

DELEGATED FILE NOTE

CASE OFFICER: ...Tabitha Kaye.....

APPLICATION REFERENCE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT	APPLICATION SITE
26/00817/FPH	Insertion of front bay window following removal of existing garage doors to facilitate garage conversion into habitable accommodation. Front entrance porch and installation of side canopy. Insertion of rooflights to existing rear element roofslope. Alterations to fenestration. Erection of boundary wall/railings and installation of entrance gates.	Larch House Old Knebworth Lane Knebworth Hertfordshire SG3 6FS

Submitted Plan Nos

8411-P01 8411-P02 8411-P03 8411-P04 8411-P05 8411-P06 8411-P07

1.0 Policies

SECN12 Achieving well-designed places

SECN13	Protecting Green Belt Land
SECN14	Meeting climate change,coastal,flooding
SECN16	Conserve + enhance historic environment
SP5	Countryside and Green Belt
SP9	Design and Sustainability
SP13	Historic environment
D1	Sustainable design
D2	House exts, replcmnt dwellings outbuild
D3	Protecting living conditions
T2	Parking
HE1	Designated heritage assets

2.0 **Relevant Site History**

- 2.1 **26/00424/FPH:** Erection of four bay cartlodge with habitable accommodation at first floor and external staircase following demolition of existing stables and store. **Conditional Permission.**
- 2.2 **89/00337/1:** Side and rear two storey extension with double garage following demolition of existing garage. **Conditional Permission.**
- 2.3 **81/00343/1:** Erection of a block of 5 stables and tack room. **Conditional Permission.**
- 2.4 **79/00074/1:** Erection of two storey extension. **Conditional Permission.**

3.0 **Representations**

- 3.1 **Site Notice and Neighbour Consultation** – None received.
- 3.2 **Knebworth Parish Council** – Neutral. Comments summarised below:
- Assess proposal against character of the Conservation Area;
 - Erection of new gates/wall would result in loss of hedge, which is detrimental to character of Conservation Area;
 - Note that the application is for a change of use.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

- 4.1.1 The application site accommodates a detached dwelling and old stable block/store, situated on Old Knebworth Lane, Knebworth. The site benefits from a large curtilage with no immediate neighbours and is highly screened from the street view by existing boundary treatments and the drive way.
- 4.1.2 The site is within the Old Knebworth Conservation Area and is brushed over by the Green Belt.

4.2 **Proposal**

- 4.2.1 Insertion of front bay window following removal of existing garage doors to facilitate garage conversion into habitable accommodation. Front entrance porch and installation

of side canopy. Insertion of rooflights to existing rear element roofslope. Alterations to fenestration. Erection of boundary wall/railings and installation of entrance gates.

- 4.2.2 The Knebworth Parish Council commented that the proposal would be for a change of use. While a garage conversion is proposed, this would be incidental to the main dwelling house, meaning that no material change of use would occur.

4.3 **Key Issues**

- 4.3.1 The key issues for consideration are as follows:

- Impact on the Green Belt;
- Design and impact on local character;
- Impact on the historic environment;
- Impact on neighbour amenity;
- Highways and parking matters;
- Impact on the environment;
- Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Impact on the Green Belt

- 4.3.1 Policy SP5 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan (NHLP) states that development proposals in the Green Belt will only be permitted where they would not result in inappropriate development, or where very special circumstances have been demonstrated. Policy SP5 is commensurate with Paragraph 154 of Section 13 of the NPPF, which states that development within the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it falls within one of the exemptions, including:

c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

- 4.3.2 The proposed brick wall and close-boarded fencing would cover a small proportion of the west boundary. The new gates would replace the existing gates, albeit in a more set back position. The proposed wall and gates are considered to be minor additions to the site and therefore accord with 154(c).
- 4.3.3 The proposed alterations to the main dwelling house would not result in an increase of floor space.
- 4.3.4 While the proposal would not constitute ‘inappropriate development’, it is still important to consider whether the proposal would have an adverse impact on the five purposes of the Green Belt, as outlined by paragraph 143 of the NPPF, as well as harm to its openness, as required by paragraph 153. Taking each in turn:

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas – the proposed development would be confined to the domestic curtilage of the dwelling and would be minimal in scale. Therefore, the proposal complies with 143(a);

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another – see above;

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment – see above;

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns – the alterations would have an acceptable level of impact upon the Old Knebworth Conservation Area and therefore would comply with 143(d);

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land – N/A.

In relation to openness, the proposed alterations to the house, and proposed boundary treatments, would be minimal in scale and largely screened from the highway. Therefore, the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on openness.

Design and Impact on the Historic Environment

4.3.5 Policies SP9, D1 and D2 of the NHLP require that development proposals respond positively to the site's local context. Policy D2 specifies that extensions to houses should be sympathetic to the main dwelling in terms of scale, form and orientation. These policies are broadly consistent with Section 12 of the NPPF.

4.3.6 In relation to the historic environment, Policy HE1 emphasises how permission will be refused where proposals would cause substantial harm or a loss of significance to a Heritage Asset - in this case, the Old Knebworth Conservation Area - and permission should be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal is necessary to deliver considerable public benefits to outweigh this harm or loss. Policy SP13 emphasises how great weight will be given to the potential harms to the significance of heritage assets, seeking their conservation and management of their setting. These policies comply with the LPA's statutory duty under s.72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and are broadly commensurate with Section 16 of the NPPF.

4.3.7 The Knebworth Parish Council raised concerns regarding the impact of the proposed west boundary treatments upon the special character of the Old Knebworth Conservation Area. It should be noted that, contrary to the Parish comments, the application does not propose to remove/alter any part of the west boundary hedgerow. The Parish council also requested that applications from Deards End be considered as a comparison for the gate design. However, these applications have been determined with regard to the special character of the Deards End Conservation Area, and are therefore not relevant to the present application within the Old Knebworth Conservation Area.

- 4.3.8 Presently, the current entrance gates are sited in a gap between the west boundary hedgerow. For improved security and highway safety, the application proposes to relocate the gates further into the driveway and adjoin them to a 1.5m high brick wall, topped with black estate-style railings. The gates would measure 1.8m in height and be constructed of timber, painted black. The brick wall would be sited parallel to, and behind, the existing hedgerow.
- 4.3.9 As the new gates and proposed boundary treatments would be set back from the highway, views of the development from the street would be largely obscured by the existing hedgerow. Notwithstanding this, the design of the gates and wall is considered to be acceptable for the locality and the character of the Old Knebworth Conservation Area insofar as being set back from the highway, maintaining a low height, and incorporating brick plinths.
- 4.3.10 Regarding the proposed alterations to the dwelling, external changes at ground floor level would include new roof lights to the single-storey roof slope, 2no. new canopy porches, and fenestration alterations. The proposed alterations would respect the existing fenestration hierarchy and character and are therefore acceptable. Due to the high hedging which surrounds the site, the only part of the dwelling which is visible from the street/Old Knebworth Conservation Area are the west and south facing elevations at first floor level. The only alteration at first floor level would be the widening of a window on the south elevation. The alteration would be minimal and would retain the existing window design. Thus, the proposed alterations would not alter the existing character and would therefore have an acceptable impact upon the character of the Old Knebworth Conservation Area.
- 4.3.11 The proposed development accords with the requirements of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies SP9, SP13, D1, D2 and HE1 of the NHLP, as well as Sections 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

Impact on Neighbours

- 4.3.12 Policy D3 of the Local Plan permits development that does not result in acceptable harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and encourages the use of mitigation measures where necessary. Policy D3 is generally reflected by the provisions of the NPPF.
- 4.3.13 The site is well distanced from neighbouring residential properties. Therefore, the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on existing residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy D3 of the NHLP and Section 12 of the NPPF.

Highways and Parking

- 4.3.14 The proposal would not increase the number of bedrooms. Notwithstanding this, the site benefits from a large drive which can accommodate the requisite number of vehicles for the house. The proposal accords with Policy T2 of the NHLP.

Environmental Implications

- 4.2.15 Policy D1 of the NHLP outlines the Council's commitment to supporting climate change mitigation through the requirement for schemes to incorporate the principles of 'sustainable design'. Examples of sustainable design under Policy D1 include retaining existing vegetation, which the proposal adheres to. Policy D1 is broadly consistent with the aims of Section 14 of the NPPF. There are no other environmental implications as a result of the proposed development.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- 4.3.16 This is a form of development which is exempt from BNG Legislation, defined under article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 due it falling under the scope of the 'de minimis' exemption.

4.4 **Conclusion**

- 4.4.1 In the absence of material planning reasons to the contrary it is my view that planning permission is **GRANTED**.

4.5 **Alternative Options**

- 4.5.1 None.

4.6 **Pre-Commencement Conditions**

- 4.6.1 None.

5.0 **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED**, subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Signed  Shaun Greaves Determining Officer	Development Management North Hertfordshire District Council Council Offices Gernon Road Letchworth Herts SG6 3JF
Date: 3 June 2026	