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AA Dip

Design and Access Statement

L/A 1 Caldecote Road, NEWNHAM, SG7
5JZ

Prepared by
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On Behalf of
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1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been written to support a submission to North Herts Council for full planning permission in respect of proposed development on land adjacent to no. 1 Caldecote Road, Newnham, SG7 5JZ.
- 1.2 The submission is made without having sought pre-application advice since it was felt that a) the Council's views had been made clear through previous planning and appeal decisions and b) circumstances had changed dramatically through a change in the National Planning Policy Framework which will be dealt with in more detail in later text.
- 1.3 The proposal is to make better use of surplus land associated with 1 Caldecote Road by making a modest but nevertheless worthwhile provision towards local housing stock which will aid meeting both National and Local targets of deliverable housing land supply.
- 1.4 Accordingly, this application seeks planning permission for a single detached 2 bedroom dwelling on Previously Developed Land (PDL)

2.0 Background and Site Description

- 2.1 Newnham is a small hamlet/village with a population of around 170.
- 2.2 Over recent years the community has seen beneficial modest organic growth largely through the grant of planning permission for small scale residential development such as at The Green, Spring Cottage, L/A Lodge Cottage and L/A Coker Cottage.
- 2.3 All these developments have been in sympathy with the local character and grain of Newnham, none setting out to break any new ground with regard to general design concepts.
- 2.4 Historically from knowledge of the applicant's family generations that have owned much of the land locally, it is known that 1 and 2 Caldecote Road were always a pair of semi-detached properties with part of an adjacent row of buildings to the South, serving as the village Post Office.
- 2.5 In the late 1940s the cottages were subject of a serious fire and were rebuilt in the early 1950s.

- 2.6 It is believed that at around this time that the Post Office was relocated to Ashwell Road, possibly due to the building also succumbing to fire, being believed to have been thatched.
- 2.7 In more recent times part of the land, which had been transferred, was sold by the Council in order to facilitate the development of a terrace of four houses, 9 – 12 The Green, and it is this development that has taken away the verdant views frequently referred to.
- 2.8 Land to the South of 1 & 2 Caldecote Road was however retained as part of the curtilage to 1 Caldecote Road. This was locally known as the vegetable plot, which had been occupied by the Post Office building, part of which had been known as Castle Gate Cottage.
- 2.9 This is corroborated by Building Conservation comments 11/05/2022 related to application ref. 22/00600/FP.
- “.....it has been established that between 1877 and 1924, a Post Office is marked in a short row of buildings on the site just to the South of nos. 1 and 2 Caldecote Road By the 1960s the group of buildings to the South and including the Post Office had been demolished.....”.*
- 2.10 From its more recent use as a vegetable garden, it has since lain somewhat derelict and of no meaningful use to the property, 1 Caldecote Road. Nor does it add any visual amenity to the Conservation Area within which the site lies and which effectively washes over the whole of Newnham. Any openness was eroded by the construction of 9 – 12 The Green.
- 2.11 There are no Listed Buildings or Buildings of Local Interest immediately abutting the site.
- 2.12 The site is not liable to flooding lying outside the influence of the Cat Ditch and being designated as Very Low risk in all categories by Environment Agency.

3.0 Planning History

- 3.1 In 2022 a planning application was submitted for one 2-bed detached house on the subject site, ref: 22/00606/FP.
- 3.2 This was a resubmission pursuant to refusal 20/02890/FP and was duly refused 21/05/2022, with only a single reason for refusal due to the claimed adverse effect on the Conservation Area.

- 3.3 The decision was taken to appeal, ref: APP/X1925/W/22/3307499 but dismissed, agreeing that the Council's key issue would be whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.
- 3.4 Whilst with a significant change in circumstance, I would comment that personally, I can find little merit in the design, siting and car parking arrangements in that application, and agree that for these reasons alone, the decisions were justified.
- 3.5 However, where I do disagree is the tenet that the principle of a dwelling on the site would be injurious to the Conservation Area.
- 3.6 Irrespective of any of the above, the planning slate has effectively been wiped clean with the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF24) introduced last December and dealing with Previously Developed Land (PDL).
- 3.7 Although reference is generally made to PDL in relation to Green Belt, the definition is not exclusive to Green Belt. Additionally one might argue with justification that the status of this site does not have the significance of Green Belt.
- 3.8 Additionally, under NPPF24, unlike previously, a site is still considered PDL even after demolition of a building with no specific timeline for PDL status to be lost after that demolition.
- 3.9 Furthermore, it is noted that within Building Conservation's comments on application 22/00606/FP, it is concluded that the application proposals will lead to "less than substantial harm" which is the lowest level of harm. In these circumstances, NPPF sets an exceedingly high bar of "substantial harm" before concern is triggered. Thus at this level of harm, whether agreed or not, we do not come even close to having a reason to reject this application in terms of harm to the Conservation Area.
- 3.10 Also, it must be remembered that NPPF generally supports limited infilling of villages, making more effective use of land, delivery of more housing all of which are a material consideration in planning decision-making.

4.0 Development Proposal

- 4.1 The current overall site area for no. 1 Caldecote Road is 978m².
- 4.2 The submission will result in the host house still occupying a generous 356m² and similarly the new dwelling will be set within the residual 622m², more than adequate for the proposed dwelling.

- 4.3 The development proposal is submitted in detail and is for a single detached two bedroom dwelling employing the existing vehicular and pedestrian access together with parking and on site turning.
- 4.4 The house is predominantly single storey with the bedroom accommodation occupying only a partial percentage of the overall footprint.
- 4.5 The design consciously locates the single storey element towards the boundary with no. 9 The Green in order to ensure no loss of amenity through overlooking or overbearing.
- 4.6 Likewise the two storey gable end elevation is kept furthest from the boundary with no. 9 The Green and with no windows to that elevation.
- 4.7 Similarly the Caldecote Road elevation presents a gable end to the streetscene, and although previously queried on another local project, it is submitted that this is in no way incongruous within Newnham. Indeed both 1 and 2 Caldecote Road are predominantly gable end on to the road as is Coker Cottage together with 1, 4, 5, 8, 9 & 12 The Green.
- 4.8 Whilst it may be considered reasonable on this little trafficked lane to be able to reverse onto the highway or into the site, the proposal indicates how full manoeuvring can be achieved to allow exit onto Caldecote Road safely in forward gear.
- 4.9 The hedgerow to the frontage will be retained but managed and aligned to ensure visibility splays are compliant.
- 4.10 The site, semi mature tree and vegetation have all lacked any meaningful maintenance and husbandry over recent years and whilst the intention would be to retain any of worthwhile amenity value, it is suggested that allowance should be made to carry out regenerative work. It is further suggested that this be best dealt with by way of a suitably worded landscape condition.
- 4.11 The application is accompanied by Coyne Environmental Ltd Biodiversity Net Gain Review (October 2025) from which it is noted that the minimum 10% gain cannot realistically be achieved on site. However suitable off-site land is available within the applicant's ownership and can be secured through a suitable legal agreement.
- 4.12 An Energy and Sustainability Statement is also appended which schedules energy and sustainability targets.

5.0 Summary

- 5.1 The proposed site's only constraint is one of being washed over with a blanket Conservation Area designation within which policy constraints are more subjective than in other situations and do not preclude development such as here proposed.
- 5.2 This has been firmly reinforced, since the 2022 refusal, by the revisions to the NPPF (NPPF24) which provides support for this type of development on land that had been previously developed, and with no restrictions time-wise or post total demolition.
- 5.3 It is a fact that the subject site, known locally as the 'vegetable plot', was occupied by a range of buildings that included the village Post Office. This is fully substantiated by the Conservation report 11/05/2022
- 5.4 These buildings were lost, believed to be in the 1950s, and from local recollection, due to fire, followed by demolition.
- 5.5 The advice through NPPF24 clearly and unequivocally states that Previously Developed Land (PDL) refers to land that is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land, and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. Additionally there are absolutely no timeline constraints. This translates into essentially meaning land that has been previously built upon and is suitable for redevelopment, and is defined as land that has been lawfully developed and is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the surrounding area of the development. This site is fully compliant.
- 5.6 Additionally the village has over recent years grown slowly and organically, inter alia 9 – 12 The Green, The Battery, Spring Cottage, L/A Lodge Cottage, L/A Coker Cottage, all helping to maintain the vitality of this small community. There has been no attempt to promote more intensive development, and this is applauded. This single dwelling will make a further modest contribution to the community and its organic growth.
- 5.7 With the principle firmly established, this only leaves the detail for consideration, and as always this is left for open discussion.
- 5.8 Noting that North Herts maintains a proactive policy, it would be greatly appreciated that, if there were any queries whatsoever, these be raised in a timely manner, allowing an equally timely response.
- 5.9 Also, on the assumption that the Planning Authority would wish to work collaboratively towards enabling rather than frustrating development, any positive suggestions would be welcomed.
- 5.10 We look forward to receiving a favourable response.