OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00226/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Erection of a new car servicing and repair structure

Location: Tilson Autos Infield Road Glatton

Applicant: Mr Harry Tillson

Grid Ref: 514832 285687

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site at Tilson Autos is occupied by a vehicle repair and servicing facility and associated parking located to the west of the village of Glatton. The application site is considered to be in the countryside and not within the built-up area of any settlement listed in Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, and whilst parts of the site are within Flood Zone 3 on the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning, the proposed application is not affected by this.

This application seeks permission for the erection of a new car servicing and repair structure.

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;
* 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 15th May 2019)

LP2: Strategy for Development
LP10: The Countryside
LP11: Design Context

LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP19: Rural Economy
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP37: Ground Contamination and Groundwater Pollution

Neighbourhood Plan and relevant policies where applicable

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):

* Place Making Principles parts 3.7 Building Form and 3.8 Building Detailing

Huntingdonshire Townscape and Landscape Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (2022)

The National Design Guide (2021)

Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

8900259FUL - Retention of former agricultural building for car repairs business, OSP 8060, Infield Road, Glatton (Permission)

9800934FUL - Retention of building & use of land for car repairs business 35 Infield Road Glatton (Permission)

0302700FUL - Extension to garage workshop building (Permission)

CONSULTATIONS

Glatton Parish Council - Recommend approval, makes following comment:

o One consideration is that whilst the site is not increasing the hard standing it is a key area for water entering the village. Is there anything that could be done as part of the construction to assist with the slowing of water flow into Glatton village.

Officer Comments: Whilst officers note the above comments made by the Parish Council, this application does not negatively impact the watercourse and its flow of water into Glatton Village due to the majority of the site existing as hardstanding surfaces, and as such mitigation measures on this are not considered in this application.

Huntingdonshire District Council Arboricultural Officer - Support the application subject to conditions

Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Health Officer - No objections, recommend conditions

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways - No objections

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the 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 (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 a number of adopted neighbourhood plans, however, there is not an adopted neighbourhood plan in place for Glatton. Therefore, in this case no neighbourhood plans are given weight in the determination of this application.

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 application are:

- The Principle of Development
- Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on the Countryside
- Residential Amenity
- Impact on Trees
- Vehicle Movement and Highway Safety
- Biodiversity
- Other Matters

*The Principle of Development

This application relates to the erection of a new car servicing and repair structure. The application site, whilst not isolated from and related to the built-up area of Glatton, is considered to fall outside of the built-up area and therefore forms part of the countryside. As such, Policy LP10 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan is considered relevant. Policy LP10 states that development in the countryside will be restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan. All development in the countryside must:

a. seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value;
i. avoiding the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) where possible, and
ii. avoiding Grade 1 agricultural land unless there are exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the loss of land;

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.

It is considered that part a. is not wholly relevant in this case, as per the submitted plans alongside Officers undertaking a site visit, it is noted that the majority of the application site, including the proposed location of the structure, consists of compacted hardcore/gravel and thus has no agricultural value. This means the development would result in no loss of land with higher agricultural value due to the current status of the location for development having no agricultural value, so is acceptable in this regard. Parts b. and c. of Policy LP10 are discussed in more detail in the subsequent sections of this report but taking into account the purpose of the proposal it is not considered that the proposal would give rise to any factors referenced to render it unacceptable.

Policy LP10 restricts development in the countryside to limited and specific opportunities. Opportunities in the countryside are limited under a number of policies which are not considered relevant to this application. However, Policy LP19 (Rural Economy) must be considered as this provides specific opportunity for development within the countryside. Policy LP19 states that a proposal for the expansion of an established rural business on land outside of its existing operational site in the open countryside will be supported where it demonstrates that:

e. opportunities to reuse existing buildings have been fully explored; and replacement or new build are only proposed where it can be demonstrated that no suitable reuse opportunities are available;

f. any opportunities to make more efficient use of land within the existing site boundary are not suitable for the proposed use;

g. it avoids the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) particularly Grade 1 where possible and should use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value; and

h. the scale, character and siting of the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on its immediate surroundings and the wider landscape.

Part e., f. and g. of Policy LP19 are not considered wholly relevant in this case, as preceding sections of this report have established that the development would not result in the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land, with the expansion of the existing established business taking place within its existing operational site on hardstanding surfaces that contain no agricultural value. Taking into account part h., it is considered that the proposal would not have a detrimental effect on its immediate surroundings and wider landscape and will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this report.

It should also be noted that paragraph 89 of the NPPF (2024) states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist"

As previously noted, the development is found to not have a detrimental impact on its surroundings, thus is acceptable in this regard. It is also considered that the proposals will not have any unacceptable impact on roads and is discussed in greater detail in further sections of this report.

Overall therefore, having regard to the above assessment, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle and is compliant with Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2024) subject to compliance with other relevant policies and considerations.

*Design and Visual Amenity

The application site at Tilson Autos is occupied by a mix of building structures which provide the functionality of a car servicing and repair facility. The existing structures contain a repair and servicing bay, alongside ancillary lean-to structures added to the main servicing facility, and are located to the south east of the site. The proposed vehicle repair and servicing structure is to be located directly to the north of the existing facilities, adjacent to the repair and servicing bay. The proposed structure is to measure 15 metres in length and 7.5 metres in width. The proposed roof is of a pitched design, with eaves at a similar height to the existing servicing facility at approximately 3.3 metres, and a maximum ridge height of 7.2 metres, which is approximately 2 metres greater than existing. When considering the form of the proposed structure to the built form of the application site, it is considered acceptable in terms of scale and design and will not have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the application site, nor will it negatively impact the appearance of the wider area. This is supported by the proposed use of materials which best match the existing structure which integrates the development within the application site and wider rural locality.

Overall, taking the above factors into consideration the proposed development is considered to be acceptable with regard to design and visual amenity and would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the character or appearance of the area. It therefore accords with Policies LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Residential Amenity

Given the location of the existing property and the type and scale of the proposed works, alongside having regard to the proximity and separation to nearby dwellings, it is not considered that there would be any unacceptable material impacts in terms of overbearing or loss of light, nor would there be any issues regarding loss of privacy or overlooking.

As mentioned in previous sections of this report, part c. of Policy LP10 of the Local Plan states that development in the countryside should not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others. Considering the nature of the development as the expansion of the current use, it is not considered that the proposal would result in any additional noise, odour or obtrusive light that would adversely affect the use of the countryside by others.

Overall, taking these factors into account the development is considered acceptable in terms of overshadowing, overbearing impact, overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light and would not have a significant impact upon residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Impact on Trees

Whilst the application site has no trees which are afforded protection by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), there are a number of significant trees on site which make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the countryside. As such, HDC's Arboricultural Officer has been consulted. They state that the Arboricultural Impact Assessment submitted as part of the supporting documents shows that there will be limited impacts as a result of the development and little chance that trees will be harmed as a result. The submitted Arboricultural Impact Assessment alongside the proposed plans suggest protective measures to be installed to ensure that materials and other activities are prevented from taking place in locations which would be damaging to the existing trees. Based on this, HDC's Arboricultural Officer has no objection to the proposals,

providing that the works comply with the submitted documents and ensure the suggested protective fencing is put in place and retained until the completion of the works.

Therefore, having regard to the above assessment and advice of specialists, subject to conditions the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on trees and therefore accords with Policy LP31 of the Local Plan to 2036.

* Vehicle Movement and Highway Safety

Due to the nature of the application, it is presented in the submitted Design and Access Statement that there is likely to be an increase in the number of vehicles on the site and using the existing access. As this is the case, Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Officer has been consulted. They raise no objections to the proposal, stating that although the new structure will increase the number of customers using the garage, this will be off-set by the number of vehicles being taken off-site to other facilities. They also consider that the existing access is of sufficient length so that vehicles will not be waiting on Infield Road to enter the site whilst other vehicles are exiting. It is also worth noting that the existing vehicle access is acceptable for the posted speed limit and provides sufficient visibility, promoting safe access in and out of the site.

Taking the favourable comments from CCC Highways into account, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable with regards to vehicle movement and will not have a detrimental impact on highway safety in the locality. The proposal therefore accords with Policy LP17 of the Local Plan in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 states that a development should ensure no net loss in biodiversity and achieve a net gain where possible. The application form details that the proposal would be exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain legislation as it would fall within the de minimis category and the LPA view aligns with this. In addition, given the commercial use of the site as well as the nature and scale of the works proposed, it is considered that achieving a net gain would be challenging. The application site is considered to be of low value for protected species, and the Ecological Impact Assessment puts forward mitigation measures which shall be secured by conditions. Additionally, a separate condition will be implemented as it is necessary to limit external lighting to avoid light pollution and prevent harm on nearby species.

Having taken this into account, with the development resulting in no net loss of biodiversity and the implementation of proposed biodiversity enhancement measures presented as part of the submitted Ecological Impact Assessment, it therefore broadly accords with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Other Matters

Due to the use of the application site, alongside the presence of a watercourse on site, HDC's Environmental Health Officer has been consulted. They have set out conditions which will be implemented to ensure the minimisation of the risks of land contamination for users of the land and neighbouring land, alongside the mitigation of any future contamination on the watercourse on site. This is to ensure compliance with the details set out in Policy LP37 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Conclusion

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

* Is of an appropriate scale and design;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the area;

* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Is acceptable with regards to impact on trees;
* Would not have a detrimental impact on vehicle movement and highway safety.
* 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.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
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