OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 24/02411/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Conversion of the outbuilding to self contained residential use

Location: 16A Euston Street Huntingdon PE29 3QS

Applicant: Dr Peter Heslam

Grid Ref: 524271 271714

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The outbuilding is located on land associated with 16 Euston Street, a Victorian dwelling in a residential area of Huntingdon and within the Conservation Area. The site is situated in flood zone 1.

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

The application is for the conversion of the outbuilding to self-contained residential use. It is noted that the internal works have already been completed.

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)
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP8: Key Service Centres
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation

LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026
* Policy BE1 – Design and Landscaping
* Policy BE2 - Local Distinctiveness and Aesthetics
* Policy BE3 - Heritage Assets

Huntingdon Conservation Area Character Assessment (March 2007)

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

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 (2024)
*Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
*Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)
*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
* H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities
* M3 Well considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
* N3 Support rich and varied biodiversity

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

PLANNING HISTORY

None

CONSULTATIONS

Huntingdon Town Council recommends refusal on the basis of overdevelopment in a crowded area. It is believed that it is not reasonable to expect no need for private parking provision and therefore refute the claimed support from Neighbourhood Plan Policy TT1. Overdevelopment of this site would exacerbate a difficult area for parking and restrict access.

HDC Conservation – with the exception of the marginal increase in the height of the front elevation and the construction of a new roof with rooflights this will not have an impact on the character and

appearance of the Conservation Area. Condition required to secure detailed design of window and door, flue and meter boxes.

REPRESENTATIONS

Objections have been received from three local properties, with comments summarised below:

- Can it be verified that all permissions were sought and approved to elevate the roof by 24"(est) at the front and 40"(est) to the rear.
- In the recent past we have had 2x additional houses built on the Green, the old 'Victoria Inn' converted into flats and more recently another new build house on the Green. The population density is presently significant and requires no increase.
- The restrictive parking for the area is not only tiresome for existing residents but becoming a danger to all. The 'no vehicle dwelling' requirement is so open to abuse, I wish to know how this will be monitored and enforced. Just drop off and pick up from the residence has dangerous implications.
- Elderly residents with shopping trollies are being forced off the path onto the road due to the waste bins being located on the path waiting for pick up or to be put away.
- There are parking problems in the area. The main dwelling is already converted into two flats and more cars without parking will be horrendous.
- Parking is a serious issue in the area, particularly after 6pm.
- Local public pay and display car park is always full.

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 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)
o Great Staughton Neighbourhood Plan (2025)

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:

- The principle of development
- Design and Visual Amenity and Impact upon Designated Heritage Assets
- Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access
- Biodiversity
- Other issues

*Principle of Development

The proposal is for the conversion of the outbuilding to self-contained residential use. It is noted that the outbuilding has direct access to the public street and has the use of a small courtyard shared with the main dwelling that has been converted into two flats.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development is clearly outlined within the NPPF, with the goal of creating positive improvements in the quality of the built environment.

Local Plan Policy LP2 (Strategy for Development) sets out the overarching development strategy for Huntingdonshire, which includes the following:

- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities;
- Protect the character of existing settlements and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside;

Huntingdon is identified in Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 as one of four spatial planning areas in Huntingdonshire. Its designation reflects its status as the one of the District's traditional market town and most sustainable centre. Local Plan Policy LP7 'Spatial Planning Areas' states:

Residential Development
A proposal for housing development (class 'C3') or for a residential institution use (class 'C2') will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area Settlement.

In addition to allocated sites, residential development of any scale may be acceptable where it can be successfully integrated within the built-up area of the existing settlement.

The site is within the built-up area of Huntingdon and within a residential area. It is an outbuilding related to the main dwelling at 16 Euston Street, with direct access onto the public street and highway. It is noted that several houses within the street have a similar arrangement. Previously the outbuilding was used for general household storage. There is controlled residential parking within the immediate area.

The over-riding character of the area is of terraced housing. The proposed development will introduce an additional property, increasing housing density. It brings into question whether an additional residential dwelling would be successfully integrated within the built-up area of the existing settlement. It is noted that the development is for the conversion of an existing outbuilding to self-contained accommodation. It is in a sustainable location, close to the town centre facilities of Huntingdon and therefore it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable in accordance with Local Plan Policies LP2 and LP7 in this regard.

It is therefore considered that the principle of conversion of the existing outbuilding to a residential dwelling (Use Class C3) is acceptable, subject to compliance with the other relevant policies and considerations.

*Design and Visual Amenity and Impact upon Designated 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 proposal falls within the Huntingdon Conservation Area.

Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

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 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.

The area is characterised by Victorian terraced housing in buff brick, with an infill of four newer terraced houses of red brick opposite the application site. The outbuilding faces directly onto the main street and is a characteristic of the area. It is of buff brick to match the main dwelling with a large window fronting the public highway. A flat roof slopes towards the rear gardens. It is noted that internal works have already been completed in the building to provide bedsit accommodation. Minimal changes are proposed to the building, which include the insertion of three roof lights to the flat roof, sloping away from the public highway and will therefore be of limited visibility from the street to the front of the property. They are set at a high level within the roof slope and will provide additional light to the main space. It is noted that the ridge height has been increased by 65 centimetres in order to install insulation and improve the structural strength of the roof.

Officers have given special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposal will result in limited changes to the external appearance of the building, with the addition of three roof lights to the sloping roof away from the public street and the small increase of the ridge height.

Therefore, due to the limited changes to the exterior of the building, it is considered that the development will not result in any harm to the general character of the area. The works will preserve the character, appearance and significance of the Conservation Area. It is considered that the scale, bulk and design of the development complement the host building and that harm will not be caused to the designated heritage asset because the development would have a neutral effect.

The proposal, therefore, accords with ss. 66 & 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, paragraphs 202-221 of the NPPF (2024), Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) and the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026 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 NPPF (2024), at paragraph 135 states that decisions should ensure that developments should create places with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Footnote 51 states: Planning policies for housing should make use of the Government's optional technical standards for accessible and adaptable housing, where this would address an identified need for such properties. Policies may also make use of the nationally described space standard, where the need for an internal space standard can be justified.

Officers have fully assessed the impact of the development with regards to amenity, including matters of overlooking, overshadowing, overbearing impact and loss of privacy relating to existing residents.

The proposed development would provide bedsit accommodation for a single person, with kitchen facilities, living and sleeping accommodation in one room. The space is measured as 25 square metres, with the national space standard for a 1bed 1person unit at 37-39 square metres and at 50 square metres for a 1bed 2person unit. The proposed development is therefore over 10 square metres below the nationally described space standard for a 1 person unit and 25 square metres below the nationally described space standard for 2 person unit. This is significantly below the recommended space standard for either a one person or two person dwelling and therefore it is considered that the space offered in the conversion is not adequate for residential accommodation and cannot be supported.

In addition, it is noted that the main front window looks directly onto the street, impacting both privacy and outlook for the occupants. The lower panes of glass would be required to be permanently obscurely glazed to provide any level of privacy for the residents, impacting daylight into the building.

Further, it is noted that there is very little private amenity space for the property and what is there is potentially shared with the opposite ground floor flat (no.16A). In addition, this is also a storage place for the existing wheelie bins.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would result in a contrived form of development and would fail to provide a high standard of amenity for the residents of the outbuilding, both due to poor space standards and the loss of daylight and sunlight. The proposal is therefore considered to be in conflict with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the NPPF (2024) and parts B1 H1 and H2 of the National Design Guide (2021).

*Highway Safety, Parking Provision and Access

Policy LP17 states that a proposal will be supported where it incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates accessibility for service and emergency vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles. Policy LP16 seeks safe physical access from the public highway.

No parking is provided for the property; it is noted that residential parking is available on the public highway through a residential parking scheme and small local public car park. Comments from the Town Council and neighbours have been noted. It is accepted that the lack of off-street parking facilities could exacerbate an existing issue, however the property is within a sustainable location with easy access to public transport with the bus and train station in close proximity to the application site and therefore a private car is not a necessity. It is also acknowledged that there is no provision for bicycle storage at the property or within the small enclosed yard and is therefore contrary to Local Plan Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard, however this issue could be dealt with by conditions if the application were considered to be acceptable in all other respects.

Therefore, on balance, given the scale and siting of the proposal, it is considered that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on highways safety and be contrary to Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the guidance within the Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017) - Part 3.5.

* 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.

Due to the nature of the proposal, 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.

The application will involve the conversion of an outbuilding to a residential dwelling, with minimal changes to the exterior of the building. It is noted that there is no significant area of private amenity space associated with the building and what is there is made up of hard standing. Therefore there will be no impact upon a priority habitat.

Therefore, given the scale and siting of the proposal, it is considered that, the proposal would not have a harmful impact on biodiversity and geodiversity. The proposal, therefore, accords with LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) in this regard.

*Flood Risk and Drainage

The application site is in Flood Zone 1 so is in an area at the least risk of flooding and does not lie within any flood plain. It is considered that any drainage issues are covered in this instance by Building Control legislation.

It is considered therefore that the flood risks and drainage of the site are in accordance with the requirements of Policies LP5 and LP15 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036.

*Accessible and Adaptable Homes

Policy LP25 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals that include housing to meet the optional Building Regulation requirement M4(2)" Accessible and adaptable dwellings" unless it can be demonstrated that site specific factors make this unachievable. No statement has been provided to confirm that the proposed development is designed in accordance with and will be built in accordance with the M4(2) standards. Therefore, this could be secured by condition to ensure that the development is built in accordance with these standards and that they are maintained for the life of the development.

*Water Efficiency

Policy LP12 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals that include housing to comply with the optional building regulation for water efficiency, as set out in Approved Document G.

No statement has been provided as to whether the proposed development is to be designed in accordance and built in accordance with the LP12 (j) standards. This can be secured by condition.

Therefore, it is considered that subject to a condition to retain the proposed measures in perpetuity the proposed development would accord with Policy LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF (2023) in this regard.

*Other Issues

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. No CIL forms have been submitted with the application but this matter would be pursued by the LPA's Implementation Team in the event of a successful appeal in accordance with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Bin UU:

A Unilateral Undertaking to secure the provision of wheeled bins has not been submitted as part of the application process. On this basis the proposal would not provide a satisfactory contribution to meet the tests within CIL Regulation 122. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with Policy LP4 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011).

There are no other material planning considerations which have a significant bearing on the determination of this application.

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

*The proposal will result in a contrived form of development and would be harmful to the residential amenity of the occupiers of the outbuilding due to the poor space standards and loss of daylight and sunlight. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, Section 12 the NPPF (2023) and parts B1 H1 and H2 of the National Design Guide (2021).

* No bin or bicycle stores have been allocated to the site and the provision of such would have an adverse impact on the private outside amenity space for the property. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy LP17 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (May 2019).

* A Unilateral Undertaking to secure the provision of wheeled bins has not been submitted as part of the application and therefore would not provide a satisfactory contribution to meet the tests within the CIL Regulations. The proposal would therefore fail to accord with Policy LP4 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and part H of the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2011).

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

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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