

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 24/01498/FP

Date: 28/01/2025

Planning Officer: MT

Address: Lodge Cottage, Ashwell Road, Newnham, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 5JX

Subject: Erection of one detached 2-bed dwelling and detached double garage.

1.0 Context

1.1 I previously commented on 16 October 2024 which included these salient points:

- *Lodge Cottage is unlisted but is a Building of Local Interest (a non-designated heritage asset) located within a designated heritage asset for the purpose of applying the aims of the NPPF. The application site is close to Important Views C and D.*
- *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.*
- *Space between buildings, particularly in a conservation area context can be as important as the buildings themselves.*
- *Although described as a two-bedroom dwelling this is a 13m wide dwelling with a single-storey rear projection and a separate double-garage building. There is no indication as to the height and relationship between the new build and Lodge Cottage. A streetscene elevation would assist with this.*
- *The grain of development on the west side of Ashwell Road is more compact when compared with that at Caldecote Road but what assists with 'easing' the relationship between each dwelling is the existence of single-storey as opposed to one-and-a-half or two-storey side additions.*
- *The proposal introduces a more substantial side addition reducing the existing experience of openness and reducing the width and height of the weatherboarded section would assist with the relationship alongside Lodge Cottage.*
- *The garage building could be said to be more than just a conventional double garage with the lean-to on the side elevation, roof lights and jacked-up eaves. This is more akin to a small barn and whilst of a quasi-agrarian character this is a building of not unsubstantial size. Which, when considered alongside the dwelling, would significantly increase built form to the northeast of Lodge Cottage and is unacceptable.*

2.0 Local Plan / NPPF (Dec 2024).

2.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 is relevant as are following paragraphs of the NPPF following revised NPPF:

- **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).

3.0 Amended scheme received on 11/12/2024.

3.1 I note an email from the agent dated 13/11/2024 which expresses thanks for attendance at a meeting by the Development Management Team Leader and the case officer in which the following was discussed:

- *Off road parking for Lodge Cottage.*
- *Pedestrian access for Lodge Cottage.*
- *Design issues related to materials, fenestration and overall design of the principal street elevation.*

The email says that design issues are **highly subjective**, that parties were apparently in **total agreement** and that there are **inaccuracies** in my previous comments.

3.2 On 03/12/2024, I note the Development Management Team Leader's response that:

- *The vehicle access at the rear is not existing but appears quite a significant access at the rear. No objection to the rear parking for Lodge Court (sic), but consider this access needs to be single track wide with parking at the end of the rear garden and not be introducing such a large extend of some form of hardstanding.*
- *No objection to the footpath at the front.*
- *Consider the front windows are better on the main part of the house.*
- *The width of the side element has not been reduced and the house still appears very wide. Maybe one option would be a slightly wider house with one ridge height and to have no side element?*
- *The flat roof through eaves windows is still considered to be contrary to the character of the locality.*

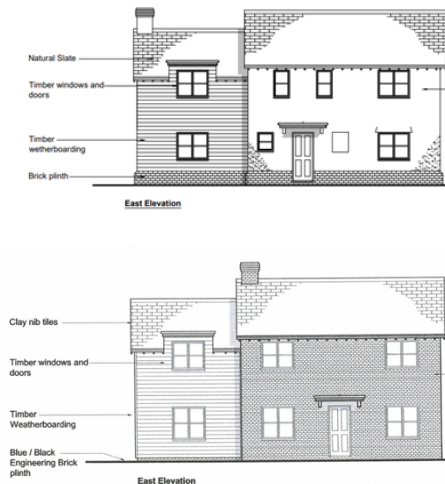
3.3 As stated previously, the grain of development on the west side of Ashwell Road is more compact when compared with that at Caldecote Road but what assists with 'easing' the relationship between each dwelling is the existence of single-storey as opposed to one-and-a-half or two-storey side additions.



3.4 I note the following when compared with the previous scheme:

- Facing brick section increased from 8.1m wide to 8.3m wide,

- Weatherboarding lower section reduced from 4.8m to 4.4m wide
- Symmetrical as opposed to asymmetrical fenestration to main section.



- 3.5 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.



- 3.6 At this point, I am mindful of an appeal dated 19 September 2024 which was allowed regarding New Cottage opposite (see appn ref: 24/00100/FPH). Paragraph 3 of the decision notice reads (my emphasis in bold):

*The appeal property is a detached dwelling, which is faces Ashwell Road within the CA, backing onto open countryside. **Properties within the CA are generally laid out along the road frontages in a traditional manner with front and rear gardens. The dwellings vary in terms of their age and scale and there is no consistent architectural theme.** When determining proposals for development in a conservation area, decision makers must pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the area.*

- 3.7 Although the proposed plot width is very similar to Lodge Cottage and indeed other plots along this side of Ashwell Road, unlike the existing dwellings, the proposal suggests building a first floor almost across the width of the site. Not only that but the choice of facing materials is also a concern. The vast majority of properties in Newnham are rendered with facing brickwork reserved for the two main properties and their respective outbuildings (Newnham Manor - below left and Newnham Hall – below right) establishing their status within the village. The use of brickwork for the proposed dwelling would draw the eye to this finish which would be further compounded by using weatherboarding for a tall side addition (once again a material not consistent with the overall appearance of the area). Admittedly, boarding was

used for a single-storey extension at Thatch End which was designed to appear as an 'outbuilding'. In my opinion, first floor accommodation across a 13m frontage and using two facing materials not consistent with the general built form in the NCA leads me to conclude that this building will 'stand out' amongst its neighbours and not to the extent of preserving or enhancing the area.



- 3.8 Furthermore, due to the road alignment when approaching the site from the south-west there is a perceived comfortable distance separating Lodge Cottage from the recently built Spring Cottage as noted in the image below. I am not convinced that 'plugging' this gap to the extent currently proposed i.e. including the weatherboarded side addition, would preserve the character of the NCA. I reiterate that there is no indication as to the height and relationship between the new build and Lodge Cottage. A streetscene elevation would assist with this.



Garaging

- 3.9 Although refused, under ref: 22/00346/FP a detached workshop/shed was proposed following demolition of existing workshop/shed on adjacent owned land. There is perhaps an opportunity here to replace the existing garage serving Lodge Cottage.



- 3.10 This aspect of the proposal has not been amended and remains a relatively large outbuilding which although semi-agrarian appears overly tall. I reiterate that whilst reading as a small barn it is of substantial size, which, when considered alongside the dwelling, would significantly increase built form to

the northeast of Lodge Cottage adding yet more weatherboarded built form in the NCA and is considered unacceptable.



Parking for Lodge Cottage

- 3.11 The proposed parking for Lodge Cottage is shown outside of the application site boundary but within the applicant's gift. Can this be controlled through this application?



4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 Paragraph 135c) of the NPPF refers to new development being '**sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment**'. Paragraph 210 of the NPPF says that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of '*the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness*' whilst at paragraph 213 it says that '*Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.....*'.
- 4.2 Considerable importance and weight are given to the special attention that should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area. 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.
- 4.3 By reason of its 13m frontage at first floor and using two facing materials not regarded as being consistent with the overall character of the NCA (brick and weatherboarding), the proposed dwelling would not make a positive

contribution to local character. The introduction of this built form would erode the sense of spaciousness of this part of Ashwell Road as the new dwelling would not sit well between the adjacent buildings. The dwelling would be an unsympathetic and discordant building harming the character and appearance of the NCA. Furthermore, the height of the double garage is such that the cumulative impact of this addition will also serve to reduce the sense of openness and positive contribution made by the Lodge Cottage's surroundings, also adversely affecting NCA's special character. Although not considered to be poor design, the proposal will nonetheless fail to satisfy the provisions of Sections 72(1) and 66(1) respectively of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and as supported by the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031.

4.4 For the above reason, I find the scheme **OBJECTIONABLE**.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer

***Note:** If the principle of developing the side garden at Lodge Cottage is supported by my planning colleagues, my concerns would be ameliorated if a rendered cottage with a single-storey side addition only was proposed together with a lower garage with conventional eaves height. Unfortunately, that is not what is proposed.*