OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00375/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: Installation of replacement generators

Location: Cambridgeshire Constabulary Hinchingbrooke Park Hinchingbrooke Park Road Huntingdon

Applicant: Harry Maclean

Grid Ref: 523019 271781

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application seeks approval for the installation of replacement generators at Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Hinchingbrooke Park Road, Huntingdon. The proposal includes two 300kVA Primed Power Enclosed Synchronising Generator Systems that would serve 'Building 2' and would sit on a 5m by 5m concrete pad.

The site is situated in the south-west corner of the settlement of Huntingdon. The overall headquarters covers an area of approx 3.5 ha in total. The application site consists of an area of grass located to the north of building 2 in the northern part of the site. The site is located within the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan area and is within the Huntingdon Conservation Area.

This application has been accompanied by a Planning Statement.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (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.

Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, 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 May 2019

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP25: Housing Mix
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026

Policy E2 - Business Investment
Policy BE1 - Design and Landscaping
Policy BE2 - Local Distinctiveness and Aesthetics
Policy BE3 - Heritage Assets

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

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
Developer Contributions SPD 2011
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017

The National Design Guide (2021)

* C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
* I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
* I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
* B2 - Appropriate building types and forms
*M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
* N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
* H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
* H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
* H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

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

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant, recent planning history.

CONSULTATIONS

Huntingdon Town Council - No comment.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Health Officer - Following the receipt of additional information confirming that the generators are for standby use only and will only be operated in an emergency (mains electrical supply outage for the site) and for limited maintenance checks and testing, raised no objections to the proposal subject to a condition being imposed.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third party representations were received during the course of the application.

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 48 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:

o Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
o Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029
o Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
o Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
o Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
o Bury Village Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)
o Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)

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 are:

o The Principle of Development
o Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets
o Residential Amenity
o Highway Safety
o Flood Risk and Surface Water
o Biodiversity

*The Principle of the Development

The site is located within the built-up area of Huntingdon, which the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 identifies as a Spatial Planning Area. As such, Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) is considered relevant.

As the proposal seeks approval for the erection of replacement generators at an existing site (Cambridgeshire Constabulary Headquarters), the principle of development is considered to be acceptable in this instance, subject to all other planning matters being addressed.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact Upon the Character of the Area

The Local Planning Authority is required to ensure that with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at Section 72. This is also reflected in Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

This application seeks approval for the erection of replacement generators at Cambridgeshire Constabulary, Hinchingbrooke Park Road, Huntingdon. The proposal includes two 300kVA Primed Power Enclosed Synchronising Generator Systems that would serve 'Building 2' and would sit on a 5m by 5m concrete pad. The proposal would be located in the northern part of the site.

The overall appearance of the generators is considered to be acceptable as they would be of a typical design of this nature. The proposed generators would be relatively small in scale, measuring a total height of 1.3m on an area of 5m by 5m. The generators are considered to be commensurate in scale to the wider site and would be well related to the existing buildings on site to which they would serve to reduce visual impact.

Given the scale of the proposal, its siting adjacent to buildings, and the trees which screen the overall perimeter of the site, it is considered that proposal would be afforded limited, obscured views from public vantage points along Views Common Road to the north-west. Accordingly the proposal is not considered to result in any visual harm on the site, the streetscene or the Huntingdon Conservation Area.

As such, the proposal is deemed to be in accordance with Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan to 2026, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Residential Amenity

Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 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.

Given the scale of the proposed development and the distance to the closest neighbouring residential properties, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any detrimental impacts on any neighbouring properties amenities.

Following the receipt of additional information during the course of the application confirming that the generators would be for standby use only and will only be operated in an emergency (mains electrical supply outage for the site) and for limited maintenance checks and testing, Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Health Team have no objections to the proposal. As requested, a condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure that maintenance checks and testing should not be completed outside the hours of 08:00-18:00 (Monday to Friday).

As such, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Highway Safety

Policies LP16 and 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.
As a result of the proposed development, the number of employees and visitors to the site would remain unaltered and therefore no additional off-street car parking is required. The proposed generators would not impact the existing access arrangements or off-street car parking provision.

Overall, the proposed development is not considered to result in any impacts on highway safety and would therefore be in accordance with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (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 159-169 of the NPPF (2023).

The application site is situated in Flood Zone 1 based on the Environment Agency Floods Maps and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2017). This results in a low probability of fluvial flooding and is not subject to the sequential and exception tests as set out within the NPPF. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2023) in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.

The proposal is considered to be exempt from ensuring biodiversity net gain as it would not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25sqm of on-site habitat. Furthermore, the Local Planning Authorities records indicate no presence of protected species in the area.

As such, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Conclusion

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

*Acceptable in principle

And it:

* Is of an appropriate scale and design;
* Would not be detrimental to highway safety in the locality;
* Would not result in an increased risk of flooding in the locality;
* Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
* 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:
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