OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00118/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Erection of one self build dwelling with vehicular access

Location: Land At 48 Beauchamp Close Eaton Socon

Applicant: Mr Pete McAra

Grid Ref: 516609 259235

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application seeks approval for the erection of a single self-build detached dormer bungalow with vehicular access on land to the rear of no.48 Beauchamp Close. No. 48 is in the ownership of the applicants and is a semi-detached two storey dwelling situated on a corner plot where Beauchamp Close meets Nelson Road. The side boundary faces Nelson Road and No.48 fronts onto Beauchamp Close. The application site is within a residential area of Eaton Socon. It is within Flood Zone 1 and there are no designated heritage assets in the vicinity.

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

It is noted that there have been previous applications for two and three dwellings on the site. The application for three dwellings was subsequently withdrawn in December 2020. The application for two semi-detached dwellings was refused and dismissed on appeal in May 2022. The appeal decision is considered and noted in the main body of the report in the assessment of this application. It is noted that this application has reduced the number of properties to a single two bedroom dormer bungalow dwelling. A further previous application for one dwelling was withdrawn following Officer concerns.

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 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.

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

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

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th 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

Neighbourhood Plans:

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan (2016)
Policy A3: Design
Policy PT1: Sustainable Travel
Policy PT2: Parking Standards for Residential Development

Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance

*Huntingdonshire Design Guide (SPD) 2017
*Developer Contributions SPD 2011
*Developer Contributions: Updated Costs 2023/24
*Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (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)

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

PLANNING HISTORY

20/01195/FUL - Proposed 3 new dwellings – Withdrawn 18.12.2020
21/00035/FUL - Proposed two new dwellings (semi-detached) – Refused 01.09.2021 - Dismissed at Appeal 31.05.2022
24/01470/FUL - Erection of one self build dwelling – Withdrawn 08.01.2025

CONSULTATIONS

St Neots Town Council recommends approval. It is noted that there is minimum impact on neighbours, and it is considered that the proposal would assimilate itself to the existing part of the town.

HDC Urban Design Team – supported in design terms. It is noted that this proposal has addressed previous concerns related to application reference 24/01470/FUL. Conditions are required to secure details of materials, hard and soft landscaping and finished floor levels.

HDC Arboricultural Officer – no response received at time of determination. However, it is noted that comments regarding the previously withdrawn application (24/01470/FUL) supported the proposal without any required conditions.

CCC Highways Department – Proposal supported with standard conditions.

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 & 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 Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Bury 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 in the determination of this reserved matters application are:

- The principle of development
- Design, Visual Amenity and Impact Upon the Character of the Area
- Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access
- Biodiversity
- Developer Contributions
- Accessible and Adaptable Homes
- Water Efficiency

*Principle of Development

The proposal is for a single storey two bedroom dormer bungalow dwelling with off-street parking to the side. The application site originally formed part of the garden for no.48 Beauchamp Close, and has already been separated from the original property with a close boarded fence. The site is located within the built-up residential area of Eaton Socon and is in a sustainable location in terms of bus routes, walking and cycling distances with access to a range of facilities, so the proposal can be supported on accessibility grounds. It is therefore considered that the proposal meets the objectives of the NPPF. It is within the St Neots Spatial Planning Area as defined by the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. As such, Policy LP7 of the adopted Local Plan is considered relevant.

Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) states:
Residential Development
A proposal for housing development (class 'C3') or for a residential institution use (class 'C2') will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement.

The proposal therefore accords with Policy LP7 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard and the principle of the proposal is therefore acceptable in spatial planning terms, subject to other 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.

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, the National Design Guide and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed site is to the rear of 48 Beauchamp Close, within the former rear garden. The introduction of the dormer bungalow would reduce the rear garden depth of No. 48 from

approximately 32.5m to 10m. Whilst this forms a slight improvement over the previous withdrawn application (which proposed reducing the rear garden depth for No. 48 to approximately 8.60m), this still forms a significant reduction, and the resulting garden is approximately 1/3rd of the original depth. Notwithstanding this paragraphs 14 and 15 of the Appeal Decision for 21/0035/FUL are applicable and state:
Paragraph 14: 'The proposed development would result in a reduction in the overall level of garden space at the property. This would result in an increase in built form and a reduction in the level of open space surrounding the appellant's dwelling'.
Paragraph 15: 'However, the proposed development would be seen in context of the surrounding area, which contains varying gaps between buildings and different sized gardens. Within this context the creation of additional dwellings would not appear unduly unusual'.

In addition, it is noted, from the site visit, that the rear garden of No. 48 has already been subdivided
previously and the proposed dwelling, facing Nelson Road, would be seen within the context of other units opposite the site rather than those within Beauchamp Close. These later dwellings have a narrower spacing between the units and shallow rear gardens. The principle of subdividing the site and the erection of a detached self-build bungalow is therefore considered acceptable.

It is noted that amendments have been made to the site layout and appearance of the bungalow to address previous comments relating to the withdrawn application (24/0170/FUL). The revised appearance of the proposed dwelling reflects the flat fronted appearance and simple verge treatment of units opposite the application site. The box dormer windows on the front elevation have been reduced and now align with the internal face of the brickwork reducing the extent of cladding below the dormer window casements, improving the proportions of the dormer windows.

Details of the materials including facing brick, roof tile, window colour, location and colour of meter boxes and driveway treatment will be secured by way of a materials condition.

The proposals include a section of 1.8m fence, setback behind a narrow grass verge and the existing footpath within Nelson Road. Whilst the fence reflects the existing boundary treatment to No. 48, hedge planting is strongly recommended in front of and to the side of this fence (within the section of grass verge to soften the appearance of this public facing boundary and accord with the Huntingdonshire District Council Design Guide SPD (2017) requirements for public facing boundaries, which states: "If the side or rear walls are in the public realm then these should be either solid wall or high hedge, or a combination of both". This should be included in a future soft landscaping plan secured by condition.

Therefore, taking the appeal decision into account and the comments of the Planning Inspector, it is considered that the proposal would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the area such that a recommendation of refusal on design and visual amenity grounds could be substantiated.

Therefore, overall, it is considered that the proposals represent an acceptable development in terms of the layout, scale and massing and will have a positive impact on the appearance of the area by virtue of the dwelling design.

On balance, the proposal is considered to not cause significant or demonstrable harm to the character and appearance of the area and is broadly in accordance with Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*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.

This application proposes a two bedroom single storey dormer bungalow with bedrooms and bathrooms in the roof space. Roof lights are proposed on the rear elevation and two box dormers on the front elevation. The submitted floor plans and elevations indicate that the three roof lights (serving the ensuite, landing and bathroom) would be obscured glazed and include opening restrictors, preventing overlooking and loss of privacy to the rear garden of No. 47 Beauchamp Close to the east.

It is noted that the driveway is to the south side of the dwelling, and the private garden located on the north side. This accords with previous recommendations and increases the separation distance from No. 48 Beauchamp Close and prevents overlooking from the existing first floor windows on the rear elevation No. 48 to the rear garden of the proposed bungalow. In addition, the south facing side elevation has no fenestration details, removing any overlooking impact from no. 48 into the proposed property. It is noted that the north facing side elevation has a large area of glazing, however this is at ground floor level with an area of mature vegetation along the northern facing boundary, providing privacy for the residents. Further, the neighbouring property to the north is a bungalow mitigating any potential overlooking.

The reduction of the proposal to a single dormer bungalow has significantly decreased the impact of the development on the neighbouring properties. The Planning Inspector comments in relation to 21/00035/FUL have been taken into account. The massing of the development close to the boundary with no. 47 Beauchamp Close has been reduced and whilst it is acknowledged that there will be an impact on the outlook for no. 47, this is not considered to be significantly detrimental to warrant a refusal of the application.

Therefore, taking the appeal decision into account and the comments of the Planning Inspector, it is considered that the proposed dwelling would not have a significant detrimental impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties such to warrant refusal of the application.

Therefore, taking the above factors into consideration, 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 in this regard.

*Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access

Policy LP17 states that a proposal will be supported where it incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates accessibility for service and emergency vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles. Policy LP16 seeks safe physical access from the public highway.

Paragraph 116 of the NPPF (2024) states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The proposed dwelling is located within the former garden space for no. 48 Beauchamp Close, with the proposed dwelling facing onto Nelson Road. Vehicular access is proposed from Nelson Road to off-street parking provision adjacent to the southern side elevation for the proposed property, providing space for two cars. This is considered to be sufficient for a property of this size. The Highways Authority has been consulted on the proposal and has no objections, subject to securing standard conditions. The proposed garden/cycle storage shed located within the rear garden is sufficient to accommodate the two cycles required.

Therefore, subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policies LP16 and LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

*Biodiversity and Impact on Trees and Hedges

Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 also requires development proposals to ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain in biodiversity where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type and location of development.

Policy LP31 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will only be supported where it seeks to conserve and enhance any existing tree, woodland, hedge or hedgerow of value that would be affected by the proposed development.

In addition, there is now a statutory requirement for sites to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Exemptions to this legislative requirement include self-build and custom build applications. The applicants have confirmed that the proposed dwelling is a self-build project, and that they have been involved in the design process and will occupy the property as their primary residence upon completion. The exemption will be secured by condition. If the position were to change in the future, it is noted that there would be a requirement to secure 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

It is noted that the application site was previously part of the rear garden of no.48 Beauchamp Close. No assessment has been undertaken with regard to retention, loss or gain to biodiversity on the site. However, the side boundary comprises of close boarded fencing and apart from the rear boundary which is landscaped, there are no other landscape features of any merit that will be affected by the proposals. As such the proposals would be acceptable in this regard subject to a condition requiring a landscape scheme together with measures to achieve a net gain in biodiversity to be submitted and approved. This would ensure compliance with policy LP30 of the Local Plan which requires a proposal to ensure no net loss in biodiversity and a net gain where possible. It is possible to provide enhancements in this instance such as built in bird boxes and possible native/pollinator planting.

The Arboricultural Officer was consulted on the proposal and has not responded. However, it is noted that there were no objections to the previously withdrawn proposal for one dwelling on the same site. The proposal results in no loss of trees or hedgerows and as such complies with policy LP31 of the Local Plan.

Therefore, subject to conditions, the proposals are considered to accord with Policies LP30 and LP31 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Flood Risk

The site is at the lowest risk of flooding according to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2017 and Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning (Flood Zone 1) and the proposal is for minor development. Accordingly, the sequential and exceptions tests for flooding nor the submission of a flood risk assessment are considered necessary in this instance in accordance with the NPPF and NPPG.

Given the low flood risk and minor scale of development, officers are satisfied that full details of the surface and foul water drainage can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.

Overall, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

*Developer Contributions

A Unilateral Undertaking to secure the provision of wheeled bins has been submitted as part of the application process. The development is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

Policy LP25 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals that include 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. No statement has been provided to confirm that the proposed development is designed in accordance with and will be built in accordance with the M4(2) standards. Therefore, this will be secured by condition to ensure that the development is built in accordance with these standards and that they are maintained for the life of the development.

*Water Efficiency

Policy LP12 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals that include housing to comply with the optional building regulation for water efficiency, as set out in Approved Document G. No statement has been provided as to whether the proposed development is to be designed in accordance and built in accordance with the LP12 (j) standards. This can be secured by condition.

Therefore, it is considered that subject to a condition to retain the proposed measures in perpetuity the proposed development would accord with Policy LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2023) 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

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:

* The principle of the development of this site for residential purposes is acceptable;
* Is of an appropriate scale and design;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon highway safety;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows;
* Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
* Would not adversely affect flood risk in the locality;
* 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 **Olivia Manton**