OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00890/PIP Permission in Principle

Proposal: Permission in principle for the erection of 4 to 5 dwellings

Location: Land North East Of High Gables Buckworth Road Alconbury Weston

Applicant: Ms Maureen Kay Stevens

Grid Ref: 517656 276419

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application relates to land to the south of Buckworth Road and east of the residential dwelling High Gables, Alconbury Weston. The 0.6ha broadly rectangular application site comprises a paddock used for horse and cattle grazing. There is residential development across the road to the north and to the east is an area of woodland. The site is bound to the north and east by mature hedges and scrub hedging. The boundary to the south is open and not bound by vegetation.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 based on the Council's 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning and therefore at lowest risk from fluvial flooding. The site is susceptible to ground water flooding and some medium and high risk of surface water flooding to the centre of the site. The Alconbury Weston Conservation Area is approximately 1120m northeast from the application site. There are no other statutory or ecological designations within or in proximity to the application site.

The current proposal is the first part of Permission in Principle (PiP) application; which only assesses the principal issues namely (1) location, (2) use; and (3) amount of development proposed and establishes whether the site is suitable in principle for residential development in this case. Should this application be successful, the applicant will have to submit a Technical Details application covering all other detailed material planning considerations.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) paragraph 8 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 also sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* making effective use of land
* achieving well-designed, beautiful, and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural 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)

LP1: Amount of Development

LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Wastewater Management
LP9: Small Settlements
LP10: The Countryside
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and vehicle movement
LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:
- Huntingdonshire's Design Guide SPD 2017 - Compatibility Statement (2021)
- Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
- Developer Contributions: Updates Costs 2019/2020
- Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Assessment (2022)
- Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024
- Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply 2024

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

Draft Alconbury Weston Neighbourhood Plan.
Alconbury Weston have recently consulted on their draft Neighbourhood Plan (regulation 14).
- Draft Policy AWP1: Definition of 'Built-up Area' (Settlement Boundary)
- Draft Policy AWP2: Protecting Heritage Assets
- Draft Policy AWP4: Minor Residential Development Proposals
- Draft Policy AWP 9: Multi-use paths
- Draft Policy AWP10: Traffic
- Draft Policy AWP11: Biodiversity and Natural Environment

As the Alconbury Weston Neighbourhood Plan remains in the early stages of the neighbourhood planning process, limited weight can be afforded to the draft policies.

PLANNING HISTORY
No relevant planning history associated with the application site.

CONSULTATIONS
Parish Council: Object and recommend refusal. The parish raisesd the following material planning considerations: adverse impact on the amenity of the residents of High Gables, inappropriate development in the countryside and harm to the character of the area, development in an area of high surface water flood risk, housing need and proposed housing mix and highway safety associated with Buckworth Road.

The officer notes that although the parish raises material concerns, many of these can only be considered at Technical Details stage. This PiP application can only consider (1) location, (2) use; and (3) amount of development proposed.

Landscape: No comments received at the time of determination.

CCC Highways: It is noted the proposed dwellings would be highly likely reliant on the motor vehicle in this village location with limited amenities. Any application that comes forward would need to indicate the following to be acceptable in highway terms.
o Access geometry of 5m wide for a minimum of 10m from the road edge
o Vehicle to vehicle visibility in accordance with the speed of the road as this is a 30mph restricted road 2.4m x 43m will be required
o Offsite footway infrastructure proposed adjoining the existing.
The above would be expected as part of the technical detailed submission

Environmental Health (EH): No Objection to this proposal with regard to environmental health matters.

County Council Archaeology Department: Object. The application is in an area of high archaeological potential to the southwest of the historic settlement of Alconbury Weston with the medieval core focused to the north east around the Brook. Any development in this location will cause significant damage to the earthwork remains, possibly removing the features completely within the proposed red line. We therefore would recommend that Permission in Principle is not granted.

REPRESENTATIONS
Fifteen third party representations have been received at the time of determination. The following material planning considerations are summarised below:
- Harm to local ecology and loss of wildlife habitat, including protected species.
- Negative impact on village character, countryside openness, and historic landscape.
- Increased flood risk due to poor drainage and existing surface water issues.
- Inadequate road infrastructure; Buckworth Road is in poor condition and heavily trafficked.
- Safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists; increased construction noise and pollution.
- Insufficient local services (GP, schools, amenities) to support new residents.
- Unsustainable location with poor connectivity to nearby settlements.
- Site not allocated in the draft Neighbourhood Plan; previously refused planning permission.
- Overbearing design and privacy concerns for nearby residents (e.g., High Gables).
- Questionable housing mix suitability for local needs.
- Alconbury Weald (a nearby strategic site) is a more appropriate and sustainable alternative.
- Site is Grade 3 agricultural land and not adjacent to the village core.
- Council has a confirmed 5-year housing land supply (as of Dec 2023).
- Development would harm views into the Alconbury Weston Conservation Area.

The officer notes that although residents raise material concerns, many of these can only be considered at Technical Details stage.

It is noted that third parties raise concerns planning permission has been refused on the application site prior to the submission of this PiP application. There is no record of historic planning applications on the site.

Officers also note that one of the objections states that the Council can demonstrate a 5YHLS. However, this is not the Council's current situation for housing land supply, this will be discussed below.

ASSESSMENT
This application is made pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) (PIP regulations) that provides opportunity for an applicant to apply as to whether permission in principle is acceptable for a site, having regard to specific legislative requirements and, in accordance with ref. 58-012-20180615 of the NPPG, as to whether the location, land use and amount of development proposed is acceptable. The permission in principle (PiP) consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development.

The permission in principle consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. PIP establishes that a particular scale of housing-led development on a defined site is acceptable. The aim is for a PIP to minimise the upfront and at-risk work of applicants.

The report addresses the principal, important and controversial issues which are in this case:
*Location and Land Use
*Amount of Development
*Other Matters

* Location and Land Use

NPPF paragraph 78 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 5 year housing land requirement including a 5% buffer is 5,501 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,430 homes equivalent to 3.94 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.

The Local Plan is undergoing a review/update, and the Land Availability Assessments (LAA)consider this site. The application site has been put forward in the call for sites as part of a larger site (Alconbury Weston 2: Land East of High Gables, Buckworth Road, Alconbury Weston) for the erection of 9 homes including 1.5ha open space and 0.38ha for flood safeguarding. The LLA concluded the site (as a whole) was potentially suitable for the delivery of low-density housing of up to 13 dwellings. The Sustainability Appraisal has identified the following key issues in bringing the site forward:

- There is limited access to culture and leisure facilities, shops, public transport and education facilities within Alconbury Weston
- The site is flood zone 1 with minimal risk of surface water flooding
- It is greenfield, classified a grade 3 agricultural land

The LAA did however acknowledge that the site has a relationship with the built form of the village as it is opposite a residential area on the frontage.

While officers acknowledge the assessment undertaken, this does not necessarily indicate that the site is the most suitable for residential development as and allocated site in the emerging local plan. It may not be taken forward in the emerging Local Plan, particularly when compared to other, more sustainable sites submitted through the Call for Sites process.

It is acknowledged that whilst Policies LP2 (strategy for development), LP9 (small settlements) and LP10 (the countryside) are out of date (and so afforded less weight in the determination of this application) they are not to be entirely disregarded. The overarching principles of sustainable development as defined in paragraph 11 of the NPPF (2024) still hold some weight in the determination of this application. Consideration should be paid as to whether the amount and location of development proposed is sustainable in relation to the level of existing service and infrastructure provision within the settlement and whether there is convenient access to everyday services and facilities through sustainable modes of travel such as walking, cycling, and public transport.

In this case, the village of Alconbury Weston offers limited services, including a public house and an hourly weekday bus service to the Market Town of Huntingdon, with reduced frequency on weekends. The nearest bus stop is located approximately 500 metres northeast of the application site. Additional essential services such as a primary school, GP surgery, village hall, public house, and convenience store are situated in the neighbouring village of Alconbury, approximately one mile southeast of the site. In the accompanying letter dated the 8th August 2025, the applicant claims the site is within a short driving, cycling and walking distance from these facilities and services at Alconbury. However, Officers acknowledge that although an unlit footpath connects the two villages, the 20-minute walking distance and lack of lighting may deter regular pedestrian use, particularly during darker hours. Given the limited-service provision within Alconbury Weston and its physical separation from Alconbury, future occupants of the proposed dwellings would likely be reliant on private vehicles to access everyday services. This reliance conflicts with the principles of sustainable development as outlined in paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Consequently, the location is considered unsustainable due to its limited infrastructure and poor accessibility to key services by sustainable modes of transport.

In the accompanying letter dated 8 August 2025, the applicants argue that the Council's suggestion, that the site is isolated from essential services and would lead to an unsustainable reliance on private vehicles, is inconsistent with previous assessments of the area, specifically as outlined in the Officer's report for application 21/02027/OUT. However, it is important to note that application 21/02027/OUT proposed a development with 60% affordable housing, a significant benefit which is not offered in the current application. This would have been a key factor in the planning balance at the time. Furthermore, each planning application is assessed on its own merits.

The applicant also references the site's proximity to Alconbury Weald, which offers additional facilities and services, including a small supermarket, café, gym, and employment opportunities. While Alconbury Weald is connected to the application site via a footpath, it is located approximately 2.3 miles away, equating to a walking time of around 50 minutes. Given this distance, it is unlikely that future occupants of the proposed development would regularly walk or cycle to access these facilities and services.

LP2 defines 'all other settlements with a single built up area of 30 dwellings or more' are defined as Small Settlements as set out in 'Definition of Small Settlements'.' Alconbury Weston has more than 30 dwellings and so would fall within this definition.

Under the definition of built up area in para 4.85 farmyards and paddocks which extend into the countryside and primarily relate to the countryside in their use is considered to be excluded from the built up area definition. Whilst the guidance states some greenfield uses maybe integrated into the built up area, these must have buildings on at least two sides and have a clear physical and visual relationship with the built-up area rather than any adjoining countryside and are defined by strong boundary features.

In this case, the immediate site context is characterised by residential development to the north and west, woodland to the east, and open countryside to the south. Mature hedgerows and scrub vegetation define the northern and eastern boundaries, while the southern boundary remains open and lacks any natural screening. Although built development exists on two sides of the site, the

absence of a defined southern boundary and the site's proximity to the woodland to the east result in a stronger visual and physical connection to the surrounding countryside than to the built-up area. As such, the site is considered to lie within the open countryside, and Local Plan Policy LP10 is therefore applicable.

Policy LP10 of the Local Plan to 2036 limits development in the countryside to those limited to specific opportunities provided for in policies of the local plan. Specific opportunities allowed for by the local plan include Policies LP19 Rural Economy, LP22 Local Services and Community Facilities, LP23 Tourism and Recreation, LP28 Rural Exceptions Housing, LP33 Rural Buildings and LP38 Water Related Development for which these are not applicable to this application. Policy LP10 also requires that all development in the countryside prioritises land of lower agricultural value, avoids adverse impacts on the public's enjoyment and use of the countryside, and respects its intrinsic character and natural beauty.

None of the relevant policies support open market residential development in this location. As such, the principle of development is considered unacceptable in this instance. Overall, the proposed location and land use are contrary to Policies LP2, LP9, and LP10 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, as well as the overarching objectives of sustainable development detailed in the National Planning Policy Framework.

* Amount of Development

Local Plan and national planning policies emphasise the importance of development that respects the character, appearance, and distinctiveness of its surroundings, while also promoting the efficient use of land. Paragraph 119 of the NPPF highlights that planning decisions should encourage effective land use to meet housing needs, while safeguarding the environment and supporting healthy living conditions. Paragraph 125 stresses the need to avoid low-density development, particularly where land supply is limited, and advises that applications failing to make efficient use of land should be refused. Additionally, Paragraph 174 recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, reinforcing the need to protect such areas from inappropriate development.

This application proposes the construction of between four and five dwellings on a broadly rectangular site measuring approximately 0.6 hectares. The site is considered to be of a suitable size to accommodate the proposed scale of development.

It is acknowledged the site is bound mature hedgerows and scrub vegetation define the northern and eastern boundaries, however, the site is clearly visible when approaching the village from the west along Buckworth Road. Although there is a single dwelling located to the south of the road, the site plays a key role in marking the transition from open countryside and agricultural fields to the built-up area of Alconbury Weston. The immediate surroundings retain a distinctly rural character, defined by mature roadside vegetation and expansive open farmland to the south. This visual experience reinforces the village's setting and character, reflecting a blend of countryside openness and the modest built form typical of a small rural settlement.

Although the application seeks permission for up to five dwellings, the proposal must be assessed against the maximum parameters set out in the submission. A development of this scale would inevitably require associated infrastructure, including vehicular access, parking areas, private gardens, boundary treatments, and external lighting. The introduction of these domestic features would result in a distinctly urbanising influence on the site, diminishing its current rural character. The development would significantly alter the landscape, eroding the transitional quality between open countryside and the built form of Alconbury Weston. As such, the proposal is considered to have a materially adverse impact on the local landscape character and would represent a form of development that is uncharacteristic of its rural surroundings.

*Other matters

Archaeology

The site at present is a paddock used for horse and cattle grazing and this PIP application seeks to establish whether the site is suitable in principle for residential development in this case. It should be noted the site is an area of high archaeological potential with lidar images of the application site and the surrounding field showing preserved earthwork medieval Ridge and Furrow.

The County Archaeology Officer has raised an objection to the proposal on the grounds that there is currently insufficient information to fully assess the significance of the earthworks present on the site. Within the proposed red line boundary, two distinct alignments of ridge and furrow have been identified. One alignment runs northeast to southwest and is situated adjacent to an earthwork bank located between the ridge and furrow and an existing pond. The second, more extensive area of ridge and furrow lies to the southwest and is aligned northwest to southeast. Notably, this latter feature appears to partially overlie the earthwork bank, suggesting that the bank may predate the ridge and furrow system and could potentially be associated with the layout of a former Saxon settlement. Despite conflicting additional information submitted by the agent, further archaeological investigation is therefore required to determine the significance and extent of these features before any development can be appropriately considered.

In the submitted letter dated the 8th August 2025, the applicant acknowledges the site's archaeological sensitivity due to ridge and furrow earthworks but argues that much of the surrounding land is undevelopable due to flood risk, naturally protecting these features. A LiDAR review indicates the most significant archaeological interest lies outside the proposed development area. While further assessment may be appropriate at the Technical Details stage, the applicant is willing to limit the scheme to 2–5 dwellings to safeguard key areas and contends that the public benefits of new housing outweigh any limited archaeological harm.

As outlined above, the application site comprises a 0.6ha portion of a larger 1.88ha agricultural field. The red line boundary is broadly rectangular in shape, although it narrows slightly towards Buckworth Road near the centre of the site. Given the red line would constrain the extent of development within the site and whilst officers consider the site to be of a suitable size to accommodate the proposed scale of development, the Local Planning authority are unsure at this stage whether any subsequent design submitted could address impacts to the ridge and furrow or whether development on the site is entirely unacceptable in regard to its impacts on non-designated heritage assets. Without the LiDAR data/ Desk Based Assessment information upfront, and despite the applicants offer to reduce the number of proposed dwellings on site, Officers remain unsure whether a future Technical Details stage could overcome the potential for archaeological harm.

In the absence of a Desk Based Assessment including earthwork survey and Historic Map regression, the proposal is considered to adversely impact the significance of ridge and furrow, and noting the sensitivity of the site, result in the significant and demonstrable loss of archaeological remains contrary to Policy LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

Flood Risk

The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is at the lowest risk from fluvial flooding according to the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 and Environment Agency Flood Map for Planning. The site is however susceptible to ground water flooding and medium and high risk of surface water flooding towards the centre of the site according to the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024.

Paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2024) states the sequential test should be used in areas known to be at risk now or in the future from any form of flooding, except in situations where a site-specific flood risk assessment demonstrates that no built development within the site boundary, including access or escape routes.

In this case, given that surface water flood risk only affects a very small area of the site and would not affect the entrance to it, there is the potential for the dwellings to be sited outside the areas at

risk of surface water flooding. It is acknowledged however that this is a matter for consideration at the Technical Details Consent stage. It is also noted that whilst the Council's SFRA has identified the site as susceptible to ground water flooding, the accompanying FRA states there is no record of groundwater flooding within the vicinity of the site and therefore the risk of groundwater flooding is low on the application site. This is again a matter that should be considered at Technical Details Consent stage should the application be successful.

It is noted that concerns have been raised regarding the sites surface water flood risk, however the quantum of development would not significantly exacerbate this issue, particularly as it is only a small area at risk of surface water flooding. Overall, the site is appropriate in respect of flood risk and surface water and drainage of the site could be considered at the Technical Details Consent stage in the event of a successful application.

Overall, the LPA are satisfied that there would be no significant risk of increased flooding to either occupants of the dwelling or occupiers of the surrounding land and the proposal broadly accords with Policies LP5 and LP15 of the Local Plan to 2036.

Residential Amenity
Policy LP14 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of a proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings. Matters when considering residential development are whether the proposal would cause a loss of privacy, reduction to the level of daylight and being overbearing in size and layout.

Under a PIP application Officers at this stage need to be satisfied the site is capable of accommodating the amount of development proposed without having a detrimental impact on neighbour's amenity and the amenity of the proposed occupiers.

The site albeit set within countryside is adjacent to residential uses to the north and east. The Environmental Health Officer consulted on the application raises no objection to the proposal in regard to noise impacts associated with the development.

It is noted that neighbours raised concerns regarding the loss of a view. This is not a material planning consideration and would not be considered at Technical Details Consent stage should the proposal obtain permission in principle.

There are neighbours close to boundaries at this site; however the scale and design of the dwellings could significantly lower their impact on these neighbours and where they are felt to be solutions to protect amenity (location of windows, layout etc).

Officers are satisfied at this stage that the dwellings could be achieved subject to their scale and siting, without causing significant residential amenity harm, the final details of the dwellings will be assessed at the technical details stage where impacts of any additional overshadowing, overbearing, overlooking will be fully assessed. Therefore the proposal is in accordance with policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 at this stage.

Highways
Third party objections raised concerns regarding on street parking on Buckworth Road and its quality and capacity to accommodate the development. The existing quality and capacity issues at Buckworth Road are matters over which this application has no control. Parking capacity within the application site is a matter to be considered at Technical Details Consent stage. Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Officers have also been consulted as part of this application and raise no objection in principle but do note that, any application that comes forward would need to be constructed in accordance with the local highway's authority guidance. This matter would be considered at Technical Details Consent stage should PIP be granted on the site.

Ecology and protected species
Policy LP30 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be required to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and that 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.

The presence of trees and hedging within and immediately adjacent to the site, as well as a pond within 250m, indicates that a preliminary ecological survey and any additional species-specific surveys would be required as part of any Technical Details Consent to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and appropriately mitigated.

In addition to the above and separate from the requirements of Policy LP30, the development will be subject to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. A mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) would need to be demonstrated with any future application unless it can be demonstrated that the development would be exempt. Details of how a 10% BNG will be achieved in accordance with the legislation would also be required under a subsequent Technical Details Consent application.

Water Efficiency
Any future application for technical details consent would need to confirm compliance with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency in Approved Document G, as set out in criteria j. of Policy LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

Accessible and Adaptable Homes
Policy LP25 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 requires all new dwellings to comply with optional Building Regulation requirement M4(2) 'accessible and adaptable homes', unless it can be demonstrated that site specific factors make this impractical or unviable. Any future application for technical details consent would need to confirm compliance with this policy.

Developer Contributions
Any subsequent Technical Details application should be accompanied by a signed Unilateral Undertaking for the provision of wheeled bins in accordance with the Developer Contributions SPD (2011).

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)
As the proposed development is for new residential dwellings, the development would 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.

* The Planning Balance

In conclusion, 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 tilted 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.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. 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 tilted balance'.

There are no strong reasons for refusal in relation to any habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Local Green Space, irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75) and areas at risk of flooding. Therefore, the 'tilted balance' is engaged.

Whilst the full impact of the proposal is unable to be fully gauged at Stage 1 of the Permission in Principle process, the proposal would provide the benefits of delivering up to 5 homes towards the housing supply and would provide the economic benefits including job creation and long-term spending by future occupants on local services/facilities. These benefits are afforded moderate weight.

Notwithstanding this, due to the limited services in Alconbury Weston and its separation from Alconbury, future residents would likely depend on private vehicles, which conflicts with the sustainable development principles in paragraphs 11 and 109 of the NPPF. The proposal is not supported by any relevant policies for open market housing in this location and is therefore considered unacceptable in principle and unsustainable. Significant weight is afforded to this.

Although the full impact of the proposal cannot be fully assessed at Stage 1 of the Permission in Principle process, the scale of development proposed is likely to result in lasting harm to the character of the area. This suggests that the site is not a suitable location for the development of five new dwellings. Significant weight is afforded to this.

While it is recognised that the full impact on non-designated heritage assets cannot be fully assessed at this stage of the Permission in Principle process, the constrained red line boundary raisess concerns about the potential effects of the proposed development. It remains unclear whether the scale of development would adversely affect the significance of the identified ridge and furrow features. In the absence of a Desk-Based Assessment to evaluate the archaeological importance of these remains, the proposal is considered likely to result in the significant and demonstrable loss of non-designated heritage assets. Substantial and demonstrable weight is given to this harm in the overall planning balance.

* Conclusion

Section 38(6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that "if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise".

The proposed development lies outside the built-up area of Alconbury Weston and fails to meet the specific criteria for development in such locations as set out in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036. The introduction of residential dwellings on this open, undeveloped site would erode the rural buffer between the village and the countryside, resulting in harm to the character and setting of the settlement. Additionally, the site's separation from essential services and infrastructure would lead to an unsustainable reliance on private vehicles. Overall, it would result in significant and demonstrable harm and is contrary to Policies LP9, LP10 (part b), LP11, LP12 (parts a, b, c, f and i), the National Design Guide (2021) parts C1, I1, M1 and M2, and the provisions of the NPPF (2024), in particular Para. 135 parts a, c and f.

In the absence of a Desk Based Assessment including earthwork survey and Historic Map regression, the proposal is considered to adversely impact the significance of ridge and furrow, and noting the sensitivity of the site, result in the significant and demonstrable loss of archaeological remains contrary to Policy LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024.

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.

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