

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 23/00407/FP & 23/00408/LBC

Date: 07/08/2023

Planning Officer: MT

Address: Node Court, Drivers End Lane, Codicote, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 8TR

Subject: See below

The proposed development is described as:

- **23/00407/FP** - *Conversion of Node Court to 8no. dwellings. Conversion of Midden building to residential and the erection of 6no. terraced dwelling-houses and 2no. detached dwelling houses as development to facilitate the restoration of Node Court together with associated car parking, landscaping, boundary treatment and ancillary works.*
- **23/00408/LBC** - *External and internal alterations to facilitate the restoration and conversion of Node Court to provide 8no. dwellings.*

I advise that the LBC description is amended to read as '*External and internal alterations to facilitate the restoration and conversion of Node Court to provide 8no. dwellings and to provide 1no. dwelling at the 'Midden'.*'

The Local Plan and NPPF

Policies HE1 and HE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 are relevant as are the following paragraphs of the NPPF:

80 b) and c). (Planning policies and decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless b) the development would represent the optimal viable use of a heritage asset or would be appropriate enabling development to secure the future of heritage assets and c) the development would re-use redundant or disused buildings and enhance its immediate setting)

130 c) (sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment),

194 (local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)

197 c) (desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),

199 (great weight should be given to the asset's conservation),

200 (clear and convincing justification), and

202 (harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use).

208. (assess whether the benefits of a proposal for enabling development, which would otherwise conflict with planning policies but which would secure the future conservation of a heritage asset, outweigh the disbenefits of departing from those policies).

Context

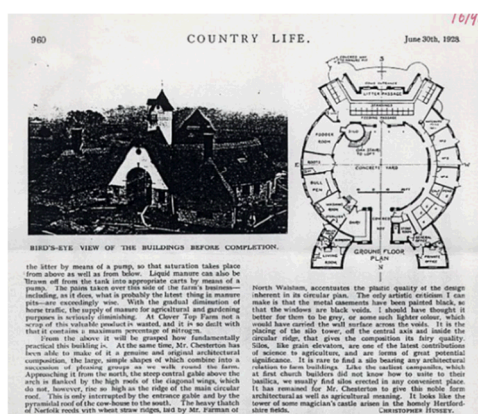
Node Court is grade II listed and is located on Drivers End Lane, Codicote. The building was added to the Statutory List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest on 8 January 1981 and the list entry reads as follows:

Model dairy, now offices. 1928 by Maurice Chesterton for the American businessman Carl Holmes. The design has its roots in the Picturesque revival and was probably inspired by Marie Antoinette's dairy in 'Le Hameau', Versailles. Circular rendered brick building mainly of 1 storey and attic arranged around a courtyard and covered with a continuous roof of thatch. Plastic casement windows, formerly metal frame. N entrance has broad 2- storey arch set in a wide gable. Offset 1-storey wings each side. On opposite side of courtyard is a 2-storey cottage with timber frame balcony. Large 3-storey tower to the SE with eyebrow dormers in circular pyramid roof. The circular courtyard acted as turning space for milk lorries. To the SE is a covered way, formerly also thatched, which was equipped with a mechanical bucket conveyor system and leads to the dungery, a low rectangular thatched, hipped-roof structure. The Node set standards for hygiene and efficient dairy farming in England. It resembles contemporary expressionist buildings in Holland. (Country Life, 30.6.1958).

The building had already partly been converted to office use when a fire on the 12 July 2015 destroyed a large portion of the thatched roof on the south side and caused considerable damage. Subsequently, disuse and general exposure to the elements has had a detrimental effect on the surviving portions.

The following is an extract from the 30th June 1928 edition of 'Country Life' magazine and it is interesting to note the following comments from Christopher Hussey that the building:

- Is 'fundamentally practical';
- Is a 'genuine and original architectural composition';
- That the roof is 'Norfolk Reed with wheat straw ridges laid by Mr Farnham of North Walsham';
- That the 'Only artistic criticism I can make is that is that the metal casements have been painted black so that the windows are black voids. I should have thought it better for them to be grey, or some lighter colour, which would have carried the wall surface across the voids'; and
- That 'It is the placing of the silo tower, off the central axis and inside the circular ridge, that gives the composition its fairy quality'.



There is considerable planning history relating to this site much of which is documented and there is more history as far back as the early 1970's when permission was granted for this building to be converted to a dwellinghouse with ancillary dairy, office, garages and stables (E1/5395-73). Under ref: 1/1053/76(624),

skylights were granted for the first time. Ten months after listing, permission was granted for 'Alterations and refurbishment to facilitate its use as offices and two dwellings, with provision of 2 car ports and 10 parking spaces' under refs: 1/960/81(622) & 1/978/81(636)LB. Installation of dormer windows as a variation of part of consent ref: 97/0337/1LB granted 19.6.97 was **refused listed building consent** under appn ref: 97/01045/1LB on 13/11/1997.

With regard to the latter application, the officer's delegated file note reads as follows:

*"These further applications have been submitted in an endeavour to persuade your officers to change their minds upon the advice given and the decision reached. A detailed report has been prepared on behalf of the applicants by a historic building consultant which I have taken into account in maintaining my view that the introduction of dormer windows, whilst improving natural lighting to the first-floor proposed office space, **would introduce features that would not preserve the integrity of the original roof design provided by the uninterrupted sweep of the circular thatched roof**".*

I previously commented on 19/12/2019 under ref: 18/03367/LBC for 'External and internal alterations to facilitate the restoration and conversion of Node Court to provide 9no. dwellings'.

In 2019, I referred to the 63 page 'Historic Building Appraisal and Impact Assessment' (Dec 2018) prepared by Archaeological Solutions Ltd. This document has been updated and I suggest, superseded by the Historic Building Impact Assessment (January 2023) and at 1.1 thereof the above is acknowledged. At 6.1 of the HBIA it states: *The proposed development plan generally follows the alterations proposed in 2018 but with some revisions following that assessment to reduce any perceived impact into the significance of the building. What follows is an assessment of the proposed plans as provided in January 2023 and reproduced as Figs. 9-16.*

On 11/05/2021 under ref: 18/03367/LBC a response was received from Briffa Phillips regarding internal changes that I had previously suggested. I did not comment on the changes at the time.

A significant change to the scheme suggested at this point was the omission of roof lights or their replacement with eyebrow dormer windows (this matter is addressed below under the relevant sub-heading).

It is the response to the internal changes in 2021 that are of particular interest and the fact that spiral staircases remain a significant part of the internal layout.

For instance, with Flats 2 & 7, I encouraged dog-leg staircases in the vicinity of the ground floor Bedroom 3 (which would then be omitted) and first floor bathroom (which would have to be relocated). I suggested that this could potentially be designed to rise in line with the first-floor landing/corridor but for this to work I indicated that Bedroom 2 could receive an ensuite whilst the main bathroom is moved further along the corridor. Briffa Phillips concluded that the original layout is the optimum layout, neutral in significance, in relation to the original interior.

With regard to Flats 3 and 6, I once again, suggested that the proposed spiral staircase is replaced with a more conventional staircase and that this could be located in the position of the proposed kitchen i.e. stairs/hallway immediately behind the front door. The WC could also be located alongside the staircase. Once again Briffa Phillips pushed back on this suggestion on the basis that this reconfiguration results in a number of unsuccessful spaces such as a poor layout to the kitchen as the window sills here are lower than kitchen counter heights, the underside of the

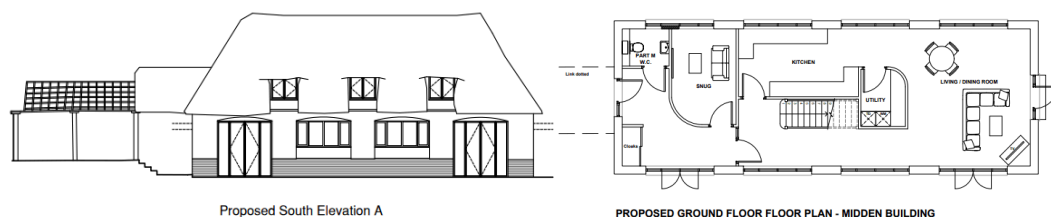
staircase will be visible in the main bedroom, the loss of a separate study room and a cramped smaller bathroom.

Whilst the proposed layout would not occasion harm to the heritage asset, I remain of the view that the staircase options I have suggested previously would work better.

At the time, Briffa Phillips stated that the original internal Flat 2, 3, 6 and 7 layouts had been very carefully designed to optimise the best light and space planning should be kept with the inclusion of all suggested eyebrow dormer instead of rooflights and external amendments.

Further changes were to the Midden building and Briffa Phillips stated that amended drawing nos. 1581 217A, 218C, 219B, 220B, 221A, 222A, 223A, 224A, 225B and 226A incorporated the Senior Conservation Officer's suggestions.

In 2019 I stated that *"..... I would be prepared to consider modifying the openings at both ends to bring more natural light into and views out from, the entrance lobby and the living/dining room. This would also maintain symmetry to this elevation."* Whilst I do not intend retracting those comments, having looked at the Midden scheme afresh, my thoughts are that whilst the enlarged opening to the far left of Elevation A would balance with the enlarged opening serving the living/dining room, I encourage the retention of the existing opening serving the hallway entrance and I would rather support an asymmetrical elevation.



Dormer windows v roof lights

Is there not a contradiction between paragraphs 6.9 and 6.10 of the HBIA as follows:

On the one hand para 6.9 states: *For the most part, the existing window arrangement will be maintained with existing windows refurbished or replaced where necessary (Proposal 6). The use of existing apertures throughout the scheme is a positive approach to a historic building conversion and conservation, limiting the alteration of fabric, while the existing windows are of no historic interest. A series of new roof lights are proposed to be accommodated within the existing roof light apertures. This would have no impact on historic fabric.*

Whilst para 6.10 of the HBIA says: ***These comprise eyebrow dormer windows and are shown on Fig. 12. This reflects a design change from the 2018 proposed development whereby inline roof lights were proposed both in the position of existing rooflights and in new locations.*** It was established that the addition of roof lights would have no physical impact of historic fabric but that the introduction of rooflights could puncture the original uninterrupted roof form. However, the use of eyebrow dormers is not out of keeping with either the roof form or the architectural style of the building and observation of photographs showing the building in use as a dairy show there is a precedent.

This confusion also exists with the submitted plans. On the one hand, Briffa Phillips drawing nos. 232, 232, 233 and 234 show roof lights to be introduced whereas Fig 12 in the HBIA, Wardell Armstrong drawing no. BE10614/012, indicates eyebrow dormers? I seek clarification on this point but I reiterate that I am prepared to support eyebrow dormers.



Thatching the walkway between the Dairy and the Midden

I note para 6.11 of the HBIA which states: *The re-building of the roof and re-thatching is proposed. This may require some replacement of timber, but this would be of low impact as the existing material is modern and most likely dates from the conversion prior to the 1980s. The re-thatching of the walkway between Dairy and Midden is proposed, providing a positive enhancement and preserving the existing material.*

This is positively encouraged and is seen as a heritage benefit.

Potential implications of the 'Dorset Model'

Dorset Council has prepared advice about the requirements for the extension or construction of new buildings with thatched roofs that are within 12m of a boundary and advises the following:

The 'Dorset Model' has been jointly produced by the Local Authorities across Dorset in conjunction with Dorset Fire & Rescue Service, the National Society of Master Thatchers, and after consultation with the National Inspection Council for Electrical Installation Contracting and the Building Research Establishment Ltd on the basis that evidence has shown that thatch can be made sacrificial in the event of fire. We recommend early consultation with a member of Building Control staff when considering thatch as each proposal is considered upon its own merits.

Building Control requirements;

- *rafters are to be overdrawn with a minimum 30 minute fire barrier (integrity and insulation) which should be water resisting*
- *50 x 25 battens are recommended on a micro-porous boarding to allow the thatch to breathe (Dorset Fire and Rescue Service recommend a 60 minute barrier)*
- *the use of a flexible material or cavity foam as a fire resisting barrier is not acceptable for the purposes of the Dorset Model*
- *the chimney, including the pot, should end at least 1.8m above the height of the ridge*
- *due to the risk of condensation forming as hot gases cool, chimney pots should be limited to a maximum height of 600mm*
- *a domestic mains and battery powered, interlinked smoke alarm system will be required with one smoke alarm fitted in the roof void*
- *the smoke alarm system should be in accordance with Approved Document B to B.S. 5839 Pt. 6: 2004*
- ***a terrace may not consist of more than three thatched dwellings together***
- *the use of intumescent mastic is required to help seal the fire barrier along all its junctions*

Ideally, the principal building should remain entirely thatched. Although not a new build and considering that the building has been susceptible to fire in the past, I question whether the repair, reinstatement and conversion of the principal building would benefit from a practical intervention by applying the 'Dorset Model'. Of particular relevance here, is the reference to a terrace not consisting of more than three thatched dwellings. Although having a significant impact upon the external appearance of the listed building, I question whether tiling the roofs of the sections that sit at 6 o'clock and 12 o'clock could be justified on the basis of creating an effective fire brake.

Setting

I note para 6.17 of the HBIA which states: *Early photographs show the building in an exposed setting with very little localised landscaping. Since that time the area has matured, with large trees and hedges now softening the setting. The result has the effect of enclosing the site and obscuring distant views from the wider countryside (apart from the tower-silo). Picturesque landscaping marks the approach from the north, where a small bridge crosses a pond in an area with mature trees. The area between the Dairy and the eastern boundary is mostly taken up by hard-standing for car parking but has been subdivided by tall hedging. Overall, the appreciation of the heritage asset is best experienced from the south and west where views remain largely uninterrupted and of similar character to the original design.*

Whilst at 6.18 it states: *The relationship between the dairy and the midden is one of subservience. The distance between them reflected the need for hygiene in milk production and the prevention of tuberculosis. This subordinate relationship is reflected in the plainer architectural design, but the two maintain a link through the formerly covered walkway, which stands within a well-developed garden with ornamental shrubs.*

Impact of proposed new ranges on the setting of Node Court (enabling development)

In July 2021, it is my understanding that Avison Young considered the Node Court Construction Costs: Revised Figures Post-Pandemic, May 2021 (encompassing the enabling scheme) and concluded that their sensitivity analysis shows that:

"small changes in build costs or residential value decreases the residential land to below zero indicating that the buffer provided even with the enabling scheme is limited. It is worth considering this in case the permission is undeliverable given economic changes that may take place due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

In conclusion our findings indicate that no enabling development is required if no planning obligations are sought and our understanding on the VAT position is correct. However, the scheme is highly sensitive to small changes in variables and therefore changes in economic conditions may mean that enabling development is required in the short to medium term."

On 09/08/2021, the former case officer advised the applicant as follows:

The application is currently mid-consultation with the Conservation Officer and Herts Highways on information submitted 15/07/2021.

In addition, we are awaiting confirmation from yourself that the applicant is willing to cover the cost of the quote provided from Avison Young (sent to you under separate cover)

As it stands, we are awaiting the outcome of a further assessment by Avison Young whether the enabling development is required and justified. This is based on updated Vat information from the previous assessment.

Following the initial assessment by Avison Young, the conclusion was not certain, subject to VAT, and susceptible to changes in build costs and house prices. As a result, we explored the

option of permitting four positions with three options (representing enabling development of either one; two or three new units) secured by S106 agreement.

Whilst you have provided site plans for the three options, we are currently not progressing that plan, in favour of re-assessing the enabling development of three units with Avison Young checking the updated information.

I have added all relevant correspondence, and will save this email, serving as a handover.

It is imperative that there is a clear understanding at this stage as to the merits of enabling development (of which I am sure there is a case) and ensuring that the amount of new development sought is convincingly justified – we need to establish what is an acceptable quantum up front.

At 6.15 of the HBIA it states the following and with which I concur: *In order to quantify the effect of the proposals on the setting of the listed building, it is useful firstly to characterise the existing setting and context. This can then be used as a basis against which the proposals can be judged to establish how their implementation may affect the perception of the heritage assets.*

The HBIA acknowledges that the site remains in open countryside (6.16) and that early photographs show the building in an exposed setting with very little localised landscaping (6.17). Further on at 6.17, I do not fully concur with the view that “*the appreciation of the heritage asset is best experienced from the south and west where views remain largely uninterrupted and of similar character to the original design*”. **In my opinion, the view from the northern approach is also key and the relationship of the area to the east where the Midden and the connecting thatched walkway would be experienced, should not be understated.** At 6.19 of the HBIA it is suggested that “*a principal threat to the immediate setting is posed by the nature of the conversion of the buildings and the creation of external-facing gardens, with associated boundaries, fencing and car parking*” but I suggest that the principal threat would be from the impact of new buildings.



Aerial View – Early 1930's

Crucial to this proposal is para 6.22 of the HBIA where it states “*Several new dwellings are also proposed and are shown on Figs. 14-16. These have been cited as required for enabling development. It must be assessed whether the proposed new ranges, which could otherwise conflict with planning policies, would secure the future conservation of the Dairy, and whether this outweighs the disbenefits of departing from those policies (MHCLG 2021, para:208)*”

I now turn to the proposed new build. In 2018, no new build was proposed to the north and up to three dwellings only were proposed to the east (see below left). The

currently proposed terrace (below right) is longer than that previously proposed and is to accommodate twice as many units.



According to para 6.24 of the HBIA, units 9 – 14 (see below) comprise a row of six terraced dwellings, one-and-a-half stories tall, **reflecting the style and form of workers' cottages.**



At 6.26 of the HBIA states that:

*“.....The height and massing of the terrace is retained within existing levels and **there are no chimney stacks to not overtly extend the building height above this.** As cottages, **the absence of chimney stacks appears somewhat incongruous** but by contrast the continuous roofline and multi-pane doors and windows lends a quasi-industrial appearance in some respects which is not out of keeping. **There is a high number of rooflights and paired ground floor windows proposed. This could appear crowded...**”*

As noted in the list entry, the principal building was designed as a model dairy in 1928. I do not consider that a terrace designed with the type of through-eaves dormers shown, the number of roof lights and overly busy fenestration throughout and with no chimney stacks would be representative of worker's cottages when the HBIA goes on to talk about a 'quasi-industrial' appearance. **The design case is not in my opinion, well made. Depending upon the quantum of enabling development required, there is a case for looking at the following images as providing a greater sense of 'worker cottage' aesthetic including chimney stacks.** The image bottom right could, for instance, be modified to provide paired entrances from each forward projecting gable but as I say, this is subject to the quantum being justified.



At 6.27 the HBIA states that:

The new terraced cottages would be mainly visible from the eastern side of the Dairy as it lies within a c.15m radius. This area has already been enclosed and subdivided by modern development and no longer reflects the open historical nature of the site. New buildings are unlikely to compromise it further. Other negative impacts of past alterations are likely be reversed in the process of adding the terrace.

In my opinion, the area on the eastern side of the Dairy has not been enclosed and subdivided by modern development or no longer reflects the open historical nature of the site as illustrated on the survey plan. I, therefore, disagree with the suggestion that “*New buildings are thus unlikely to compromise it further*”.

The HBIA refers to two proposed detached dwellings at the northern end of the site, situated to either side of the entrance from the road. The proposed dwellings lie in an area of the site **where it is proposed to largely retain the existing layout**. This surely cannot be so if the lawn area towards the front of the site is developed?

At 6.29 of the HBIA it acknowledges that the Dairy building is visible from the road to the north-west and north-east. I do not agree that the north-west view does not enhance our understanding of the building. Quite the contrary, the front of the site established the rural, verdant context and passing through this space and arriving at the bridge/pond establishes a heightened sense of arrival. **This narrative would be harmed by placing a dwelling either side of the entrance road. Even in well-established small country house estates where there may be only one point of access would you rarely find two ‘lodge houses’ side-by-side. The Heritage Consultant accepts that the construction of the north-west dwelling would result in a ‘changed view of the Dairy from the road’. This is understating the perceived impact and I suggest that not only would there be a changed view in terms of Unit 16 but there would also be a changed harmful view with respect to Unit 17 also.**

Unless the assessment of the development dictates that the quantum of new build sought is required in full, I take the view that any built form in this forward position is likely to have an adverse impact upon the setting of the principal building on site. **I am not convinced that either of the two buildings (described as lodge houses) are appropriate in this context even though I note the suggested Arts and Crafts influence. In addition, the reference to turrets reflecting the silo structure at the dairy is unnecessary and will deflect attention away from the main building.**



On 21 July 2015, the main living area of proposed Flat 4 contained panelling and a 4-centred fireplace as noted in the images below but it is apparent that these are later interventions following an earlier fire.



Since 2015, the building had been stripped back further with the panelling and fire surround now removed. There is evidence to suggest that these features were later installations following the previous fire and consequently I place limited significance on these even though the photos above convey a positive image of this later interior.

As suggested previously, consideration should be given to introducing a through floor platform lift to this flat and would probably be best located in the vicinity of the WC to Flat 5. This has been introduced and is acceptable.



Suggested conditions (working draft and further conditions may be considered necessary in due course)

1. The work to which this consent relates shall be begun by not later than the expiration of the period of 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The building shall be re-thatched using Norfolk Reed with wheat straw ridges and not combed wheat reed unless otherwise agreed and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031.

3. Before work begins, precautions shall be taken to secure and protect the following exterior features during the building work:

- i. Plaque on gateway range (Margot Holmes)
- ii. Hobbs, Hart & Co iron plate
- iii. Tap with a recessed cast-iron surround

as recorded at DP33, DP41, DP45 respectively of Appendix 4 - Photographic Index forming part of the 'Historic Building Impact Assessment January 2023' prepared by Wardell Armstrong supporting this consented scheme. No such features shall be disturbed or removed temporarily or permanently without the prior approval in writing of the Local Planning Authority and shall remain in place for the duration of the construction/ alteration work hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031.

4. Details of all external flue extraction systems shall be submitted to and approved in be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of that part of the works hereby granted consent.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this grade II listed building under Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

- 4 Metric scale section drawings of all new windows (including 1:1 scale drawing of proposed glazing bars) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the manufacture and installation of the new windows

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this curtilage-listed building under Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

- 5 Details of all new internal & external doors shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the manufacture and installation of the new internal & external doors.

Reason: To ensure that special regard is paid to protecting the special architectural and historic interest and integrity of this curtilage-listed building under Section 16(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031.

Note: I offer no conditions at the current on the planning proposal on the basis that I am currently registering an **OBJECTION.**

Recommendation

Whilst it is imperative that a future long terms use is found for Node Court it is important to understand the costs (not just in financial terms) of enabling development.

With respect to application ref: 23/00408/LBC, although the scheme appears to satisfy Local Plan Policies HE1 and HE2, I await clarification regarding roof lights v eyebrow dormers, potential impact of the 'Dorset Model' and suggested minor change to the south elevation at The Midden. Before giving a final recommendation.

With respect to application ref: 23/00407/FP, the new development in this location does not clearly outweigh the harm when taking account of the asset's significance and importance, and I am not convinced that all feasible solutions to avoid and mitigate that harm have been fully assessed. In the meantime, I await feedback regarding obtaining an assessment of the viability case before proceeding towards determination. Having said that, I raise an objection to the quantum of development shown, particularly, with respect to Units 16 and 17 but also to the length and overall design including the number of units sought within the terraced building.

Suggested reason for refusal (appn ref: 23/00407/FP only)

Node Court, The Midden and the former thatched walkway between form a grade II listed former model dairy built in 1928 with its design having roots in the Picturesque revival and was probably inspired by Marie Antoinette's dairy in 'Le Hameau', Versailles. This circular rendered brick former agrarian building stands in a rural and relatively verdant, open setting. Its significance lies not only in its unique design and extensive use of thatch but also in the fact that it set early C20 standards for hygiene and efficient dairy farming in England. By reason of the proposed terrace's length, overly busy fenestration, lack of chimney stacks and pronounced through eaves rear dormers, this building will have a significant and detracting impact upon the open, verdant setting to Node Court and its relationship to the Midden. In addition, by reason of the forward position of the 'lodge houses' these would have an erosive impact upon the entrance to Node Court, access to which is obtained via a bridge over a pond. To erect lodge/gate houses to what is a former dairy does not appear to be well justified and only serves to create a new street frontage rather than establishing a sense of arrival and indeed expectation in front of the host building. The turret features are considered whimsical additions creating overly grand and incongruous buildings at the entrance of what was once an agrarian use. On the other hand, some cottages on the east side may be justified not only in terms of enabling but also in the context of being perceived as dairy workers accommodation. As presented, all three new builds within the close setting of Node Court would harm its significance and would fail to satisfy the provisions of Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, the aims of paragraphs 80 b) and c), 130 c) and Section 16 of the NPPF and the aims of Policies HE1 and HE2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031. The degree of harm would be less than substantial and between moderate and high on that continuum. There is no housing supply deficiency and unless there is a fully justified and tested enabling case, the sum of the public benefits would be insufficient to outweigh the considerable importance and weight that even the less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset carries.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer