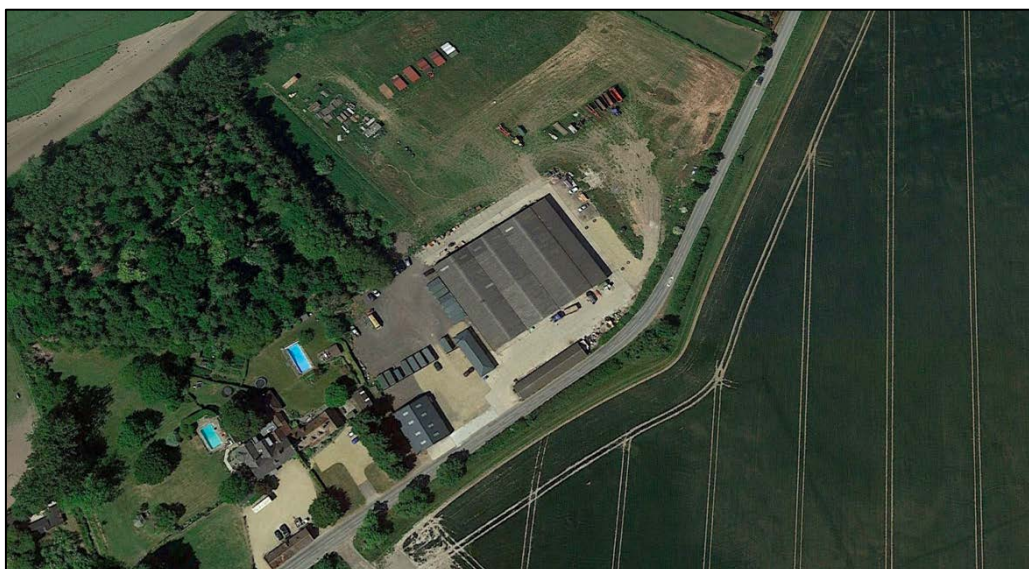


PLANNING STATEMENT

Roadside 'Gault Brick' Barn, Ashwell Road, Newnham, Baldock, SG7 5DP

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 Laura Goodall of Sollas Bakery to prepare and make an application for planning permission for the change of use of part of an existing agricultural building to form an artisan bakery (Use Class E(a)) with external alterations associated with the 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 and barn comprise part of the roadside barn which is located immediately adjacent to Ashwell Road. The original construction of the 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.

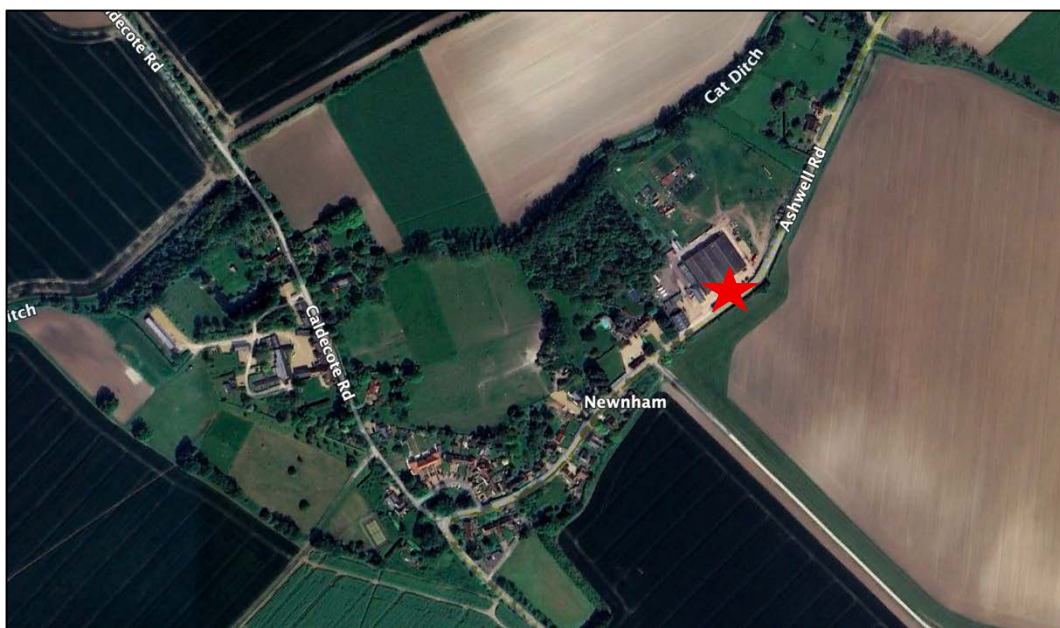


Figure 1 - The Application Site

- 2.2 In any event, the 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 the barn; however, the remainder of the yard lies beyond the conservation area boundary.



- 2.3 There are other barns located within the vicinity of the roadside barn. This includes a large, modern agricultural barn immediately opposite, and a number of other, smaller modern barns. A new agricultural barn is currently being constructed to the rear of the existing barn.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 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.



- 2.7 The site is located wholly within Flood Zone 1 and is not understood to be at risk of surface water flooding.



Section 3: The Development Proposal

3.1 The proposed development can be described as follows:

“Change of use of part of existing agricultural barn to form artisan bakery (Use Class E(a)) with external alterations to facilitate the change of use.”

Overview

- 3.2 Sollas is a small local bakery with everything made fresh each day relying heavily on handcrafted and traditional techniques. They would make approximately 40-60 loaves and 50-150 pastries daily. All products would be made entirely on site, using locally sourced ingredients wherever possible, reinforcing the bakery’s commitment to sustainability and supporting community suppliers.
- 3.3 Initially, the bakery would open to customers four days a week from 8am to 3pm, operating Wednesday to Saturday. Tuesdays would function as a preparation day, with two staff members on site to produce items for the following day. We have nevertheless set out slightly longer opening hours and days in the submission to enable the potential growth of the operation. When open, customers would be able to purchase bread, coffee, and



pastries from the counter, with the option to enjoy them in a small eat-in area or take their items away. The operation would not include table service.

- 3.4 Staffing levels would remain small, with the bakery initially employing three full-time staff members. Deliveries to the site would be limited and carefully scheduled during normal business hours. These would consist of a monthly flour delivery by a small lorry and a weekly van delivery of fresh ingredients. Waste would be kept to a minimum, with recycling and composting used wherever possible.

Proposed Alterations

- 3.5 To facilitate the change of use, a small number of external alterations to the barn are required. This includes the removal of the existing roller shutter doors and the construction of a new wall comprised of a brick plinth and horizontal cladding above. Three new window openings are proposed (two triple casements and one single casement) and two glazed doors.
- 3.6 It is proposed to replace the existing roof with insulated metal sheeting to match neighbouring barns, together with a replacement verge and ridge



detail. Two flush rooflights are proposed for the roof of the covered side exit.



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 SP3: Employment
- Policy SP4: Town Centres, Local Centres and Community Shops
- Policy SP5: Countryside and Green Belt
- Policy SP6: Sustainable Transport
- Policy SP9: Design and Sustainability
- Policy SP10: Sustainable Communities
- Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity
- Policy SP13: Historic Environment

Development Management Policies

- Policy ETC3: New Retail, Leisure, and Other Main Town Centre Development
- Policy ETC7: Local Community Shops and Services in Towns and Villages
- 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 D1: Sustainable Design
- Policy D3: Protecting Living Conditions
- 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



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 an existing rural building and represents a modest proposal for rural economic development or diversification. 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 moreover involves the conversion of an existing building currently in agricultural use for storage of machinery and equipment. It dates from the 19th century, albeit it has been heavily modified in the last century. In any event, the building is in active use, is structurally sound, and does not require major construction or reconstruction to enable its conversion. Fundamentally, the building is therefore capable of being converted to use as a bakery.

5.6 Accordingly, it is considered that the conversion of the existing building to form a bakery would be acceptable in principle in accordance with LP Policies SP5, CGB1 and CGB4, as well as paragraphs 88-89 of the Framework.



Land Use

5.7 LP Policy ETC7 states that:

“Planning permission for small scale proposals providing new shops and services to serve the day-to-day needs of the local community will be granted where:

- *The site is within a defined settlement boundary;*
- *In the case of Category B villages, the site is within the built core; or*
- *In the case of Category C settlements, the proposed development meets the criteria of Policy CGG2b.*

The policy further notes that 280 sqm will generally be used as a guide to determine small scale. This reflects the Use Classes Order 2020 and recognises that some such facilities will fall within Class E or other use classes.”

5.8 Newnham is a Category B village as per LP Policy SP2. Moreover, whilst the site lies at the north-eastern edge of the village, it falls within the extent of the conservation area which delineates the historic core of the village. Accordingly, the site is considered to fall within the built core of the village.

5.9 Additionally, the gross internal floor area of the proposed bakery would be approximately 82m². It would therefore qualify as a small-scale proposal in the context of LP Policy ETC7.



- 5.10 In all, it is considered that the proposed change of use would be compliant with LP Policy ETC7 on the basis that it would be a small-scale proposal for a shop/service within the built core of a Category B village.

Summary

- 5.11 For the reasons discussed, the proposed change of use would be acceptable in principle in accordance with LP Policies SP5, CGB1, CGB4 and ETC7 as supported by Paragraphs 88-89 of the Framework.

Heritage and Design

Context & Significance

- 5.12 The Newnham Conservation Area Character Appraisal (NCACA) (April 2008) refers to the 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.



5.13 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"*.

5.14 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 2 - Existing Barn

5.15 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.

- 5.16 The 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.

Impact

- 5.17 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.



- 5.18 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.
- 5.19 In terms of the small number of external alterations proposed to the barn, these are intended to improve its aesthetic. Indeed, the eastern end of the barn is adorned by modern roller shutters which would be removed and replaced with a brick plinth and horizontal weatherboarding to match the existing gable ends. Three window openings and a single door opening 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.
- 5.20 The barn currently has a fibre-cement roof, which does not make a positive contribution to the street-scene, and which needs to be replaced in any event. Accordingly, it is proposed to replace the roof with insulated metal sheeting in line with a material used elsewhere in the vicinity. It is considered that the replacement roof material would represent a slight enhancement compared to the existing.



5.21 It is further worth noting that the proposed bakery use would breathe new life into the building and establish a use which is likely to safeguard the medium-long term future 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 provides good impetus for not only resurrecting this building but ensuring that it continues to make the positive contribution that has been noted in the NCACA and the Register of Buildings of Local Interest.

5.22 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

5.23 The application relates to a Building of Local Interest (BLI), identified within the Newnham Conservation Area Character Appraisal as a positive contributor to the street scene and an important ‘gateway’ building when approaching the village from Ashwell Road. Whilst the building 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.

5.24 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 secure its long-term viable use as a bakery.

5.25 The removal of unsympathetic modern features, replacement of the deteriorating fibre-cement roof, and introduction of appropriately scaled openings are considered to represent a modest enhancement to the non-designated heritage asset and the wider conservation area.

5.26 It is therefore considered that the proposed development would ensure the long-term future of the building without harming its significance, thereby preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the Newnham Conservation Area.



- 5.27 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

- 5.28 The nearest residential properties comprise the 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.
- 5.29 Given the distances involved, it is unlikely that the proposed use of part of the barn as a bakery would give rise to any material harm to the living conditions of these or other neighbouring properties.

Highways Matters

Safety and Capacity

- 5.30 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 building.



- 5.31 It is considered that the existing access arrangements are suitable in connection to a modest operation such as that proposed; particularly given the small-scale of the proposed bakery.

Parking

- 5.32 A total of 8 parking spaces are proposed immediately to the north-east of the barn. This is considered to be a proportionate amount of parking based on the modest nature of the operation and its relatively small scale.

Other Matters

Ecology: Protected Species

- 5.33 A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) has been carried out confirming that the existing building provides 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

- 5.34 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 an existing agricultural barn to form an artisan bakery, with associated external alterations to facilitate the change of use.
- 6.2 The proposed development relates to the sensitive re-use of an existing rural building within the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt. The proposal would bring a structurally sound, historically established building back into an active and viable use as a small-scale bakery, supporting rural economic diversification and local service provision. Given that the works involve the conversion of an existing building 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 proposed bakery would provide a modest local commercial facility within the built core of Newnham, a Category B village. With a gross internal floor area of approximately 82sqm, the proposal would clearly fall within the scope of small-scale shops and services supported by LP Policy



ETC7. The use would serve the day-to-day needs of the local community, while also making productive use of an existing building at the edge of the historic village core. The proposed land use is therefore considered to accord with Policy ETC7.

- 6.4 In heritage and design terms, the application building 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, while removing unsympathetic modern features, replacing the deteriorating roof and introducing modest, well-proportioned openings. The proposed works would enhance the appearance of the building and secure its medium to long-term use, without harming the significance of the non-designated heritage asset, the character and appearance of the conservation area, or the setting of nearby listed buildings.
- 6.5 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 the building and its wider conservation area setting.

- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 In light of the above, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.