OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 24/01990/HHFUL Householder (Full)

Proposal: Construction of a garden building

Location: 48 West Street Great Gransden Sandy

Applicant: Tim Higginbotham

Grid Ref: 526963 256064

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application relates to 48 West Street, Great Gransden, a two-storey thatched roof semi-detached dwelling in the village of Great Gransden. The site is located within Great Gransden Conservation Area and benefits from Grade II listed building status.

This application seeks planning permission to erect a new garden building 5m x 5m, to the side of the dwelling, adjacent to the site boundary with Fox Street and removal of a section of the side boundary hedge. Listed Building consent is not required for this development.
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) paragraph 8 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 also sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* making effective use of land
* achieving well-designed, beautiful, and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural 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)

LP 11 Design Context
LP 12 Design Implementation
LP 14 Amenity
LP 17 Parking and Vehicle Movement
LP 30 Biodiversity
LP 31 Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

LP 34 Heritage Assets and their settings

Supplementary Planning Documents
Landscape And Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017

PLANNING HISTORY

18/80292/COND - Conditional Information for 17/02679/HHFUL & 17/02680/LBC: C3 (materials) - Discharged - 10.12.2018
18/80076/COND - Condition information for 17/02679/HHFUL and 17/02680/LBC - C4, C5 - Discharged - 10.05.2018
17/02679/HHFUL & 17/02680/LBC - Convert existing garage into habitable space. 2no. New windows to the front elevation to replace the existing garage doors. 1no. Conservation rooflight in existing roof. - Permission - 05.03.2018
92/00565/FUL & 92/00564/LBC - Extension to form garage - Permission / Consent - 25.06.1992
87/01371/LBC - Extensions and alterations to dwelling - Consent - 28.09.1987
87/01372/FUL - Two-storey extension to dwelling - Permission - 28.09.1987
86/01145/LBC - Demolition of barn - Consent 22.10.1986

CONSULTATIONS

Great Gransden Parish Council recommend approval however comment "a building used to be there, but doubts were expressed regarding the fire/chimney due to the proximity of thatched buildings."

HDC Conservation Officer raises objection to the proposal on the grounds of harm to the significance and setting of the Listed Buildings and the harm to the significance and character and appearance of the Conservation area.

HDC Ecology Officer comments that a PEA would be required to mitigate for the loss of the hedge. Removal of the hedge would have to avoid damage to wild birds. Not support due to lack of PEA..

CCC Highways raise no objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

Representations have been received from the following addresses.

1-3 Fox Street, Great Gransden
Full comments can be viewed online but broadly relate to.

*No objection to the proposal however concerns regarding fire safety

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The key issues to be considered are as follows: -
Design and Visual Amenity and Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area
Residential Amenity
Parking and Vehicle Movement
Impact on Trees
Impact on Biodiversity

<u>Design and Visual Amenity, and Impact on the Listed Buildings and Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area</u>

Concerning design and visual amenities, the relevant policies within the local plan to 2036 (LP 11 Design Context and LP 12 Design Implementation), and Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary Planning Document 2022 apply.

The proposal falls within Great Gransden Conservation Area and is a Grade II Listed Building.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

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.

HDC Conservation Team have been consulted and do not support the proposal.

This application relates to that part of the Listed Building which forms Number 48 only. Number 48 consists of the single storey thatched and rendered north wing with a modern, thatched and rendered single storey and attic extension and adjoining garage linked to the historic building on the east by a modern, timber-framed, glazed link.

There is also another Grade II Listed building Number 1 and 3 Fox Street on the opposite side of the road from the applicant site.

The site also is located within the Conservation Area. The character of the Conservation Area is that of a rural village with the majority of buildings being historic of various dates, and a large number of Listed Buildings which are widely spread throughout the village. The village layout is a central quadrangle of roads with the major north-south and east-west routes joining the village at West Street. The junction of West Street with Fox Street at Number 48 connects the main north-south route with the north of the village.

Th site stands on the junction of West Street and Fox Street. The house faces both West Street and Fox Street and the garden wraps around the corner with streets. There is a wide grass verge which also wraps around this corner in the streetscene, and so the open junction allows wide views of the Listed Building across the junction from all directions. There are long views of Number 48 and its garden from West Street and from Eltisley Road to the north. In views from the east along Fox Street the garden is clearly visible for a distance along the road and is seen in the foreground of Number 48 from the western end of the road.

The Listed Building 1 and 3 Fox Street stands on the opposite side of Fox Street from Number 48 and further east but because Number 1 and 3 stands at the road edge it stands almost adjacent to the north boundary of the garden of Number 48.

The garden of Number 48 has a hedge boundary to the north and west boundaries which runs along the edge of the pavement of Fox Street. The proposal removes the corner of the hedge and constructs the proposed garden building at the north-east corner of the garden.

The proposed garden building is single storey but will stand in front of the Listed Building in views of it from Fox Street and be seen in the foreground of the building in views across the junction and from West Street and Eltisley Road. The proposed garden building will partly obscure the Listed Building in views from Fox Street and it will be a highly visible feature on the street frontages and at the junction. It will also be prominent in the foreground in views of the Listed Building 1 and 3 Fox Street from Fox Street and in long views from Eltisley Road. Because of its location the proposed garden building will also be a prominent feature (seen in isolation from Number 48) on the street frontage in long views along Fox Street westwards towards the junction with West Street.

The proposal is not sympathetic to the Listed Buildings at 46 and 48 West Street and at 1 and 3 Fox Street as it brings a building into their settings which is prominent and intrusive, and interrupts existing views of them.

In addition, the proposal does not maintain the contribution which the existing Listed Building at 46 and 48 West Street and its garden makes to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Listed Building is harmonious with the overall historic rural village character, the openness of its garden allows views of the building, and as an open green space the existing garden with its hedge boundary is consistent with the green character of the junction and the village. The proposal reduces the existing garden, removes part of the hedge, and adds a new building which is prominent in the street scene and does not follow the morphology of the Conservation Area at this location.

The proposed development is considered harmful in principle, but in addition the hipped roof design does not appear to follow the pitched roofs which are characteristic of the village buildings and the proposed flue adds a further prominent and unsympathetic feature in this sensitive location.

For the above reasons the proposal is considered to be harmful to the significance and character of the Listed Buildings 46 and 48 West Street and 1 and 3 Fox Street because of the impact on their settings and for the above reasons the proposal is also considered to be harmful to the significance, character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The NPPF requires clear and convincing justification for any harm to a heritage asset but there does not appear to be any justification. Although the harm is considered to be less than substantial, the NPPF requires that it be outweighed by public benefit from the proposal but there does not appear to be any public benefit that would outweigh this harm.

Officers have considered the comments and recommendation made by the HDC Conservation Officer and have assessed the application plans and accompanying documents to the application. Officers have given weight to the Conservation team comments and considered the proposal in relation to the desirability of preserving the setting of the Grade II listed buildings, and Great Gransden Conservation Area.

The proposal site forms one of the central crossroads into the Great Gransden conservation area with views down both West Street and Fox Street. The proposed siting, size and design of the new building would be clearly visible along at this point within the Great Gransden Conservation Area and due it its siting and appearance would fail to preserve the character and appearance of the site and surrounding Conservation Area. Whilst it is acknowledged in the design and access statement that a former barn was in place at the site location, removed in around 1986, which is shown on historical maps, this has been removed for some time ago and no longer forms the setting of the listed building and does not contributes to the Great Gransden Conservation Area. In addition,

the character and appearance of a historic barn in this historic setting, is very different from a modern hipped roof outbuilding with flue proposed in this instance. The significant forward position from the dwelling, adjacent to the road boundary would also be contrary to the HDC Design guide which seeks to position ancillary outbuildings associated with dwellings in less dominant and prominent positions in the streetscene.

Officers consider that the proposal would present an extremely visually harmful, out of keeping building at the junction with Fox street and West Street which would be out of character with the siting and appearance of the built form character in the locality. Officers consider that the siting, size and design, in this case would give rise to an unacceptable level of visual harm to the siting, and significance of the Listed Buildings and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Therefore, given the above, the proposed development is considered to be unacceptable and whilst would result in less than substantial harm to the character, appearance Great Gransden Conservation Area and the significance and setting of the Listed Buildings, there are no public benefits which would outweigh this harm. Therefore, Officers consider that the proposal fails to accord with policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

Impact on residential amenity

Regarding residential amenities, the relevant policy within the local plan to 2036 (LP14 Amenity), applies.

No objections have been received from neighbouring occupiers. Concern has been raised in respect of fire safety in relation to the adjacent thatch. Whilst the safety issues are acknowledged, consideration of this fire risk would fall under separate legislation and is not a material planning consideration that could be taken into consideration under this application.

The outbuilding is situated along the northeast boundary of the application site and the west of the neighbouring garage. Due to the location of the proposed garden building and the distance to the neighbouring properties, there are no significant concerns with regards to impact on residential amenity in terms of overlooking, overshadowing or overbearing impacts.

Given all of the above, the location, size, and design of the development, it is considered that the proposal is unlikely to give rise to any significant amenity impacts in terms of overlooking, overbearing, or overshadowing or other environmental impacts. The proposal is compliant with Local Plan Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

Parking and Vehicle Movement

In this regard, the relevant policy within the local plan to 2036 (LP 17 Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement) seeks to incorporate appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilities and accessibility for service and emergency vehicles.

The property sits in a good-sized plot providing off-street parking from Fox Street. The proposed use of the building would not increase the number of vehicles visiting the site.

CCC Highways raise no objections commenting "No significant adverse effect upon the public highway should result from this proposal should it gain the benefit of planning permission".

Therefore, given the use and siting of the proposal, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on parking provision and vehicle movement and therefore considered to accord with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Impact on Trees and biodiversity

In this regard, the relevant policy with the local plan to 2036 (LP 31 Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows) seeks to conserve and enhance any existing tree, woodland, hedge, or hedgerow of value that would be affected by the proposed development. Additionally, 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.

The application site benefits from a mature hedge forming the boundary treatment to the North, east and west of the residential garden. There are some mature trees within the area however the closest to be affected by the proposal is the fruit tree within the garden of the application site and therefore it is not considered reasonable to require an arboricultural report or tree protection plan regarding trees. However, the application does require the removal of 5m of the established hedgerow forming the boundary. The removal of this 5m stretch of hedgerow is exempt from Biodiversity Net gain, however this is the 5m linear habitat is the limit to which the exemption applies and any further hedge removal would be subject to the requirement for a 10% biodiversity net gain requirement.

The HDC Ecology officer has requested the submission of a PEA to ensure there is suitable compensation for the loss biodiversity from the removal of the 5m linear stretch of hedgerow to comply with LP30. The PEA should also consider GCN due to the proximity of ponds in the vicinity of the site. Whilst the loss of hedge in biodiversity terms would be regrettable and enhancements should be sought to try and mitigate for the net loss, it is considered that this could be secured by way of a planning condition, and therefore would not form a reason for refusal. Wild Birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, and any approval of this application does not change the need for the applicant to abide by this legislation and avoid any works/removal of hedge during the bird nesting season should it be found to support such habitats.

The concern that there is no PEA and no information about GCN, when there are 3 ponds within 250m of the site, one of which is known to have GCN. Officers would comment that these ponds are on sites on the opposite of the road from the application site, and the road is a main thoroughfare road into the village. In view of the distances involved between the application site and the ponds and the road barrier, and the small scale nature of the development proposed Officers are happy to conclude that the proposed development is unlikely to have any adversely impact on GCNs. Great Crested newts are a protected species and disturbing them is a criminal offence, so even in the unlikely event they were found to be on site, any works would need to cease and the relevant permissions and professional advice sought to ensure their protection.

Given all of the above, Officers consider that the fruit tree within the garden is of little value to the site, and due to its age is likely to require removal in the future. The larger trees outside the red line of the site at a sufficient distance that they will unlikely be affected by the proposal. Officers consider that whilst there is the absence of a PEA, in this instance due to the likely impacts and scale of development proposed conditions and informatives could be applied to ensure protection of any protected species and seek to biodiversity enhancements to achieve no net loss. Therefore, on balance the proposal would comply with Policy LP30 and LP31 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (December 2024).

CONCLUSION

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be refused for the following reason:

1. The loss of part of the boundary hedge together with the proposed building, by virtue of its siting, size and design would fail to respect the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding streetscene. It would appear as a visually incongruous and harmful addition to this

part of the Conservation area streetscene. It would therefore result in harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation area, which could not be outweighed by public benefits, contrary to Policies LP11 (Design Context) and LP12 (Design Implementation), LP34 (Heritage) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, the provisions the NPPF (2024), the National Design Guide (2021) and the guidance contained within the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017).

2. The proposed development due to its siting, size and design would result in harm to the setting and significance to the host Listed building and the Listed Building 1 and 3 Fox Street on the opposite side of the road. Whilst the harm would be less than substantial, it would not be outweighed by public benefits. Therefore the proposal in contrary to policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Andrea Dollard**