OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 24/02383/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Erection of self-build agricultural workers dwelling to replace existing extant planning permission**

Location: **Land North West Of 15 Church Lane Covington**

Applicant: **Messrs J O Williams**

Grid Ref: **505477 270829**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application seeks approval for erection of self-build agricultural workers dwelling to replace existing extant planning permission at Land North West Of 15 Church Lane, Covington.

Planning permission is sought for the erection of an agricultural workers dwelling, replacing a previous permission that granted a dwelling on the same farm but in a different location.

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.

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
LP9: Small Settlements
LP10: The Countryside

LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP20: Homes for Rural Workers
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

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)
Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)

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

PLANNING HISTORY

0400780AGDET for Erection of agricultural store, NREQ dated 25.03.2004

0401665FUL for Change of use and alterations to two barns to form two holiday units, GRANTED dated 12.07.2004

0402948FUL for Erection of holiday cottage following demolition of barn, GRANTED dated 09.11.2004

1200520FUL for Alterations and extension to holiday cottages to form a single dwelling, WDN dated 09.07.2012

17/01354/FUL for Agricultural building for the use of Dairy cattle., GRANTED dated 11.09.2017

17/01360/FUL for Erection of agricultural workers dwelling, GRANTED dated 02.10.2017

19/02581/FUL for Agricultural workers cottage, WDN dated 03.03.2020

21/00559/FUL for Erection of agricultural workers dwelling, GRANTED dated 04.08.2021

21/00561/AGDET for Erection of two agricultural buildings, one for use as a grain/feed store and the other for the housing of livestock, NREQ dated 31.03.2021

22/01979/FUL for Erection of agricultural workers dwelling GRANTED 05.01.2023

23/00098/FUL for Erection of 3 agricultural workers cottage GRANTED 23.08.2023

23/02091/AGDET for Two extensions to existing agricultural buildings for housing of livestock NREQ 21.11.2023

24/00394/FUL for Demolition of agricultural buildings and erection of 5 dwellings including 3 lifetime homes with associated access, parking and landscaping GRANTED 18.12.2024

CONSULTATIONS

HDC Conservation: No comments.

HDC Urban Design : The proposal forms a similar scale and massing as the previous extant permission 22/01979/FUL, but with the introduction of the covered car port. Urban Design raise no objections.

Parish Council: No reason to object, already approved the original application.

CCC Archaeology: Our records indicate that the proposed development is in a area of relatively high archaeological potential to the north of the 12th century St Margarets church (Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record ref 10564)and earthworks indicating medieval shrunken village (CHER MCB18621), with a Medieval Moated site just to the north east of the proposed development. Despite this recent archaeological investigations to the north east and west, have found a low background level of medieval activity as well as minimal Iron Age activity. We would therefore have no further objections or recommendations for a development of this scale.

Anglian Water: No comment

CCC Highways: The application is for a single storey dwelling, which will be used as agricultural worker accommodation; the vehicle movements are likely to be fewer than other developments of this size, and so would not be considered significant. Therefore, following a review of the documents provided to the Highway Authority as part of the above planning application, no significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal, should it gain benefit of Planning Permission

CCC Public Rights of Way: Public bridleway, Number 3, Covington, runs to the south east and within the red line boundary of the proposed site. To view the location of the ROW please view our interactive map online which can be found at http://my.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/myCambridgeshire.aspx. Whilst the Definitive Map Team has no objection to this proposal, the bridleway must remain open and unobstructed at all times, subject to informatives.

LLFA: no objections subject to informative.

HDC Environmental Health: No objections subject to condition for contamination.

UK Power networks: No objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

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

ASSESSMENT

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:
- The Principle of Development
- Design, Visual Amenity and the impact upon the Character of the Area
- Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access
- Biodiversity
- Other issues

-The Principle of the Development

The principle is already established and this is a change of design and location of the development.

LP20 states:
A proposal for a home for a rural worker in the countryside will be supported where:
a. It is for a worker who is or will be mainly employed for the purposes of the proper functioning of an economically viable agricultural or other land-based rural business;

b. No suitable alternative accommodation is available or could be made available in the immediate vicinity or nearest settlement, taking into account the requirements of work;
c. Opportunities to convert an existing building or, where this is not possible, to replace an existing building have been explored and proved to be unachievable; and
d. The home is of permanent and substantial construction, unless the rural business has been established for less than three years in which case accommodation will only be supported on a temporary basis to allow time for the business to prove it is viable.

In October 2017 (17/01360/FUL) and August 2021 (21/00559/FUL) permission was approved for a dwelling to meet the needs of the farm business. The dwelling was designed as a substantial two storey dwelling located close to the farm buildings. This accommodation was approved on the basis of an established need for accommodation for occupation by a senior member of staff employed to oversee the livestock.

In January 2023, permission was granted to alter the design of this dwelling into a single storey dwelling (22/01979/FUL) which is extant. In 2023 permission was approved for three more agricultural dwellings, considering the extant permission and including it in the farming need (23/00098/FUL). These dwellings were approved nearer the village. Therefore the situation has not changed in regard to need and remains extant in accordance with policy LP20. It is not felt to be necessary to reassess the need as this is a replacement for one of the dwellings. Thus, this permission would provide the same accommodation but in a different location, nearer the village.

To ensure the original location could not be implemented (outside the redline boundary of this application) a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) has been agreed and engrossed to ensure it will not be built out if this permission is built out. There has only been the need proven for this dwelling and the 3 dwellings under the 2023 permission, not an additional dwelling. Thus the UU ensures only one permission is implemented.

The change in location is a preference from the applicants after considering the 2023 permission and location being set away from the farm holding. Being sited sufficiently far away from the farm operations means that the dwellings incur less odour, noise or other environmental impacts which would be of detriment to the amenity of the occupiers. It would also represent a more suitable location for dwellings which are otherwise located in an open countryside setting as they would be read more in the context of the village than the countryside. But yet still within close location to the farm to allow close monitoring and surveillance when needed, to fulfil the functional requirement.

The new location is not only near the three approved agricultural workers dwellings but a recently approved development of a former farmyard which been consented for redevelopment (24/00394/FUL) for dwellings.

The proposed dwelling remains single storey height as per the current extant planning permission but is larger in overall floor area. The property remains a three bedroom property but has larger living space and increased utility space. Despite this change it remains commensurate with the size and nature of the farm business and equivalent to the functional need from which it is necessitated.

Therefore it is felt that the proposal remains in accordance with policy LP20 subject to LP20.

- Design, Visual Amenity and the impact upon the Character of the Area

Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 state 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.

Urban Design have raised no objections to the proposal.

The proposed site is located to the North west of the settlement and adjacent to an approved site for housing. The site is closer to the village than the previously approved three agricultural workers dwellings. There is an access road to the site and landscaping around the site.

The proposal is similar in style and appearance to the permission 22/01979/FUL, with the addition of a car port and porch and some fenestration changes.

However, the scale has increased from 14m x 18.5m and the new permission is 20.925m x 29.015m.

The original dwelling approved to meet this need was a two storey house and this had a Gross Internal Floor area of 222 m² excluding any garage space. This was subsequently altered to a single storey dwelling which had a revised Gross Internal Floor area of 195 m². The Gross Internal Floor area of the dwelling that is now proposed, again excluding the garage space, is 240 m². It is flet that this is not materially bigger than the originally approved dwelling and remains a 3 bed property destined to meet the same original intended need.

Overall, while the erection of the proposed dwelling would intensify the built environment within this part of the countryside, given that the principle of an agricultural dwelling in this location is acceptable, it is considered that the layout and design are appropriate for this rural location and similar to that previously approved.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is considered to respond positively to its context within the surrounding built form and contributes positively to the areas character and identity. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2021) 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. A site visit was carried out by the case officer during the consultation period of the application.

The proposal is near to the approved permission 24/00394/FUL which could be implemented and built out, thus needs to be considered. Looking at this permission the nearest plots are plots 4 and 5 on the site plan 22-1751 A3.03. This corresponds with elevational drawings with different plot numbers but matching the site plan would be plots 3 22-1751 A1.03 and plot 2 22-1751 A1.02. Plot 3 (plot 5 on the site plan) is single storey along the nearest boundary and so would not cause significant overlooking or harm to amenity of the proposal or visa versa. Plot 2 (plot 4 on the site plan) does have a 2 storey element but it is not felt this would cause a detrimental degree of overshadowing given the separation distance and the only windows in this elevation are small slit windows. The case officer has assessed that these would be approximately 23m away from the new dwelling and thus not felt to cause harm to amenity.

Furthermore, the development is considered to be sufficiently sited away from the farm operations to not cause any odour, noise or other environmental impacts which could cause a detriment to the amenity of occupiers of the proposed development. Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Health team have reviewed the proposed scheme and raise no objections on amenity grounds.

In terms of future occupiers, the dwelling would meet nationally described space standards. The dwelling would also provide private enclosed garden given the large plot and location. Conditions will be imposed for M4(2) standards and water efficiency.

Overall, it is considered that a high standard of amenity would be provided for all users of the development and maintained for neighbours. The development is considered acceptable in terms of overshadowing, overlooking, overbearing impact, loss of privacy, loss of light and would not have a significant detrimental impact upon residential amenity.

The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 and paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF (2021).

- Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access

Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.

The submitted plans show at least two vehicle parking spaces within the carport and space to the front of the site for additional parking if required.

Cambridgeshire County Council as the Local Highways Authority have reviewed the proposal and the application is for a single storey dwelling, which will be used as agricultural worker accommodation; the vehicle movements are likely to be fewer than other developments of this size, and so would not be considered significant. Therefore, following a review of the documents provided to the Highway Authority as part of the above planning application, no significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal, should it gain benefit of Planning Permission.

Cycle storage is shown on the plans within the building which ensures provision for cycles and sustainable travel modes.

Subject to conditions the proposed development is considered to accord with Policy LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036.

- Biodiversity

Paragraph 174 of the NPPF (2021) 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. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 also requires development proposals to ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain in biodiversity where possible.

The application has stated that the proposal is for a self-build dwelling and thus exempt from BNG. The applicant's agent has confirmed they comply with the self-build definition and agreed to include this in the UU.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been considered by the HDC ecologist and agrees with the outcomes and mitigation of the assessment on this site. It is felt that the mitigation/protection can be secured by condition as was agreed on adjacent permission (24/00394/FUL). An updated letter from the ecologists on the 17/3/2025 confirms nothing has altered on site.

Landscaping is also proposed to offer some biodiversity enhancements on the landscaping plan 24-282 A3.02 which also shows biodiversity enhancements.

Therefore, subject to the imposition of conditions, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of ecology and biodiversity and therefore in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework in this regard.

- Other Issues

- Flood Risk and Drainage

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is appropriate for all forms of development and is not at a high risk of surface or ground water flooding the SFRA (2024). The National Planning Policy Framework requires Local Planning Authorities to steer development to areas at the lowest probability of flooding. The site is not in a flood risk area and it is less than 1.0 hectares in size. Accordingly, a flood risk assessment is not required for the application. Officers are also 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.

The development would not have an adverse impact in terms of flood risk and therefore complies with Policies LP5 and LP15 of the Local Plan, the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework.

-Housing Mix - accessible and adaptable homes:

Policy LP25 of the Local Plan to 2036 provides guidance on accessible and adaptable homes and states that all proposals for housing should include a commitment to design and build the whole proposed scheme to the M4(2) standards unless it can be demonstrated that site-specific factors make achieving this impracticable or unviable. A condition will be attached to secure this.

-Water Efficiency:

Policy LP12, Criteria j, of the Local Plan to 2036 requires all new dwellings to be in compliance with Building Regulations approved document G, which sets out standards for water efficiency. A condition will be attached to secure this.

-Bin UU:

A Unilateral Undertaking to secure the provision of wheeled bins has been included as part of the UU. On this basis the proposal would provide a satisfactory contribution to meet the tests within CIL Regulation 122 and paragraph 204 of the NPPF. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy LP4 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011).

CONCLUSION:

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

- The principle of the development of this site for an agricultural worker's dwelling to support the efficient management of the farm holding is acceptable and has already been established. A UU has been agreed to ensure only one permission is implemented.
- The proposed dwelling would have no significant adverse impact on the overall character of the area due to its scale, bulk and massing.
- There are no overriding highway safety issues, and the proposal is acceptable with regards to parking provision.
- The proposal is acceptable with regards to biodiversity and ecology.

All pre-commencement conditions have been agreed with the applicant prior to determination.

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

Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is therefore recommended that planning permission should be granted.

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