HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

24/02160/FUL

OFFICER REPORT

Case No: **24/02160/FUL** **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Change of use from class B8 to F2, including internal works and the addition of solar panels to the south facing roof slope.**

Location: **King George V Playing Field St Peters Road Huntingdon**

Applicant: **Mr Stephen Harris**

Grid Ref: **523629 272635**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The proposed application site is located close to Huntingdon Town Centre, adjacent to the Huntingdon Outdoor and Indoor Bowls Club. It is south of St Peter's Secondary School and north of a residential housing development and is within the Huntingdon Conservation Area. The building is a vacant grounds maintenance storage building, with a corrugated roof and cladding to the exterior with a roller door. Externally, the elevations will remain unchanged with an adjacent small parcel of land cleared of industrial waste and replaced with open amenity space for recreation, in keeping with the existing playing field.

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

The application is for the change of use from class B8 to F2, including internal works and the addition of solar panels to the south facing roof slope.

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 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.

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

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
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Setting

Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2026

TL2 – Leisure and Community Facilities
BE1 – Design and Landscaping
BE3 – Heritage Assets
TT1 – Sustainable Transport

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)

Supplementary Planning Documents
- Huntingdonshire Design Guide (SPD) 2017
- Developer Contributions SPD 2011
- 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)
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Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

PLANNING HISTORY

None of relevance

CONSULTATIONS

Huntingdon Town Council – no comment to make.

HDC Environmental Health – no objections, following the response from the applicant addressing concerns regarding the use of the outdoor space and a requirement for a pre-occupation condition regarding the kitchen extraction specification.

CCC Highways Department – Initial concerns raised regarding visibility splays to the entrance of the site. Following a meeting between the Town Council as owners of the land and the applicant, these issues have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Highways Authority.

REPRESENTATIONS

No objections received at 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 (2021). 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:
- Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
- Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
- St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016)
- Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
- Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
- Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
- Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
- Bury Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
- Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan (2022)
- Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
- Sawtry Neighbourhood Plan (2023)
- The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan (2023)

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:
- Principles of Development
- Design and Visual Amenity and Impact upon Heritage Assets
- Residential Amenity
- Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
- Biodiversity

*Principles of Development

The proposal is for the change of use and conversion of a vacant Huntingdon Town Council Grounds Maintenance building to a meeting place for scout groups in the Huntingdon Town area involving internal modifications. In the long term, it is hoped that the building will be available for wider community use. No external changes are proposed to the building, with only internal modifications

required, providing a kitchen, large main hall, toilet facilities and a meeting room/store room. A further meeting room is proposed at first floor level with an additional store room. Solar panels are to be placed on the south facing roof panels. The adjacent small parcel of land will be cleared of industrial waste and replaced with open amenity space for recreation.

Policy LP2 (Strategy for Development) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) states:
The development strategy for Huntingdonshire is to:

- Concentrate development in locations which provide, or have the potential to provide, the most comprehensive range of services and facilities;
- Direct substantial new development to two strategic expansion locations of sufficient scale to form successful, functioning new communities;
- Provide opportunities for communities to achieve local development aspirations for housing, employment, commercial or community related schemes;
- Support a thriving rural economy;
- Protect the character of existing settlements and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the surrounding countryside;
- Conserve and enhance the historic environment; and
- Provide complementary green infrastructure enhancement and provision to balance recreational and biodiversity needs and to support climate change adaptation.

Four spatial planning areas are designated reflecting their status as the district's traditional market towns and most sustainable centres. These are centred around:

- Huntingdon including Brampton and Godmanchester and the strategic expansion location of Alconbury Weald
- St Neots including Little Paxton and the strategic expansion location of St Neots East
- St Ives
- Ramsey including Bury.

Approximately three quarters of the objectively assessed need for housing and the majority of employment and retail growth will be focused in the spatial planning areas.

Local Plan Policy LP7: Spatial Planning Areas sets out the approach for a range of uses in the Spatial Planning Areas of Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives and Ramsey. Main Town Centre Uses states:

A proposal for a main town centre use, as defined in the 'Glossary', will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement. An appropriate location will be determined through the application of the sequential approach as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Other uses:
A proposal for a non-residential institutional use (class D1) or an assembly and leisure facility (class D2) other than those defined as a main town centre use will be supported where it is appropriately located within the built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement.

It is noted that classes D1 and D2 have been replaced with Use Classes F.1 and F.2, which include the use of a hall or meeting place for the principal use of the local community.

Local Plan Policy LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities supports local facilities and services to provide for the needs of the local community. It states:

A proposal for a new local service or community facility within a built-up area, or the extension of an existing local service or community facility on land immediately adjoining the built up area, will be supported where it:

a. is of a scale to serve local needs;
b. comprises up to a maximum of 600m2 net internal floorspace for a main town centre use; and

c. provides for a new service or facility or it retains or enhances an existing service or facility, including through the provision of premises suitable for mixed use or multiple community functions.

Policy TL2 of the Neighbourhood Plan supports proposals for development that provides leisure and community facilities for young people will be supported where it can be demonstrated that no adverse impact to the amenity or character and appearance of the surrounding area will arise; and no adverse impact on the highway network will occur.

The site is located within the Huntingdon Spatial Planning Area and it is considered that the provision of a meeting place for scout groups is a local service community related scheme, supported under policies LP2, LP7 and LP22 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and TL2 of the Huntingdonshire Neighbourhood Plan. The proposal is therefore, considered to be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with the other relevant policies and considerations.

*Design and Visual Amenity and Impact upon 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.

The application site is within the Huntingdon Conservation Area, with the entrance of the site opposite several grade II listed buildings.

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.

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.

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 proposed site is currently a vacant grounds maintenance storage building, with a corrugated metal roof and cladding to the exterior with a roller door. Externally, the elevations will remain the

same, with the exception of the introduction of solar panels on the south facing roof. In addition, it is noted that the adjacent small parcel of land will be cleared of industrial waste and replaced with open amenity space for recreation, in keeping with the existing playing field.

Officers have given special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Heritage Asset. It is considered that harm will not be caused to the designated heritage asset because there will be no changes to the existing building, and it is of limited view from the public realm. Therefore, it is considered that there will be no significant impact upon the character and appearance of the local area. The proposal, therefore, accords with policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019), Policies BE1 and BE3 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan, the NPPF (2024) and the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) 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.

HDC Environmental Health has been consulted on the proposal. Initial comments noted concerns regarding the use of the outside space and the impact on neighbouring residential properties, particularly if the area were to be used for occasional sleepovers. The applicant has responded to the concerns raised and confirmed that due to the size of the outside space, this will be of limited used to the scout group. Games will be played on alternative land away from the neighbouring properties and outside camping will similarly take place within more suitable facilities at designated Scout campsites.

In addition, it was noted that the proposed kitchen extraction system is on the south side of the building which is the direction of the closest sensitive receptors. Any extraction system would need to meet the requirements of the EMAQ guidance on odour and noise, which shall be secured by condition.

Therefore, following confirmation of the use of the area, it is considered that the change of use of the building will not cause any significant detrimental impact to the residential amenity of neighbouring properties such to warrant a refusal of the application. There are no external changes to the building and therefore there will be no change to the existing level of residential amenity upon neighbouring properties in terms of overshadowing, overlooking or loss of light.

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 the amenity of neighbouring properties. The proposal, therefore, accords with LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) in this regard.

*Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement

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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.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Department has been consulted on the proposal. Initial concerns were raised due to visibility in relation to the shared foot and cycle path and the increased use of the car park access, particularly in the evenings, as a result of the change of use of the building. In response the applicant has discussed the impact of the proposal with the landowner, and agreement has been reached to cut back the hedges to achieve the required visibility splays.

The Highways Department has confirmed this is acceptable and the plan can be secured by condition.

Therefore, given the scale and siting of the proposal, it is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact upon parking provision and vehicle movement. The proposal, therefore, accords with LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) and Policy TT1 of the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 also requires development proposals to ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain in biodiversity where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type and location of development.

In addition, since the previous application was determined there is now a statutory requirement for sites to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Exemptions to this legislative requirement include developments that are below the following thresholds:

A development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:
- 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows

It is noted that the works to the entrance of the car park to achieve the visibility splays referred to above will impact 3.5 linear metres of existing hedgerows. This is below the stated threshold and therefore the application is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain legislation and the mandatory 10% increase.

Matters relating to LP30 do still need to be addressed, however. In this case enhancement measures have been included to improve the existing small area of grassland within the site and provide new habitats in the forms of hedges, wildflower meadow and grassed area. These enhancement measures will be secured by condition.

Therefore, subject to conditions, the proposals are considered to accord with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Conclusion
The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it:
* Is 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;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon biodiversity and geodiversity;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon parking provision and vehicle movement.

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.

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:
Enquiries about this report to **Olivia Manton**