HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

25/00976/FUL

OFFICER REPORT

Case No: **25/00976/FUL** **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Minor internal works and external works to include new timber posts, lighting, planters and extension of existing polycarbonate roofing sheet**

Location: **Public House The Old Sun 161 Great North Road**

Applicant: **Mr Michael Twigg**

Grid Ref: **516947 258977**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The property is a Grade II listed public house located within the Eaton Socon Conservation Area. It is a two storey detached building finished in white render and with a tiled roof. The Old Sun Pub is located on the main thoroughfare and is surrounded by modern residential dwellings as well as several listed buildings, including the Wagon and Horses pub and Eaton House.

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

The application is for minor internal works and external works to include new timber posts, lighting, planters and extension of existing polycarbonate roofing sheet. It is noted that the internal works do not require planning permission and are subject to an associated Listed Building Consent application.

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 2023 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 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
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP21: Town Centre Vitality and Viability
LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Planning Practice Guidance is also relevant and a material consideration.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
- Developer Contributions SPD 2011
- Developer Contributions: Updated Costs 2023/24
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment (2022)
- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)

The National Design Guide (2021)

*C2 – Value heritage, local history and culture
*I1 – Respond to existing local character and identity
*M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
*H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
*H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016)
* Policy A3 – Design
* Policy SS2 – Utilising Historic Buildings

St Neots Conservation Area Character Assessment (October 2006)

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

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

PLANNING HISTORY

78/00056/LBC - Alterations and Change of Use - consent granted 06.03.1978
94/01600/FUL & 94/01601/LBC - Extension and alterations to Public House - consent granted 06.02.1995
0300879LBC - Internal alterations - consent granted 29.05.2003

25/00804/ADV - Installation of replacement signs to include 1x new pictorial panel to existing gibbet, 1x set of sign written house name, 2x door plaque, 3x floodlights, 1x amenity board, 1x lantern, 1x single sided post mounted directional sign, 1x welcome panel – consent granted 03.07.2025
25/00805/LBC - Installation of replacement signs to include 1x new pictorial panel to existing gibbet, 1x set of sign written house name, 2x door plaque, 3x floodlights, 1x amenity board, 1x lantern, 1x single sided post mounted directional sign, 1x welcome panel and repainting of building – consent granted 03.07.2025
25/00977/LBC - Listed Building Consent for minor internal works, including new floor coverings, fixed seating and new drinks shelf with screen, with new timber posts and festoon lighting to the beer garden with new planter units, extension of existing polycarbonate roofing sheet - pending consideration

CONSULTATIONS

St Neots Town Council recommends approval. It is considered that the proposal would have a limited impact on neighbours.

HDC Conservation Team recommends approval. The modernising of the interior and exterior has a neutral impact on the significance of the listed building and a neutral impact on the significance and character of St Neots Conservation Area.

REPRESENTATIONS

No objections received at 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 (2021). 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 and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016)
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 (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
o Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan (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 upon the designated heritage assets
o Residential Amenity
o Biodiversity

*The Principle of Development

The application site relates to The Old Sun Public House located in Eaton Socon, a residential area within the Spatial Planning Area of St Neots. The works include minor internal works and external works to include new timber posts, lighting, planters and extension of the existing polycarbonate roofing sheet to the external seating work. The internal works do not require planning permission and are subject to an associated Listed Building Consent application.

A public house is defined by the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 as both a local service/community facility and a ‘main town centre use’ (consistent with the NPPF 2023).

Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) of Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036 (2019) states:

Business Development
A proposal for business development (class 'B') will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement. An appropriate location will include an Established Employment Area defined in policy LP 18 'Established Employment Areas'; a town centre defined in policy LP 21 'Town Centre Vitality and Viability' or the Alconbury Enterprise Zone.

Due to the nature and scale of the proposal, it is considered that it is appropriately located within the existing business premises, enhancing the service provision.

The proposal, therefore, accords with Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) in this regard.

Policy LP22 (Local Services and Community Facilities) states that:

Local services and community facilities include, but are not limited to, shops, public houses, places of worship, cemeteries, health centres, libraries, fuel filling stations and public halls.

A proposal for a new local service or community facility within a built-up area, or the extension of an existing local service or community facility on land immediately adjoining the built up area, will be 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.

The internal works include new floor coverings, fixed seating and a new drinks shelf with screen. The external works are for new timber posts and festoon lighting to the beer garden with new planter units, and the extension of existing polycarbonate roofing sheet to an external seating area.

It is, therefore, considered that the proposal will serve local needs and enhance the existing service provision of the public house.

The proposal, therefore, accords with Policy LP22 (Local Services and Community Facilities) in this regard.

Therefore, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable in accordance with Local Plan Policies LP7, LP22 and the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan in this regard.

It is therefore considered that the principle of the minor internal works and external works to include new timber posts, lighting, planters and extension of existing polycarbonate roofing sheet is acceptable, subject to compliance with the other relevant policies and considerations.

*Design, visual amenity and impact upon the designated heritage assets

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.

Policy LP34 states that a proposal within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a conservation area should preserve, and wherever possible enhance, features that contribute positively to the area’s character, appearance and setting as set out in character statements or other applicable documents.

The Council will consider the significance of a designated heritage asset and where there is less than substantial harm, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Where there is deemed to be substantial harm, then the proposal would need to achieve substantial public benefits to outweigh that harm.

The proposal falls within the Eaton Socon Conservation Area.

Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

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. 212 of the NPPF set 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. 213 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.

The Old Sun Public House is a grade II listed building within the Eaton Socon Conservation Area. The proposed works are for minor internal works, including new floor coverings, fixed seating and new drinks shelf with screen, with new timber posts and festoon lighting to the beer garden with new planter units, and the extension of the existing polycarbonate roofing sheet.

The proposed works will enhance the existing provision, updating and creating a more attractive space both internally and externally. It is noted that the external works impact an existing seating

area to the rear of the building and provide new planter units across the external space of the site. The internal works do not require planning permission and are subject to an associated Listed Building Consent application.

The Conservation Team has been consulted on the proposals and consider that the proposal has a neutral impact on the significance of the Listed Building. The existing functionality of the space could be improved, and the proposed changes enhance the space and retain the character, historical and architectural significance of the building.

Officers have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Officers have given special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. It is considered that harm will not be caused to either of these designated heritage assets because the works will have a neutral impact on the significance of the Listed Building and a neutral impact on the significance and character of the Conservation Area.

The proposal, therefore, accords with ss. 16, 66 & 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, paragraphs 202-221 of the NPPF (2024), Policies LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) and Policies A3 and SS2 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016) 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.

The external works largely impact an existing seating area to the rear of the public house, which are closest to the southern side boundary. The festoon lighting will be to an area adjacent to the southern boundary, providing low level lighting. It is furthest away from the residential properties to the north of the site. Due to the low light emission level, this type and level of lighting is considered acceptable. To the south of the site is an area of mature vegetation and the driveway to the adjacent neighbouring property (no.157 Great North Road). Therefore, it is considered that there is a sufficient separation distance with the neighbouring properties to both the south and north, to ensure that the proposed works will not result in any significant detrimental impact upon the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties such to warrant refusal of the application.

Therefore, overall, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy LP14 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 states that a proposal will be required to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated. A proposal will 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.

It is noted that the proposal is below the development threshold applying to the requirement to provide a Biodiversity Net Gain as set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) as there is no impact upon a priority habitat and no loss of on-site habitat. It is noted that the proposed works will impact an existing area of hard standing and include the introduction of a number of new planters, which will result in a biodiversity net gain.

Therefore, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2023) in this regard.

There are no other material planning considerations which have a significant bearing on the determination of this application.

*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 designated heritage asset;
it would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon biodiversity.

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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