

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	25/01175/FP
CASE OFFICER:	MT
APPLICATION SITE:	Land between Lodge Cottage and Spring Cottage, Ashwell Road, Ashwell, Hertfordshire SG7 5JX
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Erection of self-build single dwelling and detached double garage. Solar panels installed in roof of dwelling and garage.

RECOMMENDATION:

Although I objected to application ref: 24/01498/FP, that proposal was granted conditional planning permission. I remain of the view that a dwelling here would occasion less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area (NCA). The proposal is considered contrary to the provisions of Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031. However, considering the aforementioned decision, I have no option other than to raise **NO OBJECTION**.

SHORT SUMMARY:

Impact on setting of listed buildings

There would be no adverse impact.

Impact on character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area (NCA) –

On 26/02/2025 under ref: 24/01498/FP I stated that

“There remains a case to object to the scheme on the basis that the amended built form would erode the sense of spaciousness of this part of Ashwell Road, adversely affecting the character and appearance of the NCA and the setting of the adjacent BLI. Having said that, the design and form of the dwelling and garage are such that improvements have been made to the proposal to reduce the perceived heritage harm The degree of harm is considered to be low on the less than substantial continuum. It is for the DM Team to decide whether the benefits of this proposal outweigh the heritage harm identified.”

The current proposal is an improvement upon that scheme.

Harm, preserve or enhance.

The proposal would occasion some harm to the character and appearance of the NCA.

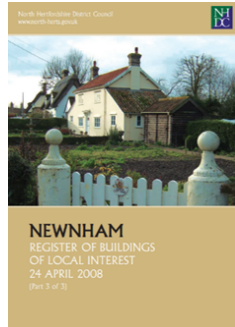
SITE CONTEXT:

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.



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 NCA.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

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).”

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.



As noted in the before and after images below, the removal of the trees has significantly reduced the verdant character of the area and in doing so has a) exposed a post-mounted

electricity installation and b) allows a distance view toward the Parish Church of St Vincent. A development here would clearly screen both. Whilst the decision was taken to allow the trees to be removed, this has made way for the current plot to be formed without interference from trees at the site's midpoint.



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 is considered to make a positive contribution to the verdant character of the area. As stated previously I take the view that the openness of the garden frontage to Lodge Cottage makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the NCA and to the setting of Lodge Cottage (a non-designated heritage asset). Whilst not seeking to overstate the significance of the site, the LPA has a statutory duty to ensure that any proposal preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the NCA.

The case officer's delegated file note under ref: 24/01498/FP states:

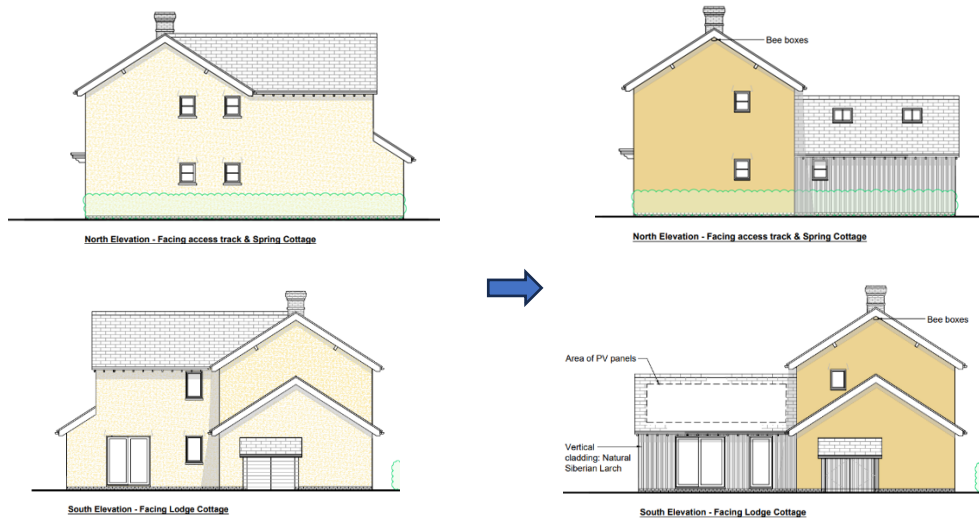
4.3.18 Having regard to the detailed comments made by the Conservation Officer, I take a different view. I note that there the side garden to Lodge Cottage provides a large area of openness within the Conservation Area, and that this openness can be regarded as a feature of the Newnham Conservation Area and a feature of the BLI of Lodge Cottage. However, I am of the view that the development of this site with this proposal would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or the BLI. The proposed amended scheme has a better proportion frontage with the single Storey side element reducing the overall bulk and width of the property in the streetscene, and in my view the gap between Lodge Cottage and the proposed dwellinghouse and the large front garden will help to maintain setting and character, the harm, in my opinion, is to the lower end of less than substantial. Relevant policy dictates that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of a proposed development.

4.3.19 In line with the above and subject to the conditions, it is my view that the amended proposed development would not result in material harm to the character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area or the setting of nearby listed buildings, as designated heritage assets. Furthermore, it is considered that the proposed dwelling would not result in material harm to the significance of Lodge Cottage BLI, as a non-designated heritage asset.

I am not so sure that the case officer had taken a 'different view' on the heritage case, in that a degree of harm is identified so there is agreement on this point. Harm is harm and the case officer considers the harm to be at the lower end of the less than substantial

harm continuum. I do not recognise the term 'material harm.' It is, however, accepted that the case officer had to weigh up all matters in the case presented so I understand why that scheme was approved.

The front elevation of the current proposal and the extant permission has not changed. However, below is a comparison between the extant permitted side elevations (left) and the proposed scheme (right). The reduction in the massing of the rear projection combined with proposed materials and fenestration, creates a more acceptable development in heritage terms.



HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:
Sections 66(1) & 72(1).

North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031:
Policy HE1.

NPPF (December 2024):

The following paragraphs are relevant:

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

CONCLUSION:

Although I am professionally disappointed that we have got to this position, there is no sustainable reason to raise an objection to this scheme considering the very recent planning history. As stated at 4.4.3 of the officer's delegated file note under ref: 24/01498/FP:

"Through consultation with the agent, the design of the scheme has been amended such that in the view of the Conservation Officer, the amended proposed dwelling would now be considered that the degree of harm is to be low on the less than substantial continuum and has recommended a number of conditions. Moreover, in my view the scheme is not considered harmful towards the host dwelling Lodge Cottage as a BLI. This is in accordance with Policies HE1 and HE3 of the Local Plan and Section 16 of the NPPF and should be given moderate weight. In terms of the heritage impacts, it is considered that there would be no harm to the heritage significance of the conservation area and nearby listed buildings."

It is assumed that conditions imposed on ref: 24/01498/FP will be carried forward here?
Other than that, I have no further comment to make.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 20/06/2025