OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 24/02142/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Demolition of barn and construction of single self build dwelling

Location: Former Agricultural Building West Street Godmanchester

Applicant: Mr and Mrs Millward

Grid Ref: 524013 270061

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The site is accessed off the western side of West Street and covers 0.26 Hectares of Grade 3 agricultural land located outside the built-up area of Godmanchester which lies approximately 50 metres to the east.

Currently there is a pitched-roof rectangular agricultural building on site set approximately 16.5 metres away from West Street orientated so its short side faces the highway. There is already an existing access to the site from West Street.

The site is bound on its northern side by established trees while the southern and western rear features open land. To the east fronting West Street has a recently felled tree to the front.

The front of the site is located within flood zones 2 while the rear section is in Flood Zone 3 according to the Environment Agency flood mapping data and the Huntingdonshire District Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024).

There are no listed buildings or scheduled monuments within close proximity of the site, nor is the site within a Conservation Area, although it is acknowledged that the proposal site is within the setting of the Godmanchester Conservation Area (CA) which lies approximately 55 meters to the east and a Grade II Listed Building which lies within the CA approximately 73 metres to the east.

The site does not contain nor is within the root protected area of any legally protected trees.

This application seeks permission for the demolition of the existing agricultural building on site to be replaced by the construction of single self-build dwelling.

It is acknowledged that a Class Q application to convert the agricultural building on site was approved in June 2024 under HDC reference 24/00781/PMBPA. This represents a significant material consideration of the proposal.

During the life of the application, following objections from the Environment Agency and Cambridgeshire Highways, amended plans were received which amended the red line plan at the access and further information was provided regarding flooding. While the Environment Agency and Cambridgeshire Highways were formally reconsulted, full consultation with other interested parties did not take place given the proposed amendments would not prejudice any third party. Subsequently, the application will be determined based on the latest plans received by the Local Planning Authority.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (12 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 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

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

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
* LP1: Amount of Development
* LP2: Strategy for Development
* LP5: Flood Risk
* LP6: Waste Water Management
* LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
* LP10: The Countryside
* LP11: Design Context
* LP12: Design Implementation
* LP14: Amenity
* LP15: Surface Water
* LP16: Sustainable Travel
* LP17: Parking Provision
* LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
* LP31: Trees, Woodland and Hedging
* LP33: Rural Buildings
* LP34: Heritage Assets

Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
- Huntingdonshire's Design Guide SPD 2017 - Compatibility Statement (2021)
- Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
- Developer Contributions: Updates Costs 2019/2020
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment (2022)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
- Huntingdonshire Tree Guidance Note 3
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply.

The National Design Guide (2021)
* C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
* I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
* I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
* B2 - Appropriate building types and forms
*M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
* H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment

* H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
* H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

The site is outside of the Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan designated boundary.

To view, please visit: https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/planning/neighbourhood-planning/

PLANNING HISTORY

23/01186/PMBPA for Change of use from agricultural building to dwelling (C3)., REFUSED 21.08.2023

23/02439/PMBPA for Application for change of use from agricultural barn to a residential dwelling under class Q, NOT DETERMINED 26.07.2024

24/00781/PMBPA for Change of use from agricultural building to dwelling (C3)., APPROVED 24.06.2024

Please note that the following consultation responses represent the latest comments received on the application following formal reconsultation.

Godmanchester Parish Council: No response.

Cambridgeshire County Highways - Whilst we have reservations, given the established use in planning land use terms which you have outlined, we accept this application represents a modest re-use of a redundant agricultural building with an established entrance and therefore the Highway Authority have no objections to the proposed development.

Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Health Services - No objection subject to conditions relating to the Air Source heat Pump and Contaminated land control.

Huntingdonshire District Council Ecology Officer - No response at time of determination.

Trees Officer - No response at time of determination.

Lead Local Flood Authority - No response at time of determination.

Environment Agency - No objection to the proposals subject to condition to remove permitted development rights for landscaping and structures to the rear and side gardens of the proposed development and within the 1 in 100 year plus climate change flood line as delineated on the submitted Flood Risk Assessment to prevent further flood risk.

Original comment was an objection as the proposed patio/patio was not above ground level. This has been overcome with an amendment which can be controlled by condition.

Huntingdonshire District Council Waste Officer - No response.

REPRESENTATIONS

No comments received at time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 47 of the NPPF (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 consists of:
o Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
o Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o St Neots Neighbourhood Plan (2016)
o Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
o Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
o Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
o Bury Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
o Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan (2023)

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main matters for consideration are:

1. The Principle of Development
2. Flood Risk
3. Impact upon Heritage Assets
4. Residential Amenity
5. Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access
6. Biodiversity
7. Trees
8. Other Matters

*Principle of Development

Extant Permission

It is acknowledged that there is a legal fallback of a dwelling on the site by virtue of planning approval reference 24/00781/PMBPA, which allowed a Class Q conversion (Schedule 2, Part 3 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015) of an agricultural building to a residential dwelling. Nevertheless, the proposal submitted under this current application for a new-build dwelling has a significantly enlarged red line (from approximately 400 sqm to 1600 sqm) and the proposed dwelling itself is larger in terms of form, height, depth and design and therefore different to what is allowable under the Class Q fallback

and so it must be recognised that the proposed dwelling is materially different. For these reasons the principle of a dwelling on the site has been established under LPA ref 24/00781/PMBPA.

Housing Land Supply

NPPF paragraph 78 requires the Council to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide a minimum of five years' worth of housing against our housing requirement. A substantially revised methodology for calculating local housing need and the reimposition of this as a mandatory approach for establishing housing requirements was introduced on 12th December 2024 in the revised NPPF and associated NPPG (the standard method).

As Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 is now over 5 years old it is necessary to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply (5YHLS) based on the housing requirement set using the standard method. NPPF paragraph 78 also requires provision of a buffer to ensure choice and competition in the market for land. As Huntingdonshire has successfully exceeded the requirements of the Housing Delivery Test a 5% buffer is required here. The five-year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,430 homes equivalent to 4.03 years' supply.

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 housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'. 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.

Location and suitability of the site (including its impact on the character and appearance of the area)

The application seeks planning permission for the demolition of barn and construction of single self build dwelling on a site within Godmanchester.

Policy LP2 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (the Local Plan) sets out the overarching development strategy for Huntingdonshire through the plan period. The main objectives are:

- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities;
- Direct substantial new development to two strategic expansion locations of sufficient scale to form successful, functioning new communities;
- Provide opportunities for communities to achieve local development aspirations for housing, employment, commercial or community related schemes;
- Support a thriving rural economy;
- Protect the character of existing settlements and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside;
- Conserve and enhance the historic environment; and
- Provide complementary green infrastructure enhancement and provision to balance recreational and biodiversity needs and to support climate change adaptation.

Policy LP2 directs approximately a quarter of the objectively assessed need for housing (together with a limited amount of employment growth) to sites dispersed across the Key Service Centres and Small Settlements in order to support the vitality of these communities and provide flexibility and diversity in the housing supply. In addition, rural exception, small and windfall sites will be permitted on sites which are in conformity with other policies of the plan, thereby providing further flexibility in the housing supply.

Policy LP2 is within the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, and is therefore considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications for residential development. Notwithstanding this, weight should still be given to Policy LP2 given that it directs development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities which is consistent with the NPPF.

Local Plan Policy LP7 identifies Godmanchester as part of the Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area where a good level of available services and facilities are available and are more sustainable. Specifically, LP7 states:

Development Proposals on Unallocated Sites

A proposal for development on a site which is additional to those allocated in this plan will be supported where it fulfils the following requirements and is in accordance with other policies:

Residential Development

A proposal for housing development (class 'C3') or for a residential institution use (class 'C2') will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement.

Policy LP7 is within the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and is therefore considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications for residential development. Notwithstanding this, weight should still be given to Policy LP7 given that the policy sets out that a set of criteria for assessing whether the proposal reflects sustainable development which is consistent with the NPPF. However, the part of Policy LP7 which specifies that only certain types of development on land within a built-up area is to be given reduced weight in determining a proposal for residential development. This means that any residential development on sustainable land may be acceptable in principle subject to other material planning considerations.

Firstly, it must be considered whether the site falls within the Countryside or within the built-up area.

The supporting text to Local Plan Policy LP7 provides extensive criteria-based guidance on the assessment of whether land falls within or outside the built-up area, specifically excluding:

"Farmyards and associated agricultural buildings which extend into the countryside or primarily relate to the countryside in their use, form, character or connectivity."

The site is approximately 50 metres from the nearest built form at the settlement of Godmanchester and comprises an agricultural building surrounded by open or treed land. It is considered that the proposal does not meet the built-up areas definition (to be within a distinct group of buildings that includes 30 or more homes) as set out in page 53 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan (2019) and is therefore considered to be located in the open countryside but adjacent to the built-up area of Godmanchester.

Given the above consideration that the site may appear more visually part of the countryside, policy LP10 is considered to be relevant.

Policy LP10 places significant restrictions on developments in the countryside locations, referring to only "limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan" as being acceptable in principle. Policy LP10 requires all development in the countryside to:

(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.

Policy LP10 is within the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and is therefore considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications for residential development. Notwithstanding this, weight should still be given to Policy LP10 especially in relation to criteria (a) to (c) as it is consistent with the NPPF. However, the part of Policy LP10 which restricts residential development in the countryside is to be given reduced weight. This means that any residential development on land in the countryside may be acceptable in principle subject to other material planning considerations.

With regard to Policy LP10 part (a), while the site is classified as Grade 3 agricultural land falling within the category of the best and most versatile agricultural land, albeit at the lower end. The site is currently occupied by hardstanding and an agricultural building and is therefore not used for the growing of crops. The size of the site is quite modest and the site is separated from the adjacent agricultural field by means of enclosure. Therefore, the proposal does not significantly conflict with Local Plan Policy LP10 part a.

This enlarged area and increased massing, height and scale of built form impacts the assessment of criteria b of LP10, as it requires that development outside of the built-up area of settlements does not harm the character and appearance of the countryside.

In terms of Part b of LP10, guidance set out within Paragraph 4.113 of the Local Plan sets out that development proposals should seek to minimise their potential impact and recognise the intrinsic character of the countryside through good design and careful location and that where development is proposed high quality design will be required.

As previously noted, the red line boundary plan has been extended significantly from the red line approved under the Class Q approval (HDC ref: 24/00781/PMBPA) to the south. The proposed dwelling is sited further forward and is significantly wider than the extant approved conversion of an agricultural building and it therefore it is acknowledged that in terms of siting the introduction of additional built form would be more noticeable in the countryside.

While post and rail fencing (details not supplied) and a 30m-long Hawthorn hedge/treeline is proposed to the periphery of the site, on the front boundary the hedging would cover only the bottom two-thirds of the site and would clearly expose the massing of the built form to the public realm. Nevertheless, hedging can be removed or fail and could result in a much more prominent built form. The conversion application retained the original form of the existing building. This application conversely increases the prominence of the dwelling by increasing the height, floor area and massing, removing an agricultural building and replacing it with a domestic building resulting in an increased degree of prominence. It is therefore considered the change of use and significant increase in scale of the dwellings will have a degree of negative visual impact on the countryside and would have some conflict with criteria b. of Policy LP10.

In terms of criteria c of Local Plan Policy LP10, it is acknowledged that the proposals would introduce an additional residential use in this location. However, given the fallback of a dwelling on the site, it is considered that the introduction of a dwelling would not have a significant adverse impact upon the use or enjoyment of the countryside by others. The proposal therefore is considered to accord with part c of LP10.

Of the 'other policies' within the Local Plan which provide opportunities for development in the countryside as set out in Local Plan Policy LP10, Policy LP33 'Rural Buildings' is most relevant in this instance.

Policy LP33 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan states that a proposal for the conversion of a building in the countryside that would not be dealt with through 'Prior Approval/Notification', as in this case, will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

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; and

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

The position of the replacement buildings within the site should be considered comprehensively so that it is located where it would have the least possible adverse impact on the immediate surroundings, the wider landscape and the amenity of the users of existing buildings nearby.

The proposal is for a replacement building and therefore criteria a, i to iii above are relevant alongside a requirement that the proposal would lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting, with a modest increase in floorspace supported.

It is acknowledged that LP33 supports the re-use of rural buildings as opportunities for development. Rural buildings are defined within the Local Plan as being an intrinsic part of the countryside, both in terms of their role in the rural economy for people living and working in the countryside and as part of the character of the landscapes of Huntingdonshire.

It is accepted that the proposal meets Local Plan Policy LP33 criteria a as confirmed by the Class Q approval. It therefore falls upon the Local Planning Authority to consider whether the proposal would lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting, allowing a modest increase in floorspace.

The site lies approximately 50 metres west of the main built-up area of Godmanchester and currently comprises an agricultural building set approximately 15 metres from the back edge of the pavement surrounded by open vegetation or treed land with its western southern and northern sides similarly verdant agricultural land.

Given the current open land to the front of the site, views of the site would be taken from the context of built form at the background from the village of Godmanchester from the west. When stood on West Street facing the site, it is considered that the site would be seen in the context of its residential character adjacent to the site and would not cause significant and demonstrable harm to a degree which would warrant a refusal of the application.

The proposals significantly increase the scale of the approved Class Q development (HDC ref 24/00781/PMBPA), providing an additional 4.089 metres in height, going form a rectangular building to a T-shaped building set further forward in the plot (which has been significantly extended) with the introduction of hardstanding. This cumulative larger development would have a much greater impact on the visual appearance of the countryside compared to the Class Q conversion already approved in the site, which as an agricultural building is an appropriate building to be located in the countryside and adds to the agricultural and rural nature of the site.

The proposal would also increase the floorspace of the approved Class Q dwelling by 50%. The original agricultural building had a floorspace of 100 sqm, with the introduction of a first-floor

mezzanine accounting for the floorspace increase. Even when allowing for this mezzanine, the resulting 50% increase in floorspace is not considered to be a modest increase. This therefore represents a conflict with Policy LP33 in terms of the size and massing of the dwelling.

Matters such as landscaping, levels, materials and bins/cycle storage should be conditioned.

Sustainability of the Site

As outlined above, Huntingdon is a Spatial Planning Area which are considered more sustainable than those locations identified lower down up the settlement hierarchy under Policy LP2.

The pavement to the front of the site providing footpath access from West Street to the wider village of Godmanchester where services such as schools, doctors, shops and leisure activities are found as well as public transport links to other parts of Cambridgeshire. It is therefore accepted that despite its countryside setting, a dwelling on the proposal site would not be considered an isolated home (as set out in paragraph 84 of the NPPF) as the site is in a sustainable location where any future dwelling on the site would not be reliant on a private motor vehicle.

NPPF Para 110 states: Development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making.

It is considered that the development would have access to services and facilities within Godmanchester, and also the means to access larger settlements such as the Market Towns of St Neots and Huntingdon through sustainable modes of transport. The development would therefore not result in the development of isolated homes in the countryside nor would the future occupiers have an over-reliance on the private motor vehicle.

Overall. it is determined that the site is considered to be sustainable for the amount of development proposed and is overall acceptable in principle in terms of location.

*Flood Risk

Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 states that a proposal will only be supported where all forms of flood risk, including breaches of flood defences or other defence failures, have been addressed such that, amongst other things, the sequential approach and sequential test are applied and passed.

The application site falls within the Environment Agency's (EA) Flood Zone 2 and 3 and Flood Zones 2 and 3a and 3b as identified by Huntingdonshire District Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2024). Together the EA flood maps and SFRA 2024 form the basis for applying the NPPF Sequential and Exceptions Test.

Paragraph 170 of the NPPF (2024) states that 'inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.'

It is acknowledged that the site benefits from extant planning approval for a conversion of an agricultural building under planning reference 24/00781/PMBPA and therefore there is legal fallback for a residential use on the site which is a material consideration when considering Flood Risk issues.

Nevertheless, footprint of the dwelling has increased and the red line boundary and footprint of the proposed dwelling in this current application has increased significantly (from approximately 400 sqm to 1600 sqm, from a 100sqm ground internal area to approximately 160sqm) and so there would be an increase in flood risk potential for future users of the site.

The legal-fallback dwelling approved in the 24/00781/PMBPA was principally located in Flood Zone 3 and the bulk of the current proposal is relocated into Flood Zone 2 with bedrooms on the first floor. It is considered that this repositioning in the current application of habitable space in a lower Flood Zone is a welcome amendment and improvement on the extant conversion application, which it must be acknowledged, included two bedrooms on the ground floor.

Therefore while it is the case that there would likely be more suitable sites in a lower risk flood zone which could accommodate the residential unit, Planning Practice Guidance encourages that in applying the Sequential Test, a pragmatic approach on the availability of alternative sites should be taken.

In this case, it is acknowledged that the development would be in a medium to high risk area. However, it is considered that given the legal fallback of a dwelling onsite and the relative betterment this current application would provide over the extant Class Q conversion, a sequential test is not considered necessary in this instance.

A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) has been provided as part of the application prepared by MTC Engineering dated November 2024, with an addendum letter by MTC received 16th January 2025 setting out clarification and further information to overcome the Environment Agency's objection (discussed below).

The FRA notes that the only significant flood risk to the site comes from the River Great Ouse, which has a maximum modelled 1 in 100 year plus climate change water level of 10.28m AOD in the vicinity of the site. Paragraph 4.3 of the FRA states that the replacement dwelling will have a minimum finished floor level set at 10.58m AOD. This is also above the 1 in 1000 year water level of 10.51m AOD at the site, and represents an increase of 130mm above the floor level of the consented dwelling at the site which is 10.45m AOD. Furthermore, refuge areas in flood event are provided given sleeping accommodation is now to be located onto the first floor. Safe access will be retained in a 1 in 100 year plus climate change event, with no adverse impact upon flood storage volumes at the site or the off-site risk of flooding. These mitigation measures as well as the site being signed up to flood warning schemes will be secured by condition should the proposal be approved.

Additional information (MTC Letter, 16.1.25) was provided by the applicant following an objection by the EA that the proposed path / studio was to be either set at or below existing ground levels or would be designed as a raised decking area with void space to ensure there is no impact flood storage volumes, noting that Paragraph 049 of the PPG indicates that the use of voids should not be relied upon for compensating any loss of floodplain storage. The EA concludes that the proposed path / studio void would not be an appropriate method of floodplain compensation. This objection was removed following the MTC letter and the EA subsequently removed their objection, recommending conditions removing permitted development rights for structures or landscaping within the rear or side garden to prevent risk from further flooding and that the mitigation measures proposed in both MTC FRA and follow-up letter are fully implemented prior to occupation or otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority. Should the proposal be recommended for approval, these conditions are recommended be attached to any consent given to reduce further flood risk on the site.

Overall, given the site benefits from a legal fallback for a conversion of an agricultural building to residential use on the site and that this current proposal represents an improved dwelling in terms of Flood Risk, it is considered that subject to conditions ensuring compliance with the mitigation and resilience measures set out in the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and additional letter,

the proposed development is considered acceptable and in accordance with the overall aims and objectives of Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of the Local Plan and the NPPF 2024 in this regard.

*Impact upon Heritage Assets

The proposal does not fall within the Godmanchester Conservation Area but is within 55 metres of its boundary where a domestic Grade II building is sited (a further 18 metres to the east. When standing on West Street on the pavement in front of the site and when approaching the site from the west, the site would be experienced within the settings of these heritage assets.

Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Paras 202 - 221 of the 2024 NPPF provide advice on proposals affecting heritage assets and how to consider different levels of harm. Paragraph 212 sets out that ‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance’. Para. 213 states 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification'. Local Plan policies LP34 align with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.

The proposed dwelling would have an impact on the setting of both the Godmanchester Conservation Area and Grade II listed building by virtue of its increased height, scale and siting, being placed further forward in the site where it would be both viewed and experienced within the context of these heritage assets.

However, given the proposal is for a barn-like dwelling that would be read against other built form using materials found in the observable landscape in the built-up area of Godmanchester, it is considered that the scale and design of the proposal would result in a cohesive additions using materials that match the visual palette of the wider Conservation Area, the proposal for one dwelling on the site is considered to be proportionate and appropriate to the setting of the designated heritage assets and would not give rise to any harmful impact on the identified heritage assets and is compliant with the provisions of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, the NPPF and Local Plan policy LP34.

*Residential Amenity

Policy LP 14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states amongst other things that 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, and that any neighbouring properties are protected from any significant impacts that would result from a development.

In terms of its relationship with neighbouring properties, the site is location within open countryside with its nearest neighbour to the southeast of the site being No.33 West Street located approximately 63.5 metres away. The proposals are therefore unlikely to result in any significant amenity impacts on neighbouring properties given the separation distances.

The proposals demonstrate that the occupiers of the replacement dwelling would benefit from adequate private amenity space and the proposal would nationally described space standards.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Health Officer has considered the proposals and requested conditions relating to details of the proposed air source heat pumps and a contamination condition. Given the sites history as agricultural use and to safeguard future occupiers health, these conditions are considered to be reasonable, relevant and necessary and it is recommended to append these conditions to any consent given to the application.

Overall, subject to conditions, it is considered that a high standard of amenity would be provided for all users of the development and maintained for neighbours. The development is considered acceptable in terms of overshadowing, overlooking, overbearing impact, loss of privacy, loss of light and would not have a significant detrimental impact upon residential amenity. The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 and paragraph 135(f) of the NPPF (2024).

*Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access

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. Paragraph 115 of the NPPF (2024) states that development should only be prevented or refused on Highway Safety Grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe. Policy LP16 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 also encourages sustainable transport modes.

Access to the site would be from West Street to the northern front of the site consented as part of the extant Class Q Permitted Development application (HDC ref: 24/00781/PMBPA).

Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority (LHA) have reviewed the proposals and accept that the proposal is acceptable in principle given the access arrangements remains the same under the Class Q application (HDC ref: 24/00781/PMBPA), noting that given the established use in planning land use terms, accept that this application represents a modest re-use of a redundant agricultural building with an established entrance and subject to condition have no objections to the proposed development.

The proposed site layout plan indicates the provision of Nos.3 car parking spaces to the southern front of the site measuring 3 metres by 5.5 metres. With regard to the level of parking provision, the Local Plan to 2036 does not include set standards, but having regard to Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036, three formal spaces for the dwelling are considered to be acceptable. No cycle spaces have been put forward as required by Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017) for the provision of secure and covered cycle parking on the basis of 1 space per bedroom. This, however, could reasonably be secured by condition.

Overall, subject to conditions, the proposal would accord with Policies LP16 and LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Biodiversity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 states that development proposals should demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity have been investigated. Any proposal that is likely to have an impact, directly or indirectly on biodiversity will need to be accompanied by an appropriate appraisal, such as a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). LP30 also states that all proposals must also demonstrate a net gain in

biodiversity where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.

The site is part-situated within a large field of modified grassland between West Street and the River Great Ouse that is managed as cattle-grazed pasture. The current site comprises a single-storey, corrugated metal/wood barn which is proposed to be demolished which is surrounded by modified grassland, scrub, and multiple habitat piles of materials such as rubble, breeze blocks, wooden posts, roof tiles and brash. A large mature ash tree is located on the western boundary of the site. The site is within 250m of a pond.

A range of ecology documents accompany the proposal including a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), by Greenwillows Associates Ltd, dated January 2023, a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan by BMD dated November 2024, an Ecological Verification Note by BMD dated November 2024, a Bat and Great Crested Newt Survey Report By Allied Ecology dated June 2023 and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool.

Given the site is within 250 metres of a pond and could provided habitats for protected species, the PEA identified potential protected species habitats and recommended further surveys including a Phase 2 emergence/return bat survey and a Phase 2 great crested newt eDNA survey. These surveys were carried out and are assessed within the Great Crested Newt Survey Report By Allied Ecology dated June 2023, which concludes that no active bat roosts were identified during survey work and Great Crested Newts presence is confirmed within the nearby pond which would 'highly unlikely' cause an offence to be committed as part of the proposals. Therefore, subject to the safeguarding and mitigation measures set out in Part 5 of the Great Crested Newt Survey Report (which could be secured by condition) the proposal if implemented, would lead to an acceptable impact on these protected species in this regard.

Furthermore the Ecological Verification Note by BMD dated November 2024 seeks to update the submitted concluding that no further surveys are required with recommendations and mitigation measures set out in part 3, while biodiversity enhancement measures including new wildflower seeding area, plating of native species-rich hedgerows and bat roosting features and bat-friendly planting as well as bird roosting features and bird-friendly planting. However, limited detailed information has been supplied and therefore a condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to secure specific details.

Regarding mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), the applicant has submitted this as a self-build project for which a BNG exemption would apply.

Overall, subject to condition, the proposal is considered to broadly be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

*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.

It is acknowledged that an Ash Tree cited to the front of the site has been removed since the Class Q application has been determined. The proposal is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), Tree Survey Schedule and Tree Survey Legend By Greenwillows Associates Ltd, dated November 2022, which identifies 4 trees that could be impacted by the proposals (including the since-removed oak tree) which are categorised as one C1 Ash tree, and two instances of a dense group of early-mature, self-set wild Plum trees and dense Ivy. Up to 8 metres

in height. No action is proposed to these trees, in terms of pruning or removal with no trees to be physically protected during demolition site preparation or construction.

Therefore subject to the imposition of compliance conditions to ensure the proposal is carried out in accordance with the submitted arboricultural details, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP31 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

*Other Matters

Housing Mix - 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 will 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.

Water Efficiency:
Policy LP12, Criteria j, of the Local Plan to 2036 requires all new dwellings to be in compliance with Building Regulations approved document G, which sets out standards for water efficiency.

A condition could be attached to secure this if the application were to be approved.

Unilateral Undertaking for Wheeled Bins:
Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a refuse bin payment for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking Form in respect of wheeled bins accompanies this application. The proposed development therefore accords with Policy LP4 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan and the Developers Contributions SPD (2011).

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

*Conclusion and Planning Balance

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 housing. This is generally referred to as ‘the titled balance’. 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.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

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 five year housing land supply (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 housing. This is generally referred to as 'the titled balance'.

NPPF para 11 states:

'Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance (7) provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

Foot note 7 states: The policies referred to are those in this Framework (rather than those in development plans) relating to:
habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; land designated as Green Belt, Local Green Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.'

As outlined in the report, in light of all considerations, there are no strong reasons for refusal in relation to any habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Green Space, irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75) and areas at risk of flooding. Therefore, there is no reason to not move forward to test d (ii) as per above and thus the 'titled balance' is engaged.
As stated above, a tilted balance approach should be applied in the assessment of the proposed development, and a balancing exercise should be carried out to determine the potential any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

The application seeks full planning permission for the demolition of barn and construction of single self-build dwelling in Godmanchester.

It has been determined that overall, the site is within the countryside on land adjacent to the built-up area. Local Plan Policies LP7 and LP10 are therefore relevant, however it is also relevant that the site also benefits from a fallback position of an extant Class Q conversion for an agricultural building to a dwelling. Local Plan Policies LP7 and LP10 are concerned with the supply and location of housing as set out in the Development Strategy chapter of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, but 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 on land well-related to the built up or in the countryside is to be given reduced weight.

It has been established that the proposed development would have access to services and facilities, and that it would not result in an over-reliance on the private motor vehicle. As such, the proposed development would comply with Framework Paragraph 109.

It is considered that the application site could satisfactorily accommodate 1 dwelling.

The proposed access is considered to be safe and acceptable in highway terms. The level of traffic generated by the development would not result in adverse traffic impacts.

Parts of the site would operate as Flood Zone 2, but habitable space is primarily sited on the first floor. Notwithstanding this, it is reiterated that there is a fallback position of a conversion of agricultural building to dwelling which was located in Flood Zone 3, which represents a betterment in terms of flood risk.

The development of the site would result in Grade 3 agricultural land, nationally considered as amongst the best and most versatile agricultural land. However, the site is modestly sized not actively farmed and would not prevent the farming of adjacent agricultural fields The proposal is of good design and would not adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others so broadly accords with LP10 parts (a), (b) and (c) and part a of Local Plan Policy LP33.

The proposal will result in the delivery of 1 self-build home towards the housing supply. Substantial 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.

In terms of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, the proposal offers potential for the incorporation of energy efficiency measures as well as the delivery of green space and a net gain in biodiversity. 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 wider Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area; and is accessible by sustainable transport modes. Moderate weight is afforded to this.

Whilst some conflict/harm has been identified in relation to agricultural land and countryside impact as well as LP33 in terms of the proposal being beyond a modest increase in floor space, it is concluded that the identified harm would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefits when taking all the positives and negatives of the proposal into account.

It has therefore been concluded that there is an overriding need for the development given the lack of a five-year housing land supply and the need for affordable housing in the district.

Having regard to all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that approval be granted for the proposed demolition of barn and construction of single self-build dwelling.

CONTACT OFFICER:
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