

Dear NHDC,

Regarding 26/00104/FP

Erection of one detached dwelling with detached double garage and air source heat pump following demolition of existing stables and outbuildings including landscaping, amenity space, layout of access and parking. Erection of detached double garage to serve existing dwelling. Lagonda Stud Pottersheath Road Pottersheath Hertfordshire AL6 9SU

As residents of Pine Lodge, we would like to submit our formal objection to the updated/new planning application at Lagonda Stud, which is directly adjacent to our property. Our position on several of the material planning considerations are summarised, then detailed below.

We do not consider any of the evidence presented provides a legitimate justification or special circumstance for this substantially expanded development in the greenbelt. We do not understand what additional benefit 1 extra bedroom and 2 detached garages offer, however, the harm inflicted on surrounding properties and to the openness and character of this greenbelt site is clear. This expanded submission does not provide additional housing (especially affordable) in the area. Two additional very large garages offer no benefit to anyone with one only being required due to demolition of existing amenities for the recently approved single storey dwelling. Indeed, such large garaging only encourages reliance on multiple cars in an already dangerous and overused and speed abused rural lane (with no footpaths for the ever increasing population). We highlighted (in our original objection) the likely need to replace the loss of amenity (garaging and storage and potentially future stabling) due to the conversion of existing amenities to the now approved original single storey dwelling. This large proposed increase to the overall footprint and volume of 'Lagonda Stud' in the greenbelt is 100% without merit, arguably unnecessary and completely avoidable.

We strongly disagree with the arguments presented around 'grey belt' designation and consider this plot may only align with emerging definitions by virtue of manipulative intent. Clearly a paddock/grassland area, intentionally stripped of stables with subsequent loss of 'original purpose' will soon also be considered as 'underutilised' and be up next for attack. We do not feel the arguments presented are in the spirit or intent of the many ongoing (justifiable) attempts at grey belt repurposing.

This proposal specifically harms the current amenity and privacy of Pine Lodge (and in our opinion that of surrounding properties, particularly the cottages backing onto the proposed 2 storey dwelling). Of particular concern is the newly proposed detached garage (for the existing dwelling) which will be on the north boundary to our Pine Lodge plot. We consider the structure has an inappropriate height and footprint in that exact proposed location and will have a significant visual impact on openness (making a well spaced out open greenbelt site into a congested zone where the 3 plots converge).

Finally, we would like NHDC to investigate several inaccuracies and omissions in the application, particularly those impacting the required/claimed 10% net gain in biodiversity (BNG). We strongly refute the calculations and claims and also disagree with the various 'snap shot' statements regarding absence of local wildlife and habitats and glossed over dismissal of likely impacts.

1) Residential amenity - negative impact of 'proposed garage for existing house' on Pine Lodge

This proposed structure is placed as close to both Pine Lodge and Poplars Farm as is legally permissible (2m), and we consider it to be too big/bulky (nearly 4m high & 6m wide), overbearing and inappropriate for the proposed location. Of note, we do not consider the dimensions presented are even possible in the actual location (see below) which impacts site boundary into paddock land and BNG calculations. Photos available on request - on site inspection welcomed.

- The adjacent **Pine Lodge 'orchard' area** is a lovely small semi-secluded wooded habitat currently opening onto a clear view over the low hedge into the large open paddock area of Lagonda Stud. Planting includes 3 plum trees, 3 apple trees, 2 crab apples 1 damson tree, various elder and holly and other mixed hedging. There is a central very large Norway maple tree, numerous large pine/spruce trees and numerous very large and mature shrubs, ground cover perennials and native woodland species are encouraged. This area is pretty quiet and largely daily undisturbed (occasional visitor parking). Wildlife love it.
- A garage, particularly of this **size** (potentially 4 cars) and associated frequent movements back/forth and noise will negatively impact our privacy and this wildlife rich corner of our garden, both during and after construction.
- The proposed garage would **block daytime light levels** (already pretty shaded) in the 'orchard' - potentially impacting growth of mature and productive apple, plum, damson trees and bordering native hedging (some of which are on the boundary and not highlighted in plans). Night time illumination (inside via roof lights and outside via presumed pedestrian lighting) of this area would undoubtedly disturb the existing wildlife.
- The **proposed footprint does not look feasible** without relocation of the (presumed) curtilage boundary of the existing dwelling beyond the existing post and rail fence into the 'paddock' (presumed agricultural) area. This structure will completely change the look of this rural setting, with visual congestion at the 3 boundaries. We request that all dimensions and related BNG related claims are checked (more below).
- **Foundations required** for such a large garage, within such a tree/hedge dense area, are likely to be deep and potentially damage and certainly disturb surrounding existing landscape/species. Many potentially impacted trees are not shown on the plans.
- This area, greatly improved as a **habitat** over the last decade, is home to much wildlife, including a family of firecrests, and many other nesting and hedgerow birds which would be disturbed and likely lost through this proposed development (more below). Frogs, toads, hedgehogs, [REDACTED] foxes and bats also live in the various niche locations in the orchard, including the compost heaps and large sheltered shrub area. This improved habitat benefits everyone and has become especially important as a much loved amenity to us.

2) Residential amenity - negative impact of 'proposed new dwelling' on Pine Lodge

We consider the increased height and bulk of the **new dwelling** is overbearing in the location, especially compared to the single storey dwelling already approved. It will be highly visible to the back of all properties along Pottersheath Road, especially impactful via the extensive upstairs lighting and overlooking at night with considerable increase in visual disturbance of this dark space and wildlife habitat onto the paddocks and long secluded gardens.

The shared access and increased traffic relating to such a proposal is of concern (as it was when we objected last time). We do not think NHDC sufficiently consider the relative increase of traffic related to one such huge property on this little lane. The nature of the lane (as stated in the submission) is rural/no footpaths. I would urge NHDC officers to come up here and try to walk

along Pottersheath Road with a pram, wheelchair or alongside animals. It's increasingly fraught with danger. Such a development and notably 2 new detached garages with parking for 4 cars each, significantly increases traffic. In addition, never ending delivery vans, numerous service vehicles, essential gas or oil deliveries etc all to serve one new large property is not a negligible increase in traffic, danger or noise. Construction traffic for this expanded development will be extensive and prolonged.

3) Inaccuracies in submission for 'proposed garage for existing house' - negative impact on supporting arguments/harm

Numerous inaccuracies and omissions describing the current trees in situ, current boundary types and current uses/types of land at Lagonda Stud are included in the submission. We consider these to be potentially misleading without a site visit. These minimise the likely impacts on Pine Lodge and on wildlife habitats and undoubtedly negatively impact the calculations presented for the required/claimed 10% BNG. Specifically;

- **Fencing type** - adjacent boundaries to Pine Lodge are variously described as 'close boarded fencing' - the areas in question are not and are actually visually open to the green fields beyond and are predominantly mixed/wild hedgerow, crab apple, elder, ivy, holly, damson, pine with some open wire fencing embedded (protect previous owners chickens escape). *This underestimates impact on Pine Lodge.*
- **Fencing height** - current boundary described incorrectly as 2.5m/1.8m - current hedging is approx 1-1.5m on the boundary to the proposed garage location. *This implies little or no impact of a new 2.5m wall on the boundary.* This, along with a 4m high roof with sky lights, will be overbearing and block open passage of birds/other wildlife to the orchard.
- **Boundary/nearby trees** - numerous trees appear to have been omitted from the diagrams. *This underestimates impact on Pine Lodge.* We are concerned the plans are inconsistent in level of detail and are unsure if minimal sizes (however some are annotated as 'small trees'), canopy cover or type apply to such drawings. However, at least 2 trees of >10m and 3 trees >5m height are missing from the east and north boundaries to Pine Lodge, respectively. Two very large pine trees are also just inside the Pine Lodge boundary just beyond the plans (onto our boundary with Poplars Farm). All of these important (and cherished) trees could be impacted via light and root disturbances.
- **Lack of space for proposed size of structure** - 2m gap shown on proposed plans to the back and side of the proposed garage adjoining Pine Lodge, along with specified double width garage dimensions, do not appear feasible. *We do not believe location of specified garage is possible without re-positioning of curtilage fence into (presumed) greenbelt land. We have grave concerns about all aspects of planned dimensions and urge strict controls/inspections around this matter if approved.*
- **Ambiguous areas/designation** - the area where the north boundary of the site meets the existing paddock area is not clear/differs in the various plans (part of the 'modified grassland' area). Potential green gains may have been made through this ambiguous information/proposed layouts. It is assumed access to the paddock beyond should be limited to Lagonda Stud curtilage and not via proposed new dwelling plot. This 'road to nowhere' is arguably ripe for future submissions. *All aspects around this area require clarification/revised plans as they appear to overestimate BNG gains.*
- **Potential omission/wrong designation of areas for BNG** - plans do not show or account for any footpath(s), driveway or parking directly linking to the house. We find it highly unlikely this is practical/feasible. Transit from garage to house, at least by foot, or also by vehicle, is likely to be required/added at a later date, thereby falsifying any claimed BNGs through complete conversion of the back garden area to green space. We would welcome

scrutiny of feasibility of plans and clarification if 10% BNG should apply to both the old and new dwellings/plots (should the plans be approved)?

- **BNG calculations** - these somewhat rely on conversion of a patio area directly adjacent to the rear and down the west side of the existing dwelling being considered as 'garden'. This area has recently been concreted over (right up to and along Pine Lodge east boundary) by the applicant and it is considered highly unlikely to be dug back up. Loss of the outdoor toilet/shed is also indicated on plans. Other ambiguities (as above) also impact these BNG calculations. *We request that strict conditions are set and inspected in respect of any claimed BNGs if approved. How are these maintained/enforced over time?*

4) Biodiversity and ecology - inaccurate assignments of land and derived calculations and concerns regarding ecology surveys and statements

The number of misleading errors and derived assumptions in the plans demands detailed scrutiny by NHDC as detailed above. Ecology surveys are also considered minimal, incomplete and totally contrary to personal/collective observations. Specifically;

- **BNG calculations are flawed** (existing dwelling patio area, lack of pathways garage to Lagonda Stud, incorrect tree counts/potential losses, ambiguous boundaries to paddock/grassland etc)
- **Tree location**, and likely damage/loss is underestimated, especially along Pine Lodge boundary to the new garage
- **Bat survey was minimal**, likely out of season and certainly contrary to observations. Anecdotal tales of numerous bats in the stables can be followed up. Most properties on Pottersheath Road are home to bats. Just no-one will admit it with fear of restrictions on essential property maintenance! Our garden is full of them all summer. Come and see :-)
- We were particularly upset at the **amphibian/reptile surveys and statements**. Without going back to search on actual terms used - the bottom line was they were considered negligible and of little value, with no ponds noted nearby and no issues to development. We are not sure what constitutes a 'pond' in this context, but the majority of properties along Pottersheath Road have ponds and provide habitats for innumerable frogs, toads and newts. Date stamped pictures available - some from this week.
- We have **returning toads**, as do most of the properties in this area (signs even put up along the road to Rabley Heath to protect them during mating season).
- We have not personally noted **newts**, but they are reputedly present next door at Windmill Cottage and definitely seen/documented at Annesgarth, Whites Gates and other properties on the road. Transit of so many species along the backs of the cottages, across the site in question, is undoubtedly taking place.

We feel pretty strongly about this application and the likely impact on our home and the surrounding area. Many thanks for your time in reading our rants. We sadly note that the applicants/owners have (again) chosen not to engage with any neighbours in this process. We, along with other residents, would welcome an on site meeting with the planning officer/inspector to better review the plans and further explain comments before such a development is considered.

Regards,

Fiona & Jim @ Pine Lodge, Pottersheath Road, Welwyn, AL6 9SU