OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00382/HHFUL Householder (Full)

Proposal: Extension to rear of property

Location: Sycamore Cottage Leighton Road Hamerton

Applicant: Mr John Souter

Grid Ref: 513535 279842

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

Sycamore Cottage is a 17th Century cottage with 20th Century renovation, timber framed and plastered of one storey and attic. It is a Grade II Listed Building close to another listed building to the south-west. It is located within a semi-rural location within Hamerton village and within flood zone 2 and 3.

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

The application is for an extension to the rear of the property.

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)
LP5: Flood Risk
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity

LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):
* Place Making Principles – Parts 3.8 Building Detailing and 3.7 Building Form

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

PLANNING HISTORY

19/02310/LBC - Replacement of external doors and windows which are beyond repair – consent granted 28.03.2023
25/00474/LBC - Extension to rear of property – pending consideration

CONSULTATIONS

Hamerton Parish Council – no response received at time of determination

HDC Conservation Team – object to the application. It is considered that the proposal does not preserve the character of the listed building and the relationship with the adjacent listed building. There is no justification, and no public benefit identified in the application as required by the NPPF. In addition, insufficient information has been submitted regarding the replacement of the roof covering of the existing rear extension to be able to fully assess the potential impact of this on the listed building. Fullrther comments from the Conservation Officer are contained within the main body of the report below.

REPRESENTATIONS

No objections received at time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- Design and Visual Amenity
- Residential amenity
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
- Flood risk.

*Design and Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 state that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

Policy LP34 states that a proposal within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a conservation area should preserve, and wherever possible enhance, features that contribute positively to the area’s character, appearance and setting as set out in character statements or other applicable documents.

The Council will consider the significance of a designated heritage asset and where there is less than substantial harm, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Where there is deemed to be substantial harm, then the proposal would need to achieve substantial public benefits to outweigh that harm.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Para. 212 of the NPPF set out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'. Para. 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification…'.

Local Plan policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.

The proposal is for a rear extension, which will be attached to the lean-to existing rear extension built in the 1970s, using concrete block and render to match the existing rear extension. The works will include repairing the roof on the lean-to extension and replace the current red tiles with interlocking slate tiles, which would match those used on the Victorian extension at the southern end of the building.

The Conservation Officer has considered the proposal, and the applicant comments have been noted.

The proposed rear extension is 5870mm in height with double doors and a full length glazed panel or window at ground floor level and sets of three and four windows at each of the elevations at first floor level. There is no proposed first floor plan and no stairs proposed at ground floor level. The proposed extension is rectangular and adjoins the existing rear lean to at its eaves which are considerably lower than those of the proposed extension. The proposed extension has rendered block walls, a stone string course and a hipped roof of reclaimed pantiles and has the overall appearance of a tower.

To provide access to the proposed extension the existing rear double doors are proposed to be removed and the doorway widened. The application form states that a lintel may be required for support, but details have not been submitted.

The proposed extension is the height of a two storey extension and stands as a separate higher element adjoining the single storey lean to. Its tower appearance is inappropriate on this building which is a historic cottage of one storey and attic, and it has an odd junction with the lean to and an uncomfortable relationship with the cottage. The proposed extension is not of a design which is sympathetic to the historic cottage and does not reflect the character of the Listed Building.

For that reason, the proposal is not considered to preserve the character nor maintain the significance of the Listed Building, Sycamore Cottage, but is harmful to it.

The addition of the proposed extension also harmfully changes the character of the Listed Building and the relationship it has with the adjacent Listed Building, as the two surviving cottages of similar date and construction at this location, and the contribution it makes to the setting of that Listed Building.

Although the harm is less than substantial, any harm requires clear and convincing justification and must be balanced against public benefit from the proposal. There is no justification, and no public benefit identified in the application, as required by the NPPF.

Also proposed is the removal and replacement of the existing roof tiles of the single storey rear lean to extension. The existing roof is described as having a 21 degree roof slope and because of the shallowness of the slope the existing clay tiles allow water ingress. Proposed replacements are Sandtoft Clay Rivius interlocking slate roof tiles. The Sandtoft website (accessed 10/4/25) states that these tiles are to be used on a minimum 22.5 degree roof slope. Although this part of the proposal may be supportable, the information submitted is insufficient to fully assess the potential impact of it on the Listed Building.

The applicant states that the Conservation Officers comment of 'Sycamore Cottage is a Grade II Listed Building (listed as 'Sycamore Cottage, Main Street'). It also stands near to another Listed Building ('Cottages circa 16 metres North East of Sycamore Cottage') which stands on the road junction and bend north of Sycamore Cottage' is incorrect as Elm Cottage is over 40m from Sycamore Cottage.

'Listed Building ('Cottages circa 16 metres North East of Sycamore Cottage') is the title of the listing description for Elm Cottages and has been included by the Conservation Officer to make officers aware which Listed Buildings the assessment has been based on. The comments from the Conservation Officer and the assessment consider the actual relationship between the Listed Buildings.

The applicant has made some points in respect of the potential impact of the proposal on the Listed Building and other heritage assets. The applicant does not consider that the application site is near to another listed building, that the building is two-storey not one and a half, that the height of the proposed extension is one and a half storey. The applicant also has concerns about the accuracy of the list description, stating that 'by the time the listing was made Sycamore was not a good example of a 17thc cottage'.

In response to these the Conservation Officer has noted the following:

- The list description includes the reference to 20th century renovation of the building and the works the applicant says took place prior to the listing so were taken into account in the decision to list Sycamore Cottage as a Listed Building. Planning Officers note that the building is a Listed Building and has to be considered as such. Great weight is given to its status as a Listed Building.
- A cottage with attic rooms is generally known as one and a half storey. The Tower is taller than the cottage so appears to be of two storey height in comparison and it has windows at two levels. Planning Officers note that due to its design the extension appears to be two-storey.
- The proposal was assessed on the basis of the submitted drawings and information.
- Reasons have been provided for the proposed alterations to the cottage but these do not appear to amount to public benefit. Planning Officers note that the reasons given for the proposed alterations, including being able to stand up right in this part of the building, and additional sunlight into the building, and consider these to be private benefits for the applicant, rather than public benefits.

Therefore, it is considered that the information provided does not amend the original proposal nor provide the missing information.

Officers have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Officers have given special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. It is considered that harm will be caused to the designated heritage asset because the proposal is not considered to preserve the character nor maintain the significance of

the listed building, Sycamore Cottage, but is harmful to it. In addition, insufficient information has been provided with regard to the replacement roof tiles to enable a full assessment of the potential impact upon the listed building. The proposal, therefore, does not accord with ss. 16, 66 & 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, paragraphs 202-221 of the NPPF (2024), Policies LP12 and LP34 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 dwelling sits within a generous plot in a semi rural location. As such there are no neighbouring properties that will be impacted by the proposal. Therefore, given the separation distance, it is considered that the proposal will not have any significant detrimental impact on the residential amenity of the 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.

*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.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was conducted of the site and has reported that due to the nature of the proposed works to the roof of the lean-to and the proposed rear extension being restricted to existing hardstanding ground, no further surveys are required. The proposed development is not considered to conflict with any national, regional or local planning policies and will not have any significant or adverse impacts on protected species and their habitats. The recommendations and mitigation measures suggested in the PEA can be secured by condition.

Therefore, notwithstanding the required condition, the proposals are considered to accord with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

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 several mature trees within the application site. However, an Arboricultural Report has not been submitted with the application and therefore the impact on the trees cannot be fully assessed. It is noted that the site plan identifies an apple tree 6 metres away from the proposed development area and a Horse Chestnut tree further away. The application site is not within a Conservation Area; however the trees offer an important positive contribution to the site and therefore a tree protection plan would be required to provide adequate protection to the trees throughout the development, if the application were to be approved.

Therefore, subject to an appropriate condition, the proposals would accord with Policy LP31 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 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 165-175 of the NPPF (2023)).

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 should however still meet the requirements for site specific flood risk assessments. The application includes a document confirming flood proofing measures that 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.

*Conclusion
The proposed development is not considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as:

* The proposed new rear extension is considered to be harmful to the character and significance of Sycamore Cottage, due to its scale, height and bulk and the unsympathetic design, style and features, which are not harmonious with the existing building. The proposals do not respect nor preserve the historic character of the listed building. The proposed development is considered to result in less than substantial harm to the character and appearance of the Sycamore Cottage. This harm is not outweighed by the public benefits of the proposal. As such, the proposed development is considered to be contrary to sections 16 and 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended), Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

* The application is not supported by sufficient and accurate information on all aspects of the proposal and therefore the Local Planning Authority is unable to fully assess the proposals appropriately and meet their statutory duty to preserve the listed building and its setting. As such, the proposed development is considered to be contrary to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be refused.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
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