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PLANNING + DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 This Planning + Design & Access Statement has been prepared by GamPlan Associates in support of the accompanying 'Full Planning' application submitted on behalf of Mr & Mrs Wisson for the erection of a replacement farmhouse for the existing property where extension, alteration, renovation and upgrading of thermal performance / resource use mitigation would be cost-prohibitive when compared to a new build replacement property. A purpose-built property would not only be more energy-efficient but would allow a fit-for-purpose rather than 'extension-upon-extension' property to be provided. A previous grant of planning permission (HDC ref 24/0872HHFUL) seeking the upgrading of the existing property has revealed how it would be both more cost-effective and environmentally beneficial to replace (rather than renovate and try to retro-fit) the existing property.

1.2 The application would not change the number of dwellings at the site, with the proposed replacement to sit directly upon the location of the existing Farmhouse. The farm is a family-run (and owned) enterprise, with recent permissions for new / replacement barns and the establishment of a small holiday-let element all requiring dedicated 'office space' within the Farmhouse. It is considered that the proposed replacement dwelling would make the continuation of this strong family-focus of activities viable for many years to come.

1.3 Although located within the 'open countryside' for planning purposes, the site has an established residential use and both the principle of 'replacement dwellings' (in this case with the proposed replacement sitting directly upon the similar footprint of the existing property) and the need for agricultural workers to have appropriate 'local' accommodation is recognised by both the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework.

1.4 This application follows from a rigorous process of **Assessment, Involvement, Evaluation** and **Design**, and very careful consideration of the relationship with both the active areas of agricultural operations and recently approved tourism activities within the site and the site's wider landscape context. There are no third-parties where 'neighbour amenity' issues needed to inform any design or layout choices.

1.5 The design-choice of a traditional form of dwelling for the proposed replacement farmhouse would be the 'best-fit' with regards to both ensuring harmonious relationships with the wider landscape setting, but also bringing a sense of clarity and hierarchy to the cluster of buildings in an otherwise isolated setting, albeit where natural topography and existing mature planting at both the site and along the Offord-Graveley Road mean there are actually very limited views of either the farmhouse or even the wider farm complex; the map extract above (with farmhouse highlighted) gives an idea of the nature of the cluster of buildings, while photos included aa Appendix 2 of this statement show the limited nature of views.



1.6 As such, and as can also be seen from the submitted plans and supporting details, a comprehensive contextual appreciation of the site and its surroundings, together with consideration of the detailed design approach to best allow the proposed Replacement Dwelling to be integrated into the existing character and appearance of the site and mitigate any impact upon wider landscape character were important baselines for the proposed development.

2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The site is a family-owned and run active agricultural enterprise, with recent grants of planning permission for both the rationalisation of the agricultural buildings and operations (HDC refs 24-2412FUL & 26-0500FUL) and also the conversion of existing WW2 air raid shelters to holiday accommodation (HDC ref 26-0715FUL). Additionally, previous 'householder' consent granted to extend and renovate the existing farmhouse, although as already explained it has become apparent that a better-functioning, more visually-attractive and thermally-efficient property could be achieved by replacement rather than piecemeal extension / alteration and trying to retro-fit sustainability enhancements.

2.2 Although falling to be considered as 'countryside' for planning purposes, the site already hosts the existing residential farmhouse and the large collection of barns and other structures which form the grouping of buildings at the site. The recent approvals for new &/or replacement barns has been driven both by requirements for modern plant and machinery no longer being able to be accommodated within out-grown buildings, but also as some were just coming to (and exceeding) their lifespan in terms of structural integrity and performance. The proposed replacement farmhouse is driven by a similar approach; in that the requirements for a family home and functioning farmhouse would be better served by a new more energy-efficient property than attempting to further upgrade the existing building. The proposed replacement would have a similar footprint and occupy the same position, centrally-located within the farm complex, as the existing property. As such, there would be no change to wider landscape character or views of the property.

2.3 The site, as may be expected occupying a hilltop location, is indicated as being within a 'low flood risk' area by the Environment Agency, with a flood risk of less than 1 in 1000 years, placing the site within 'Zone 1' where neither a sequential approach to site selection nor a specific Flood Risk Assessment is required – extracts from both the Environment Agency's Flood Risk map and the HDC Strategic Flood Risk Assessment at Appendices 3 & 4 demonstrate this.

2.4 Equally, and although there is no recorded history of there being any pollution or ground contamination at the site, increasingly stringent 'pollution control' requirements from DEFRA, it can be seen that neither the site nor any of the 'residential land' at the farm should be considered to be at any risk of any such contaminations.

2.5 A detailed consideration of the farm's existing vehicular access point, the nature of its use and the existing wider highways network helped inform the proposals and the provision of appropriate on-site parking to the proposed Replacement Dwelling. As could be reasonably expected given the nature of the highway and access arrangements, the local highway authority holds no records of any vehicular or pedestrian accidents or injuries in the immediate vicinity. In summary, it is considered the existing access is capable in terms of layout, geometry and construction of accommodation both the residential, holiday-let and agricultural vehicular movements associated with the site.

2.6 Given the previously developed nature of the site and the proposed siting upon the footprint of the exiting property, it is not thought that a condition requiring archaeological investigation being included within permission for the replacement of the existing farmhouse at the site would be required.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 replaces the previous section 54A of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and maintains the requirement that applications be determined in accordance with the policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.2 The relevant development plan comprises the **Huntingdonshire Local Plan** to 2036; with additional guidance contained within the **Huntingdonshire Design Guide**.

3.3 The following elements and policies in the **Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036** are applicable to this proposal: to this proposal:

- Within the 'Introduction and Context' to the document the primacy of the NPPF is recognised together with the clear 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' within that document.
- **LP1** – following from the confirmation of the '**presumption in favour of sustainable development**' in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF set out within the supporting text, **Policy LP1** identifies Huntingdonshire as an area of significant development pressure and sets out a requirement for '**at least 20,100 new homes**' to be provided within the lifespan of the plan. As such, the provision of a replacement farmhouse would accord with the broad aim of this policy.
- **LP2** – sets out the strategic approach of seeking to accommodate new housing development within existing settlements or as part of large-scale 'urban expansion'. Within the supporting text it is explained that in addition to the formal site allocations within the new Local Plan it is expected that a supply of '**windfall**' or '**infill**' sites will help allow for an appropriate amount of new residential developments across the lifespan of the plan. As such, the proposed replacement of an existing dwelling with a 'future-proofed' farmhouse would accord with the aims of **Policy LP2**.
- **LP4** – confirms the LPA will use the **Community Infrastructure Levy** and planning obligations to mitigate the impacts of new development.

In this case the proposals would be both CIL liable and have been fully assessed against the requirements for any other financial contributions.

- **LP5** – the site is not at any identified risk of flooding from either rivers or surface water run-off
- **LP6** – the proposals would allow for appropriate wastewater management to be achieved
- **LP10** – acknowledges that development can occur in the countryside, particularly if well-related to an existing farm and would not cause any harm to landscape character or setting
- **LP11** – sets out that development proposals are expected to respond positively to their setting and context.
- **LP12** – requires developments to make a positive contribution to the locality through the use of high-quality design in response to site-specific considerations and also requires matters such as energy efficiency and the mitigation of resource consumption to be integral to the construction of new developments of particular relevance to the proposals where thermal-efficiency and resource use mitigation are some of the main driving forces.
- **LP14** - recognises the importance of designing to allow for natural light and to mitigate noise, together with the wider aims avoiding overlooking or the production of any sources of pollution.
- **LP15** – appropriate surface water management at the site could be incorporated into the construction phase
- **LP17** – in consideration of **Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement** the use of existing accesses is always the best starting point if appropriate.
- **LP30** – sets out that development proposals will be supported provided there would not be a significant impact upon biodiversity.
- **LP35** – the proposals would allow for low-energy consumption throughout the lifespan of the proposed property
- **LP36** – the proposals would have no negative effects upon Air Quality
- **LP37** – the proposals would have no negative effects upon Groundwater, nor see any greater demand for water use.

3.4 Whilst adopted local planning policy can be seen to be supportive of the development proposals, further guidance on all aspects of development are

set out within the **National Planning Policy Framework** (NPPF) which is clear that there should be a presumption in favour of 'sustainable development' and, in outlining the 'three dimensions to sustainable development' the NPPF is explicit in confirming that the economic and social advantages in the provision of new housing in appropriate locations should also be considered as part of the application determination process.

3.5 The NPPF offers clear guidance on the importance of allowing for housing choice for all members of society; with a requirement to "**be responsive to local circumstances and needs**". In this case, the proposals would provide considerably more suitable, usable and energy-efficient accommodation than the existing farmhouse to be replaced.

3.6 In assessing the importance of local character, the NPPF explains that whilst it would not be appropriate to require particular designs or styles to be imposed that it would be appropriate to require development proposals to respond to the existing character of the locality. In this case issues of positioning within the site, presentation to the public realm, scale, mass and detailing were all carefully considered and used to inform the proposals, particularly in light of the rural location and existing arrangement of buildings.

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY OF THE APPLICATION SITE

4.1 The site itself has only very limited directly relevant formal planning history; exclusively related to the agricultural activities and new barns and other developments required both in response to day-to-day operational requirements and changes in legislation, with the previously highlighted rationalisation of the agricultural buildings and operations (HDC refs 24-2412FUL & 26-0500FUL) and also the conversion of existing WW2 air raid shelters to holiday accommodation (HDC ref 26-0715FUL) being the most recent. Additionally, previous 'householder' consent (HDC ref 24/0872HHFUL) granted to extend and renovate the existing farmhouse, although as already explained it has become apparent that a better-functioning, more visually-attractive and thermally-efficient property could be achieved by replacement rather than piecemeal extension / alteration and trying to retro-fit sustainability enhancements.

4.2 The current proposals seek a further 'tidying-up' of the site; replacing the existing farmhouse and allowing for necessary ancillary space (Boot Room, Farm Office etc) that would not only appear visually more attractive but have considerably enhanced resource use mitigation and inherent thermal efficiency than the existing property.

5.0 THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL – PLANNING AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 It can hopefully be easily appreciated that every aspect of the proposals; from broad-brush considerations of the principle of the development, through the general layout, positioning and orientation of the proposed replacement property, and on to individual aspects of design and detailing follow from a rigorous process of **Assessment, Involvement, Evaluation** and **Design**.

5.2 It is considered that the proposed replacement home should be constructed using sympathetic materials, appropriate to both the general character of the proposed development and the surrounding locality. Although it is presumed that external **building materials** would be controlled by way of a standard condition of planning permission requiring the submission of sample materials prior to the commencement of development, it is proposed that an appropriate local brick below a tile roof would be an appropriate approach; reflecting the dominant palette of materials in the locality.

5.3 To assist with maintaining the drainage characteristics of the site it is proposed to retain the existing permeable gravel surfacing to the parking area to accord with the standing advice of the Environment Agency regarding surface water drainage as outlined earlier.

5.4 It is important that developments are designed to maximise **energy efficiency** in new and regenerated buildings. For example, this may involve the use of 'eco-friendly' insulation products or 'micro-renewable energy sources', such as solar panels or photovoltaic cells. The proposals will use energy efficient materials and procedures during construction and for the lifetime of the project and such matters will be controlled through building control legislation applicable at that time. As such, and with clear benefits in terms of energy efficiency and the mitigation of resource consumption the proposed replacement dwelling should be considered as examples of good design in accordance with advice from CABE that **"no building .... can be considered well-designed if it does not contribute to environmental sustainability"**.

5.5 Huntingdonshire District Council is a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change and within its Corporate Environmental Sustainability

pledge states the authority is **"committed to reducing its impact on the environment and encouraging our residents and businesses to do likewise"**. The aims of the Nottingham Declaration mirror the approach towards placing environmental considerations at the heart of the decision making process expressed by the Secretary of State in the speech at the Green Alliance 'Global Warming, Local Leadership' event where it was made explicit that **"green issues to be at the heart of what we [DCLG] do and how we do it"** and again confirming that **"Energy use in our homes and offices accounts for nearly half of our national carbon emissions"**, is a matter to be tackled by the planning system, concluding **"Let me be clear. We want local authorities to innovate"**.

5.6 With regard to Part B of the Building Regulations, **emergency vehicles** could easily obtain access to the site given existing access arrangements if required.

5.7 The proposed retention of the existing **vehicular access arrangements** represents the best solution both in terms of highway and pedestrian safety and were carefully considered against existing patterns of use within the highway.

5.8 As such, the proposals would provide for satisfactory access and on-site parking facilities for motor vehicles and cycles in a new purpose-built secure store, it would also result in the retention of more than adequate and convenient amenity space for the proposed property.

5.9 Cities, towns, villages and hamlets have grown up over time and display a special relationship with their surroundings. The pattern, form and appearance and use of buildings and spaces are particular to each location and contribute to the unique sense of place and cultural identity. Good design should respect the character of its setting, whether urban or rural, and can make a positive contribution to reinforcing local distinctiveness. In this instance, the proposals have followed from a detailed consideration of local distinctiveness and recognise that much of the stronger elements of local distinctiveness respond to and reflect the historic patterns of development in the locality being retained whilst allowing for housing provision to respond to the housing needs of rural workers and enterprises.

5.10 The site affords an opportunity to provide for a sympathetically designed scheme with a layout and appearance that will actively enhance the character and appearance of the area whilst making an appropriate use of the site to meet the specific needs of the farm. The proposals would not require the loss of any site features of note and re-use of the site within the surrounding complex of agricultural buildings should be considered to contribute positively to the general character and appearance of the wider locality.

5.11 It is considered that the adopted design solution responds sensitively to the site and its setting, with particular care having been taken to ensure that the proposed property would sit comfortably at the site and would not create an alien, cramped or inappropriate form of development that would harm the existing character or appearance of the locality. Similarly, the proposals provide for more than acceptable levels of privacy and amenity for both existing and future occupiers as the by virtue of the siting and existing arrangement of buildings would clearly not be detrimental to the residential amenities enjoyed at any neighbouring property by reason of overlooking or overshadowing.

5.12 With regard to guidance within the NPPF, it is considered that the overall scale, massing, height, landscaping, layout and access to the proposed replacement farmhouse are appropriate in relation to neighbouring buildings and the wider landscape setting more generally. Also, it is evident that the proposed home can be constructed with sympathetic materials of appropriate colour and texture to ensure a high-quality building befitting of the rural setting.

5.13 With regard to regard to the NPPF, it is considered the proposals are in accordance with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations that warrant the refusal of planning permission. It is also supported by planning policy and guidance which recognise the principle of replacing existing sub-standard accommodation with better alternatives, and the enhancements to appearance and thermal efficiency this can bring about, together with the special requirements of rural enterprises such as farms where workers not only have a functional requirement to live on-site for animal welfare and security reasons, but are often all part of the same family.

5.14 Overall, it is considered that the design solution that has been adopted would not cause demonstrable harm to interests of acknowledged importance and can be summarised thus:

Use

5.15 The proposal would see this area of the wider farm continue to be utilised for residential occupation; meaning a mature garden would already be awaiting the replacement farmhouse.

Amount

5.16 The application seeks the erection of a replacement farmhouse where extension, alteration, renovation and upgrading of thermal performance / resource use / mitigation would be cost-prohibitive when compared to a new build replacement property, while allowing for appropriate private amenity space within a mature garden and with car parking for the proposed replacement property retained and new cycle store added.

Layout

5.17 Comprehensive details of the layout and arrangement of the proposed replacement home are shown on the accompanying plan **JLG958/NB/02** and would allow for harmonious relationships with the wider landscape setting.

Scale

5.18 As can be seen from the plan included within this application, and as outlined elsewhere within this statement, the proposed property would be of two-storey scale (having eaves at 5.4m and hipped roof of 7.6m & 8.6m height agl). The proposed replacement property would have a similar siting and footprint to the existing farmhouse at the site.

Landscaping

5.19 Again as shown on the accompanying plans, the site would continue to be hard and soft landscaped in a manner commensurate with the continued residential use of the site, including the retention of existing mature garden and the parking & turning area; with the small increase in footprint over the existing farmhouse being to the sides and rear rather than forwards. For ease of reference, both the existing and proposed replacement farmhouses would sit along a common front plane, maintaining the existing degree of set-back from the vehicular access.

Appearance

5.20 The overall character of the development would be that of a well-designed and simply detailed rural farmhouse property, which would respond in an appropriate manner to the constraints upon, and opportunities for development at the rural site.

6.0 ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Sustainable Transport Links – The site is in an isolated rural location with very limited access to public transport. However, in providing an enhanced farmhouse at the site, the proposals would go some way towards mitigating these circumstances.

6.2 Inclusive Access – The layout, design and construction of the proposed replacement dwelling would again allow for car parking to be provided adjacent to the proposed replacement property and all means of access to be level. No new vehicular crossovers, removal of hedges or hardstandings are required as part of the proposals. As can be seen from the submitted plans and requirements of current Building Regulations, the proposed replacement home would fully accord with Part M of the Building Regulations.

6.3 As such, the proposals can be seen to accord with all relevant guidance and development plan policy in these regards.

7.0 SUMMARY & OVERVIEW

7.1 For the various reasons set out within this statement, it is considered that the possible technical constraints on development have been fully examined and discounted and that the design solution adopted would not cause demonstrable harm to any interests of acknowledged interest; sitting comfortably within the farm grouping and wider landscape setting.

7.2 With regard to guidance within the NPPF, it is considered that the proposed replacement property would be appropriate in relation to the site, the farm grouping of buildings and the rural area more generally. This includes the positioning and orientation and ensuing relationships with views, together with representing a clear improvement in visual terms over the existing situation. Also, it is evident that the proposed replacement dwelling could be constructed with sympathetic materials of appropriate colour and texture to ensure a high-quality appearance befitting of the site's rural setting.

7.3 With regard to the NPPF, it is considered the proposals are in accordance with the Development Plan and there are no material considerations that warrant the refusal of planning permission at the site. The proposals are also supported by central government guidance contained within the NPPF which recognise matters such as the importance of the rural economy, the need for farms and their workers to have appropriate accommodation and the drive towards more energy efficient homes.