OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/01111/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Construction of 3 storey building containing 6No. Apartments, parking and associated landscaping**

Location: **Land At South End Of Meadow Park Meadow Lane St Ives**

Applicant: **Mr Jeff Fenton**

Grid Ref: **531775 271142**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The site comprises of a 0.16-hectare irregular shaped parcel of land which hosts an electrical substation and hardstanding for approximately 50 vehicle parking spaces servicing the office and residential units on Meadow Park. The site is located at the southern end of Meadow Park, Meadow Lane, St Ives and within an Established Employment Area.

Immediately north of the application site are Meadow Park Blocks 5–6 and 7–8, both of which remain in office use and benefit from dedicated parking provision. To the northeast lies Lancaster House, also in office use, while No.1 The Wilderness, a residential property, is situated to the south. The north western boundary is defined by a mature tree line and the access track serving The Wilderness, running adjacent to Harrison Way. Former office buildings Blocks 1–4 at Meadow Park have been converted to residential use, providing a total of 38 apartments through various change of use consents detailed in the planning history section of this report. The existing buildings at Meadow Park are 2.5 storeys in height and exhibit a consistent architectural style and palette of materials.

The application site is within Flood Zone 1 (at low risk from fluvial flooding), based on Environment Agency Flood Maps and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024. The site is susceptible to groundwater flooding whereby groundwater levels are either at or very near (within 0.025m of) the ground surface. EA mapping also indicates the site is at risk from 1 in 30-year surface water flooding.

The site is not within a Conservation Area and does not contain any trees covered by a Tree Preservation Order however, St Ives Conservation Area is located approximately 24m east of the application site beyond the tree belt known as the Wilderness and Harrison Way.

This application proposes the construction of a three storey building containing six one bedroom apartments, arranged with two units on each floor. Plots 1 and 2 would each have a private patio, while Plots 3 and 4 would benefit from a terrace and a balcony. Although Plots 5 and 6 do not include private outdoor space, they would have access to a communal garden located to the west of the site.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (12th December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the

achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 10).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

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

PLANNING POLICIES
Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
- LP1: Amount of Development
- LP2: Strategy for Development
- LP3: Green Infrastructure
- 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
- LP18: Established Employment Areas
- LP25: Housing Mix
- LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- LP31: Trees, Woodland Hedges and Hedgerows

There is no 'made' or emerging Neighbourhood Plan for St Ives.

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

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
Developer Contributions SPD 2011
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
LDF Developer Contributions SPD (2011)

PLANNING HISTORY
There is no planning history associated with the application site however the following applications have been considered on the wider Meadow Park site.

Eight offices within four buildings approved by:
8700706OUT- Demolition of abattoir and erection of office building with car park- Approved

8701758REM- Demolition of abattoir and erection of office building with car park- Approved

8800282FUL- Office building with car park- Approved

1401274FUL- Widen roadway to erect 8 additional allocated parking spaces- Approved

Permission converting the former office blocks to residential use:
16/00195/FUL (Block 1)- Change of use from offices to 10 x apartments and construction of two new dormers & additional roof lights.- Approved

16/00768/P3JPA (Block 2)- Prior Approval, change of use of Unit 2 to use class C3 (dwellinghouses) from a use falling within use class B1(a) offices- Prior Approval Approved

20/00408/P3JP (Block 3)- Conversion of offices to 6 x 2 bed flats, 2 x studio flats, 2 x 1 bed flats.- Prior Approval Approved

22/01230/PIAPA (Block 4)- Change of use from Offices (Use Class E) to 8 apartments (Use Class C3)- Prior Approval Approved

CONSULTATIONS
St Ives Town Council – Objection. The Parish Council object to the development proposal noting that the proposal would have similar issues as the application 24/02275/FUL - refused by the Planning Authority.

Town Council Members also expressed concerns regarding wider highways implications particularly in respect of congestion and delays due to the volume of traffic going through the town and utilising the river crossing at the A1307. Overall, the town council consider the proposed development conflicts with Local Plan Policy LP 17.

Following a re-consultation of the amended scheme, the Parish Council maintained their objection but also raised concerns about the building's proximity to the site boundaries, impacts on the street scene of The Wilderness, flooding risks to septic tanks, ambient noise levels for future occupants and land contamination.

Local Highways Authority- No objection. The proposed development would utilise the existing highway access onto Meadow Lane, which is of adequate width to serve as a shared access road.

The development comprises six dwellings, with provision for four car parking spaces. Drawing no. 1361.P.02 Rev A indicates that one of these spaces would be designated for disabled users. The Transport and Parking Statement suggests that residents may also use other vacant parking spaces on the site, which are allocated to existing buildings.

Although there is a pedestrian footway linking the site to the town centre, it requires crossing the B1096 Harrison Way at uncontrolled crossing points near the roundabout.

The Local Planning Authority may wish to consider whether the parking provision and pedestrian connectivity are appropriate for a development of this scale.
Conservation Officer- No objection.

Environmental Health Officer- No objection. The Noise Impact Assessment shows that internal night time noise levels would exceed the 30 dB LAeq guideline when windows are open. However, only one bedroom (Plot 2) faces the road, with predicted levels of 33 dB LAeq, and the internal layout positions the bed away from the window. Similar noise levels have been accepted on nearby schemes, so the design is considered acceptable subject to the reports glazing and ventilation recommendations.

Externally, some private and communal amenity spaces would exceed the 55 dB LAeq daytime guideline. Additional noise mitigation, such as acoustic panels, sound absorbing materials, or partial balcony enclosures, should therefore be explored.

It is recommended that, should planning permission be granted, conditions are imposed requiring the submission and approval of an external noise mitigation scheme prior to commencement. This scheme must demonstrate how the glazing and ventilation measures identified within the report will be delivered.

In respect of land contamination, the submitted assessment comprises a desk-based preliminary risk assessment supported by a Groundsure Screening report for a nearby site (Unit 4 Meadow Park, Meadow Lane). As there is no site-specific investigation, the applicant has proposed a robust remediation strategy for landscaping and garden areas. Should planning permission be granted a land contamination condition requiring a verification scheme is essential. However, to allow flexibility for the applicant to amend their remediation approach, it would be prudent to apply the full land contamination condition.

Arboricultural Officer- Objection. Although the revised layout places the building slightly further from The Wilderness, the proposal still requires significant encroachment into the Root Protection Area (RPA) to construct the western corner of the building and patio, necessitating specialised construction methods to mitigate harm.

Much of the patio remains very close to, or underneath, existing tree canopies, preventing natural canopy development and resulting in a need for ongoing pruning despite the trees being healthy and well formed.

Concerns remain regarding the long term viability of residents parking beneath rapidly maturing trees. This arrangement is likely to lead to conflict as falling branches and debris, particularly during storms, may damage vehicles, increasing pressure for tree pruning or removal. Shading impacts on gardens and patios are also of concern, especially during winter months and evenings.

The Officer concludes that the proposal is likely to harm tree vitality along the Wilderness and generate significant future conflict between the development and the retained trees.

Urban Design Officer- No objection. Recommends the imposition of conditions securing the details of material, architectural details, street lighting and boundary treatments should the development be permitted.

Anglian Water- Objection. Anglian Water originally objected to the proposal in their consultation response dated 17 November 2025, citing a lack of evidence that the surface water drainage hierarchy had been fully explored. They also identified the presence of a 600mm surface water rising main within the curtilage of the proposed building, noting that Anglian Water does not permit permeable paving or SuDS features to be located over their assets

Following amendments to the submitted plans, Anglian Water were re consulted on 4 February 2026. While their previous objection regarding the proximity of the development to the rising main was resolved, the applicants failed to address the outstanding concerns relating to surface water drainage and compliance with the SuDS hierarchy.

REPRESENTATIONS

During the course of the application, four third-party representations have been received from the occupants of nearby properties including No 1, 2, 5 and 6 The Wilderness. The following concerns have been raised by the third parties and have been summarised.

- The building's height and wide frontage are considered out of character with the rural setting and significantly taller than properties at The Wilderness.
- The design is viewed as unsympathetic, with materials not reflecting the predominantly Victorian character of nearby homes.

- The height and positioning are said to cause overlooking, overshadowing, and loss of daylight for Nos.1 and 2 The Wilderness, including an 11.39 m boundary wall perceived as oppressive.
- The Wilderness tree belt is an established habitat for wildlife, and concerns are raised about impacts from the development, including from external lighting.
- Surface water and foul water drainage arrangements are considered inadequate, with fears that existing flooding issues, linked to high groundwater levels and septic tank capacity, would be worsened.
- The scale of development is regarded as overdevelopment and not in keeping with surrounding housing.

One third party representation from the occupant/owner of Unit 7 was also received during the course of the application and raising an objection to the proposal for the following reasons:

- Loss of 30 well-used parking spaces serving NHS staff and visitors, forcing parking off-site.
- Unsafe alternative parking on Meadow Lane due to heavy lorry traffic.
- Guided Busway car park is too far away and already used by Busway users.
- Site was not intended for residential use; originally protected by covenant.
- Development would sandwich office units between housing, creating poor layout and conflicting uses.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

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

- Principle of development
- Design, visual amenity and impact on the character and appearance of the area
- Impact on heritage assets
- Flood Risk and drainage
- Residential amenity
- Highway Safety, access and parking provision
- Trees
- Biodiversity
- Other matters

*Principle of Development

Housing Land Supply

This report should be read with the knowledge that the 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 5,907 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,345 homes equivalent to 3.68 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.

Local Plan Policies

The site lies within the St Ives Spatial Planning Area, where Local Plan Policy LP7 supports residential development in principle within the built up area. As the site constitutes previously developed land and is surrounded by existing buildings, it is considered to fall within the built up area for the purposes of Policy LP7.

As outlined above, the site lies within an Established Employment Area, where Local Plan Policy LP18 sets out four criteria that must all be satisfied for non employment uses, such as this residential development, to be acceptable in principle:

a. it will be compatible with surrounding employment uses taking account of amenity and public safety

b. it will not adversely affect the role and continuing viability of the Established Employment Area as an attractive and suitable location for employment uses;

c. it will not significantly reduce the range, availability and suitability of land and buildings for employment uses in the nearest Spatial Planning Area or Key Service Centre; and

d. the sequential approach to site selection, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, has been followed if the proposal includes main town centre uses.

The application does not involve a main town centre use as defined in the Local Plan Glossary; therefore, the sequential approach is not applicable in this case, and the proposal does not need to comply with part (d) of the policy.

It is acknowledged that third parties have raised concerns site was not intended for residential use as it was originally protected by covenant and that development would sandwich office units between housing, creating poor layout and conflicting uses.

As set out above, the wider Meadow Park Employment Area has evolved into a mixed use environment comprising both office and residential uses. In this context, the introduction of additional residential development is considered compatible with the existing mix. Importantly, the proposal does not result in the loss of any existing employment floorspace but simply adds further residential units within the established mixed use setting. Officers are therefore satisfied that the scheme complies with parts (a) and (c) of Policy LP18.

Third-party concerns regarding the covenant that restricts the site to employment use are noted. However, such covenants are private legal matters and do not prevent the granting of planning permission. Any disputes relating to the covenant would need to be resolved through a separate legal process.

In relation to part (b) of the policy, it is acknowledged that the proposal would result in the loss of a notable number of existing parking spaces, with potential implications for the operational viability of the remaining offices used. Third-party representations also raise concerns that the proposal would remove 30 well-used parking spaces, forcing office staff to park off-site in locations that are neither convenient nor safe. As such, the application is supported by a Traffic and Parking Statement which seeks to demonstrate that the development would not remove parking to an extent that would adversely impact the operation of the wider Meadow Park Employment Area.

The submitted Parking Statement confirms that the wider Meadow Park complex contains a total of 160 parking spaces serving both the residential and office units. Of these, Blocks5, 6, 7 and 8 retain 30 designated spaces for office use each, with the NHS also leasing an additional 15 spaces within the site.

A parking survey undertaken on a Friday morning in April recorded 112 spaces in use during peak office hours, indicating that while the car park is well used during the working day, it has available capacity and begins to empty as residential parking demand increases in the evening. Following

the development, 31 existing spaces would be lost; however, six new spaces would be provided for the proposed apartments. The report concludes that 15 unallocated spaces would remain across the wider site, providing sufficient flexibility to accommodate any overflow.

A site visit was undertaken on 23 October 2025, during which it was observed that no parking restrictions operate across the wider Meadow Park Employment Area. As a result, occupants of the proposed apartments would not be prevented from using the available overflow parking spaces.

Notwithstanding the above, the proposed layout positions four of the six parking spaces in a tight perpendicular arrangement between the proposed building and the adjacent tree belt. No vehicle tracking analysis has been submitted to demonstrate that vehicles can safely reverse from these bays and exit the site in a forward gear. Based on the measurements shown on the site plan, if all four spaces were occupied, occupants would have only a 6m × 6m manoeuvring area, which is unlikely to provide sufficient turning space. Furthermore, the access road serving the parking area measures just 3 metres in width, preventing two vehicles from passing simultaneously. This constrained arrangement leads officers to conclude that future occupants are likely to rely on overflow parking elsewhere within Meadow Park, given the limited functionality of the proposed on site provision.

In addition to the above, it is noted that the four proposed parking spaces are located directly beneath the canopies of adjacent and retained trees along the Harrison Way tree belt. The Arboricultural Officer has raised concerns that falling branches and debris could lead to pressure for future pruning or even the removal of these trees, given their proximity to the parking. Officers also consider that leaf fall and other organic debris associated with these trees would likely discourage occupants from using these parking spaces, resulting in increased reliance on overflow parking elsewhere within the wider Meadow Park Employment Area.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is in a highly sustainable location, with convenient access to local services and public transport, including Waitrose to the west and the St Ives Park and Ride to the east , and as such not all occupants of the proposed apartments or existing offices would be reliant on private vehicles, the proposed arrangement would nonetheless fail to provide a self sufficient parking layout. In its current form, the scheme cannot deliver one functional parking space per apartment without placing additional pressure on the wider Meadow Park Employment Area, thereby adversely affecting existing parking provision.

Due to the absence of vehicle tracking information demonstrating that cars can safely manoeuvre and exit the site in a forward gear, combined with the highly constrained nature of the proposed parking layout, officers are not satisfied that the scheme provides a functional level of on site parking. In this context, the development is likely to displace parking demand onto the wider Meadow Park Employment Area and would result in the loss of 31 existing spaces within the park. Officers therefore conclude that the proposal would adversely affect the operation of the retained office uses, and as such, the development fails to accord with Policy LP 18 part (b).

The principle of development is therefore considered unacceptable as it fails to accord with Policy LP 18 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area
Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 states that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

It is acknowledged that third parties and the Town Council have been raised regarding the scale, height and materials of the proposed building, including that it would not reflect the character of the surrounding area or its rural setting, and that it may represent overdevelopment of the site.

In terms of the site's immediate context, Meadow Park Blocks 5–6 and 7–8 lie to the north of the application site, are both still in office use. These buildings are 2.5 storeys in height and follow a consistent architectural style and material palette. To the northeast is Lancaster House, a two storey, U shaped office building constructed in red brick with brown uPVC windows and doors and grey cladding. To the south are Nos. 1–7 The Wilderness, a row of residential properties, several dating from the early 1900s to 1920s, predominantly built in cream brick. No. 1 The Wilderness is the closest residential property, and potential impacts on its amenity are assessed in a later section of this report. Given the surrounding development, the site is not considered to have a rural character.

Due to the well established tree belt along both sides of Harrison Way, views of the site from the public highway are largely screened, with only limited glimpses available. As a result, the main visual experience of the development would occur within Meadow Park itself, particularly for the occupiers of No.1 The Wilderness and users of Meadow Lane. The Wilderness also serves only seven dwellings and is not a through route, meaning public visibility of the proposal is restricted. In this context, the building would mainly be perceived as part of the existing mixed use environment at Meadow Park, where buildings are generally 2.5 storeys in height.

The Urban Design Officer considers the proposal to appropriately reflect the height and character of the established blocks within Meadow Park, noting its 2.5 storey form (approximately 6.3 m to eaves and 11.4 m to ridge). The Officer also highlights that the applicant has responded positively to preapplication advice through key amendments to the layout and form of the building, including re orientating the ridge line east–west, increasing separation from No.1 The Wilderness, and significantly reducing the gable depth, from 19.7m to 9.1m. The Urban Design Officer supports the amended scheme and has recommended the imposition of conditions securing details of the proposed materials, architectural features, street lighting and boundary treatments, should the development be permitted.

Notwithstanding the Urban Design Officers comments, the building would be separated from No.1 The Wilderness by 7.45m, and whilst submitted elevations indicate that the proposed building would sit approximately 1m lower than the ridge height of Blocks 7 and 8, the apartment block would be 4.7 m higher than No.1 The Wilderness and would have an overall gable depth of 9.1 m on the southern elevation. It is acknowledged that the proposed block would be significantly taller than No. 1 The Wilderness, and its impacts on residential amenity are addressed in the following section of this report.

The immediate area includes 2.5 storey former office blocks within Meadow Park and the 2 storey Lancaster House. In this context, the proposed 2.5 storey building would not necessarily appear out of character, as suggested by third parties and Town Council representations. However, the associated impacts on residential amenity, as discussed in a later section of this report, render the design of the proposal unacceptable.

Third parties have also raised concerns about the proposed materials not being in keeping with the adjacent Victorian properties at the Wilderness. Proposed materials include red facing brick, slate roof, powder-coated aluminium dormer windows, and rendered rear projection. It is acknowledged that the properties along The Wilderness are constructed using Cambridge buff brick however, as detailed above the proposed building would be read in the context of the Established Employment Area and constructing the building using buff brick would be out of keeping in this context. Furthermore, the Urban Design Officer also raised no objection to the proposed material palate.

As detailed above, Officers raised concerns in respect of the proposed parking layout due to the absence of vehicle tracking information demonstrating that cars can safely manoeuvre and exit the site in a forward gear, combined with the highly constrained nature of the proposed parking layout, officers are not satisfied that the scheme provides a functional level of on site parking.

Whilst the integral cycle and bin store is acceptable in principle, the submitted floor plans indicate that the apartments would be served by a covered bin store designed to accommodate five 240 litre bins. However, during the preapplication process, the Waste Minimisation Officer advised that three communal 1,100 litre bins are required for a development of this scale. Officers remain unconvinced that the proposed communal bin and cycle store provides sufficient space to accommodate three large bins. The rear wall of the bin store measures 3.19 m in width, whereas each 1,100 litre bin has a width of 1.26m. It is therefore evident that three such bins cannot be fully enclosed within the store and that at least one bin would need to be stored externally.

The HDC Design Guide (page 98) states that waste and recycling storage—whether individually for dwellings or communally for flats—must:
• provide sufficient capacity for the required containers;
• be discreet when viewed from the public realm;
• be protected from weather and animal interference; and
• allow for easy access and movement of bins on collection day.
The inability to fully enclose all required communal bins would fail to meet these standards, particularly in terms of capacity, weather protection, and visual impact.

Officers also remain concerned that the width of the bin store door opening would not be sufficient to allow the manoeuvring of three 1,100 litre bins, further calling into question the functionality and suitability of the proposed arrangement.

In light of the above, officers raise significant concerns regarding the overall design of the proposal particularly in respect of overdevelopment of the site. The irregular shape of the application site, together with the constraints posed by the adjacent tree belts, has resulted in a highly constrained layout. These limitations have contributed to an unusable parking arrangement and inadequate bin storage provision. In addition, officers have concerns regarding the height of the proposed building and the resulting residential amenity impacts on the closest neighbouring property, No. 1 The Wilderness; these matters are addressed in detail within a later section of this report.

For these reasons, officers consider that the proposal fails to comply with Local Plan Policies LP11 and LP12. The constrained nature of the site prevents the development from successfully integrating the functional requirements of the scheme, contrary to Policies LP11 and LP12(m) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 3.5 of the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017).

*Impact on heritage assets
This application seeks to erect a 2.5 storey apartment block at Medow Business Park and whilst the site is not located within the St Ives Conservation Area, the boundary of the Conservation Area is located to the west of Harrison Way.

Policy LP34 of the Local Plan sets out that great weight and importance is given to the conservation of heritage assets and their settings. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out 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.

From within the Conservation Area, views towards the application site and from Meadow Lane are strongly influenced by the modern development at Meadow Drove Business Park. However, as outlined above, the well established tree belt on both sides of Harrison Way provides substantial screening. As a result, views of the site from the public highway and from within the Conservation Area are largely obscured, with only limited glimpses available.

The submitted Arboricultural Report confirms the tree belt along Harrison Way and adjacent to the application site would be retained and therefore there would not be significant intervisibility between the development and the Conservation Area.

Furthermore, the Conservation Officer consulted on the application raised no objection to the proposal in the interests of conserving the character and appearance of St Ives Conservation Area.

The proposal is considered to comply with Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in heritage terms.

*Flood Risk and drainage
National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan seek to steer new development to areas at lowest risk of flooding and advises this should be done through application of the Sequential Test, and if appropriate the Exceptions Test (as set out in paragraphs 174-181 of the NPPF (2024)).

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

In respect of the application of the sequential test, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) was updated in September 2025 and states ‘in applying paragraph 175 a proportionate approach should be taken. Where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates clearly that the proposed layout, design, and mitigation measures would ensure that occupiers and users would remain safe from current and future surface water flood risk for the lifetime of the development (therefore addressing the risks identified e.g. by Environment Agency flood risk mapping), without increasing flood risk elsewhere, then the sequential test need not be applied.’

As detailed above, the application site lies within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk of fluvial flooding, in accordance with Environment Agency Flood Maps and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024). However, the site is identified as being susceptible to groundwater flooding, with groundwater levels at or close to the ground surface (within 0.025 metres). Environment Agency mapping also shows the site to be at risk from surface water flooding in a 1 in 30 year event. Subsequently the application is accompanied with a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA).

The FRA confirms that, for the defended 1% AEP plus climate change event, the site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is therefore at low risk of fluvial flooding. The FRA also identifies that the site could be at risk in the unlikely event that the River Great Ouse defences were overtopped or failed. However, it demonstrates that this residual risk can be appropriately mitigated by setting the finished floor level at 7.394m AOD and incorporating flood resilient construction measures. These measures would ensure the development remains safe during such an event.

During the course of the application, Anglian Water (AW) were consulted and initially raised an objection on the grounds that the surface water drainage hierarchy had not been fully evidenced. They also identified the presence of a 600mm surface water rising main within the curtilage of the proposed building. Following amendments to the submitted plans, Anglian Water were re consulted and whilst their previous concern regarding the proximity of the development to the rising main was resolved, the AW maintained their objection the applicants did not address the outstanding issues relating to surface water drainage or demonstrate compliance with the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) hierarchy.

In respect of drainage, it is acknowledged that neighbours and the Town Council have raised concerns surface water and foul water drainage arrangements are presently inadequate and raised

apprehensions that existing flooding issues, linked to high groundwater levels and septic tank capacity, would be worsened by the proposal.

In respect of surface water flooding, the site is currently a hard surfaced car park. The proposal would replace 31 existing parking spaces with a 2.5 storey building whilst retaining six spaces and therefore would not increase the extent of impermeable surfacing. The FRA confirms that no additional urban creep would occur. The preliminary drainage layout proposes on site attenuation to temporarily store water during storm events, with a flow control device (such as an orifice or vortex control) releasing water gradually into the existing surface water network. This approach would ensure controlled discharge and prevent any increase in flood risk.

The submitted FRA confirms that the SuDS hierarchy has been considered. It concludes that rainwater harvesting is unsuitable due to site constraints, infiltration is unachievable because of the underlying clay substrate, and there are no nearby watercourses available for discharge. As a result, surface water is proposed to drain into the existing capped surface water system located within the site access road. The FRA also recommends the use of permeable paving and raised planters to help reduce runoff rates.

However, whilst the FRA indicates that the SuDS hierarchy has been investigated and that discharge to the existing sewer network is the only feasible option, Anglian Water remain unsatisfied with the level of evidence and justification provided to support this conclusion. Notwithstanding this, matters relating to surface water drainage could be secured by condition to ensure a robust and appropriate assessment of the SuDS hierarchy is undertaken and to demonstrate that the proposed drainage solution is the only viable option for the scheme.

The application form confirms that foul sewage would be discharged to the mains sewer. The accompanying FRA includes a foul network survey, which identifies the presence of an existing below ground drainage network within the site access road. This network is capped within the development area and assessed as being of low grade but serviceable condition and it is considered suitable for connection.

Whilst neighbour and Town Council concerns regarding both surface water and foul water drainage are acknowledged, the FRA demonstrates that the existing foul network has capacity to accommodate the proposed development. It also confirms that surface water flows can be appropriately managed on site through attenuation and a flow control device to ensure a controlled rate of discharge. Officers are therefore satisfied that an effective drainage solution can be secured by condition, without increasing flood risk or pollution risk beyond existing levels.

It is recommended conditions securing full details of a foul and surface water drainage scheme, finished floor levels and flood resilient construction methods are imposed, should the development be permitted. Subject to the imposition of the above conditions, it is considered the development would accord with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

*Residential Amenity
Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

Amenity of neighbouring properties
The closest residential dwelling to the application site is No. 1 and 2 The Wilderness to the south. No. 1 the Wilderness shares a common boundary with the application site partly formed by the northern elevation of the dwelling and a 1.8m close board boundary fence. In considering this proposal regard must be given to the impact on the residential amenity of the closest residential dwellings No. 1 and 2 The Wilderness.

Neighbour concerns in respect of overlooking of the rear gardens of No. 1 and 2 The Wilderness are acknowledged by Officers. It should be noted that the proposed side southern elevation contains no windows, and that the first floor terraces on the southeast elevation are fitted with privacy screens to prevent overlooking of No. 1's rear garden. These can be secured by condition if the development is permitted. In respect of the 2nd floor of the building, windows on the rear elevation are unlikely to offer oblique overlooking as they are set forward of No.1's rear garden. In addition, No. 1's northern elevation does not include any windows servicing habitable rooms. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed apartment block would result in any unacceptable detrimental impacts on the residential amenity of these neighbours in terms of overlooking impacts.

Whilst neighbour concerns have been raised regarding potential overshadowing of the rear gardens of Nos. 1 and 2 The Wilderness, these impacts are not considered to be significant. The proposed building would be located to the north of the neighbouring dwellings, with the rear gardens of Nos. 1 and 2 positioned primarily to the east. Given the sun's path, rising in the east and setting in the west, a building located to the north would not materially restrict sunlight to these gardens. Any shadowing would be limited in extent and duration and would not result in a significant loss of daylight or sunlight. As such, the proposal would not cause an unacceptable level of overshadowing to neighbouring properties.

With regard to Nos. 5 and 6 The Wilderness, there is considered to be sufficient separation between the application site and these dwellings such that any impacts relating to overshadowing, overlooking, or overbearing would not be significant.

As set out above, the proposed apartment building would have a ridge height of 11.39metres and would be set back approximately 7.45metres from the common boundary with No.1 The Wilderness. It is acknowledged that the building would be significantly taller than No. 1, which has an approximate ridge height of 6.95metres, resulting in the proposal rising around 9.59metres above the boundary fence line. The proposed apartment block would have a gable depth of 9.1metres.

Whilst the Urban Design Officer supports the amended scheme and considers it an improvement in terms of residential amenity compared with the pre application submission, officers still have concerns regarding the combined effect of the building's height, gable depth, and its limited separation from the southern boundary. Taken together, these factors are considered to create an overbearing and oppressive relationship with the adjacent dwelling at No.1 The Wilderness. Officers therefore consider that the scale and massing of the proposed development, in relation to its proximity to the shared boundary, are disproportionate. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to result in an unacceptable overbearing impact on neighbouring residential amenity, specifically for the occupants of No.1 The Wilderness.

<u>Amenity for future occupiers</u>

In respect of residential amenity for future occupiers of the development, the proposal would comprise of a block of six 1-bedroom apartments arranged over three floors, with two units per level. Unit sizes range from 45 sqm (Plots 5 and 6) to 54.8 sqm (Plots 2–4) of which all meet the minimum Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) for 1-bed/1-person and 1-bed/2-person units. Plots 1 and 2 benefit from private patios, while Plots 3 and 4 include a terrace and balcony. Plots 5 and 6 lack private amenity space but are served by a communal garden to the west.

Daylight considerations

Given the site's proximity to the mature tree belt to the west, the proposed building may experience some overshadowing, particularly during the afternoon and evening. This concern has also been raised by the Arboricultural Officer, and appropriate consideration must therefore be given to daylight levels for future occupants.

The application is supported by a Daylight Assessment, which has been reviewed by the Urban Design Officer. The assessment considers the influence of existing trees to the south and southwest and addresses observations that trees T3–T6 may reduce afternoon and evening sunlight to the rear elevation, as identified in the submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment.

The assessment evaluates Target Daylight Factor (TDF) for each room, considering window size, number, room layout, surface reflectance, and visible sky angle. The report concludes all rooms exceed the minimum daylight levels set out in BRE Guidance (2022) and BS EN 17037:2018, ensuring adequate daylight for future occupants. The Urban Design Officer has reviewed this report and raises no objection in respect of loss of daylight impacts.

Noise considerations
Given the site's proximity to the heavily trafficked Harrison Way, it is necessary to consider whether future occupants of the proposed development would be exposed to acceptable levels of both internal and external noise. Noise impacts were also highlighted as a concern by the Town Council.

The accompanying Noise Impact Assessment confirms that the proposed external wall construction, double glazing and ventilation strategy would achieve the internal noise levels set out in BS8233. The assessment also considers whether openable windows can provide adequate thermal comfort and demonstrates that all plots would be able to rely on open windows to manage overheating in accordance with Approved Document O.

The Environmental Health Officer (EHO)notes that night time noise levels would marginally exceed the 30dB LAeq guideline when windows are open for one bedroom (Plot 2), which faces the road, with predicted levels of 33dB LAeq. However, the internal layout positions the bed away from the window, and similar levels have been accepted on nearby schemes. The EHO therefore raises no objection, subject to conditions securing the glazing and ventilation measures recommended in the assessment.

In respect of external noise, the assessment identifies that some private and communal amenity spaces would exceed the 55dB LAeq daytime guideline. The EHO therefore recommends a condition requiring the submission of an external noise mitigation scheme.

Land contamination
In respect of land contamination Town Council concerns are acknowledged, however the EHO consulted on the application noted that the submitted assessment comprises a desk-based preliminary risk assessment supported by a Groundsure Screening report for a nearby site (Unit 4 Meadow Park, Meadow Lane). Given this and as there is no site-specific investigation, it is therefore recommended that a full land contamination condition is imposed on any consent granted.

Taking the above factors into consideration, whilst the proposal has addressed residential amenity matters for future occupiers in respect of noise, land contamination and daylight, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions, Officers remain concerned about its impact on neighbouring residents. Due to the limited separation from the southern boundary with No.1 The Wilderness, combined with the proposed building's ridge height and gable depth, the development would result in an unacceptable overbearing impact on the occupants of No.1 The Wilderness. The proposal therefore fails to comply with Policy LP14 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

*Highways and Parking
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.

The existing access from Meadow Lane, which currently serves Meadow Lane Business Park, would also provide access to the proposed apartment block. Meadow Lane is adopted by the Local Highways Authority and is subject to a 20 mph speed limit.

It is noted that the Town Council has raised concerns that the proposal would conflict with Local Plan Policy LP17 and exacerbate congestion and delays within the town of St Ives. These points are acknowledged. However, existing levels of traffic congestion form part of the established highway conditions and are not, in themselves, matters over which this application has control. The assessment must therefore focus on whether the proposal can achieve safe and convenient access, appropriate parking provision and acceptable vehicle movements within the application site boundary, and what impact the additional cars from this development would have on existing traffic flows.

Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority (LHA) have been consulted as part of the application who raise no objection to the proposal as it would utilise the existing highway access onto Meadow Lane, which is of adequate width to serve as a shared access road. They have not raised any concerns about the additional traffic flows from this development on the highway junctions or existing traffic flows. Due to the size of the development 6 x 1 bedroom flats it is not considered the additional traffic flows would result in significant detriment to the surrounding highway network.

The LHA did note that further consideration is required as to whether the proposal would provide sufficient parking provision. As detailed in the in-principle section of this report, it is considered that the proposed development would not result in a level of parking loss that would adversely affect the operation of the remaining office uses within the wider Meadow Park Employment Area.

In respect of the parking provision proposed for the 6no. one-bedroom flats, each flat would be allocated a single parking space as detailed in parking layout plan (dwg non 1361.P.07 rev A). The drawing indicates that one of these spaces would be designated for disabled users.

The LPA does not have a parking policy that specifies minimum provision based on the number of bedrooms within each apartment. However, each flat would be allocated its own parking space and the submitted Transport and Parking Statement indicates that residents and visitors may also make use of additional vacant spaces within the wider business park. In addition to this, given the site's proximity to the town centre of St Ives, accessible by foot and cycle, officers are satisfied the quantum of parking provision is adequate.

However, as detailed above, the proposed parking layout places four of the six spaces in a tightly constrained position between the new building and the adjacent tree belt, with no vehicle tracking analysis to show cars can safely reverse and leave in a forward gear. The limited 6m × 6m manoeuvring area, alongside a 3 metre wide access road that prevents two way vehicle movement, suggests the spaces would be difficult to use and would likely result in residents relying on overflow parking within Meadow Park.

Additional concerns arise from the location of these bays beneath the canopies of retained trees, where falling branches, debris and leaf fall could discourage use and create future pressure for pruning or tree removal. As a result, the scheme fails to provide one functional vehicle parking space per apartment, is likely to displace parking demand onto the wider employment area and is therefore considered to adversely affect the operation of nearby office uses, contrary to Policy LP17 and LP18 (b) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

In respect of vehicle movements within the site, it is noted that neither refuse nor emergency vehicles would have sufficient space to turn within the application site itself. As a result, both would be required to utilise turning areas within the wider Meadow Business Park. The submitted Refuse Document (dated 19th December) demonstrates, through vehicle tracking, that refuse vehicles

would need to use turning points around Units 03, 04, 05, 06, 07 and 08, and would be required to reverse for distances of up to 20 metres. While this arrangement may be acceptable in relation to refuse storage and collection, it nevertheless highlights that access for larger vehicles is constrained and relies heavily on the wider business park to facilitate safe manoeuvring.

It is also noted the LHA raised concerns about the uncontrolled pedestrian crossing over the B1096 (Harrison Way) and linking the site to the town centre of St Ives. However, Officers acknowledged at the office blocks within the EEA have been converted into residential use via permitted development rights and have not required pedestrian upgrades, subsequently it would be unreasonable to request upgrades due to this application on the same employment site.

It is acknowledged that a nearby scheme, application 24/02275/FUL at Harrison Way and Meadow Lane, St Ives, proposed Use Class C2 Residential Accommodation with Care for residents aged 65 and over. That application was refused for several reasons, including the absence of a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit and a Transport Assessment. In that case, Officers took a different view on the need for a pedestrian crossing due to the specific nature of the proposal: it related to older persons' accommodation where residents were considered to have reduced mobility in contrast to general private sector housing, and the overall scale of development was significantly greater, comprising 86 Class C2 units.

In light of the constrained parking and limited turning space within the site, the proposal fails to provide appropriate space for safe vehicle movements and does not facilitate suitable access for service or emergency vehicles without reliance on the wider business park's parking and internal road layout. The development is therefore considered unacceptable in parking and access terms and fails to accord with Policies LP17 and LP18(b) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

*Trees
Policy LP31 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that the potential for adverse impacts on trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows has been investigated and that a proposal will only be supported where it seeks to conserve and enhance any existing tree, woodland, hedge or hedgerow of value that would be affected by the proposed development.
As there are trees within and adjacent to the application site the application is accompanied by an Arboricultural report. It is acknowledged the trees which line The Wilderness and Harrison Way form an important landscape boundary to the site. Harrison Way is a tree lined road on either side which limits the intervisibility between the application site and the Conservation Area. This tree lined road is an important landscape feature contributing to the character of the immediate surrounding area. The trees within and adjacent to the application site are not protected by virtue of Conservation Area status or by tree preservation orders. Nevertheless, the submitted arboricultural report confirms this proposal would not result in the removal of any trees.

It is acknowledged the proposed building would be located in close proximity (approximately 6.13m at its closest point to tree T6) to the western tree belt known as the Wilderness. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms the development would result in less than 0.5% peripheral Root Protection Area (RPA) incursion into the RPA of T6. However, the report acknowledges the existing hard surfaces within the site and therefore considers that it is unknown whether the roots of T6 extend this far.

However, the Arboricultural Officer considers the encroachment into the RPA of T6 to be more significant than stated, due to the proposed construction methods for the western corner of the building and the patio area. In addition, the Officer raises concerns that building in such proximity to the trees would also cause impacts in respect of lateral spread growth, particularly for the trees in the northwestern corner.

In respect of the construction of the building and associated patio, Officers consider that any potential impacts on adjacent trees can be adequately mitigated through the recommended

condition requiring the submission, approval and implementation of a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS). The AMS would control construction techniques, ground protection and supervision arrangements and would be reviewed by the Council's Arboricultural Officer to ensure the development is carried out without harm to retained trees.

The submitted Arboricultural Report identifies a limited incursion into the Root Protection Area (RPA), amounting to less than 20% of the calculated RPA. British Standard BS5837:2012 advises that RPAs can tolerate incursions of up to 20% where they are peripheral in nature and supported by appropriate mitigation. In this case, the incursion largely affects areas of existing hardstanding, where root presence is likely to be limited.

Furthermore, the site is currently wholly hard surfaced, and the works would primarily involve the removal of existing hardstanding rather than excavation of undisturbed ground. These works can be appropriately managed through an AMS to minimise disturbance to underlying root systems.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proximity of the proposed development would restrict future canopy spread, the affected trees are not protected by Tree Preservation Orders and are not located within a Conservation Area. On balance, having regard to the limited extent of RPA incursion, the existing site conditions, the absence of statutory tree protection and the ability to secure robust mitigation through condition, the proposal is not considered to result in unacceptable harm to trees and is therefore acceptable in arboricultural terms.

The Arboricultural Officer also raised concerns regarding potential overshadowing from the adjacent tree belt. However, the submitted Daylight Assessment demonstrates that, although trees T3–T6 may reduce afternoon and evening sunlight to the rear elevation, all rooms meet the minimum daylight levels set out in BRE Guidance (2022). Officers have no evidence to contradict the findings of the assessment, and the applicant has demonstrated compliance with relevant standards. As such, the concerns relating to overshadowing are not substantiated.

In addition, patios to the west would experience some evening overshadowing from the adjacent tree belt. However, these units are one bedroom apartments that are more likely to function as starter homes rather than family dwellings, and consequently the reliance on private outdoor space is expected to be limited. In addition, residents would have convenient access to nearby public open spaces, including Warner's Park, ensuring adequate opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Whilst it is acknowledged that several trees overhang the proposed parking area, and the Arboricultural Officer has raised concerns regarding potential issues such as falling branches, fruit and sap, these matters alone would not warrant a reason for refusal, as the trees are neither protected by Tree Preservation Orders nor located within a Conservation Area. However, as noted earlier in this report, the canopy spread of the retained adjacent trees would further exacerbate the already constrained parking arrangement, with debris likely to discourage regular use of these spaces and increase reliance on parking elsewhere within the wider Meadow Park. The associated impacts of the adjacent trees on parking therefore carry weight in the overall assessment and are considered unacceptable given the wider implications for the established employment area.

Planning Officers consider the encroachment into both the canopies and RPAs of the adjacent non protected trees to be limited. The submitted Daylight Assessment demonstrates that overshadowing from these trees would not significantly affect residential amenity. It is recommended that a condition securing the details of an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan is imposed, should the development be permitted. Subject to the recommended conditions the proposal is considered to accord with Policy LP31 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

*Biodiversity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan dovetails this and requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible.

Concerns raised by third parties in respect of the impacts of the development on the ecological habitat of the Wilderness tree belt are acknowledge by Officers. The accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) dated June 2025, has been considered by Officers however, it is also noted that the site as existing is a carpark and is located urban area adjacent to an established row of trees.

The accompanying PEA acknowledges that whilst the site is urban in nature and the site has a low ecological value, the line of trees to the east of the site has the potential to support commuting and foraging bats. In respect of bat roosts the proposal does not intend to fell or impact these trees offering habitat value. In addition to this, the PEA notes these trees and ornamental hedgerows adjacent to the site have the potential to support breeding birds and hedgehogs. A protected species scoping survey was undertaken as part of the submitted PEA which concluded other than bats, hedgehogs and birds, the presents of other protected species is negligible.

The PEA recommends that light pollution from any lighting should be minimised both during and after the construction phase. Should the development be permitted, it is recommended that a bat sensitive external lighting scheme condition is imposed on the development should permission be granted. It is also recommended that a condition seeking the details of a Biodiversity Method Statement, securing how the recommendations in the PEA would be implemented, is also imposed if consent is granted.

As of 2 April 2024, a mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement was introduced for small sites as such, the application is accompanied with a BNG metric and Biodiversity Assessment. The report details the site habitat baseline primarily comprises of developed sealed surfaces, urban trees and bare ground with a habitat value of 0.83. Officers are satisfied the habitat baseline is an accurate reflection of the site as existing. It is anticipated that the proposed development would provide on-site post development additional planted mixed scrub, modified grassland, developed sealed surfaces, unsealed and unvegetated surfaces, delivering a post-development habitat value of 0.92 units.

In relation to the on site hedgerow baseline, the ornamental, non native hedgerows provide an existing ecological value of 0.17 hedgerow units. Following development, the proposed planting of additional native hedgerows would deliver a further 0.02 hedgerow units.
The assessment concludes that the biodiversity gain of +10.24% Area-based habitat units and +11.02% hedgerow units would be provided on site post-development, representing a BNG compliant development.

A condition is recommended to secure the details of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan which would detail how the onsite habitat units would be maintained for a minimum period of 30 years post-development.

Subject to the imposition of the recommended conditions, the proposal is considered to accord with the objectives of Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

*Other matters
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.

M4(2) requires a step free approach to the dwelling entrance. In larger buildings such as blocks of flats, this typically necessitates the provision of communal lifts in addition to stairs to ensure step free access for all upper floor units.

In this case, the submitted floor plans show that access to the first and second floor apartments would be achieved solely via internal communal stairs, which does not provide a step free approach. The application is not accompanied by any explanation or evidence to demonstrate that site specific constraints make compliance unachievable. The proposal therefore fails to accord with Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

Water Efficiency
Policy LP12 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals that include housing to comply with the optional building regulation for water efficiency, as set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. A condition is recommended to be imposed upon any granted consent to ensure that the dwellings are built in accordance with these standards and that they are maintained for the life of the development.

Developer Contributions-Wheeled Bins
The proposed apartment block comprising of 6-appartments would be serviced with a ground floor combined cycle and bin store. During the course of the preapplication the Waste Minimisation Officer recommended the apartments are serviced with 1 x refuse and 2 x recycling communal 1100 litre capacity bins, with refuse to be collected weekly and the recycling fortnightly.

Refuse collection would comply with the HDC Waste Collection Checklist. All bins would be 1100 litre units with a maximum pull distance of 20 metres and would be stored within an integrated bin store, moved externally by the management company on collection days.

A refuse vehicle would enter the site, turn within the existing car park entrance between Blocks 3/4 and 7/8 and reverse approximately 20 metres along the access road. The resulting pull distance for operatives would be approximately 16 metres. However as detailed above, this relies on the utilise turning areas within the wider Meadow Business Park. Access for larger vehicles is constrained within the application site and relies heavily on the wider business park to facilitate safe manoeuvring.

In addition to this, the proposed bin and cycle store is shown to accommodate only five 240 litre bins, despite the Waste Minimisation Officer advising, during the preapplication, that three 1,100 litre communal bins are required for a development of this size. Measurements confirm that the store cannot physically contain all three large bins, meaning at least one would need to be stored externally. This shortfall fails to meet the HDC Design Guide requirements for capacity, weather protection, visual impact and ease of bin movement. Officers also note the bin store doorway is too narrow to allow practical manoeuvring of three 1,100 litre bins, further undermining the functionality of the proposed arrangement.

Developer Contributions- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

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

Conclusion and the planning balance

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 5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS). While no 5YHLS can be demonstrated 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 application seeks full planning permission for a 2.5 storey apartment block comprising six flats, with associated parking and landscaping, within the built up area of the sustainable settlement of St Ives and is supported in principle by Local Plan Policy LP7. However, the site lies within an Established Employment Area, and the development would result in the loss of 31 parking spaces serving the wider Meadow Park Business Park. Due to site constraints, including its irregular shape and the proximity of adjacent trees, the proposed layout fails to achieve a self sufficient and functional parking arrangement. In its current form, the scheme cannot provide one usable and safe parking space per apartment, placing additional pressure on parking provision within the wider Meadow Park Employment Area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy LP18 part (b) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

The site is considered acceptable in principle with regard to flood risk and whilst AW object on the basis of insufficient surface water drainage information, these details can be secured by condition.

The proposed apartment block would result in negligible harm to the St Ives Conservation Area. The adjacent tree belt along Harrison Way, which provides important screening between the site and the Conservation Area, would not be significantly affected in terms of direct encroachment into the Root Protection Areas. However, the proximity of the proposed parking spaces and building beneath the overhanging canopy would create pressure for future pruning or potential removal of these trees. The identified level of harm is considered minor and, on balance, is likely to be outweighed by the wider benefits of the scheme. Furthermore, the submitted assessment demonstrates that the trees would not give rise to unacceptable residential amenity impacts for future occupants in respect of overshadowing.

Officers have identified harm arising from the design and layout of the scheme, with the restricted nature of the site resulting in an impractical parking arrangement and inadequate bin storage provision, demonstrating overdevelopment. The absence of vehicle tracking plans prevents Officers from confirming that vehicles can safely manoeuvre within the site. Further concerns relate to the building's height, gable depth and proximity to No. 1 The Wilderness, which together create an unacceptable overbearing impact. The proposal also fails to provide a step free approach or justify non compliance with Policy LP25 and Building Regulations M4(2). As such, the scheme conflicts with Section 12 of the NPPF (2024).

In terms of the social benefits of the scheme, the proposal would contribute six dwellings to the district's housing supply at a time when the Council cannot demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

In terms of the economic dimension of sustainable development, the proposed development 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.

In terms of the environmental dimension of sustainable development, the application site constitutes a sustainable location for the scale of development proposed in respect of access to local employment opportunities, services and facilities within the wider area; and is accessible by sustainable transport modes.

Having regard to paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the NPPF (2024), officers consider that these harms attract substantial weight and significantly and demonstrably outweigh the moderate benefits identified above when the Framework is considered as a whole.

Overall, the proposed development is considered to be of poor design, as it cannot satisfactorily accommodate essential functional requirements, particularly in relation to vehicle parking and bin storage, and therefore represents overdevelopment of the site. This overdevelopment would also result in harmful impacts on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupants, notably No. 1 The Wilderness, and would place additional pressure on parking capacity within the wider Established Employment Area serving existing office uses. The public benefits of the proposal are not considered to outweigh the identified harm. As such, the proposed development is considered to be contrary to Policies LP2, LP7, LP12 part (m), LP 14, LP17, and LP18 part (b), LP25 part (f) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, and Section 3.5 of the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD (2017) and Section 12 and paragraph 135-part f of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is concluded that the proposed development is contrary to policy and not acceptable. There are no overriding material considerations that indicate that permission should be granted in this instance. Therefore, it is recommended that the application be refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposal would remove 31 existing parking spaces within the Established Employment Area and provide six spaces for the residential development. Four of the proposed spaces are arranged in a tightly constrained perpendicular layout between the building and the adjacent tree belt. In the absence of vehicle tracking evidence demonstrating that vehicles could safely manoeuvre in and exit the site in a forward gear, and given the highly restricted layout, the scheme fails to provide functional on site parking for its own needs and would also result in the loss of parking for existing employment uses. In addition, canopies of adjacent trees would overhang the proposed parking spaces and result in litter and debris on parked cars. Consequently, parking demand for the proposed apartment block would likely be displaced onto the wider Meadow Park Employment Area, undermining its operation and continuing viability for employment. The principle of development is therefore not supported, and the proposal fails to comply with Policies LP2, LP7, LP12 part (m), LP17, and LP18 part (b) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

2. Given the restricted layout and the absence of vehicle tracking evidence, the development fails to demonstrate that the proposed parking spaces can be safely or effectively used, and therefore does not provide functional on site parking for the apartments. The submitted plans also show integral storage for wheeled bins; however, the store is not large enough to accommodate the required three 1100 litre bins, resulting in at least one bin being stored externally without screening. In addition, the proposal fails to justify the absence of a step free approach and does not demonstrate compliance with M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable Homes. As a result, the scheme fails to successfully integrate essential functional requirements, parking, refuse storage and accessibility, and does not minimise their visual or operational impacts. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies LP12 part (m), LP17, and LP25 part (f) of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, and Section 3.5 of the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD (2017) in relation to servicing for residential development. The proposal also conflicts with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), notably Section 12 (Achieving well-designed and beautiful places), which seek development that forms well-designed environments.

3. The proposed apartment block, by virtue of its siting, height, scale and design, would result in unacceptable harm to the residential amenity of the neighbouring property No. 1 The Wilderness. A separation distance of 7.45 metres from the common boundary with No. 1, combined with a proposed ridge height of 11.39 metres and a gable depth of 9.1 metres, would create an overbearing impact on this property and its rear amenity space. The building would extend almost the full length of the boundary adjoining No. 1's garden. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy LP14 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, the placemaking principles in Chapter 3 of the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017), and paragraph 135(f) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

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