OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/01065/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Change of use from office and stores on ground floor to an additional four guest bedrooms with associated internal alterations**

Location: **Old Bridge Hotel 1 High Street Huntingdon**

Applicant: **Mr James Daley**

Grid Ref: **524208 271506**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The Old Bridge Hotel is a Grade II Listed Building located within the Huntingdon Conservation Area. The site is bordered to the west by the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Huntingdon Castle (a motte and bailey castle and Civil War fieldwork), to the north is Huntingdon Ring Road and Huntingdon High Street with a number of Listed Buildings (the closest of which is 156 High Street), to the east the Grade I Listed Huntingdon Bridge and to the south the River Ouse. The site is located within the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan boundary.

This application seeks approval for the change of use of existing ground floor offices and store rooms located on the lower ground floor at the eastern end of the Old Bridge Hotel into four additional guest bedrooms with en-suite facilities, alongside associated internal works. This is part of an ongoing refurbishment and improvement of the hotel facilities.

The Local Planning Authority is also considering a Listed Building Consent application for the same development (Ref: 25/01066/LBC).
This application has been accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and a Heritage Statement.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (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.

Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, 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 May 2019

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP21: Town Centre Vitality and Viability
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026 - adopted September 2019

Policy E1: Opportunities for Employment
Policy TL1: Tourism Development
Policy BE1: Design and Landscaping
Policy BE2: Local Distinctiveness and Aesthetics
Policy BE3: Heritage Assets
Policy TT1: Sustainable Transport

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

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
Developer Contributions SPD 2011
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)

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
* N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
* 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

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

25/01066/LBC - Listed Building Consent for change of use from office and stores on ground floor to an additional four guest bedrooms with associated internal alterations - pending consideration

25/01061/LBC - Installation of 4 small CCTV cameras mounted externally to rear of hotel building (retrospective) - Approved.

23/01471/FUL - Retrospective application for the erection of buttressing to boundary wall - Approved.

23/01472/LBC - Retention of buttressing to boundary wall - Approved.

20/00433/FUL - Installation of a sun canopy - Approved.

20/00434/LBC - Installation of a sun canopy to the courtyard - Withdrawn.

0704174LBC - Internal alterations to reception area - Approved.

0603508LBC - Alteration to access ramp and door to function room and internal alterations - Approved.

0503842LBC - Alterations to door and window and removal of internal wall - Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Huntingdon Town Council - Recommend approve on the basis it will provide more hotel rooms in the town centre which is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan policy TL1.

Huntingdonshire District Council Conservation Officer - No harm to the special architectural and historic interest of the Listed Building, subject to the imposition of conditions.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority - No objections to the proposed development, subject to the Local Planning Authority being able to satisfy themselves over the level of car parking.

Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Health - No objections to the proposal.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third party representations were received during the course of the application.

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 48 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 & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029
o Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
o Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
o Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
o Bury Village Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)
o Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (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 issues to consider are:

o The Principle of Development
o Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets
o Residential Amenity
o Highway Safety, Access, and Parking Provision
o Flood Risk and Surface Water
o Biodiversity

*The Principle of the Development

The application site is located within the built-up area of Huntingdon, which the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 identifies as a Spatial Planning Area and as such, Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) is considered relevant.

This application seeks approval for the change of use of existing ground floor offices and store rooms located on the lower ground floor at the eastern end of the Old Bridge Hotel into four additional guest bedrooms with en-suite facilities along with further alterations to the function rooms. This is part of an ongoing refurbishment and improvement of the hotel facilities.

Policy LP7 of the adopted Local Plan states that a proposal for a main town centre use will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement. As the site is located within the built-up area of Huntingdon, directly adjacent to the Huntingdon Town Centre, the proposed use is considered to be acceptable in accordance with Policy LP7 in this instance.

The application site is an established hotel and the proposals are being made to create extra guest bedrooms from office and store spaces which the accompanying Design and Access Statement

states are no longer required as the general management and accounting facilities for the hotel have been re- located to head office. The statement goes on to say that The Old Bridge Hotel constantly operates at a strong annual occupancy rate exceeding 80%. The addition of four new guest bedrooms will allow the hotel to accommodate more guests during periods of peak demand, reducing the number of bookings it must currently decline.

The proposal therefore seeks to expand the existing tourist accommodation by enhancing the operational capacity of the hotel. Policy LP21 (Town Centre Vitality and Viability) states that beyond the primary shopping frontage and primary shopping area a development proposal for a main town centre use will be supported where the scale and type of development reflects the centre's size, role and character.

Policy TL1 of the adopted Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan states that proposals for new tourism development within the existing built-up area of the town will be supported where no adverse impact to the amenity or character and appearance of the surrounding area will arise and no adverse impact on the highway network will occur. As discussed in following sections of this report, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposed development would be in accordance with the criteria of the policy in this instance.

As such, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable in this instance, subject to all other planning matters being addressed.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

The Local Planning Authority is required to ensure that special regard is given to preserving the listed buildings and their settings in relation to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Local Planning Authority is also required to ensure that with respect to any buildings or other land in a Conservation Area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at Section 72. This is also reflected in Policy BE3 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan to 2026, Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

This application seeks approval for the change of use of office and stores at ground floor level to provide four additional guest bedrooms and associated internal alterations at The Old Bridge Hotel, 1 High Street, Huntingdon. The application property is a Grade II Listed Building, is located within the Huntingdon Conservation Area and is in close proximity to other Grade II Listed Buildings as well as the Grade I Listed Huntingdon Bridge.

The proposal would not result in any external alterations and the proposed use would match that of the existing building. As such, the proposal is not considered to result in any impacts on the character or appearance of the application site, the streetscene of High Street or the Huntingdon Conservation Area. Furthermore, the proposal would not result in any harm to the special architectural and historical interest of the Listed Building.

As such, the proposed development would be in accordance with Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies TL1, BE1, BE2 and BE3 of the Huntingdon

Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*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.

Given the scale and nature of the proposed development, the distance to the closest neighbouring residential properties and the existing use of the application site as a hotel, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal to create an additional four bedrooms would not result in any detrimental impacts on any neighbouring properties amenities.

As such, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Highway Safety, Access, and Parking Provision

Policies LP16 and 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 116 of the NPPF 2024 states that "Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios."

The proposed development would not result in any alterations to the existing access arrangements off Castle Moat Road and the off-street car parking provision would remain the same. The hotel currently has 24 bedrooms with existing parking for up to 66 vehicles. The proposal will increase the number of bedrooms to 28 whilst retaining the number of parking spaces.

While the proposal would result in the provision of four additional rooms to the existing hotel and therefore generate additional comings and goings, given the town centre location and ratio of bedrooms to parking spaces, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposed arrangements are sufficient to accommodate the additional bedrooms and would not result in any highway safety concerns.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policies TT1 and TL1 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan, and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Flood Risk

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 in accordance with Environment Agency mapping and the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024). It is noted that whilst a small section of the overall site immediately adjacent to the river lies within flood zones 2 and 3 the area the subject of this application is entirely within flood zone 1.

The flood risk vulnerability of the proposed development is 'more vulnerable' in accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance, which is compatible with land within Flood Zone 1. Furthermore, as stated in paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), as the application seeks approval for the change of use, sequential and exception tests are not required.

Given the low flood risk and minor scale of development, officers are satisfied that full details of the surface and foul water drainage can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.

As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*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 to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.

The proposal seeks change of use with internal alterations only and therefore would not result in the loss of any habitat or impact on any notable habitats due to the scale and nature of the proposal as well as the urban location. Furthermore, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposed development would result in a biodiversity no net loss.

As such, the proposal is deemed to be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Conclusion

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

* Acceptable in principle
* Would not be harmful to the character or appearance of the area;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not be detrimental to highway safety in the locality;
* Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
* There are no other material planning considerations which lead to the conclusion that the proposal is unacceptable.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
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