DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is approximately 0.13 hectares in extent and comprises land within a gently sloping field that was previously in agricultural use. The site is bounded by existing residential development off Nuffield Road to the east, to the north by Cambridge Road, to the west by a commercial site and to the south by the proposed Wintringham District Centre. There are no public rights of way that cross the site. A bus stop is located to the north east of the site on Cambridge Road. There is some vegetation and hedgerow within the site, notably along the boundary with Cambridge Road. There is an existing surface water drainage ditch that runs east to west within the boundary of the site parallel with Cambridge Road.

Outline planning permission for Wintringham (reference 17/02308/OUT) was approved in November 2018 and is in the process of being built-out.

Part of the application site lies within Flood Zone 2 and 3 on the Environment Agency Maps for Flooding and as designated within the Council's 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

This application seeks full planning permission for a temporary construction access off Cambridge Road to enable and facilitate the delivery of the Wintringham District Centre and the David Lloyd leisure club development as part of the wider Wintringham delivery. The temporary construction access will remove the need for construction traffic along Nuffield Road and eliminate conflicts that could occur between the current users i.e. residents and students that will be accessing the existing development to the east. The application proposes that the temporary construction access will be in place for 3 years from the date of permission.

The temporary construction access is proposed as a simple left-in and right-out junction on to Cambridge Road. Due to the close proximity to the roundabout located at the intersection of Cambridge Road and Nuffield Road, this arrangement will allow construction traffic arriving from either direction of Cambridge Road to utilise the access.

The current application has been submitted in full detailed format (rather than as a reserved matters application) as an access in this location lies outside that permitted by the outline planning permission.

This application has been accompanied by the following drawings and documents:

* Proposed plans;

* Planning Statement;

* Highways, Drainage and Landscaping Technical Note;

* CEMP; and

* Preliminary Ecological Assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Metric.

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area. During the determination period of the application amended plans and documents have been submitted which have sought to address the comments of consultees.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 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):

* building a strong, competitive economy;

* achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;

* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment

For full details visit the government website National Guidance

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted May 2019)

- SEL2: St Neots East

- LP1: Amount of Development

- LP2: Strategy for Development

- LP5: Flood Risk

- LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
- LP11: Design Context
- LP12: Design Implementation
- LP14: Amenity
- LP15: Surface Water
- LP16: Sustainable Travel
- LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (Made February 2016)

No relevant policies.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
- Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2017)

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

17/02308/OUT - Hybrid planning application comprising:1) Application for outline planning permission for development of a mixed use urban extension to include: residential development of up to 2,800 dwellings (C3), up to 63,500 sqm of employment development (B1-B8), District Centre including shops, services, community and health uses (A1-A5, D1 & D2), Local Centre (A1-A5), Temporary Primary School, Two Permanent Primary Schools, open space, play areas, recreation facilities and landscaping, strategic access improvements including new access points from Cambridge Road & A428, associated ground works and

infrastructure. All matters reserved with the exception of means of access: and 2) Application for full planning permission for the construction of new roads, hard & soft landscaping, creation of SUDS and all associated infrastructure and engineering works including creation of haul routes at Wintringham Park, Cambridge Road, St Neots – Approved 06.11.2028

24/01333/FUL - Erection of health, fitness and racquets club, including three outdoor tennis courts within an enclosed air dome structure, three outdoor padel courts enclosed within a canopy, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, outdoor multi use court, gym and studio facilities, internal spa facilities and external spa garden, child activity area, lounge and food and drink uses, together with ancillary facilities, car parking, servicing, landscaping and associated works at land west of Nuffield Road, St Neots – Approved 10.06.2025

Various reserved matters submissions have been received and determined following approval of 17/02308/OUT.

25/01884/REM – Reserved Matters application pursuant to Planning Permission 17/02308/OUT for the development of District Centre including general retail, food and beverage retail, office space, together with open space, access and parking, electricity substations and utility connections, drainage infrastructure, pedestrian and cycle links, cycle parking, and all other ancillary works and engineering operations - Pending

CONSULTATIONS

CCC Highways team - No objections subject to conditions.

St Neots Town Council – Recommends approval, subject to CCC highways approval.

HDC Urban Design – No objections subject to a condition securing dropped kerbs, to maintain safe and inclusive pedestrian access along Cambridge Road.

HDC Landscaping – No objections.

HDC Ecology – No objections subject to conditions.

HDC Trees – No objections to the proposals subject to tree protection fencing being installed around the RPAs of nearby trees.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary – Have no comments on the proposals.

Lead Local Flood Authority – No objection in principle, noting that the proposals have minimal impact on surface water flood risk or drainage implications. Requests a condition and informative be added.

Anglian Water – No comments in respect of connections, but notes that there is a water main that crossed the site that may be affected.

HDC's Environmental Health officer - No objections with regards to this application.

Cadent Gas – No objections in principle subject to an informative.

Health and Safety Executive – Does not advise, on safety grounds, against the granting of planning permission in this case**.**

REPRESENTATIONS

None received, noting that three site notices were posted up and 40 adjacent occupiers were notified.

ASSESSMENT

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 in 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 the NPPF (2024). 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 relevant to this application comprises:

- Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 2019)
- St Neots Neighbourhood Plan (Made 2016)
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (Adopted 2021)

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 application are:

- Principle of Development
- Design, Visual Amenity and the Impact upon the Character of the area
- Amenity
- Highways Safety and Access
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Biodiversity and Trees
- Other matters

* Principle of Development

This proposal seeks full planning permission for a temporary construction access off Cambridge Road to enable and facilitate the delivery of the Wintringham District Centre and the David Lloyd leisure club development as part of the wider Wintringham delivery. The temporary construction access will remove the need for construction traffic along Nuffield Road and eliminate conflicts that could occur between the current users i.e. residents and students that will be accessing the existing development to the east. It is proposed that the temporary construction access will be in place for 3 years from the date of permission, which will be controlled by condition.

This application should be read alongside the officer reports and decision letters for 17/02308/OUT and 24/01333/FUL.

As a standalone full planning application the scheme enjoys support in principle from Local Plan Policies LP2 (Strategy for Development) and LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas), and in broad terms as part of the SEL2 (St Neots East) site-specific allocation in respect of the delivery of Wintringham.

*Design, Visual Amenity, and the Impact upon the Character of the area

Local Plan Policy LP11 supports proposals that demonstrably respond positively to their context, whilst Policy LP12 expects new development to be well designed and contribute positively to the area's character and identity, successfully integrating with adjoining buildings and landscape.

At national level NPPF Section 12 seeks to achieve well designed places and notes that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development.

The proposed access is part of the delivery of the wider Wintringham site, in particular the district centre and the David Lloyd leisure club.

The location of the access has been chosen to avoid disruption to some of the more difficult existing utilities that existing within the site, primarily the High-Pressure (HP) gas main that runs south to north through the wider Wintringham site.

The proposed access will be constructed with a tarmac finish on a type 1 sub-base layer, with the existing drainage ditch being culverted and re-profiled to facilitate the access and highway gullys installed on the route.

A gatehouse and an entrance gate to monitor access along the route are proposed; noting that the gatehouse falls outside the current application proposals. The applicants have noted that there is appropriate space to allow an articulated vehicle

to stop off the highway whilst access is granted. It has also been noted that there will be some form of access control (details to be agreed at a later date) that will hold exiting vehicles if there is a waiting vehicle to enter site (which fall outside the application site).

The HDC Urban Design officer has reviewed the submitted details and confirmed that there are no objections subject to a condition securing dropped kerbs, to maintain safe and inclusive pedestrian access along Cambridge Road.

In respect of landscaping matters it is proposed to seed the area post construction with a mix of different species. The seed mix proposed (EM8 Meadow Mix for Wetland for the disturbed ditch area and EM2 Standard General Purpose Meadow Mixture for the roadsides and embankments) has been reviewed by the HDC Landscape Officer who has confirmed that these are acceptable and the maintenance of the areas (using suppliers' recommendations) are considered appropriate.

The construction access and its residual visual impact will be temporary in nature (expected to be 3 years, which will be controlled by condition). The area covered by the location of this access point will be largely re-instated to its existing condition (the footpath) and the remainder will then form part of soft landscaping works/ the proposed M&S foodstore. Reinstatement details can be secured by condition.

The impact of the proposal on the highway and biodiversity (ditch /vegetation within the site) will be discussed in the following sections of this report.

Given the nature of the proposal, the visual impact of the access road will be temporary. It is considered that the proposal is acceptable with regards to Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshires Local Plan to 2036.

* Amenity

Policy LP14 of the Local Plan 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 closest neighbouring residential properties are to the north (Loves Farm development fronting Cambridge Road). Given the nature of the proposals there would be no overshadowing, overlooking or overbearing impacts.

A CEMP has been submitted in support of the application; this has been reviewed by the Environmental Health officer who raises no objections.

Due to the nature of the proposals, it is acknowledged that there will be a temporary impact in terms of amenity on neighbouring properties, particularly the properties to the north of the application site. However, this impact will be temporary for up to 3 years which will be controlled by condition, and given the wider development at Wintringham, the impact is not considered to be significant. The proposal, therefore, is considered to be acceptable with regards to LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 subject to appropriate conditions.

*Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access

CCC Highways have been consulted and following receipt of additional information the officer has confirmed that there are no objections to the proposed temporary access, noting that the proposals will be subject to a future S278 agreement.

In respect of the submitted CEMP it has been noted that this requires input from the contractor once appointed and it has therefore been requested that that submission of a full CEMP be secured by condition (which should align with the information required in the Highway Development Management Construction Traffic Management Plan). In respect of the construction of the temporary access road the highways officer has noted that this must be constructed to a permanent standard in accordance with Appendix 1 of HERCS which requires a minimum of 240mm of bitumastic material, rather than the 150mm shown (although it is noted that the plans state that the exact details should be confirmed at detailed design stage).

The highways officer has also noted that approximately 100m2 of private road is shown draining to adoptable highway gullies which would not be permitted and therefore the proposals require additional drainage within the private section of road, which cannot be agreed as part of future s278 agreement. However, the officer notes that there are no objections in this regard providing the applicant is required by condition to provide additional details of the drainage measures to prevent surface water run-off onto the adjacent public highway.

Comments have also been received in respect of obtaining verification of the highways extent where the piped ditch will fall within the public highway. A note has also been added in respect of the proposals needing Ordinary Watercourse Consent (required before highway technical approval and commencement of any works within the ditch).

A number of planning conditions have been suggested which include a required setback distance for access gates from the edge of the highway, construction specification, turning within the site, access drainage measures, wheel washing

facilities, traffic construction routes, time limit for the duration of the access and reinstatement of the verge to its original condition.

A CEMP has been submitted as part of the application and this contains details in relation to wheel washing; the CEMP will therefore be secured by compliance condition, alongside the submission of a Traffic Management Plan (to address the outstanding requirements as noted by CCC highways). In respect of all the other conditions proposed by CCC highways it is considered that these are necessary mitigate the impact of the proposal on the highway.

It is therefore considered that subject to the above conditions, the proposal is acceptable in respect of highway and traffic impacts, in accordance with Policies LP16 and LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Flood Risk and drainage

The proposed temporary construction access crosses an existing surface water drainage ditch; this application therefore proposes a piped culvert to allow continuity of the water flows across the access.

Elements of the application site fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3, as designated within the Council's 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the Environment Agency's Flood Maps. In the longer term (once the wider development is built out) this area will fall within planned green space located with defined Flood Zones 2 and 3 associated with the Fox Brook.

The proposals have been developed in accordance with the approved surface water strategies for the wider Wintringham development and for KP1 specifically.

A Technical Note has been submitted in support of the proposals to demonstrate how the temporary construction access will limit the risk of surface water flooding and reduce the impact on the existing drainage ditch which requires culverting. Overland flows will be controlled during the construction works and directed downstream of the temporary construction access to further alleviate the flows through the culvert. The access itself will be drained via trapped road gullies located along the side of the tarmac area that will enable the access to prevent debris and hydrocarbons entering the watercourse. The highway gullies will drain downstream of the proposed culvert; this will minimize the inflows through the culvert.

Anglian Water has been consulted on the proposals but have made no comments other than noting that that there is a water main that crossed the site which may be affected.

The CCC Lead Local Flood Authority have fully considered the proposals and following receipt of additional information have confirmed that they have no objections in principle, noting that the proposals have minimal impact on surface

water flood risk or drainage implications. The LLFA has requested a compliance condition with the submitted technical note, which is considered to be acceptable and necessary. They have also requested an informative be added in respect of the construction surface water maintenance.

Details relating to drainage measures to prevent surface water run-off to the adjacent public highway will be secured by condition (as per CCC Highway suggestion).

Overall, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk, surface water and drainage. The proposal 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.

*Biodiversity and trees

The applicant is legally required to provide not less than a 10% net gain in biodiversity, in accordance with the provisions of the Environment Act 2024. Local Plan Policy LP30 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, 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 states proposals will be supported where they seek to conserve and enhance existing trees.

This application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment and Metric.

The submitted PEA assesses the impact of the proposals on protected species, concluding that none will be affected by the temporary access road. A number of recommendations are made within the PEA which include the installation of bat and bird boxes, pre-work badger checks and tree protection heras fencing; these details can all be secured by condition alongside compliance with the PEA.

The BNG baseline calculations confirm that the modified grassland to the south will be partially lost to the new access road, with narrow strips temporarily retained on either side. However, it is noted that future development phases are expected to result in the complete loss of this habitat and the other neutral grassland to the north will also be removed, with the ground reprofiled to facilitate construction. While parts of the site may be left to naturally regenerate post-construction, it has been agreed that for the purposes of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the entire area should be treated as permanently lost. As such, the required 10% BNG is to be secured and

delivered entirely through the purchase of off-site biodiversity units through the statutory BNG condition; this avoids the need for on-site habitat creation or long-term management agreements linked to future (yet unknown) landscape proposals.

The submitted PEA concludes that vegetation clearance at the site will not result in impacts beyond the site boundary and will be fully compensated through the purchase of 0.19 off-site habitat units (as an off-site payment, secured through a BNG condition) to achieve a 10% BNG uplift.

Having assessed the submitted information the Ecology Officer is satisfied that the applicants' approach to protected species, on-site habitats and the mitigation and enhancement measures, are acceptable in principle. The Ecology Officer supports an off-site BNG payment in principle given the wider site proposals and future unknown proposals for the application site, that will in time form part of the Wintringham District Centre. Conditions are therefore recommended to secure compliance with the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, together with securing off-site units.

The HDC tree officer has noted that there are no TPO's covering the site and that whilst no arboricultural impact assessment has been submitted, the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) details two trees that should be considered during works taking place. One of these (a mature oak tree) is located outside the application site, but is within an influencing distance; it is a high value tree that will need to be fenced off during works and protected from damage. Whilst indicative RPA's have been identified within the PEA no specification or location of tree protection fencing have been included. The tree officer has confirmed that as long as the RPA's of the existing trees are fenced off throughout the construction process then significant impacts should be avoided. A planning condition is therefore proposed to secure full details of tree protection measures.

Subject to conditions the proposal is therefore considered to accord with the objectives of Policy LP30 and LP31 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework and the Environment Act.

*Other matters:

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

*Conclusion

Local Plan policies which seek to direct development to the most sustainable locations (notably Policies LP2 and LP7) offer support for the wider Wintringham development, as does the proposals' siting within the SEL 2 mixed-use urban extension. The applicant has demonstrated that the temporary access is required and that it has been sited in an appropriate location given existing constraints.

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with relevant national and local planning policy as:

- The proposed development is considered acceptable in principle.

- The proposal would have no significant adverse impact on the overall character of the area due to its minor and temporary character.

- The proposal would satisfactorily safeguard the amenities of neighbouring dwellings.

- There are no overriding highway safety and access issues.

- The proposal is acceptable in terms of flood risk and drainage.

- The proposal is acceptable with regards to biodiversity and impact on trees.

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

Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is therefore recommended that planning permission should 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.