

## CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

|                              |                                                                           |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>APPLICATION REF:</b>      | 26/00047/PIP                                                              |
| <b>CASE OFFICER:</b>         | TH                                                                        |
| <b>APPLICATION SITE:</b>     | Land at Grange Farm, Hitchin Road, Great Wymondley, Hertfordshire         |
| <b>DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:</b> | Demolition of existing stable building and erection of up to 9 dwellings. |

### RECOMMENDATION:

The application is located in the Great Wymondley Conservation Area with several listed buildings nearby. Historically up until post WWII this site has been a relatively open site whilst more recently a large grain silo was replaced on the northern front boundary with 6 dwellings. No specific significance has been identified other than the site having archaeological interest. However, considering the density, cul-de-sac arrangement, almost continuous built form on the eastern edge and the relationship particularly of units 4, 5 and 6 to the working farm alongside, it is considered that the scheme would occasion a moderate degree of less than substantial harm to the GWCA. It is for the case officer to identify whether this degree of harm is outweighed by public benefits but I raise an **OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal fails to satisfy the provisions of Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Para 135 c) and Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

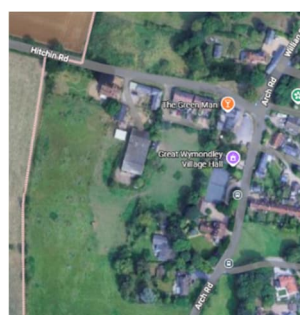
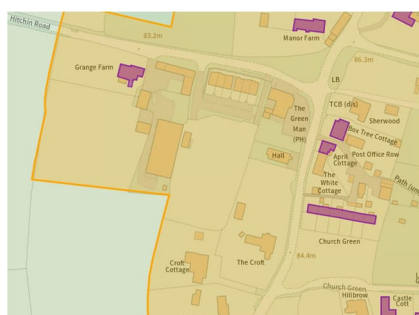
### SHORT SUMMARY:

#### **Harm, preserve or enhance.**

There is a case to say that the proposal will occasion less than substantial harm to the setting of nearby listed buildings.

### SITE CONTEXT:

The application site is located within the Great Wymondley Conservation Area (GWCA) – a Designated Heritage Asset for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).



Grange Farm (grade II) is located to the north-west whilst further to the north-east is the Manor House (grade II\*). On the east side of Arch Road are several grade II listed buildings including Box Tree Cottage, 1 Post Office Row, and nos.1-6 Manor Cottages, Church Green.

#### **DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:**

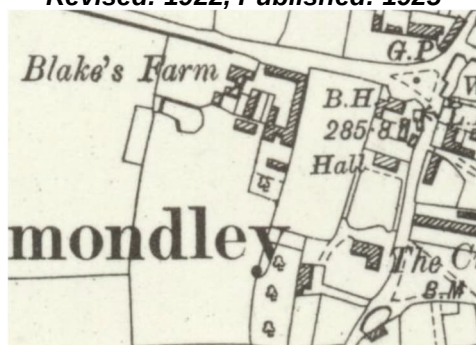
Noted as being in an Area of Archaeological Significance this does not itself preclude development, but it is part of the site's narrative. I have not established historic ownership of the application site and whether this contributes to the site's significance.

Considering that the OS depiction of The Rookery in 1878/81 shows what appears to be two frontage bay windows and given the building's facing brickwork I am sure that The Rookery is what is now known as The Croft.

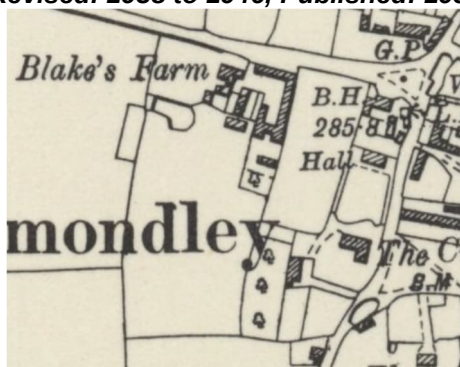
***Hertfordshire Sheet XII  
Surveyed: 1878 to 1881, Published: 1884***



***Hertfordshire Sheet XII.NW  
Revised: 1922, Published: 1925***

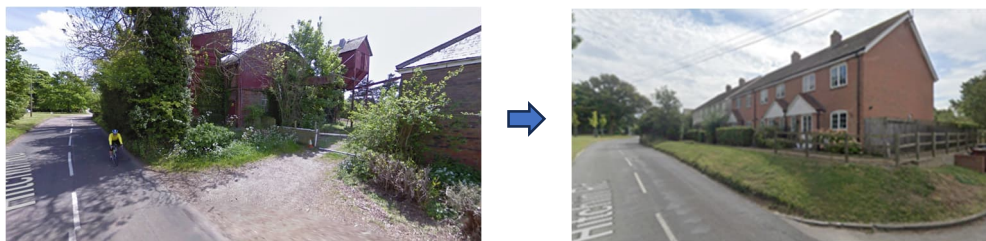


***Hertfordshire Sheet XII.NW  
Revised: 1938 to 1946, Published: 1950***



***With permission from the National Library of Scotland***

The key heritage issue is to consider the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the GWCA and to a lesser extent upon the wider setting of listed buildings in the vicinity. What is key here is understanding the significance of the site. Throughout the C19 and earlier and beyond WWII, the site in question was an open tranche of land that effectively separated Blake's Farm (Grange Farm) from the village. Sometime later a large grain store was erected with a rear section used as stables (see below left) and which sat behind a very mature, dense and overgrown tree belt on the front boundary. This building became semi-derelict and residential properties at nos.1-6 Hitchin Road to the north of the application site were granted consent in June 2010 under reference 10/00065/1 (see below).



There are several views into the site which would be directly impacted upon if the proposal were to be built. Although KV2 in the Great Wymondley Conservation Area Character Statement (GWCACS) would not be affected I am surprised that a view of the same green looking north-west from the south-east corner is not also a key view as noted in the second image below. If it were not for the tree cover, the development would be seen to the right of 'The Croft' as highlighted by the arrow.



KV2 From Arch Road, adjacent to The Croft, looking east towards the Church of St Mary the Virgin, demonstrating the open nature of this part of the village and the 'village green' feel of this green space.



Closer to the site there is a view through the vehicular entrance to 'The Croft' and beyond the tennis court to the application site. This view would be significantly altered by the proposed development but is not identified as a Key View in the GWCACS.



The Grange is located on Hitchin Road (Wymondley Road according to the list entry) and there is a red brick and slate roof outbuilding to the east of this which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the GWCA. Once again, the proposed development would impact upon the view below.



Several buildings occupy sites around the application site, but the site is not considered enclosed as such. However, I regard this to be an important 'hinterland' to properties within the GWCA, and parts of the site's boundary are open with views towards the countryside.

Turning to the development, the cul-de-sac has a somewhat engineered, urban appearance unlike the less planned arrangement to the settlement that has evolved over several centuries. The density of development would be unlike other development in the vicinity with a more or less continuous built form indicated on the east side and this is what would be viewed beyond the tennis court at The Croft.



The submitted Planning Statement says that *"Dwellings are shown as set within large plots with rear gardens and off-street parking, in keeping with the character of the surrounding area"* (para 3.3). I would not say that these are particularly large plots and certainly not with large gardens (some with a very poor aspect). At paragraphs 3.21 and 3.22 reference is made to paragraphs 207 to 211 and 212 to 215 of the NPPF. Of interest is para 5.29 of the Planning Statement which says:

*Whilst the design and appearance of the residential properties would be considered at technical detail stage, the principle of residential development on the application site **would be unlikely to result in substantial harm to the Conservation Area or non-designated heritage assets given the location of the site**, the limited views of it and the existing residential setting. It is therefore our opinion that, at most, **the scheme would result in 'less than substantial harm' to the setting of the Conservation Area and non-designated heritage assets on Arch Road and on the lower end of the spectrum.***

It is acknowledged that detailed design and appearance would be considered at the technical detail stage. However, the site layout provides us with some indication of form, layout and density. The 'substantial harm' bar is purposefully set high, and I agree that residential development on the site would not result in substantial harm. The site is within the GWCA therefore it is not appropriate to consider the development in terms of affecting the setting thereof. This is a site where Section 72(1) is to be applied. There is no statutory duty to consider the setting of non-designated heritage assets, but the setting of listed buildings is relevant to an extent and Section 66(1) should also be applied. Having said that I see this more as a Section 72 case.

After careful consideration, I am convinced that the engineered and urbanised layout and perception of a continuous built form as viewed beyond the entrance to The Croft (which would introduce density inconsistent with the fragmented evolution of Great Wymondley) is inappropriate here. Furthermore, I am unconvinced that a development of up to 9 dwellings could be delivered without having a detrimental impact upon future occupiers due to the adjacent working farm. In my opinion, the following non-conservation related point is well-made by Wymondley Parish Council:

*Adjoining this site is a working farm, farming both arable and livestock. Grange Farm is not in the ownership of the Letchworth Heritage as could be deduced from their chosen definition of the site location.*

*There is an agricultural building on the boundary of the site to the west. The barn is used for storage of straw and on a cyclical basis the keeping of cattle. It seems extremely unwise to be building houses so close to a cattle barn. We note that under the regulations if a farmer wishes to build a cattle barn it must be 400m from a residential property to minimise noise, odour and risk of flies and of course fire.*

Unlike let's say Church Green, I am not prepared to make a case that this site should be sacrosanct from any development proposal, but any development should be 'tailored' so as to avoid an engineered layout with a dense form of development thereby reducing or indeed removing heritage or design harms. A significantly reduced scheme may not result in harm to the significance of the GWCA or listed buildings nearby but there remains the matter of building close to a working farm on the west side. In my opinion, there are good design reasons why the scheme as submitted has the potential to occasion harm.

#### **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:**

No specific significance has been identified other than the site having archaeological interest and having had an established character of openness (notwithstanding built forms beyond the site's boundaries). I agree that substantial harm would not arise from this development. However, considering the density, cul-de-sac arrangement, almost continuous built form on the eastern edge and the relationship particularly of units 4, 5 and 6 to the working farm alongside, I still consider that the scheme would occasion a moderate degree of less than substantial harm to the GWCA and for this reason I consider that the proposal is **OBJECTIONABLE**.

**OFFICER:** Mark Simmons

**DATE:** 28/04/2026