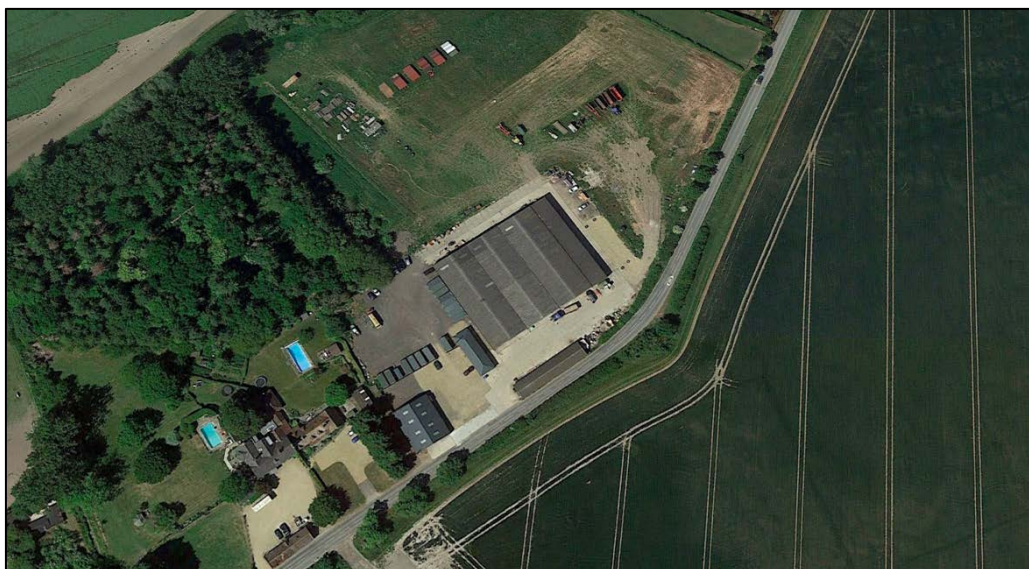


PLANNING STATEMENT

*Roadside 'Gault Brick' & Agricultural Barns, Ashwell Road, Newnham,
Baldock, SG7 5JX*

Job Ref: 26/044

Date: June 2026



Prepared by Tom Donovan BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI on behalf of

PETER GEORGE TOWN PLANNING



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Section 1: Introduction & Background

- 1.1 Peter George Town Planning has been instructed by Mr Williams of Future Youth Inspired Ltd to prepare and make an application for planning permission for the change of use of parts of two existing agricultural buildings to form a workshop based vocational learning and tuition centre (Use Class F1) with external alterations associated with the proposed change of use.

- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to set out the proposals, provide an analysis against relevant national and local planning policy and ultimately make the case as to why planning permission should be granted.



Section 2: Analysis of the Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises one of the front three bays of the large, modern agricultural barn set back from Ashwell Road, and the south-western part of the gault brick roadside barn which fronts Ashwell Road. The original construction of the gault brick barn dates to the 19th Century although, apart from the gault-brick road-facing wall and the two boarded ends, much of the structure of the building is modern, including the fibre-cement roof. The large agricultural barn is a modern steel-frame building with metal cladding and roof covering.



Figure 1 - The Application Site

- 2.2 The gault brick barn is on the Council's Register of Buildings of Local Interest (BLI) for Newnham, with the roadside-facing wall regarded as



being an ‘important boundary wall’. The boundary of the Newnham Conservation Area (NCA) extends up to and around this barn; however, the remainder of the yard, including the modern barn, lies beyond the conservation area boundary.



Figure 2 - L: Modern Barn. R: Gault Brick Barn

- 2.3 There are other barns located within the vicinity of the roadside barn including number of other, smaller modern barns. A new agricultural barn is currently being constructed to the rear of the existing barn. None of these other barns have any historic significance.
- 2.4 The site has an existing vehicular access from Ashwell Road, which has a 30mph speed limit at this point. The access leads directly onto a hardstanding which provides access to the various barns within the site and to the wider agricultural holding.



- 2.5 The nearest listed buildings to the site are Newnham Hall, and the Barn on Road in Front of Newnham Hall (both listed at grade II). These are located approximately 80m and 115m respectively from the application barn. The site is not understood to be an archaeological area.
- 2.6 The site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 and is not understood to be at risk of surface water flooding.
- 2.7 The site lies at the north-eastern end of Newnham within the main built-up part of the village. The village is located in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. It has a small number of services including a village hall, church and a bus stop.



Section 3: The Development Proposal

3.1 The proposed development can be described as follows:

“Change of use of parts of two existing agricultural barns to form a workshop based vocational learning and tuition centre (Use Class F1) with external alterations to the gault brick barn facilitate the change of use.”

Overview

- 3.2 The proposed development would comprise a workshop-based vocational learning and tuition centre providing practical trade-based education alongside classroom-based teaching.
- 3.3 The modern agricultural barn would accommodate workshops for vocational training in disciplines including carpentry, mechanics, bricklaying and plastering together with classroom facilities for the delivery of functional skills in English and mathematics. The roadside gault brick barn would provide catering training facilities where students would receive practical instruction and work towards recognised vocational catering qualifications.



- 3.4 The proposed learning and tuition centre would provide education for between approximately 20-25 students (typically between the ages of 10 and 18 years old) supplemented by 4 full-time tutors. The centre would operate between 0900-1630 Monday-Friday during term times only.

Proposed Alterations

- 3.5 To facilitate the change of use of the end part of the gault brick barn, a small number of external alterations to the barn are proposed. This includes the construction of a new wall comprised of a brick plinth and horizontal cladding above. One new window opening is proposed along with a proposed door opening.
- 3.6 No alterations are required or are proposed to the modern agricultural barn.



Section 4: Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The Government policies on different aspects of planning are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (the Framework).
- 4.2 The relevant sections of the Framework are as follows:
- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
 - Section 6: Building a strong, competitive economy
 - Section 7: Ensuring the vitality of town centres
 - Section 8: Promoting healthy and safe communities
 - Section 9: Promoting sustainable transport
 - Section 11: Making effective use of land
 - Section 12: Achieving well-designed places
 - Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
 - Section 16: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Development Plan

- 4.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations dictate otherwise.”



4.4 The development plan context for the planning application is provided by:

- **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2022)**

4.5 The following policies are considered relevant to the consideration of this application:

Strategic Policies

- Policy SP1: Sustainable Development in North Hertfordshire
- Policy SP2: Settlement Hierarchy and Spatial Distribution
- Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt
- Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability
- Policy SP10: Healthy Communities
- Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity
- Policy SP13: Historic Environment

Development Management Policies

- Policy T1: Assessment of Transport Matters
- Policy T2: Parking
- Policy CGB1: Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt
- Policy CGB4: Existing Buildings in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt
- Policy ETC7: Local Community Shops and Services in Towns and Villages



- Policy D1: Sustainable Design
- Policy D3: Protecting Living Conditions
- Policy HC1: Community Facilities
- Policy NE2: Landscape
- Policy NE4: Biodiversity and Geological Sites
- Policy HE1: Designated Heritage Assets
- Policy HE3: Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Vehicle Parking at New Development SPD September 2011
- Design SPD July 2011

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Section 5: Planning Analysis

Principle of Development

Rural Area beyond the Green Belt

- 5.1 North Herts Local Plan (LP) Policy SP5 sets out that the Council will operate a general policy of restraint in Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt through the application of their detailed policies.
- 5.2 LP Policy CGB1 states that, in the Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt, planning permission will be granted provided that the development, among other things, relates to an existing rural building, or is a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification.
- 5.3 LP Policy CGB4 states that, planning permission for the re-use, replacement or extension of buildings in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt will be granted provided that any extension building to be converted for re-use does not require major extension or reconstruction, and the resultant buildings do not have a materially greater impact on the openness, purposes, or general policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt.



- 5.4 Firstly, the proposal relates to relatively small parts of two existing rural buildings and represents a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification in the form of the change of use change of use to form a workshop-based vocational learning and tuition centre. The proposed conversion would therefore be consistent with the aims of LP Policy CGB1, and the broader aims of paragraphs 88-89 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) inasmuch as it seeks to support schemes for rural diversification in the interests of the rural economy.
- 5.5 Secondly, the proposal involves the conversion of two existing building currently in use for the storage of agricultural machinery and equipment. The grain store is a modern agricultural building, and the roadside gault brick barn dates from the 19th century, albeit it has been heavily modified in the last century. In any event, the buildings are in active use, are structurally sound, and do not require major construction or reconstruction to enable their conversion. Fundamentally, both buildings are therefore capable of conversion.
- 5.6 Accordingly, it is considered that the conversion of both parts of the existing buildings would be acceptable in principle in accordance with LP



Policies SP5, CGB1 and CGB4, as well as paragraphs 88-89 of the Framework.

The Proposed Use

- 5.7 The proposed use of the barns would be as a workshop based vocational learning and tuition centre, which falls within Use Class F1. LP Policy SP10 is broadly supportive of the provision of sufficient school places and facilitates the provision of new or expanded schools in appropriate locations. LP Policy HC1 is likewise supportive of proposals for new community facilities (including schools) provided that they are a) appropriate in scale, b) accessible by a wide range of transport modes, and c) would meet an identified need. These policies are broadly in accordance with paragraph 99 of the Framework which seeks the same.
- 5.8 The proposed learning and tuition centre would provide education for between approximately 20-25 students (typically between the ages of 10 and 18 years old) supplemented by 4 full-time tutors. It would therefore represent a fairly small-scale operation in the context of the provision of this sort of privately-run education.



5.9 Moreover, Newnham is identified in the LP as a Category B village, with the site itself being located at the north-eastern end of the main built-up part of the village. Newnham has a small range of facilities and services, including a regular bus service (no.91/91A service) which provides services between 0659-1800 Monday-Saturdays. It is moreover only a relatively short distance from Ashwell (approx. 2km) which is a Category A village, and approximately 3.2km to the north-east of Baldock. It is considered therefore that the site is in a suitable location accessible to a sufficiently wide range of transport modes.

5.10 The proposed learning and tuition centre would provide an alternative form of education centred on practical and vocational learning providing an alternative educational environment centred on practical and vocational learning. The applicants offer a broad range of vocational courses and activities, including arts and crafts, sport, beauty, bricklaying, cooking, carpentry, mechanics and music recording.

5.11 Whilst the proposal is not intended to replace mainstream education, it would broaden the range of educational opportunities available within the district, increase parental and student choice and support the development of practical skills that are capable of improving future employment and



training prospects. As such, the proposal is consistent with the objectives of national and local planning policy to support the provision of educational and community facilities.

Summary

- 5.12 In all, the proposed development would deliver a modestly scaled vocational learning and tuition centre within an accessible and sustainable location within the built core of Newnham, Category B village. It would broaden the range of educational opportunities available within the district by providing practical, skills-based learning that complements existing mainstream provision, whilst making productive use of existing rural buildings.
- 5.13 The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the aims of LP Policies SP10 and HC1, together with paragraph 99 of the Framework, by supporting the provision of educational and community facilities in an appropriate location.

Heritage and Design

Context & Significance

Gault Brick Barn



5.14 The Newnham Conservation Area Character Appraisal (NCACA) (April 2008) refers to the gault brick barn as one of two frontage, earlier outbuildings on the north side of Ashwell Road that contribute positively to the street-scene. A red brick building slightly further into the village is grade II listed, whereas the barn in question (referred to as the ‘gault brick building’) is regarded as a Building of Local Interest (BLI) (the wall is moreover noted in the NCACA as an ‘important boundary wall’). It is thus a non-designated heritage asset for the purpose of the application of policies in the Framework.

5.15 In the Council’s Register of Buildings of Local Interest for Newnham, the barn is described as *“Elongated, single storey 19th-century building constructed in gault brick with later corrugated roof. Indicated on 1877 1st Edition Ordnance Survey”*.

5.16 The reason for its inclusion in the list was given as follows: *“Building of local architectural which performs a particularly important role in the streetscene and is the ‘gateway’ building into the conservation area when approaching from Ashwell.”*



Figure 3 - Existing Gault Brick Barn

5.17 Its significance is thus considered to derive from its prominence in the street-scene and its role as ‘gateway’ building into the village and conservation area when approaching from Ashwell. The gault brick wall on the roadside and the gable ends have historic significance given that these are likely the only original parts of the barn, but much of the barn is modern and has little historic significance. This includes the fibre-cement roof and roof structure which is modern and of little historic significance.

5.18 The gault brick barn falls within the Newnham Conservation Area (NCA), the boundary of which was adjusted in 2008 to omit the large modern agricultural barn adjacent to the application barn. The nearest listed buildings to the site are Newnham Hall, and the Barn on Road in Front of Newnham Hall (both listed at grade II). These are located approximately



80m and 115m respectively from the application barn. The NCA and the two listed buildings are designated heritage assets.

Modern Barn

- 5.19 The modern agricultural barn is referred to in the NCACA as ‘Triple Gable Building’ and described as: *“Agricultural buildings on the north side of Ashwell Road, located at the entrance to the village but outside the conservation area. The buildings establish the agricultural character of the village and there is scope to improve the setting of the conservation area.”*
- 5.20 The modern barn does not have any inherent heritage value or historic significance, although one could make the case that its presence makes some sort of positive contribution to the NCA on the basis that it establishes the agricultural character of the village. Overall, it is considered that the heritage significance of the modern barn is low.

Impact

- 5.21 The gault brick barn is understood to have originally been constructed in the 19th century. However, all that survives from the original barn is the gault brick wall adjacent to Ashwell Road, and the two gable ends. The roof has been replaced with a corrugated metal roof, and it appears that much



of any earlier timber-frame, and any other internal historic fabric has been lost. Other alterations, such as the existing roller shutters, are modern and jar with its historic origins.

- 5.22 It is firstly important to note that the proposals do not seek to alter or effect any change to the gault brick wall fronting Ashwell Road, or either of the two historic gable ends. Accordingly, the barn would continue to make a positive public contribution as the ‘gateway’ building to the village and conservation area.
- 5.23 In terms of the small number of external alterations proposed to the barn, these are intended to improve its aesthetic. Indeed, a brick plinth and horizontal weatherboarding to match the existing gable ends are proposed to be constructed which would bring it in keeping with the character and appearance of the original part of the barn (and relate to separate proposals to convert the remainder of the barn to a bakery). Single window and door openings are proposed for the north-facing elevation, and it is considered that these are well-proportioned and appropriate to a barn of this design and form. These changes are considered to represent an enhancement to the barn by replacing utilitarian agricultural detailing with



materials and openings that reflect the traditional appearance of the building.

- 5.24 The proposed use would establish a use which is likely to safeguard the medium-long term future of part of the building; particularly given its increasing unsuitability for modern agricultural use due to its small size. The building has local historic significance, and this proposal would help to ensure that it continues to make the positive contribution that has been noted in the NCACA and the Register of Buildings of Local Interest.
- 5.25 No external alterations are required to the modern agricultural barn. Its conversion would therefore have no impact on the character, appearance or significance of the NCA.
- 5.26 In terms of the two listed buildings, these are situated approximately 80m and 115m to the west of the barn in question with other buildings in between. Accordingly, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in any harm to the setting or significance of the listed buildings.

Summary



- 5.27 The application relates in part to a Building of Local Interest (BLI), identified within the Newnham Conservation Area Character Appraisal as a positive contributor to the street scene and important ‘gateway’ building to Newnham, and a modern barn of little historic merit.
- 5.28 Whilst the gault brick barn retains local heritage significance through its prominent roadside gault brick wall and historic gable ends, much of its original fabric has been lost through previous alterations, including the replacement of the original roof and the insertion of modern roller shutters.
- 5.29 The proposed development has been carefully designed to preserve those elements which contribute most significantly to the building’s heritage value, whilst introducing sympathetic alterations that enhance its appearance and would help to secure its long-term viable use.
- 5.30 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would ensure the long-term future of the locally listed building without harming its significance, thereby preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the NCA and not impacting negatively of the settings of nearby listed buildings.



5.31 The conversion of one bay of the existing modern agricultural barn would not involve any external alterations and would thus preserve the character and appearance of this part of the NCA and not be harmful to the setting of the two grade II listed buildings located near to the site.

5.32 It is considered therefore that the proposed development would be compliant with LP Policies SP9, SP13, D1, HE1 and HE3 and Sections 12 and 16 of the Framework.

Impact on Neighbouring Properties

5.33 The nearest residential properties comprise the two properties at Newnham Hall, which are located some 70m from the barn at its nearest point, and The White House which is located some 155m to the north-east of the site.

5.34 Given the distances involved, it is unlikely that the proposed change of use would give rise to any material harm to the living conditions of these or other neighbouring properties.

Highways Matters



Discussion

- 5.35 The site is served by an existing access from Ashwell Road which has a 30mph limit at this point. The access is well-established and serves the various buildings and agricultural operations carried out within the wider site, as well as the existing buildings.
- 5.36 The proposed tuition centre would operate between the hours of 0900-1630 Monday to Friday during regular term times only. Students would attend sessions that would typically run between the hours of 0930-1130 and 1230-1500. Each session would be small comprising of around 10-15 students supported by approximately 4 full-time members of staff.
- 5.37 Students will typically be transported to the site by private car, taxi services, or via their mentor. The existing bus service that serves the village provides an additional form of transport that could be utilised, either by students or staff. The provision of cycle stands further encourages a means of transport other than the private motor car.
- 5.38 The Council's adopted parking standards indicate that for Educational Establishments, 1 car parking space should be provided per full-time



member of staff, plus 1 space per 100 pupils, 1 space per 8 pupils over 17 years old, and 1 space per 20 pupils under 17 years old.

5.39 As discussed, the proposed use would involve 4 full-time tutors with approximately 10-15 students present in each session. Accordingly, it is considered that the proposed 5 spaces to the front of the main barn would be sufficient in connection with the proposed use and the parking standards set out above, with additional informal parking available within the wider farmyard if ever required.

5.40 A small number of Sheffield parking stands are proposed immediately adjacent to the main barn. This would provide parking for 4 bikes which is considered a proportionate amount of secure cycle parking in this context.

Summary

5.41 The existing agricultural use already generates staff, agricultural vehicles and associated traffic movements. Whilst the proposed use would generate regular staff and visitor movements during term time, the scale of the operation is modest, with no more than approximately 15 students attending any one session. Accordingly, the proposal would not be



expected to give rise to a material increase in traffic such that highway safety or capacity would be adversely affected.

5.42 Moreover, car and cycle parking would be provided in accordance with the Council's adopted standards ensuring that the proposed learning and tuition centre would be served by a sufficient amount of on-site parking.

5.43 In all, it is considered that the proposed use of the site as a learning and tuition centre would not give rise to unacceptable harm to highways safety or capacity.

Other Matters

Ecology: Protected Species

5.44 A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) has been carried out confirming that the existing buildings provide negligible potential for bats. No further surveys are considered to be necessary in respect to any other UK or European protected species.

Ecology: Biodiversity Net Gain

5.45 The proposed development meets the de minimis exemption for BNG on the basis that it impacts less than 25m² of habitat.



Section 6: Summary & Conclusions

- 6.1 This statement supports an application for planning permission for the change of use of part of two existing agricultural barns to form a learning and tuition centre (Use Class F1), with associated external alterations to facilitate the change of use.
- 6.2 Given that the works involve the conversion of two existing buildings without major reconstruction and would not result in a materially greater impact on the character, openness or policy aims of the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle in accordance with Policies SP5, CGB1 and CGB4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, and with the economic objectives of the Framework.
- 6.3 The proposal would moreover provide a valuable educational facility offering practical vocational training and classroom-based learning for young people within North Hertfordshire, broadening educational choice whilst supporting skills development and future employment opportunities.
- 6.4 In heritage and design terms, the gault brick barn is recognised as a Building of Local Interest and makes a positive contribution to the Newnham Conservation Area, principally through its roadside gault brick



wall, historic gable ends and gateway role on the approach from Ashwell Road. The proposals have been carefully designed to preserve these elements of significance with any external alterations founded in the original design and materiality of the original building.

- 6.5 No external alterations are proposed or required to the modern barn. Consequently, the proposed change of use of this part of the barn would have a neutral impact on and thus preserve the character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area.
- 6.6 Overall, the proposal represents an appropriate and sustainable form of rural economic development that would deliver local economic and community benefits, while preserving and enhancing the heritage significance of one of the buildings and its wider conservation area setting.
- 6.7 Other matters material to the consideration of this application have been considered and discussed in the foregoing and it is considered that the proposed change of use would be suitable and would be fully compliant with relevant national and local planning policy.



6.8 In light of the above, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.

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