

Case No: 0802818FUL (FULL PLANNING APPLICATION)
0803317CAC (CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT)

Proposal: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS AND ERECTION OF
FOUR FLATS

Location: 21 HIGH STREET

Applicant: AWJ USHER AND SONS

Grid Ref: 519066 267442

Date of Registration: 22.10.2008

Parish: BUCKDEN

RECOMMENDATION - APPROVE

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

- 1.1 The site comprises a two-storey cottage with its front elevation abutting the back edge of the pavement. Within the site there are remains of outbuildings that have been demolished; a lean-to conservatory attached to the existing dwelling; and an overgrown garden. This site lies on the western side of High Street, immediately north of the roundabout; the site backs onto the A1 a strategic transport highway. Due to the prominent location the site is very exposed. The site lies within the Buckden Conservation Area.
- 1.2 This is a joint report for both the planning application and Conservation Area Consent – 0802818FUL for demolition of existing buildings and erection of four flats – 2 x one bedroom and 2 x two bedrooms; and 0803317CAC for demolition of cottage and associated buildings.

2. NATIONAL GUIDANCE

- 2.1 **PPS1: “Delivering Sustainable Development” (2005)** contains advice on the operation of the plan-led system.
- 2.2 **PPS3: “Housing” (2006)** sets out how the planning system supports the growth in housing completions needed in England.
- 2.3 **PPG13: “Transport” (2001)** provides guidance in relation to transport and particularly the integration of planning and transport.
- 2.4 **PPG15: “Planning and the Historic Environment” (1994)** sets out Government policies for the identification and protection of historic buildings, conservation areas, and other elements of the historic

environment. It explains the role played by the planning system in their protection.

- 2.5 **PPG24: “Planning & Noise” (1994)** guides planning authorities on the use of planning powers to minimise the adverse impact of noise.

For full details visit the government website <http://www.communities.gov.uk> and follow the links to planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Policy.

3. **PLANNING POLICIES**

Further information on the role of planning policies in deciding planning applications can also be found at the following website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk> then follow links Planning, Building and Environment, Planning, Planning Information and Guidance, Planning Guidance and Advice and then Creating and Better Place to Live

- 3.1 **East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy (May 2008)**

Policies viewable at <http://www.go-east.gov.uk> then follow links to Planning, Regional Planning then Related Documents

- **ENV7:** “Quality in the Built Environment” - requires new development to be of high quality which complements the distinctive character and best qualities of the local area and promotes urban renaissance and regeneration.

- 3.2 **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan (2003)**

Saved policies from the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan 2003 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk> follow the links to environment, planning, planning policy and Structure Plan 2003.

- None

- 3.3 **Huntingdonshire Local Plan (1995)**

Saved policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan95

- **H31:** “Residential privacy and amenity standards” – Indicates that new dwellings will only be permitted where appropriate standards of privacy can be maintained and adequate parking provided.
- **H32:** "Sub-division of large curtilages" states support will be offered only where the resultant dwelling and its curtilage are of a size and form sympathetic to the locality.
- **H33:** “Sub-division of large curtilages affecting protected buildings or features” states the subdivision of curtilages will not be supported where development will adversely affect the

qualities of a Conservation Area or affect trees worthy of protection.

- **H37:** “Environmental Pollution” – housing development will not be permitted in locations where there is a known source of environmental pollution which would be detrimental to residential amenity.
- **H38:** “Noise Pollution” – development sites adjoining main highways, railways, industrial operations and other potentially damaging noise pollution sources will be required to adopt adequate design solutions to create acceptable ambient noise levels within the dwellings and their curtilage.
- **En5:** “Conservation Area Character” - development within or directly affecting conservation areas will be required to preserve or enhance their character and appearance.
- **En6:** “Design standards in Conservation Areas” – in conservation areas, the District Council will require high standards of design with careful consideration being given to the scale and form of development in the area and to the use of sympathetic materials of appropriate colour and texture.
- **En8:** “Demolition in Conservation Areas” – consent may be withheld until acceptable plans for the new development have been approved, if approved the timing of demolition will be strictly controlled.
- **En18:** “Protection of countryside features” – Offers protection for important site features including trees, woodlands, hedges and meadowland.
- **En20:** “Landscaping Scheme”. - Wherever appropriate a development will be subject to the conditions requiring the execution of a landscaping scheme.
- **En25:** "General Design Criteria" - indicates that the District Council will expect new development to respect the scale, form, materials and design of established buildings in the locality and make adequate provision for landscaping and amenity areas.

3.4 **Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alterations (2002)**

Saved policies from the Huntingdon Local Plan Alterations 2002 are relevant and viewable at www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/localplan - Then click on "Local Plan Alteration (2002)

- **STR1:** “District Hierarchy”- Outlines the settlement hierarchy. Group villages are those where housing groups and infilling will be allowed and infill villages where only infilling will be allowed.
- **STR2:** “Provides definitions for housing development” – Housing group: up to 8 dwellings forming a planned entity using either an existing frontage or grouped around a short cul-de-sac. Exceptionally where: the site is within the environmental

limits of the village; the development would make the best use of land; the overall benefits of estate scale are strong, up to 15 dwellings may be permitted.

- **STR5:** “Group Villages” – includes Buckden
- **HL5:** “Quality and Density of Development” - sets out the criteria to take into account in assessing whether a proposal represents a good design and layout.
- **HL7:** “Reusing Brownfield Land and Buildings” - indicates that the District Council will seek to maximise the re-use of previously developed land.
- **HL8:** “Rural Housing” - identifies that in group villages groups of dwellings and infilling will be permitted on appropriate sites within the village environmental limits where development is sensitive to the scale and character of the village.

3.5 **Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007**

Policies from the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning, then Planning then Planning+Policy then Informal policy statements where there is a link to Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007

- **G3:** “Trees, hedgerows and Other Environmental Features” - development proposals should minimise risk of harm to trees, hedgerows or other environmental features of visual, historic or nature conservation value.
- **B1:** “Design Quality” - developments should demonstrate a high quality of design in terms of layout, form and contribution to the character of the area.
- **B4:** “Amenity” - developments should not have an unacceptable impact upon amenity of existing or future occupiers.
- **B7:** “Listed Buildings” - lists the criteria against which the demolition of a listed building and an unlisted building in a conservation area should be assessed.
- **B8:** “Conservation Areas” - states the criteria against which developments within or affecting a Conservation Area should be assessed.
- **H2:** “Housing density” – lists the minimum density standard housing developments should achieve. Within smaller settlements and the countryside: 30-40 dwellings per hectare.
- **T1:** “Transport Impacts” - development proposals should be capable of being served by safe convenient access to the transport network and should not give rise to traffic volumes that exceed the capacity of the local transport network.

- **T2:** “Car and Cycle Parking” - development proposals should limit car parking and provide cycle parking facilities to the levels set out in the Council’s parking standards.

3.6 **Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy 2008**

Policies from the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy 2008 are relevant and viewable at <http://www.huntsdc.gov.uk> click on Environment and Planning then click on Planning and then click on Planning Policy where there is a link to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

- **CS1:** “Sustainable development in Huntingdonshire” – all developments will contribute to the pursuit of sustainable development, having regard to social, environmental and economic issues. All aspects will be considered including design, implementation and function of development e.g., by making best use of land, buildings and existing infrastructure.
- **CS3:** “The Settlement Hierarchy” – Identifies Buckden as a ‘Key Service Centre’ in which development schemes of moderate and minor scale and infilling may be appropriate within the built up area.

3.7 **SPD – Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2007, 2.1**

4. **PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 There is none relevant to the determination of this proposal.

5. **CONSULTATIONS**

5.1 **Buckden Parish Council – recommend APPROVAL (copy attached).**

5.2 **Environmental Health Consultation – recommend REFUSE;** due to noise levels the site is unsuitable for intensification of residential use

5.3 **CCC Highways Consultation –** comments on access, pedestrian visibility splays, parking and need for a speed survey to justify vehicle to vehicle visibility

5.4 **Highways Agency –** advises on conditions to be attached to any planning permission which may be granted, e.g. demolition method statement; and new access to be made operational for construction vehicles

6. **REPRESENTATIONS**

6.1 **ONE** third party representation received raising the following issues:

- highways issues regarding the roundabout and traffic along the High Street;
- overlooking and loss of privacy/amenity for Nos. 6 and 8 High Street due to proposed window position;

- character out of keeping due to detailing (lack of chimneys, windows etc) and scale, form; and
- air pollution.

7. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- 7.1 This land is “previously developed” within the meaning of PPS3, and thus its more efficient use would be supported by some of the provisions of this guidance, and by a number of policies referred to above. However, although Government advice encourages the best use of land by re-using previously developed land, this should not be to the detriment of other planning issues, which in this case are the design; impact of the proposal in relation to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area; highways issues; noise; refuse; landscaping; impact of the development on the neighbouring properties; and air quality.

Design

- 7.2 Due to the exposed nature of the site in this prominent location it is imperative that any development on the site must be of high quality, having regard to the character of the locality and preserving and enhancing the character of the street scene and the Conservation Area. The proposal seeks to demolish the existing cottage and replace it with a much larger development which would wrap around the southern and eastern boundaries of the site creating a stronger frontage to the highway than there currently is, although it is intended to site the buildings further back from the edge of the footpath than the existing building or those within the locality. It is considered that this will erode the character of this part of the High Street.
- 7.3 In addition to this, the proposal fails to successfully turn the corner with the ground floor unit at the south of the site is proposed to be accessed where the curve of the road is; a highway verge is currently adjacent to the road and there is no pavement. It is considered that the removal of this verge to incorporate the extension of the footpath would erode the informal nature of this entrance into Buckden.
- 7.4 The general character of dwellings along the High Street is of dwellings with a shallow gable, as the existing cottage on the site, although it is noted that the dwellings to the north have wide gables. The main element of the proposed building on the site is quite wide at 7.3 metres which increases the bulk and height of the building. The length of the development proposed at two-storey would create a very bulky building in the street scene. This is not in accordance with the proportions of other buildings in the locality or with guidance in the SPD – Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2007.
- 7.5 The main elements of the scheme give the appearance of three dwellings, with three front doors. The window locations however fail to give any composition to the building. Dwellings in the locality are noted for their composition of openings and rhythm. Whilst there is a window feature, above the central door which gives access to the two first floor flats, because it is bricked up this elevation does not comfortably read as two dwellings.

- 7.6 The detailing is also poor, and the proposed development fails to include any chimneys, a common feature along High Street; the fenestration detailing is poor; the brick detailing is bland although in contrast the arches are overly ornate and are totally inappropriate for the development proposed; the double drive through is uncharacteristic of the area as buildings generally have one arch at most and these often relate to grander/larger buildings.
- 7.7 The single-storey element generally has the appearance of an outbuilding; however the two windows facing the road are of domestic proportions echoing the windows proposed for the main building, thus creating an awkward relationship.
- 7.8 In essence the proposals are considered to be contrary to policies in the Development Plan.

Impact of the proposal in relation to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area

- 7.9 Despite being within the Conservation Area, Paragraph 2.8 of the Design and Access Statement asserts that the site is not within the boundary and the D & A Statement does not reference relevant Development Plan policies or PPG15. The application cannot therefore be considered to have fully analysed the context or constraints of the site adequately and is apparent by the rather pedestrian design of the proposed building and the lack of justification for the demolition of the existing cottage; the other buildings on the site appear to have already been removed.
- 7.10 The existing cottage is an attractive traditionally built property which retains many historic features. It complements the modest scale of the properties at this end of the High Street and is considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. As such any proposals to demolish this property should be assessed against the criteria in Policy B7 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement to consider the demolition of a listed building. This application has not undertaken such an assessment providing no evidence that the property is structurally unsound or that it is incapable of continuing in its present or other use.
- 7.11 It is considered therefore that the proposal relates poorly to the traditional forms and detailing of the surrounding properties and is certainly not of the same quality as the building it is proposed to replace. The large vehicular openings are not a traditional feature of dwellings of this relatively modest scale along the street, particularly as there are two proposed, creating an unsuccessful break in the elevation.
- 7.12 The single-storey element of the scheme does not respect the traditional relationship of buildings in the area, being too domestic in detailing for an 'outbuilding' and at odds with the formality of the rest of the proposal. The lack of chimneys is also noticeable, in stark contrast to the strong rhythm created by chimneys in the locality.
- 7.13 The proposal fails to justify the demolition of the existing property which contributes to the character and appearance of the

conservation area and therefore is contrary to policy. The merits of the proposed replacement building are not sufficient to justify the demolition of the existing property.

Highways

- 7.14 The existing highway access further south along the site is proposed to be closed. It is considered that the details of the proposed access are unclear and a minimum width of 5 metre is required with 1.5 metre x 1.5 metre pedestrian visibility splays on either side. This could be covered by conditions.
- 7.15 A speed survey carried out by the Local Highway Authority demonstrates that the proposed vehicle to vehicle visibility is adequate. The provision of six parking spaces as proposed is considered adequate.

Noise

- 7.16 The noise report submitted with the application suggests that the Noise Exposure Category for the site (NEC – PPG24, Annex 1) is NEC C based on the use of the shortened measurement procedure in CRTN during the daytime hours only. The reported levels place the site near the top of this NEC. PPG24 does, however, also categorise sites due to their night time noise environment, but no night time noise levels have been included in the submitted report.
- 7.17 The report makes a case that many developments are permitted in NEC C environments, which may be true, but PPG24 does state that ‘Planning permission should not normally be granted...in these circumstances’. Furthermore it is possible that night time noise levels would place this site within NEC D.
- 7.18 HDC Environmental Health Services undertook longer term noise measurements at the site and found that the site lies within NEC D, and it is therefore the opinion of the Environmental Health Officer that this site is just not suitable for intensification of residential development due to the noise in the vicinity. PPG24 recommends that ‘Planning permission would normally be refused’ where a site is within NEC D.

Refuse

- 7.19 The bin store may need to allow for extra bins, as two bedroom properties may require an additional recycling bin, also depending on who will be responsible for the maintenance of the planted areas green bins may also be required.

Impact on the neighbouring properties

- 7.20 The proposed scheme has been designed with bedroom and lounge windows looking towards Nos.6 and 8 High Street across the road at ground and first floor level, and although this is an increase to the present situation it is not uncommon in a residential situation such as this. Therefore, it is considered, particularly with the distance of approximately 18 metres (the proposed buildings will be set further

back from the footpath than the existing building), that there will not be an unacceptable loss of amenity for the neighbouring properties.

- 7.21 The other issues raised by a third party, of highways and character, have been addressed earlier in the report.

Air quality

- 7.22 The application site is also in an area where nitrogen dioxide concentrations have been predicted to exceed European and UK objective levels. It is therefore likely that the introduction of residential receptors at this location would result in the Council being obliged to declare a further Air Quality Management Area. Although the air quality does not in itself constitute a robust reason for refusal it does support the suggestion that this site is not suitable for residential development due to its extremely close proximity to a busy roundabout on the A1 and the associated traffic pollution and the resulting poor quality living conditions for possible occupants.

- 7.23 Having regard to applicable national and local planning policies, and having taken all relevant material considerations into account, it is recommended that planning permission should be refused in this instance.

- 8. RECOMMENDATION – REFUSE BOTH APPLICATIONS** for the following reasons:

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- 8.1 The proposed residential development by reason of its layout, design, form, bulk and detailing would appear out of keeping with the character and appearance of the street scene and would result in an unduly prominent and inharmonious development which would fail to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This would be contrary to policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan - Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy 2008; policies En5, En6, En9, En25 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995; HL5 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration 2002; policies B1 and B8 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007; and CS1 from the Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework submission Core Strategy 2008.

- 8.2 The application site lies within Noise Exposure Category D (NEC D; PPG24:1994). The NEC is derived from average daytime and night time noise levels which have been found to be very high. In addition to the very high average noise levels the site is also subject to extremely high maximum noise levels and the maximum noise level found during the recent survey was in 101dB L(A)max. The impact of these high maximum levels is that, even with very substantial noise mitigation incorporated into a building envelope, there could still potentially be frequent disturbance for occupiers. The proposal would therefore result in poor living conditions for the future occupiers of the proposed properties and would be contrary to policies H37 and H38 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995; B4 of Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007; and to PPG24: Planning & Noise (1994).

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- 8.3 The proposal fails to justify the demolition of the existing property which contributes positively to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The merits of the proposed replacement building are not sufficient to justify the demolition of the existing property. This would be contrary to guidance in PPG15; policy En8 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan 1995 and policy B8 of the Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388388 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

Background Papers:

Planning Application File Reference: 0802818FULL; 0803317CAC
East of England Plan – Revision to the Regional Spatial Strategy May 2008
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Structure Plan, 2003
Huntingdonshire Local Plan, 1995
Huntingdonshire Local Plan Alteration, 2002
Huntingdonshire Interim Planning Policy Statement 2007
Huntingdonshire Local Development Framework Submission Core Strategy 2008

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