OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/01121/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Replacement Community shop with timber cladded building

Location: Grafham Community Shop Grafham Village Hall Brampton Road

Applicant: Vice Chair David Russell

Grid Ref: 516396 269205

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is currently occupied by Grafham Community Shop, located to the east of the built-up area of Grafham and falls within the curtilage of Grafham Village Hall. The application site falls within Flood Zone 1 of the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning and there are no constraints relative to the site.

This application seeks permission for a replacement community shop with a timber cladded building.

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 15th May 2019)

LP2: Strategy for Development
LP9: Small Settlements
LP11: Design Context

LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

Neighbourhood Plan and relevant policies where applicable

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):

* Place Making Principles parts 3.7 Building Form and 3.8 Building Detailing

Huntingdonshire Townscape and Landscape Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (2022)

The National Design Guide (2021)

Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 (2022), policies:

GNEP 5 - supporting the local economy

GNEP 11 - support and provision of community facilities

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

9500397FUL - Erection of a community building (Permission)

1300998FUL - Siting of portacabin for use as community shop with disabled access ramp and air conditioner (Permission)

1401232NMA - Amendment to 1300998FUL to substitute smaller portacabin for that previously approved (Other Consent)

21/02235/S73 - Variation of condition C1 (time limit) and C3 (opening hours) to 1300998FUL to extend trading period (Permission)

CONSULTATIONS

Grafham Parish Council - Recommend approval, shop proved to be a valuable asset during COVID and remains so.

HDC's Environmental Health Officer - No objections with regard to environmental health matters.

HDC's Arboricultural Officer (Informal Consultation)- No objections, further comments in subsequent sections of the report.

HDC's Landscape Officer - No comment received at the time of determination.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Officer - No objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 47 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of a number of adopted neighbourhood plans. As mentioned in preceding sections of this report, Grafham has an adopted neighbourhood plan (Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan 2020 to 2036). The site falls within the built-up area of Grafham and is defined as a community facility in the Neighbourhood Plan. As such, significant weight has been given to the relevant policies therein in the determination of this application.

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:

- The Principle of Development
- Design and Visual Amenity
- Residential Amenity
- Biodiversity
- Impact on Trees
- Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement

*The Principle of Development

The application site is considered to fall within the built-up area of a Small Settlement as defined by Policy LP9 of the Local Plan to 2036, and a proposal will be supported 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.

Considering points a. and b., these are not wholly relevant to the proposed development as the level of service and infrastructure provision will not change due to the type of development proposed, neither will the opportunities for users of the facility to access this by sustainable modes. Taking into account part c., the replacement of the existing community shop, which is currently contained in a portacabin with temporary planning permission originally approved under planning reference 1300998FUL, with a timber building is considered to provide a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area in comparison to the existing building and therefore is acceptable in principle.

Additionally, proposals for development on land well related to the built-up area of a Small Settlement will be considered subject to the provisions of Policy LP22 of the Local Plan to 2036, which defines a shop as a local service and community facility. The proposed development consists of the enhancement of the existing local service, and such development is therefore supported where it:

a. is of a scale to serve local needs;
b. comprises up to a maximum of 600m² net internal floorspace for a main town centre use; and
c. provides for a new service or facility or it retains or enhances an existing service or facility, including through the provision of premises suitable for mixed use or multiple community functions.

In this case, the proposal relates to the replacement of an existing community shop, with a shop which is larger in scale and therefore considered more sufficient to serve local needs. Part b. is not wholly relevant in this case as the location of the community shop is not within a main town centre. Considering part c., the proposals help to enhance an existing facility through the increase in floorspace and of a design that is more permanent in nature, and is therefore acceptable in principle.

Taking the above into account, the proposal clearly accords with the aims of Policies LP9 and LP22 of the Local Plan to 2036 and is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant policies and considerations.

*Design and Visual Amenity

The application site comprises of the existing Grafham Community Shop, alongside ancillary parking within the site, shared between the shop, Grafham Village Hall and The Pub at Grafham, of which is adjacent to the shop as presented in the existing site plans. The proposal consists of the replacement of the existing community shop with a timber cladded building.

While the proposed replacement shop represents an increase in overall scale relative to the existing structure, it is considered to be of a modest scale in the context of its surroundings and is appropriately sited within the footprint of the existing building. The proposed shop measures 12 metres in width a maximum depth of 5 metres, with an accessibility ramp extending an additional 1.5 metres forward of the principal elevation of the shop. The shop is to consist of a flat roof, in line with existing, with the building measuring a maximum height of 2.6 metres. In terms of proposed materials, whilst the use of timber cladding differs from that of the existing shop, this provides a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. Additionally, the use of timber cladding relates well to the surroundings, with the adjacent 'The Trout' also utilising cladding. Considering this, the proposed replacement shop is considered acceptable with regards to design and enhances the appearance of the application site within the surrounding area. A condition will be implemented in this instance to control the materials and ensure that the cladding used is suitable for the type of development proposed alongside relating well to the adjacent building.

Overall, taking the above factors into consideration, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable with regard to design and visual amenity and would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the character or appearance of the area. It therefore accords with Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Residential Amenity

Given the location of the proposed shop in place of existing and the current use of the application site, alongside having regard to the proximity and separation to any adjacent neighbours or dwellings, it is not considered that there would be any unacceptable material impacts in terms of overbearing or loss of light, nor would there be any issues regarding loss of privacy or overlooking. Furthermore, although the proposal entails a modest increase in the built footprint of the

community shop, it is not considered that this would give rise to any adverse impacts in terms of noise pollution affecting nearby residential properties. This assessment is supported by the existing use of the site and the separation distances maintained between the proposed development and neighbouring dwellings.

Overall, taking these factors into account, the development is considered acceptable in terms of overshadowing, overbearing impact, overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light and would not have a significant impact upon residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 states that a development should ensure no net loss in biodiversity and achieve a net gain where possible. The application form details that the proposal would be exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain legislation as it would fall within the de minimis category and the LPA view aligns with this, as whilst there is a modest increase in footprint, the building will be located on hard surfacing and therefore impacts less then 25m² of habitat and less than 5 metres of linear hedgerow. In addition, given the commercial use of the site as well as the nature and scale of the works proposed, it is considered that separate from BNG legislation, achieving a net gain would be challenging. Having taken this into account, with the proposal resulting in no net loss of biodiversity it therefore broadly accords with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

Having regard to the above assessment, the proposal will result in no net loss of biodiversity and therefore broadly accords with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Impact on Trees

Whilst there are no trees within or nearby the application site which have been afforded formal protection, and the site is not within a Conservation Area, there are a number of mature trees to the south of the site which provide a positive contribution to the green character of the area. As such, HDC's Arboricultural Officer has been informally consulted on the proposals, stating that whilst there may be impacts on nearby trees, these are likely to be insignificant. It is highlighted that, providing the new building is located on the hardstanding that is already in place, there will be no harm to the rooting environments of the adjacent trees. In this case, the proposed building is to be erected on stilts, reducing the contact with the ground which as a result will mitigate any harm on the rooting environment of the trees. Officers acknowledge that given the location of the building, there may be some future pressure for works to be carried out to the trees (falling debris etc). this is not necessarily guaranteed to be required, and in any event as stated above, the trees are not protected and the benefits of providing this community facility outweigh any harm.

Therefore, having regard to the above assessment and advice of specialists, the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on trees and as such accords with Policy LP31 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement

Given the nature of the proposed development as a community facility, along with the existing site access and the availability of off-street parking, Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Officer has been consulted. They have raised no objections to the proposals, with the proposals involving only the replacement of the existing community shop, and it is noted that there is no change to the highways access or parking arrangements. Further to this, due to the modest increase in the scale of the shop, it is not determined that there will be any detrimental impact on off-street parking provision in the vicinity, nor will there be any issues in terms off accessibility, with sufficient space available for the parking and manoeuvring within the existing carpark adjacent to the proposed shop.

Taking the above into account, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable with regards to parking provision and vehicle movement and will not have a detrimental impact on highway safety in the locality. The proposal therefore accords with Policy LP17 of the Local Plan in this regard.

*Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it:

* Is of an appropriate scale and design;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
* Is acceptable with regards to impact on trees;
* Would not have a detrimental impact on vehicle movement and highway safety;
* There are no other material planning considerations which lead to the conclusion that the proposal is unacceptable.

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

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CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Josh France**