

Application Ref: 21/01943/FUL

Proposal: Demolition of existing building and erection of 4no. dwellings each comprising 4no. bedrooms; erection of garages, parking areas, access, soft landscaping and associated infrastructure.

Site: Castor Business Centre- Vogal Training Centre, Helpston Road, Ailsworth, Peterborough

Applicant: Mr Jon Gibbison
Hereward Homes Ltd

Agent: Mr Simon Machen

BarMach Ltd

Site visit: 12.01.2022

Called in by: Ailsworth Parish Council

Reason: Supports in principle the development of this site for residential use as it immediately abuts the village envelope and this is detailed and allowed for in the Neighbourhood Plan. We would like to see the comments from the Tree Officer taken into account for any development and tree protection orders applied where appropriate.

Case officer: Mr Jack Gandy

Telephone No. 01733 452595

E-Mail: jack.gandy@peterborough.gov.uk

Recommendation: REFUSE

1 Description of the site and surroundings and Summary of the proposal

Site and Surroundings

The application site comprises of the 'Castor Business Centre - Vogal Training Centre' and associated car parking. The site is located outside of the village boundary of Ailsworth, within the open countryside, however its frontage on to Helpston Road abuts the village boundary which runs along Helpston Road and encloses the residential development on the opposite side of the road. Similarly, the Conservation Area boundary of the village follows this boundary along Helpston Road and so the site is also outside of, but adjacent to, the Conservation Area. The site is served via a single vehicle access from Helpston Road. It has extensive tree coverage and vegetation along its western boundary with Helpston Road which helps to screen the site from road and the residential properties beyond. The site has a rural agricultural character to its north, east, and southern boundaries, with a residential character to the west. The village boundary to the south is located 50 metres to the south of the site, as well as being immediately to the west of the site on the opposite side of the road.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought to demolish the existing building on site and replace it with 4no. detached 4 bedroom dwellinghouses. Each proposed dwelling would have a double garage, together with private and public garden areas.

The proposed dwellings would all be two storey in height and the garages for plots 2 and 3 would be 1 ½ storey in height with office accommodation at first floor level. Each dwelling would utilise coursed limestone for its elevations and slate for their roof material. The proposed linear layout of the dwellings would be orientated with their frontages facing north, which would be perpendicular

to the adjacent public highway to the west of the site. The existing vehicle access from Helpston Road is to be used to serve the dwellings. Plots 1 is the nearest to the public highway, with Plot 4 furthest east. The proportions are as follows:

- Plots 1, 2 and 3: The proposed dwellings would have an overall width of approximately 14 metres and they would measure approximately 12.2 metres in overall depth. The highest ridge line would measure approximately 8 metres from ground level, with the proposed eaves to measure approximately 5 metres high from ground level.

- Plot 4: This dwelling would be positioned furthest to the east on site and is the most varied in appearance. The proposed dwelling would have an overall width of approximately 14.5 metres and it would measure approximately 21 metres in overall depth, given the attached single storey garage to its north elevation. The highest ridge line on this property would measure approximately 8 metres from ground level, with the proposed eaves to measure approximately 5 metres high from ground level.

2 Planning History

Reference	Proposal	Decision	Date
04/01264/FUL	Siting of temporary mobile unit for use as a changing room	Permitted	13/09/2004
04/00015/FUL	Conservatory style entrance lobby, installation of five first floor windows, single storey extension and siting of portable unit – retrospective	Permitted	27/05/2004
96/P0371	Change of use to use classes B1 (business), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage/distribution)	Withdrawn by Applicant	31/01/1997
96/CL018	Continued unrestricted training use	Permitted	28/11/1996
94/P0379	Renewal of planning permission 91/P0252 for retention of two temporary buildings for training purposes	Permitted	29/06/1994
91/P0252	Renewal of planning permission P0324/88 for two temporary buildings and change of use of existing building for training purposes	Permitted	02/05/1991
P0324/88	Erection of two temporary buildings and change of use of existing building for training purposes	Permitted	07/07/1988
P0993/77	Erection of automatic telephone exchange	Permitted	06/01/1978
P0357/76	Erection of an automatic telephone exchange	Permitted	24/06/1976

3 Planning Policy

Decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan policies below, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

Paragraph 13 - Neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans or spatial development strategies; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.

Paragraph 70 - Neighbourhood planning groups should also give particular consideration to the opportunities for allocating small and medium-sized sites (of a size consistent with paragraph 69a) suitable for housing in their area.

Paragraph 79 - To promote sustainable development in rural areas, housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

Paragraph 85 - Planning policies and decisions should recognise that sites to meet local business and community needs in rural areas may have to be found adjacent to or beyond existing settlements, and in locations that are not well served by public transport. In these circumstances it will be important to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings, does not have an unacceptable impact on local roads and exploits any opportunities to make a location more sustainable (for example by improving the scope for access on foot, by cycling or by public transport). The use of previously developed land, and sites that are physically well-related to existing settlements, should be encouraged where suitable opportunities exist.

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. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land⁴⁷.

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.

Paragraph 127 - Neighbourhood planning groups can play an important role in identifying the special qualities of each area and explaining how this should be reflected in development, both through their own plans and by engaging in the production of design policy, guidance and codes by local planning authorities and developers.

Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Section 72 - General duty as respects conservation areas in exercise of planning functions.

The Local Planning Authority has a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Peterborough Local Plan 2016 to 2036 (2019)

LP02 - The Settle Hierarchy and the Countryside

The location/scale of new development should accord with the settlement hierarchy. Proposals within village envelopes will be supported in principle, subject to them being of an appropriate scale. Development in the open countryside will be permitted only where key criteria are met.

LP08 - Meeting Housing Needs

LP8a) Housing Mix/Affordable Housing - Promotes a mix of housing, the provision of 30% affordable on sites of 15 or more dwellings, housing for older people, the provision of housing to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, and dwellings with higher access standards

LP8b) Rural Exception Sites- Development for affordable housing outside of but adjacent to village envelopes maybe accepted provided that it needs an identified need which cannot be met in the village, is supported locally and there are no fundamental constraints to delivery or harm arising.

LP8c) Homes for Permanent Caravan Dwellers/Park Homes- Permission will be granted for permanent residential caravans (mobile homes) on sites which would be acceptable for permanent dwellings.

LP11 - Development in the Countryside

Part A: Re-Use and Conversion of Non-Residential Buildings for Residential Use in the Countryside- Change of use proposals will be supported provided that the use has not ceased, for agricultural buildings they were not constructed in the last 10 years, no more than 3 units would be created, significant reconstruction is not required and there are no fundamental constraints to delivery or harm arising.

Part B: Replacement of Permanent Existing Dwellings in the Countryside- Proposals will be supported provided that the residential use has not been abandoned, it is a permanent structure and the dwelling is not of architectural or historic merit. The replacement dwelling should be of an appropriate scale and design and is located on the site of the original house (unless suitable justification is provided).

Part C: Mobile Homes/Temporary Dwellings in the Countryside- Applications will be considered in the same way as permanent dwellings.

Part D: New Dwellings in the Countryside- Permission for a permanent dwelling in the countryside for an agricultural worker will only be granted to support existing agricultural activities on a well established agricultural unit subject to demonstration of a functional need which cannot be met by an existing dwelling or conversion.

Part E: The Rural Economy- Development involving the expansion or conversion of an existing employment use/building or use for tourism/leisure will be supported provided it is an appropriate scale, would not adversely affect the local community/services and would not cause harm to the character of the area and would be accessible.

Part F: Protecting the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land- Proposals should protect this land to ensure the continuation of the agricultural economy. With the exception of allocated sites proposals affecting this land will only be accepted if there is lower grade land available, the impacts have been minimised through design solutions and where feasible the land is restored when the development ceases.

Part G: Agricultural Diversification- Proposals will be permitted provided that the location and scale are appropriate for the use and the scale is appropriate for the business.

LP13 - Transport

LP13a) New development should ensure that appropriate provision is made for the transport needs that it will create including reducing the need to travel by car, prioritisation of bus use, improved walking and cycling routes and facilities.

LP13b) The Transport Implications of Development- Permission will only be granted where appropriate provision has been made for safe access for all user groups and subject to appropriate mitigation.

LP13c) Parking Standards- permission will only be granted if appropriate parking provision for all modes of transport is made in accordance with standards.

LP16 - Urban Design and the Public Realm

Development proposals would contribute positively to the character and distinctiveness of the area. They should make effective and efficient use of land and buildings, be durable and flexible, use appropriate high quality materials, maximise pedestrian permeability and legibility, improve the public realm, address vulnerability to crime, and be accessible to all.

LP17 - Amenity Provision

LP17a) Part A Amenity of Existing Occupiers- Permission will not be granted for development which would result in an unacceptable loss of privacy, public and/or private green space or natural daylight; be overbearing or cause noise or other disturbance, odour or other pollution; fail to minimise opportunities for crime and disorder.

LP17b) Part B Amenity of Future Occupiers- Proposals for new residential development should be designed and located to ensure that they provide for the needs of the future residents.

LP19 - The Historic Environment

Development should protect, conserve and enhance where appropriate the local character and distinctiveness of the area particularly in areas of high heritage value.

Unless it is explicitly demonstrated that a proposal meets the tests of the NPPF permission will only be granted for development affecting a designated heritage asset where the impact would not lead to substantial loss or harm. Where a proposal would result in less than substantial harm this harm will be weighed against the public benefit.

Proposals which fail to preserve or enhance the setting of a designated heritage asset will not be supported.

LP27 - Landscape Character

New development in and adjoining the countryside should be located and designed in a way that is sensitive to its landscaping setting, retaining and enhancing the landscape character.

LP28 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

Part 1: Designated Site

International Sites- The highest level of protection will be afforded to these sites. Proposals which would have an adverse impact on the integrity of such areas and which cannot be avoided or adequately mitigated will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where there are no suitable alternatives, overriding public interest and subject to appropriate compensation.

National Sites- Proposals within or outside a SSSI likely to have an adverse effect will not normally be permitted unless the benefits outweigh the adverse impacts.

Local Sites- Development likely to have an adverse effect will only be permitted where the need and benefits outweigh the loss.

Habitats and Species of Principal Importance- Development proposals will be considered in the context of the duty to promote and protect species and habitats. Development which would have an adverse impact will only be permitted where the need and benefit clearly outweigh the impact. Appropriate mitigation or compensation will be required.

Part 2: Habitats and Geodiversity in Development

All proposals should conserve and enhance avoiding a negative impact on biodiversity and geodiversity.

Part 3: Mitigation of Potential Adverse Impacts of Development

Development should avoid adverse impact as the first principle. Where such impacts are unavoidable they must be adequately and appropriately mitigated. Compensation will be required as a last resort.

LP29 - Trees and Woodland

Proposals should be prepared based upon the overriding principle that existing tree and woodland

cover is maintained. Opportunities for expanding woodland should be actively considered. Proposals which would result in the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland and or the loss of veteran trees will be refused unless there are exceptional benefits which outweigh the loss. Where a proposal would result in the loss or deterioration of a tree covered by a Tree Preservation Order permission will be refused unless there is no net loss of amenity value or the need for and benefits of the development outweigh the loss. Where appropriate mitigation planting will be required.

LP32 - Flood and Water Management

Proposals should adopt a sequential approach to flood risk management in line with the NPPF and council's Flood and Water Management SPD. Sustainable drainage systems should be used where appropriate. Development proposals should also protect the water environment.

LP33 - Development on Land Affected by Contamination

Development must take into account the potential environmental impacts arising from the development itself and any former use of the site. If it cannot be established that the site can be safely developed with no significant future impacts on users or ground/surface waters, permission will be refused.

Ailsworth Neighbourhood Plan (2017-2036) (December 2017)

AH1 – Criteria For All Building Development Within The Parish

AH2 – Housing Growth

ALU1 – Environmental Impact

Supplementary Planning documents

Peterborough Design and Development in Selected Villages (2011)

SPD Policy – Ailsworth: Ail1 – Ail16

Ailsworth Conservation Area Appraisal (2009)

11.3 – New Buildings

4 Consultations/Representations

PCC Archaeological Officer

No objection: The site has high archaeology potential and it is recommended that the site is subject to further archaeological investigation (trial trenching). This can be secured by way of a planning condition.

PCC Conservation Officer

Objection: The Vogal Training Centre sits awkwardly on the edge of Ailsworth with fields to three sides. Although not of agricultural use, it does have the character of a 20th Century agricultural building. This to a limited extent reduces the impact of the incongruous siting and form when viewed in context with the Conservation Area.

The prevailing layout of Ailsworth is linear, especially along the three northern roads, Maffit Road, Main Street and the relevant Helpston Road. The proposed development will be in clear contrast to this established linear pattern of development and will appear incongruous when viewed from the east in relation to Ailsworth and its Conservation Area. This perception is not helped by the proposed designs of the four dwellings which have no reference to the prevailing traditional character of the village.

Any development should appear as a natural extension of the existing village. As such any dwellings should either be linear along Helpston Road or should be appreciated as a farmstead or similar edge of village character.

PCC Peterborough Highways Services

No objections in principle: The following conditions should be applied to any permission granted:

- Details of a construction management plan
- The access to be constructed as per the proposed plans
- The provision of vehicle-vehicle visibility splays
- Parking and turning spaces
- Temporary facilities
- Bin storage provision

PCC Pollution Team

No objection: The proposal documentation identifies the previous commercial / industrial use of the site. Such use potentially could be associated with localised land contamination and should therefore be investigated in accordance with LP33 for full contamination assessment, remediation and reporting of any unexpected contamination. An appropriate condition should be attached to any permission granted.

PCC Senior Landscape Technical Officer

No objections: The scheme falls below the threshold for the requirement of off-site POS S106 contributions.

PCC Tree Officer

Objection: The proposal is currently unacceptable. Insufficient information has been submitted to make an informed decision/recommendation regarding the above proposals, however, amendments could be made to make it acceptable.

Please request that a drawing showing sections across the site is submitted, to clearly demonstrate how the change in levels will be dealt with as a part of the proposals, as there appears to be a change of levels across the site, especially in the eastern third of the site, adjacent to and along the eastern boundary line of trees T.3 - T.11, in particular?

Please also request that the layout and size of the dwellings on the Plots is reconsidered, in light of the close proximity of the treed boundaries to the site, and especially with regards to Plots 1 & 4 and to a lesser extent Plot 2.

PCC Wildlife Officer

No objections, subject to conditions being applied:

- Pre-commencement, no development shall take place until details of a construction environmental management plan have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- Utilising locally native species within landscaping schedules unless agreed otherwise by the Local Planning Authority.
- The installation of at least 2no bird boxes and 2no bat boxes in accordance with best practice methodology as set out by the Royal Society for the Protection for Birds and Bat Conservation Trust.

Ailsworth Parish Council

Support: Ailsworth Parish Council supports in principle the development of this site for residential use, as it immediately abuts the village envelope and this is detailed and allowed for in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Ailsworth Parish Council would like to see comments from the Tree Officer taken into account for any development, with tree preservation orders applied where appropriate.

If Officers are minded to refuse the application, the Parish Council requests that it be referred to Planning Committee, as it is in line with the Neighbourhood Plan's provision of housing supply.

Local Residents/Interested Parties

Initial consultations: 4
Total number of responses: 0
Total number of objections: 0
Total number in support: 0

No letters of representation were received by local residents or nearby neighbours. A site notice was displayed adjacent to the application site.

5 Assessment of the planning issues

The main considerations are:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact to the character and appearance of the site and the adjacent Ailsworth Conservation Area
- Highway safety and parking provision
- Neighbour amenity
- Future occupier amenity
- Meeting housing standards
- Trees
- Wildlife
- Flood risk
- Archaeology
- Contamination

a) Principle of development

Outside village boundary

The application site is located within the open countryside. Policy LP2 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) directs new housing development to be located within the boundaries of settlements. Housing within the open countryside is prohibited unless exemptions are met under Policies LP2, LP8 or LP11. It is not considered that the proposal meets the main requirements of these policies. In addition, the Council currently has a positive 5 year land housing supply and therefore, it is in a position to refuse residential developments which are not acceptable. However:

Policy LP2 does state: *'All other residential development outside of village envelopes and outside of Peterborough Urban Area boundary will, by definition, be contrary to the vision, objectives, development strategy and policies of this Local Plan, and **should be refused, unless otherwise acceptable within a made Neighbourhood Plan**'.*

Ailsworth does have an adopted neighbourhood plan. The Ailsworth Neighbourhood Plan (2017), under Policy AH2, supports development which immediately abuts the village development and states, managed housing growth across the plan period would allow for some 20 new dwellings by 2037. Policy AH2, paragraph a, states that new dwellings would be supported providing that they are located within the village or immediately abut the village envelope. The frontage of the site on to Helpston Road abuts the village envelope boundary, therefore it can be considered the principle of dwellings on this site would be accordance with Policy AH2. However, paragraph d) of Policy AH2 also states that any new dwellings should respect the built village character and surrounding landscape character and paragraph e) states the development needs to be of an appropriate scale for the village context. It is, in particular, these points that Officers consider there is conflict and this is further discussed in Section b) of this report below.

Previously Developed Land

The proposal would utilise previously developed land. Paragraph 119 of the NPPF (2021) states, *'planning ... 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. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously-developed or 'brownfield' land.* This is however subject to sub-paragraph 47, which states, *'except where this would conflict with other policies in this Framework'*. Development on such land is considered to provide further weight in support of the scheme.

Business relocation

The agent has highlighted the need to dispose of the site. The company currently occupying the site are seeking to expand and upgrade their training centre in order for the company to continue operating, which the agent advises that this cannot be delivered on the existing site. The proposed re-development of this site would help cover costs of relocation, expansion and improvement, as well as to increasing staffing. The supporting letter from the Vogal Group Chairman states that they are proposing to relocate to Flaxley Road, within the Hampton General Employment Area. The training offered within this business predominantly relates to engineering matters, which potentially has limited relationship within the residential village that it currently serves. Given that the business would not be entirely lost but relocated to a General Employment Area, it is not considered that the proposal would contribute to the loss of an employment site. Additionally, given that the building is not considered to be architecturally significant or one which provides a significant contribution to the village's character, its loss would not be resisted and any new development on the site could provide the opportunity to improve and enhance the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area.

Finally, and for the avoidance of doubt, it is not considered that the loss of employment sites policy, Policy LP4, can suitably be applied to this proposal given that the existing use does not fall within a B2 or B8 use class. The existing use is a Class F1(a) 'Education' use and so would not be subject to Policy LP4's criteria for compliance.

b) Design and impact to the character and appearance of the site and the adjacent Ailsworth Conservation Area

The application site is not situated within, but it is adjacent to the Ailsworth Conservation Area. Section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended) requires special regard be paid as to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas such as the Ailsworth Conservation Area.

The existing building on site shares many characteristics of a 20th Century agricultural building in terms of its size, scale and form. However, the use of materials with brick, cladding and conservatory style entrance, gives a more commercial appearance. The building is positioned centrally on the site set well in from front (Helpston Road) and rear (countryside) boundaries. Officers do not consider the existing building to be of any special architectural or design merit that makes a significant contribution to the Ailsworth Conservation Area or its setting. Therefore, Officers do not have any objections to its loss.

The pattern and layout of residential buildings within the surrounding area is predominantly linear development fronting on to the road, on east-west alignments, with densities generally decreasing as you progress northwards out of the village. This is evident on the three main routes heading north to south in the village, which are Maffit Road, Main Street and Helpston Road. It is the latter on which the application site is sited. The existing village boundary and residential properties to the south of the site, on the east side of Helpston Road, are approximately 50m from the application site, with the site surrounded to the north, east and south by agricultural fields.

No. 36 Helpston Road is the first residential property to the south of the application site and has a

plot depth of approximately 29 metres at its longest point, whereas the application site has a depth of approximately 90m. This excessive plot depth and eastward projection into the countryside is wholly out of keeping with the village boundary and residential plots in the surrounding village. The 4 dwellings proposed on the site are to have a north-south alignment which is at odds with the east-west alignment of properties in the surrounding area and would have no properties fronting on to Helpston Road. This is poor in design terms and extremely uncharacteristic of the residential development in the surrounding area. This is contrary to Policy LP16 and LP19 of the Local Plan. The existing building is set centrally on the plot and landscaped boundaries to minimise its visual impact on the adjacent Conservation Area and open countryside. Only plot 2 would be positioned within the footprint of the existing building on site. Plot 1 would be positioned between the existing building frontage and Helpston Road, and the house on plot 3 and all of plot 4 would be positioned on land which is currently free of buildings and helps to give a buffer between the building form and countryside edge to the east. Whilst the principle of redeveloping the site for residential dwelling is accepted there is real concern that the 4 dwellings proposed would not represent an appropriate redevelopment of this site. This is due to their large footprints, their limited separation distance between each other, their suburban layout character, their north-south alignment and their proximity to site boundaries, in particular the east, west and south boundaries. The increased built form on site represents a further encroachment into the open countryside and one which would be visible from the surrounding public highways, namely when viewing the site from the north via Helpston Road, which increases in the height of topography when travelling northwards and leaving the village. This would also be visible via the public right of way to the south (reference Ailsworth 11) that cuts behind the gardens of Holmes Close.

It is considered the resulting development would represent an unacceptable overdevelopment of the site, and one which has failed to respect the layout pattern and character of residential development in the surrounding area, and the sites edge of village rural character adjacent to the Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policies LP16 and LP19 of the Local Plan.

Officers consider that any residential re-development of this site should appear as a natural extension to the village to avoid visual harm and development that appears as unacceptable overdevelopment on the village edge. This would either comprise dwellings fronting onto Helpston Road, replicating the existing linear layout pattern, albeit this layout would result in uncharacteristically long gardens and not necessarily equate to the best use of this brownfield land. Alternatively, a farmstead-like residential development could be proposed to aid with the transition from the edge-of-village residential character into the open countryside. Or even a separate proposal to utilise the existing building's shape and form to convert to a dwelling with has a barn conversion/agricultural character would also aid this transition from village to countryside appearance.

Nos. 35, 37 and 39 Helpston Road

The Planning agent and applicant consider that the three dwellings on the opposite side of Helpston Road to the north of application site have set a precedent for allowing large dwellings on the village edge site and that in allowing that scheme it is comparable to the development being proposed on this site. The three dwellings are Nos. 35, 37 and 39 Helpston Road, were approved in 2013 under planning application 13/00831/FUL and the applicant was Hereward Homes as per this application. The Officers report stated that this was an allocated residential site and the layout and homes were designed to appear as an agricultural farmstead. No. 37 Helpston Road acts as the 'principle dwelling', with Nos. 35 and 39 as supporting buildings. No. 39 Helpston Road, in particular, has a large front extension which projects towards Helpston Road, which this extension then turns southwards to be parallel with Helpston Road. This is to allow for the appearance of a supporting structure within the farmstead development, such as a barn, and soften the transition from the open countryside to the residential edge of Ailsworth. These properties all have an east-west alignment and frontage on to Helpston Road. As described in the report above, the principle of designing an agricultural farmstead development on the site would be appropriate but that is not what is proposed. A linear row of four large detached dwellings with side double garage and in some instances residential accommodation above, with limited separation between each other and

site boundaries, similar to the layout of many suburban development, is what is proposed and which is not considered to be appropriate on this village edge site.

On the basis of the above, it is considered the proposal would adversely impact upon the visual character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area. contrary to Policies LP16 and LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and Policy AH2 of the Ailsworth Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

c) Highway safety and parking provision

The Local Highway Authority have raised no objections to the proposed development.

Each of the proposed dwellings is to have 4 bedrooms. In line with Peterborough City Council's parking standards, two parking spaces are required per dwelling. Garages and driveways are proposed for each property and so this is acceptably achieved. In addition, sufficient space has been provided on site to allow cars to turn to so they can enter and leave the site in a forward gear and do not have to reverse into or out of the site.

The vehicle access from the main road measures approximately 9.5 metres at its widest point, but then narrows to approximately 4.6 metres wide in the site. For any new residential schemes, the Local Highway Authority would normally request shared access to measure 5.5 metres wide for the first 10 metres into the site. This would enable a 5m width to enable two way traffic, along with 0.5 metres as a shared pedestrian access.

However, no objection has been raised to this slightly sub-standard access width because the proposed scheme would result in less traffic movements than the existing use, which currently uses the access without incident. Officers therefore consider using the existing access for this less intensive residential use would have highway safety benefits from the existing situation. Ideally, a separate pedestrian access should be provided, however as there is not one existing to serve the training centre, the replacement development is only four dwellings and it is in a rural location where there are not footpaths along the road and to create a footpath would result in the loss of trees. On balance, it is not considered appropriate to insist upon one in this instance.

The Local Highway Authority have recommended a number of planning conditions be imposed to any given planning consent, such as the provision of parking and turning spaces for each dwelling. Temporary facilities be provided on site to prevent any encroachment on to the public highway during construction, this would be imposed via a compliance condition. A construction management plan was also requested. The Planning Agent has submitted this detail prior to the determination of this application and is currently subject to consultation with the Local Highway Authority. Members will be updated of their response either at Committee or in the Update report.

Finally, each Plot is considered to be large enough for bins to be stored at each property site, but clarity is required as to the bin collection method and whether bin lorries can enter and leave the site in a forward gear. This information has been requested by Officers, but no details have been submitted for consideration at the time of writing. It does appear possible that bin lorries could turn in front of Plot 1, but this would need to be demonstrated with a swept path plan. If bin lorries were not to enter the site, but were to stop adjacent to the access along Helpston Road, a bin collection point would need to be provided near to the access, within the site.

Officers do not consider that the proposal would adversely impact upon the safety of surrounding public highways, subject to the imposition of conditions, in particular to ensure sufficient parking and turning facilities are provided on site.

In light of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP13 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and Policy AH2 of the Ailsworth Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

d) Neighbour amenity

The nearest existing neighbours to the site are Nos. 31 and 33 Helpston Road both of which are located on the opposite side of the road to the application site. No. 33 Helpston Road is sited directly opposite the application site and its vehicle access.

Plot 1 would be the dwelling positioned closest to the adjacent public highway and would be approximately 9.1 metres from the edge of the vehicle carriageway serving Helpston Road. At its nearest point, No. 33 Helpston Road's front elevation would be approximately 10.5 metres from the public highway, with No. 31 Helpston Road's front elevation being approximately 11 metres back from the public highway. Combining these separation distances for each property with the width of the vehicular highway (approximately 4.5 metres), Officers consider that there would be adequate separation to ensure that the proposed development would not cause unacceptable overbearing or significant overshadowing impacts and nor would the development contribute to any adverse loss of privacy to these existing residential neighbours.

Therefore, Officers are of the view that the proposed development would not adversely impact upon the residential amenity of surrounding neighbours.

On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP17 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

e) Future occupier amenity

Plots 1 and 3 would each contain four bedrooms to provide for eight persons. Plots 2 and 4 would each contain four bedrooms, but would instead provide for seven persons. The Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS), which are not adopted in local policy, but serve as a useful guide to detail minimum residential floorspace provision. In line with the spaces standards Plots 1 and 3 should provide a minimum of 124sqm of floor area, they actually provide 230sqm and for Plot 2 and 4 should provide a minimum of 115sqm floor area, they actually provide 205 and 240sqm respectively. As such, the properties proposed are well in excess of the minimum space standards and would provide acceptable amenity for residents.

Officers consider that the general circulation space around each proposed property is acceptable. All habitable rooms are served by appropriately sized and positioned windows to allow for both outlook and natural light. The gardens would not be cramped and would allow future occupiers to utilise and enjoy these spaces. Space for storage within these gardens would be able if required, whether it be for incidental equipment storage, bin storage or for cycles. Overall, Officers consider that the proposed four dwellings would adequately serve the needs of future occupiers.

With regards to the four proposed properties and the amenity relationships between them, Officers consider that this is sufficient separation between each plot to avoid immediate, adverse overbearing impacts from the properties which would all be two storey in scale. The west-to-east linear road layout of the properties proposed of Plots 1-3, along with their intervening garages, would limit the impact of adverse shadows being formed across neighbouring garden spaces. It is considered additionally that the proposed window layout for each property is acceptable. All bedroom and living areas are served by windows facing towards their respective gardens they serve or across the proposed driveway into the site.

With regards to Plot 4 and to lesser extent Plot 1, significant proportions of the rear garden would be subject to overshadowing from the trees to the east (Plot 4) and west (Plot 1) and southern boundaries of the application site. It is considered such overshadowing would have a material impact upon how future occupiers would utilise and enjoy their rear garden, which in turn risks the trees being removed by future occupiers to reduce the shadowing impacts. Officers consider that there would be limited opportunities to limit shadowing based on the layout proposed and thus reducing Plot 4 and Plot 1's scale and positioning would be considered necessary. On the basis of the plans submitted, the proposal is considered by Officers to be unacceptable in amenity terms based on this aspect.

In light of the above, the proposal is considered to be unacceptable and not in accordance with Policy LP17 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

e) Meeting housing standards

Policy LP8 requires all new dwellings to be constructed to meet Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations, unless there are any exceptional reasons to avoid doing so (such as topography or listed building constraints). It is not considered that there are any exceptional reasons to this scheme.

Upon entry into each of the proposed dwellings, a clearance of 1.2 metres beyond the entrance door openings would be provided. The corridor widths around the homes generally would also equal or exceed this dimension depending where measured, but such is necessary to aid with manoeuvrability requirements around the homes. The master bedrooms of each property would have the required 0.75m clearance areas to both sides and foot of the beds, with subordinate bedrooms meeting the 0.75m clearance requirements to one side and foot of the beds. To each kitchen, adequate clearance beyond the kitchen appliances would also be provided. The ground floor of each property contains toilet and sink facilities and whilst no level access shower areas are proposed, Officers consider that the footprints of each property would make it possible for these facilities to be installed if future occupiers required them to serve their future access needs. Overall, it is considered that the proposed dwellings would acceptably accord with Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations and thus be in accordance with local policy.

On the basis of the above, Officers consider the proposed dwellings would accord with Policy LP8 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

f) Trees

The City Council's Tree Officer currently objects to the proposal. Revised plans have been submitted to try and address these concerns and at the time of writing this report they are out to consultation. As a result of this amended information the Tree Officer's stance may or may not alter, but the report has to be written on the basis of the original information submitted. Members will be updated either in the Update report or at Committee.

There are trees all along the frontage of the application site with Helpston Road, as well as along the other three boundaries of the application site. There are no specific tree preservation orders, however the trees along the site frontage are adjacent to the Ailsworth Conservation Area and thus can impact upon the setting, amenity and character of the Ailsworth Conservation Area.

The City Council's Tree Officer advises that there is insufficient information submitted to make an informed stance. Drawings have been requested (and now submitted and awaiting comment) for section drawings across the site to demonstrate level changes across the site. The existing eastern portion of the site has a noticeable dip in levels compared to the surroundings and would need to be raised for the homes to be more level with each other.

In addition, the City Council's Tree Officer advises that the proposed site layout and dwelling sizes would need to alter, in relation to Plots 1 and 4, and to a less extent Plot 2. This is on the basis that the dwellings would be sited too close to the tree boundaries and would cause pressure on the tree to be inappropriately pruned and felled by future property owners, given concerns of shade and anxiety over the proximity and safety of the trees within the boundaries. The Tree Officer therefore recommends the dwellings are reduced in size and relocated accordingly.

The Planning Agent has provided section drawings and a statement try and overcome the Tree Officer's concerns. The submitted letter advises that none of the proposed dwellings would lie with the root protection areas of any trees around the application site, along with technical justification of how the scheme would not unacceptably impact upon trees. The only revisions to the plans

themselves include the removal of a first floor bedroom above the attached garage to Plot 4. The scale and siting of the dwellings are the same as per the original plans submitted and thus it is not considered these revisions would satisfy the Tree Officer's recommendation as described above.

Until the revised comments from the Tree Officer are received, it is considered to be necessary, reasonable and appropriate for Officers to maintain the objection position currently held on the plan. Trees are characteristic of the site and those trees, especially adjacent to the Helpston Road frontage, need to be ensured given their existing contribution to the amenity value of the surrounding area. Furthermore, Officers consider that the south-east portion of the site, i.e. where Plot 4's garden would be located, would be subject to significant shadowing and it is considered that these trees here would be at risk from unnecessary removal.

In light of the above and based on comments already received, the proposal is considered to be unacceptable and contrary to Policy LP28 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

g) Wildlife

The City Council's Wildlife Officer advises that the application site and development proposed would cause minimal impact and disruption to local ecological constraints. Recommendations have been made within the submitted 'Extended Phase 1 Survey' document to ensure that no adverse impacts would result upon these constraints. A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) is advised as necessary to secure as a planning condition to ensure the delivery and responsibility of these recommendations.

The City Council's Wildlife Officer advises that the proposal would not adversely impact upon local wildlife habitat and that the proposal would actually increase habitat provision for local wildlife.

It is a recommendation by the Wildlife Officer that all fences are constructed with 12x14cm holes to allow small mammals to traverse the gardens easily. This would increase the habitat available to these important species. This matter can be secured within the standard hard and soft landscaping condition if planning permission is granted. The Wildlife Officer also requests details of bird and bat boxes (including specification, quantity of boxes and locations of installation) are secured. The proposed dwellings would have these boxes installed directly upon them, and it is considered reasonable to secure a planning condition to obtain full details to ensure a positive impact from the development upon local biodiversity. Finally, the Wildlife Officer recommends all soft landscaping measures utilise native species and are produced by an ecologist. It is considered appropriate, necessary and reasonable to secure this measure within the standard landscaping condition, if the proposal is approved.

Subject to the imposition of the above conditions, Officers consider there would be biodiversity enhancements to the site and surrounding area.

On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP28 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and Policy ALU1 of the Ailsworth Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

h) Flood risk

No part of the application site falls within Flood Zone 2 or Flood Zone 3. Officers therefore do not consider that the proposed development would have an unacceptable risk of flooding.

Policy LP32 requires all new housing development to achieve the Optional Technical Housing Standard of 110 litres per person per day, to minimise the impact of new development upon the water environment. This is matter that could be secured as a planning compliance condition to any granted planning permission.

In light of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP32 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

i) Archaeology

The City Council's Archaeologist advises that the application site is situated within an area of significant archaeological interest. Within the general area of Castor and Ailsworth, archaeological investigations and chance discoveries have made, particularly in relation to the Roman period. In addition, an investigation carried out at No. 54 Main Street in 2013 uncovered residual pottery of 9th-11th century dating, which suggests potential Late Saxon activity. Remnants of a medieval ridge and furrow field system were also revealed, along with residual pottery dating to the mid 12th-13th century. Homing in on the application site, prior to the construction of the existing building, it does not appear that the application site has been subject to previous major development. With the added curtilage around the building included within the application site, it is considered possible that these are areas where survival of potential buried remains is possible and anticipated, including the car park and grassed areas.

The City Council's Archaeologist therefore advises that given the high archaeological potential of the site, investigations need to be considered and be subject to evaluation via trial trenching methods. Given that there have been archaeological discoveries in the surrounding area previously, plus that there is land surrounding the existing building that does appear to have been subject to development area, it is considered reasonable, relevant and necessary to secure further archaeological investigation as described above. In the event that this proposal is approved, this would need to be secured via a planning condition.

On the basis of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

j) Contamination

The City Council's Environmental Health Officer advises of the need for a full contamination assessment along with necessary remediation measures to be secured given the commercial nature of the site. These matters can be secured by way of a planning condition and no information needs to be provided prior to the determination of this application. It is considered reasonable to secure these matters as a planning condition for the benefit of the health and wellbeing of any future occupiers of the site.

In light of the above, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP33 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

6 Conclusions

The proposal is unacceptable having been assessed in light of all material considerations, including weighing against relevant policies of the development plan and for the specific reasons given below.

7 Recommendation

The Executive Director of Place and Economy recommends that Planning Permission is **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

- R 1 The proposed development, by virtue of its design, layout, appearance and scale, would unacceptably impact upon the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, including the Ailsworth Conservation Area. The proposed four dwellings would represent overdevelopment of this site and would have an unacceptably suburban layout for this rural edge site and as a result would fail to respect either: i) the linear, ribbon development found within the immediate area along Helpston Road; or ii) utilise farmstead characteristics given that the site represents the edge of the village and a point of transition to the open

countryside. In addition, the proposed development projects further into the open countryside than the existing building and would be readily visible from the higher topographical land to the north via Helpston Road and surrounding public rights of way. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to Policies LP16 and LP19 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019) and Policy AH2 of the Ailsworth Neighbourhood Plan (2017).

- R 2 On the basis of the information submitted, the proposal, by virtue of its design and layout and proximity to surrounding trees, would unacceptably impact upon the trees on site and within the immediate area around the application site, which provide important screening on the countryside edge. The proposal would likely place adverse demands on existing trees and prejudice their retention and longevity. Specifically, the trees to the south-east corner of the application site, from T1 to T8 would result in significant shadowing across the garden of Plot 4 and become a nuisance to future occupiers, thus risking their pressure for removal. In addition, there is insufficient information at present to ensure that the proposed dwelling's design and siting would not adversely impact upon the health and wellbeing of surrounding trees. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to Policy LP28 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).
- R 3 The proposal, by virtue of its design and scale, would unacceptably impact upon the residential amenity of the future occupiers to Plot 4 and Plot 1. This is specifically in relation to the trees to the east and south boundaries of the application site for Plot 4, which would result in significant overshadowing of their rear garden area and feel overbearing to the enjoyment of their rear amenity space. For Plot 1, shadows would fall from the trees to the south and west boundaries and would also result in significant overshadowing of the rear garden area and would produce an overbearing to the enjoyment of their rear amenity space. This would result in insufficient residential amenity for those occupiers contrary to Policy LP17 of the Peterborough Local Plan (2019).

Copies to Ward Councillors Farooq and Hiller