

Planning, Design, Access and Heritage Statement

PROPOSAL: Full planning application for the erection of a single building range providing for 3no. dwellings, interlinked by open cartlodge style garaging. The proposed development would replace the existing range of vacant commercial stables, extensive concrete yard, freestanding storage units, associated manége and paraphernalia such as flood lighting.

SITE: Former Salix Stud and Livery, Hamerton Road, Alconbury Weston, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 4JD.



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1.0 THE APPLICATION

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application which seeks consent for the erection of a predominately single building range providing for 3no. dwellings, interlinked by open cartlodge style garaging. The proposed development would replace the existing range of vacant commercial stables, extensive concrete yard, freestanding storage units and associated manége and flood lighting at the former Salix Stud and Livery, to the north of Salix House, Hamerton Road, Alconbury Weston.
- 1.2 The application is supported by the following:
- Location plan;
 - Block plan;
 - Existing elevations and floor plans;
 - Proposed elevations and floor plans;
 - Proposed CGIs;
 - Structural engineers report;
 - Integrated drainage strategy report; and
 - Ecology and biodiversity enhancement report.
- 1.3 It is evident from the supporting drawings that the proposed building form is akin to the existing buildings on the site. It is of a single storey form, narrow gabled and linear, with a subservient rear projection at either end to provide for horseshoe shaped development.
- 1.4 The proposed buildings are positioned on the footprint of the existing stables, storage containers and extensive concrete hardstanding to be removed. The buildings are presented with an active, soft frontage to the open countryside to the north/east.
- 1.5 The northern half the site, which is currently covered by an extensive manége surfaced with recycled rubber chippings, would remain open providing for an extensive landscaping belt and a feature, surface water swale and attenuation pond.
- 1.6 Overall, the proposal is considered well-conceived. It provides for a low sling and inconspicuous development with simple fenestration detailing that respects and enhances the immediate setting and the local vernacular. It does not seek to make a statement but rather it provides for a high quality design that would successfully assimilate into its setting, being what one would expect to see in this edged of settlement, backland location.
- 1.7 The proposed low slung height, form/bulk and simple design combined with the proposed spacious, open and soft landscape site arrangements would also preserve the existing character of the immediate setting. The two storey development currently under construction to the south within the Conservation Area would be softened by the proposed development and thereby provide for an appropriate transitions to and from the open countryside to the north and east of the site.
- 1.8 The proposal will replace the unsightly manége, sizable storage units, a vast amount of concrete hardstanding and the existing stable buildings. It is a distinctive and high-quality development that responds directly and positively to its context. It will, on balance, provide for an enhancement of its immediate setting as well as enhanced views into and out of the conservation area.

- 1.9 The structural report which accompanies this application evidences that the structures to be replaced are of permanent and substantial construction and suitability for continue their use as stables.
- 1.10 The accompanying ecology survey confirms the absence of any protected species including bats, badgers and breeding birds. It also details the biodiversity enhancement which would be brought about by the proposed development.
- 1.11 The accompanying integrated drainage strategy report demonstrates that the surface water has been considered at the outset as an integral part of the design. The site itself is located in flood zone 1 and as such it is not prone to flooding. However, Hamerton Road is in an area identified to be at high risk of flooding from surface water. The accompanying report demonstrates that the development will provide for a swale and balancing pond and, together with the introduction of formal drainage and a reduction the amount impermeable hardstanding and built form, the proposed development will bring about a betterment which will prevent surface water runoff at times of peak rainfall.
- 1.12 The report concludes that during periods of high rain fall there will be no increase in flow into the Alconbury brook and the Sustainable Drainage Strategy is fully in line with current Local and National Policy and there are no flood risk or drainage related grounds on which to object to the proposed development.
- 1.13 The application is being submitted following withdrawal of planning application 20/01547/FUL which also sought consent for the erection of 3no. two storey dwellings, following the removal of the existing disused stables and associated paraphernalia.
- 1.14 LPA officers prepared a committee report for proposal to be presented to member in June 2021, prior the application being withdrawn. The report confirms that the LPA sought to refuse the application for the following reasons, if the application had not been withdrawn:
- 1) No information has been submitted which evidences that the buildings are genuinely vacant and they are of a permanent and substantial construction relative to their existing use and the development does not lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting due to the extent of the plots and the scale, layout, massing and design of the proposed dwellings;
 - 2) The extent of the site, the height, form/bulk and design of the proposals are out of character with existing transition the stables provide from settlement edge into countryside and do not represent a clear enhancement of the immediate setting;
 - 3) The height, form/bulk and design of the proposals fails to preserve the existing character of the immediate setting whereby the edge of Conservation Area transitions into the open countryside through the existing low rise and simple vernacular of the stable buildings and manége area;
 - 4) Surface water has not been considered at the outset as an integral part of the design and is particularly important to ensure that the development does not result in greater surface water runoff as Hamerton Road itself is at high risk of flooding; and
 - 5) Unilateral Undertaking has not been submitted to provide a financial contribution towards bin provision.

- 1.15 The said reasons for refusal are considered in section 7 of this statement, along with justification how the new scheme addresses the issues raised by the LPA.
- 1.16 This statement will evidence and conclude that the proposal accords with Policies LP2, LP10, LP11, LP12, LP33 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and paragraphs 79 and 189 to 196 of the NPPF.

2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

- 2.1 The site has a lawful use as a livery with exercise area (the manège) and the stationing of the said storage units is also lawful through the passage of time. The site is considered to be brownfield land.
- 2.2 The livery business at its peak in 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s housed up to 18 horses in full time livery (exercise, and full care), part livery (stabling mucking out, turnout) and DIY livery, run by the joint proprietors of Mr and Mrs K M Baker. In 2008 the business was scaled down to solely DIY livery due to ill-health of Mrs Baker. For the following 10 years the number of horses fluctuated up to 17, but on average the yard was typically only half full. Following on from Mr Baker suffering two transient ischaemic strokes in late 2019 the decision was immediately taken to plan for the timely closure of the livery business. Ill health, coupled with Mr and Mrs Baker being 75 and 68 years old respectively and no predecessors, meant that in April 2020 clients were notified of regrettably pending closure of the business. From July 2020 to date there have been no liveries stabled. The surrounding fields are now manage as permanent grazing grassland.
- 2.3 The disused stable blocks and associated yard and storage units are situated adjacent to the residential properties to the south and west, open countryside lies directly north and east of the site. As evidenced in the image below, the land comprises of a range of stable blocks situated on the southernmost part of the site, closest to Salix House and the 3no. dwellings currently under construction which lie within the adjoining conservation area:



Image 1: Existing stables viewed from the north

- 2.4 The northern half of the site is covered by an unsightly manége as evidenced in the following image:



Image 2: Existing manége viewed from the east

- 2.5 There 3no. large, unsightly storage containers located on the southern half of the site as shown in the images 3 and 4 below. The below Google Earth image confirms that these contained have been stationed on site for in excess of 10 years:



Image 3: Existing Storage containers viewed from the south-east (November 2021)



Image 4: Existing Storage containers viewed from the south-east (November 2021)



Image 5: Existing Storage containers - Google Earth (October 2008)

- 2.6 The structural report which accompanies this application evidences that the buildings to be replaced are of permanent and substantial construction.
- 2.7 The application is also accompanied by an updated ecology survey which confirms the absence of any protected species including bats, badgers and breeding birds. It also details the biodiversity enhancement which would be brought about by the proposed development.
- 2.8 Preliminary walkover investigations has confirmed the site does not show any evidence of contamination or land fill. And, given the historic use of the site for stabling of horses, it can be stated with certainty that the site does not represent “contaminated land” as defined by section 78(A)2 of Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- 2.9 The accompanying integrated drainage strategy report confirms that the site itself is located in flood zone 1 and as such it is not prone to flooding. However, Hamerton Road is identified to be at high risk of flooding from surface water. Consequently, the proposed development will provide for a swale and balancing pond and, together with the introduction of formal drainage and a reduction the amount impermeable hardstanding and built form, the proposed development will bring about a betterment which will prevent surface water runoff, even during periods of high rain fall.
- 2.10 The proposed development would utilise the existing private drive which provides vehicular access off Hamerton Road. This driveway serves the existing livery yard, Salix House and the approved development for three dwellings under 18/01946/FUL. The access improvements being undertaken under planning permission 18/01946/FUL ensure suitable access provision for the 3no. dwellings being proposed herewith.
- 2.11 The edge of Alconbury Weston Conservation Area follows the east-west edge of the built-up area at this location as described above. It abuts the southern-most elevation of the stable buildings. As such the proposed main area of development is located just

outside but abutting the Conservation Area. However, the existing access serving Salix House and providing the route of the public footpath towards the countryside to the rear is within the conservation area. As such, this part of the application site lies within the conservation area.

- 2.12 There are two grade II listed buildings in the vicinity of the site at 72 and 78 Hamerton Road. It is considered that the site of the proposed dwellings is too removed from these listed curtilages to affect the setting, especially as the development permitted under 18/01946/FUL will be intervening once constructed.
- 2.13 The re-development of the site provides an opportunity to enhance the character and appearance of the wider area, and the adjacent Conservation Area with a sensitively designed scheme.
- 2.14 An assessment of the character of the Conservation Area and the contribution that the countryside immediately to the north makes to its setting is discussed in Section 7 of this statement. It assesses views from the public footpaths in the vicinity of view into and out of the conservation area and considers the transition the stables currently provide from conservation area out to the countryside beyond relative to the development now proposed.

3.0 SITE SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The site lies outside the built-up area of the village and is therefore in open countryside. The southern boundary of the site abuts Alconbury Weston Conservation Area. There is a public footpath in close proximity – it runs alongside the proposed access off Hamerton Road and at the point where the proposed extension to the drive would be created, the footpath turns due east and runs around the edge of the field. There is another public footpath to the west adjacent to 74 and 76 Hamerton Road. Neither public footpath would require diversion or alteration to accommodate the proposed development, as evidenced in the accompanying proposed block plan.
- 3.2 The site is surrounded to the east and north by open countryside, to the west by gardens to neighbouring residential properties and land containing another manège which is in the ownership of the adjacent residential property, 76 Hamerton Road. To the south of the site is the original dwelling, Salix House, and the 3no. two storey dwellings which are currently being erected under planning permission 18/01946/FUL.
- 3.3 The layout and density of the residential developments in immediate locality of the application site outlined in red are indicated on the Location Plan excerpt below:

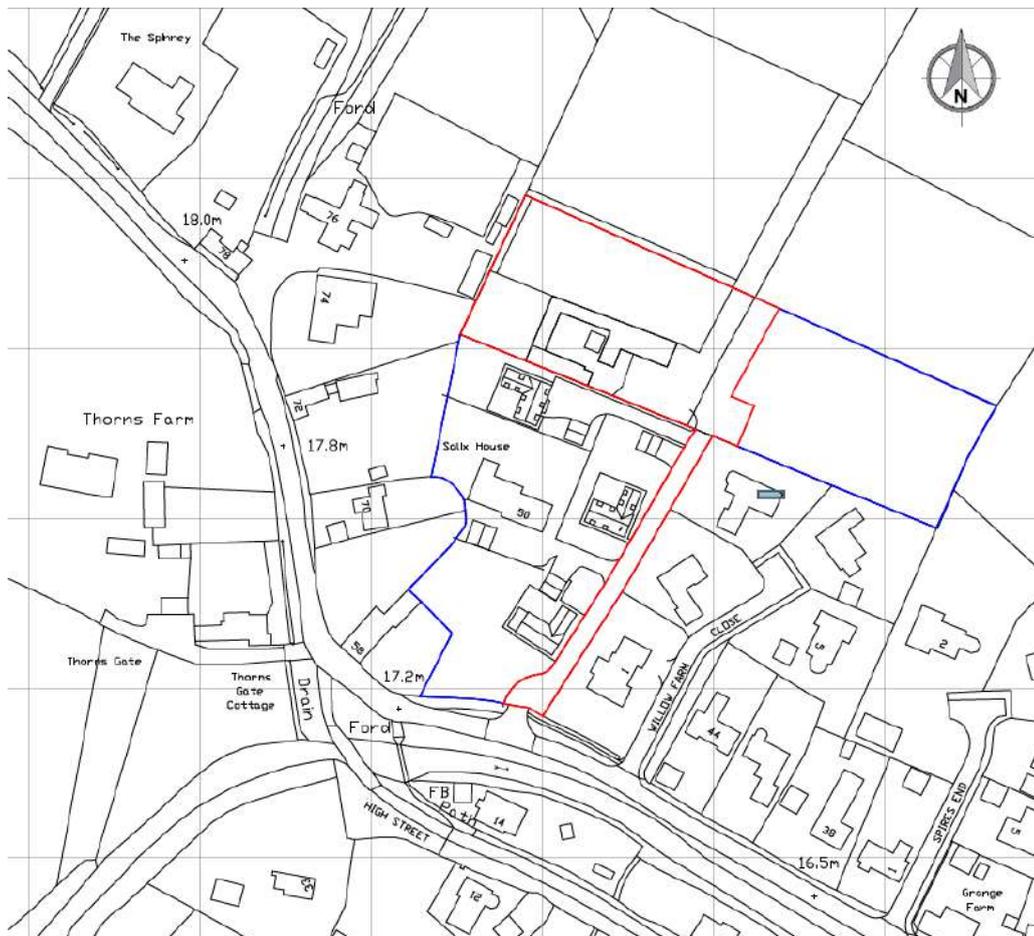


Image 6 - Location plan indicates the site outlined in red and further land ownership to the east outlined in blue

- 3.4 The site falls within a residential area that is characterised by modest dwellings of mixed ages, designs, scale and form which are typical of the respective eras in which they were built.

- 3.5 Hamerton Road is characterised on its northern side by both frontage and in depth residential development. Alconbury Brook runs along the south side of the road with residential development beyond.
- 3.6 The majority of dwellings are two storey, detached properties which sit above the road level within their own curtilage. Off road parking and garaging is provided to either the front or side of properties.
- 3.7 With regard to external materials, a mixture of facing brick (both buff and red) and rendered properties are dominant. The use of small plain clay tiles and slate is also dominate but concrete tiles are also in evidence.
- 3.8 There is no distinctive local vernacular to which new development should stringently follow as evidenced by the images provided below.



Image 7 – Nos.14 to 28 (even) Hamerton Road



Image 8 – Nos.30 to 34 (even) Hamerton Road



Image 9 – Entrance to modern in depth development view (Spires End) viewed from Hamerton Road



Image 10 – Modern in depth development, Spires End



Image 11 – Nos.34 to 14 (even) Hamerton Road



Image 12 – No.1 Spire end and nos.38-44 (even) Hamerton Road



Image 13 – Nos.42 to 44 (even) Hamerton Road



Image 14 – Nos.1 to 3 Willow farm Close



Image 15 – Nos.58 and 50 Hamerton Road and dwellings under construction to south of site



Image 16 – Thorns Gate Cottage and No.58 Hamerton Road



Image 17 – Nos.58 and 50 (Salix House) Hamerton Road and dwellings under construction to south of site



Image 18 – No. 50 (Salix House) Hamerton Road and dwellings under construction to south of site



Image 19 – Existing access road to and dwellings under construction to south of the application site



Image 20 – Salix House, existing access road to and dwellings under construction to south of the application site

4.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- [Erect of stables and tack room, rear of Salix House, 50 Hamerton Road, Alconbury Weston](#)
Ref. No: 8801518FUL | Status: Permission 26 Sep 1988
- [Retention of six stables and tack/feed room and erect six new stables, 50 Hamerton Road, \(Salix House\), Alconbury Weston](#)
Ref. No: 89/00595/FUL | Status: Permission 05 Jun 1989
- [Construction of access](#)
Ref. No: 97/00439/FUL | Status: Refused 19 Jun 1997
- [Construction of access Salix House/Livery Stables Hamerton Road Alconbury Weston](#)
Ref. No: 9800104FUL | Status: Permission 20 Apr 1998
- [Certificate of existing lawful use of stables, tack and feed room, exercise yard for equestrian exercise and use of the northern lean-to of building A and use of building B for equestrian purposes including the stabling of horses and for storing feed, bedding & ancillary equipment, but not including the retailing of equipment](#)
Ref. No: 1201025CLED | Status: Consent 26 Oct 2012
- [Like for like in situ extension of lamp columns from 4 metres to 7 metres](#)
Ref. No: 1201584FUL | Status: Permission 19 Jun 2013
- [The erection of three dwellings, change of use of stable yard to livery parking area and construction of an extension to the access road to the proposed livery parking area](#)
Ref. No: 18/01946/FUL | Status: Permission 18 Oct 2019



Image 21 – Excerpts from approved drawings

- [The erection of 3 detached dwellings, following the demolition of the stables and the re-use of the exercise yard associated with the disused equestrian use.](#)

Ref. No: 20/01547/FUL | Status: Withdrawn 18 Jun 2021



Image 22: Street scene proposed under withdrawn application 20/01547/FUL



Image 23: - Extract from block plan proposed under withdrawn application 20/01547/FUL

5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Relevant National Planning Policy

- 5.1 The Framework confirms that section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 require applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material indications indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The framework goes on to confirm that it is in presumption of favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. Proposed development that accords with an up-to-date Local Plan should be approved and proposed development that conflicts should be refused unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. It is highly desirable that local planning authorities should have an up-to-date plan in place.

PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK Relevant National Planning Policy (2018)

- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework - July 2018 ('NPPF') sets out the Government's planning policies for England and updates the March 2012 guidance. It views delivery of sustainable development as a key consideration for the planning system.
- 5.4 Sustainable development comprises three overarching objectives, as set out in paragraph 8: - an economic objective; - a social objective; and - an environmental objective.
- 5.5 Objectives are interdependent and should be pursued in a mutually supportive manner in order to secure 'net gains' across each of the different objectives.
- 5.6 The Framework at paragraphs 10 and 11 states there is 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development', for decision-taking this mean: - approving development proposal that accord with an up-to-date development plan without; or - Where there are no relevant development plan polices, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless: - The application of policies in this Framework that protects areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as whole.'
- 5.7 **Paragraph 47** stresses that, as required by planning law, applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material consideration indicate otherwise. It reiterates that decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible and within statutory timescales. Delivering a Sufficient Supply of Homes
- 5.8 The Framework at **paragraph 60** supports the objective of 'significantly boosting the supply of homes'. It goes on to state that housing should meet the needs of groups with specific housing requirements.

5.9 **Paragraph 69** supports the delivery of small and medium sized sites. The Framework states that authorities should:

a) identify, through the development plan and brownfield registers, land to accommodate at least 10% of their housing requirement on sites no larger than one hectare; unless it can be shown, through the preparation of relevant plan policies, that there are strong reasons why this 10% target cannot be achieved;

b) use tools such as area-wide design assessments and Local Development Orders to help bring small and medium sized sites forward;

c) support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes; and

d) work with developers to encourage the sub-division of large sites where this could help to speed up the delivery of homes.

5.10 **Paragraph 77** of the Framework requires that decision makers 'should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing development that reflect local needs.' Promoting Healthy and safe Communities

5.11 **Paragraph 79** promotes sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. Planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive, especially where this will support local services.

5.13 **Paragraph 119** - Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land;

promote and support the development of under-utilised land and buildings, especially if this would help to meet identified needs for housing where land supply is constrained and available sites could be used more effectively.

5.14 **Paragraph 123** - Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.

5.15 **Paragraph 124** - states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

5.16 **Paragraph 126** - The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.

Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

5.17 **Paragraph 180** - When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

“development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate”.

5.18 **Paragraph 192** - In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

5.19 **Paragraph 193** - Great weight should be given to the significance of a designated heritage asset, irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm.

5.20 **Paragraph 194** – if harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting, should require clear justifications.

5.21 **Paragraph 196** - states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

5.22 **Paragraph 199** - When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

5.23 **Paragraph 200** Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

RELEVANT LOCAL POLICY

Development Plan Policies

- 5.24 Policy LP1 – Amount of Development Policy
Policy LP8 – Key Service Centres Policy
Policy LP9 – Smaller Settlement Policy
Policy LP10 – The Countryside Policy
Policy LP11 – Design Context Policy
Policy LP12 – Design Implementation Policy
Policy LP14 – Amenity Policy
Policy LP16 – Sustainable Travel
Policy LP17 – Parking provision and Vehicle movement
Policy LP30 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Policy LP31 – Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows Policy
Policy LP33 – Rural Buildings
LP34 – Heritage Assets and their settings
- 5.25 Supplementary Planning Guidance – Huntingdonshire Design Guide 2017
- 5.26 The application in this instance accords with policy LP33, as the buildings are of substantial construction and are redundant/disused. The stables and barns no architectural merit but are of permanent and substantial construction. The proposed re-build will result in a clear enhancement of the site and the overall area when viewed from the open countryside beyond the site. In regard to the design approach and the use of sympathetic materials, the proposal is considered to be in keeping with the rural character of the site.
- 5.27 The development will result in a coherent, inclusive and sympathetic use of a brownfield site, providing for enhancements in accordance with Local Planning Policy LP33 and the guidance contained in the NPPF.

6.0 HERITAGE STATEMENT

- 6.1 A formal Heritage Statement is required for applications within or adjacent to a Conservation Area or applications involving land adjacent to a listed building or which may affect a listed building nearby.
- 6.2 Statements will need to recognise the relevant Heritage Asset(s) and consider the impact of the proposal on those Heritage Asset(s). However, the scope and degree of detail necessary in a Heritage Statement will vary according to the particular circumstance of each application.
- 6.3 The application site lies adjacent to the Alconbury Weston Conservation Area, as indicated below:

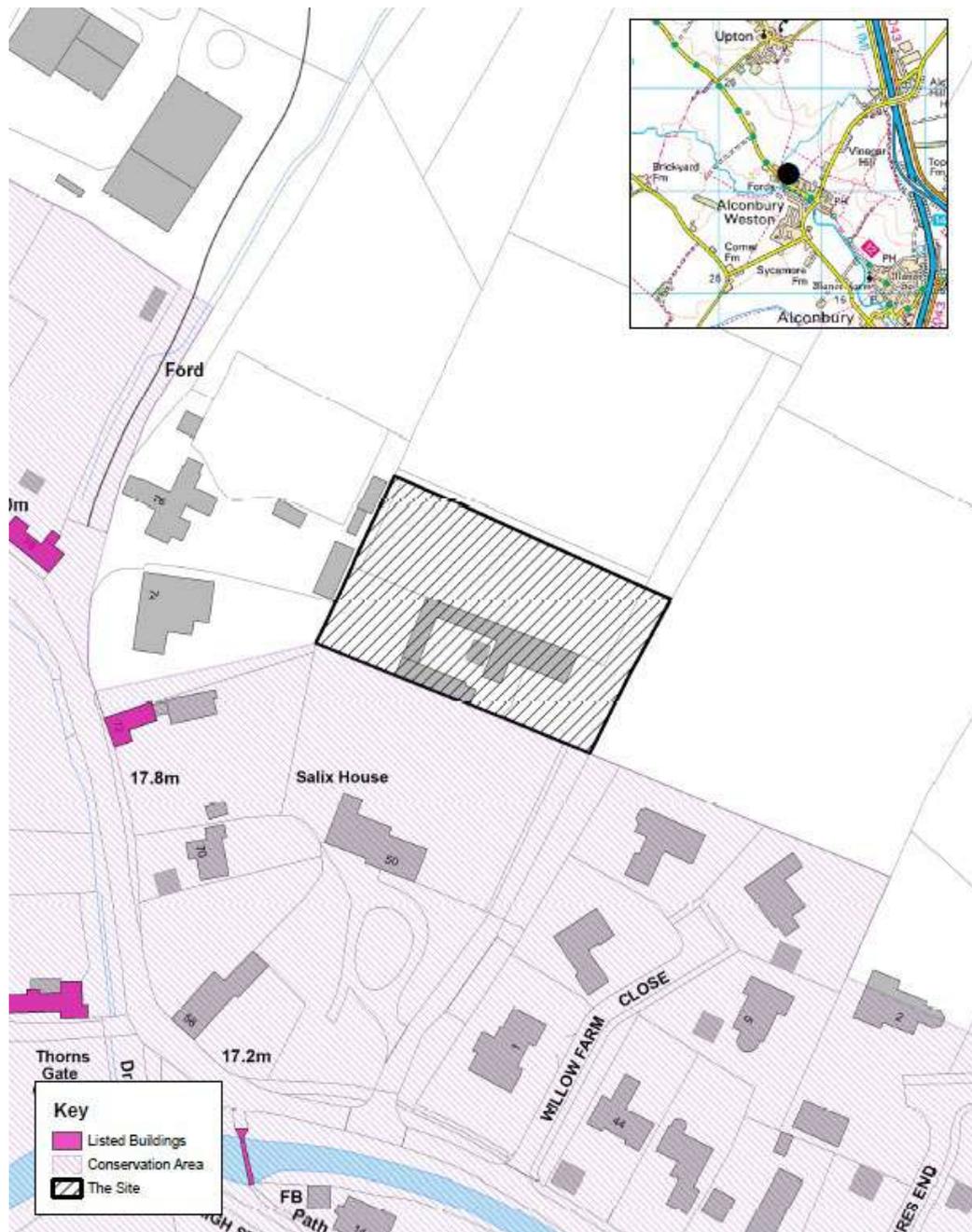


Image 24: Excerpt from officer report relating to withdrawn planning application 18/01946/FUL

- 6.4 In regard to any other heritage assets, in considering withdrawn planning application 18/01946/FUL, officers confirmed that the site is sufficient distance from the Grade II Listed Properties (as identified in Image 23 above), not to affect the setting of the said properties. This heritage assessment will therefore focus on the setting of the conservation area.
- 6.5 Alconbury Western Conservation Area was designated in 1977. Shortly after the designation the area close to the site was subject to considerable amounts of development. The neighbouring properties Willow Farm and Spires End were constructed soon after the designation of the Conservation Area. Salix House was built later, around 1980 on land associated with a public house.
- 6.6 The site is located adjacent to the conservation area and there is a designated footpath running to the east. The LPA conservation team expressed concern that the height and form of the withdrawn application, did not preserve the existing setting at edge of the conservation area, the transition to the countryside and the views from the public footpath.
- 6.7 The below image confirms the extent of the conservation area and the sites relationship with the adjacent conservation area and the designated footpath as indicated by the dashed orange line:

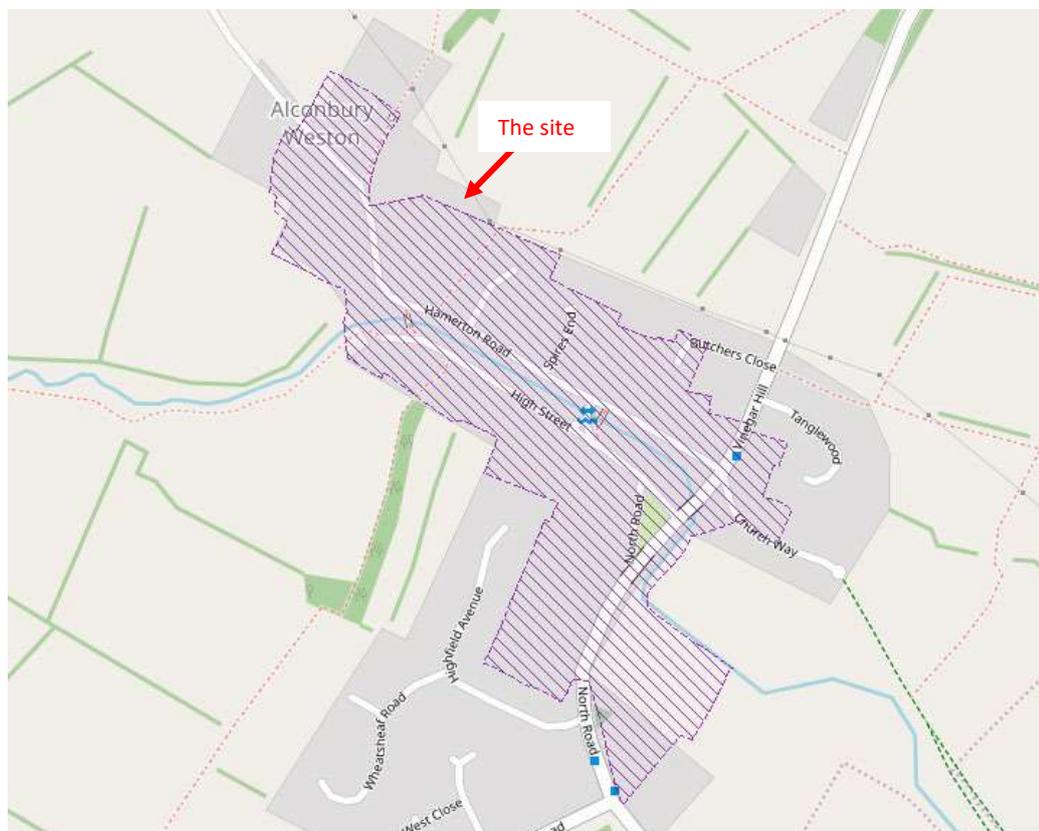


Image 25: Map showing extent of Alconbury Weston Conservation Area.

- 6.8 The stables are generally screened from public view from within the conservation area by the Salix House and the 3no. dwellings currently being constructed under planning permission 18/01946/FUL. Public view points of the site are apparent from the southern eastern edge of the conservation area as evidenced by the images below.



Image 26 – Dwelling under construction to south of application site (viewed through no.44 Hamerton Road)



Image 26 – Nos.58 and 50 (Salix House) Hamerton Rd and dwellings under construction to south of site



Image 27 – No.50 (Salix House) Hamerton Road and dwellings under construction to south of application site



Image 28 – Glimpse of roof to existing stable viewed from Salix House/dwellings under construction to south



Image 29 – Dwellings under construction to south viewed from access road junction with Hamerton Road.



Image 30 – Dwellings under construction to south viewed from access road to application site.



Image 31 – Salix house and dwellings under construction on Plots 2 & 3 to south, view of stables not attainable



Image 32 – Dwelling under construction on Plot 2 (glimpse view of stables and storage container attainable)



Image 33 – Dwelling under construction on Plot 3/garage to Plot 2 (glimpse view of stables and storage container)



Image 34 – Dwelling under construction on Plot 3 (view of stables and storage containers attainable)



Image 35 – Dwelling under construction on Plot 3/garage to Plot 2 (view of stables and storage container)



Image 36 – Dwelling under construction on Plots 1-3, Salix House and stable/southern boundary to application site



Image 37 – Dwelling under construction on Plot 3 and application site viewed from public footpath to east

6.9 The existing stables/equestrian themselves do not bear any historic value, although they do form a rural transition to the open countryside when viewed into and out of the conservation area as evidenced by the following images:



Image 38: The re-development when viewed from the public footpath and from the edge of the conservation area.



Image 39: The re-development when viewed from the public footpath and from the edge of the conservation area.

6.10 It is considered that the proposed re-development of the site will reinforce the existing in depth developments found in the locality, while offering a softened low lying development taking design cues of a rural appearance and high quality transition to the open countryside, when viewed from the Conservation Area.

6.11 The removal of the vast amount of hard standing and the introduction of the high quality landscaping within the and the comprehensive soft buffer at the edge of the site, will bring about public benefits and therefore enhancement the site and views in and out of the conservation area.



Image 40 – Dwellings and garaging under construction on Plots 2 & 3 to south and application site viewed from public footpath to east



Image 41 – Application site viewed from public footpath to east



Image 42 – Application site viewed from public footpath to east



Image 43 – Application site viewed from public footpath to east



Image 42 – Zoomed in view of application site from public footpath to east



Image 43 – View of application site from public footpath to north-east



Image 43 – Zoomed in view of application site from public footpath to north-east



Image 44 – Zoomed in view of application site from public footpath to north-east



Image 45 – View of application site from public footpath to north



Image 46 – Zoomed in view of application site from public footpath to north

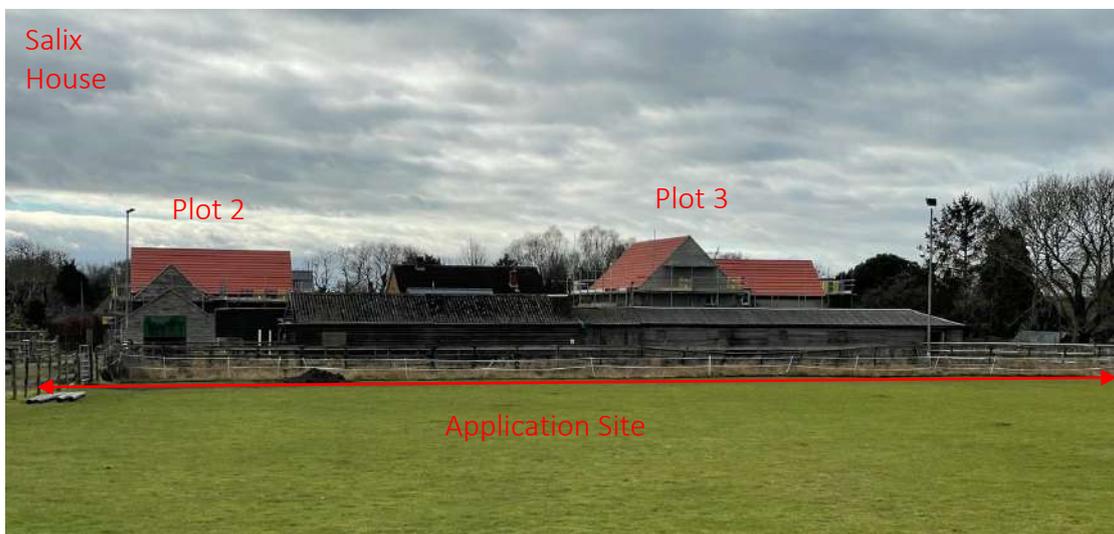


Image 47 – Zoomed in view from north of application site and existing dominate development beyond to south



Image 48 – Zoomed in view from north of application site and existing dominate development beyond to south



Image 48 – Zoomed in view from north-east of application site and existing development beyond to south



Image 49 – View from private land north-east of application site and with existing development beyond



Image 50 – Ménage to the relinquished viewed from northern eastern corner of the application site



Image 51 – Existing view into the conservation area from northern eastern corner of the application site



Image 52 – Existing view into the conservation area from northern eastern corner of the application site



Image 53 – Existing view taken in the conservation area from southern eastern corner of the application site



Image 54: View from south-eastern corner of application site looking south down existing access into the conservation area.

- 6.12 For the reasons outlined in paragraphs 7.7 to 7.48 of this statement, and as evidenced by the array of images provided above, it is considered that the significance of the Conservation Area and its setting, including public views into and out of the Conservation Area have been assessed and taken into account in the design of the proposal.
- 6.13 The proposed site arrangements and the height, form/bulk and design of the proposed building range will preserve the existing character of the immediate setting whereby the edge of Conservation Area transitions into the open countryside through the existing low rise and simple vernacular of the stable buildings and manège area.
- 6.14 As such the proposal will not cause harm to the identified heritage assets. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy LP 34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and paragraphs 189 to 196 of the NPPF.

7.0 DESIGN SOLUTION

- 7.1 The physical characteristics of the scheme have been informed by a rigorous process of Assessment, Involvement, Evaluation and Design following the withdrawal of planning application 20/01547/FUL and consideration of the detailed advice contained within the officer report for this application.
- 7.2 The design proposal now adopted responds to specific site constraints and opportunities by taking design cues from the adjoining residential developments. The proposal adopts an innovative approach whilst respecting the physical characteristics of the site and its surroundings, the building tradition, ordering, form and materials of the locality, the historic scale and context of the setting and the natural qualities and features of the area.
- 7.3 The grounds on which officers sought to refuse application 20/01547/FUL are set out below and followed by an explanation as to how this application addresses these concerns, and the submitted fully complies with the relevant National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Local Planning Policies LP2, LP10, LP11, LP12, LP33 and LP34.

Vacancy and integrity of existing buildings and floor area comparisons

- 7.4 **Reason 1:** *The proposed development site lies within the countryside. Policy LP 10 restricts development in the countryside to opportunities as provided for in other policies within the plan and that development must recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Policy LP 33 enables support for the replacement of rural buildings where the building is redundant or disused, of permanent and substantial construction and is not in such a state of dereliction or disrepair that significant reconstruction is required; that the proposal would lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting and that a modest increase in floorspace will be supported. The stables/barns proposed to be demolished are considered to have been made vacant for the purposes of complying with policy LP 33 and no information has been submitted which evidences that these buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction. The floorspace of the proposed dwellings is approximately 100 square metres larger than the stables which is in excess of a modest increase and due to the extent of the plots and the scale, layout, massing and design of the proposed dwellings the development does not lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting. As such the proposal is contrary to policies LP 2, LP 10 and LP 33 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and paragraph 79 of the NPPF (2019).*
- 7.5 The LPA identifies the policy context and confirms the LPA consider the site to be in the open countryside. Proposed Reason 1 for refusal encapsulates three concerns:
- a) *The stables/barns proposed to be demolished are considered to have been made vacant for the purposes of complying with policy LP 33;*
 - b) *No information has been submitted which evidences that these buildings are of a permanent and substantial construction; and*
 - c) *The floorspace of the proposed dwellings is approximately 100 square metres larger than the stables which is in excess of a modest increase and due to the extent of the plots and the scale, layout, massing and design of the proposed dwellings the development does not lead to a clear and substantial enhancement of the immediate setting.*

- 7.6 It is acknowledged the site is located in the countryside for the purposes of the Development Plan. Local Plan Policy LP33 supports developments that enable the replacement of rural buildings where the building is redundant or disused, such as proposed with the withdrawn application and the proposal now presented under this application.
- 7.7 In regard to concern (a) and building vacancy, the stables have in the past been used for livery, housing approximately 18 horses, all of which were stabled with, tack rooms, feed rooms, ménage and jumps. The livery business has over the recent years been significantly scaled down, due to a continued decline in the viability of the business coupled with enforced retirement of the site/business owner.
- 7.8 The elderly owners have long since closed the livery business and there are no paying customers. It is a matter of fact and degree that the business has not traded and the building have been vacant since 2015 and they remain vacant today. It is therefore evident that the business has not been purposely closed in anticipation for the re-development, and the application complies with Planning Policy LP33 in this regard.
- 7.9 In regard to concern (b) and the structural integrity of the buildings, this proposal is supported by a structural engineers report. Peter Knight, (BSc (Hons) MSc CEng MIStructE MICE FGS) from Tellet Engineering carried out a site visit on 29th September 2021, where a structural survey of the building's was undertaken.
- 7.10 The report provides photographic evidence of the condition of the buildings along with a written statement indicating the construction type and the condition of the individual building elements.
- 7.11 The report recommends some general upkeep and concludes that the structures as they exist today are of permanent and substantial construction and suitability for continue use as stables, the application complies with Planning Policy LP33 in this regard.
- 7.12 In regard to concern (c), local plan policy LP33 supports redevelopment if the site with a modest increase in scale. In considering withdrawn application 20/01547/FUL officers felt that the then proposed 100m² increase floorspace was in excess of a modest increase.
- 7.13 In this regard, the table below is extracted from the submitted block plan. It provides a full break down on internal and external floor areas. The existing structures to be demolished have a gross internal floor area of 365m² and the proposed development provides for a a gross internal floor area of 372m²
- 7.14 The proposal would result in an extremely modest increase in gross internal floor space of 7m². This equates to a 1.9% increase relative to the existing building situated on the application the site.

Areas:	Existing	Proposed	Proposed increase
TOTAL Footprint including open-sided structures	459.5m ²	499m ²	8.6%
TOTAL Footprint excluding open-sided structures	383.5m ²	380m ²	-1%
TOTAL Gross internal floorspace	365m ²	372m ²	1.9%

Image 55: chart indicating the existing and proposed GIFA

- 7.15 The existing large storage containers have not been included in the existing buildings figures noted above. Albeit, they should be taken into account in determining this application given the stationing of the said storage units is lawful. The units have combined gross internal floor area amounting to 60m².
- 7.16 The information above fully responds to the officers' first recommendation of refusal in that it has been evidenced that: (a) the buildings were not vacated solely for the purposes of redevelopment; (b) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction and suitability for continue use as stables; and (c) the re-development of the site will result in an extremely modest increase in gross internal floor space. The proposal therefore fully complies with planning policy LP33 in this regard.
- 7.17 Concerns raised regarding the extent of the plots and the scale, layout, massing and design of the proposed dwellings relative to the setting are considered collectively in the context of proposed reasons 2 and 3 for refusal as follows.

Design context, local identity and built form and floor areas

- 7.18 **Reason 2:** *The proposal does not respond positively to its context to help create distinctive and high-quality development and does not contribute positively to the areas character and identity. The proposal has not been designed with any reference to its context, the local identity or built form as set out in the National Design Guide. The extent of the site, the height, form/bulk and design of the proposals are out of character with existing transition the stables provide from settlement edge into countryside and do not represent a clear enhancement of the immediate setting. The proposal therefore fails to comply with Policies LP10 b, LP11, LP12 and LP 33 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and paragraphs 130 and 170 b) of the NPPF (2019) and guidance within the National Design Guide and Huntingdonshire Design Guide.*
- 7.19 In regard to the design, the LPA considered the proposed dwellings to be excessive in scale and mass and the "scheme appeared to be rather squat buildings and to be urban and fussy in their appearance.... This is exacerbated by the varied ridge heights, gable projections and varying size and style of windows..... There is nothing about them that relates them to the rural setting nor to their position on this site that current appears as the transition from residential/built up area to countryside via the scale and rural nature of the stable buildings".

- 7.20 The proposal has been fully informed by the officer recommendation of refusal and has been through a rigorous design process prior to the submission of the application. It is considered the re-development of the site will now contribute positively to the areas character and identity for the following reasons.
- 7.21 As before, the application proposes to removal of the existing commercial stables, storage units, manège and all other associated paraphernalia, including flood lights which presently detract from the appearance and character of the area . In turn, the now proposed re-development of the site will provide for a high quality predominately single building range providing for 3no. dwellings, interlinked by open cartlodge style garaging.
- 7.22 The existing single storey buildings are linear and elongated in form but with a rear projection at its western end. Here, as shown in the image below, the buildings return along the southern boundary of the site to form a traditional courtyard development:



Image 56: Aerial image taken from Google Street

- 7.23 Correspondingly, the proposed predominately single building range provides for 3no. dwellings, interlinked by open cartlodge style garaging. It too has narrow gabled and linear, elongated building form. It also has a subservient rear projection at either end to provide for a traditional horseshoe/courtyard style barn development, the type of which one would expect to see in this edge of settlement, backland location.

7.24 The proposed block plan accompanying this application shows the footprint of the proposed development relative to the existing stables to be replaced and the manège to be relinquished. The existing building footprints are denoted as dashed redlines with the extent of the manège indicated by the dashed below line, as evidenced in the image below:



Image 57: Extract from the submitted block plan indicating the re-revised position of the dwellings in context with the surrounding area.

7.25 The northern half the site, which is currently covered by an extensive manège surfaced with recycled rubber chippings, would remain open providing for an extensive landscaping belt and a feature, surface water balancing pond.

7.26 Overall, the proposal is considered to be a well-perceived, inconspicuous, low rise and a simple vernacular development that respects and enhances the immediate setting. It does not seek to make a statement but rather it provides for a high quality design that would successfully assimilate into its setting, being what one would expect to see in this edged of settlement, backland location.

7.27 For this reason, it is consider that the proposed site layout and the extent of the site to be developed provides for a designed with reference to its context, the local identity and built form.

7.28 The existing stables are single storey simple structures and the design has been lead based on the existing situation at the site. As evidenced below, the application is now considered to be in compliance with Local Plan Policy LP33 which supports a modest increase in scale when considering the re-development of site such as that under consideration herewith.

7.29 The overall height, scale and mass of the development has been significantly reduced. The proposed development is now of single storey building form as evidenced by the low 2.4m eaves height and just under 5.4m principle ridge heights of plots 1 and 3:



Image 58: Plot 1 (front/northern elevation)



Image 59: Plot 3 (front/northern elevation)

7.30 Plot 3 sits between, and is cloaked by, plots 1 and 2. It is considered that this arrangement offers the some flexibility to provide for some design interest, variation. In this regard, plot 3 has been designed with an eave and maximum ridge height of 3.18m and 6.06m respectively.

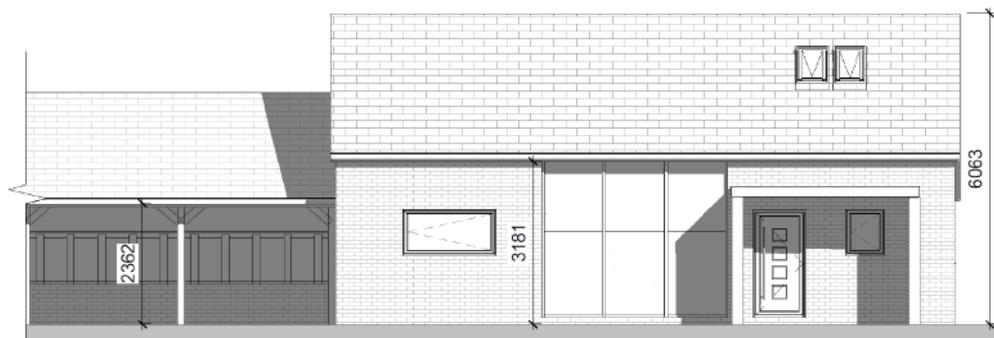


Image 60: Plot 2 (front/northern elevation)

7.31 The eave and ridge heights of plot 3 are just 675mm higher than those proposed on plots 1 and 3. This enables the provision of some first floor accommodation within its limited roof void whilst still maintaining an appropriate low slung scale of development, with a simple roof slope punctuated front and back by a few modest, simple rooflights:



Image 61: Plot 3 (building section)



Image 62: Front/northern elevation to proposed development (view from east)



Image 63: Front/northern elevation to proposed development (view from west)

- 7.32 The chosen elevation treatments and fenestration detail is simplified, reducing the domesticated appearance of the proposed dwellings, to ensure the re-development of the site is characterised with the rural setting, softening the appearance of the urbanised developments to the south.



Image 64: Front/northern elevation to proposed development with the two storey dwellings under construction to the south (view from north)

- 7.33 The materials are shown as a mix of timber cladding and buff brick, natural slate and plain clay roof tiles are also envisaged. It is understood that a condition will be imposed on the decision notice to ensure full details of the materials are submitted prior to and approved by the LPA prior to the commencement of any works above slab level.
- 7.34 In regard to the transition the existing stables provide from settlement edge into countryside, it is considered that the overall site layout, mass and scale of the proposed development as described above is appropriate to its context.
- 7.35 The proposal now maintains a tumbling down effect the two storey development to the south which is under construction. Relative to the existing building and paraphernalia on the application site, the proposed development will in fact better screen the said two storey dwellings to the south and thereby soften and enhance the transition of buildings towards the countryside.



Image 65: Front/northern elevation to proposed development with the two storey dwellings under construction to the south (view from north)



Image 66: Two storey dwellings under construction to the south (view from the southern boundary of the application site)



Image 67: CGI aerial view of proposed development and the two storey dwellings under construction to the south

- 7.36 Restricting the proposed development to the southern half of the site follows the footprint the existing stables and thereby maintains a suitable transition from the built form to the open countryside, whilst also optimising the opportunity to provide an extensive landscape buffer, softening the appearance of the development when viewed from the open countryside beyond the site.
- 7.37 The relationship of the proposed buildings with the two storey dwellings currently under construction to the south of the site, assists in softening the urbanisation of the site appearance, when viewed from the open countryside, providing a coherent development, in keeping with the rural character of the area.
- 7.38 The siting of the proposed new buildings respond positively to the site, the surrounding area and the setting of the adjacent residential/built up area to countryside. The proposal relates well to the built up area in accordance with Policy LP9 and fully complies with planning policy LP33, in regard to replacement buildings.

Conservation area setting

- 7.39 **Reason 3:** *The application has failed to demonstrate that the significance of the Conservation Area and its setting, including public views into and out of the Conservation Area have been assessed and taken into account in the design of the proposal. The height, form/bulk and design of the proposals fails to preserve the existing character of the immediate setting whereby the edge of Conservation Area transitions into the open countryside through the existing low rise and simple vernacular of the stable buildings and manege area. As such the proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset and the public benefits of the proposal to provide three market dwellings do not outweigh this harm. The proposal is therefore contrary to policy LP 34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and paragraphs 189 to 196 of the NPPF.*
- 7.40 The officers reasoning for the recommended refusal contained in the committee report confirms it is the view of the LPA that the existing stables: *"have the effect of marking a transition from the residential built up part of the village into the countryside and this is how the buildings would read by passers-by who use the public footpath to the east of the site..... The proposed new houses did not relate to the rural setting nor their position on the site that currently appears as a transition from residential/built up area to countryside via the scale and rural nature of the area".*
- 7.41 The LPA remarked further in this regard suggesting: *"the existing buildings sit well within the surroundings and fit with the nature and character of the immediate area..... new houses will stand out and will being viewed as a creep of urbanisation beyond the natural edge of the village into the open countryside".*
- 7.42 It is evident from the supporting drawings that the now proposed building form is akin to the existing buildings on the site. It is of a single storey form, narrow gabled and linear, with a subservient rear projection at either end to provide for horseshoe shaped development.

- 7.43 The proposed buildings are positioned directly on the footprint of the existing stables, storage containers and extensive concrete hardstanding to be removed. The buildings are presented with an active, soft frontage to the open countryside to the north/east.
- 7.44 The northern half the site, which is currently covered by an extensive manège surfaced with recycled rubber chippings, would remain open providing for an extensive landscaping belt and a feature, surface water balancing pond.
- 7.45 As evidenced above in respect of proposed reason (2) for refusal, the proposal is considered to be a well-perceived, inconspicuous, low rise and a simple vernacular development that respects and enhances the immediate setting. It does not seek to make a statement but rather it provides for a high quality design that would successfully assimilate into its setting, being what one would expect to see in this edged of settlement, backland location.
- 7.46 The proposed low slung height, form/bulk and simple design combined with the proposed spacious, open and soft landscape site arrangements would also preserve the existing character of the immediate setting. The two storey development currently under construction to the south within the Conservation Area would be softened by the proposed development and thereby provide for an appropriate transitions to and from the open countryside to the north and east of the site.
- 7.47 The proposal will replace the unsightly manège, sizable storage units, a vast amount of concrete hardstanding and the existing stable buildings. It is a distinctive and high-quality development that responds directly and positively to its context. It will, on balance, provide for an enhancement of its immediate setting as well as enhanced views into and out of the conservation area.
- 7.48 The proposal is therefore contrary to policy LP 34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and paragraphs 189 to 196 of the NPPF.
- 7.49 A formal heritage impact assessment is provided in section 7 of this statement.

Surface water drainage

- 7.50 **Reason 4:** *The submitted application forms states that surface water drainage will be provided via a mains connection. Surface water has not been considered at the outset as an integral part of the design and is particularly important in this area where the proposed access where it adjoins Hamerton Road is in an area at high risk of flooding and surface water drainage issues. The proposal does not include Sustainable Drainage Systems nor does it demonstrate that these are inappropriate and is therefore contrary to policy LP 15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.*
- 7.51 The LPA officer report explains: *"application has not considered SuDs as an integral part of the development and is not proposing to provide a sustainable drainage system. There is a potential that an increase in surface water run-off as a result of the development could find its way onto the highway, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of flash flooding during heavy rainfall or surface water flooding after heavy rainfall".*

- 7.52 The application is now supported by an Integrated drainage strategy report prepared by MTC engineering.
- 7.53 Therein, the application site is referenced as the 'Phase 2' development of 3 residential dwellings on land at Salix House, Hamerton Road, Alconbury Weston.
- 7.54 The report confirms that in line with the drainage hierarchy surface water discharge will be to the Alconbury Brook via the surface water drainage system to be installed as part of the Phase 1 development consented under planning reference 18/01946/FUL. The 'Phase 1' development being the 3no. dwellings currently under construction immediately to the south of the application site.
- 7.55 Supporting calculations have been provided to demonstrate that the proposed SuDS systems will accommodate a 1 in 100 year plus 40% climate change rainfall event. Information demonstrating that all relevant local and national requirements relating to surface water drainage are met has also been provided.
- 7.56 The report concludes that during periods of high rain fall there will be no increase in flow into the Alconbury brook, as the flow is restricted by the 5l/s rates as per the installed system of Phase 1. Furthermore this proposed development will bring additional benefits during peak rainfall as there will not be the current run off from the existing equine buildings and hardstanding that currently run directly into the watercourse via land drains.
- 7.57 The Sustainable Drainage Strategy is fully in line with current Local and National Policy and there are no flood risk or drainage related grounds on which to object to the proposed development of 3no. dwellings on land at Salix House, Hamerton Road, Alconbury Weston.
- 7.58 The report and appendices thereto show foul drainage to be provided via an existing connection to the mains. This is to be taken via the 'Phase 1' development which has been design to accommodate the additional foul water follow that would be generated by the proposed development of 3no. dwellings on the application site.

Unilateral Undertaking (bins provision)

- 7.59 **Reason 5:** *The proposal is required to ensure that infrastructure is provided to make the development acceptable in planning terms which includes a contribution towards bin provision for each dwelling through a financial contribution delivered by submission of a completed Unilateral Undertaking. Such an Undertaking has not been provided therefore the proposal is contrary to policy LP 4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Developer Contribution SPD (2011).*
- 7.60 The applicant has confirmed that a formal Unilateral Undertaking will be prepared, signed and submitted once the said planning application has been registered and a formal planning reference number provided by the LPA.

Other material considerations

Access and parking

- 7.61 The site will be accessed from Hamerton Road, via a internal road partly constructed to serve the new development to the south of the site. No changes are required to the main access from Hamerton Road and no objections were from the County Highways engineers during consultation with the withdrawn application.
- 7.62 Each dwelling would be served by their own private cartlodge providing garaging for two cars with space reserved in front of each garage for the parking of two further vehicles. Thus, each dwelling will be afford 4no. parking spaces.
- 7.63 The internal site arrangements and private driveway have also been design to enable delivery vehicles to turning on site clear of any parking spaces. All vehicles will be able to enter and leave the site in forward gear.
- 7.64 The internal road is fully compliant to enable everyone to get to and move through the site and the proposed dwellings on equal terms regardless of age, disability, ethnicity or social grouping.
- 7.65 Access to the dwelling and the site will be mobility friendly and fully compliant with Part M of the Approved Documents and 'The Principles of Inclusive Design'.
- 7.66 With regard to Planning and Crime Prevention, opportunities for the passive surveillance of the development, including its access and parking areas, can be achieved from the properties adjoining the site and the proposed dwellings themselves. The proposed site layout and window positions ensure that parking and access areas are secure as they are subject to passive surveillance by occupants.
- 7.67 The siting and layout of the scheme is such that space is clearly attainable for the suitable storage of refuse and recycling within the curtilage of the dwellings.

Biodiversity

- 7.68 The accompanying ecology survey confirms the absence of any protected species including bats, badgers and breeding birds.
- 7.69 It confirms that the site supported common and widespread habitats low in ecological value. No signs or evidence of protected, priority or rare species were identified. No further investigations are considered necessary but it does recommend precautionary measures to be adopted during construction to protect potential foraging bats, birds, amphibians and hedgehogs.
- 7.70 The report concludes that with recommendations followed as described, proposed development could proceed with a minimal risk of harm impact to protected, priority or rare species or habitats.
- 7.71 With biodiversity enhancements followed as described, the proposed development would be enhanced for the benefit of local wildlife in accordance with net gain requirements in the national planning policy.

7.72 It is considered that adoption of the recommendations set out in this report should be secured through a standard condition of planning permission.

8.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The proposal would provide for individually designed dwellings with a sympathetic appearance and resulting site layout and density that would maintain, if not enhance the character and appearance of Alconbury Weston Conservation Area. It will make a more efficient use of land and provide for a low density of development which is appropriate to its historic village setting.
- 8.2 Particular care has been taken to ensure that it would not create an alien or inappropriate form of development that would harm the existing character or appearance of the locality. The proposed scheme would reinforce the historic village character of Alconbury Weston and make more efficient use of a brownfield site.
- 8.3 The site layout and relationship with existing buildings would allow for adequate daylight and sunlight to penetrate in and between buildings. It would respect the amenity of occupiers of neighbouring buildings and those of future occupants by ensuring their environments are not harmed by noise and disturbance or by inadequate daylight, sunlight, privacy or by overshadowing. The site arrangement would provide for convenient and more than adequately sized rear gardens and parking and access arrangements would not detract from the amenity of adjacent properties by reason of increased noise and activity.
- 8.4 It is evident that the proposed development could be constructed with sympathetic materials of appropriate colour and texture to ensure a high quality build which is befitting of the site. The same, together with hard and soft landscaping, would be reserved for approval as part of a standard condition of planning permission which will allow the submission of details for approval by the LPA prior to the commencement of development.
- 8.5 It is considered that the adopted design proposal would meet with the requirements of all relevant planning policies for the reasons that have been outlined herein and there are no adverse material considerations in this particular case which would warrant the refusal of planning permission.