OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/01006/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: **Removal of roller shutter doors and infill, new windows and conversion of the garage area to office accommodation, this area will then enable the existing Portacabin unit to be removed from site.**

Location: **St Neots Ambulance Station Huntingdon Street St Neots**

Applicant: **Mr Sean O'Sullivan**

Grid Ref: **518688 260751**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is St Neots Ambulance Station, which is located on Huntingdon Street, St Neots. The site lies within Flood Zone 2 and is outside of the St Neots Conservation Area boundary, which is to the south of the site. Trees which are subject to Tree Preservation Orders are to the front of the site.

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

This application seeks permission for removal of roller shutter doors and infill, new windows and conversion of the garage area to office accommodation, this area will then enable the existing Portacabin unit to be removed from site.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (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 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 places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

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

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

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development

LP5: Flood Risk
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)
* Placemaking Principles - Parts, 3.7 Building Form and 3.8 Building Detailing

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2019 (2016)
*Policy A3 - Design

St Neots Conservation Area Character Assessment (October 2006)

Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance

*Huntingdonshire Design Guide (SPD) 2017
*Developer Contributions SPD 2011
*Developer Contributions: Updated Costs 2023/24
*Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
*Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2017)
*Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
*LDF Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
*Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2020)
*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
* H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
* H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces

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

PLANNING HISTORY

7600001C1884 - New Ambulance Garage For St Neots Ambulance Station – No objection 18.02.1976

CONSULTATIONS

St Neots Town Council recommend approval, noting that the proposal makes efficient use of the site and will have no negative impact on the wider landscape.

REPRESENTATIONS

No objections received at time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 47 of the NPPF (2021). 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 (2016)
o Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
o Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
o Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
o Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Bury Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
o Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan (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 in the determination of this reserved matters application are:

- Principle of Development
- Design and Visual Amenity Impact
- Residential Amenity
- Flood Risk
- Biodiversity
- Impact on Trees

*Principle of Development

Policy LP22 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Local Services and Community Facilities) states that 'A proposal for a new local service or community facility within a built-up area, or the extension of an existing local service or community facility on land immediately adjoining the built-up area, will be supported where it:

a. is of a scale to serve local needs;
b. comprises up to a maximum of 600 square metres net internal floorspace for a main town centre use; and

c. provides for a new service or facility or it retains or enhances an existing service or facility including through the provision of premises suitable for mixed use or multiple community functions.

Part a of paragraph 97 of the NPPF (2023) states that 'to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies should; 'plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses, places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.

Whilst it is accepted that the Ambulance Service facilities are not specifically mentioned they are considered to fall under the category of 'other local services'.

The proposed development is therefore considered to broadly meet the requirements of LP22 and the NPPF (2024) in this regard and is considered acceptable in principle subject to compliance with the other relevant policies and considerations.

*Design and Visual Amenity Impact

Policy LP11 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 requires new development to respond positively to its context. Policy LP12 requires new development to contribute positively to the area's character and identity and to successfully integrate with adjoining buildings.

The proposal is for the removal of the roller shutter doors and infill, new windows and conversion of the garage area to office accommodation, this area will then enable the existing Portacabin unit to be removed from the site. The garage is of modern brick construction with a flat roof. The roller shutter doors are to be replaced with uPVC windows and doors. The garage is positioned to the rear of the site and as such is of limited visibility from the public highway.

Therefore, it is considered that the scale, bulk and design of the development complements the host building and would not harm the general character of the area. The proposal, therefore, accords with LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036 (2019) 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.

The garage is adjacent to the blank side elevation of a neighbouring property. The proposed windows and doors are at ground floor level with a standard 1.8 metre high close boarded fence between the buildings. Therefore, there will be limited visibility or overlooking to the adjacent property and as such it is considered that there will be no detrimental impact in terms of residential amenity on neighbouring properties.

Therefore, the development is considered acceptable in terms of overshadowing, overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light and would not have a significant impact upon residential amenity. The proposal, therefore, accords with LP14 of Huntingdonshire’s Local Plan to 2036 (2019) in this regard.

*Flood Risk

National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 seek to steer new developments 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 172-184 of the NPPF (2024)).

The land that the application site forms part of is liable to flood. The proposed development is considered 'minor development' and therefore is not subject to the Sequential or Exception Tests as detailed in the NPPF. The application includes flood mitigation measures, which are considered appropriate and reasonable for the scale of development proposed and can be secured by condition. As such, the development is considered compliant with LP5 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF in this regard.

*Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 states that a proposal will be required to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated. A proposal will ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type and location of development.

It is noted that the proposal is below the development threshold applying to the requirement to provide a Biodiversity Net Gain as set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and further that a priority habitat would not be impacted by the application.

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

*Impact on Trees

Policy LP31 of the Local Plan to 2036 states 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.

There are a number of trees which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order to the front of the site. Due to the nature and location of the proposed development, it is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact on the trees protected by a Tree Preservation Order.

Therefore, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regards to its impact on protected trees and accords with Policy LP31 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Conclusion

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

* Acceptable in principle

And it:

* Is of an appropriate scale and design;
* Is acceptable with regard to its impact upon the designated heritage assets;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not result in an increased risk of flooding in the locality;
* Is acceptable with regard to biodiversity;
*Would not be harmful to protected trees in the vicinity.

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

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

CONTACT OFFICER:
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