OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00848/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Change of use from amenity space to private garden

Location: 3 Sycamore Drive Huntingdon PE29 7JA

Applicant: Mr Michal Lesniewski

Grid Ref: 524100 273425

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is occupied by a two-storey semi-detached dwellinghouse located on the corner of Sycamore Drive, a well-established residential area in Huntingdon. There are no constraints relevant to the site.

Planning permission is sought for the change of use from amenity space to private garden.

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

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;
* achieving well-designed places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural environment;
* conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

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

The National Design Guide (2021)

*C2 – Value heritage, local history and culture
*I1 – Respond to existing local character and identity
*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

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

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)

LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP32: Protection of Open Space

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026 (September 2019)
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
- Developer Contributions SPD 2011
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment (2022)

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

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

None.

CONSULTATIONS

Huntingdon Town Council were consulted but make no comment on the application.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- Principle
- Design and Visual Amenity
- Residential amenity
- Highway Safety

Principle

The application site is located within an established residential area of Huntingdon which is defined as a Spatial Planning Area under Policy LP7 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036. However, in this case the proposed development does not fall into any of the categories detailed under Policy LP7 which concern residential and commercial development.

Policy LP32 of the Local Plan looks to avoid the loss of open space, outdoor recreation facilities, allotments and areas of garden land that provide amenity value. In this case, the area of land in questions measures approximately 50.56 square metres comprising grass and unmaintained shrubs. Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026, Appendix 1 states that Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open space and the designation should only be used: where the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; where the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular

significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife and where the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land. The area of land in question does not fit into one of the above categories and is therefore not Designated Green Space. Whilst the loss of this small section of land is acknowledged, it is considered to be of low public value and would not be contrary to the aims of Policy LP32 of the Local Plan or the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to other material considerations.

Design and Visual Amenity

Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Local Plan and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD (2017) set out key principles of good design to support proposals that respond positively to their context, integrate successfully with the surrounding built form and create well designed and sustainable developments that are functional to meet the needs of present and future occupiers.

The application site is a two-storey semi-detached dwellinghouse located within a well-established residential area of Huntingdon.

The proposal seeks a change of use of approximately 50.56 square metres of grassed amenity land located to the south of the rear garden of No. 3 Sycamore Drive, adjacent to Sallowbush Road, to form additional private garden space. The land currently comprises a grassed verge with some unmaintained shrubs and sits between the rear boundary of the application site and a public footpath.

As part of the proposal, a new 1.8m high close boarded boundary fence would be realigned to enclose the additional land, bringing it in line with the rear boundary treatment of the neighbouring property at No. 5 Sycamore Drive to the west. The proposed repositioned fence would sit adjacent to the existing footpath but would not encroach upon or obstruct it. The fence would be a close vertical boarded timber fence with a natural stain.

The application site lies to the west of the junction of Sycamore Drive and Swallowbush Road. The area of open space that is the subject of this application is not mirrored by a similar area of open space on the opposite side of the junction. Instead, the boundary of No 4 Sycamore Drive is parallel to the footpath, and there is no open space. The proposed change of use to garden land will result in the two sides of the junction having a broadly similar appearance (albeit with different boundary treatments as discussed below) and as a result it is not considered that the proposed change of use or associated boundary treatment would appear visually intrusive or uncharacteristic within the street scene.

The Local Planning Authority would normally expect to see a brick wall or similar as boundary treatment adjacent to a footpath or road, as is the case for the property on the opposite side of the junction (No 4 Sycamore Drive). In this instance however the existing boundary treatment to No 3 adjacent to the road is a close boarded fence, the proposal will move this approx. 4.8 metres closer to the footpath at its widest point, and 1.53 metres at its narrowest point closest to the junction. In addition, the neighbouring dwelling, No. 5 Sycamore Drive to the west also has a close boarded fence, and the proposed fence will be in line with this. Due to the existing boundary to the west of the application site and the fact that the new fence will be approx. 4.8 metres closer to the path than the existing close boarded fence at No 3 Sycamore Drive, it is not considered that the proposed change will have an adverse impact on the street scene such that a refusal of planning permission is warranted.

The footpath is set back from Sallowbush Road and separated by a grassed verge with established trees, which would remain unaffected by the proposal. Given that the repositioned fence would align with neighbouring boundaries and reflect an established boundary line, it is not considered

that the proposed change of use or associated boundary treatment would appear visually intrusive or uncharacteristic within the street scene.

As such, the proposal is considered acceptable in design terms and would not result in any adverse harm to the character or visual amenity of the surrounding area. The proposal therefore accords with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

Residential Amenity

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

In terms of neighbour amenity, the proposed change of use of the land to the south of No. 3 Sycamore Drive to form additional private garden space would not result in any built form or development that would give rise to overshadowing, loss of light, or an overbearing impact on neighbouring properties. The repositioning of the 1.8m boundary fence to align with that of No. 5 Sycamore Drive would represent a continuation of existing boundary treatments and would not introduce any new features that would adversely affect neighbouring residential amenity.

The change of use would enhance the quality of the outdoor space available to the occupants of the application property without affecting the use or enjoyment of neighbouring dwellings or communal areas. Furthermore, the proposal would not result in any additional overlooking or loss of privacy for surrounding residents.

The proposal therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 12 of the NPPF (2024) in this regard.

Highway safety

The proposed change of use involves the incorporation of an area of amenity land into the private garden of No. 3 Sycamore Drive through the realignment of the rear boundary fence. The revised fence line would align with the existing boundary of the neighbouring property at No. 5 Sycamore Drive and would sit adjacent to an existing public footpath.

The footpath itself would not be affected by the proposal and would remain fully accessible to pedestrians. No alterations are proposed to existing access points, and there would be no impact on visibility splays, junctions, or vehicular access to the site or surrounding highway network.

Given the limited scope of the proposal and its nature, it is not considered that the development would give rise to any highway safety concerns.

The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of highway safety in accordance with LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Conclusion

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

* Is acceptable in principle;
* Is of an appropriate scale and design;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon Highway Safety

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.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Robyn Kerrigan**