

Vicki Wood
North Herts Council
PO Box 7075
Manchester
M28 8JX

07/10/2026

Dear Vicki Wood,

RE: Objection to Planning Application 26/01503/FPH 17 Hodwell, Ashwell, SG7 5QQ

Ashwell Parish Council (APC) resolves to object to the above application. APC recognises that the application has been amended following concerns raised by the Conservation Officer, including changes to the ridge height, roof materials and retention of the chimney. However, APC considers that these amendments do not go far enough to address the fundamental concerns regarding the application's scale, height and massing.

Scale, massing and character

The principal concern is the overall size and mass of the proposed development. Despite the amendments, the proposal would remain an excessively large and visually dominant building in a sensitive and central location within Ashwell.

This conflicts with **North Hertfordshire Local Plan Policies SP9 and D1**, which require development to respond positively to its context, including its **scale, height, massing, layout and materials**.

It is also contrary to **Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policies ASH3 and ASH4**, which require development to conserve and enhance the character of Ashwell, respond appropriately to its surroundings and make a positive contribution to the village.

APC's consideration of this application reached a similar conclusion. Councillors acknowledged the amendments but remain concerned that the proposal continued to represent a **large mass**, particularly given its height and central location. APC therefore resolved to object and seek a substantial reduction in the mass of the property.

Impact on the Conservation Area

The property is within the **Ashwell Conservation Area**, and consequently the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area must be given considerable weight.

The **NPPF** requires development affecting designated heritage assets to avoid or minimise harm and gives substantial weight to the conservation of designated heritage assets. The Council's own Ashwell Conservation Area Appraisal also emphasises the importance of ensuring that new development is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The amendments do not resolve the fundamental objection

APC acknowledges that the applicant has responded to previous concerns and that the amended proposal represents an improvement in some respects.

However, reducing the ridge height or changing roof materials does not, in itself, resolve the fundamental issue if the **overall, bulk and mass of the building remain excessive**.

The important question is not whether the revised scheme is smaller than the previous proposal, but whether the scheme now before the Council is acceptable in its own right. In APC's view it is not.

Heritage and planning balance

The application should also be considered against **North Hertfordshire Local Plan Policies SP13 and HE1** and **Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan Policies ASH8 and ASH9**, which seek to protect the historic environment and the character and appearance of Ashwell.

If the Council considers that the proposal causes harm to the Conservation Area, the NPPF requires that harm to a designated heritage asset is given substantial weight. The principal benefits of this householder application are private benefits to the occupants and, in my view, do not outweigh the harm caused by the excessive scale and visual prominence of the proposed development.

Conclusion

I therefore respectfully ask the Council to **refuse planning permission** on the grounds that the proposal:

- remains excessive in **scale, height and massing**;
- would be visually dominant within its immediate surroundings;
- would fail to respond appropriately to the existing character of Ashwell;
- would cause harm to the character and appearance of the **Ashwell Conservation Area**; and
- conflicts with relevant policies of the **NPPF, North Hertfordshire Local Plan and Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan**.

If the Council is minded to support the principle of extending the property, I ask that the applicant instead be required to submit a substantially reduced scheme, with

particular emphasis on reducing the **overall mass and visual prominence** of the building.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Forrester
Deputy Clerk
Ashwell Parish Council