

Planning and Heritage Statement

Site address: Land to Rear of 32 Church Street, Weldon NN17 3JT

Proposal: Erection of 1 no. new dwelling with new access from Church Street



1.0 Site characteristics and relevant planning history

- 1.1 The site consists of land to the rear of No. 32 Church Street in Weldon, which is a relatively new property and detached gatehouse, both constructed with a brick plinth and dark horizontal weatherboard and slated roof. There is a courtyard parking area and gardens that extend to the south and east of the buildings.
- 1.2 The site is located within a Conservation Area. It is located at the junction of Church Street and Oundle Road.
- 1.3 To the north-east on the other side of Oundle Road is located 'The Manor House' which is a Grade II* Listed Building. To the north-west of the site on the other side of Church Street there is an area of open space which adjoins the running water course, Willow Brook. To the south-west is the detached bungalow No. 30 Church Street. This has a number of outbuildings including a recently constructed garage which immediately abut the boundary with the subject site. Beyond No. 30, Church Street is fronted for the remainder of its length by a variety of mainly detached dwellings. South-east of the site is a substantial area of woodland which extends into the site itself. This woodland forms part of a Tree Preservation Area, Ref W3 in the Corby Tree Preservation Order No.75/2.
- 1.4 With respect to the site's planning history, of particular relevance is the Appeal Decision that granted permission for the existing property – APP/U2805/A/09/2114603 (relating to planning reference 09/00266/DPA).
- 1.5 Also of note is a recent pre-application submission and advice under reference NC/23/00216/PE for the erection of two dwellings in land to the rear of No. 32 Church Street.

2.0 Policy framework and design guidance

- 2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with an up-to-date Development Plan unless material planning considerations outweigh it.
- 2.2 The Development Plan in this instance comprises the National Planning Policy Framework (2021) ("NPPF"), the Joint Core Strategy (2016) ("JCS"), the Part 2 Local Plan for Corby ("Local Plan"), and a number of Neighbourhood Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents.
- 2.3 The main thrust of the policy position relevant to this proposal remains, however, in the Joint Core Strategy. The relevant policies in the JCS are:
- Policy 1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
 - Policy 2 (Historic Environment)
 - Policy 3 (Landscape Character)
 - Policy 4 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity)

- Policy 5 (Water Environment, Resources and Flood Risk Management)
- Policy 6 (Development on Brownfield Land and Land Affected by Contamination)
- Policy 8 (North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles)
- Policy 9 (Sustainable Buildings)
- Policy 11 (the Network of Urban and Rural Areas)
- Policy 28 (Housing Requirements)
- Policy 29 (Distribution of New Homes)
- Policy 30 (Housing Mix and Tenure)

2.4 In terms of the Local Plan, the relevant policies are:

- Policy 6 (Green Infrastructure Corridors)
- Policy 11 (Delivering Housing)
- Policy 16 (Residential Gardens)
- Policy 17 (Settlement Boundaries)
- Policy 18 (Restraint Villages)

2.5 Of particular relevance to the site is the Weldon Conservation Area Appraisal (2009), which provides an account of the character and significance of the conservation area, and identifies how it should be managed going forward (through the accompanying Management Plan).

2.6 The site lies within the Great Weldon Hamlet to the South of Willow Brook Character Area, and while the site itself is not specifically mentioned within the CAA, the relationship between Church Street and the adjacent Grade II* Listed Manor House is recognised as significant. This was highlighted by the Inspector in the previous approval on the site.

2.7 The Government published a revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2023. As per the previous iterations, this document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which local people and local planning authorities can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. Given the age of the adopted Development Plan documents, where there are discrepancies between it and the new NPPF it is appropriate to consider only the NPPF.

2.8 At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development – Local Planning Authorities should approve proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan and, alongside saved local plan policies and to which the relevant Strategic Policies will align, it too seeks to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings, as well as taking account of the character of different areas.

3.0 Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal relates to the erection of 1 new dwelling to the rear of the existing property. The pre-app response made clear that it would not be possible to achieve two dwellings on the site, and so the applicant has worked with the architect to deliver a scheme that responds thoroughly to the various points raised by the case officer and consultees.
- 3.2 As set out within the Design and Access Statement, the dwelling is orientated east-west along the southern boundary. Vehicular access is provided via Church Street, whilst there is also a pedestrian access from Oundle Road. The architect has paid close attention to the relationship between the site and the Grade II* Listed Manor House to the north east – and the positioning of the new dwelling, hidden within the mature trees and planting along that boundary is a key part of the proposals. This will be enhanced through additional planting to create a clear separation.



Image 1 –Proposed Layout

3.3 The positioning and scale of the property is commensurate with the established character for this part of the village and Conservation Area – with the principle of isolated properties sat within large gardens echoing the defined characteristics of the surrounding area.



Image 2 – Proposed 3D Visualisations

3.4 The choice of materials reflects that of the existing property and relates well to the woodland setting – once established, it will all but disappear into that woodland. It also reflects the advice given during the recent pre-application.

4.0 Considerations

4.1 The key issues to consider for this application are:

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Scale, Design and Character
- Residential Amenity
- Biodiversity
- Sustainability
- Highways

Principle of Development

4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that *“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”*

4.3 The site is within the settlement boundary for Weldon village as defined within policy 17 of the adopted Part 2 Local Plan for Corby (P2LP, 2021) and shown on the supporting interactive Policies Map. Policy 11 of the adopted North Northamptonshire joint Core Strategy (JCS, 2016) outlines the network of urban and rural areas, with villages included within the rural areas. JCS Policy 11 seeks to limit development in the rural areas to that required to support a prosperous rural economy or meet a locally arising need that cannot be met more sustainably at a nearby larger settlement. Policy 11 supports small scale infill development on suitable sites within villages where this would not materially harm the character of the settlement and residential amenity or exceed the capacity of local infrastructure and services.

4.4 Policy 16 of the Part 2 Local Plan allows for the development of residential gardens in built-up areas provided they meet criteria relating to design/character, amenity, access and parking. Paragraph 7.50 of the supporting texts suggested that *“the uncontrolled loss of residential gardens can lead to piecemeal and inappropriate pattern or style of development being delivered. This can individually or cumulatively erode openness, disrupt wildlife corridors and give rise to problems with access, disturbance and loss of privacy.”* This justification therefore suggests that any proposed development of residential garden that does not

negatively impact on the pattern or style of development in an area, does not erode the openness of the area, disrupt wildlife corridors, or give rise to problems with access, disturbance and loss of privacy would be considered to be acceptable.

- 4.5 As such, it is considered that the proposals are acceptable in principle – subject to the detailed matters to follow.

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 4.6 The council is required by section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The site is not Listed, and is not within the setting of any Listed Buildings.

- 4.7 Policy 2 of the JCS sets out the policy background for the protection, preservation and enhancement of the historic environment. This is further enhanced through the contents of Policy ENV7 of the Part 2 Local Plan.

- 4.8 With regards the revised NPPF, chapter 16 sets out government advice on conserving and enhancing the historic environment. Paragraph 195 sets out its guidance where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 196 advises on development proposals which will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset. The paragraph goes on to say that the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.

- 4.9 As noted above, the Weldon Conservation Area Appraisal (2009), provides an account of the character and significance of the conservation area, and identifies how it should be managed going forward (through the accompanying Management Plan).

- 4.10 The principle of development on the site was considered during the recent pre-application advice, with the following commentary provided by the Council's Conservation Officer:

*"The subject site is located within a densely wooded area, within the Conservation Area of Weldon and adjacent a Grade II** listed building, with other designated heritage assets in close proximity.*

The main house on the subject site was approved under an Appeal in 2009-2010, creating a residential use and dwelling to the former Woodyard commercial site. The existing house is located to the front of centre of the site, with a further annexe building to the road edge, with Church Street.

The subject site is a large sloping site, rising to the south, following the natural topography of the undulating landscape, rising from the valley, with the brook to the north of Church Street, at the lowest point. The subject site is heavily enclosed and shielded from view by the high levels of mature trees and shrubs forming the wooded area to the perimeter and predominantly to the southern and eastern boundaries. This boundary treatment forms the character of this section of Oundle Road, creating a sense of enclosure over the access road into and out of the village.

A 20th Century housing development has been built to the south of the site, comprising initially social housing at the head of the rising ground and outside the wooded area, this development dates from the early to mid 20th Century and the street name is Woodlands Road, indicative of the wooded character of the immediate area.

The pre application details, show the floor plans and elevations, including materials for the proposed dwellings, to a satisfactory level of detail. The dwellings are linear buildings, within linear plots abutting the southern boundary of the site, with a shared access driveway to the south, each dwelling is served with garaging and car parking, with the houses orientated approximately west to east across the south of the site. This orientation ensures that the narrow gable elevations face onto Oundle Road, reducing their physical and visual impact on the Conservation Area and the listed building to the east.

The site appears to be very narrow, with the house design forming a linear repeated, almost terrace like pattern to the aerial view, which is out of character to the wider street scene. The character of the dwellings to the south eastern end of Church Street, is one of more isolated, detached larger properties, with surrounding gardens, which is distinctly different to the core of the village or of Woodlands Road. The wooded area, the sense of enclosure created to the street scene and the isolated detached dwellings clearly define this section of the village and make a positive contribution, with the open grounds of the Manor House enhancing the isolated and rural vista.

From a conservation standpoint any development in this area must enhance this character and maintain the simple rural views to the edge of the village.

The site is situated in close proximity to a small number of listed buildings, running along Church Street and Oundle Road to the north and is located within the Weldon Conservation Area and as such all and any development must be appropriate to the character of the adjacent buildings, the street scene and the wider conservation area. The proposed dwelling is unlikely to be visually impacting upon the adjacent

houses and the street scene, owing primarily to the retention of the wooded screening to the site, which currently only affords glimpsed views of the elevations and roof slopes of the existing house, this must be maintained.

The current proposal has given due consideration to this with the orientation of the houses, ensuring the narrow gable elevations face the Oundle Road, which are a mix of natural and traditional materials, with larger areas of glazing to further reduce the visual impact. The considered use of an appropriate material palette of simple traditional and natural materials, including slate, timber and brickwork complement both the natural and built environment and the adjacent heritage assets, which along with restricted views will reduce the overall physical and visual impact to the street scene, retaining its simple character.

The overall feel of the proposed dwellings and their location within the plot is that it has been designed to accommodate the narrow plot rather than designed to accord with the conservation area, which comprises the overall site. The considered architectural detailing and material palette, is appropriate to the mix of natural and built environment, which along with the overall design, mass, scale and proportions of the submitted dwellings are largely in keeping.

However, the limited amenity space, awkward shared driveway location and cramped feeling created within this section of the site, is out of character with the immediate surroundings. In this case my recommendation would be for refusal based on two dwellings.

Recommendation: My recommendation is for refusal. The principal of a further residential dwelling to the rear of the existing, designed to a similar standard, design, mass, scale and material palette, could be acceptable and positively contribute to the character of this part of the conservation area.

It is suggested that the proposal is reduced to a single dwelling, more closely reflecting the isolated character of Church Street, with natural and traditional materials, used in a contemporary manner, working with the historic, natural and existing built environment surrounding the site.

4.11 This application has been designed to reflect the comments received from the Conservation Officer – in particular their advice that a single dwelling to the rear of the existing property was possible, subject to specific criteria being met.

4.12 In terms of the standard of the design – the architect has delivered a proposal that meets the very highest standards of design from an aesthetic, construction and sustainability perspective. It is proposed to use a

combination of natural and traditional materials with a very modern approach taken to the look and feel of the dwelling. The mass, scale and proposed materials take a lot from the existing property, whilst reflecting the more subordinate role that the application site must play within the street scene and wider Conservation Area.

- 4.13** The location of the proposed dwelling is separated from the Grade II* listed Manor House to the northeast by the same bank of mature trees that were considered important to the Inspector when allowing the existing property on site.
- 4.14** In addition, the proposals will involve additional tree and shrub planting as part of a landscape strategy – which will further add to the sense of separation between the site and the Manor House. Thus it can be said that the proposals have a minor positive impact on the relationship between the site and the Manor House.
- 4.15** With respect to the Conservation Area, the new property will sit comfortably within its surrounds, and provide an example of how modern design can be a positive addition to a Conservation Area provided that it delivers in terms of materials, finish and setting – as is the case with this proposal. As such it is contended that the scheme would have a minor positive impact on the Conservation Area.
- 4.16** The development can therefore be considered to accord with the relevant legislation as detailed above and to be consistent with the aims and objectives of the NPPF that provides overarching guidance, as well as Policy 2 of the JCS.

Design and character

- 4.17** The scale, design and detail of the new development have been developed so as to ensure that the development would not look out of place within the surrounding area. The architect has examined the local vernacular and arrived at a style that takes much from the existing dwelling. As evidenced on the accompanying plans, the new property would follow a similar form, with a combination of materials that look familiar to the existing dwelling and the wider area - complementing each other and resulting in a form of development that will add quality and interest to this part of the village.
- 4.18** Due consideration has been given to the comments received in the formal pre-app, which included a recommendation to limit the number of dwellings on the site to 1, but also gave some useful comments regarding how the design of the new property should take its lead from the existing dwelling.

4.19 As can be seen in the accompanying plans, and detailed within the Architect’s Design and Access Statement, the new property would be an exciting and innovative addition to the village, delivering a new property that has the very highest design credentials whilst sitting comfortably within its historic setting.



Image 4 – Proposed 3D Visualisations

4.20 Therefore, in accordance with Policy 8 of the Joint Core Strategy and Section 16 of the NPPF the proposals are acceptable in terms of their design, character and impact on the surrounding area.

Sustainability

4.21 Policy 9 of the JCS is clear that development should incorporate measures to ensure high standards of resource and energy efficiency and reduction in carbon emissions.

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- 4.22 The proposed layout provides a high standard of accommodation and will be acceptable in allowing adequate natural lighting and ventilation and in full compliance with the required Building Regulations. But the architect has created a scheme that goes far beyond this minimum requirement.
- 4.23 The new dwelling had been specifically designed so as to keep energy bills as low as possible. This was a key factor for the applicants, who are keen to ensure that the new property provides an exemplar for other new properties in the area in this regard.
- 4.24 The design and modern construction techniques also offer a plethora of benefits relating to both sustainability and resource efficiency which accord with guidance within the NPPF and the goals and aspirations contained in the Development Plan. The materials used are those associated with a modern form of the development and may include solar PV panels on the roof, and possibly air source heat pumps if these prove to be a viable and cost-effective addition.
- 4.25 The design also incorporates the use of cutting-edge LED lighting, which is considerably more efficient than the use of traditional lighting methods. As such the whole development has been designed and will be constructed with resource efficiency in mind where energy use is minimized and opportunity to harness renewable energy is optimized.
- 4.26 With regards to access requirements, it is certain that the new development will provide a very high category 'A' EPC rating and will be in accordance with building regulations requirements and also in compliance with the latest part M building regulations.
- 4.27 The proposals will incorporate measures to limit use to no more than 105 litres/person/day – this will be achieved through the provision of suitably designed faucets, etc within the property, but also through grey water harvesting to enable the use of the rain water within the house and in the gardens. If further information is required, we respectfully suggest that this might be via a suitably worded condition.
- 4.28 As such, it is considered that the proposals are well in advance of the requirements of national and local policy in relation to sustainability considerations. This was considered to be acceptable as part of the previous application.

Residential amenity

- 4.29 The architect has also given careful consideration to the nature of the proposed structure in relation to their potential impact on adjoining properties. There would be no loss of light, loss of privacy or overbearing impact as a result of the proposed dwelling.

- 4.30 The windows will either look out over the gardens associated with the new dwelling, or over the private drive to the front. The separation distances between the proposed and existing properties on Church Street are such that there would be no unreasonable overlooking or lack of privacy in rear amenity spaces.
- 4.31 Furthermore the new dwellings will benefit from their location in close proximity to a number of open spaces and other amenities close by in Weldon and Corby.
- 4.32 As such, it is contended that the proposals are therefore in full accordance with the requirements of the NPPF and Development Plan in so far as they have regard to residential amenity and the importance of protecting it. This was considered to be acceptable in consideration of the previous application.

Transport Impact

- 4.33 The proposed dwelling will benefit from car parking commensurate with its size, and with due regard to the Northamptonshire Parking Standards guidance document. Secure cycle storage and secure bin storage will also be provided for the property within the garage area of the dwelling.
- 4.34 The Highways Authority provided some clear advice as part of the pre-app response from NNC, and this application has been designed so as to meet each point in full.
- 4.35 As such, it is contended that the proposals are therefore in full accordance with the requirements of the NPPF and Development Plan in so far as they have regard to the development's impact on the highway network.

Air Quality

- 4.36 To ensure quality of life and safer and healthier communities the JCS at policy 8 (e) (i) requires development not to have an unacceptable impact on amenities by reason of pollution, whilst 8 (e) (ii) goes further by stating that both new and existing development should be prevented from contributing to or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.
- 4.37 Chapter 15 of the revised NPPF offers broad advice on how local planning authorities should prevent both existing and new development from being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.
- 4.38 The PPG at paragraph 001 of the air quality section dated 6 March 2014 states that "*It is important that the potential impact of new development on air quality is taken into account in planning where the national assessment indicates that relevant limits have been exceeded or are near the limit*". The PPG at paragraph 009 demonstrates how considerations about air quality fit into the development management process.

4.39 As the proposed development includes provision for vehicle parking it is possible to include EV charging points. The architect has shown them on the plans, and this detail can be further secured via condition should the case officer require it. Policy 15 (c) of the JCS seeks for the design of development to give priority to sustainable means of transport including measures to contribute towards meeting the modal shift targets in the Northamptonshire Transportation Plan – in this regard the proposals adhere entirely, in that they are located within a very sustainable location and will provide secure bicycle storage for the residents, as well close proximity to a variety of bus routes. Any gas fired boilers installed will meet a minimum standard of 40 mgNOx/Kwh.

4.40 The result of which is that the proposals are deemed to be in accordance with the requirements of both local and national policies with respect to air quality.

Impact on Biodiversity and Trees

4.41 Paragraph 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, under the heading of ‘duty to conserve biodiversity’ states “every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.” This is enshrined within the Development Plan at JCS policy 4, which sets out policy requirements for the protection and where possible, a net gain in biodiversity.

4.42 The revised NPPF at chapter 15 ‘conserving and enhancing the natural environment’ sets out government views on minimising the impacts on biodiversity, providing net gains where possible and contributing to halt the overall decline in biodiversity.

4.43 The application includes a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and BNG Report by GreenLeaf, which sets out the baseline and proposed improvements to ensure the scheme can deliver the net gain in biodiversity that is required by the JCS.

4.44 It concludes that any habitat loss can be adequately mitigated through landscaping, planting and other biodiversity enhancement measures. It provides a list of advisory recommendations, and the applicant awaits the County Ecologist’s input as to which are the most appropriate for the site and development proposals. The BNG calculations set out that the development can deliver a very strong 12% net gain, which is beyond that which is required for the site under the current legislation. This performance should be given significant weight in decision-making.

4.45 The pre-app response contained some useful commentary from NNC’s Tree Officer, which stated:

“The layout shows that seven trees would need to be removed from the area covered by TPO 75/2. However, it also shows that twice this number of trees will be planted in mitigation. The development is screened to a great extent, by the existing/retained trees and buildings, with only a small section by the proposed access road being clearly visible and the layout shows new planting that will help with future screening. To conclude, at this stage I would have no objection to the development.”

4.46 As detailed above, the proposals have been reduced in terms of the number of dwellings when compared to the pre-app, but the above commentary remains relevant. As requested, an Arboricultural Report and Protection Plan has been provided with this application – providing further detail on the approach taken which involves the planting of 18 new trees with several metres of additional hedgerow. Should the case officer require it pre-determination, a landscaping proposal can be provided illustrating precisely the number and location of replacement trees – albeit that our preferred option is to provide that information as part of a discharge of condition application.

4.47 We are confident that this will meet the needs of the Tree Officer in full and ensure that the scheme meets the requirements of the development plan with respect to the impact of the proposals on trees and hedgerows.

Designing Out Crime

4.48 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 details the need for the council to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. The JCS at policy 8 (e) (iv) sets out the policy requirement for new development to seek to design out crime and disorder and reduce the fear of crime. The adopted designing out crime supplementary planning guidance gives detailed advice this issue.

4.49 The revised NPPF at paragraph 127 (f) state that decisions should aim to ensure that developments create safe, inclusive and accessible environments which promote health and wellbeing with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

4.50 The architect has worked closely with the applicant to ensure that the principles of ‘Secured By Design’ are embedded within the proposals from the start, and include the following (not exhaustive):

- Vehicular and pedestrian access is open, direct and will be appropriately lit
- The property benefits from a sensible designed area of defensible space

- Enhanced hedgerow planting will ensure that no gaps existing in boundaries, whilst hedges and shrubs close to pathways will be limited in height to ensure visibility
- The parking area will be well over-looked by the new property
- Bin storage is provided appropriately for the property and is secured
- Cycle storage, likewise, is lockable and suitably located
- Access points to the rear garden is lockable and of sturdy design
- Rear boundary fencing is 1.8m in height

4.51 As such the proposals are considered to meet the requirements of Policy 8 of the JCS and Paragraph 127 of the NPPF with respect to designing out crime.

5.0 Summary

5.1 This submission provides a clear and logical assessment of the site's constraints such that the scale, design and layout of the proposals as described in the sections above, and illustrated within the accompanying plans, provides an appropriate response to the site's status.

5.2 As such appropriate consideration has been given to the advice given by the case officer of the previous application, relevant current Local Plan policy requirements and to the important guidelines within the NPPF as also identified in the sections above.

5.3 The site consists of previously developed land within the village of Weldon.

5.4 The proposals will have a minor positive impact on the character of the surrounding Conservation Area and on the relationship between the site and the nearby by Grade II* Listed Manor House.

5.5 The scheme will deliver a form of development that is wholly in keeping with the character of the site and its surroundings.

5.6 The scheme would not have a detrimental impact on the amenity enjoyed by existing or future occupiers of adjoining properties.

5.7 The proposals would have a neutral impact on the highway network.

5.8 The proposals will result in a net gain of biodiversity commensurate with the requirements for small sites such as this. The method for achieving this net gain is set out within the accompanying plans and BNG Report attached to this submission.

- 5.9** The proposals will have a positive impact on the number and quality of tree coverage within the wide site.
- 5.10** The development can therefore be considered to accord with the relevant planning policies as detailed above and to be consistent with the aims and objectives of the NPPF that provides overarching guidance. In line with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF, the application accords with the Development Plan and should be approved without delay.