OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00666/OUT **Outline Application**

Proposal: Outline Permission with All Matters Reserved for the Construction of two Dwellinghouses

Location: Land North Of 2 High Street Great Paxton

Applicant: Mr Key

Grid Ref: 520739 263562

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The 0.0399-hectare rectangle-shaped application site currently comprises mostly of open land (a shed is sited to the rear) mostly formed of a bare track and scattered vegetation fronted by metal gates and green metal mesh fencing situated on a wider parcel of open and track land within the settlement of Great Paxton. The site is located within the Great Ouse Valley Green Infrastructure Priority Area.

Immediately south sits No.2 High Street and associated outbuildings and to the rear of the site is a trainline (East Coast Mainline). The site to the rear comprising of track is within the applicant's ownership but is not associated within this application. The site is accessed from the High Street to the east.

The site is within Flood Zone 1 as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Huntingdonshire Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, although approximately 18 metres from the rear of the site is at a risk of groundwater and surface water flooding (groundwater levels are at or very near (within 0.025 metres of) the ground surface in the 100-year return event and surface water is at a risk of a mixture 1 in 30 year event, 1 in 100 year event and 1 in 1000 year event, depending on the site location).

The site is not a designated conservation area and is approximately 65 metres north-west of a Grade II Listed Building (Low Farm, High Street Great Paxton). There are no trees on site that are afforded legal protection.

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

It is noted that an unsolicited amended Location Plan was received from the applicant over the course of the application extending the red boundary line to the rear, enlarging the boundary for 'Plot 2' and associated parking area, repositioning the dwelling and turning area. In line with Huntingdonshire District Council's 'no amendments' policy this plan has not been considered by officers, nor have the amendments been consulted upon.

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

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)
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply.

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

PLANNING HISTORY

The site has no relevant planning history.

CONSULTATIONS

Great Paxton Parish Council - Full comments: Great Paxton Parish Council have concerns that this proposal is on the development line.

Local Highway Authority - Objection. Full comments:

Following a review of the documents provided to the Highway Authority as part of the above planning application I have noted that the application is for two dwellings with two parking spaces per dwelling and a shared access. There is no vehicular access to the land beyond plot 2. The shared highway access is too narrow and should be a minimum of 5m wide in accordance with our Highways Development Management Principles for Development document Highways Development Management General Principles for Development- January 2023 - Amended.

There is insufficient room for vehicles to manoeuvre on-site when the parking spaces are in use, necessitating reversing into the carriageway which is unacceptable on a classified road. Space for turning on-site to enable delivery vehicles to enter turn and leave in a forward gear should be provided.

In addition, the driveway leading to the rear plot is of insufficient width.

If the applicant is unwilling or unable to amend the application or provide additional information as outlined above, please advise me so I may consider making further recommendations, possibly of refusal.

Environmental Health Officer- No objection, subject to further details to be submitted at technical stage. Full comments:

I write with regard to the Environmental Noise Assessment written by Acoustic Associates (report reference SEM/J3861/18741, dated July 2025).

The proposed layout shows the gardens would be adequately shielded from road noise by the houses and that a 2m high acoustic fence would be required to shield the gardens from the rail noise. This is acceptable, however, confirmation of the plot and rooms layout would be required.

In order for internal noise levels to meet guidelines, windows would have to be closed. Therefore, an overheating assessment and ventilation strategy would need to be undertaken to ensure future occupiers are not exposed to unacceptable noise or subject to overheating during the hot weather.

The tenth highest maximum noise level during the night-time was determined to be 65-76dB LAmax, 1min. Taking 15dB off for an open window, this would be between 50-61dB inside a bedroom. Sleep disturbance is likely if 45dB LAmax is exceeded 10 times or more during the night, so the number of likely exceedances would be useful to see.

If you are minded to grant permission to this proposal, I recommend you set the following condition, or similar:

Condition: A detailed Ventilation Scheme, and if necessary an overheating assessment, shall be submitted to the LPA with any reserve matters application. The Ventilation Scheme shall demonstrate how adequate ventilation and cooling will be achieved for dwellings without undermining the performance of the Noise Mitigation Scheme. A suitable ventilation system would achieve between 2 to 4 air changes per hour for each noise sensitive habitable room. The approved scheme shall be fully implemented in the development and the ventilation measures shall thereafter be retained in perpetuity.

Reason: To avoid noise from giving rise to a significant adverse impact on the health and quality of life of future users of the development.

Ecology Officer-No comment at the time of determination.

REPRESENTATIONS

One third-party representation was received in objection to the proposal. This comment is summarised below and is available to view in full on the councils website:

- Over intensification of plot out of character to the local area;
- Dwellings too close to No.2 High Street and would detrimentally impact privacy, overshadowing, right to light, additional fumes, noise and additional headlights. Overlooking could be a further impact should the dwellings be two storey.
- Concerns that the proposal would increase flood risk.
- Detrimental impacts to biodiversity and loss of green space.
- Highway safety impacts from access being close to No.2 High Street
- Impact to viability of retreat business located at No.2 High Street in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy, noise, vehicle movements.
- Construction disruption.
- Risk of precedent.

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
- Flood Risk and Drainage

Other Matters:

- Development Obligations
- Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings
- Water Efficiency

*The Principle of the Development

Housing Land Supply

NPPF paragraph 78 requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against our housing requirement. A substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements was introduced on 12th December 2024 in the revised NPPF and associated NPPG (the standard method).

As Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 is now over 5 years old it is necessary to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) based on the housing requirement set using the standard method. NPPF paragraph 78 also requires provision of a buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As Huntingdonshire has successfully exceeded the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test a 5% buffer is required here. The five-year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,430 homes equivalent to 4.03 years' supply.

As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

The application seeks outline planning permission for two dwellings on a site within Great Paxton.

Local Plan Policy LP9 identifies Great Paxton as a Small Settlement, one of many settlements across Huntingdonshire which have limited or no available services and facilities. Small Settlements are less sustainable than those in the Spatial Planning Areas or the Key Service Centres, and inherently involve a greater need to travel on a regular basis to access services and facilities elsewhere. Consequently, the Local Plan does not make any development allocations in the Small Settlements, instead allowing only for a limited amount of sustainable development in order to contribute to the settlements' social and economic sustainability.

Policy LP9 states:

'Development Proposals within the Built-up Area

A proposal that is located within a built-up area of a Small Settlement 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.

Development Proposals on Land well-related to the Built-up Area

A proposal for development on land well-related to the built-up area may be supported where it accords with the specific opportunities allowed for through other policies of this plan.'

Policy LP9 is within the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, and is therefore considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications for residential development. Notwithstanding this, weight should still be given to Policy LP9 given that the policy sets out that a set of criteria for assessing whether the proposal reflects sustainable development which is consistent with the NPPF. However, the part of Policy LP9 which specifies that only certain types of development on land well-related which accords with specific opportunities allowed for through other policies of this plan is to be given reduced weight in determining a proposal for residential development. This means that any residential development on land well-related may be acceptable in principle subject to other material planning considerations.

Firstly, it must be considered whether the site is within the built-up area. The Local Plan to 2036 sets out within page 53 the following built-up area definition:

"A built-up area is considered to be 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".

Having regard to this definition, the site is not considered to be within the built-up area as it is not within a distinct group of buildings more than 30 or more homes and is open on its northern side and western boundary. Specifically, the proposal is defined as an exclusion of the built-up area by virtue of its open space character as grassland/agricultural track which is not well contained by strong boundary features and provides a visual buffer between the built form and the wider countryside of the Great Ouse Valley and primarily relates visually and functionally to the countryside rather than built development. However, given the sites proximity to built form on its southern side and development on the other side of the High Street, it could be argued that the site is instead well-related to the built-up area where Local Plan Policy LP9 still applies.

As outlined above, Great Paxton is a small settlement. Smaller settlements are, by their nature, considered less sustainable than those locations identified higher up the settlement hierarchy under Policy LP2.

NPPF Para 84 states: Planning decisions should avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside.

NPPF Para 110 states: The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

With regard to Parts a and b of Policy LP9, it is recognised that there are services and facilities in Great Paxton, including a Post Office and Store and a public house. Nevertheless, the site is within walking distance to a bus stop which provides public transport to St. Neots and Buckden with other development between the site and the city centre offering additional work and leisure opportunities accessible by sustainable methods of transport.

Given the minor scale of the proposed development for a two dwellings, the proposal is considered sustainable with regards to the accessibility to services, facilities and infrastructure particularly given the proximity to St. Neots approximately 3km from the site. The development would therefore not result in the development of isolated homes in the countryside nor would the future occupiers have an over-reliance on the private motor vehicle.

However, while it is recognised that the proposal is in a sustainable location meeting parts a and b of Local Plan Policy LP9, the supporting text of part c (paragraph 4.106) states that "The consideration of the effect on the character of the surroundings will look at how the proposal would fit in with the immediate environment around the proposal site, encompassing design and amenity issues. Consideration of the wider settlement character will be concerned with maintaining the nature of the settlement and its individual identity as well as preventing adverse landscape and visual impact." Local Plan policies LP11 and LP12 aligns with the aims of LP9 part c as does the National Design Guide (2021) and the design objectives of the NPPF 2024.

In considering these aspects, while there is a mixture of scale and massing in Great Paxton, the overriding character in the immediate vicinity is of dwellings fronting the highway with modest front gardens and larger rear gardens. Specifically, the dwellings on the western side of the High Street are characterised by open land to the rear, contributing to the rural nature of the wider village. In comparison, the application site is noticeably narrow and features large-scale back land residential development which presents as a cramped and contrived design too small for the size of the plot resulting in a perception of overdevelopment contrary to the spacious nature of this section of the High Street. This cramped form of development would be particularly noticeable given that the site would sit next to an established parcel of open land where development would be highly visible, especially from views from the north where the core of the village is located.

It is acknowledged that there is some back land development to the south of the site at No.2 High Street. However, this back land development retains space around the buildings keeping a sense of space around the dwellings and respecting the wider rural character of the area. Nevertheless, the prevailing character is as described above with only this dwelling being the only exception to the overriding character of the area.

Given that this is outline permission with all matters reserved, details of scale, layout, landscaping access and appearance are reserved for a future reserved matters application. However, an indicative site plan has been provided which shows two dwellings in tandem layout with associated access road to the rear and landscaped parking areas for two vehicles per dwelling. Both dwellings

would be approximately 0.5 metres from the shared boundary with No.2 High Street with approximate 11.5 metre rear gardens. No details are provided regarding scale or bedroom numbers.

To conclude, having regard to the requirement to apply tilted balance, whilst the scheme would not fall into a category which would be supported, given that it is well-related to the BUA, it is in this instance acceptable in terms of sustainability given its location. As reduced weight has been given to LP9 parts and a and b, however in terms of part c there are concerns that the provision of two dwellings (regardless of their scale) in this location would result in a cramped and awkward form of tandem development which is not characteristic of this location and which would be harmful to the streetscene and the wider settlement.

Overall therefore, it is considered that the provision of two dwellings in this location would (for the reasons given in the above assessment) result in a harmful and incongruous form of development and would be contrary to the established character and therefore to Policies LP9(c), LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, parts B2, C1, I1, I2 and I3 of the National Design Guide (2021) and the NPPF (2024). It is therefore unacceptable in principle and should be refused.

*Impact on Heritage Assets

As detailed in the preceding sections of this report, the site is not in a designated conservation area but is approximately 65 metres north-west of a Grade II Listed Building (Low Farm, High Street Great Paxton).

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Para. 205 of the NPPF sets out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.

Para. 206 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification'

Local Plan policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.

Whilst given that this application does not propose any design details, for the purposes of this assessment it is acknowledged that the provision of two dwellings in this location would be out of character with the surroundings. Nevertheless, it is accepted that given the proximity of the site and intervening trees and development, built form on the site would unlikely be viewed within the context of its nearby listed building and so the setting of the Listed Building is not harmed.

The principle of a dwelling in this location is therefore considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on the designated heritage assets and therefore (despite the limited assessment of the heritage assets, broadly accords with Policy LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the provisions of the NPPF (2024) and the Planning, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act (1990).

*Residential Amenity

Policy LP14 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of a proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings. The application has been submitted in outline form, with all matters reserved.

The submitted plans are indicative only as all matters are reserved for assessment in the Reserved Matters application should the proposal be approved. The reserved matters application(s) will fully assess the impacts of matters such as overlooking, overbearing, overshadowing, loss of light and loss of privacy, both in relation to the dwellings proposed and the impact upon existing neighbouring properties.

Notwithstanding this, officers 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 amenity. It is noted that the East Coast Mainline is within close proximity of the site, being approximately 65 metres from the rear of Plot 2 and 85 metres from the rear wall of Plot 1.

Neighbour Amenity

The closest dwelling to the application site is No.2 High Street, which sits immediately adjacent south of the site. Otherwise, the nearest neighbour is No.1 on the opposite side of High Street and No.12, approximately 38 metres to the north east. This application seeks outline permission with all matters reserved.

While objections have been received relating to amenity for both the residential dwelling and business to the rear of No.2 High Street, as all matters are reserved for future consideration, the detailed impact of the scale, layout, and design of the proposed dwellings on neighbouring properties cannot be fully assessed at this outline stage. However, despite the quantum of development not being acceptable on the site, it is noted that the site appears capable of accommodating some residential development without resulting in significant harm to the amenity of nearby properties in terms of noise, additional light and movements, overlooking, loss of light, or overbearing impact.

While the development may generate some additional noise and disturbance including during the construction phase, this is not considered sufficient to warrant refusal and is covered by other environmental health legislation.

At this stage, officers are satisfied that the site provides adequate scope for residential development to ensure that the amenity of neighbouring residents and future occupiers can be safeguarded at the detailed design stage. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy LP14 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

Future Occupants Amenity

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) has been consulted on the proposals. Noting the train line to the rear of the site, the EHO notes that a 2m high acoustic fence would be required to safeguard future residents from noise impacts. This could be secured in a future Reserved Matters application should the proposal be approved. Additionally the EHO requests a detailed ventilation scheme and if necessary a ventilation scheme be applied to any consent given to the application to avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impact on the health and quality of life of future uses of the development to enable the proposal to be acceptable to future residents in line with Local Plan Policy LP14 and the National Planning Policy Framework (2024). Officers agree that this is necessary to make the proposal acceptable on residential amenity grounds and recommend that the suggested condition from the EHO is appended to any consent given to the application.

Whilst HDC do not have amenity space standards, proposed gardens need to be commensurate to

the size of the dwelling and be of a sufficient size to accommodate the basic functional needs of the dwelling (area for seating, drying washing, young children to play, planting, area for cycle and refuse storage etc). It is acknowledged that this an outline application with all matters reserved for future consideration, however the application form does propose one 3-bed and one 4-bed dwelling and an indicative plan is provided. While it is not indicated which dwelling would be 3 bedroom or 4 bedroom, it is likely the small gardens would be unable to accommodate these functional needs, especially for Plot 1, which shows a rear garden of 11.641m by 8.704m. It is accepted that the plan is indicative only and that other layouts could be proposed, however due to the long thin nature of the site it is considered that it would be difficult to provide sufficient acceptable outdoor amenity space for the size of dwellings proposed in the application form, resulting in a cramped and contrived form of development. As such, the proposal is not considered to provide a high standard of amenity for future owners/occupiers of the dwellings.

Overall, having regard to the above assessment it is concluded that residential development could be achieved on the site without resulting in harmful overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light or other environmental impacts to neighbouring dwellings subject to condition and in this respect would therefore provide an acceptable standard of residential amenity in accordance with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF (2024) and the National Design Guide (2021) in this regard.

In relation to future occupants amenity, having regard to the above assessment it is concluded that residential development is not considered to provide a high standard of amenity for future owners/occupiers of the dwellings and therefore it is not in accordance with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF (2024) and the National Design Guide (2021) 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. Policy LP17 states:

A clear justification for the space for vehicle movements and level of vehicle and cycle parking proposed will need to be provided taking account of:
a. highway safety and access to and from the site;
b. servicing requirements;
c. the accessibility of the development to a wide range of services and facilities by public transport, cycling and walking;
d. the needs of potential occupiers, users and visitors, now and in the future;
e. the amenity of existing and future occupiers and users of the development and nearby property; and
f. opportunities for shared provision, where locations and patterns of use allow this.

This application seeks outline planning permission for the erection of two dwellings on the site off High Street, Great Paxton. The High Street at the point of access is in a 30mph speed limit. It is noted that Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority (LHA) have raised concern regarding safe access widths and manoeuvring on and off the site. Whilst access and layout are reserved matters and are not for consideration at this stage, Officers need to be satisfied that that a safe access can be achieved.

The application is accompanied with an indicative site plan showing each dwelling to have two vehicle spaces to the front of each respective dwelling with an access road leading to Plot 2 which would be approximately 3 metres in width, although the access itself would be approximately 4.6 metres. Matters relating to parking, access and manoeuvrability would form part of a later reserved matters application, and due consideration should be given to the Cambridgeshire Highways teams comments as part of any reserved matters application.

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 it is considered that acceptable access, parking, manageability and highway safety could be achieved on site and has the capacity to accord with Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Biodiversity

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 presence of protected species would need to be investigated, an Ecological Appraisal (EA) conducted by Allied Ecology dated the February 2025 accompanies this application. The report concludes that the site has limited ecological value as it primarily comprises bare ground with the occasional scattered vegetation. The PEA found the proposal to have limited impact on protected species and habitats and any further ecological surveys not required. The report details recommendations to mitigate against any potential impacts to protected species and habitats and proposes biodiversity enhancements (part 7) appropriate to the scale and nature of the proposal. Should the development be permitted a condition seeking a Biodiversity Method Statement detailing how the recommendations and enhancements contained in the EA 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 metric detailing the pre-development baseline habitat value alongside a biodiversity net gain assessment (BNGA, Allied Ecology, dated 17th February 2025)

The submitted BNGA report in part 3.8 concludes that the development proposal would result in a -73.24% of habitat loss and 100% loss of hedgerow units. As the shortfall cannot be delivered on-site given the size of the site, a condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure off-site credits will be provided.

A third party has raised concern regarding the impact to biodiversity and the loss of green space. However, should the proposal be approved conditions would be applied to the consent to ensure the proposal would deliver a biodiversity net gain as well as ecological advancements.

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.

*Flood Risk and Drainage

The site is exposed to minimal risk to surface water flooding and is located within Flood Zone 1 (lowest probability of fluvial flooding), per the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) 2024 and Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning. The site is at risk from surface water flooding, particularly along the southern boundary of the application site according to the Council's SFRA 2024 and the rear of the site is partly susceptible to groundwater flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment by MTC Engineering has been submitted as part of the application. It is acknowledged that a third party has raised concerns regarding future flood risk on the site should the proposal be approved.

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 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.

The site is identified as being subject to surface water flooding, and is only partially susceptible to groundwater flooding. As matters pursuant to layout are reserved for future consideration, Officers are satisfied that there is adequate space within the site to accommodate residential development outside of the areas identified as being at risk from both surface and groundwater flooding and that surface water mitigation can be achieved through an appropriate surface water drainage system and finished floor levels being raised, as well as placing the dwellings in lowest risk areas and precise surface and foul water drainage details would be satisfactorily addressed as part of building regulations, should the development be permitted.

Overall, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in regard to flood risk and drainage in accordance with Policy LP5 of the Local Plan and the NPPF 2024 in this regard.

Other Matters

Great Paxton Parish Council have raised concerns that this proposal is on the development line. The proposed built form is submitted as indicative only and all matters are reserved future application. Therefore, while this comment is noted, full design details will be secured at Reserved Matters stage, should the proposal be approved by the Local Planning Authority.

A neighbour as raised the risk of precedent of this development should the proposal be approved. All applications are assessed on their own merits against local and national policy valid at the time of determination. It is not for the Local Planning Authority to enter into discussion on potential development that may or may not come forward following this application assessment.

*Development Obligations
A Unilateral Undertaking to secure the provision of wheeled bins has not been submitted as part of the application. On this basis the proposal would not provide a satisfactory contribution to meet the tests within the CIL Regulations. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with Policy LP4 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011).

*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

Section 38(6) TCPA 2004 states that "if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

The proposed development is contrary to the development plan being residential development on land well-related to the built up area which does not meet any development plan policy exceptions.

Whilst reduced weight has been given to parts a and b of Local Plan Policy LP9 given the situation with the Council's five-year housing land supply and application of tilted balance, the proposal represents unacceptable development on land well-related to the built-up area of Great Paxton which would result in encroachment and expansion of a small settlement into the countryside. The applicant has not demonstrated that the development would fall within a category which would allow for the relaxation of these policies.

It is therefore considered that the social, economic and environmental aspects of the proposal such as contribution to the 5YHLS, the impact on local business through expansion of a rural village and contribution to other trades such as builders and suppliers would not outweigh the significant and demonstrable harm which would result from the provision of two dwellings in this location. The proposed development is considered to be contrary to relevant national and local policy for the following reasons:

1. The provision of two dwellings in this location would result in a contrived, cramped, harmful and incongruous form of development which would be unacceptably contrary to the established layout pattern and visual character and appearance of built form development in the surrounding area. This is therefore contrary to Policies LP9(c), LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, parts B2, C1, I1, I2 and I3 of the National Design Guide (2021) and the NPPF (2024).

2. A Unilateral Undertaking to secure the provision of wheeled bins has not been submitted as part of the application. On this basis the proposal would not provide a satisfactory contribution to meet the tests within the CIL Regulations. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with Policy LP4 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011).

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:

Enquiries about this report to **Marie Roseaman**