

Parish:	Walsoken	
Proposal:	OUTLINE APPLICATION SELF-BUILD: Proposed Custom/Self-Build Dwelling	
Location:	Land Rear of 1 To 3 Griffin Close Griffin Close Walsoken Norfolk PE14 7BW	
Applicant:	Mr and Mrs P Griffin	
Case No:	25/01675/O (Outline Application)	
Case Officer:	Mr K Wilkinson	Date for Determination: 12 December 2025 Extension of Time Expiry Date: 16 January 2026

Reason for Referral to Planning Committee – Called in at the request of Cllr Julian Kirk.

Neighbourhood Plan: No

Case Summary

The application site is located to the south of Griffin Close, a fairly newly established enclave of development east of Green Lane close to its junction with Broadend Road where it meets Burrettgate Road in the parish of Walsoken.

The site lies within an area classed as countryside and within Flood Zone 1 of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Outline permission is sought for a proposed Custom/Self-Build dwelling with only access for consideration at this stage and all other matters reserved for future consideration.

Key Issues

Recent history

Principle of development

Impact upon form and character

Impact on neighbour amenity

Highway/accessibility implications

Flood risk issues

Ecology issues

Any other matters requiring consideration prior to determination of the application

Recommendation

REFUSE

THE APPLICATION

The application site is located to the south of Griffin Close, a fairly newly established enclave of development east of Green Lane close to its junction with Broadend Road where it meets Burrettgate Road in the parish of Walsoken.

The site lies within an area classed as countryside and within Flood Zone 1 of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.

Outline permission is sought for a proposed Custom/Self-Build dwelling with only access for consideration at this stage and all other matters reserved for future consideration. An indicative plan shows a dwelling sited towards the SW corner of the site accessed via the existing private driveway off Green Lane.

SUPPORTING CASE

The following statement has been submitted by the agents in support of this proposal:

"This statement is submitted in support of a single self-build dwelling in Walsoken, a Tier 3 settlement under Policy LP01. The applicants have lived in this location for many years, deeply value their home and community, and wish to remain close to their two sons and their families who live within the adjoining terrace. The proposal would enable them to build a sustainable "forever home" while maintaining essential family support networks.

Under Policy LP02, residential development is acceptable in principle within or adjoining settlement boundaries. While the site is not directly adjacent to the Walsoken development boundary, it directly adjoins the strategic allocation F3.1: Wisbech Fringe and the land granted permission for 294 dwellings under F/YR22/1256/F. Given the allocation, outstanding housing requirements, and the status of that scheme (approved subject to S106), F3.1 effectively functions as a development boundary. Development here therefore accords with the spatial strategy and meets the intent of Policy LP02.

The proposal also satisfies the criteria of LP02(2). It would sit within an emerging residential context defined by F/YR22/1256/F and would not be isolated under the Braintree judgment, thereby meeting parts and existing infrastructure and future provision associated with the neighbouring allocation ensure compliance with part (b). With an identified need for 53 dwellings in Walsoken, the proposal would contribute appropriately to local housing delivery in accordance with the NPPF.

The scheme carries additional weight as a bona fide self-build proposal. The Council's 2025 Custom and Self-Build Position Statement identifies a shortfall of 162 self- and custom-build plots. National policy and recent legislative updates require LPAs to secure enough serviced self-build plots to meet demand accordingly the Council's current self-build deficit must be afforded significant weight.

The LPA has previously approved self-build proposals that do not strictly meet LP02 but carry positive planning balance, including 25/00276/O in Tilney St Lawrence, located 380m beyond the settlement boundary.

25/00276/O demonstrates that where policies are largely met and there is a clear self-build need, support is justified. The current proposal is in a Tier 3 settlement, within a more sustainable context, and therefore merits equal, if not greater, support.

Although the site lies within Grade 1 agricultural classification, historical aerial imagery demonstrates long-term non-agricultural use, including use as a yard area. No active farming has taken place for many years, and the proposal would not result in the loss of productive high-value farmland.

The scheme also meets the sustainable transport objectives of the NPPF and Policy LP13. The approved layout of the neighbouring site for 294 dwellings provides an adopted road and footpath directly to the site access, ensuring safe pedestrian links to local services. Existing footpaths connect to Quaker Lane, the village shop (0.2 miles), the school (0.4 miles), Walsoken centre (0.7 miles), the local park (1 mile) and Wisbech town centre (slightly over 1 mile). The site can no longer be reasonably described as isolated.

The earlier refusal for tandem development is superseded by changing circumstances: the approval of F/YR22/1256/F introduces a clear pattern of development extending in depth. The proposal would relate logically to this emerging built form and integrate successfully without harm to local character.

In conclusion, the proposal complies with the overarching aims of Policies LP01, LP02, LP13, LP18 and LP21 and aligns with the NPPF's approach to sustainable, well-designed and community-supported housing. When the substantial weight for self-build delivery is added to the material change in context and the applicants' long-standing local ties, the planning balance clearly supports approval."

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

25/01060/F: Application Permitted: 26/08/25 - Retrospective change of use of land to residential and retention of existing garden room (Delegated decision)

25/00284/O: Application Refused: 11/04/25 - OUTLINE PLANNING PERMISSION WITH SOME MATTERS RESERVED FOR: Proposed Custom/Self-Build Dwelling (Delegated decision)

21/00205/F: Application Permitted: 15/06/21 - Proposed residential development, involving demolition of existing buildings benefitting from prior notification approval for 5 dwellings (Committee decision)

20/00709/F: Application Permitted: 02/09/20 - Proposed barn conversion to dwelling and garage block (Delegated decision)

18/00817/PACU3: Prior Approval - Approved: 17/08/18 - Prior notification for a change of use from an agricultural building to a dwelling house (Delegated decision)

18/00114/PACU3: Prior Approval - Approved: 09/03/18 - Prior Notification: Change of use of agricultural building to a dwelling house (Delegated decision)

16/01195/PACU3: Prior Approval - Not Required: 28/09/16 - Change of use of agricultural buildings to two dwellings (C3) (Delegated decision)

CONSULTATIONS:

Parish Council: SUPPORT

“Having read the Notice of Decision for the previous application 25/00284/O on this site, the council would like to point out some inaccuracies in the refusal. The site is not on Grade 1 agricultural land but on the farmyard, mainly made of stone. Also, in regards to the isolation from service provision, a short distance from the entrance to Griffin Close, there is a footpath which runs to a local shop. The location is also not far from other local amenities. Lastly, the refusal mentions no footpath on Burrettgate Road, but Griffin Close actually adjoins Broadend Road. In summary, there are inaccuracies in the original refusal document and therefore, the council fully supports the application and supports the calling in of the application to committee.”

Local Highway Authority: NO OBJECTION

IDB: NO OBJECTION – Advice offered relating to Byelaw matters.

Environmental Quality: NO OBJECTION subject to a suite of contamination conditions.

District Emergency Planning Officer: NO OBJECTION - Due to the location in an area at risk of becoming isolated from safe access/egress (dry island) during extreme flooding, it is advised that the occupants sign up to the Environment Agency's Flood Warning service and prepare a flood evacuation plan.

REPRESENTATIONS **TEN** items of **SUPPORT** received on the following summarised grounds:

- New dwelling would greatly improve the character and appearance which is just a piece of waste land
- Site is not prime agricultural land
- The site is sustainable – close to local amenities not far from a footpath that leads to local shop, school and park
- Site is close to an existing development of 5 dwellings and another 300 coming soon
- Shortage of housing in this area
- Sure that the applicants would ensure a sympathetic design of house to the existing area.

Cllr Julian Kirk: Requests that the application is called in for determination at the Planning Committee.

KING'S LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK LOCAL PLAN 2021-2040

LP01 - Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy Policy (Strategic Policy)

LP02 - Residential Development on Windfall Sites (Strategic Policy)

LP04 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development Policy (Strategic Policy)

LP06 - Climate Change (Strategic Policy)

LP13 - Transportation (Strategic Policy)

LP18 - Design & Sustainable Development (Strategic Policy)

LP19 - Environmental Assets - Green Infrastructure, Landscape Character, Biodiversity and Geodiversity (Strategic Policy)

LP21 - Environment, Design and Amenity (Strategic Policy)

LP23 - Green Infrastructure (Strategic Policy)

LP27 - Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) (Strategic Policy)

LP31 - Custom and Self-Build Housing (Strategic Policy)

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

National Design Guide 2021

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main considerations in determining this application are as follows:

Recent history

Principle of development

Impact upon form and character

Impact on neighbour amenity

Highway/accessibility implications

Flood risk issues

Ecology issues

Any other matters requiring consideration prior to determination of the application

Recent history

It will be noted from the History section above, that an identical application was refused on 10/04/25 under application ref: 25/00284/O under delegated powers for the following reason:

“1. Walsoken is within Tier 3 of Local Plan Policy LP01 and residential development outside of, but adjoining the development boundary, may be considered for residential development providing they meet strict criteria as set out within Local Plan Policy LP02.

The application site does not adjoin the development boundary and is located on Grade 1 Agricultural land, at some distance from the development boundary of Walsoken. This results in the site being relatively isolated from local service provision and is exacerbated by the fact that there is no footpath provision on the relatively busy road (Burrettgate Road) which joins the A47 to the west of the application site.

The proposal does not therefore meet all the criteria within Part 2 of Local Plan Policy LP02 and in addition would result in a form of development which does not enhance the local character, nor would it be readily assimilated into the existing settlement given its tandem form.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the provisions of the NPPF 2024 and Local Plan Policies LP01, LP02, LP06, LP13, LP18, LP19 and LP21.”

The appeal deadline (6 months from decision) has lapsed, and this is effectively a repeat application.

Principle of Development:

The application site is located to the south of Griffin Close, a fairly newly established enclave of development east of Green Lane close to its junction with Broadend Road where it meets Burrettgate Road.

Initially prior approval was established under Class Q, Part 3, Schedule 2 of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (2015) to convert the former agricultural buildings into 5no. dwellings (ref: 20/01849/PACU3). Subsequently under the ‘fall-back’ position 5no. new dwellings were permitted (ref: 21/00205/F) in two blocks providing the same number and style of dwellings as the conversion scheme. This has been built out and occupied.

The site comprises land to the rear of the previously approved block of three dwellings and would have been part of the former nursery; for planning purposes it is therefore classed as agricultural land (Grade 1) within the countryside.

Contrary to the Parish Council’s claim, this is not a previously developed/brownfield site. The NPPF (2024) clearly states *inter alia* that: “Previously developed land excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings...” From previous site visits for planning applications it can be evidenced that part of this site was occupied by a building back in 2018 which was subsequently demolished.

The proposal is for outline planning permission with only access being considered at this stage, for the construction of a ‘proposed self-build dwelling’; the indicative plan and application form show one detached dwelling.

The application site lies outside the development boundary of Walsoken which is defined on Local Plan mapping on the western side of Burrettgate Road some 0.7km away from the site. It also lies to the east of the Local Plan allocation F3.1 (Wisbech Fringe) which is to the west of Green Lane.

Policy LP01 of the Local Plan (Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy) classes Walsoken (East of Wisbech) within Tier 3 of the Settlement Hierarchy and the Wisbech Fringe allocation as within Tier 2. Policy LP02 of the Local Plan (Residential Development on Windfall Sites) states that residential development in Tiers 2 and 3 of the settlement hierarchy which are outside of the development boundary will be supported if they adjoin the development boundary and meet the criteria within the first part of the policy (such as sustainable development, enhance local character etc.) as well as respecting the character of the adjoining settlement and countryside and being readily assimilated into the existing fabric of the adjoining built up area. In addition, it should be supported by existing and future service and infrastructure provision and maintain the physical separation between existing settlements to protect their identity.

With regards to Policy LP02, as stated above, the application site lies approximately 0.7km from the ‘development boundary’ of Walsoken and its associated service provision. Whilst it lies approx. 25m east of the Wisbech Fringe housing allocation (separated by Green Lane

and a belt of trees), it is not the defined development boundary and even so does not adjoin it.

It is also clear that with no footpath provision to the highway network (Burrettgate Road and Broadend Road) and on a road which has direct access onto the A47, the site feels disconnected from any services and facilities and would be heavily reliant on the use of the private motor vehicle (the least sustainable form of transport). The adjacent site allocation (F3.1 Wisbech Fringe) has a cross-border hybrid proposal (Our application ref: 22/01756/F) which has been deferred for Fenland District Council (FDC) to determine. It has recently been referred to FDC Planning Committee and approved subject to a Section 106 agreement. It presently does not have planning permission and there is consequently no current assurance that the adjacent site will be developed in the near future. The proposal would therefore be disconnected from the existing built form and as stated above, is not adjoining the defined development boundary for Walsoken.

Consequently, the proposed development would be contrary to Local Plan Policies LP01, LP02 and LP06 and LP19.

The application is identified as for a 'self-build' dwelling and paragraph 73b) of the NPPF 2024 seeks opportunities to support small sites to come forward for self-build and custom build housing. Policy LP31 of the Local Plan supports self-build housebuilding where it respects *local character and complies with other relevant policies of the plan*.

Currently the Council cannot demonstrate that it has met the need for Custom and Self-Build plots due to a change in legislation, the 2023 LURA (Levelling Up and Regeneration Act) places statutory requirements on the Council with regard to granting permission for Custom and Self-Build Housing. This is of considerable weight when considering the planning balance and may mean that consent is granted where other types of housing would not be acceptable. However, it is one of several considerations in the decision-making process and does not automatically indicate approval.

Given the issues raised above the proposal fails to comply with other relevant policies of the plan – in that it fails to adjoin the defined development boundary and the impact on form and character will be addressed below.

Impact upon Form and Character:

As stated above, the existing dwellings gained permission on the back of a fall-back position following establishing change of use under Class Q. Class Q restricts the garden sizes to that of the footprint of the existing barns and this usually entails further applications to extend the garden areas to more commensurate sizes relative to the accommodation and locality. Indeed an earlier approval incorporated this land within the garden of a single dwelling replacing Plots 1-3 (application ref: 20/00709/F) but this was not implemented. The gardens to numbers 1-3 are small and in assessing the earlier refusal it was noticed that a garden room structure had been erected beyond the garden of No.2 and projecting into this current site. That has been regularised in the interim with a retrospective application ref:25/01060/F.

Indeed, it also appears that Nos.4 & 5 have extended their gardens southwards without permission to correspond with the southern boundary of this application site.

So, the principle of having this site as extended garden areas for the existing three dwellings would be acceptable, however it would have permitted development rights removed for additional outbuildings etc.

This is not however what is being proposed in terms of developing this parcel of land.

Griffin Close is a very small development of 5no. dwellings which replicated the format of the former agricultural buildings. The proposal would result in an unplanned, piecemeal form of backland/tandem development which would not respect or enhance the local character but would feel rather contrived. The proposal would increase the projection of the built form, out into the countryside and away from Broadend Road, which would not respond to the existing built form in the locality which is predominantly linear. While there are trees to the western boundary, these cannot be relied upon to screen the built form and its contrived appearance.

The proposal is considered to be contrary to Local Plan Policies LP02, LP18 and LP21 as well as paragraphs 135 and 187 of the NPPF (2024). By virtue of this appraisal, it would also fail to comply with Policy LP31 of the Local Plan.

Impact on Neighbour Amenity:

The proposal is in outline form and therefore the final layout and design of the dwelling is not presently known, however, it would be possible to design a dwelling which would not adversely affect the existing neighbours (in terms of overlooking, overbearing and overshadowing impacts) and could potentially comply with Policy LP21 of the Local Plan.

Highway/accessibility implications:

Whilst Griffin Lane is accessed off Green Lane, which is a narrow unclassified road, it is close to its junction with Broadend Road and Burrettgate Road; therefore, on balance, the Local Highway Authority (LHA) have not objected to the proposal. They have however drawn attention to the fact that they feel it does not represent sustainable development given its isolation from services and facilities and lack of footpath provision along the road network.

Notwithstanding the location, the LHA do not object on highway safety grounds and the proposal is considered to comply with paragraph 115 of the NPPF (2024) and Policy LP21 of the Local Plan. However, the proposal does not meet part 4 of Policy LP13 of the Local Plan, as it does not reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport.

With regards to accessibility to services, the previous decision referred to the recognised heart of Walsoken at the Chapnell Road/Kirkgate Street junction (Tesco Express, Post Office, Boots chemists etc.) which is some 1.8km away from the site by road. Supporters of the proposal identify that the site has links into the fringe of Wisbech via public footpath networks to the west off Green Lane – i.e. Walsoken FP1 and Green Drove. There is indeed a convenience store on the corner of Quaker Lane (0.8km away), a playingfield rear of Money Bank and Ramnoth Road (approx. 1km away) and a school (Meadowgate Academy approx. 1.1km away). The latter is a Special Educational Needs facility not a mainstream school and these are unmade and unlit routes which are not commodious for access to daily services. It is maintained that the residents would mainly rely on private transport.

Flood risk issues:

The application site is located within Flood Zone 1 of the Council-adopted Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2018) and Environment Agency's flood risk mapping and as such a flood risk assessment is not required. The point of access from Griffin Close and Green Lane would be affected by climate change (tidal breach 0.1% and 0.5% and surface water) due to the land drain network, however, the site itself is not affected and is designated as being within a 'dry island'.

Our Emergency Planning Officer suggests that due to the location of the site in an area at risk of becoming isolated from safe access/egress (dry island) during extreme flooding, it is advised that the occupants sign up to the Environment Agency's Flood Warning service and prepare a flood evacuation plan. This matter would be covered by an informative note should the proposal be acceptable due to concerns regarding enforceability and the tests applied to the use of conditions.

The proposal is capable of complying with the provisions of the NPPF, PPG and Policy LP21 of the Local Plan.

Ecology issues:

Biodiversity Net Gain – the proposal is exempt from BNG as it is for a self-build plot.

GIRAMS – A full appropriate assessment has not been carried out, however given the distance to the European protected sites (North Coast, The Wash) the shadow HRA is considered appropriate along with financial mitigation with regard to the Norfolk GIRAMS. At the time of this outline, no payment has been made and this would be required as mitigation prior to the granting of any reserved matters approval.

Protected Species – given the site characteristics a protected species survey was not considered necessary.

Trees – there are no trees within the application site, however there are some tall coniferous trees to the west of the plot and access. A tree survey was not requested at this time, however if the outline was approved, a tree survey would be required at reserved matters stage should there be any trees within 15m of any proposed building.

Other material considerations:

Climate change: Policy LP06 of the Local Plan requires development to recognise and contribute to the importance of, and future proofing against, climate change and to support the Government target of becoming a net zero economy by 2050.

The site is at some distance outside the development boundary of a tier 3 settlement where there is no footpath provision along the highway network, and it would be necessary to rely upon private vehicles (the least sustainable mode of transport). Further information regarding climate change is unknown at this outline stage.

Loss of high-quality agricultural land - The proposal is on Grade 1 agricultural land and Policy LP19 states that the long-term capacity of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3a) will be safeguarded as a resource for the future.

Contamination: Environmental Quality state that the site is first seen developed in aerial photography from 1999 and the surrounding landscape is largely agricultural.

The screening assessment provided indicates no known contamination, however site plans submitted mention a previous application permitted under 21/00205/F. This site was subject to contamination conditions due to confirmed contamination relating to the previous site use. Both sites look to be part of a former nursery, this gives reason to suspect contamination may also be present on the proposed development site and full contamination conditions (including pre-commencement conditions) would be required should the proposal be approved.

CONCLUSION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provides that an application must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

While the proposal is located outside of the development boundary and contrary to the Council's strategic strategy with regard to the provision of housing, it is of significant weight when considering the planning balance that the Council does not have an adequate supply of Custom and Self-Build housing.

Notwithstanding this, the adverse impact of the proposal with regard to the current sustainability of the location at some distance from the development boundary, and the contrived 'backland/tandem' form of development, is considered to outweigh the positive contribution that the granting of one dwelling may have on the supply of custom and self-build housing. The granting of the proposal is considered to cause significant and demonstrable harm at the current time and should therefore be refused in accordance with the development plan.

The proposal is contrary to the principles of the NPPF 2024 and Local Plan Policies LP01, LP02, LP06, LP13, LP18, LP19 and LP21 and should be refused.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reason(s):

- 1 Walsoken is within Tier 3 of Local Plan Policy LP01 and residential development outside of, but adjoining the development boundary, may be considered for residential development providing it meets strict criteria as set out within Local Plan Policy LP02.

The application site does not adjoin the development boundary and is located on Grade 1 Agricultural land, at some distance from the development boundary of Walsoken. This results in the site being relatively remote from local service provision and is exacerbated by the fact that there is no footpath provision on the relatively busy connecting road network (Burrettgate Road and Broadend Road) which also joins the A47 to the east of the application site.

The proposal does not therefore meet all the criteria within Part 2 of Local Plan Policy LP02 and in addition would result in a form of development which does not enhance the local character, nor would it be readily assimilated into the existing settlement given its tandem form.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the provisions of the NPPF 2024 and Policies LP01, LP02, LP06, LP13, LP18, LP19, LP21 and LP31 of the Local Plan (2021-2040).