OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/01067/PIP Permission in Principle

Proposal: Permission in Principle application for the construction of up to 2no. dwellings

Location: Land North Of Agricultural Buildings Washingley Farm Green End

Applicant: Mr Paul Allgood

Grid Ref: 522611 274672

This application relates to a 0.2-hectare, predominantly rectangular parcel of agricultural land situated to the north of the Washingley Farm development, which comprises six residential dwellings. The site is enclosed by post-and-rail fencing along its northern and eastern boundaries, with established vegetation along the western edge. To the south lies a residential development currently under construction. Access to the site is gained via a newly constructed private estate road serving the residential development. A pond is located directly to the east of the application site.

The site is not located within, nor in close proximity to, any designated heritage assets or trees subject to statutory protection. While public rights of way do not cross the site itself, they are present to the east, south, and west of the site.

According to the Council's 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning, the site lies within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk of fluvial flooding. The site is not considered susceptible to groundwater flooding. However, the SFRA identifies a partial risk of surface water flooding, particularly in relation to potential overflow from the adjacent pond.

The current proposal is the first part of permission in principle application; which only assesses the principal issues namely (1) location, (2) use; and (3) amount of development proposed and establishes whether a site is suitable in principle. Should this application be successful, the applicant must submit a Technical Details Consent application addressing all remaining 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

The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan (Made July 2023)
- Policy 1 - Definition of 'Built-up Area' (Settlement Boundary)
- Policy 2 - Opportunity Sites for Enhancement
- Policy 3 - Strategic Development Delivery
- Policy 7 - Green Infrastructure Network in Alconbury Weald
- Policy 8 - Protected Settlement Breaks

PLANNING HISTORY
There is no direct planning history associated with the application site however, the following planning application are related to the adjacent site:

25/00393/S73- Variation of condition 2 (approved plans) of 24/00433/FUL-Permitted 29.04.2025

24/00433/FUL- Erection of 6 residential dwellings and garages following demolition of 5 barns (Pursuant to 22/00950/FUL).- Permitted 23.01.2025

22/00950/FUL- Erection of no4 residential dwellings following the demolition of 3no barns and the conversion of 2no barns to provide 2no dwellings, a total of 6no dwellings all with garaging.- Permitted 04.07.2023

CONSULTATIONS
Parish Council-No comment at the time of determination.

Highways- No objection. Access to the site will be provided via an existing approved development. In terms of vehicle movements associated with the proposed dwellings, these are not considered significant when compared to the existing daily traffic levels on the road. The Highways Officer did, however, raise concerns regarding the site's sustainability, particularly due to the absence of pedestrian infrastructure and other supporting facilities.

Environmental Health Officer- No objection. It is likely the details of a land contamination survey will be required should the development proceed to technical details stage.

REPRESENTATIONS
One third-party representation received in support for the development proposal at the time of determination. No material planning reasons for their support were provided.

No third-party representation received in or objection to the development proposal at the time of determination.

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:
1. Location,
2. Land Use
3. Amount of Development
4. Other Matters

1. LOCATION
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 5 Year Housing Land Supply (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.

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF 2024 also states:
"In situations where the presumption (at paragraph 11d) applies to applications involving the provision of housing, the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, provided the following apply:
a) the neighbourhood plan became part of the development plan five years or less before the date on which the decision is made; and
b) the neighbourhood plan contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement (see paragraphs 69-70)."

In this instance, The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) (Made July 2023) became part of the development plan five years or less and Policy 2 - Opportunity Sites for Enhancement identified two redevelopment sites for mixed-use and residential development. These Opportunity Sites in the Neighbourhood plan provide allocations to meet the identified housing requirement. In light of this, despite the application site being outside of Great Stukeley settlement boundary as identified in policy 1 of the SNP, in a formal application Officers shall pay due regard to whether the adverse impact of allowing development which conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

It is acknowledged that whilst the Council's Local Plan Policies LP2 (strategy for development) and LP9 (Small Settlements) are out of date (and so afforded less weight in the determination of this application) they are not to be entirely disregarded.

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'. In addition, Map 3A (Settlement Boundary) of the SNP defines the build-up area for Great Stukeley. Great Stukeley is separated between linear built development to the north of Ermine Street along Green End and the main settlement of great Stukeley to the northwest. The application site is detached from the settlement boundary and is separated from the built-up area with intervening agricultural fields/farmstead and new residential development. In light of this, the application site is located in the open countryside whereby Local Plan Policy LP10 is applicable.

Local Plan Policy LP10 seeks to limit development in the countryside to specific opportunities provided for in other policies of the Local Plan. The policy states that all development in the countryside must:
a. seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value:
   i. avoiding the irreversible loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1 to 3a) where possible, and
   ii. avoiding Grade 1 agricultural land unless there are exceptional circumstances where the benefits of the proposal significantly outweigh the loss of land;
b. recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside; and
c. not give rise to noise, odour, obtrusive light or other impacts that would adversely affect the use and enjoyment of the countryside by others.

In relation to criterion (a), the application site comprises Grade 3 agricultural land. Whilst it is acknowledged that the district's agricultural land is generally of good quality, with only approximately 15% classified as Grade 1, the land subject to this application holds a lower classification and therefore a reduced agricultural value. Given the modest scale of the proposed development, covering approximately 0.2 hectares, it is considered that the scheme would not result in a significant or unacceptable loss of high-quality agricultural land.

In regard to criteria b of LP10, PIP applications are not required to provide any details as to layout, scale, design etc. In this instance the PIP is accompanied with an indicative block plan which demonstrates there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate two detached residential dwellings.

While it is acknowledged that the proposed development would extend the built form northward along Green End into the open countryside, the site is visually contained by existing features such as post-and-rail fencing and established hedging. As a result, the site relates more closely to the former Washingley Farmstead than to the wider open countryside.

It is important to note that any future development beyond this point would be both visually and physically detached from the established built form and would be assessed as part of the open countryside, with its associated visual impacts considered accordingly.

Notwithstanding this, subject to the inclusion of a landscaping buffer along the northern boundary, secured at the Technical Details Consent stage, officers are satisfied that the proposed residential development would result in limited harm to the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, given the site's association with the former farmstead.

In relation to part (c), while it is acknowledged that introducing residential development in this location may give rise to some impacts, the scale of the proposal is such that any effects are unlikely to be significantly harmful. Potential issues, such as external lighting, could be appropriately managed through planning conditions, and it is noted that the Environmental Health Team has not raised any objections. Given the existing surrounding land uses, former land use and the presence of other dwellings nearby, it is considered that a refusal based solely on these grounds would not be justified.

Whilst the above application is considered to accord with Policy LP10 parts a to c, Policy LP10 restricts residential development in the countryside to limited and specific opportunities allowed for through other 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.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council are unable to demonstrate a 5YHLS and Local Plan Policies concerned with the supply and location of new residential development are considered to be out-of-date and can no longer be afforded full weight in the determination of planning applications. As such the proposal shall be considered under the 'tilted balance' as defined in paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF.

Paragraph (d) states where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the applications are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

A balancing exercise shall be undertaken in the conclusion of this report.

Sustainability of the Application Site
It is noted that the application site was not submitted during the Council's Local Plan update call for sites and, as such, has not been assessed for its sustainability credentials through the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) by the Planning Policy Team.

The settlement of Great Stukeley offers a modest range of day-to-day facilities, including a church, village hall, public house, and hotel. In addition, the nearby strategic housing development at Alconbury Weald provides a broader array of amenities such as shops, cafés, a gym, and other services. Further afield, the town of Huntingdon offers an extensive range of facilities and employment opportunities.

While access to these wider services via sustainable transport methods is somewhat constrained—requiring pedestrians to travel along Green End, which is currently unlit and lacks dedicated footpaths—Ermine Street, located approximately 500 metres from the site, provides a pedestrian and cycle route into Huntingdon. Public transport options are also available, with the Ermine Business Park bus stop located 0.9 miles to the south and the Owl End bus stop 0.7 miles to the northwest. Both stops offer hourly services to and from the City of Peterborough, Huntingdon and other destinations.

Although the site is located outside a defined settlement and has limited immediate access to facilities, its proximity to Alconbury Weald and Huntingdon, combined with the availability of sustainable transport options within walking and cycling distance, provides a reasonable level of accessibility. Given the minor scale of the proposed development, the Local Planning Authority considers the site to be sustainably located and capable of supporting future residential use.

2. LAND USE

According to the Council's 2024 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) and the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning, the site lies within Flood Zone 1, indicating a low risk of fluvial flooding. The site is not considered susceptible to groundwater flooding. However, the SFRA identifies a partial risk of surface water flooding, particularly in relation to potential overflow from the adjacent pond.

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 can be designed to ensure the site entrance would not be affected by it. There is also the potential for the dwellings to be sited outside the areas at risk of surface water flooding. It is acknowledged however that design is a matter for consideration at the Technical Details Consent stage should the application be successful.

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.

The Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017) identifies three key considerations when assessing residential development proposals: the potential for overlooking and loss of privacy, the reduction in daylight to neighbouring properties, and the risk of the development appearing overbearing due to its scale 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.

There are neighbours close to the southern boundary of this site (Plot 5 of the residential development to the south); 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).

It should also be noted the Environmental Health Officer was consulted as part of the application and raised no objection to the proposed development, in terms of residential amenity impacts.

At this stage, Officers are satisfied that the proposed dwellings could be delivered, subject to appropriate scale and siting, without resulting in significant harm to residential amenity. The detailed design, including any potential impacts relating to overshadowing, overbearing presence, or

overlooking, will be fully assessed at the Technical Details Consent stage. Accordingly, the proposal is considered to comply with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 at this stage.

3. AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT

Local Policy LP12 states new development will be expected to be well designed based upon a thorough understanding of the constraints and appraisal of the site's context, delivering attractive, usable and long-lasting buildings and spaces. A proposal will be supported where it can demonstrate that it contributes positively to the areas character and identity, successfully integrates with adjoining buildings, the routes and spaces between buildings, topography and landscape.

These matters will be addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage, where the design will need to respect the local character and the amenity of neighbouring properties. Consideration should also be given to changes in land levels and the need for softened boundaries where the site adjoins the open countryside. The design should be guided by the principles set out in the Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017).

The proposed density of the site of two dwellings is felt to reflect the grain and character of development along Green End. Whilst PIP applications are not required to provide any details as to layout, scale, design etc, in this instance the PIP is accompanied with an indicative block plan which demonstrates there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate two detached residential dwellings. It is also felt there is sufficient space within the site to accommodate proportionally scaled landscape buffers to the countryside to soften the impact. A subsequent Technical Details stage would consider soft and hard landscaping details.

As detailed above, mature vegetation forms the western boundary of the site. Any future design would need to consider the impacts of the proposed dwellings on the canopies and root protection areas of the adjacent trees and hedgerows. A future Technical Details Consent application should be accompanied with an Arboricultural impact assessment, tree survey and tree protection plan.

With regard to ecology, no supporting ecological information was submitted with the application. However, it is not considered that there are likely to be significant ecological constraints that would prevent the determination of this proposal under a Permission in Principle application. Any potential ecological impacts should be addressed at the Technical Details Consent stage, and any future application should be supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

A subsequent Technical Details application would need to be supported with a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) statement, predevelopment biodiversity value in a Statutory Biodiversity Metric and accompanying plan. The submitted details would need to demonstrate how a mandatory 10% BNG will be achieved.

The Local Highway Authority has raised no objections to the proposed development in terms of access and highway safety. However, concerns were noted regarding the site's sustainability for residential use, particularly due to the lack of pedestrian infrastructure and supporting facilities in the immediate vicinity.

As outlined in the 'Sustainability of the Application Site' section of this report, Officers have carefully considered the suitability of the site for residential development in light of the Council's current Five-Year Housing Land Supply position, relevant planning policies, and the tests set out in paragraph 11(d)(ii) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024. On balance and taking into account the scale of the proposal and proximity to existing services and infrastructure, the site is considered to represent a sustainable location for a modest level of residential development.

It is however noted that matters such as the detailed access arrangements and visibility splays will need to be fully assessed at the Technical Details Consent stage.

Under the Permission in regulations, it is not possible to impose planning conditions at this stage. Therefore, any additional information required must be submitted as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application. This includes details relating to on-site parking, bin storage, turning space for vehicles, and secure cycle storage.

4. OTHER MATTERS

The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) states that the scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development as assessed above. Following grant of permission in principle, the site must receive a grant of technical details consent before development can proceed. The granting of technical details consent has the effect of granting planning permission for the development. Other statutory requirements may apply at this stage such as those relating to protected species or listed buildings. The following other matters will be considered at Technical details stage.

Water Efficiency

Any future application for Technical Details Consent for a dwelling at the site 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.

Infrastructure Requirements and Planning Obligations

Bins - Unilateral Undertaking (UU)

Once Permission in Principle has been granted, the development cannot proceed until Technical Details Consent is also secured. The approval of Technical Details Consent constitutes full planning permission for the proposed development. At this stage, other statutory requirements may also apply, such as the submission of a Unilateral Undertaking (UU) for the provision of wheeled bins.

CONCLUSION

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.

In regard to paragraph 11 (d) part i, it is considered 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.

A tilted balance approach should be applied in the assessment of the proposed development, and a balancing exercise should be carried out to determine the potential any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits in accordance with paragraph 11 (d) part ii of the NPPF 2024 and whether the adverse impact of allowing development that conflicts with the neighbourhood plan is likely to significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, in accordance with paragraph 14 of the NPPF 2024.

Whilst the site lies outside the defined built-up area of Great Stukeley, it is considered that, subject to appropriate design, residential development in this location could be visually, physically, and functionally integrated with the existing built form. Although the site lies outside a defined settlement for Great Stukeley and has limited immediate access to local amenities, its proximity to Alconbury Weald and Huntingdon combined with the availability of sustainable transport options within walking and cycling distance, offers a reasonable degree of accessibility for future residents. It is considered that the site has the potential to accommodate between one and two dwellings. These benefits are afforded moderate weight.

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 2no. dwellinghouses 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.

Although part of the site is partially susceptible to surface water flooding, the precise extent and implications of this flood risk would be assessed at the Technical Details Consent stage. Importantly, there is sufficient land within Flood Zone 1, where the risk of fluvial flooding is lowest, and not at risk from surface water flooding to accommodate up to 2no dwellings. On this basis, the site is considered acceptable in principle with regard to flood risk and drainage. This matter is afforded limited weight.

It is concluded that there is no identified harm that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when considering all the positives and negatives of the proposal into account.

While the proposal does conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan in terms of its location outside the defined built-up area of the village, the resulting impacts are not considered to significantly or demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposal's conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan.

Taking national and local planning policies into account and material considerations, the principle of the proposed development, is, on balance, considered acceptable and therefore recommended that Permission in Principle be granted subject to approval of outstanding details at Technical Details stage.

Once Permission in Principle has been granted, the development cannot proceed until Technical Details Consent is also secured. As this application is only allowed solely on the basis of the tilted balance, it is considered appropriate to limit the time period for submission of the technical detail stage to 2 years rather than the standard 3 years.

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 Charlotte Dew

CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Charlotte Dew**