OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00599/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Conversion of barn to self-build dwelling including extension.

Location: Glebe Farm Gidding Road Sawtry

Applicant: Mr James Close

Grid Ref: 515984 283504

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The site is located approximately 1.5km north-west of the settlement of Sawtry and comprises two agricultural buildings. The existing barn relating to this application is of a timber frame construction with brick infill panels up to 1.8m high and corrugated fibre cement panels over up to eaves height. The roof is supported by timber purlins and clad with corrugated fibre cement panels. The agricultural building is located approximately 1 km along a reasonably substantial access track from Gidding Road.

This application seeks approval for the conversion of an existing barn to a self-build dwelling, including the erection of an extension, at Glebe Farm, Gidding Road, Sawtry. The proposed extension would measure 5m by 9.2m with an eaves height of 3.5m and a ridge height of 6.3m. It is proposed to replace the existing external wall finish with Western Red cedar cladding and the roof with insulated corrugated sheeting and solar panels.

The accompanying information states that the dwelling would provide suitable living accommodation for the applicant and his family who currently works on the farm holding and lives in rented accommodation.

This planning application follows a previously withdrawn application (24/02315/FUL) for the same development following concerns raised by the case officer regarding the scale of the proposed extension.

This application has been accompanied by the following:

- Planning, Design and Access Statement;
- Structural Inspection;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment;
- Unilateral Undertaking in relation to wheeled bins.

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.

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

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

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 - adopted May 2019

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP10: The Countryside
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP25: Housing Mix
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP33: Rural Buildings

Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan (Made Dec 2023).
SNP1 - The natural Environment and protecting green spaces
SNP8 - Footpaths and Cycle Ways
SNP9 - Off-street parking and electric vehicle charging

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

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

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

The National Design Guide (2021)

* C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
* I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
* I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
* B2 - Appropriate building types and forms

*M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
* N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
* H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
* H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
* H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

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

PLANNING HISTORY

24/02315/FUL - Proposed change of use of existing agricultural building to single dwelling (Use Class C3) including single storey extension - Withdrawn.

21/01335/PMBPA - Change of use of agricultural building to single dwelling (Use Class C3) - Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Sawtry Parish Council - No objections to the proposed development.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority - No objections to the proposed development. The Location Plan indicates that the access is in excess of 6m in width with 10m radii, which is acceptable for mixed agricultural/residential use. Therefore no significant adverse affect upon the Public Highway should result from the proposal.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Health - No objections to the proposed development.

REPRESENTATIONS

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

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

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

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of:

o Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
o Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o Various Neighbourhood Plans

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF

does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main issues to consider are:

o The Principle of Development
o Design, Visual Amenity and Impact upon the Character of the area
o Residential Amenity
o Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access
o Flood Risk and Surface Water
o Biodiversity
o Developer Contributions
o Accessible and Adaptable Homes
o Water Efficiency

*The Principle of the Development

The site is located outside of the built-up area of any defined settlement and is therefore classified as countryside land in accordance with the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. As such, Policy LP10 (The Countryside) is considered relevant in this instance.

Initially, it is worth noting that the site is approximately 1.5km north-west of the settlement of Sawtry, which the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 identifies as a Key Service Centre (Policy LP8). The settlement of Sawtry provides a range of services and facilities, including a primary and secondary school, leisure centre, doctors surgery, shops and public houses as well as bus stops that regularly travel to and from Huntingdon, Peterborough and other neighbouring settlements. As such, it is recognised that any future owner/occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be reliant on the use of private vehicles for the access of day-to-day services and facilities.

Paragraph 78 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 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 five-year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,430 homes equivalent to 4.03 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. As such, less weight can be attributed to Policy LP10 (though aspects of the policy remain relevant and are assessed in the proceeding sections of this report).

Policy LP10 of the adopted Local Plan states that development in the countryside will be restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan.

This application seeks approval for the conversion of an existing barn to a residential dwelling, as well as the erection of an extension, at Lodge Farm, Gidding Road, Sawtry. As such, Policy LP33 (Rural Buildings) is considered to provide an opportunity for development in this instance.

Policy LP33 of the adopted Local Plan states that a proposal for the conversion of a building in the countryside will be supported where it can be demonstrated that the building is
(i) redundant or disused;
(ii) of permanent and substantial construction;
(iii) not in such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction would be required; and
(iv) structurally capable of being converted for the proposed use.

Based on the information supplied (including structural survey and Design and Access Statement) and the site visit undertaken by the case officer, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the building in question satisfies the criteria of Policy LP33 of the adopted Local Plan.

It must also be bourne in mind that Prior Approval for Change of use of agricultural building to create a single storey 3 bedroom dwelling under parts a) and b) of Part 3 of the GPDO was approved in 2021, although this was never implemented and did not include the proposed extension.

Policy LP33 goes on to state that the proposal will be supported where the proposal

(i) would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting; and
(ii) any extension or alteration would not adversely affect the form, scale, massing or proportion of the building.

Furthermore, Policy LP33 requires that the proposal would lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting.

As discussed in following sections of this report, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting and the alterations proposed would not adversely affect the building.

Policy LP10 goes on to state that all development in the countryside must
(a) seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value;
(b) recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
(c) not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others.

The application site currently comprises of the agricultural barn, an area of hard surfacing and modified grass land. Given there is a limited supply of land of lower grades in the district and the site is on Grade 3 agricultural land, it is considered that the proposed development does not represent an unacceptable loss of agricultural land and any harm that results is very limited. The proposal therefore is in accordance with Policy LP10 criterion (a).

As discussed in the following sections of this report, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that criterion (b) and (c) are met.
In this instance the proposal for the conversion of a barn to a residential dwelling is not considered to cause significant and demonstrable harm to outweigh the economic, social and environmental benefits of the proposal. Therefore, given the current policy position, the principle of development is established and acceptable subject to compliance with other material planning considerations and conditions.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact Upon the Character of the Area

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

This application seeks approval for the change of use of the existing barn to a residential dwelling, the erection of an extension and associated works at Glebe Farm, Gidding Road, Sawtry. The proposed extension would measure 5m by 9.2m with an eaves height of 3.5m and a ridge height of 6.3m. It is proposed to replace the existing external wall finish with Western Red cedar cladding and the roof with insulated corrugated sheeting and solar panels.

The proposed extension would extend beyond the western elevation of the existing barn by 5m and would have a matching width, eaves height and ridge height. The scale of the proposed extension is now considered to be subordinate and acceptable and would not result in harm to overall form, scale, massing or proportions of the building. Furthermore, the finishing materials of the existing barn and the proposed extension are considered to be acceptable and would reflect the countryside location.

The proposed alterations to the barn, including the insertion of windows and doors and the use of solar panels on the southern roof slope are considered to be acceptable and are typical of this form of development. Furthermore, the large expanse of glazing on the eastern and western elevations would utilise existing openings.

To ensure the building retains its rural character, it is considered to be appropriate and necessary to restrict further development within the site and extensions that could be achieved under householder permitted development rights. An appropriately worded condition will be added to the decision notice in this regard.

The red line area is drawn relatively close to the existing barn and the proposed change of use would utilise the existing access and an area hardsurfacing whilst also creating a new garden area. This element of the proposal is considered to improve the current arrangement and would not result in any visual harm. Therefore, the residential curtilage would not extend significantly into the open countryside and would ensure the agricultural practices on adjoining land are not compromised.

The application includes limited detail in regard to landscaping and boundary treatments. A condition will be appended to the decision in this regard, to ensure that these are appropriate for this location.

The proposals also do not include any detail of external lighting, given this remote location within the countryside and lack of street lighting it is considered appropriate to secure appropriate external (unobtrusive) lighting details by a condition attached to the decision notice in accordance with Policy LP10 (c).

Overall, the proposal is considered to be of an acceptable scale and design and would recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. As such, the proposal is deemed to be in accordance with Policies LP10, LP11, LP12 and LP33 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy SNP1 of the Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Residential Amenity

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

Given the location of the site and the distance to the closest neighbouring residential property (approximately 675m to Lodge Farm, Gidding Road), the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any detrimental impacts on any neighbouring properties amenities.

Consideration shall also be given to the residential amenity of the future occupants of the converted barn. The proposal would include an appropriate size private amenity space for the future owners/occupiers of the proposed dwelling. However, the adjacent land uses of the land surrounding the barn is agricultural which may lead to amenity issues for future residents in terms of dust and noise emanating from agricultural practices.

The proposal is in close proximity to an adjacent agricultural barn which the applicant has confirmed is currently in use as a grain store. Whilst the building is not used for housing livestock, the location and proximity of the proposal site, immediately adjacent to a building in agricultural use, on an active farm, could expose the future occupiers of the proposed dwelling to noise and odour impacts form agricultural activities.

The proposed dwelling would have an outlook towards the adjacent agricultural building (grain store) and the access drive to the building also runs immediately adjacent to the east elevation of the dwelling where there would be a lounge on the ground floor and two bedrooms above.

Noise and odour disturbances are likely to worsen in warmer summer month when the future occupiers would be likely to be reliant upon open windows and would spend more time in the associated external areas of the building (which is shown to the west of the dwelling away from the agricultural building).

The applicant has confirmed that the barn is used during harvest time (July/August) when it is filled over the course of one/two days by tractor and trailer with a number of journeys over the 24/48 hour period. The grain is then stored until the market demand/price is considered right at which time the whole of the contents of the barn is then picked up by 30 tonne lorries, again over the course of one/two days. This usually occurs when the crops are fully dried in wintertime, but is dependent on grain demands/markets. The rest of the time the barns are empty and not visited.

The submitted location plan has a red line area drawn relatively close to the existing barn whilst still offering a degree of separation between the adjacent agricultural fields and grain store. The separation distance, in addition to a condition securing the details of boundary treatments, would help reduce the potential for land use conflicts and amenity issues between differing land uses to some extent.

It must be bourne in mind that the barn the subject of this application has previously been granted Change of use of agricultural building to single dwelling under Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (amended) under application 21/01335/PMBPA although this was never implemented and has now expired. The existence of the permitted development rights under class Q brings with it an acceptance that people would be living in buildings on existing farms and as such some degree of impact from agricultural operations is to be expected. In this instance, whilst the dwelling is in close proximity to the grain store, the dwelling will be occupied by the applicant and his family who currently works on the farm holding. Based on the information submitted regarding the use of the grain store it is likely that the disturbance is only likely to occur intensively for a period of approximately 4 days over the course of a year. However, to ensure that there are no adverse impacts on the residential amenities of future occupants of the dwelling it is considered necessary to impose a condition to ensure that any residents of the dwelling have an occupational link to the farm holding.

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

*Highway Safety

Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.

The proposed dwelling would be accessed via an existing agricultural track off Gidding Road, Sawtry. The existing access measures in excess of 6m in width with 10m radii, which is considered to be acceptable for a mixed agricultural and residential use. The access track is reasonably substantial and laid with hard core along the length of it.

The proposed dwelling would have five bedrooms. The submitted site plan shows an area to the north of the existing building for off-street car parking and turning. The Local Planning Authority are satisfied the area is adequate to serve the proposed dwelling. A condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to secure cycle parking on a basis of one space per bedroom as per Policy LP16 of the adopted Local Plan.

Therefore, subject to appropriate conditions, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policies LP16 and LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy SNP8 and SNP9 of the Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Flood Risk

The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 in accordance with Environment Agency mapping and the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024).

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

The accompanying application form details that foul sewage would be disposed of via a package treatment plant and surface water would be disposed of via soakaways. Given the low flood risk and minor scale of development, officers are satisfied that full details of the surface and foul water drainage can be secured as part of building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.

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

*Biodiversity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.

This application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Roost Assessment. This sets out that the development would have negligible impact on invertebrates, reptiles, nesting birds, bats, badgers, great crested newts or hedgehogs as such no further ecological surveys are required. However, a number of precautionary measures have been put forward and it is advised that lighting is sensitively designed to ensure there is no adverse impact on foraging and commuting bats. The Local Planning Authority are satisfied with the findings and recommendations, and a condition would be imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure development is carried out in strict accordance.

In regard to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), as of the 2nd April 2024 a mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was imposed on small sites. A statement has been submitted within the application form which states the application falls within the self-build exemption. As the application consists exclusively of a single self-build dwelling on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares, Officers are satisfied that it is exempt from providing biodiversity net gain under The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024. A condition to ensure the property would be a self-build property shall be imposed on any permission granted.

Overall, the proposed development is deemed to broadly be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Policy SNP1 of the Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Developer Contributions

Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking Form in respect of wheeled bins has been received by the Local Planning Authority dated 30 May 2025. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Developers Contributions SPD (2011).

*Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that all housing developments in the district offers a genuine choice of Accessible and adaptable dwellings that meet the requirements of residents:

f. ensuring 100% of new dwellings, across all tenures provided, meet Building Regulation requirement M4 (2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' (or replacement standards).

To ensure that the development can meet these standards a condition would be imposed on any permission that may be granted in this regard in accordance with Policy LP25 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Water Efficiency

Policy LP12 (j) of the Local Plan to 2036 states that new dwellings must comply with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. A condition will be attached to any consent to ensure compliance with the above, in accordance with Policy LP12 (j) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Other

*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.

*Conclusion

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

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

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

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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