

## CONSERVATION TEAM CONSULTATION APPLICATION RESPONSE

|                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>APPLICATION REF:</b>      | 25/01767/FPH                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>CASE OFFICER:</b>         | VW                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>APPLICATION SITE:</b>     | Windmill House, Bennetts Lane, Rushden, Buntingford<br>Hertfordshire SG9 0SH                                                                                                                        |
| <b>DESCRIPTION OF WORKS:</b> | Erection of detached timber garage and workshop outbuilding with storage, following demolition of existing detached outbuilding/garage (as amended by plans received on 07/08/2025 and 16/09/2025). |

### RECOMMENDATION:

Await feedback before giving a final recommendation. However, I am minded raising an **OBJECTION** on the basis that the proposal will fail to satisfy the provisions of Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031.

### SHORT SUMMARY:

#### Impact on building's special character

The proposal will have a small impact upon the wider setting of nearby listed buildings.

#### Impact on character or appearance of the Rushden Conservation Area (RCA).

The proposal will have an impact upon the RCA's appearance.

#### Harm, preserve or enhance.

The glazed gable end and number of roof lights would occasion a small amount of harm to the RCA.

### SITE CONTEXT:

I previously commented under ref: 24/02799/PREH

Windmill House is grade II listed and is located within the Rushden Conservation Area. Both the building and the area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of Section 16 of the NPPF. The building was added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest on 27 May 1968, and the list entry can be seen at the following link:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1102667?section=official-list-entry>

Ten metres east of Windmill House stands another grade II listed building described in the list entry as:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1176020?section=official-list-entry>

The Ordnance Survey map regression indicates the following:

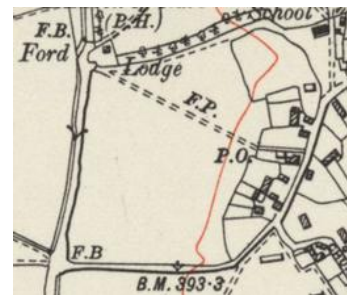
**Surveyed: 1877**  
**Published: 1883**



**Revised: 1896**  
**Published: 1898**



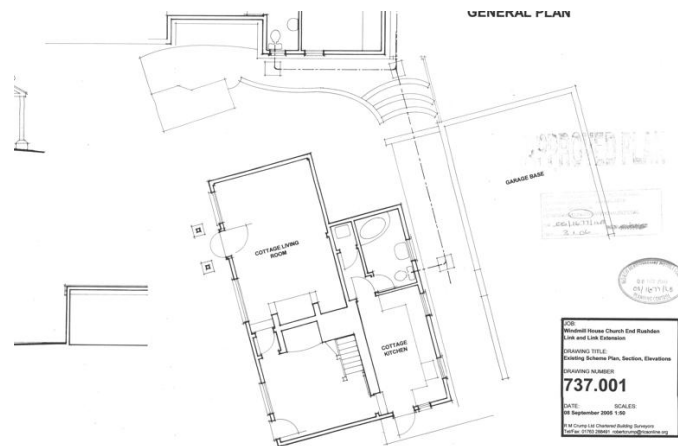
**Revised: 1946 to 1947**  
**Published: ca. 1950**



*With permission from the National Library of Scotland*

As noted in the map regression above, the residential curtilage to Windmill House appears to have been more compact.

The last planning history relating to listed building 10M east were refs: 05/01676/1HH and 05/01677/1LB for 'Underground and single storey link between main house and cottage'. The reason for mentioning this is that Windmill House already appears to have annexe accommodation and the current proposal is annotated with '*Future Assisted Living Area*'.



## DETAILED ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The key heritage issues are:

- Whether permission would be granted to take down the building before considering any replacement,
- Impact of proposal on the setting and potentially the significance of nearby listed buildings, and
- Impact upon the character and appearance of the Rushden Conservation Area

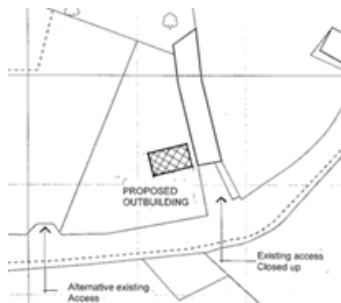
I have not been to site to inspect the interior of the building, and no survey is provided indicating whether it is structurally sound and 'fit for purpose'. It is acknowledged that the existing outbuilding is not conducive to providing 3 garage spaces. If the building serves as a workshop and log store and maybe parking for one vehicle, the question is whether the proposal can be justified as providing the additional footprint for a home office/gym considering this distance from the main house and at the entrance to the RCA. Can this be described as a 'home office' in planning terms in this location?

I have not been able to ascertain or attach any significance to the outbuilding in heritage terms, and I do not consider that it contributes to the significance of Windmill House or indeed any other listed buildings in the vicinity. The building is discretely located off Bennett's Lane behind a road frontage tree/scrub screen. In my opinion, the outbuilding's appearance as a low, linear outbuilding is such that it has a relatively neutral impact on the character and appearance of the RCA. I note two garage/outbuildings in a more conspicuous location south of Old Thatches

A key aspect of this proposal is the relationship of the outbuilding to Windmill House. Unlike the listed cottage 10m east of Windmill House and described as already serving as an outbuilding to Windmill House, the outbuilding subject of this application is somewhat divorced from the house, so given its location, the site could be perceived as a separate parcel. If the demolition of the existing outbuilding is supported (and there does not appear to be a conservation reason to resist this), then the question is whether a replacement building is acceptable in planning/conservation terms.



Planning permission was granted under ref: 13/00053/1HH for 'Erection of detached outbuilding, demolition of existing retaining wall and closure of existing access and removal of two holly trees'.



In 2013, the case officer reported the following (my emphasis in red):

*The proposed building would be located on an existing hardstanding (where a previous building was removed). The proposed building would be approx. 7.4m in depth by approx. 4.6m in width. The ridge height would be approx. 3.75m, which would be the same as the existing outbuilding. It would be black timber featheredge weatherboarding and the roof would be corrugated fibre cement sheeting (Black Marley Eternit Profile 3 fibre cement roofing). The doors would be black timber boarded doors. The site is relatively well screened by trees from public views, but the proposal would be just visible from public views from the road to the south west, however the building would read against the existing outbuilding. I have discussed the proposal with the Conservation Officer he would raise no objections.....*

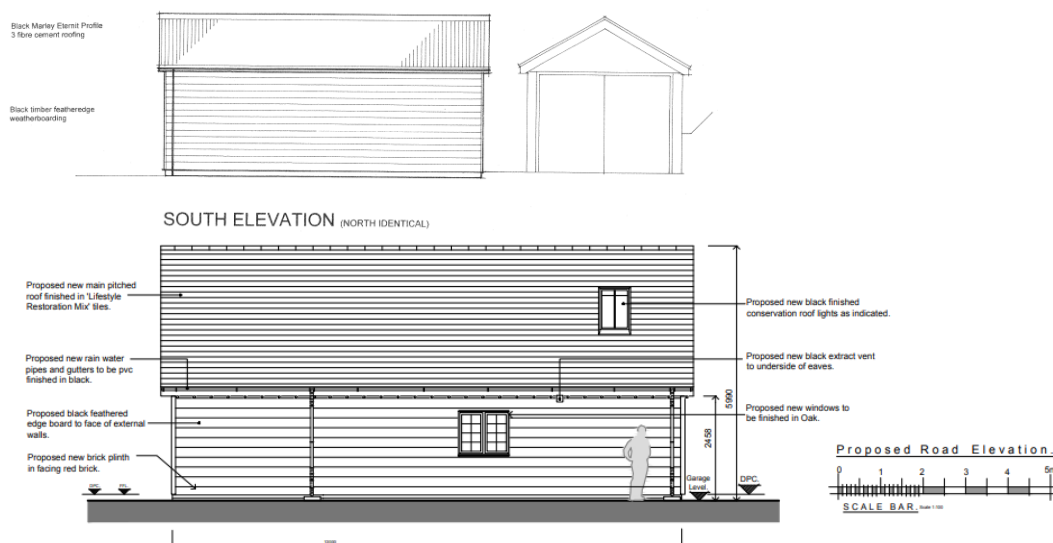
*..... The site falls within an Archaeological Area. The County Archaeologist was not consulted in this instance as the application is a small scale householder proposal and the proposed building would be on a similar footprint to an existing concrete base, which would indicate this area has already been disturbed.....*

The current proposal would result in a similar 'L-shaped arrangement' to that of the existing building + the scheme approved under ref: 13/00053/1HH (had that been implemented). Whilst similar in form, the current proposal is nonetheless wider and taller. Although I appreciate the similarities here, the erection of a 20,230mm long building with a 5990mm ridge and 6000mm gable widths will result in a substantial building when compared with the existing. Furthermore, the cumulative impact of the framed and glazed west facing gable end, the glazed doors to the north elevation, small-pane windows, and several roof lights, would result in an outbuilding with an overly residential character. There is an anomaly on the elevation in that there would appear to be north and south facing roof lights on the short projection when looking at the Front Entrance Elevation but there is no roof light on the north roof slope of the Proposed Gable & Entrance Elevation. There will be a minimum of 7 but maybe 8 roof lights proposed in total. It is unclear as to why 6no. roof lights are required over car and tractor spaces.

It is also worthwhile noting that there have also been previous enquiries under refs: 17/01538/1PRE & 17/04088/PRE to locate a new dwelling to the west of this outbuilding but also demolishing the outbuilding to form a garage building serving the new dwelling. Officer responses were issued on 19 June 2017 and 13 December 2017 respectively and whilst the content of those enquiries remain confidential, the conclusion that an application of the type presented for pre-app in 2017 would not be supported in this location, is to an extent relevant but the policy position may have changed.



The existing building is much lower with no opportunity to create a first floor and the same can be said of the 2013 consented scheme. The new build is a much more substantial building and whilst a partial mezzanine is shown, a first floor could effectively be created throughout if permission is granted and I question whether this is why 3no. roof lights are shown on the east and west elevations?



## HERITAGE POLICY ASSESSMENT:

### Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:

Sections 66(1) and 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:

This comes down to a judgement of whether there would harm to the setting and potentially the significance of nearby listed buildings and what would be the impact upon the character and appearance of the Rushden Conservation Area. There would be no direct impact upon the significance of listed buildings. But the size and external appearance does concern me with respect to the character and appearance of the RCA. Although this building is shorter than the existing, the ability to potentially introduce a first floor throughout suggests that the useable floorspace is significantly greater than what the existing building delivers. Additionally, I question the justification for the following:

- 2 tractor spaces (could reduce length by 1 bay?),
- 8no. roof lights (justification for 3no. east facing roof lights?),
- 2no. external entrances (access workshop through gym/office space?)
- Amount of glazing to the north and west elevation of gym/office (weatherboard gable end?)

I remain convinced that this proposal has the potential to be transformed into residential at later date but clearly that would be considered on its own merits if such an application materialised. A smaller building with less glazing would more readily convey the attributes of an outbuilding and for this reason I encourage the case officer to seek changes before offering a final recommendation.

**OFFICER:** Mark Simmons

**DATE:** 29/09/2025