OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00201/FUL Full Planning Application

Proposal: Erection of 4 dwellings to replace 3 former agricultural barns

Location: Lodge Farm Raveley Road Great Raveley

Applicant: Mr David Ward

Grid Ref: 523240 281390

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is Lodge Farm, which is located to the south of Raveley Road, the main road between the villages of Great Raveley and Woodwalton. The application relates to the redevelopment of a redundant farmyard and agricultural buildings to provide 4 residential dwellings with a central courtyard thereby forming the character of a traditional farmstead.

The site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no Listed Buildings or trees subject to Preservation Orders in the immediate vicinity. The site lies within Flood Zone 1 and does not indicate a risk of surface water flooding as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data. There are some high voltage electricity cables in the vicinity for which a 10m easement is required.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):

* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 - adopted May 2019

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP10: The Countryside
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP25: Housing Mix
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP33: Rural Buildings
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings
LP37: Ground Contamination and Groundwater Pollution

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

Huntingdonshire Design Guide (2017)
Developer Contributions SPD (2011)
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD (2024)
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)

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

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

79/00738/FUL - Erection of agricultural storage building (Permission)

7900467FUL - Erection of extension (Permission)

97/00881/FUL - Erection of agricultural building - (Permission)

23/01380/FUL - Erection of grain store with new vehicular access and access drive - (Permission)

24/00121/FUL - Erection of grain store with new vehicular access and access drive - (Permission)

CONSULTATIONS

Upwood and the Raveleys Parish Council - No observations either for or against the proposals.

HDC Ecology Team (informal consultation) - No objections subject to conditions.

HDC Environmental Health Team - No objections subject to conditions.

HDC Arboricultural Officer - No objections subject to conditions.

Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) Highways Team - No objection subject to conditions.

Cambridgeshire County Council Historic Environments Team - No objections.

Cambridgeshire County Council Rights of Way Team - No representations received at the time of determination.

Natural England - No objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the 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 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 a number of adopted neighbourhood plans, however, there is not an adopted neighbourhood plan in place for Upwood or the Raveleys. Therefore, in this case no neighbourhood plans are given weight in the determination of this application.

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 are:

*The principle of development
*Design, visual amenity and impact on the countryside
*Residential amenity
*Highway considerations
*Flood risk
*Biodiversity
*Impact on Trees

*The principle of the development

This report should be read with the knowledge that 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 4.03 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.

However, notwithstanding the above consideration, whilst the local plan does seek to resist residential development in the countryside (not least due to sustainability issues), Policy LP33 of the local plan covers the conversion or replacement of rural buildings and does not require tests relating to the sustainability of the site. There are however tests to ensure that the building(s) are suitable for conversion/replacement. In this case, the proposal seeks to replace 3 agricultural barns with 4 dwellings and so LP33 is the starting point for assessment. LP33 specifically states that:

A proposal for the conversion of a building in the countryside that would not be dealt with through 'Prior Approval/ Notification' will be supported where it can be demonstrated that:

a. the building is:

i. redundant or disused;

ii. of permanent and substantial construction;

iii. not in such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction would be required; and

iv. structurally capable of being converted for the proposed use; and

b. the proposal:

i. would lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting; and

ii. any extension or alteration would not adversely affect the form, scale, massing or proportion of the building.

A proposal for the replacement of a building in the countryside will be supported where criteria a, i to iii above are fulfilled and the proposal would lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting. A modest increase in floorspace will be supported.

At present, the site hosts 3 single storey buildings south-west of the access consisting of an open sided 'Dutch Barn' to the north, two workshops with a lean-to on the western elevation of the workshop. Its range is not linear and extends north-west within the site. There is a variance in materials with brickwork and corrugated metal and fibrous sheeting evident across the span of the buildings. All have solid concrete floors/slabs in place. Internal photographs (provided within a structural survey) show these buildings to be largely empty. There is evidence of some storage taking place but it could not reasonably be argued that this was at a level which would be consistent with an established agricultural use. The information submitted with the application details that the buildings subject to the application were previously used for workshops and general agricultural storage. Contract farming has meant that the buildings have become redundant with main operations of the contract farmer concentrated at Leighton Bromswold. This is consistent with

the information provided under approved application ref 23/01380/FUL which also provided a new access road to the operational farmyard (further south) bypassing the buildings which are subject to this application.

As referenced above, the application is also accompanied by a structural survey prepared by Gawn Associates. This concludes that all three buildings are in a satisfactory condition, considered to be of permanent and substantial construction and not ion such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction would be required. It should be noted that the submission refers to 2 'lean-to' structures both of which are attached to building d (the southernmost workshop) one of which is enclosed on all three sides (and is considered in the structural assessment above) whilst the extreme southern lean-to is very much a temporary structure, open on all three sides and considered to require effective reconstruction. The submitted planning statement confirms that this section has been omitted from the floorspace calculations resulting in a footprint of approx. 688m².

Based upon the above assessment, Officers are broadly satisfied that the requirements of Policy LP33 (part a i-iii) have been satisfied. In considering other requirements of the policy (in terms of floorspace and appearance) it is noted that the Planning Statement refers to habitable floorspace totalling 732m² and so an overall reduction in footprint (with the lean-to included) or a 6% increase with the southern lean-to omitted. However, it should be acknowledged that the policy refers to floorspace and not footprint. It also does not differentiate between habitable or non-habitable floorspace. In this case, the calculation of all floorspace in total exceeds 880m² (approx.). As such, it would far exceed the existing floorspace. It is questioned as to if this could be considered a 'modest increase' as per the policy. However, given the current position regards the 5YHLS and the enhancement of the site as a result of the development (discussed in further detail below) this is not considered to result in significant and demonstrable harm and Officers are satisfied that a pragmatic approach can be adopted in this instance. The re-use of redundant buildings is also consistent with Para.84 of the NPPF (2024).

In terms of appearance, the resulting development will be 3 units (single, 1.5 and 2 storey) arranged around a central courtyard with associated car ports/garages and landscaping. The scale, design and massing is considered to be sympathetic to the rural location and is designed to add interest (the varied ridge heights and use of materials etc). Careful consideration has been given to the scale and location of window openings and the arrangement of materials. Whilst the materials proposed are broadly acceptable these will be secured by condition. Overall, in comparison with the existing buildings it is considered that the development proposed will result in a clear enhancement of the immediate setting.

On balance, based upon the detail submitted, the above assessment and having regard to tilted balance considerations it is concluded that the proposal broadly complies with Policy LP33 of the Local Plan to 2036 and is therefore acceptable in principle subject to compliance with all other material planning considerations and conditions.

*Design, visual amenity and impact on the countryside

Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan state, amongst other matters, that proposals will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context and has drawn inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings, including natural, historic and built environment, contributes positively to the character and identity of the area and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings, the routes and spaces between buildings, topography and landscape.

As referenced in the preceding sections of this report, at present the site hosts 3 agricultural buildings of varying design, scale and material finish. Given the limited scale of the boundary treatments these are highly visible to anyone travelling Raveley Road in either direction. Most prominent are the 2 Dutch Barns located to the northern edge of the site. The buildings are characteristic of the rural location. Under this scheme the north-western and south-western

elevations (facing the road) will consist of a range of buildings of varying design, scale and material finish. A 1.8m high native hedgerow and post and rail fence will be provided but (welcome) views of the development will still be possible. It is considered that the design and scale of the buildings will add interest and the material finish (which will be secured by condition) will all remain consistent with the rural location and supports its assimilation into the area. It is considered prudent to attach a condition limiting permitted development rights under Classes A, B and D of Part 1 and Class A of Part 2 of Schedule 2 of the GPDO which includes alterations/additions to the dwellings, additions to the roof, porches and boundary treatments to ensure that the LPA can control the visual appearance of the dwellings and protect the rural character. It is not considered necessary to impose a condition in relation to Class AA (construction of additional storeys) as there is a requirement that the dwelling to which it relates was constructed prior to 28th of October 2018. As such, these rights would not apply.

In terms of outside space each unit benefits from a rear private garden with a paddock area to the north-east. The driveway will be gravel with a bonded surface at the access. No specific details have been provided in relation to landscaping (aside from the BNG and boundary hedgerows) and so these shall be secured by condition. Access to rear gardens will be via the carports/garages with the exception of unit 1 with access via the adjacent paddock.

Overall, it is not considered that the development would be uncharacteristic of the locality or would result in the introduction of built development which would be considered incongruous or harmful. It therefore accords with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Local Plan to 2036.

As the site is located within the open countryside some assessment under Policy LP10 of the Local Plan is required. LP10 seeks to limit development in the countryside unless it is permitted via other policies of the Local Plan. LP10 seeks to secure the long-term use of the best and most versatile agricultural land and avoid the introduction of development which could be harmful to the character of the countryside either visually or due to other accompanying factors (such as noise, odour or obtrusive light).

In this case, the land is classified as grade 3 agricultural land (and so is not land of the highest value). The surrounding land (including developed areas) is grade 2 or 3. The site is already occupied by built development and so it cannot be considered that this will result in the loss of additional agricultural land. For the reasons in the preceding sections of this report it is not considered that the development would result in an incongruous addition to nor alter the landscape character of the countryside. Whilst it is acknowledged that residential development could result in the introduction of 'uncharacteristic factors' such as increased noise, light etc, given the scale of the development in an area where there are other examples of residential dwellings (Lodge Farm Cottages to the north) alongside operations which are characteristic of the countryside it cannot be considered that this would cause undue harm.

Overall, the development accords with Policy LP10 of the Local Plan to 2036 and is acceptable in relation to its impact on the countryside.

*Residential amenity

Policy LP14 of the Local Plan states that 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's Environmental Health Team have been consulted and raise no objections in terms of noise or odour either on the future occupants or to third parties. They do note that there could be some contamination of the land due to its use and so recommend a standard condition to deal with this matter.

In terms of other matters, given the arrangement of windows serving habitable rooms and the layout there are no concerns with regards to overbearing impacts, overshadowing or loss of light nor overlooking or loss of privacy. The rear facing rooflights closest to the common boundaries

largely serve bath or shower rooms. The one exception to this is the rooflight to the double bedroom in unit 2. This could (given its position) afford additional views over the rear garden area of unit 1. As this is a secondary window this can be conditioned as obscure glazed alongside the bath/shower room windows which should prevent any overlooking of the adjacent rear gardens. There are windows providing natural light to all habitable rooms and the dwellings (including bedroom sizes) comply with those set out within the Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standards Document. There is also sufficient outside amenity space which is commensurate to the scale of the dwellings.

Overall, subject to conditions, the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to residential amenity matters and its approach to contaminated land and therefore accords with Policies LP14 and LP37 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Highway safety

The site is accessed from Raveley Road (the original farm access) and there is provision for parking (both cycles and motor vehicles) for each dwelling. There is also scope for parking forward of the dwellings within the extensive gravelled courtyard which would provide scope for visitor parking. CCC Highways Team have been consulted and initially requested further details on vehicle-to-vehicle visibility along with a speed survey and further dimensions on plan. Following this request, a Highways Technical note prepared by MTC Engineering was provided and Highways have been re-consulted. Having reviewed the revised information, they confirm that they are satisfied that the access can accommodate the intensification of the access for a residential use and state that any effect on the highway will be mitigated provided conditions are attached to the permission.

In terms of cycle storage, the carports/garages accord with the recommendations contained within the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and provides additional space for cycle storage (one space per bedroom). This provision shall be secured by condition.

Overall, based upon the detail provided alongside the favourable comments from specialists, the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to parking provision, sustainable travel and highway safety and therefore accords with Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Flood risk

The application site is wholly within Flood Zone 1 and does not have a risk of surface water flooding as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data. Development of this nature is acceptable in Flood Zone 1 and does not require the submission of a flood risk assessment nor the application of the sequential or exception tests.

Surface water will be addressed at the building regulations stages but, given the degree of hard surfacing on the site, the footprint of the existing buildings (which will be demolished) alongside the permeability of the surrounding land it is not considered that there will be significant surface water run-off impacts. A condition shall be attached to secure drainage across the site access in order to prevent drainage onto the highway.

Overall, the proposal is acceptable with regard to its approach to flooding and is considered to accord with Policies LP5 and LP15 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Biodiversity

Policy LP30 of the Local Plan requires a development to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and achieve a net gain where possible.

As well as the above (and separate from the requirements of LP30) qualifying new development is subject to Biodiversity Net Gain legislation pursuant to the Environment Act 2021. This means that a 10% statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is required, following the hierarchy of onsite provision; mixture of on-site and off-site provision; and the last resort of statutory biodiversity credits unless it can be demonstrated that the development would be exempt.

In this case the application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) dated June 2025. This concludes that there is little wildlife interest. Great Crested Newts have been identified in the locality and it is recommended that a District level License be obtained in this respect. The EIA goes on to make further recommendations for enhancements and mitigation and these (along with the license) shall be secured by condition. Natural England were initially consulted and raised a concern that the development could impact a site of Special Scientific Interest/Special Areas of Conservation/Special Protection Area or a Ramsar site (Woodwalton Fen) due to increased recreational pressure. Subsequently, a technical note was provided by the agent dated 8th of April 2025 and Natural England have been re-consulted. Following a review of the submitted details they raise no further objections confirming that they consider that the development will not have significant adverse impacts on any statutorily protected nature conservation sites or landscapes.

In terms of BNG the submitted metric and BNG details state that a 10% BNG can be achieved on site. HDC's Ecology Officer has been consulted and is broadly supportive of the proposals. The BNG shall be secured by condition.

Overall, having regard to the above matters, the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to biodiversity impacts and accords with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Impact on Trees

There are some trees within the site which whilst not afforded formal protection do have the potential to be impacted by the development (works or vehicle movements/landscaping). The application is accompanied by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment including Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan.

HDC's Arboricultural Officer has been consulted and raises no in principle objections. He does highlight the bi collection point beneath a cherry tree and has worked on the basis that this will be a store. There is no reason to consider that this will be a store and, in any event, whilst he does refer to concerns about root damage his main concern relates to falling leaves and detritus affecting its use. Similar concerns are raised in relation to the location of the garage serving unit 4 in relation to T10, T12 and T16. Again, this is due to the inevitable encroachment of these trees over time which may become a nuisance to occupants of the dwelling and therefore result in future pressure to prune.

Whilst Officers have carefully considered this situation it is not considered that this provides sufficient justification to seek amendments nor refuse the application solely on this basis. Given that the trees are at present not afforded any protection and the Arboricultural Officer has not imposed any protection on these trees a pragmatic approach is adopted. It is acknowledged that some future pruning may be required but in balancing the merits of the proposal against this minor harm there is no objection.

Overall, subject to condition for compliance with the submitted Tree Protection Plan the development is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on trees and broadly accords with Policy LP31 of the Local Plan to 2036.

*Other matters

*Archaeology

The site is located within an area of archaeological potential, as such, CCC's Historic Environments Team have been consulted. Having reviewed the submitted details they raise no objections to the development observing that whilst ridge and furrow cultivation survive in the area (further south-east and south-west of the site) these no longer survive within the site for consideration due to modern ploughing.

Overall, given the detail provided alongside the lack of objection from specialists there are considered to be no heritage impacts and the development accords with Policy LP34 of the 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. The submitted Planning Statement confirms that the dwellings will accord with this and this shall be secured by condition.

*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. The submitted Planning Statement confirms that the dwellings will accord with this and this shall be secured by condition.

*Developer contributions (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. CIL forms have been provided as part of the application and these shall be dealt with by the Council's Implementation Team.

The proposal is considered to accord with the requirements of Policy LP4 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contribution SPD in this regard.

Developer contributions (Wheeled Bins)

The application is accompanied by a signed wheeled bin unilateral undertaking dated 9th of July 2025.

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the requirements of Policy LP4 of the Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contribution SPD in this regard.

*Conclusion

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

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it is acceptable in principle, would be visually acceptable and would not be harmful in terms of residential amenity, contaminated land, highway safety, flood risk, ecology or impact on trees.

Having regard to all relevant material considerations the proposed development is considered to comply with Policies LP2, LP5, LP10, LP11, LP12, LP14, LP15, LP16, LP17, LP30, LP31, LP33, LP34 and LP37 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and consequently, 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:
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