OFFICER REPORT

Case No: **25/01018/FUL** **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Construction of one residential self/custom build dwellinghouse**

Location: **Wood Farm Vicarage Road Waresley**

Applicant: **Mrs Patricia Cameron**

Grid Ref: **525593 254248**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is in the south-eastern corner of Waresley and comprises an irregular shape of land to the rear of existing properties and farm buildings along the south-west side of Vicarage Road.

This application seeks approval for the erection of one residential self-custom build dwellinghouse at Wood Farm, Vicarage Road, Waresley Sandy. The proposed two-bedroom dwelling would be single storey in height, be of a gable-end design and constructed with timber. The applicant is on the self/custom build register.

Whilst the surroundings are predominantly rural, there is a degree of built development in the vicinity with Chase Farm and its associated buildings to the west, and Wood Farm and the associated agricultural buildings to the north.

This application has been accompanied by the following:

- Planning Statement;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
- Ecological Impact Assessment.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (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
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
LP25: Housing Mix
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows

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

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
Developer Contributions SPD 2011
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)

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
* N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
* 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

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

PLANNING HISTORY

25/00489/FUL - Erection of an agricultural building for free range egg production with associated feed bins, linked egg packing and storage building, linked manure trailer store, hardstandings and access track - Approved.

CONSULTATIONS

Waresley cum Tetworth Parish Council - Discussed these plans and voted by 4 votes to 1 to approve the plans on the strict condition that they are subject to an agricultural tie as the development is outside of the normal village built up area.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority - No objections. Based on the information submitted, the proposed development is acceptable as ancillary to the existing agricultural business and the parent dwelling. The LPA should be satisfied it can condition as such.

Huntingdonshire District Council Environmental Health - No objections.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third-party representations were received during the course of the application.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of:

o Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
o Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016)
o Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
o Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
o Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
o Bury Village Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)
o Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)
o Great Staughton Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (2025)

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main issues to consider are:

o The Principle of Development
o Design and Visual Amenity
o Residential Amenity
o Highway Safety
o Flood Risk and Surface Water
o Biodiversity
o Developer Contributions
o Accessible and Adaptable Homes
o Water Efficiency

*The Principle of the Development

The application site comprises an irregular shaped area wrapped around the south of Wood Farm along the south side of Vicarage Road in the south-east corner of Waresley. The application site is an area of grassed land with existing boundary treatments (fencing and hedging) along the north of the site and open to the south.

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 5,907 homes. The current 5YHLS is 4,345 homes, equivalent to 3.68 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. Each planning application will be considered on its own merits and the degree of weight to be attached is a matter for the decision maker.

It is acknowledged that whilst Policies P2 (Strategy for Development), LP10 (The Countryside) of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 are out of date (and so afforded less weight in the determination of this application) they are not to be entirely disregarded.

Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that for decision-making, where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless 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.

As required, this decision is taken by carrying out an assessment on the planning balance and by considering the full suite of local and national planning policies. In the assessment below the merits of the application are discussed and weight is given to each element.

The starting point for consideration of this application is if the site lies within the countryside or the built-up area (BUA) of the village which is a matter raised by the Parish Council.

The adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 defines a built-up area as a distinct group of buildings that includes 30 or more homes. Land which relates more to the group of buildings rather than to the surrounding countryside is also considered to form part of the built-up area.

The character of the area has been outlined in the preceding sections of this report and Officers have had regard to the guidance contained within the table on pages 53 - 55 of the Local Plan to 2036 which defines what can and cannot be considered as BUA. Broadly speaking, the guidance details a BUA as a distinct group of 30 or more homes. Officers consider that this section of Vicarage Road (to the south-east) represents 'ribbon development' as opposed to forming part of the grouping of dwellings forming the main section of the village. Guidance on the BUA also suggests that farmyards and associated agricultural buildings (where these extend into the countryside) should be excluded. On the other hand, the table refers to land given over to other uses (though not agricultural) forming part of the BUA where there are strong boundary features, buildings on at least two sides and a clear physical and functional relationship with the BUA as opposed to the adjoining countryside.

The guidance also states that agricultural land or sections of large residential curtilages where the character of the land primarily relates to the countryside is excluded from the built-up area. These spaces can provide a visual buffer between the built development and the open countryside, softening the visual impact and linking the built-up area with its rural context. Large curtilages with grounds stretching away from the rest of the built-up area are excluded to prevent sub-division of the plot for new development. The built-up area will include elements of the grounds that relate closely to the buildings, for instance formal gardens, ancillary parking and hard tennis courts but not those parts with a more natural, rural character.

The submitted Planning Statement states that the site is located within the open countryside but directly adjoins the settlement boundary. However, during the course of the application, the agent has indicated that the application site has been utilised as extended garden land for at least 10 years. However, there is no planning history or Certificate of Lawful Development to substantiate this claim.

The application site is an area of grassed land with existing boundary treatments (fencing and hedging) along the boundary with Wood Farm but is completely open to the countryside beyond to the south.

Having regard to the prevailing character of the area, the built development surrounding the site (dwellings and agricultural buildings), alongside the history of the site it is considered to form part of the open countryside rather than within or adjacent to the BUA.

In reaching this decision regard has been given to the recently permitted dwelling (under ref 24/02366/FUL) which is to the north of the site across Vicarage Road. This was considered to lie outside of the BUA (but well-related to it), and also 25/01459/PIP which forms part of the land directly to the front of Wood Farm adjacent to Vicarage Road, and was considered to be within the BUA. Both of these sites are considered to have very different characteristics to the application site.

Policy LP10 states that development in the countryside will be restricted to the limited and specific opportunities as provided for in other policies of this plan.

This application seeks approval for the erection of one self/custom-build dwelling at Wood Farm, Vicarage Road, Waresley.

Policy LP25 (Housing Mix) states that where appropriate, the Council will work with developers, registered providers, landowners and relevant individuals or groups to address identified local requirements for self and custom-build homes as identified in the Huntingdonshire self and custom-build register.

However, the creation of a private residential property is not considered to be acceptable in a countryside location and there are no limited and specific opportunities detailed within the adopted Local Plan that support the proposal.

The application site is located outside of the settlement of Waresley, which the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan identifies as a 'Small Settlement' (Policy LP9).

Officers accept that there are some services and employment opportunities within Waresley but that these are limited when compared with other 'small settlements' within the local plan. Accordingly, it is very likely that residents of the proposed dwelling would be heavily reliant on the use of private motor vehicles to access services and facilities of a day-to-day nature. This is not unusual in a rural setting. Public transport to larger settlements is available but this is irregular and transport available is limited in comparison to services to other areas within the district.

That said, the village does have a church, village hall, public house, cricket club and a large garden centre which also incorporates a farm shop and café. The submitted Planning Statement also references the Waresley Park Estate where there is a cafe and wellness centre. The LPA recognise that part of enabling communities to achieve vitality through growth is the introduction of new housing in order to allow new people to join these rural communities.

The site access is not served by a public footpath but is on a 30mph road which (whilst unlit) does provide a link to the footpath to the north-east of Vicarage Road which begins at Glebe House. There is then a public footpath (on at least one side of the road) for a pedestrian to travel on foot to the garden centre and which is arguably one of the main attractions in terms of sustainability and other services within the village. It is recognised that there would be a need to cross the road at certain points but this would still be within the village limits and 30mph section of the highway.

Whilst the lack of footpath directly to the site is not ideal, given that this is not uncharacteristic of the locality, is on a 30mph relatively quiet rural road which at some points is single track and leads only to Wood Farm (and terminates at this point) as opposed to being on a main route into the village (where vehicle speeds are likely to be higher), it is concluded that, on balance, there would not be significant and demonstrable harm when assessed against the quantum of development proposed.

Policy LP10 goes on to state that all development in the countryside must
(a) seek to use land of lower agricultural value in preference to land of higher agricultural value;
(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.

The existing land that is the subject of this application is classified as Grade 2 (Very Good) agricultural land. Some 98% of the district comprises land within Grades 1 to 3, with 15% being Grade 1 and an estimated 77% of land falling within the definition of best and most versatile land.

Given there is a limited supply of land of lower grades in the district and that a significant number of sites allocated for development in the District in the Local Plan to 2036 are on land that is the best and most versatile, it is considered that the proposed development does not represent an unacceptable loss of agricultural land and any harm that results is very limited.

As discussed in further detail in the following section, the Local Planning Authority consider the proposal to satisfy criteria (c) of Policy LP10, however, do not consider the proposal to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and therefore would not meet criteria (b) of Policy LP10.

On tilted balance, the benefit of the erection of one private residential dwelling to contribute toward the Council's five-year housing land supply is considered to be limited and the adverse impacts of creating a dwellinghouse in the open countryside in this instance would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified benefit.

As such, the proposal is deemed to be contrary to Policy LP10 of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework and the principle of development is therefore considered unacceptable in this instance.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact Upon the Character of the Area

Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in Policy LP10 of the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

This application seeks approval for the erection of a detached dwellinghouse at Wood Farm, Vicarage Road, Waresley. The proposed dwelling would be single storey in height, of a log-cabin design and would be constructed using high-quality timber. The property would be located south-east of No. 40 Vicarage Road.

The proposed dwelling would be located to the rear of No. 40 Vicarage Road and the existing agricultural buildings at Wood Farm. The building line along Vicarage Road is clearly defined with properties fronting the public highway with varying set-back distances and no examples of back-land development. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to the prevailing pattern of development and would not successfully integrate with adjoining buildings and the overall landscape and would respond positively to its context or positively contribute to the area's character and identity.

It is worth noting that the scale of the proposed dwelling is considered to be commensurate to the size of the plot and the single storey scale would reduce its visual prominence. The proposed log cabin design is considered to be acceptable given the countryside location and the use of high-quality timber in the construction of the property would soften the visual impacts of the proposal.

While details have not been provided in terms of soft/hard landscaping or boundary treatments, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that an acceptable scheme could be delivered, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted.

Overall, due to the siting of the proposed dwelling, the proposal is not considered to respond positively to the site's context and would be at odds with the character of the surrounding area. As such, the proposal is deemed to be contrary to Policies LP10, LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) 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.

Given the single storey scale of the proposed dwelling and the distance to the closest neighbouring residential property (approximately 6.8m to the shared boundary with No. 40 Vicarage Road), the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any detrimental overbearing, overshadowing, loss of light or overlooking impacts on any neighbouring properties amenities.

Furthermore, the proposed dwelling sits a comparable distance off the boundary to its nearest dwelling in respect of surrounding land uses and the proposal would include an appropriate size private amenity space for the future owners/occupiers of the proposed dwelling.

As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Highway Safety

Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.

The proposed dwelling would be accessed via an existing agricultural vehicular access off Vicarage Road, Waresley. Vicarage Road is single track, no-through road and the application site entrance would be situated beyond the end of the adopted highway. There are incidental passing places in the form of property accesses with adequate visibility between them.

Vehicular access on to the public highway would be from the existing gated access at the end of Vicarage Road with adequate space to ensure vehicles enter and leave in a forward gear. Furthermore, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that there is adequate space for off-street car parking.

The Highway Authority have therefore confirmed that the proposed development is acceptable as ancillary to the existing agricultural business and the parent dwelling and the LPA should be satisfied it can be conditioned as such. However, if the intended use is for market housing, the Highway Authority may wish to make further comments and potentially add conditions. It is not clear from the application whether the dwelling is proposed to be ancillary to the agricultural business/host dwelling. Whilst the Planning Statement refers to the applicant seeking to retire and live closer to her daughter's family that reside at Wood Farm there is nothing to suggest that the dwelling will be ancillary accommodation. However, it is considered that this could be conditioned if necessary if all other aspects of the proposal are considered to be acceptable.

As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policy LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Flood Risk

The application site is located on Flood Zone 1 land in accordance with Environment Agency mapping and the Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024).

The flood risk vulnerability of the proposed development is 'more vulnerable' in accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance, which is compatible with land within Flood Zone 1. Furthermore,

as stated in paragraph 176 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), as the application seeks approval for minor development, sequential and exception tests are not required.

Given the low flood risk and minor scale of development, officers are satisfied that while details of the surface water strategy have not been provided as part of this application, full details of the surface and foul water drainage can be secured as part of relevant building regulations and other relevant legislative requirements in this instance.

As such, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and 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.

This application has been accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment and a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which have both been carried out for the wider site of Wood Farm. The submitted reports conclude that the overall site is of low ecological value with negligible potential for roosting bats, badgers and reptiles due to a lack of suitable habitat on site. There is no suitable habitat for Great Crested Newts on site, however, as the site falls within an amber risk zone and is within 250m of two waterbodies, a method statement should be followed to provide a precautionary approach.

The submitted reports include biodiversity protection and enhancements measures, which are considered to be acceptable in this instance and conditions would be imposed on any planning permission granted to secure specific details.

It is also worth noting that the proposal would not impact any trees as there are none on the site or directly adjacent and as the proposed dwelling would be self/custom-built, it is exempt from providing a Biodiversity Net Gain.

Overall, the proposal is deemed to be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Developer Contributions

Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. However, the application has not been accompanied by a Unilateral Undertaking in relation to wheeled bins.

As such, the proposed development is therefore contrary Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Developers Contributions SPD (2011) in this regard.

*Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that all housing developments in the district offers a genuine choice of Accessible and adaptable dwellings that meet the requirements of residents:

f. ensuring 100% of new dwellings, across all tenures provided, meet Building Regulation requirement M4 (2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' (or replacement standards).

To ensure that the development can meet these standards a condition would be imposed on any permission that may be granted in this regard in accordance with Policy LP25 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Water Efficiency

Policy LP12 (j) of the Local Plan to 2036 states that new dwellings must comply with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. A condition will be attached to any consent to ensure compliance with the above, in accordance with Policy LP12 (j) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Other

*Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

*Conclusion

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

On tilted balance, the harm caused through erection of a private residential dwelling in a countryside location where owners/occupants would be reliant on the use of private motor vehicles for services and facilities of a day-to-day nature would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of providing a self/custom-build dwelling toward the Council's deficient five-year housing land supply. Furthermore, due to the siting of the proposed dwelling (backland development), the proposal would not respond positively to the site's context and would be at odds with the character of the surrounding area. The application has also not been accompanied by a Unilateral Undertaking in relation to wheeled bins.

As such, the proposed development is considered to be contrary to Policies LP4, LP10, LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD, the Developers Contributions SPD (2011) and the National Planning Policy Framework.
Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is concluded that the proposed development is contrary to policy and not acceptable.

There are no overriding material considerations that indicate that permission should be granted in this instance. Therefore, it is recommended that the application be refused.

CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Jennifer Wallis**