

CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

APPLICATION REF:	26/01503/FPH
CASE OFFICER:	VW
APPLICATION SITE:	17 Hodwell, Ashwell, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 5QQ
DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:	Two storey side/rear extension and single storey side extension following demolition of existing garage/workshop and removal of chimney. Covered front porch and alterations to fenestration. Installation of vehicular and pedestrian gates, brick piers, brick boundary walls and timber fencing. Erection of detached shed, external rendering and cladding. Soft and hard landscaping works.

RECOMMENDATION:

I raise an **OBJECTION** for the following reason.

No.17 Hodwell is unlisted yet is located east of three convergent 'Key Views' in the Ashwell Conservation Area Character Statement (April 2019). Notwithstanding its condition the building makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Ashwell Conservation Area. By reason of the extension's size and particular its wrap around form on the south elevation, the loss of chimney stack, fenestration changes, introducing a third dormer to the east elevation and introducing concrete interlocking roof tiles, the addition and alterations will have an unwelcome and erosive impact, harming the special character and appearance of the Ashwell Conservation Area and will have a small yet noticeable impact upon the setting of Plait Hall (grade II). The proposal will not be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment (para 135c), NPPF) and will not make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness (para 210, NPPF). The proposal fails to satisfy the provisions of Sections 66(1) & 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and the aims of Policy HE1 of North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

SITE CONTEXT:

No.17 Hodwell is unlisted but is located in the Ashwell Conservation Area which is a Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031. The site lies immediately south of but outside Character Area V1: "The Church and Environs" as indicated at Fig 6.1 of the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan.



I note that in one neighbour representation it is written:

The application site at 17 Hodwell was split from Plait Hall in the 1960s. Before this time, it comprised an orchard in the grounds of Plait Hall, along with a fish and chip shop and other outbuildings. Because the application site was subdivided from Plait Hall's grounds after 1948, the site may form part of the curtilage of Plait Hall for listed building purposes. The application or its supporting Heritage Statement has not addressed this and we ask the Council's conservation officer to consider this question before the application is determined.

The significance of 1st July 1948 only becomes relevant if considering unlisted buildings / structures within the curtilage of listed building if built before this date, but what is key here is establishing what was the curtilage at the time of listing. In this case, Plait Hall was added to Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest on 19 November 1984 by which time no.17 Hodwell had already been established as a separate curtilage for several decades. The OS map regression below provided with permission from the National Library of Scotland indicates that this cottage appears sometime between 1925 and 1947.

Cambridgeshire Sheet LVII.SW
Surveyed: 1877 to 1886
Published: 1887



Cambridgeshire Sheet LVII.SW
Revised: 1901
Published: 1903



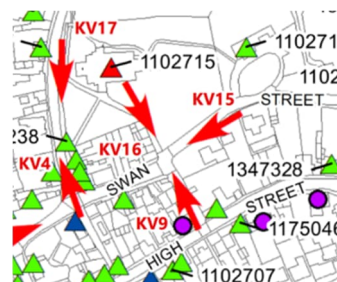
Hertfordshire Sheet IV.SW
Revised: 1921
Published: 1925



Cambridgeshire Sheet LVII.SW
Revised: 1947 to 1948
Published: 1950



There are two documents covering Ashwell Conservation Area, a Character Statement produced by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Ltd dated April 2019 and the Ashwell Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan prepared by Place Services dated February 2023. In the first of these documents no.17 stands to the east of three convergent 'Key Views' (although the arrow to KV15 is wrongly positioned on plan).





02/15 View from the junction of High Street and Church Lane looking north along Church Lane showing the dense, almost urban character at the core of the Conservation Area.



02/15 View from the corner of Swan Street and Church Street looking west including housing from a range of modern, and older styles, but also the impact of parking within the Conservation Area.



02/15 View from the south entrance to the churchyard looking south along Church Lane. The tree coverage at the margins of the churchyard contributes greatly to the green character of the Conservation Area.

In the second of these documents, considering that Hodwell is located within the close setting of St Mary's Church (grade I) and is the road from which the former Rectory (grade II) and the village lock-up (grade II) are accessed, it is disappointing to note that Hodwell is only mentioned twice in a 78-page document. In my opinion, the significance of Hodwell is understated in both documents. The Character Appraisal and Management Plan 2023 does at least mention the following:

Anglo Saxon and Early Medieval (410 – 1066 AD)

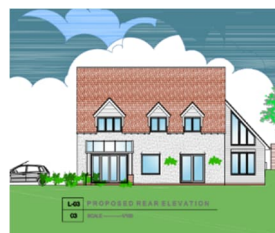
The layout of the Anglo-Saxon borough is legible in Ashwell's historic core. It is centred around the market place, delineated by High Street, Gardiners Lane, Swan Street, Hodwell and the footpath from the Lock up to The Springs and Mill Street, with the area dominated by the Church of St Mary.

DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

No.17 is a modest and well-proportioned building with vernacular notes and despite its condition, its built form and detailing does make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Ashwell Conservation Area. The broad symmetry of the most prominent rear elevation is noted with the stack being the only element of asymmetry. The patina of the existing tiles roof is suggestive of a long established dwellinghouse.

The existing dwelling has three double bedrooms and a bathroom with separate WC at first floor. The proposed works would create 4 double bedrooms (two of which would have generous ensuites and three of which have space for additional seating in each room). In other words, this would be a transformational proposal from what may be perceived as a modest vernacular cottage. The symmetry of the rear elevation is lost in the proposed scheme with one dormer enlarged and another dormer introduced together with significant changes to fenestration. The additional dormer would result in an overly busy roofscape to the detriment of the host building and is intended to serve a bathroom.

It should also be noted that the roof is proposed to be relaid using the Marley Ashmore (Old English Dark Red) plain roofing tile – a concrete interlocking tile marketed as being a “*highly cost effective*” tile and offers “*ease and speed of installation*”. This is not a clay plain tile with the patina of the existing roof. The Planning Portal states that “*Work to the roof of a house (e.g. re-roofing) that does not materially affect its external appearance will usually not require planning permission*”. In my opinion, re-roofing with concrete interlocking tiles will materially affect the dwelling's external appearance and will not preserve or enhance the CA's special character. I leave the decision on whether planning permission is required with the case officer (I see that re-roofing is not in the description). In short, what is proposed will give the perception of a new build in a highly sensitive heritage location.



Similarly, the polite arrangement of first floor windows either side of the chimney stack on the north facing gable are replaced by windows of different sizes and with no glazing bars windows. The stack is also proposed to be removed which currently makes a positive contribution to the existing building's appearance. Its proposed loss is disappointing. My initial thoughts were that the removal of a chimney from an unlisted house in a conservation area, does not require planning permission as this is an alteration and not the demolition comprising a substantial part of the whole building of a building (Schedule 2 Part 31 of The Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. This would, however, be a most disappointing outcome and I turn to an appeal made under section 174 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (the Act) in relation to an enforcement notice issued by East Hampshire District Council. The notice was issued on 9 November 2023 and the breach of planning control as alleged in the notice is *'Within the last four years and without planning permission the removal of chimney stacks and the replacement of roof tiles within a Conservation Area'* - see link to appeal decision.

<file:///C:/Users/mksimmon/Downloads/3334515%20and%203331174%20Appeal-Decision.pdf>

The Inspector considered that:

6. *The removal of the chimneys has fundamentally changed the composition of the building, which is clear from short and long views within the Greyshott Conservation Area (CA), where the site is located. I saw that tall chimneys are a common feature of the CA, and their absence on the building is a notable change to its former external appearance. The removal of the chimneys has therefore had a material effect on the external appearance of the building, and those works comprised development requiring planning permission.*

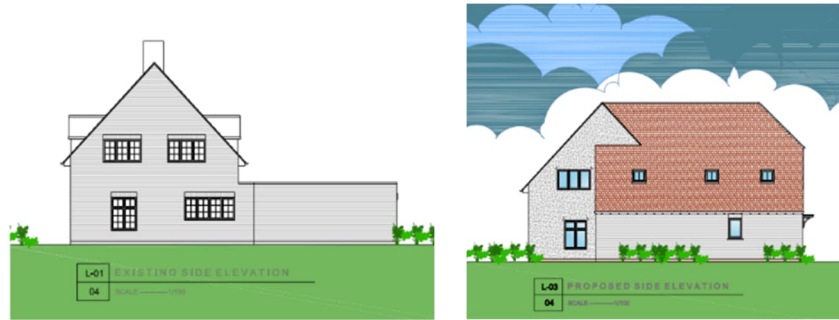
7. *Sandtoft Humber Kensington tiles were used to re-roof the building because the former Warner Star tiles have been discontinued and reclaimed Warner Star tiles were unavailable. The new tiles are similar to the former tiles, but they lack an overall weathered appearance and have a consistent reddish/brown hue compared to the aged and varied darkened orange finish of the former tiles. It is clearly noticeable that new tiles have been applied to the roof, the overall effect of which is different to the more dated exterior of the rest of the building.*

8. *The new tiles are not therefore like for like replacements. They have brought about an obvious change to the external appearance of the building as a whole. This change can be seen from a range of ground level viewpoints across the CA. The prominent location of the building, amongst the historic surroundings of the CA, emphasises the materiality of the change in the external appearance of the building.*

9. *For the above reasons I find that the removal of the chimney stacks and the replacement of the roof tiles, taken separately or together, comprise development requiring planning permission. I have not been referred to, and I am not aware of, any planning permission the development may benefit from. It is therefore in breach of planning control.*



The extension is the same height as the existing building and the wrap around on the south elevation, facing towards Plait Hall (grade II) is a disappointing design detail that does not preserve or enhance the existing dwelling. In fact the design introduces an unnecessary degree of bulk and a more subservient extension form would more fully respect the form of host building. The smaller dormer over the porch serves a void next to the stairs and is not therefore convincingly justified. The extension will have a modest and noticeable impact upon the setting to Plait Hall. A lower, subservient addition without the wrap around and ideally seeking the retention of the chimney stack, omitting two dormers (north and east elevations) and changing the roof material to clay tiles i.e. Keymer, Lifetiles, Imerys Phelampin, Marley Ashdowne Ashurst etc. would lead to improvements.



I draw attention to Policy ASH3 in the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan.

POLICY ASH3 CHARACTER OF DEVELOPMENT

- A Development proposals should conserve and enhance the Conservation Area, the Character Areas V1 to V5 as shown in Figure 6.1 , and key views and assets identified in the Conservation Area Character Statement 2019.
- B The design of new development should demonstrate how it has taken account of the local context and reflected the character and vernacular of the area, using architectural variety in form and materials, in order to avoid building design that is inappropriate to the ANP area.
However, innovation in design will be supported where this demonstrably enhances the quality of the built form in a character area.
- C As appropriate to their scale, nature and location, development proposals should:
 - (i) make a positive contribution to the visual impact of the village from the highway and footpath approaches; and
 - (ii) not have a significantly detrimental impact on the local views as set out in POLICY ASH8 Locally significant views.
- D Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets (either directly or via a change in their settings), should respect, conserve, and enhance the significance of those assets.

Conformity reference: NP Objectives: 8; Saved Plan 1996: 7; Emerging Local Plan: SP8, SP9, SP13; NPPF (2021): 20, 127, 130

In addition the following is also noted in the ANP:

6.6 All development should be designed to a high quality and reinforce and enhance local character, heritage assets and the rural setting of the area. The density of development should create a character that is appropriate to the site's context, including the landscape in which it is set, whilst making best use of the land available. Lower density housing should be located towards the outer edges of the settlement where it abuts open countryside, to maintain views from and into the individual settlements.

6.7 Development should have regard to both the character of the area in which it is set and to the character of the area overall. This approach is consistent with the design-led approach as captured in national planning policy (NPPF 2021, para 20).

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:

I find this proposal **OBJECTIONABLE**.

OFFICER: Mark Simmons

DATE: 10/08/2026