

Planning Statement

Proposed extension and alteration of
existing dwelling and detached garage
to provide additional space, and
reorganisation of existing
accommodation

Fencote Station,
Hatfield, Leominster,
Herefordshire, HR6 0SQ

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Introduction and Site Context

1. This supporting statement accompanies an application for householder planning permission for the proposed extension and alteration of an existing dwelling and detached garage to provide for utility, office and studio spaces. The extension would incorporate the existing garage/workshop building into the single-storey house, to achieve a more functional layout with two-bedrooms. Internal works are proposed within the existing house, which in isolation would not constitute development.
2. The buildings subject to this application form part of a well-established residential property known as Fencote Station. It is sold subject to contract and currently vacant. This application seeks to provide a comfortable standard of habitable accommodation and to bring the dwelling up to date, whilst maintaining its intrinsic character as a railway station. Key features such as the Victorian architectural detailing and station platform canopy would remain, as well as a single-bay garage.
3. The station was opened as part of the final section of the Worcester, Bromyard and Leominster Railway, with the railway having been bought out of bankruptcy by the Great Western Railway in 1888. Please refer to information found on the 'Herefordshire Through Time' website below.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20130127184723/http://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/htt/619.aspx>

4. The Leominster to Bromyard line (and so Fencote Station) was opened in 1897. Unstaffed as a station from September 1949, the line closed to regular passenger services in September 1952. On 26th April 1958, a special train ran from Worcester to Leominster, calling in at Fencote, amongst other places. This was to be the last train running along the track before it was removed. Fencote Station has since been restored and the station building put to more productive use as a dwelling (circa. 1980). The site retains much of its original character and has occasionally been open to visitors.
5. The enlarged dwelling would comprise two bedrooms and feature a large, communal living, dining and kitchen space. No substantial rebuilding works are necessary, with only very minor external alterations required to the Victorian station building to enable connection to the existing outbuilding. The general site layout is shown within the aerial image below. This shows the relationship of the existing garage/workshop building to the main house, with an associated parking area.



6. The applicant, Mr Anthony Higham, is relocating to Herefordshire and wishes to ensure the property is suitable for his needs. The intention is to take on the site as opportunity to conserve the station and thereby act as a custodian to an important part of the county's railway heritage. Access is taken via an existing unclassified lane that leads from the A44 to Hampton Charles, Bockleton and Hatfield.
7. This statement will describe the layout and design of the proposed works in the context of compliance with local and national planning policy. The site lies in a rural situation and, for development plan purposes, is found within open countryside between Leominster and Bromyard. The grounds are generous and other former railway buildings, including the signals box and platform waiting rooms, provide an idiosyncratic setting for a residential property. There are nearby residential properties, notably to the south and south-west, albeit these would be unaffected by the proposed works.
8. As regards potential constraints, the site is located outside of any "valued" or designated landscape and there are no designated heritage assets found nearby. The site is also located outside of Flood Zones 2 and 3 (now or in the future) and only minor surface water flooding (up to 20cm) is shown along the railway track. Finally, no public rights of way are directly affected by the proposal. It is however acknowledged that bridleway HFN10 runs along with the initial part of the private drive.

Policy Context

9. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions are taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For this application, the development plan comprises the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are both material considerations that carry substantial weight.
10. Hatfield and District Group NDP has not progressed beyond the drafting stage. The area encompasses the parishes of Docklow and Hampton Wafre, Hatfield and Newhampton and Pudleston.

National Planning Policy Framework

11. National policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, supported by the Planning Practice Guidance. The Framework has been revised on several occasions, with the most recent version being published in December 2024. The Framework, at paragraph 2, repeats that applications for planning permission are required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations, including the Framework, indicate otherwise.
12. The Framework sets out that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which is explained at paragraph 11. For decision-taking this means:-

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:-

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

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13. Moreover, paragraph 8 of the Framework states that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives). These objectives are social, economic and environmental.
14. Paragraph 12 explains that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision-making. Nonetheless, in line with the statutory planning balance described above, it reinforces that local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan where material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed.

Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy (2011-2031)

15. The Core Strategy is a key document within the Local Plan, which provides the strategic planning framework for Herefordshire's future development needs up to 2031. A range of policies sets out how these needs can be met while at the same time achieving social and environmental objectives. The Core Strategy sets out strategic planning policies and more general development management policies. At the time of adoption, it was envisaged that the location and level of development allocated to settlements would be determined through the preparation of NDPs.
16. The Core Strategy was adopted by Herefordshire Council in October 2015. The following policies are found to be relevant to the proposal.

SS1 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

SS6 – Environmental quality and local distinctiveness

SS7 – Addressing climate change

LD1 – Landscape and townscape

LD2 – Biodiversity and geodiversity

LD4 – Historic environment and heritage assets

SD1 – Sustainable design and energy efficiency

SD3 – Sustainable water management and water resources

MT1 – Traffic management, highway safety and promoting active travel

17. The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and paragraph 33 of the Framework require a review of local plans be undertaken at least every five years in order to determine whether the plan policies and spatial development strategy are in need of updating (and should then be updated as necessary). The Core Strategy was adopted on 15th October 2015 and the decision to review it was made on 9th November 2020. The review process remains ongoing and the delays mean that it has not been completed within the 5-year period required by the Framework. The degree of consistency of Core Strategy policies and those found in the Framework is a material consideration for planning applications until the point of adoption.

Principle of Development

18. The principle of extensions, alterations and additions to existing lawful dwellings are accepted in general terms by the policies found within the development plan. For this application proposal, the principle of development is acceptable subject to the scale, design and siting of the extension and alterations respecting the character of the host dwelling and avoiding any dominating effects, as well as ensuring that there would be no unacceptable impact on any neighbours' amenity.
19. The social benefits of providing an enlarged and enhanced dwellinghouse, with new ancillary spaces including a small office and studio, should be given weight in the planning balance. Maintaining the existing housing stock and ensuring it is in active use is encouraged under Section 11 of the NPPF.

Design and Amenity

20. Policy SD1 deals with design and states that development proposals should create safe, sustainable, well integrated environments for all members of the community. Amongst the policy criteria is a requirement that new buildings be designed to maintain local distinctiveness through incorporating local architectural detailing and materials, and respecting scale, height, proportions and massing of surrounding development, while making a positive contribution to the architectural diversity and character of the area including, where appropriate, through innovative design.
21. There is no policy within the Core Strategy that specifically addresses house extensions.

22. Having regard to the submitted plans and drawings, the proposal represents a sympathetic, viable option to enlarge the modest habitable accommodation without harming the intrinsic character of the original station building. It is suggested that the station has some local historic interest, thereby warranting its acknowledgement as a non-designated heritage asset.
23. Paragraph 216 of the Framework states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated asset should be taken into account. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
24. By retaining the single-storey form of the building and using a discreet, flat roofed linking section at the rear of the toilet block, the dominance, linear form and architectural quality of the station would remain intact. The elongation of the existing garage/workshop building would be of limited visual consequence, due to its discreet location meaning it is viewed in the background on approach along the drive. In terms of materials, the alterations would reflect the existing buildings (brick, timber cladding and natural slate). Overall, the proposed works would secure the long-term conservation of the station building in a viable use and employ a suitable standard of design and build quality.
25. The set-back, visually discreet position of the proposed extension is shown in the photo below.



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26. The proposal would benefit future occupiers in terms of the standard of living accommodation and, given the distance to other properties, there are no concerns in relation to neighbours' amenity. The additional of an extra bedroom and ancillary spaces such as an office and studio, as well as a more modern, open plan kitchen, living and dining space, would be highly beneficial.
27. Limited change would be necessitated to the wider curtilage to the property, with existing parking and turning arrangements to remain and no additional landscaping being necessary.
28. In conclusion, the proposal represents high quality architectural design and fulfils Policies SD1 and LD1 of the Core Strategy and paragraphs 131, 135 and 216 of the Framework.

Other Matters

29. As this is a householder application, and no independent overnight accommodation is proposed, the HRA exemption agreed between the Council and Natural England applies. This means that there will be no need to carry out an Appropriate Assessment. For the record, sustainable drainage methods will be employed to ensure that there is no increase in the rate and volume of surface water run-off, and foul water will continue to be managed via private arrangements.
30. Turning to ecology, the proposed works have been designed to avoid impacts on any potential habitat features. This is insofar as there would be no impact on existing roof structures or roof spaces; the area to be built upon is closely mown lawn; and there would be no loss of trees or hedges. On this basis, there is no requirement for a habitat appraisal or protected species survey.
31. In relation to sustainability, the project involves re-use of an existing outbuilding, thereby minimising the amount of new construction materials. Moreover, the proposed alterations and extensions will include thermal upgrades to existing built fabric, where appropriate, and ensure that energy efficient light fittings and potable water saving measures are used, so far as it is possible.
32. Safe and suitable access is already available from the lane, with good visibility in both directions.

Conclusion and 'Planning Balance'

33. The Framework, as an important material consideration, sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development at paragraph 11. For decision-taking this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay.
34. This application relates to the proposed reorganisation, extension and alteration of Fencote Station, which although it is now in residential use, retains much of its original, idiosyncratic appearance.
35. The proposed works relate to a well-established dwelling situated in a rural area. The works would conserve the character and appearance of the original station building and avoid any adverse impacts on amenity, wildlife and built heritage. The works have also been designed to limit their impact on the setting of the former railway station and the wider rural area. Pursuant to the foregoing, there are no adverse impacts associated with the development that outweigh the social, economic and environmental benefits of the scheme. The proposal represents sustainable development and accords with the Core Strategy read as a whole, and notably, Policies SD1 and LD1.