# OFFICER REPORT

**Case No:** 25/00667/FUL **Full Planning Application**

**Proposal:** **Demolition of agricultural barn and erection of self-build dwelling including relocation of vehicular access.**

**Location:** **Land North West Of The Pastures Conger Lane Holywell**

**Applicant:** **Mr Anderson**

**Grid Ref:** **533543 270952**

## DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site comprises of an irregular shaped parcel of land to the east of the village of Holywell and hosts an open bay agricultural barn. The site is served by an existing access onto Conger Lane. Conger Lane is a private road which leads to an agricultural track and Public Right of Way (PROW) (Footpath 129/1) which connects pedestrians to St Ives. The site is approximately 2km west from St Ives and 1k southwest from the village of Needingworth.

The application site is located on the village periphery but still within the Holywell Conservation Area and the setting of a Grade I Listed Building (Parish Church of St John the Baptist) and the Grade II Listed building 'The Holy Well'. The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and at the lowest risk from fluvial and surface water flooding according to the latest Environment Agency mapping and the Councils Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024). The Councils Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024) did however, identify the site is susceptible to Ground Water Flooding, whereby the groundwater levels are between 0.025m and 0.5m below the ground surface in the 100-year return period event. No other statutory ecological or historical designations are located within or are in proximity to the site.

This application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the open sided agricultural barn and the erection of one five-bedroom house with a contemporary barn style design and detached garage, replacement access and vehicle parking.

It is noted this application is a resubmission of application reference 24/00594/FUL with design amendments and additional information. Application ref 24/00594/FUL was refused under delegated powers for the following reasons as summarised:

1. In principle concerns regarding development outside the built-up area which does not accord with specific opportunities provided by Policies of the Local Plan. The existing barn is not considered a substantial construction/building. Development would introduce domestic formalities such as vehicle and people movement and noise which are all now absent from the agricultural location. The application was considered contrary to Local Plan Policies LP 10 parts b and c and LP 33 parts a (ii) to (iii) of the Huntingdonshire District Plan to 2036 and paragraph 84 c) of the NPPF 2023.
2. Proposal is considered harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and to its historic and evidential values because it fundamentally changes the green nature and rural character of the site; removes its role as a buffer zone between the developed and undeveloped areas of the Conservation Area; has a harmful impact on the views of and within the Conservation Area from the watercourse and meadow to the south; and has a harmful impact on the rural character of Conger Lane. The harm caused to the significance of the Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area is considered to be less than substantial in terms of the NPPF 2023 however the identified level of harm would not be outweighed by public

benefit. The proposal was considered contrary to Policies LP10 part b, LP11, LP12 parts a - c, LP33 LP34 parts f - j of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, and paragraphs 130 parts a - e, 208 of the NPPF 2023.

It should be noted that application 24/00594/FUL was determined at a period in time where the Council was able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. This amended application is therefore considered under the 'tilted balance'. The balancing exercise is discussed in a following section of this report.

During the lifetime of the application revised block and elevation plans was received. This was purely to address minor alterations including the rationalisation of the fenestration, reduction to the extent of the patio and the accurate indication of the existing barn footprint on the block plan. On the balance of fairness further public consultation was considered not to be necessary on this occasion.

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 10).'

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.

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

**PLANNING POLICIES**

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 - adopted May 2019
o LP1: Amount of Development
o LP2: Strategy for Development
o LP5: Flood Risk
o LP6: Waste Water Management
o LP9: Small Settlements
o LP10: The Countryside
o LP11: Design Context
o LP12: Design Implementation
o LP14: Amenity
o LP15: Surface Water
o LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
o LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
o 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 (2017)
*Huntingdonshire Tree Guidance Note 3
*Annual Monitoring Report, regarding housing land supply.

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

**PLANNING HISTORY**
24/00594/FUL- Demolition of existing agricultural barn and erection of a self-build dwelling. - Refused 03.12.2024.

**CONSULTATIONS**
Detailed consultee comments can be found on the Local Planning Authority (LPA) public access website. The consultations below have been summarised.

Parish Council- No objection. The Parish Council see no planning reason to object to the application.

Rights of Way Officer - No objection recommends the imposition of several informatives.

Conservation Officer - Objection. The site as existing makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. The proposal would not sustain this contribution. The proposal is considered harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area because it fundamentally changes the green nature and rural character of the site; removes its role as a buffer zone between the developed and undeveloped areas of the Conservation Area; has a harmful impact on the views of and within the Conservation Area from the watercourse and meadow to the south; and has a harmful impact on the rural character of Conger Lane. The proposal is considered harmful, but the harm is not fundamental to the whole Conservation Area and is considered to cause less than substantial harm.

The Conservation Officers full comments are summarised in preceding sections of this report.

Environmental Health Officer- No objection. Recommends the imposition of a site contamination assessment condition should the development be permitted.

Ecology Officer- No comment at the time of determination. It is however noted that the Ecology Officer reviewed the same Preliminary Ecological Appraisal submitted under application 24/00594/FUL. The PEA submitted under this application is up to date and valid.

Under application ref 24/00594/FUL, the Ecology Officer raised no objection to the application and recommended the imposition of a compliance condition to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the precautionary measures and enhancements detailed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

CCC Highways Officer-No objection. Should the proposed development be permitted the type of vehicles to use Conger Lane will be smaller than that of the previous agricultural ones. The short-term use of Conger Lane for the construction of the dwelling (if permitted) is also acceptable by the Highways Officer however, the imposition of a condition survey would be imposed to ensure that remedial works are carried out following any damage caused to the adopted highway.

**REPRESENTATIONS**
One third party representation has been received in objection, raising the following matters (summarised):

- The site has been put forward in the local plan call for sites for the erection of 5 dwellings.
- The site is adjacent to a public footpath there is no right of access across the footpath.
- The site is within a conservation area and outside the village boundary.

Two third-parties neither objecting to or supporting the proposal raised the following:

- Concerns about the environmental impact and heritage harm of the development.

- Concerns about the quality of the private road as existing and the proposal may result in further damage to Conger Lane due to increased trip generation resulting from temporary construction traffic and the change of use of the site to residential.
- The size of the dwelling could increase traffic generation to and from the site by 3,4 or even 5 more vehicles.
- Conger Lane already has deep potholes and is poorly maintained.
- The proposal would compromise the intrinsic historic countryside sense of Holywell.

**SUMMARY OF ISSUES**

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

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

*Principle of development

The Council acknowledges that when considering 24/00594/FUL, the Council could demonstrate a 5YHLS. The decision to refuse 24/00594/FUL was made the 03.12.2024, prior to the publication of the revised NPPF 2024.

A revised NPPF was published in December 2024, introducing a substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements. This has resulted in the Council being unable to demonstrate a 5YHLS. While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated the Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter (policies LP2, LP7, LP8, LP9 and LP10) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications.

As a result of this, the presumption in favour of sustainable development is applied for decision-taking in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) and footnote 8 of the NPPF in relation to applications involving the provision of dwellinghouses (referred to as 'the tilted balance'). A balancing exercise is detailed towards the end of this report.

Officers shall firstly establish whether the amended proposal accords with policies concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter, namely policies LP9, LP10 and LP33.

*Development within the built up area*

It is acknowledged that third partes raised concerns the site is located outside the settlement boundary. It should be noted that Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 does not include defined settlement boundaries but instead offers inclusionary and exclusionary criteria for constitutes a built-up area.

The Local Plan to 2026 considers Holywell to be a small settlement whereby Policy LP9 of the Local Plan applies. Policy LP9 states that development proposals on land well-related to the built-up area may be supported where it accords with the specific opportunities allowed for through other policies of the Local Plan. The definition of a built-up area is "a distinct group of buildings that includes 30 or

more homes. Land which relates more to the group of buildings rather than to the surrounding countryside is also considered to form part of the built-up area". To identify whether the principle of development is acceptable it is necessary to establish if the proposal is located within the built up area of Holywell.

In regard to whether the site is considered within or well related to the built up area, the site hosts a former agricultural barn whereby exclusionary criteria set out in paragraph 4.85 of the Local Plan states "farmyards and associated agricultural buildings which extend into the countryside" are excluded from the built up area.

Paragraph 4.85 also states that where "the building comprises a long standing traditionally built building and is well-related in terms of scale and positioning to eligible properties with a defensible boundary it may be included where it is likely to be deemed suitable for reuse under permitted development rights." The site is not contained by existing hedgerows or tree belts and the northern elevation of the existing barn is set in front of the principal elevation of 'The Pastures' and 'Foxtern House'. LPA aerial imagery identifies the erection of the barn occurred during the 1990s. Furthermore, it was agreed by the LPA and applicants that under application ref 24/00594/FUL the site did not benefit from Class Q (agricultural building to dwellinghouse) conversion permitted development rights by virtue of the sites location within the conservation area.

Paragraph 4.85 of the Local Plan also excludes "undeveloped land that affords important views from a public vantage point to or from a listed building or conservation area connecting the building or area to its countryside setting". The meadow land south of the application site lies within the Conservation Area and sits at a lower elevation (approximately 5 meters) from the buildings on Conger Lane. The existing barn can be viewed from the meadow through gaps between the sparse trees and bushes along the edge of the meadow.

In regard to the above, Officers consider the site to be in the countryside. Therefore, to assess the principle of this proposed development the starting point is to consider Local Plan Policy LP10 'The Countryside'.

*Development within the countryside*
As established the application site is outside the built-up area of Holywell. Resultantly the site is considered open countryside for which Local Plan policy LP10 is applicable. Local Plan Policy LP10 states development in the countryside will be restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan.
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.

It should also be considered that Local Plan Policy LP10 restricts development in the countryside to the limited and specific opportunities provided in other policies of the Local Plan. Opportunities in the countryside are limited under Policies LP19 Rural Economy, LP22 Local Services and Community Facilities, LP23 Tourism and Recreation, LP28 Rural Exceptions Housing and LP38 Water Related Development for which these are not applicable to this application.

In regard to part a, LPA mapping denotes the application site is grade 3 agricultural land which is considered to the be the best and most versatile agricultural land in the country. Officers visited the site, and it is not considered the site is used for agricultural purposes but rather former storage of agricultural machinery and equipment. This is also confirmed by the accompanying documentation

which states the agricultural holding benefited from an agricultural determination permitting the erection of a farm machinery and hay store approximately 400 metres east of the site in 2020 (20/00789/AGDET). As such Officers consider that development on the site would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land, in accordance with criteria a of Local Plan Policy LP10 criteria a.

With regard to criteria c, refusal reason 1 of 24/00594/FUL considered there to be a conflict with the policy as the proposed development would introduce domestic formalities such as vehicles and people movement and noise which are absent from the location. As detailed in a preceding section of this report and in the submitted planning, heritage, design and access statement (PHD&AS), details how and why the barn subject of this application has become redundant and disused. Given this the site is not presently used for agricultural purposes and as such Officers determined 24/00594/FUL on the basis that the site is bereft at present from noise, odour, obtrusive light impacts.

Whilst the Conservation Officers comments state the application site is undeveloped and bereft from domestic formalities, the Council acknowledge the barn on site constitutes built development and the lawful use of the site is agricultural. The Council acknowledge that the site can be used for agricultural purposes and agricultural paraphernalia in terms of light and noise can exist on site. The residential use of the site is therefore not considered to be significantly indifferent in terms of the impact to the character of the countryside and the green/rural nature of the site. The proposal is considered to not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others and would accord with Local Plan Policy LP10 criteria c.

In regard to Local Plan Policy LP 10 criterion (b), the effect of the development proposal on the character of the immediate locality is discussed below and is considered to be acceptable by Planning and Urban Design Officers. This is discussed in greater detail in later sections of this report.

*Replacement of a building in the countryside*
As established, development in the countryside is limited to specific opportunities provided for by the Local Plan nonetheless, Local Plan Policy LP33 supports the replacement of a building in the countryside where criteria a, i to iii are fulfilled and the proposal would lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting.
Criteria a i to iii are as follows:
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;

During application ref 24/00594/FUL Officers raised concerns that the barn had purposefully been made redundant or disused for the sole purpose of complying with the criteria, given there was a short lead time between the agricultural determination permitting the erection of a farm machinery and hay store 400 metres east of the site in 2020 (20/00789/AGDET) and the submission of the application (24/00594/FUL). This however did not form a reason for refusal.

In this case, the accompanying planning, heritage, design and access statement (PHD&AS) provides evidence as to why and how the barn subject of this application had become redundant and disused. The applicants state the main farmstead in Needingworth was subject to an arson attack in 2018 whereby the agricultural business lost two barns and that the insurers advised that unless the Holywell barn (subject to this application) was made secure, the premium would rise significantly. The applicants claim that due to the long and open sided nature of the barn only to be filled with hay from the long open site, opportunities to secure the building were nigh impossible. The Council acknowledge this response and as a result of this additional information are now satisfied the barn subject of this application has not purposefully been made redundant to accord with LP 33 criteria a (i).

With regard to criteria a(ii) of policy LP 33, the Council acknowledge the policy, nor its supporting text sets out a definition of what constitutes permanent and substantial construction. Consideration of such matters are therefore matters of planning judgement based on the evidence submitted and the individual merits of the case.

In the case of refused application (application ref 24/00594/FUL), Officers were satisfied the barn (subject to this application) is of permanent construction given the steel frame appears to be grounded to the floor. Notwithstanding this, the Council raised concerns the barn is not a substantial building due to its three-sided formation, limited enclosure and lack of ground floor stabilisation. Whilst this amended application is accompanied with a supplementary letter from the Structural Engineer which states the barn is a substantial building given it is able to withstand substantial wind load due to its exposed and elevated location, the Council maintain the position the proposal does not accord with Local Plan Policy LP33 (a) ii as the barn subject to this application is not considered a substantial building. This is because the building only comprises of three walls, has no concrete pad and the cladding on the east and west elevation does not reach to the bottom of the ground floor. The proposal to some extent conflicts with Local Plan Policy LP33 (a) ii.

The supplementary letter from the Structural Engineer, also states the building repairs listed are general repairs which is in keeping with the age and wear of the structure and as such is not such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction would be required. Given the Council have no evidence of the contrary, and in light of the additional information submitted under this amended application, the Council no longer consider the proposal contrary to Local Plan Policy LP33 (a) iii.

Overall, taking the above into consideration, whilst the Council consider the proposed development contrary to Local Plan Policy LP 33 parts a (ii) of the Huntingdonshire District Plan to 2036, on balance the application is considered to provide social, economic and environmental benefits which are relevant material planning considerations in the planning balance discussed in a proceeding section of this report.

*Impact on designated heritage assets.
The application site is located in the setting of a Grade I Listed Building (Parish Church of St John the Baptist) and the Grade II Listed building 'The Holy Well' whereby, section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the decision maker to pay 'special regard' to the desirability of preserving a Listed Building or its setting. Local Plan Policy LP 34 aligns with this statutory duty which states great weight and importance is given to the conservation of heritage assets and their settings.

It is noted that the Officers report for 24/00594/FUL raised that the site contributes to the wider setting of the Grade I Listed Building (Parish Church of St John the Baptist) and the Grade II Listed building 'The Holy Well'. Whilst the Conservation Officer noted the proposal would not cause a direct impact on the immediate settings of the Listed Buildings, it would be harmful to which this site makes to their wider settings and public benefits of the scheme would not outweigh the level of harm identified. The concern formed part of Reason 2 of 24/00594/FUL as the identified harm was less than substantial.

During 24/00594/FUL failed to acknowledge the planning history associated with application ref 18/00139/FUL and subsequent appeal for the demolition of an existing bungalow and replacement with a two storey dwellinghouse directly adjacent to the Grade I Listed St Johns Church (separated by approximately 50m). The Council considered the proposal for a contemporary replacement dwelling house to have harmed the setting of the listed building which offered no public benefits. Notwithstanding this, the inspector allowed the appeal on the basis the Councils Design Guide (SPD) supports contemporary approaches, the dwelling was set back from Holywell frontage and was of a similar scale and hight of the existing property. The Inspector also considered supplementary landscaping would also buffer the proposal from the listed building which would result in a similar

impact as the existing building on site (appeal ref APP/H0520/W/18/3197828 and APP/H0520/W/18/3200311).

In this case, the application site is separated an additional 100m from the listed church. The proposal would replace existing built development on the site with a contemporary dwellinghouse designed to reflect the existing barn and its scale would be smaller than the existing building. Whilst it is acknowledged that every application is assessed on its own merits, in light of the appeal above the harm previously identified to the setting of the listed building is considered to be less significant and would preserve the setting of the listed buildings. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Local Plan Policy LP 34 and section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 in this regard.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area
This application seeks to demolish the existing barn on site and erect a detached, five-bedroom dwelling with a contemporary barn design and with an associated detached garage on the site to the west of Holywell. The application site is located within Holywell's Conservation Area and the setting of a Grade I Listed Building (Parish Church of St John the Baptist) and the Grade II Listed building 'The Holy Well' whereby, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area and as per Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The NPPF and Local Plan Policy LP 34 aligns with this statutory duty.

Local Plan Policies LP 11 and LP 12 also states proposals will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context (LP 11), is well designed and demonstrates that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape (LP 12).

In regard to the context of the site, the application site is located in Holywell Conservation Area which is characterised with rendered, thatched cottages and a distinctive historic road layout forming a ring village. The application site is not located off the two roads (Holywell Font and Back Lane), which form this historic circular route, but is accessed off Conger Lane. OS maps from 1880 to 1920 record that a small number of modern houses have been built to the south of Conger Lane which were previously occupied by the farmstead associated with Manor Farm. The Holywell Character Statement states that views of farmland to the north (particularly through Manor farmyard) are almost as important as those over The Lakes to the south and that the trees at the entrance to Conger Lane enhance the rural character of this settlement.

The Conservation Area contains the Holywell village streets and extends southwards across meadows to the bank of the River Great Ouse. The western edge of the Conservation Area lies beyond the proposal site along Conger Lane and continues southwards to the Marley Gap Brook (the watercourse which now runs along Holywell Front), including the proposal site and land to the south. The Conservation Area Character Statement describes the buildings on Holywell Front as occupying an elevated position above the floodplain, and the Ouse Valley Way public right of way runs along Holywell Front, turning southwards at the Holy Well and Parish Church across the floodplain meadows.

The Conservation Area Character Statement describes in detail the historic importance of the land south of the village towards the River. Known as 'Flagholme' and 'The Lakes', it is a large area of meadows, prone to flooding, including land reclaimed from the River dating back to at least the 14th century and may have also been a river harbour. The eastern part of Flagholme is included within the Conservation Area but also extends further west (to the south of the proposal site). This area of meadows is described as an attractive feature and a valued element of the Conservation Area, which enhances Holywell's edge of fenland setting, creates a link between the settlement and the River, emphasises Hollywell's elevated position, and requires protection because of its importance.

The application site is located off Conger Lane. The built form along Conger Lane comprises of residential dwellings two-storey in nature. Dwellings to the south of the lane benefit from spacious front and side gardens. Modern development on Conger Lane is limited with only one exception The Pastures. The material finishes along Conger Lane are primarily red bricks, brown tiles, white PVC windows and doors, render and cladding. A historic Saxon ring road layout characterises the wider settlement of Holywell and predominantly the village is characterised by detached thatched dwellings situated in spacious plots.

*Impact on the meadowland*
The land to the south of the proposal site lies within the Conservation Area and forms the meadow land to the Marley Gap Brook watercourse. There are views of the existing site and building from the watercourse and meadow to the south. The meadow land is flat, but the ground rises steeply to the buildings on Conger Lane.

Reason for refusal 2 of 24/00594/FUL raised concerns the proposal would have a harmful impact on the views of and within the Conservation Area from the watercourse and meadow to the south. Due to the elevation of the site and the proposed ridge both Conservation and Planning Officers raised concerns the proposed dwelling would be a clear feature in views of it from across the watercourse into the Conservation Area. At the time it was also considered that the proposal would introduce domestic formalities such as ancillary structures such as garden shed, garage, patio and garden furniture, which would impact views into the Conservation Area.

Notwithstanding the above, the submitted PHD&AS includes a collection of landscape photographs demonstrating winter views from the meadow towards the application site, which also includes the site in the context of the setting of the Grade I listed church. The PHD&AS also states that there is only one public footpath across the meadow and that the site cannot be viewed directly from the watercourse.

The photos demonstrate that the existing barn is still screened by winter vegetation on the approach to Holywell village along the PROW. Whilst it is acknowledged the proposal would have a localised impact in closer views towards the application site from the meadowland to the south, the ridge of the amended elevations would be the same as the existing barn and the proposed dwelling would be seen in the context of the existing neighbouring development and Grade 1 Church (right).

The Conservation Officers concerns in regard to the introduction of domestic formalities would detract from views into the Conservation Area are acknowledged and this can be addressed through the removal of Permitted Development Rights for extensions, outbuildings, hard surfacing, and boundary treatments by condition should the development be permitted. The applicant has also agreed with this approach as per paragraph 6.79 of the submitted PHD&AS. Furthermore, a condition seeking the details of a soft and hard landscaping can be imposed on any consent to ensure the southern boundary of the application site is further screened from the meadowland to the south.

In light of this additional and contextual evidence, the visual harm to the Conservation Area previously identified by the Conservation Officer in terms of the impacts from the meadowlands into the Conservation Area are not considered as significant as previously considered.

*Impact on Conger Lane.*
This application seeks to demolish the existing barn and erect a detached, five-bedroom dwelling and double garage. In regard to the proposed scale, massing and design of the dwelling, the proposed ridge would be equivalent to the existing barn. Whilst the proposed dwellinghouse would be sited closer to Conger Lane than existing houses and would not maintain the morphology of the existing residential development, the proposed building has been pushed back slightly from the existing building line of the barn and squared off and sited further forward than the adjacent dwelling 'The Pastures'.

Application 24/00594/FUL noted the proposed dwellinghouse would also have a greater impact on the lane than existing houses and would intrude in views along the lane, particularly facing west. When approaching the site at present from Conger Lane west the barn is screened by vegetation which binds the PROW to the south. The submitted block plan indicates this existing vegetation to the northwest of the site would be retained however, this area of vegetation is not within the applicant's control. Notwithstanding this, the proposed dwellinghouse has been designed to reflect the existing openside barn with cladding at first floor and would be set further away from Conger Lane than the existing barn. In terms of fenestration on the western elevation, floor to ceiling glazing would be located on the southwestern corner of the dwelling, with one smaller pane of glazing in the northwestern corner. The design features contribute to reducing the impact of the dwellinghouse from the views along the lane facing west. This again can be supplemented with landscape screening, secured by condition should the development be permitted, on the western boundary of the application site.

The Conservation Officer also raised the following concerns, the existing nature of the lane and its contribution to the Conservation Area would be fundamentally changed from a narrow unmade muddy footpath to an urbanised road. It is noted that the redline boundary of the application site does not extend into Conger Lane and therefore, the application is not seeking to make any changes to the surface of the muddy track. In addition, the Urban Design Officer consulted as part of the application notes the proposed siting of the new access drive helps to limit the extent of hardstanding across Conger Lane with the existing access track to the site to be soft landscaped as part of the site frontage.

Historical mapping indicates that 7 meters (width) of a well-established tree and hedgerow to the north of the existing barn has been removed in recent years. The UD Officer raised the importance of retaining the area to the front of the proposed dwelling with soft landscaping adjacent to Conger Lane as it adds to the character of the lane and rural setting adjacent to the public right of way. A condition seeking the details of a soft landscaping scheme particularly in the area between the footprint of the existing building to be removed and the proposed dwelling can be imposed on any consent to ensure the rural character of the lane is retained.

Reason 2 of refusal for 24/00594/FUL relates to the proposal fundamentally changing the green nature and rural character of the site and the removal of its role as a buffer zone between the developed and undeveloped areas of the Conservation Area and forming a harmful impact on the rural character of Conger Lane. As discussed previously, Officers acknowledge the existing barn on site constitutes built development and the lawful use of the site is agricultural and whilst the Conservation Officers comments state the application site is undeveloped and bereft from domestic formalities, the site is presently redundant and disused due to the applicants reasoning detailed in in the submitted PHD&AS. Apart from the removal of existing bushes in the southeastern corner of the site, the application would retain existing vegetation and would enhance the western, southern and eastern boundaries with 1.4m post and rail fencing planted with a new hedgerow. In this case, Planning Officers are satisfied the green nature and rural character of the site would be retained through the amended and sympathetic design submitted and the imposition of a landscaping condition, should the development be permitted.

*Design*

It is acknowledged that third parties raised concerns the proposal would compromise the intrinsic historic countryside sense of Holywell and the Conservation Officer considers the design to conflict with the existing character and distinctiveness of the location, due to the use of vertical cladding, zinc roofing, large openings, paviours, and close boarded fencing materials considered unsympathetic to the existing modern and historic houses along Conger Lane. Notwithstanding this, the HDC design guide states the Council welcomes high quality contemporary architecture that has been designed to integrate successfully into its surroundings (page 150). In this instance, the proposal is for the erection of a contemporary dwellinghouse designed similar to the existing barn/ agricultural buildings whereby its scale and massing would also be smaller than the existing of which the Urban Design Officer considered the proposal sympathetic to this edge of settlement /

countryside setting. In light of the amended design for which the scale and mass of the dwellinghouse has been reduced and the materials proposed reflect the existing barn, Planning Officers consider the design of the proposal appropriate for this edge of settlement location.

Overall, Planning Officers acknowledge the site as existing is in a sensitive edge of settlement location and as such makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area particularly from views across the meadowland and the PROW (Conger Lane). Whilst this amended scheme is of a contemporary design which is not necessary in keeping with the dwellings along Conger Lane, the design would be appropriate given it would reflect the existing agricultural building on the site. Whilst the site contributes to the green nature and rural character of the Conservation Area, the site albeit redundant and disused at present is not undeveloped. The proposal, subject to enhanced landscape screening and controlled via the removal of permitted development rights, would replace the visually deteriorating barn with a high-quality contemporary design offering a betterment to the redundant site. Officers therefore consider the proposal to maintain the sites contribution to the character of the conservation area in accordance with Local Plan Policies LP10 part b, LP11, LP12, LP33 and LP34 and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

*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.

*Amenity of neighbouring properties*
The closest neighbouring residential properties to the proposal are dwellings known as 'The Pastures' and 'Manor Farm' and are most likely to be impacted as a result of the proposed development.

With regard to Manor Farm, the proposal is not considered to result in any significantly detrimental overbearing, overshadowing or overlooking impacts on the neighbouring property by virtue of the 67-meter separation distance.

Regarding amenity impacts on the occupants of The Pastures, the proposed dwelling would be set back from the building line of the existing barn by approximately 1.5m and orientated at 90 degrees. The side separation between the proposed dwelling and the common boundary would be 9m. The proposed single storey garage, with a ridge height of 5.1m and eves height of 2.5m, would be situated between the proposed dwelling and The Pastures and would be 1.1m from the common boundary with The Pastures. This would be an improvement to the existing overbearing impact as the barn 7m in height to the ridge is presently located 0.6m from the common boundary. In addition, the dwelling would not protrude over the established boundary hedge to be retained.

The occupants of The Pastures are not considered to be exposed to significant overlooking impacts from the proposal, given the side separation distance between the Pastures and the proposed garage would be 8.4m and the applicants seek to erect a 1.8m high close board fence on the common boundary and would enhance the retained 6m (length) section of the existing post and rail fencing on the boundary with hedgerow planting. Furthermore, the proposed dwelling would be set in front of the principle elevation of The Pastures and the 'L' shape of The Pastures dwelling and outbuildings enclose the garden in a 'U' shape. It is therefore, considered oblique views into the rear amenity space of The Pastures would be negligible from the proposed dwelling. There are no windows servicing habitable rooms on the first-floor east elevation of the proposed dwelling to overlook the front amenity space of The Pastures.

Overshadowing impacts on the front garden of The Pastures by the development proposal are considered to be a betterment from the existing site scenario given the proposed dwelling, with the same ridge height of the barn, will be separated from the common boundary by 9.15m when compared to the existing scenario of 0.6m. The intervening proposed garage would have a ridge height of 5.1m which would be significantly shorter in hight than the existing barn.

In regard to the overshadowing of habitable rooms on the western elevation of The Pastures, the 5.1m meter ridge of the proposed garage would meet the 25 degree test set out in Huntingdonshire District Council's Design Guide (2017) and would therefore not overshadow ground floor habitable rooms given the 9.15m side separation distance between buildings.

*Amenity for future occupiers*
It is considered the proposed development would provide a high standard of amenity for future occupants of the dwelling as it meets the nationally described space standard for a 5-bedroom 8-person dwelling, provides adequate outdoor amenity space and would be screened with close boarded fencing and hedging to offer privacy. All habitable rooms of the proposed dwelling are serviced with windows which offers appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight.

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, 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. Policy LP16 of the Local Plan also states that where a proposal would affect an existing public right of way or other formal non-motorised users' route, this route should be protected or enhanced within the proposed development.

The existing access gate to the barn is to be removed as part of the proposal and a new access further east along Conger Lane is sought as part of the development proposal. The access driveway leading up to the proposed double garage would provide space for at least three vehicles to be parked. The farm track at the end of Conger Lane is a Public Right of Way for which the occupants of the proposed dwelling could use to access the town centre of St Ives by foot in approximately 40 minutes.

*Highways Safety and Public Rights of Way (PROW)*
The applicants seek to establish a new access onto the application site from Conger Lane. Conger Lane is also a PROW which connects pedestrians from the village to the town of St Ives. At the end of the Conger Lane's adopted highway is a non-mettled farm track for which the existing access to the barn is established. The Highways Officer raised no concerns with the proposed access arrangements given that once constructed, the type of vehicles to use Conger Lane will be smaller than that of the previous agricultural ones. The short term use of Conger Lane for the construction of the dwelling (if permitted) is also acceptable by the Highways Officer however, the imposition of a condition survey would be imposed to ensure that remedial works are carried out following any damage caused to the highway.

The Rights of Way Officer has been consulted as part of this application and raises no objection to the proposal providing the PROW remains open and unobscured at all times. The Officer recommends the imposition of various informatives including an informative regarding the liability of those with private vehicular rights to 'make good' the un-mettled surface of the PROW should the footpath be damaged as a result of increased motorised vehicle use.

It is acknowledged that third parties raised concerns regarding the existing quality of Conger Lane and the development proposal may increase damage to the road however, the quality of the road is an existing situation of which this application does not have control. Notwithstanding this, a condition can be imposed upon any consent to ensure the condition of Conger Lane would not be further impacted during the construction of the dwellinghouse. In regard to concerns about increased vehicular use of the road, the lawful and existing use of the site is agricultural, despite being redundant at present. It is acknowledged there may be some increase to traffic generation however,

private motor vehicles are smaller than that of agricultural vehicles and therefore are less likely to have an impact on the quality of the road surface.

Concerns raised by third parties also highlighted the site is adjacent to a public footpath and there is no right of access across the footpath. Officers note the application would form a new access onto Conger Lane across third party land. Planning permission can be applied for on land not within the applicant's control, providing the relevant notification has been sent to relevant parties. In this case, the applicants have submitted evidence confirming the third party landowner has been notified.

Taking the above into consideration, the proposal is therefore considered to provide a safe and acceptable access arrangement in accordance with highways safety and Policies LP 16 and LP 17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Parking Provision*
As detailed by the Urban Design Officer, whilst the proposed garage of 5.9m x 5.79m internally is not sufficiently sized to accommodate two vehicles as per the guidance in the HDC Design Guide, the garage could however accommodate cycle storage, based upon 1 space per bedroom as per Local Plan Policy LP17, and the storage of one vehicle.

The drive appears to be able to accommodate parking for several vehicles and as such it is unlikely that the garage would be required for a dedicated parking space(s).

Officers are satisfied the development proposal would provide sufficient vehicle and cycle parking and therefore complies with Policy LP16 and 17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Biodiversity
Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan dovetails this and 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.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), by Skilled Ecology dated March 2024, accompanied this application which states the site is of low ecological value due to the negligible presence of notable habitats. The report concludes the risk of the proposed development to protected and priority species is low. Further ecological surveys are considered unnecessary by the authors of the report however, it does recommend mitigation measures to protect birds, hedgehogs and bats from any residual risk associated with the development proposal. The report also offers biodiversity enhancement measures including bird and bat boxes, the planting of a wildflower meadow and planting of native species.

It is noted that under application ref 24/00594/FUL the Ecology Officer reviewed the same PEA by Skilled Ecology and raised no objection to the application. Should the development be permitted it is recommended that a compliance condition is imposed to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the precautionary measures and enhancements detailed in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

In regard to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), as of the 2nd April 2024 a mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was imposed on small sites. 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 to ensure the property would be a self-build property shall be imposed should the development be permitted.

Overall, given the site as existing primarily comprises of a gravelled area with some grass and herbaceous planting, Officers are satisfied with the findings of the submitted appraisal and as such the proposal accords with Local Plan Policy LP30, subject to the imposition of conditions.

* Impact on Trees

Policy LP31 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that the potential for adverse impacts on trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows has been investigated and that 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. As the application site is located within Holywell Conservation Area, the trees within the designated area are afforded with protection.

The application is supported with a topographical survey which indicates that there are no trees within the redline boundary of the application site. The survey does however note an approximate 25 meter (hight) by 14 meter (length) by 7 meter (depth) hedgerow which bounds the site to the southeast and screens the existing barn from the closest adjacent neighbour (The Pastures, Conger Lane). The applicants seek to retain the established and significant hedgerow to offer privacy for the proposed dwelling and The Pastures. However, the identified bushes in the southeastern corner of the site are to be removed.

Given the application site is on the edge of the settlement, the site is at a higher elevation than the River Ouse and the site can be viewed from the countryside via the public right of way to the south, Officers deem it appropriate to secure a hard and soft landscaping scheme, to soften the relationship between the settlement edge and the openness of the countryside, should the development be permitted.

Whilst historical mapping indicates that 7 meters (width) of a well-established tree and hedgerow to the north of the existing barn has been removed, regrettably Officers are unable to assess the implications of the removal as the application was submitted post removal.

Subsequently, the removal of the small area of bushes in the southeastern corner is considered acceptable and in accordance with Local Plan Policy LP34, subject to the imposition of a condition for landscaping details.

*Flood Risk and Drainage

National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan seek to steer new development 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 172-179 of the NPPF (2024)).

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is at the lowest risk from fluvial flooding according to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 and Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning. The site is however susceptible to ground water flooding, whereby the groundwater levels are between 0.025m and 0.5m below the ground surface in the 100-year return period event according to the Councils Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024.

Paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2024) states the sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding, except in situations where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes.

It is acknowledged the site is susceptible to ground water flooding and the proposed use of the application site to residential would increase the flood risk vulnerability classification from less vulnerable to more vulnerable and as such a site-specific flood risk assessment considering ground water flooding was submitted as part of the application.

The submitted Flood Risk Assessment identified the geology of the site to comprise an underlain of Oxford Clay formation with a superficial geology of River Terrace Depositions of sand and gravel. The report concludes this geology formation has a low permeability bedrock and is unlikely to have any significant ground water present, however there is a risk of perched water take occurring above this in the superficial geology of river terrace deposits of sand and gravel. The report states that should water be present in the superficial geology as a perched water table this would outflow to the southwest of the site and flow overland to the Marly Gap Brook. The report concludes the outflow of water at ground level on the site itself is unlikely and there are no significant risks associated with groundwater in this instance. In light of this report, Officers are satisfied the site is at limited risk to groundwater flooding and as such did not consider the submission of sequential and exceptions tests necessary in this instance.

The submitted application form states surface water will be disposed of through a sustainable drainage system and at present the proposed arrangement for foul water discharge is unknown. The existing gravelled hard standing on the site is sought to be replaced with amenity grass and patio. The existing extent of hardstanding would be reduced by the development proposal and therefore, it is considered the proposed development would not significantly increase surface water run off to warrant the refusal of this application. Officers are satisfied that drainage details can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements. The proposal therefore complies with Policies LP6, LP12 and LP15 of the Local Plan.

*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 of the Building Regulations. 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.

*Other Matters
Developer Contributions
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.

Wheeled Bins
Part H of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking to secure the provision of wheeled bins has been submitted as part of the application. The proposal therefore accords with Policy LP4 of the Local Plan and the Developer Contributions SPD (2011).

A condition seeking the details of bin storage shall be imposed to any permission granted to ensure the functional needs of the development is successfully integrated into the scheme and the countryside setting of the site as per Local Plan Policy LP 12.

Conclusion and Planning Balance:
The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of the open sided agricultural barn and the erection of one five-bedroom house with a contemporary barn style design and detached garage, replacement access and vehicle parking, adjacent to the built up area of the settlement of Holywell.

Due to the Council's revised 5YHLS and in light of paragraph 11 (d)(i) of the Framework and the provisions of footnote 7, the previously identified harm to the designated heritage assets of the Holywell Conservation Area and the setting of the grade I Listed St Johns Baptist Church would not form a strong enough reason to restrict the proposed development. The Council therefore consider that the proposal should be considered under the 'tilted balance'.

It has been determined that overall, the site is located in the countryside whereby Local Plan Policies LP10 and LP33 are relevant. Notwithstanding this, these Local Plan policies concerned with the supply and location of housing are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications. The aspects of these policies that restrict development in the countryside is to be given reduced weight.
There is some but limited conflict with Local Plan Policy LP33 (a) ii given the existing barn does not constitute a substantial construction given the building only comprises of three walls, has no concrete pad and the cladding on the east and west elevation does not reach to the bottom of the ground floor. Moderate weight is afforded to this.

Occupants of the proposed dwelling would have access to services and facilities within Holywell and surrounded villages/towns and development in this location would not result in an over-reliance on the private motor vehicle. As such, the proposed development would comply with the National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 109.

The proposed layout, scale and appearance is considered acceptable and would not negatively impact the residential amenity of adjacent neighbours or the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1, is not at risk from surface water flooding and is at low risk from groundwater flooding. The proposal is acceptable in terms of flood risk and drainage.

The proposal would result in the delivery of one dwelling towards the housing supply. Moderate weight is afforded to this.

In terms of the economic dimension of sustainable development, the proposal would contribute towards economic growth, including job creation - during the construction phase and in the longer term through the additional population assisting the local economy through spending on local services/facilities. Moderate weight is afforded to this.

The application site constitutes a sustainable location for the scale of development proposed in respect of access to local employment opportunities, services and facilities within the village of Holywell, and the wider Needingworth and St Ives areas. Moderate weight is afforded to this.

When taking all the positives and negatives of the proposal into account, the harm identified would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Therefore having regard to all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be approved.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate

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