

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 24/01498/FP

Date: 16/10/2024

Planning Officer: MT

Address: Lodge Cottage, Ashwell Road, Newnham, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 5JX

Subject: Erection of one detached 2-bed dwelling and detached double garage.

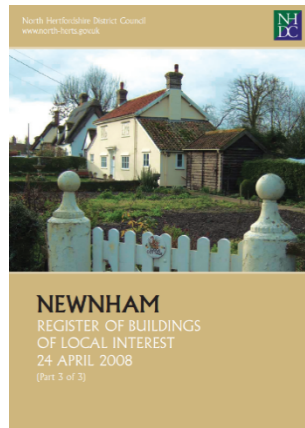
1.0 Context

- 1.1 Lodge Cottage is unlisted but is a Building of Local Interest (front page and entry no.2 in the NEWNHAM REGISTER OF BUILDINGS OF LOCAL INTEREST 24 APRIL 2008 (Part 3 of 3). The building is described as follows and is also in the Newnham Conservation Area:

Eighteenth century, two storey cottage with colour wash, rendered walls and red pantile roof. Distinctively different to the three thatched properties to the west yet aesthetically pleasing, well-proportioned property with central door with cut bracketed hood.

Reason for inclusion:

Building of local architectural interest that pre-dates the 1877 1st Edition Ordnance Survey and contributes positively to the streetscene.



- 1.2 Lodge Cottage is a non-designated heritage asset located within a designated heritage asset for the purpose of applying the aims of the NPPF. The key issues are to assess the impact of the proposal upon the setting of nearby listed buildings (i.e. whether their significance is affected) and upon the character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area ['NCA'].
- 1.3 The document entitled NEWNHAM CONSERVATION AREA 24 APRIL 2008 (Part 1 of 3) includes the following:

“Before reaching Lodge Cottage on the same side of the road, there is a gap through which there is a view across fields towards St Vincent’s Church in its well-treed setting and is a view worth maintaining. Further south and still on the same side of the road, there are three, grade II thatched listed properties in a row (Pilgrims Cottage, Old Thatch and Thatch End). The former is described as a 17th century house, Old Thatch is described as mid to late 17th century whilst Thatch End is described as probably early 16th century and a ‘remarkable small late medieval

house'. The existence of these three houses suggests that there was an established route between Newnham Hall and the church well before Ashwell Road was formed (as mentioned previously, Newnham Hall was formerly known as Church Farm)."

- 1.4 Important View C is the one referred to in the text above and which is illustrated on the conservation area plan below. Close-by there is another Important View (D) looking north towards Newnham Hall.



2.0 Local Plan / NPPF

- 2.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 is relevant as are following paragraphs of the NPPF:

- **135c)** - *sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment),*
- **200** - *(local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)*
- **203** - *(desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),*
- **205** - *(great weight should be given to the asset's conservation),*
- **206** - *(clear and convincing justification), and*
- **208** - *(harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use).*

3.0 Planning Design and Access Statement & Heritage Statement dated July 2024 on behalf of the applicant.

- 3.1 Before commenting on the proposal I wish to note the following from the Planning Design and Access Statement & Heritage Statement ['PDASHS']:

1.9 *Additionally, advice tendered in the pre-application advice related to the land to the rear of 'Lodge Cottage' and 'Pilgrims Cottage', ref: 23/02756/PRE has provided an excellent steer into formulating these proposals, which have already been discussed informally with the Council.*

Response: No consultation took place with the Conservation Team with respect to this pre-app.

1.14 *As a footnote, it is worth highlighting that whilst the original brief was for this to be a house to sell on the open market, due to the lack of success at 2 Caldecote Road to realise a modest bespoke home for the applicant's retirement, in this case, as a genuine self-builder, this, hopefully more straightforward proposal will now be Mr*

Bartlett's opportunity to move out of rented accommodation and continue to reside in Newnham.

Response: This is anything but a 'straightforward' proposal.

2.4 *The land is currently part of an anomalously large garden associated with 'Lodge Cottage', and unmanageable for the tenants.*

Response: The adverb 'anomalously' means '*in a way that produces no outstanding, individual, or unusual features; unremarkably or impersonally.*' Presumably the intention is to effectively disassociate/divorce the right-hand part of the front garden from the positive contribution made by Lodge Cottage. The area is mainly laid to lawn similar to the front section that would be retained with Lodge Cottage. I am sceptical as to whether this is deemed to be 'unmanageable'. I consider that the front/side garden relates well to Lodge Cottage and makes a similar contribution to that of the front/side garden at no.1 Caldecote Road, Newnham (see appeal decision notice extracts at 4.0 below).

2.5 *The current total site frontage is c. 40m with the proposed subdivision resulting in the proposed plot having a frontage of 20m leaving an equal 20m for the host house, which is compatible with the local grain.*

Response: Is this the case? I paced this out on site and the frontage for the proposed plot is only realised by increasing the width of the site beyond the gate in the photo on the front cover of the BLI Register.

2.7 *To the West is currently land which is deemed to be within the settlement limit and was subject of pre-application advice for land to the rear of 'Lodge Cottage' and 'Pilgrims Cottage'. The advice has been taken on board by abandoning the idea of a separate building on this parcel of land but incorporating it within the subject site and providing 'Lodge Cottage' with more appropriate amenity area.*

Response: There was no consultation with the Conservation Team regarding this pre-app. However, the fact that this has been mentioned and the fact that this pre-app and the current scheme are within the same land ownership, I refer to ref: 23/02756/PRE for 'Erection of one 3-bedroom dwelling'. The case officer mentions amongst other matters, the following:

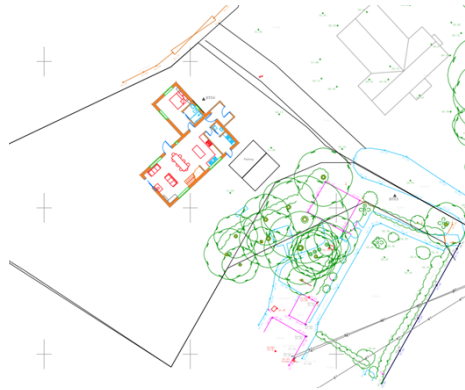
Any subsequent planning application will need to be supported by a full Heritage Statement.

In my opinion, the location of the building on this plot and scale of development at 1 ½ storey is appropriate for this site, seeing as it is situated behind Lodge Cottage and would not have a frontage onto Ashwell Road. I would not advocate for anything larger than what is current proposed in terms of scale and footprint, given its location and relationship with neighbours.

The appearance and form of the building would reflect the traditional, rural character of Newnham which is positive. However, whilst I have no significant objections to the appearance, form, and layout of the proposal, the Conservation Team may have some comments to make in design terms should a formal application be submitted. In my view, the front porch should be omitted from the scheme in any subsequent submission, as I am of the view this appears odd on the principal elevation. There might be an opportunity to improve the design of the scheme further by introducing traditional details, but

I appreciate the presence of the newly built Spring Cottage may have some bearing on the design considerations of this scheme.

I do not concur with the view that the appearance and form of the building would reflect the traditional, rural character of Newnham. In fact, there are very few weatherboarded buildings in the NCA with the majority being rendered and either one-and-a-half or two-storey.



3.8 Additionally, with grant of planning permission on land adjacent to Lodge Cottage (ref: 22/02115/FP) now called 'Spring Cottage', a strong precedent has been set in support of this linear policy compliant infill. This is further reinforced by the recent planning permission granted at 'Coker Cottage'.

Response: Each case is considered on its own merits and matters of assessing 'infill' is a planning matter. In terms of the 6no. housing schemes I have been involved with in this small village since 2020, my focus has always been to consider schemes with a view to preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area.

- **20/00970/FP** - Erection of a terrace of 4 dwellings (2 x 3 bed and 2 x 4 bed) and new vehicular accesses onto The Green, associated car parking, landscaping and ancillary works.
CP 24.08.2020
- **21/02890/FP** - Erection of one detached 2-bed dwelling including widening of existing vehicular access.
R 10.12.2021
- **22/00346/FP** - Erection of a detached one 3-bed dwelling and erection of detached workshop/shed following demolition of existing workshop/shed on adjacent owned land
R 24.06.2022 Appeal Dismissed 14.07.2023
- **22/00606/FP** - Erection of one 2-bed detached dwelling including widening of existing vehicular access (as a resubmission of planning application 21/02890/FP refused on 10.12.2021)
R 31.05.2022 Appeal Dismissed 17.08.2023
- **22/02115/FP** - Erection of one 4-bed dwelling including off road parking and landscaping (as a resubmission of planning application 22/00532/FP withdrawn on 09.08.2022).
CP 06.10.2022

- **23/01807/FP** - *Erection of one detached 4-bed dwelling with integral garage and creation of vehicular access off Ashwell Road (as amended by plans received 23/10/2023).*
CP 17.11.2023

There is both a spatial (The Green) and loose-knit (parts of Ashwell Road and Caldecote Road) character to the NCA which in my view defines where it may or may not be appropriate to develop. My decisions to support the schemes under refs: 20/00970/FP, 22/02115/FP & 23/01807/FP were based on the circumstances of each case with none of these setting a 'strong precedent' for the current proposal.

3.15 Within Building Conservation's comments dated 15/09/2022 in relation to 'Spring Cottage' ref: 22/02115/FP it was concluded that a singular, East-facing property with garaging/parking set behind would be a positive response in that location.

Response: This is correct and highlights the case of looking at each proposal on its own merits.

4.4 The proposed new dwelling takes a traditional approach and although a challenging contemporary approach is often the more appropriate solution, it is strongly suggested that this location would not be the place to put this to the test.

Response: I agree that it would not be the place to put a contemporary building but then again, I question whether this is the best place to put any building.

4.9 The L-shaped configuration has been consciously adopted as it provides two major benefits namely 1) it provides an ideal South West aspect for any adjacent amenity area/patio and 2) it ensures that the neighbouring property, 'Lodge Cottage' is neither overshadowed nor dominated by an overbearing element.

Response: I am not convinced that a dwelling with a 13m wide frontage that is essentially two-storey across would not have a significant impact on Lodge Cottage or on the appearance of the NCA which includes several listed buildings within this streetscene.

4.10 In consideration of this last point, likewise the Southern portion of the property is stepped down to emphasise the separation between 'Lodge Cottage' and the new dwelling. It should however be noted that generous separation between the two is assured by virtue of the large timber shed to the 'Lodge Cottage' northern boundary.

Response: I would not say that the spacing between Lodge Cottage and the proposed dwelling is generous and is not 'assured by virtue of the large timber shed'. Quite the contrary, in my view the spacing is relatively tight, to the extent that Lodge Cottage is no longer afforded sufficient space should the need arise, for instance, to park off-road as the current area dedicated for parking for this property now lies within the application site.

4.0 Appeal at 1 Caldecote Road, Newnham

- 4.1** On 17 August 2023, the Planning Inspector issued his decision on application ref: 22/00606/FP for *'Erection of one 2-bed detached dwelling including widening of existing vehicular access (as a resubmission of planning*

application 21/02890/FP refused on 10.12.2021)'. The following paragraphs are noted (my emphasis in bold):

7. *The proposed dwelling would be positioned to the southern part of the elongated garden to No1 Caldecote Road, which runs parallel with the highway. The dwelling would be two-storey in height, constructed of brick under a slate roof with white timber windows and doors. Whilst properties in the locality vary in their architectural style, the proposed dwelling would not incorporate characteristics which are prevalent in the CA. Amongst others, this includes forward facing gables, chimneys and dormer windows. The roof design and orientation of the proposed dwelling would be discordant with the character and appearance of nearby dwellings.*

8. ***The CA derives its significance from the rich collection of historic buildings and from its loose-knit and verdant character.*** Properties along Caldecote Road, in the vicinity of the site, are characterised by substantial properties in spacious plots, set back from the highway, which influences the character of the CA. The recent development adjacent to the appeal site at The Green, including the boundary fence, may have reduced the rural quality of the appeal site, however, as the appeal site is orientated to Caldecote Road it is viewed in a different context which is more loose-knit in appearance than The Green.

9. *Whilst the appeal site does not lie within one of the important views highlighted in the Newnham Conservation Area appraisal dated 24 April 2008, nevertheless, the duty for the preservation and enhancement of the CA relates to the whole designation. No1 Caldecote Road contributes positively to the variety in architectural form and appearance found within the locality and the historic environment and **its spacious side plot makes a positive contribution to the verdant character of the road.***

10. *The proposed development would occupy much of the appeal site, and due to its shallow depth and its prominent location, **the introduction of built development would erode the sense of spaciousness of this part of Caldecote Road. This would result in a cramped form of development which would not sit comfortably between the adjacent buildings.*** Consequently, the proposed development would be out of character with the prevailing pattern of development in the locality and the CA.

5.0 Trees

- 5.1 Even though application refs: 23/00867/TCA & 23/01601/TCA to remove 8x Conifers and 3x Beech were objected to, no objection was raised for the same under ref: 23/02846/TCA. The case officer acknowledged under 4.3.2 of his report that: *The trees are mature specimens located in the side garden. Due to their size and positioning to side of the dwelling, they are highly visible from the public realm. **In my view they are of significant landscape value to the Newnham Conservation Area.*** The latter I agreed with.
- 5.2 Under 4.3.3 the case officer says that: *Following this application and a tree survey from Maydencroft, provisional TPO/00211 was served on the three beach trees as these were considered of greater amenity value and quality than the conifer trees.*
- 5.3 However, under 4.3.4 it states: *The applicant has provided soil testing, photographic evidence and comments from a structural engineer which indicates that the trees are causing subsidence to the property. In my view, the evidence provided and the visible harm to the property outweighs the harm to the Conservation Area and therefore warrants the withdrawal of the provisional TPO. I therefore have no objections to the proposed works.*

- 6.3 It is fair to say that the grain of development on the west side of Ashwell Road is more compact when compared with that at Caldecote Road but what assists with 'easing' the relationship between each dwelling is the existence of single-storey as opposed to one-and-a-half or two-storey side additions.



- 6.4 The proposal introduces a more substantial side addition reducing the existing experience of openness. Whilst I am of the view that any dwelling here would occasion harm to the NCA, either omitting the weatherboarded section or at the very least, reducing the width of the weatherboarded section and reducing this to single-storey would assist with the relationship alongside Lodge Cottage as would introducing a chimney to the two-storey section. In my view, it is important that should the application be considered favourably (and this does not currently have my support) that this dwelling does not read directly as a pair with Spring Cottage, so consideration could be given to clay handmade tiles as opposed to slate.



- 6.5 The above is important in that currently the garden to Lodge Cottage ensures that there is a significant degree of separation between Lodge Cottage and Spring Cottage. Space between buildings, particularly in a conservation area context can be as important as the buildings themselves.



In my view the garden frontage to Lodge Cottage is an important part of its contribution to the character and appearance of the NCA.

- 6.6 A key issue which may be more of a planning as opposed to a conservation matter is that of pedestrian access, parking and garaging.

Pedestrian access.

The current proposal does not identify a means of pedestrian access to Lodge Cottage.

Parking

Lodge Cottage currently has the benefit of the building in the image below which, I have to say, does not make a positive contribution to the conservation area. Should the ability to park off-road for Lodge Cottage be removed this raises the question as to where would the occupier(s) park their car(s) considering the highway constraints? I would also be opposed to creating parking at the front of Lodge Cottage to address this. In terms of 'good planning', I suggest that it would be desirable to see parking spaces allocated to Lodge Cottage should the current proposal be favourably considered.



Garaging

Although refused, under ref: 22/00346/FP a detached workshop/shed was proposed following demolition of existing workshop/shed on adjacent owned land. There is perhaps an opportunity here to replace the existing garage serving Lodge Cottage.

- 6.7 This brings me on to the proposed garage This building could be said to be more than just a conventional double garage with the lean-to on the side elevation, roof lights and jacked-up eaves. This is more akin to a small barn and whilst of a quasi-agrarian character this is a building of not unsubstantial size. Which, when considered alongside the dwelling, would significantly increase built form to the northeast of Lodge Cottage and is unacceptable.



- 6.8 Considering everything in the round, I discourage the current scheme and by doing so, this would see both the pedestrian access and off-road parking to Lodge Cottage retained.
- 6.9 I suggest that there is some merit in further exploring the potential for a dwelling with garaging on the site considered under ref: 23/02756/PRE on the basis that this is likely to have much less impact upon Lodge Cottage and the NCA.
- 6.10 Although the design below was offered at pre-app, weatherboarded buildings are not prevalent in the NCA. A rendered, low, two-storey cottage would

perhaps be more in keeping with the NCA but I acknowledge the overlooking issue raised by the pre-app case officer. With this in mind, a low building with agrarian accents might work in this backland location.



- 6.11 I would not be opposed to consideration of a new build low form (ideally single-storey) that perhaps took some of its design cue from let's say, Sayefield Barn, a relatively new residential build with rolled ridge adjacent to the pond at Sandon constructed under ref: 11/01293/1. A garage building that is also single-storey may also be acceptable in this context. Combining garages for Lodge Cottage and the new build into one longer built form may also be worth considering.



7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 Paragraph 135c) of the NPPF refers to new development being ***'sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment'***. Paragraph 203 of the NPPF says that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of *'the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness'* whilst at paragraph 206 it says that *'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.....'*
- 7.2 Considerable importance and weight are given to the special attention that should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area. With respect to Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the duty for the preservation and enhancement of the CA this relates to the whole designation. Lodge Cottage contributes positively to the variety in architectural form and appearance found within the locality and the historic environment and its spacious front/side garden makes a positive contribution

to the verdant character of the road. The introduction of built development would erode the sense of spaciousness of this part of Ashwell Road with the new dwelling not sitting comfortably between the adjacent buildings. Consequently, the proposed development would be out of character with the prevailing pattern of development in the locality and the CA. The lack of car parking to Lodge Cottage is also a matter of concern as is the size of the 'double-garage' associated with the new dwelling.

- 7.3 I conclude that the proposal will not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the NCA and to a lesser extent will adversely affect the wider setting of listed buildings in the vicinity. The proposal will fail to satisfy the provisions of Sections 72(1) and 66(1) respectively of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and as supported by the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031 and for these reasons is **OBJECTIONABLE**.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer