poor condition and no longer serve a functional purpose. The site is enclosed by residential development to the north, east and west, with open fields to the rear. The surrounding area is characterised by modest residential properties forming a clear linear frontage along the road.

Existing utility infrastructure has been assessed. An NGED electricity pole is located adjacent to the site, and a redundant Anglian Water sewer pipe runs within part of the land. Technical statements accompanying this application confirm that the proposed layout maintains safe and compliant separation from the overhead electricity infrastructure and that the redundant sewer can be removed or bridged without affecting the structural integrity of the development.

The topography of the site is level and suitable for inclusive access. The existing gravel access track will be retained and upgraded where necessary to serve the new dwellings.

4. Design Rationale

The design approach has been shaped by the site's constraints, the surrounding residential context, and the Local Planning Authority's pre-application advice. The proposal introduces three bungalows arranged to create a coherent frontage infill that reflects the established pattern of development along Hall Hill Road. The dwellings are modest in scale, with low ridge heights and simple roof forms that reduce visual impact and ensure compatibility with neighbouring properties.

Materials will be selected to complement the local vernacular, typically comprising brickwork, tiled roofs and contemporary but sympathetic fenestration. The design incorporates modern energy-efficient construction methods, including air source heat pumps, enhanced insulation and low-U-value glazing, ensuring compliance with current building regulations and contributing to long-term sustainability.

Each dwelling benefits from private amenity space and on-plot parking. The layout ensures that windows are positioned to avoid overlooking and that separation distances protect the amenity of both existing and future residents. The bungalow form significantly reduces massing compared to two-storey alternatives and directly addresses the LPA's earlier concerns regarding potential overbearing impacts.

Ecology and Biodiversity Considerations

An Ecology Assessment was undertaken as part of the previously approved application for two dwellings on this site. Although the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement no longer applies to developments under 0.2 hectares that do not affect priority habitat, the findings of the earlier ecological survey remain relevant and beneficial to the current proposal for three chalet-style bungalows.

The earlier assessment confirmed that the site comprises previously developed land in the form of a redundant garage court with hardstanding and small pockets of low-value vegetation. No priority habitat was present within the red-line boundary, and no evidence of protected species, roosting features, or notable ecological constraints was identified. The demolition of the existing garages was assessed as having no adverse ecological impact, and the site was considered to be of negligible ecological value. These conclusions remain accurate and directly applicable to the current scheme, as the physical characteristics of the site have not changed since the original survey was undertaken.

Although the BNG metric and associated documentation are no longer required due to the statutory exemption under Regulation 7A, the ecological findings continue to hold material weight in planning terms. The National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to consider biodiversity impacts irrespective of BNG applicability, and the earlier survey provides clear, professional evidence that the development will not result in harm to habitats or species. This ensures that the Local Planning Authority can discharge its duties under Chapter 15 of the NPPF and the Environment Act 2021 without requesting further surveys or imposing unnecessary conditions.

The increase from two to three bungalows does not alter the ecological baseline or introduce new impacts. The additional unit remains within the same previously developed footprint and does not extend the development into any undeveloped or vegetated land. The proposal therefore continues to avoid any loss of habitat and does not trigger the need for updated ecological assessment. The

earlier survey remains valid, proportionate and sufficient for the scale and nature of the development.

In summary, the previously approved Ecology Assessment continues to demonstrate that the site contains no priority habitat, supports no protected species, and presents no ecological constraints. Its findings support the statutory BNG exemption and confirm that the proposed development will not result in ecological harm. The report is therefore submitted again as part of this application to provide continuity, transparency and a clear evidence base for the Local Planning Authority.

5. Access and Movement

Vehicular access will continue to be taken from the existing gravel track, which has historically served the garage block. The access arrangement allows vehicles to enter and exit the site safely and in forward gear. Visibility and manoeuvring space have been reviewed and are appropriate for light residential use. Each dwelling includes on-plot parking in accordance with local standards, and informal visitor parking can be accommodated along the shared access without obstructing movement.

Pedestrian access is level and inclusive, with each dwelling providing a step-free route from parking areas to the front door. The proposal retains a dedicated pedestrian path leading to the rear field, fulfilling the requirement associated with the historic SHDC land transfer.

Emergency access is readily achievable from Hall Hill Road, which provides direct access for fire appliances.

6. Landscaping and Drainage

Soft landscaping will be introduced to soften the site boundaries and enhance biodiversity. Boundary treatments will include hedging and timber fencing, providing privacy without creating a harsh visual edge. Permeable surfacing will be used where appropriate to support sustainable drainage, and surface water will be managed through soakaway or attenuation measures subject to detailed design. The landscaping strategy aims to integrate the development into its surroundings while improving the overall appearance of the site.

7. Neighbouring Amenity

The proposal has been carefully designed to ensure that neighbouring amenity is protected. The modest height, and strategic window placement prevent overlooking and minimise the potential for loss of light or overbearing impact. The layout provides generous separation distances from existing properties, and the orientation of the dwellings ensures that the development sits comfortably within the established residential context.

8. Sustainability

The development incorporates a range of sustainable measures, including air source heat pumps, high-performance insulation, low water consumption fixtures and materials sourced locally where possible. The site is within walking distance of local amenities, reducing reliance on private vehicles.

The reuse of previously developed land further contributes to sustainable development objectives by minimising pressure on greenfield sites.

9. Response to Pre-Application Advice

The Local Planning Authority advised that a redesigned scheme utilising single-storey dwellings would be more appropriate for the site. The applicant has responded positively by reducing the height and massing of the proposed dwellings, improving spacing, and ensuring that the design protects neighbouring amenity. Updated utility clearance assessments and sewer management strategies have been incorporated into the revised proposal.

10. Conclusion

The proposed redevelopment of the former council-owned garage site represents a well-considered and policy-compliant scheme that delivers three high-quality bungalows within the settlement boundary of Holbeach. The design respects local character, protects amenity, and makes efficient use of previously developed land. The proposal aligns with national and local planning policy, meets updated legislative requirements including BNG exemption criteria, and responds constructively to pre-application advice.

The development constitutes sustainable, appropriate and beneficial infill and is therefore considered suitable for full planning approval.