OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 24/01996/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings and house to be replaced with a new self-build 4 bed dwelling

Location: Rectory Farm Morborne Road Folksworth

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Chamberlain

Grid Ref: 514504 290699

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site of 0.31ha is located approximately 1km north of the village of Folksworth. The site hosts a farmhouse with attached barns and detached agricultural buildings of varying size. The site is served by an existing access onto Morborne Rd. The agricultural field to the north of the application site is within ownership control of the applicant but not associated with this application.

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 according to Environment Agency Mapping and therefore at lowest risk of flooding. There are no ecological assets or historic designations within the site or in proximity to the site.

This application seeks planning permission to demolish the existing dwelling and various agricultural buildings and replace them with a four-bedroom dwelling with extensive ground floor living accommodation.

Officers note this application is a resubmission of application 24/00094/FUL which was withdrawn in August 2024 for the following reasons:

- Absence of a structural report. The proposal failed to confirm whether the buildings proposed for demolition are in a state of dereliction or disrepair.
- The orientation and deep plan form of the proposed dwelling was uncharacteristic of building forms in the village of Folksworth.
- Absence of a Standard BNG Matrix. The application failed to demonstrate a 10% biodiversity net gain

A structural report and amended plans company this revised application. The application also seeks to replace the existing dwelling with a self-build dwelling. As such, this amended application is exempt from mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (12th 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 are also relevant and material considerations.

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

PLANNING POLICIES
Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 - adopted May 2019
*LP1: Amount of Development
*LP2: Strategy for Development
*LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
*LP5: Flood Risk
*LP6: Waste Water Management
*LP10: The Countryside
*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
*LP33: Rural Buildings

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:
*Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD (2017)
*Huntingdonshire Townscape and Landscape Assessment SPD (2022)
*Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
*Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2024)
*Huntingdonshire Tree Guidance Note 3
*Annual Monitoring Report, regarding housing land supply.

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

PLANNING HISTORY
24/00094/FUL-Demolition of existing buildings and house to be replaced with a new 4 bed dwelling-Withdrawn 08.08.2024

CONSULTATIONS
Parish Council - No objection. The parish recommend approval as the proposal would represent an improvement over what is currently on this site.

Environmental Health- No objection.

CC Highways- No objection.

Urban Design Officer - No objection. The Officer recommends the imposition of conditions to seek the details of the amenity space / garden, cycle parking, refuse storage, boundary treatments and landscaping.

REPRESENTATIONS
No representation in support or objection to the development proposal were received at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES
The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area
- Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety, Access and Parking Provision
- Biodiversity
- Flood Risk/Surface Water Drainage
- Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings
- Water Efficiency
- Other matters

*Principle of development
Huntingdonshire's strategy for development is set out in Policy LP2 of the Local Plan and looks to concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities.

The application site is located approximately 280 metres north from the built-up area of the settlement of Folksworth. As such, the existing dwelling and ancillary buildings are located in the countryside whereby Policy LP10 of the Local Plan is applicable and the starting point to establish whether the principle of development is acceptable. Policy LP10 states that development in the countryside will be restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan and that all development in the countryside must:

a. seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value:
i. avoiding the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) where possible, and
ii. avoiding Grade 1 agricultural land unless there are exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the loss of land;
b. recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
c. not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others.

The application site and surrounding land is designated as Grade 3 agricultural land and therefore the lowest grade agricultural land. The site covers approximately 0.31 ha and comprises of a farmhouse with attached barns and detached agricultural buildings of varying scale however, the buildings do not appear to have been used for agricultural purposes. The site as existing is used for residential purposes and the proposal is for a replacement dwelling on a residential site. Therefore, the proposal would not result in the loss of agricultural land. An assessment against criteria b. and c. of LP10 can be found in the sections below.

In addition to complying with the criteria of Policy LP10, development in the countryside is restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of the Local Plan, including Policy LP33 'Rural Buildings' which is most relevant in this instance.

Policy LP33 states that a proposal for the replacement of a building in the countryside will be supported where criteria a, i to iii are fulfilled and the proposal would lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting. A modest increase in floor space will be supported.

a. the building is:
i. redundant or disused;

ii. of permanent and substantial construction;
iii. not in such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction would be required.

A building is considered to be redundant or disused only where it has not been made vacant for the sole purpose of complying with the remaining criteria set out in the policy. The case officer undertook a site visit in May 2024 and whilst the dwelling house appeared to be occupied, the attached barns and detached agricultural buildings appeared vacant. Nonetheless, the established and existing use of the site/land is residential and therefore criteria a(i) of Local Plan Policy LP33 is therefore not applicable to this application.

In regard to part a i) and ii), this amended application is accompanied with a letter completed by a suitably qualified structural engineer and dated the 06 September 2024. The report confirms the barns to the rear of the host dwelling are constructed using Flemish bound brick masonry walls, timber collars, purlin gable roofs with pantiles and timber lintels in walls. Therefore, Officers are satisfied the barns are of permanent and substantial construction. Whilst the report noted there are several defects to the buildings, they appear to be weather tight and are in generally fair condition. The report concludes that the barns are capable of retention and conversion with some upgrade works to make them habitable for residential accommodation. Given the above, Officers are satisfied the barns to the rear are not in such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction would be required and as such the proposal accords with Policy LP33 a parts (ii and iii).

In regard to a modest increase in floor space, the proposed development would result in the demolition of 449m2 of buildings and their replacement with a 487m2 dwelling. The proposal would result in additional 38m2 of floor space on the site. Whilst the existing dwelling is under 100 square meters, the demolition taken as a whole and including the existing stables and barn outbuildings, would only result in an 8.46% increase to floor space and as such is considered acceptable.

It is also noted that the existing use of the site is residential and as the proposed development does not seek to intensify the residential use of the site, the principle of development is considered acceptable.

Overall, the principle of replacing a dwelling in the countryside on residential land with another dwelling, albeit larger in scale, is considered acceptable, is supported and would be in accordance with Policies LP2, LP10 and LP33 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, subject to compliance with other relevant policies and material considerations.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area
Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's 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. Similarly, Local Plan Policy LP10 states that all development proposals in the countryside should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

Rectory Farm is separated from the main built form of the closest settlement and located within the open countryside between the village of Folksworth and the hamlet of Morbone. The site is situated in the landscape character area of the Northern Wolds, whereby the landscape character of is achieved through the distinctive and repeated pattern of ridges, valleys and regularly spaced settlements. The ridges are generally used for arable farming and have a relatively open feel with long views and few hedgerow trees. In contrast, the valleys have a higher proportion of land in pastoral use and typically feel more enclosed due to smaller field sizes and less views out, according to the Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022).

Paragraph 3.87 of the SPD states both villages and countryside within the Northern Wolds are vulnerable to unsympathetic development. As such development proposals should:

- Protect key views towards the distinctive skyline of ridge tops, church towers and woodland.

- Protect and enhance the distinctive characters of the valley and plateau landscapes through maintenance of field patterns and long-distance views from the upland areas and protection of ancient hedgerows and oak trees within the valleys.

The site hosts a farmhouse with attached barns and detached agricultural buildings of varying scale. The majority of the farmstead buildings are constructed using buff brick, brown roof tiles and UPVC doors/windows. Apart from the two-storey dwelling, the outbuilding(s) as existing are single storey in nature and designed with a gable roof. The northwestern elevation of the existing outbuilding forms the northern boundary to the site and faces towards the open countryside. The existing northwestern elevation has limited fenestration.

Due to the topology of the landscape, the existing dwelling and associated outbuildings are located at a higher elevation than Morborne Road. Dense and well-established hedgerow boundaries of the agricultural field (within the applicant's control) to the north, screen the application site from the public road. The site is also screened from the south along the public highway by the field margin hedgerows. Given the site is situated between Folksworth and Morbone and the closest Public right of Way is over 270 metres it is unlikely the replacement dwelling would be seen in context with the village of Folksworth. The application does not seek to alter any of the soft landscaping which binds the site to the east, south and west. It is therefore considered that the proposal would protect key views and enhance the distinctive characters of the Northern Wolds.

The application proposes to demolish the existing 2-storey 3-bed dwelling and single storey outbuildings and erect a new 4-bed dwelling with extensive ground floor living accommodation. The proposals seek to mimic the existing barns and outbuilding. The proposed two storey element is sited approximately 4.4m further back from Morborne Road compared to the existing dwelling.

During the course of the application amended plans had been submitted to address concerns raised by the Urban Design Officer. The Officer previously raised concerns about the cluttered arrangement and lack of order and hierarchy with the fenestration, the central projecting feature gable being uncharacteristic of traditional building forms in the locality and the positioning of the chimney. Minor amendments have been conducted and the Urban Design Officer now raises no objection to the proposed design. Should the development be permitted, it is recommended by the Urban Design Officer that conditions be imposed on any consent to secure details of the amenity space / garden, cycle parking, refuse storage, boundary treatments and landscaping are secured.

Given the above, Officers are satisfied the proposed scale, massing and appearance of the replacement dwelling in the countryside would positively contribute to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in accordance with Policy LP10 part b, LP11, LP12 (parts a, b and c) of the Huntingdonshire 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. Similarly, Local Plan Policy LP10 part c states proposals in the countryside must not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others.

The proposed development would be significantly larger than the existing dwelling, with one additional bedroom and extensive ground floor. However, given the closest residential neighbour is over 330 metres from the application site and the level of domestic paraphernalia would remain unchanged, the proposal is not considered to unduly impact the amenities of the adjacent neighbour or the users of the open countryside in terms of noise and light.

Given the above, it is unlikely that any significant issues in terms of overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of light would be as a result of the development proposal. The proposal would secure a high standard of amenity for current and future occupiers of the replacement dwelling in

accordance with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide, the National Design Guide and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Highway Safety, Access and Parking Provision
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.

The County Council Highways Officer was consulted as part of this application and raises no objection to the proposal on highways safety grounds as the application is for a replacement dwelling which would utilise the existing access and it would not be intensified.

It is noted that the 6 outbuildings on the site are to be retained. The submitted site plan (drawing non JPT/CLN/0423/003 rev E) indicates cycle storage will be provided in one of the retained outbuildings. The outbuilding indicated is sufficiently sized to accommodate the secure storage of 4 cycles in accordance with one per bedroom as per Local Plan Policy LP17. It is therefore considered unnecessary to secure the details of cycle storage through condition.

In regard to parking, the Highways Officer noted the proposal indicates 4 parking spaces and a turning area for vehicles to enter and exit the site in a forward gear. Given HDC do not have a parking policy to stipulate the number of vehicle parking spaces to the number of bedrooms, Officers are therefore satisfied there is sufficient off-street parking for the proposed 4 bedroom property.

The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in highways safety and parking terms in accordance with Policy LP 17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF 2024 in this regard.

*Biodiversity
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 provide a net gain where possible.

The application is accompanied with a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. The report concludes the proposed development has low to negligible habitat value for invertebrates, hazel dormouse, badgers, reptiles, otter and water vole. In regard to bats and birds, the report found the hedgerow and scattered trees suitable for commuting bats and found the presence of owl feeding perches, swift and wren nests in Building 1 (the dwelling with attached barns). No impacts to any notable habitats are anticipated according to the accompanying report due to the small-scale nature of the proposed development. The PEA provides recommendations for works to be undertaken outside of the nesting seasons, provides other recommendations for the duration of the construction and ecological enhancements. It is also recommends that a barn owl mitigation strategy is undertaken to detail protection measures during and post development. A pre-commencement condition seeking the details of a barn owl mitigation strategy and biodiversity enhancement plan shall be secured by condition should the development be permitted.

In regard to mandatory biodiversity net gain, as of the 2nd of April 2024 a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was imposed on small sites. This application was validated on the 2nd April 2024, whereby the submission of a standard biodiversity matrix was compulsory. Evidence has been submitted which states the application falls within the self-build exemption. The evidence confirms the applicants have had the primary input into the final design and layout of a house and would occupy the proposed dwelling themselves. Officers are satisfied the proposal is exempt from a mandatory net gain as the development is self-build. As it is on this basis only that 10% BNG is not to be secured, a condition shall be imposed on any consent to ensure the property is a self-build property.

The application has demonstrated the proposal would not result in adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity and any impacts which may arise can be mitigated. Subject to the imposition of

conditions, the proposal is considered to accord with the objectives of Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 in this regard.

*Flood Risk and Drainage
National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 seek to steer new developments to areas at lowest risk of flooding and advises this should be done through application of the Sequential Test, and if appropriate the Exceptions Test (as set out in paragraphs 174-181 of the NPPF (2024).

The application site is within Flood Zone 1 (at low risk from river and sea flooding), based on Environment Agency Flooding Maps and at low risk of ground water flooding per the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2017. Given this and the site is less than 1 hectare in size, the submission of a flood risk assessment, sequential and exceptions tests for flooding are considered unnecessary in accordance with the NPPF and NPPG.

The submitted application form states surface water will be disposed of through soakways. As the proposed development is minor and is at a low risk of flooding, Officers are satisfied that drainage details can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements.

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

*Accessible and Adaptable Homes
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. 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 that include 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.

*Developer Contributions
Unilateral Undertaking for Wheeled Bins:
The application is not accompanied by a completed Unilateral Undertaking for the provision of wheeled bins however, the existing dwelling on site is serviced by refuse bins as confirmed by the HDC Refuse Calendar. The proposal therefore complies with part H of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011) and Policy LP4 of the Local Plan to 2036, as the replacement dwelling would be serviced by the existing wheeled bins.

Conclusion and Planning Balance:
In this instance, a proposal for the erection of a replacement residential dwelling in the countryside, albeit considerably larger in scale, is not considered to cause significant and demonstrable harm that would outweigh the economic, social and environmental benefits of the proposal and the proposed development is considered to be compliant with relevant national and local planning policy as:

*The principle of the development of erecting a replacement residential dwelling and its associated outbuildings is acceptable.
*The proposal would not have a significantly adverse impact on the overall character of the area and the wider character of the countryside.
*The proposal is designed satisfactorily to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring dwellings.
*There are no overriding highway safety issues.

*The proposal will not impact on existing ecology and would be able to enhance biodiversity.
*Is acceptable in regard to flood risk.

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.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388424 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Charlotte Dew**