OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00460/PIP Permission in Principle

Proposal: Permission in Principle application for construction of up to 3no. dwellings

Location: Land Adjacent To 5 High Street Hail Weston

Applicant: Ms Sadley

Grid Ref: 516052 262338

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application relates to land adjacent to 5 High Street, Hail Weston. The site is located to the west of the settlement of Hail Weston with existing residential development to the east.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 based on the Council's 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning.

The current proposal is the first part of permission in principle application; which only assesses the principal issues namely (1) location, (2) use; and (3) amount of development proposed and establishes whether a site is suitable in principle. Should this application be successful, the applicant will have to submit a Technical Details application covering all other detailed material planning considerations.

The proposal has had two previous permissions refused. 24/01917/PIP was a larger site than included this piece of land and 23/01023/PIP was a smaller site that included part of this piece of land.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) paragraph 8 sets out the three objectives - economic, social, and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 also sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* making effective use of land
* achieving well-designed, beautiful, and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural environment;

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

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

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Wastewater Management
LP9: Small Settlements
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and vehicle movement
LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

- 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
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024
- Land Availability Assessments: 18 September 2024 and 27 November 2024
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply 2024

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

PLANNING HISTORY

8101642OUT for DWELLING AND GARAGE
ADJ 5 HIGH STREET HAIL WESTON,
REFUSED dated 10.12.1981

23/01023/PIP for Permission in Principle for construction of 1 no. dwelling,
REFUSED dated 08.09.2023
Reason for refusal:
The proposed development would be outside of the built-up area of Hail Weston and the proposed development of one singular dwelling, as submitted, does not accord with the opportunities for development on land outside the built-up area of small settlements provided for by other policies of the Local Plan. In addition, the proposed development would erode a visual buffer between the built-up area of Hail Weston and the open countryside to the detriment of the rural character and appearance of the settlement and primary linear arrangement of dwellings in the locality, and it is not considered this amount of dwellings could be acceptable accommodated on the site in this regard. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies LP2, LP9, LP10, LP11 and LP12 parts a-c of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and paragraph 130 part c of the NPPF 2023.

24/01917/PIP for Permission in principle for the construction of up to 8no dwellings,
REFUSED dated 11.12.2024
Reason for refusal:
The proposed development would be outside of the built-up area of Hail Weston and it does not accord with the limited and specific opportunities for development on land outside the built-up area of small settlements provided for by other policies of the Local Plan. The loss of the existing open and undeveloped character, and the introduction of a domestic form of development would have a notable urbanising effect and would erode a visual buffer between the built-up area of Hail Weston

and the open countryside to the detriment of the rural character of the site and fails to protect the character of the existing settlement. The location and amount of development would be contrary to the strategy for managing growth across the District and result in significant harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies LP2, LP9, LP10, LP11 and LP12 parts a-c of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

CONSULTATIONS

Parish Council: The PC oppose this application due to the size of the houses. The PC would support any houses that encourage first time buyers or downsizing opportunities. Before or at the parish meeting the PC received no objections or comment.

CCC Highways: It was noted that the proposed shared access is adjacent to the existing pedestrian dropped crossing. It would not be permissible for the access to be either adjacent to the pedestrian dropped crossing or on the radius. It would therefore be necessary to construct a new pedestrian crossing point so that there is a minimum of 2 no. full height kerbs between the access and the crossing point. It will also be necessary to extend the footway on the south west side of High Street and construct a new corresponding pedestrian crossing point. Although there is a fence outside No.16 our indicative highway records indicate that there is approximately 2.4m of highway verge adjacent to the carriageway. Our Asset Information Searches team will be able to confirm this Highway searches - Cambridgeshire County Council The highways team would therefore have no objections in principle however further details of the access design including any accommodation works, drainage and adjustments to the footway and pedestrian crossing points shall be expected as part of the Technical Details Consent application.

Environmental Health (EH): The EH team have no objection to the development in principle, however the applicant should consider how noise from the B645 road may affect the future resident's sleep and enjoyment of outdoor amenities at technical details stage.

CCC Archaeology: Raise no objections for this application to secure Planning In Principle, however we would request to be consulted on any future planning application for development within the redline area indicated.

REPRESENTATIONS
The application was advertised by neighbour letter, site notice and on the council website.
Five representations have been received at the time of determination. These are summarised below:
4 in objection:
o Concerns in regard to access and traffic. Dangerous junction.
o Previously refused and so should be refused again. Still not in the built up area. Harm to the countryside.
o Green land and extending the village will harm the resources of the village.
O Wildlife will be harmed including bats, red kite, buzzards, owls, foxes, dear, rabbits and hares.
o Harm to local ditch and potential flooding.
o Concerns that plot size will decrease and number of houses should be limited to 3.
o Feel the local plan review should be completed first.
o Feel that other residents should have been consulted by letter.
Officer comment: The Local Plan review is not yet complete but the policy context is at the time of submission. The Local Land Availability Assessments for this review are considered in the report below.

1 neither objecting or supporting:
o Did not understand why the previous application was refused, do not feel it is outside the village.
o Should be granted and details be in line with the village.

- Access to and from the site should be carefully considered
- Other developments in the village have been allowed.

The officer notes that although residents raise material concerns, many of these can only be considered at Technical Details stage.

ASSESSMENT

This application is made pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) (PIP regulations) that provides opportunity for an applicant to apply as to whether permission in principle is acceptable for a site, having regard to specific legislative requirements and, in accordance with ref. 58-012-20180615 of the NPPG, as to whether the location, land use and amount of development proposed is acceptable. The permission in principle (PIP) consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development.

The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. PIP establishes that a particular scale of housing-led development on a defined site is acceptable. The aim is for a PIP to minimise the upfront and at-risk work of applicants.

The report addresses the principal, important and controversial issues which are in this case:
1. Location,
2. Land Use
3. Amount of Development
4. Other Matters

1. LOCATION

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 5 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.

The Local Plan is undergoing a review/update and the Land Availability Assessments (LAA)consider this site. The site was put forward as part of a larger site and was felt to be able to accommodate 5 dwellings. This assessment felt 'The size of the site, its relationship with existing residential development and its proposed residential use means that it would have minimal

landscape impact and could be integrated with the existing built development.' It went on to state 'There is no known contamination or pollution on site. No gas or oil pipelines run through the site but electricity powerlines run along the frontage of the site along High Street. There are no heritage or nature conservation designations on site or within its immediate vicinity. Highways access to the site may be achievable from High Street which is accessed directly from the B645.' The site progressed to the sustainability assessment (SA) stage. The outcome was 'In combination the outcomes of the LAA and SA indicate that the site:

- Has potential to provide built development of a scale that will not harm the character of the area
- Development should be linear in form and not be in depth in order to reflect the character of the area
- Should demonstrate that it is not in active amenity use for the community
- Support residential development on sites of less than 1ha'

There is no evidence that the site has been used by the community and no objections from residents in this regard. The above offered some support for the site for residential development.

LP2 defines 'all other settlements with a single built up area of 30 dwellings or more are defined as Small Settlements as set out in 'Definition of Small Settlements' Hail Weston has more than 30 dwellings and so would fall within this definition.

Under the definition of Built up area in para 4.85 this land falls outside of the built up area. This was the main reason for the two previous applications being refused.

Policy LP9 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. LP9 states 'Development Proposals on Land well-related to the Built-up Area': A proposal for development 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 this plan.

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 if potential adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Although the site is outside the built up area, the policy context has changed since the last two decisions on this site. The provision of 3 open market houses to add to the 5YHLS does weigh in the favour of the application site when it is in a sustainable location in the tilted balance.

The site has a footpath linking it to the village, it is on the edge of residential development and would benefit from the Local Public house and 4 bus services per day Monday -Saturday to St Neots and back, where there are significant services in St Neots. The application site is felt to be in a reasonably sustainable location. Being only for 3 dwellings this would not have an unreasonable demand on the village and could easily be accommodated. 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 the National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 109.

Although there would be some impact on the countryside as expressed in the previous refusals, this would not account to substantial or demonstrable harm to refuse the application as the benefits would outweigh this in the tilted balance. Furthermore the site could accommodate substantial landscaping, more than indicatively shown, to create a soft edge to the countryside and the form of development could step down towards to countryside (to be decided at technical details stage).

In social terms, the proposal will result in the delivery of 3 homes towards the housing supply and was supported for residential development in the LAA and SA. 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 harm to the countryside would have some modest weight. The proposal offers potential for the incorporation of energy efficiency measures (to be considered in detail at reserved matters stage). 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 area; and is accessible by sustainable transport modes. Moderate weight is afforded to this.

It is considered that the development of the up to 3 dwellings on the site is acceptable in this location and the proposed land use and amount of development are acceptable in principle. The proposals would constitute a sustainable form of development in accordance with the NPPF (2024) and in terms of the planning balance, the positive aspects of the proposal outlined above, including the provision of housing, demonstrably outweigh the material planning considerations weighing against the development proposal.

2. LAND USE

The site lies within Flood Zone 1 as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data. However, it should be noted that The Council produced an updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) in 2024, which also defines Hail Weston as being within Flood Zone 1.

Flood Zone 1 is defined as having the lowest risk of flooding in the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) seeks to direct inappropriate development away from areas at the highest risk of flooding (whether existing or future). Therefore, this site is appropriate and drainage of the site can be considered further, including the ditch raised by residents, at details stage.

Overall, the development is considered acceptable with regard to flood risk and broadly accords withs Policies LP5 and LP15 of the Local Plan to 2036.

Policy LP14 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of a proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

The Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2017 states when considering residential development there are three key issues that need to be addressed which are loss of privacy, reducing the level of daylight and being overbearing in size and layout.

Officers need to be satisfied at this stage that the site is capable of accommodating the amount of development proposed without having a detrimental impact on neighbour's amenity and the amenity of the proposed occupiers.

The Environmental Health officer raises concerns in regard to the possible noise from the road. At this stage it is felt that housing could be achieved here subject to a noise report at technical details stage, informing the siting of the houses and planning mitigation into the designs.

Although the proposed access would be close to the junction, the Highways team do not object and feel the access could be amended to address their concerns at Technical Details stage. The

junction is busy but the access could be safely achieved and would not cause significant harm to the highway. Car parking could also be provided off street.

There are neighbours close to a boundary at this site, however the scale and design of the dwellings could significantly lower their impact on these neighbours and there are felt to be solutions to protect amenity (location of windows, layout etc).

The site is situated in an extensive mineral safeguarding area for sand and gravel; engagement with Cambridgeshire County Council will advise whether this is a viable resource to work at Technical Details stage and if mitigation is required to remove the resource prior to developing out the site.

Huntingdonshire's agricultural land is almost entirely of good quality: 98% is classed as grades 1, 2 or 3. 15% is grade 1 (excellent quality) which is concentrated in the north east of the district, mainly in the Fens with a few pockets along the Great Ouse Valley. The land north of Huntingdon and land south of the A14 is predominantly grade 2. From the Nene Valley in the north of Huntingdonshire south to the A14 corridor and extending from the district's western boundary to the A1 the land is classed almost entirely as grade 3. Although some agricultural land will be lost this is not the best agricultural land (grade 1) but is grade 2. Although this is a loss it is a modest loss given the size of the site and will not outweigh the benefits.

Officers are satisfied at this stage that the dwellings could be achieved subject to their scale and siting, without causing significant harm, the final details of the dwellings will be assessed at the technical details stage where impacts of any additional overshadowing, overbearing, overlooking, noise impacts and land contamination will be fully assessed. Therefore, the proposal is in accordance with policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 at this stage.

3. AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT

Local Policy LP12 states new development will be expected to be well designed based upon a thorough understanding of the constraints and appraisal of the site's context, delivering attractive, usable and long-lasting buildings and spaces. A proposal will be supported where it can demonstrate that it contributes positively to the areas character and identity, successfully integrates with adjoining buildings, the routes and spaces between buildings, topography and landscape.

These details will be considered at Technical Details Stage and will need to be sympathetic to the local character and neighbouring properties, taking consideration of any land level changes and softened boundaries towards the countryside. The design should be informed by the Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2017.

The proposed density of the site for up to 3 dwellings is similar to the dwellings to the East along High Street with a similar grain of garden size. This is therefore felt to support the grain and character of the area, with a similar density. It is not felt that this is a lower density than surrounding housing that would be harmful to the character of the area or that the site could not accommodate buffers to the countryside to soften the impact if required at technical details stage as this is a maximum of 3 and if a lower density is needed this would not appear out of keeping with the housing in the village that often have large plots.

There are no significant trees to the site and if there were they would be able to be considered at technical details stage. Details of landscaping details for hard and soft landscaping again can be supplied at the detailed stage in accordance with LP31.

In regard to ecology, no ecology information was submitted as part of the application. It is not considered there are likely to be ecological issues which would make it inappropriate to determine

this application as a permission in principle application. Any ecological impacts would need to be addressed at Technical Details stage and any application should be accompanied by a preliminary ecological appraisal.

Any future technical details application would also need to demonstrate Biodiversity Net Gain and provide the metric and full assessment to be considered. This may require a legal agreement at the technical details stage. Again the site has opportunities to reduce the number of dwellings if on site land is required for improvements in accordance with policy LP30.

This could be amended at technical details stage to satisfy the requirements of the site and could be reduced, however from the indicative layout officers are confident that a residential development of this amount of development would sit comfortably in this location and not result in overdevelopment.

Archaeology have stated that although around 500m west of the 13th century St Nicholas' Church (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record CB14879), archaeological investigations along the High street and Bird land have seen medieval activity continuing west (CHER ECB207, ECB1312). Opposite the proposed plot is the site of the Crown Public house, recorded from early edition OS mapping and indicating a possible post medieval focus towards the west of the village (CHER MCB29350). Possibly more significantly to the north and west of the village the area is characterised by a number of crop marks including sub circular and sub rectangular enclosures just to the north (CHER MCB21097, MCB21098) which are likely Iron Age settlement activity. To the north east undated cropmark enclosures have been noted possible of medieval field systems (CHER MCB28263, MCB28263). Whilst the archaeological interest of the site does not necessarily constitute an absolute barrier to development proceeding in this location, an archaeological evaluation would be necessary in advance of any works commencing in order to mitigate the impacts of development, and would expect that this would be secured at Technical Details application stage.

Archaeology therefore raised no objections for this application to secure Planning In Principle, however would request to be consulted on any future planning application for development within the redline area indicated.

In regard to highways, the Local Highway Authority has not objected but access and visibility will need to be considered at technical details stage.

The PIP regulations prohibit any form of conditions being imposed to this development and as such any information requested would need to be submitted as part of any subsequent Technical Details Consent. As well as consideration of onsite parking, bin storage, turning for the dwelling and secure cycle storage.

4. OTHER MATTERS

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that the scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development as assessed above. Following grant of permission in principle, the site must receive a grant of technical details consent before development can proceed. The granting of technical details consent has the effect of granting planning permission for the development. Other statutory requirements may apply at this stage such as those relating to protected species or listed buildings. The following other matters will be considered at Technical details stage.

Water Efficiency

Any future application for Technical Details Consent for a dwelling at the site would need to confirm compliance with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency in Approved Document G, as set out in criteria j. of Policy LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Infrastructure Requirements and Planning Obligations
Bins - Unilateral Undertaking (UU)
Following a grant of permission in principle, the site must receive a grant of technical details consent before development can proceed. The granting of technical details consent has the effect of granting planning permission for the development. Other statutory requirements may apply at this stage, such as those relating to the submission of a UU for Wheeled Bins.

CONCLUSION

Although previous applications have been refused on the site the policy context of the 5YHLS has changed since these decisions. Thus, an alternative conclusion has been reached.

In conclusion, 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.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. 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'. 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, the 'titled balance' is engaged.

There is no harm to heritage assets therefore, NPPF para's 214/215 are not relevant in this case. 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 site is felt to be adjacent to the built up area. It has been established that the proposed development would have access to services and facilities by local bus routes and footpaths and is felt to be a sustainable location. It is considered that the application site could satisfactorily accommodate up to 3 dwellings and the general layout and scale could be made acceptable for technical details stage.

The site is Flood Zone 1, and the site is therefore acceptable in principle in terms of flood risk and drainage.

The proposal will result in the delivery of up to 3 homes 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, although there would be some loss of agricultural land and countryside, landscaping could be planned in and the proposal offers potential for the incorporation of energy efficiency measures (to be considered in detail at technical details stage). 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 area; and is accessible by sustainable transport modes. Moderate weight is afforded to this.

It is concluded that there is no identified harm that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when considering all the positives and negatives of the proposal into account.

Taking national and local planning policies into account and material considerations, the principle of the proposed development, is, on balance, considered acceptable and therefore recommended that Permission in Principle be granted subject to approval of outstanding details at Technical Details stage.

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

CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Hannah Hodges**