OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00259/OUT **Outline Application**

Proposal: Erection of single storey dwelling (all matters reserved except access)

Location: Gloucester Barn Fen Road Pidley

Applicant: Mr David Hopkins

Grid Ref: 533078 278238

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The 0.137-hectare application site comprises an area of amenity space to the front of Gloucester Barn, a single storey dwelling off Fen Road, Pidley. The site located to the north of the village of Pidley is bound by vegetation to the east, south and west. The site is located on the edge of the village of Pidley but is considered to be within the built-up area of the village given the site comprises the grounds of large curtilage which relates closely to the built form of Gloucester Barn. The site is also considered to be within the built-up are of Pidley, as the site presents an opportunity to round off land which is physically, functionally and visually related to existing buildings and is well contained by existing hedgerows.

Gloucester Barn was a former agricultural barn which was permitted for the change of use to a dwelling in September of 2015 (planning application ref 15/00377/FUL). A condition imposed on 15/00377/FUL restricted class A to H permitted development rights on the site, including the erection of a building's incidental to the enjoyment of a dwellinghouse, without the prior written approval of the Local Planning Authority. No other conditions pertaining to development on the large residential curtilage was imposed.

The site is within Flood Zone 1 and has an overall low risk of fluvial flooding as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Huntingdonshire's latest Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024). Notwithstanding this, a 16m width area running north/south across the site is subject to 1 in 1000 (low risk) year surface water flooding. There are no listed buildings within or in the immediate vicinity of the site. The site is not within a conservation area. Protected ecological designations are not within or in proximity to the site.

This application seeks outline planning permission with all matters reserved except access for the erection of a single storey residential dwelling. Details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale are 'Reserved Matters' to be considered at a future date (should outline permission be granted).

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):

* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15/05/2019)

- LP1: Amount of Development
- LP2: Strategy for Development
- LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
- LP9: Small Settlements
- LP11: Design Context
- LP12: Design Implementation
- LP14: Amenity
- LP16: Sustainable Travel
- LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- LP25: Housing Mix
- LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance

- Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD (2017)
- Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment (2007)
- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Huntingdonshire Tree Guidance Note 3
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply.

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

There is no 'made' or emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Pidley.

PLANNING HISTORY

24/80291/COND-Discharge of Condition 5 (Contamination) of 15/00377/FUL.- Acceptable not discharged 26.09.2024

20/00451/FUL-Construction of an outbuilding, brick wall and post and rail fence, use of amenity land as garden curtilage and vehicular access (retrospective). Erection of a rear extension and garage (proposed).- Permitted 23.09.2020

15/00377/FUL-Change of use and extensions to form dwelling- Permitted 04.09.2015

1408280COND-Condition information for 1400791PACOU-Dischared 17.03.2015

1400791PACOU-Change of use from agriculture to single residential dwelling.-Prior Approval Approved 04.07.2014

0703928FUL-Erection of a storage building-Permitted 28.01.2028

CONSULTATIONS
Pidley Parish Council- No objection. Recommend Approval.

Local Highway Authority- No objection. It is noted the propose dwelling would utilise the existing access for Gloucester Barn. No significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal should it gain benefit of Planning Permission.

Environmental Health Officer- No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS
No third party representations received in support or objection to the proposal at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES
The report addresses the principle, important and controversial issues which are in this case:
- The Principle of the Development
- Design, Visual Amenity and the Impact upon the Character of the Area
- Access, Highway Safety and Parking Provision
- Residential Amenity
- Biodiversity and Impact on Trees
- Flood Risk
- Development Obligations
- Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings
- Water Efficiency

*The Principle of the Development
Huntingdonshire's strategy for development is set out in Policy LP2 of the Local Plan and looks to concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities. The application site is located in the Small Settlement of Pidley whereby Local Plan Policy LP9 is the starting point to establish the principle of development.

Policy LP9 supports residential development where it is appropriately located within the built-up area of the settlement. The question to consider in this instance is whether the application site is considered part of the built-up area of Pidley.

Paragraph 8.48 of the Local Plan defines a built-up area as a distinct group of buildings that includes 30 or more homes. Land which relates more to the group of buildings rather than to the surrounding countryside is also considered to form part of the built-up area.

Local Plan paragraph 8.85 provides inclusionary and exclusionary guidance and criteria to define whether a site is within the built-up area. Paragraph 8.85 notes residential and employment buildings which are predominantly surrounded by other buildings are considered to be the within the built-up area. Furthermore, the criteria also states that land is generally considered to primarily relate to the countryside where it is surrounded by built development on less than two sides.

As stated in a preceding section of this report, the application site comprises an area of amenity space to the front of Gloucester Barn. It is acknowledged that the approved residential curtilage of Gloucester Barn (location plan 10.32.PS1 of 15/00377/FUL) does not include the land subject of this application. Notwithstanding this, the character of the land to the front of Gloucester Barn over time has changed given residential paraphernalia has encroached upon the land (May 2023 Street view imagery).

Whilst it is acknowledged that in this instance the application site is not defined as residential curtilage, the site has residential and commercial built development to the north and west (in other words on two sides) and the appearance of this site is residential in nature. It is on this basis the

Council consider this application site to relate more to Gloucester Barn and other surrounding buildings than the open countryside. The application site is therefore in the built-up area of Pidley whereby Policy LP9 is applicable.

Within the built-up areas of Small Settlements, residential development shall be supported where it is appropriately located within the built-up area and where the amount and location of development proposed is sustainable in relation to the:
a. level of service and infrastructure provision within the settlement;
b. opportunities for users of the proposed development to access everyday services and facilities by sustainable modes of travel including walking, cycling and public transport;
c. effect on the character of the immediate locality and the settlement as a whole.

The village of Pidley is serviced with a public house, church, golf complex and community centre which can be accessed by foot and the application site is located 0.2 miles from a bus stop. Bus services to Ramsey, March and St Ives and Chatteris offering a broader range of facilities and services is accessible from the application site and the frequency is approximately every 2 hours. Approximately 165 m west from the application site is a footpath connection to the bus stop and facilities/services in Pidley. Whilst it is acknowledged there is no direct footpath from the application site, this application only seeks to erect 1 dwelling within the built-up area of a sustainable settlement and the length a future occupant would have to walk without a footpath is minimal. The quantum of development proposed is therefore considered sustainable for the level of service and infrastructure provision within the settlement and in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP9 parts and b. Details of secure cycle storage imposed by condition on any consent would encourage the use of sustainable modes of travel.

Local Plan Policy LP 9 part c states a proposal that is located within a built-up area of a Small Settlement will be supported where it has a positive effect on the character of the immediate locality and the settlement as a whole. This matter is discussed in the following section of this report and is considered acceptable.

Given the above, the principle of development is acceptable and accords with the NPPF and policies LP2 and LP9 of the Local Plan to 2036, subject to compliance with other relevant policies and material considerations.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact Upon the Character of the Area
Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 state that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

Whilst the application is in outline form, consideration shall be made to determine whether the proposed amount of development can be satisfactorily accommodated on the site. An Illustrative plan which accompanies the application indicates a large sprawling single storey dwelling can be accommodated within the plot.

A detailed design should make efficient use of boundary treatments and soft landscaping on the northern and eastern boundaries of the site, to ensure the rear amenity space of the dwelling is protected from overlooking from Glouchester Barn. The siting of the proposed dwelling will also need to be carefully considered at reserved matters stage due to the constraint of surface water flooding and overlooking from Glouchester Barn. Notwithstanding the above, the application site is considered sufficiently sized to accommodate one single storey residential dwelling.

Whilst the street scene along Fen Road primarily comprises of two storey dwellings, Glouchester Barn is a single storey dwelling which is situated at a lower elevation than the application site. Should the development be permitted, conditions can be imposed that set out the design parameters of the development. A finished floor level condition and a condition limiting the quantum and hight of the

development would be imposed to protect Glouchester Barn from overbearing, overlooking and overshadowing impacts.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable with regards to the impact upon visual amenity and the character of the area. Whilst a future reserved matters application would be submitted assessing further details such as scale, layout, materials and landscaping, subject to the above, the proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies LP 9 part c, LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017), the National Design Guide and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Flood Risk
National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 seek to steer new developments to areas at lowest risk of flooding and advises this should be done through application of the Sequential Test, and if appropriate the Exceptions Test (as set out in paragraphs 174-181 of the NPPF (2024).

The application site is within Flood Zone 1 (at low risk from river and sea flooding), based on Environment Agency Floods Maps and at low risk of ground water flooding per the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024. Notwithstanding this, a 16m width area running north/south across the site is subject to 1 in 1000 (low risk) year surface water flooding

Paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2024) states the sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding (emphasis added), except in situations where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes. Whilst it is acknowledged the site is at risk from surface water flooding, this application relates to a minor development at low risk of fluvial flooding.

As only a 16m width area running north/south across the site is subject to 1 in 1000 (low risk) year surface water flooding and whilst matters relating to layout are reserved for consideration at a later stage, the Local Planning Authority consider there is sufficient space within the site for the proposed dwelling to be sited outside of the area at risk of surface water flooding.

Given the above, the minor nature of the development, the site is less than 1 hectare in size and the site is sufficiently sized to design around the surface water flood risk (details to be agreed at a later reserved matters stage), the submission of a flood risk assessment, sequential and exceptions tests for flooding are considered unnecessary in accordance with the NPPF and NPPG.

The submitted application form states surface water would be disposed of through a soakaway and foul water sewage by mains sewers. As the proposed development is minor and is at a low risk of flooding, Officers are satisfied that drainage details can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements.

The development therefore accords with Policies LP5 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Access, Highway Safety and Parking Provision
Paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024) states development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.

This application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of one residential dwelling on the site off Fen Road, Pidley with all matters reserved except access. Whilst matters pursuant to layout are reserved matters and are not for consideration at this stage, Officers need to be satisfied that a

safe access can be achieved. As such Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority (LHA) have been consulted as part of the application.

It is noted by Officers that the LHA reviewed the submitted documentation and considered that vehicular access to the host dwelling (Gloucester Barn) would be via a new access. Whilst the proposed dwelling would be accessed off Fen Road via the existing junction which services Glouchester Barn, Glouchester Barn would use an established access to the east for occupants to access the dwelling. No new accesses are proposed off Fen Road as part of this development proposal.

The LHA raised no objection to the proposal and no significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal should it gain benefit of Planning Permission.

Whilst matters relating to layout would form part of a later reserved matters application, the indicative site layout shows an area of hard surface at the front of the property proposed. The accompanying design and access statement states the indicative site plan can accommodate parking for up to two vehicles and vehicle rotating space. Officers are satisfied that sufficient parking can be accommodated within the sizable residential plot proposed and that vehicles would be able to enter and exit the site in a forward gear.

In terms of other matters, under a subsequent reserved matters application it should be demonstrated that cycle storage will be provided within the site (which is considered large enough) to accommodate storage for one cycle per bedroom in order to accord with the requirements of Policy LP17 of the Local Plan.

Overall, taking the above matters into consideration the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to parking provision and highway safety and therefore complies with Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Residential Amenity
Paragraph 135 of the NPPF 2024 states planning decisions should ensure that developments provide a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. In line with the NPPF, Local Plan Policy LP14 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

This application seeks outline permission for means of access only however, in considering this application the LPA need to be satisfied at this stage that the site is capable of accommodating the amount of development proposed without having a significantly detrimental impact on neighbouring amenity.

The closest residential dwellings to the application site are Glouchester Barn a single storey barn conversion to the rear and Capricorn House, Fen Road approximately 70m east of the application site.

The indicative site plan indicates the proposed dwelling would not be sited directly south of Glouchester Barn but southwest with most habitable rooms located furthest south from the adjacent dwelling. Conditions restricting the quantum of development and height of the proposed dwelling to single storey and securing details of the finished floor levels would mitigate concerns regarding overlooking, overbearing and overshadowing impacts on the occupants of the Glouchester Barn.

As detailed in the preceding section of this report, careful consideration in regard to the northern boundary treatments is necessary to secure the rear amenity space of the new dwelling from overlooking. The indicative site plan indicates landscape screening and 1.3m high metal railing fencing on the northern boundary. These would be considered acceptable boundary treatments in a future reserved matters stage.

Due to the separation distance between the application site and Capricorn House, Fen Road, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied the site is capable of accommodating one dwelling without having a significantly detrimental impact on the neighbouring amenity of Capricorn House.

Given the above, it is unlikely that any significant issues in terms of overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of light would be as a result of the development proposal. Nonetheless, Officers cannot comment fully at this stage given the proposal seeks outline permission for the means of access only. The proposed development is therefore considered to broadly accord with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide, the National Design Guide and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Biodiversity and Impact on Trees
Paragraph 187 of the NPPF 2024 states planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

Policy LP30 of the Local Plan requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and where possible provide a net gain. Additionally, Policy LP31 of the Local Plan requires development proposals to investigate adverse impacts to existing tree, woodland, hedge or hedgerows and supports proposals which conserve and enhance tree, woodland, hedge or hedgerows.

Given the site is within 250 metres of a pond whereby the presents of protected species would need to be investigated, an Ecological Impact Assessment conducted by green Willows Associates Ltd and dated September 2024 accompanies this application. The report concludes that the sites boundary hedgerows offer a suitable habitat for nesting birds and foraging bats, however there is no presents of these identified during the ecologists' site visit and recommends mitigation measures to avoid impacts and to enhance ecology of the site. Similarly, whilst the site is considered suitable to support foraging and commuting hedgehogs and badgers, no evidence of these species was recorded. The hedgerows forming the southern than western site boundaries are to be retained as part of the proposed development.

eDNA testing was conducted as part of the ecology survey. The report concluded that the two waterbodies, one north and one south of the application site, were assessed as poor in their suitability to support the Great Crested Newt and as such is considered highly unlikely that a GCN would be encountered by the proposed development.

Overall, given the site primarily comprises of mown garden lawn is ecological value is considered to be low. Notwithstanding this, the ecology survey details recommendations to mitigate against any potential impacts to protected species and habitats. Should the development be permitted a condition seeking a Biodiversity Method Statement detailing how the recommendations contained in the survey will be carried out can be imposed.

As of the 2nd April 2024, mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) is applicable on small sites as per paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)). The application is accompanied with a BNG matric detailing the pre-development baseline habitat value, biodiversity net gain statement and baseline habitat plan. It is noted that the submitted application form states the application is BNG exempt as the proposed development is self-build. An email received by Officers on the 11/04/2025 clarified the proposed development is not self-build and therefore the development is applicable to mandatory BNG.

The accompanying details confirm the application site comprises of artificial unvegetated, unsealed surfaces and vegetated garden which equates to 0.256 habitat units. The site also comprises of 0.0007 hedgerow units from the southern and western ornamental hedging. Whilst the proposed development would result in the loss of 0.256 habitat units the hedgerows would be retained. The Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the development would not impact on any onsite priority

habitat and agree the baseline biodiversity value of the site. Paragraph 3.2 of the submitted BNG statement states 'efforts should be made to ensure the design of the site post-development provides a net gain in biodiversity in excess of 10% of the baseline value of the site in respect of area habitats and hedgerows.' Given this is an outline application with matters pursuant to design and landscaping are to be agreed at a later date, a condition shall also be imposed on any consent for the applicants to demonstrate how 0.2816 (0.265 + 10%) habitat units will be provided as a result of the development on the residential amenity area to the front of Gloucester Barn.

Overall, Officers are satisfied with the findings of the PEA and the backline habitat value of the site and subject to the imposition of conditions to secure a Biodiversity Method Statement and Biodiversity Net Gain Plan, the proposal is considered to accord with the objectives of Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024). The development is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on hedgerows and therefore accords with Policy LP31 of the Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Development Obligations
The application is accompanied with a Unilateral Undertaking for the provision of wheeled bins dated the 20th February 2025. The application therefore accords with part H of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011) and Policy LP4 of the Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):
The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

*Accessible and Adaptable Homes
Policy LP25 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals for housing to meet the optional Building Regulation requirement M4(2)" Accessible and adaptable dwellings" unless it can be demonstrated that site specific factors make this unachievable.

A condition could be imposed upon any consent to ensure that the development is built in accordance with these standards and maintained for the life of the development.

*Water Efficiency
Policy LP12 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals for housing to comply with the optional building regulation for water efficiency, as set out in Approved Document G.

A condition could be imposed upon any consent to ensure that the development is built in accordance with these standards and that they are maintained for the life of the development.

*Conclusion
In this instance, a proposal for the erection of one residential dwelling in the built up-area of Pidley is not considered to cause significant and demonstrable harm that would outweigh the economic, social and environmental benefits of the proposal and the proposed development is considered to be compliant (subject to conditions) with relevant national and local planning policy as:

*The principle of residential development within the built-up area of a sustainable settlement is acceptable.
*The quantum of development could be accommodated and would not have a significantly adverse impact on the overall character of the area.
*The quantum of development could be accommodated and could be designed to satisfactorily safeguard the amenities of neighbouring dwellings.
*There are no overriding highway safety issues.
*The proposal will not impact on existing ecology and would be able to enhance biodiversity.

*Is acceptable in regard to flood risk and surface/foul water drainage.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that outline planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
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