

PLANNING COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 2020 - 1.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor A Lynn (Vice-Chairman), Councillor C Marks, Councillor Mrs K Mayor, Councillor N Meekins, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor R Skoulding and Councillor W Sutton,

APOLOGIES: ,

Officers in attendance: Stephen Turnbull (Legal Officer), Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer), Nick Harding (Head of Shared Planning) and David Rowen (Development Manager)

P42/20 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 16 September were confirmed.

P43/20 F/YR19/1068/F LAND NORTH OF MAPLE GROVE INFANT SCHOOL, NORWOOD ROAD, MARCH,ERECT 50X 2-STOREY DWELLING COMPRISING OF 24X 2-BED, 21X 3- BED AND 5X 4-BED WITH GARAGES TO PLOTS 18, 20, 21, 37, 43 AND 49 ONLY WITH ATTENUATION BASIN AND SUB-STATION INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDINGS.

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Mr Adam Conchie, the Agent.

Mr Conchie explained that the land was released by Cambridgeshire County Council to provide much needed quality housing and the revenue generated goes back to support education, health and social care within the community. He added that prior to the submission of the planning application, an engagement exercise was held with the community and there have been two pre application meetings held with officers to assist with the design of the scheme and he has continued to work with officers throughout the progress of the application, being proactive in providing information and any further detail which has been requested.

Mr Conchie expressed the view that the scheme will provide 50, much needed homes that will contribute to the District and County Councils housing requirements with them being in a sustainable location and within walking distance of the town centre and train station. He stated that there will be a mixture of 2,3 and 4 bedroomed dwellings, which have been designed to provide a good standard of accommodation for the future occupants and all meet the national minimum space standards, have substantial sized gardens and provide for minimum car parking standards and the development will be landscaped.

Mr Conchie stated that he is aware that objections to the proposal have been raised with regard to flooding, highways, loss of trees and anti-social behaviour, however, the application has been assessed by the relevant stakeholders, including the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA),

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways, Cambridgeshire Police and the Tree Officer at the Council, who have all confirmed that they are satisfied with the proposed development as it meets all the technical and policy requirements. He acknowledged that it is disappointing that the provision of affordable housing is lacking as part of the development, however in accordance with the adoptable policy of LP13, a viability appraisal has been provided to the County Council and District Council who were both in agreement that the scheme is unable to provide any affordable housing as part of the proposal and in his opinion in accordance with planning policy, the lack of the affordable housing does not justify the refusal of the scheme.

Mr Conchie stated that the scheme is well designed, provides much needed homes in a landscaped setting, meets all the technical requirements and will be a welcome addition to the town of March.

Members asked Mr Conchie the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked Mr Conchie whether a traffic count assessment had taken place.? Mr Conchie stated that a transport assessment had been carried out, which was submitted as part of the application and County Council have assessed this. Councillor Mrs French asked Mr Conchie whether he was aware of the findings of the March Area Transport Study, regarding the Norwood Road area and the amount of road traffic collisions which have taken place over the last 3 years.? Mr Conchie explained that as part of the transport assessment, the data of the last 5 years regarding accidents would be reviewed.
- Councillor Mrs French asked whether the road was going to be adopted by the County Council? Mr Conchie explained that part of the road is going to be adopted to allow refuse vehicles to access the site and service the properties, however some of the roads within the estate will not be adopted.
- Councillor Mrs French asked Mr Conchie to clarify that, if the application is approved, will he be prepared to sign a Section 38 and a Section 278 Highway Works Agreement? Mr Conchie explained that if the road is adopted then they will have to be carried out in accordance with the County Council requirements and the applicant is prepared to undertake those works and sign the necessary documentation.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked Mr Conchie to confirm the width of the entrance road.? Mr Conchie stated that amended plans were submitted to officers which increased the width of the access road in accordance with comments from the County Council. Councillor Mrs Davis asked for confirmation that there are footpaths in the proposal and that there is adequate space for vehicles to pass? Mr Conchie confirmed that there is space for two vehicles to pass and there is the inclusion of footpaths which was at the request of the County Council.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that the eastern border of the site is a fenced border against an area of public open space and he asked for clarity as to whether there is the intention to remove the fence, whilst taking into consideration the reason the fence was erected in the first place. Mr Conchie explained that as part of the application, meetings were held with officers and there is the intention to provide timber bollards along the boundary edge, which will enable the residents to access Wake Road and will provide a secondary means of access for emergency vehicles. Councillor Cornwell questioned whether the fence is owned by the landowner and Mr Conchie stated that the boundary fence forms part of the site and is within their ownership.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that the fence was erected to act as a deterrent for antisocial behaviour, which has been effective and therefore if removed, it could lead to a resurgence of antisocial behaviour. Mr Conchie stated that he can understand the concerns, however, the area of open derelict land could lead to antisocial behaviour, as there are no overlooking issues and by building the dwellings there will be natural surveillance across the highway network and the public open space to the north and east of the site. He added that Cambridgeshire Police have reviewed the proposal and have raised no concerns. Councillor Cornwell stated that the Police have reviewed the site on the historic basis that there has

been no antisocial behaviour and they have responded on this basis because there has been no antisocial behaviour since the fence was erected.

- Councillor Sutton stated that at 10.13 of the officers report the County Council Transport Team have indicated a holding objection as there has been no cycle way or pedestrian way included to access the school and he questioned why this request has not been looked into? Mr Conchie stated that this has not been reviewed as it would only be of benefit to the scheme to access the rear of the school and not a benefit to the wider community. He added that discussions did take place with the school, however, there was not a request from the school for an additional entrance to be included at the rear of the site.
- Councillor Sutton addressed the query that Councillor Mrs Davis had raised regarding the width of the road and confirmed that it was 5.5 metres and there is a pavement at either side of it which is 1.8 metres.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked why there have been no consultation or contributions with the National Health and the Primary Care Trust? David Rowen stated that the viability assessment has demonstrated that the development cannot deliver any financial contributions, albeit affordable housing or financial contributions towards the NHS or public open space.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that there appears to be slight confusion between 5.3 of the officer's report where it mentions that the transport team have raised a holding objection and the comments stated at 10.13. David Rowen stated that the Transport Assessment Team still have an outstanding issue in respect of access through the development site to the school, however, the content of the wording at 10.13 is correct in the fact that it is not considered that the lack of the footway link, would be sufficient grounds to refuse the application.
- Councillor Sutton expressed the opinion that, with regard to the holding objection from the Transport Team, there does not appear to have been any action taken from officer's about resolving the issue. He added that he is aware from Mr Conchie's presentation that preliminary discussions took place with the school, however, there is no evidence of this mentioned on the Public Access system or within the officer's report. David Rowen stated that the fact that the issue has not been evidenced on Public Access does not mean that no discussion had been entered into around this issue. The matter was explored, and the rationale was that the school was not insistent on an additional access point at the rear, and therefore it has not been progressed any further.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that at 10.23 of the officer's report, the fence on the current open space is raised which was erected to stop the antisocial behaviour but there is nothing in the report regarding this issue. He made the point that historically the fence was put in place as a result of considerable antisocial behaviour across the rear of the site and if it is removed it will open up the area and Wake Road to pedestrian access which could then lead to a repeated issue of the antisocial behaviour and he asked officer's to confirm whether this has been taken into consideration? David Rowen asked for clarification on which fence that Councillor Cornwell was referring to and it was confirmed that it was the fence to the western side of the public open space adjacent to Wake Road. This fence divides the application site from the public open space which is a significant area of waste land that has been vacant for some time which encourages anti-social behaviour and by developing the land, it may overcome the issue. He added that there is the intention for pedestrian access from the site across the open space to Wake Road, which could be seen as a benefit to the community, allowing movement around the area and the Police have raised no concerns about the development proposed. Nick Harding added that the design of the layout, is such where the residential properties will look towards the open space and therefore levels of surveillance are increased, and the situation has changed which would indicate that a fence would no longer be required.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Sutton stated that he is content with the overall scheme, however, he has concerns over the holding objection from the Transport Team and from his own personal experience he is aware that there are significant traffic issues at the end of the school day and expressed the opinion that to suggest a walkway and cycle way would not be beneficial to this proposal and to the wider area is wrong. He added that the application needs to be revisited and discussions should take place with the school for them to have further input as he feels the application should include a walkway and a cycle way into the back of the school and as the application stands, he cannot support it. Nick Harding stated that if a gate were to be provided to enable access directly to the school from the development it may attract drivers from outside of the proposal to use the development as a parking area and drop off area for their children. He added that if the committee wish to explore this issue further and if they are happy with the rest of the proposal, he suggested that the committee could give officers delegated authority to approve the application if the primary school confirms that they do not want a secondary means of access via the development to be included.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she agrees with Councillor Suttons comments. She added that regarding the discussion concerning the fence, she can confirm that it was erected fifteen years ago for a reason as the residents of Wake Road were subjected with extensive anti-social behaviour and that Councillor Cornwell is correct in his statement that there are no statistics available regarding anti-social behaviour as the issues are historical. Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that she would not wish for the fence to be removed which will enable easy public access onto Wake Road.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to the Transport Statement dated 8 January and the Transport Technical Notes Statement which was dated 20 February, both statements derived from the Highway Authority and in each documents conclusion, it stated that the County Council requested that the application should not be determined until such time as additional information was submitted and reviewed. She expressed the view that the agent had not addressed her question regarding the results of the traffic survey making the point that March Town Council carried out a traffic survey and over a two week period, the results showed 24,161 vehicles travelled in one direction, from Hundred Road towards Wisbech Road, with a top speed of 82mph in a 30mph area. The second survey carried out was from the 26 February through to 12 March, going in the opposite direction and showed 22,860 vehicles with a top speed of 83mph and she cannot understand why the application is recommended for approval without a proper transport infrastructure. Councillor Mrs French added that she is the Chairman of the March Area Transport Strategy and has been working on the strategy, focusing on 3 schemes for the past two years, but she has been dealing with issues and concerns over the issue of speeding for over 30 years. She made reference to accident data that she was aware of , including damage to property and vehicles and expressed the opinion that she cannot support the application in its present form, it should be deferred and returned to committee once the concerns and issues have been addressed. She expressed her disappointment that the application does not include any Section 106 contributions and is disappointed that the applicant wishes to build 50 dwellings but is not prepared to include contribution towards the National Health Service or Primary Care Trust.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that he is one of the Ward Councillors for the area and he agrees with the comments made by Councillor Mrs French and Councillor Sutton. He added that twice daily there is significant traffic disruption in Maple Grove and there is the need for a rear access into the school. He feels that enforced parking control measures may alleviate some of the traffic issues, but he cannot support the application in its current format.
- Nick Harding reiterated his suggestion to members in relation to the inclusion of a second school access and if the school is agreeable to an additional access then the decision could be delegated to officers who in turn would issue a consent. If the applicant was not in agreement with the inclusion of a secondary access, then the application would have to be

brought back to the committee. He explained in relation to the concerns raised over the fence, the applicant could be contacted to ascertain whether they would be prepared to leave the fence in place. Nick Harding referred to the County Council's comments with regard to the secondary pedestrian access for the primary school with their response of the 20 February 20, detailing concerns over an isolated walking route without direct access to the school. He added that regarding accident data, the County Council had stated that the data was acceptable for use and covered the period from September 2014 to September 2019 and there were no concerns raised with regard to trip generation, distribution or queue length surveys. Nick Harding concluded by stating the County Council's holding objection only relates to the issue of the secondary access by pedestrians as they have stated that they are happy with all other aspects of the application with regard to transportation.

- Councillor Mrs French expressed the opinion that she cannot support his suggestion regarding further discussion with the school over secondary access which she feels is a highway issue. She reiterated that the application should be deferred and brought back to the committee when all relevant concerns have been addressed.
- Councillor Sutton expressed the view that Nick Harding has suggested that the application be delegated to the Head Teacher of the school but that decision should not be down to the current Head Teacher as her view may not be agreeable with her successors in the future. He added that he will recommend that the application be deferred.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that if the application is deferred then the retention of the fence also needs to be considered.

It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and AGREED that the application be deferred to seek clarification from the school regarding the Highway Authority's concerns surrounding secondary access to the school, request for the retention of the fence to Wake Road and to obtain up-to-date data regarding transportation and accidents from the Highways Authority.

(Councillor Mrs French and Councillor Connor both declared an interest by virtue of the fact that they are both elected members of Cambridgeshire County Council but have had no involvement with this land)

P44/20

F/YR20/0710/F

F/YR20/0711/LB>BR/>2 MUSEUM SQUARE, WISBECH,

FULL APPLICATION: CHANGE OF USE FROM OFFICE (B1) TO A 7-BED HOUSE IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) (SUI GENERIS) FOR UP TO 9 PERSONS.

LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO A LISTED BUILDING TO FORM A 7-BED HOUSE IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) FOR UP TO 9 PERSONS.,

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a written representation, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure from Kirsty Fullarton, read out by David Rowen, Development Manager.

"In my opinion, Wisbech's one distinguishing feature is its Georgian architecture. I believe that failure to recognize and respect its architectural heritage by approving these alterations will further chip away at its identity and contribute to its general decline into a soulless town with high levels of social deprivation. The character of Museum Square, which is currently a paved pedestrian area, will be irreparably altered by the inevitable increase in cars parked in the vicinity of the museum. The only people who benefit from HMOs are the absent landlords who own them. For tenants, the conditions are often crowded, and, during the current Covid pandemic, social distancing will be impossible".

Members received a written representation in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure from William Wagstaff, read out by David Rowen, Development Manager.

"I write to register my concern that the over thirty comments written by residents and societies have not been addressed in the officer's recommendation to grant this application. Would the officer confirm for example that the issue of local parking has been taken into consideration when making this decision? Also, I am alarmed that the decision for approval appears to have been made by the officer because there is no better proposal on the table (see last paragraph of Conservation Referral Comments document "It is disappointing that the house is not to be returned to a single dwelling, as it would have brought it closer to its historic appearance and plan form and would have enhanced its significance. However, the alterations now proposed are no more harmful than the current arrangement over all"). It should not be a fait accompli that an absentee developer can buy up Wisbech's historic property and turn it into a modern-day slum for profit. The planning committee should send out a message that starting now that houses in the conservation area should be retained as good family housing".

Members received a written representation, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure from Marcus Aspden, read out by David Rowen, Development Manager.

"Change of Use

With regards to the change of use application, I feel the HMO will over intensely utilise the current property and the neighbouring areas. What control measures will be put in place to ensure parking facilities are not affected? The application does not provide details for dealing with refuse collections - how will these be controlled? I feel consent should not be granted without details and control measures in place.

Internal Alterations

The agent, in recent correspondence has stated the alterations and change of use and the works planned will improve the current condition and appearance of the property. As the council are aware, the Owner of a Listed Building has a duty to maintain and keep their property in repair, it should not be left to fall derelict. If necessary, the local authority or council should serve an enforcement notice on the owner to undertake repair and maintenance works. Allowing a property to fall into disrepair and then using this as a reason for a change of use application and alterations should not be considered in support of the application. On the 7th September FDC recommended Objecting to the application (notes posted on the website on 8th Sept). What has been submitted by the applicant to change the Council's opinion to now recommend approval?"

Members received a presentation in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure from Ray Johnson of the Wisbech Civic Society in objection to the proposal.

Mr Johnson stated that the Wisbech Society strongly objects to the planning application to convert a fine example of a late 18th century family town house into a nine bed HMO. He expressed the view that Museum Square is the cultural heart of Wisbech and is a gem in terms of its architecture significance to the town with its unique historic setting with its Grade 1 Listed Church and church gardens, Grade 2* Listed Castle and Museum as well as many other Grade 2 Listed Buildings and monuments. Mr Johnson expressed the opinion that Museum Square is a sensitive area of the town, regularly used for public events, such as Rose Fair and other museum, civic and church events, and these events could be severely disrupted by the accumulated storage of household waste to the outside

of the property or insensitive car parking, as there are no allocated car parking spaces to the frontage. He feels Museum Square and adjacent Church gardens are a haven for residents and visitors to rest and admire the surrounding buildings and their setting which will be seriously affected by the potential for excessive noise and disturbance that a nine bed HMO can bring.

Mr Johnson stated that the town needs additional housing, but this should be of a quality and desirability that offers its occupiers a place to call 'home' not merely somewhere to sleep and asked is allowing a HMO to be established in the cultural centre of Wisbech the appropriate response to much needed housing, or simply an attempt by opportunistic developers, who he emphasised, are not locally based or invested in the towns society, to make profit at the expense of people?

He added that Wisbech is the Birthplace of Octavia Hill, who as well being a founder of the National Trust, was a social reformer and pioneer in improving housing conditions for the working classes and the application does not appear to have taken into consideration the progressive practices she introduced and possibly could be considered a disappointment to this amazing woman. Mr Johnson stated that although the Planning and Conservation Departments have applied the Planning Laws and guidelines precisely, he believes that they have been too rigid in their application and have not sufficiently considered the strong local feeling against this application with 44 written objections; and in failing to do so, have not used the leeway provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which delivered the Fenland 'Local Development Plan (LDP) in 2014'. He referred to the wording Policy LP18 of Fenlands Local Plan under the Historic Environment and Heritage Assets and Historic England's guidance regarding enhancement and conserving heritage assets and the contribution that the historic environment can bring to the area

Mr Johnson concluded that on the basis of the Fenland Local Plan and the advice given to Local Authorities by Historic England, the Wisbech Society strongly contends that it is clear that the proposed HMO within the cultural centre of Wisbech will seriously affect the setting of the building and the historic asset which is the Town's Museum Square with the proposal for an HMO in Museum Square negatively affecting its local character and distinctiveness while offering no wider social or public benefit.

Members received a presentation in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure from Mr Jeremy Baldwin, the Applicant.

Mr Baldwin stated that the building is not in disrepair and it is a large four-storey house of approximately 2000 sq. ft. internal area, which has been used as office accommodation for the past 20 years. He added that the Fenland Probation Service previously used the building as offices and an employee that worked there for 16 years has stated that the offices provided a work space for 7-8 staff and would typically host between 10-15 meetings with outside clients each working day, with all of the associated traffic load and foot-fall in and out of the building, and there was never any concerns over parking raised.

Mr Baldwin stated that the property is in a central location and is well suited to serve a growing and economically important element of the Town's community looking for a high quality "shared living" experience with the proposal bringing back into residential use a property which has been for 20+ years used as a commercial office building. He feels this is in keeping with the stated objectives and preferences of the Conservation Officer, who has been fully consulted as part of this application and who has visited and surveyed the property.

Mr Baldwin explained that there will be a sizable injection of investment to rehabilitate the property which although costly, will benefit the local economy, both in terms of materials supply

and employment for local trades and the refurbishment and improvement of the property externally will enhance the local street scene, improve the look of the square and the Conservation Area more widely. He explained that there are already 20 Licenced HMOs within 220m of 2 Museum Square and 3 of these are also Listed Buildings with one of these being a 30 seconds walk from 2 Museum Square next to the Fenland Library and the designation of 2 Museum Square as a Listed Building, should not be relevant in the assessment of the usage application, provided the Conservation issues are fully identified and respected as in this case.

Mr Baldwin stated that the proposal to use the house as an HMO has the support of the responsible Housing Officer who has met with the applicant and surveyed the building to ensure that the necessary amenity standards will be met and she is satisfied that this is the case. He added that parking is referred to in several of the objections registered, but it should be noted that there is a public car park 70m away from the property, less than a 2 minutes' walk which was not considered an issue when the property was used as offices; with the likely parking demand as an HMO being almost certainly less than when the property was used as offices with 7-8 staff and 15 visitors a day and the Council's own policy is for reduced parking in Town Centres with nil being considered acceptable in certain circumstances.

Mr Baldwin expressed the opinion that the suggestion that HMO's are a source of "anti-social" behaviour is a dangerous generalisation and should not be relevant in considering this application. He added that whilst there may be HMO's in Wisbech which are not professionally managed in his view these are very much in the minority and are not the yardstick against which other HMO's are assessed with the Council having a proactive management policy concerning the private rental sector and HMO's, and therefore this should not be an issue.

Mr Baldwin added that many the objections to the Planning Application are "Cut and Paste" letters with follow precisely the same format and content and the protests appear to be a "whipped-up", carefully orchestrated storm with little foundation in reality and even perhaps, "Nimbyish". He explained that not everyone can afford to rent other types of accommodation, and the proposed high-quality shared living alternative is genuinely very necessary in the Town with "shared living" accommodation being on the rise across the country, and 2 Museum Square is ideally suited for this use. He concluded that the proposal is centrally located, well designed, properly licenced, and affordable; it will be a benefit to the economy of the Town and fills an essential need in the rental market.

Members asked Mr Baldwin the following questions:

- Councillor Meekins asked Mr Baldwin to clarify the overhauling works to the front of the property that he had referred to and asked what further works will be carried out? Mr Baldwin stated that the Conservation Officer wanted to see detail of the overhauling of sash windows and that has been provided to her, along with the full details to tidy up the front of the building. He added that the rear sash windows will need slight repairs, but the front windows will only need to be repainted. He referred to the drawings in the officer's presentation which highlighted conservation approved grills and vent outlets which will maintain the character of the building.
- Councillor Meekins asked for clarity regarding the location of the fire escapes as the plans only show one fire escape. Mr Baldwin explained that the central staircase is the main means of escape, which conforms with building regulations and a fire risk assessment has been carried out which will form part of the licensing process for the HMO which is a secondary regulatory process to deal with.
- Councillor Marks asked that if planning permission is refused to turn the property

into an HMO, will he look to change the property into a single dwelling? Mr Baldwin stated that the application is for a marginal increase in the occupancy levels of the building and if refused it will just operate as a 6 bedroomed HMO. Councillor Marks asked whether there will be caretaker living on site? Mr Baldwin confirmed it will be managed professionally and high-quality shared living is increasing across the country and there is a constant demand for this type of accommodation.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Skoulding asked for confirmation as to whether the local car parks referred to in the officer's report have any time limits associated with them? David Rowen stated he is unsure regarding any restrictions, but as residents there maybe the opportunity to apply for a dispensation when parking there.
- Councillor Mrs French clarified that there are no restrictions currently associated with the car parks, however, in the future this maybe something that is introduced as part of the Civil Parking Enforcement initiative to include permits and time restrictions.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Meekins expressed the opinion that the refuse collection in the area is collected in bags, which will look unsightly and attract vermin. He stated that, within the building itself, there is one historic fireplace and he questioned whether this will be removed, retained or boxed in and preserved. Councillor Meekins referred to the plans and highlighted that on the second floor there are three bedrooms and a sitting area, but there is no inclusion of a toilet or washing facilities. He made the point that although there are two large car parks near the development, people will choose to park in the vicinity of their home, and in his opinion, this could cause an issue. Councillor Meekins stated that Museum Square is the cultural centre of Wisbech, with the Museum, Castle and Church in the vicinity of the HMO and he added that the property is going to well managed but, in his opinion, there is the scope for residents that will live there to be non-compliant with the house rules. He stated that he will be voting against the officer's recommendation.
- Councillor Cornwell expressed the view that members are always cautious when determining HMO properties in the Wisbech area, which is why some strict controls had been introduced previously and Mr Baldwin has confirmed that if the application is approved then it will need to be managed appropriately. He added that in his opinion the HMO is not situated in the right location, since it will be surrounded by Grade 1 and 2 Listed Buildings along with the Castle and Church and he questioned why the refuse cannot be stored and serviced from Love Lane.
- Councillor Lynn stated that he was worked in some of the HMO properties in the area and due to the size and nature of them, they have all had en suite rooms, whereas this proposal does not, in his opinion, have sufficient bathrooms and kitchen facilities for 9 people. He added that the officer's report states that the drainage from the property will egress into Love Lane and there are concerns as to whether that drain will be fit for purpose. Councillor Lynn expressed the opinion that the proposal for 9 people is too overcrowded with too few amenities and he cannot support the application.
- Councillor Sutton stated that he does not have an issue with the building being used as an HMO or the location of it but in his opinion if the proposal had been brought forward with bedroom 7 being used as a wet room and toilet for the

residents of the upper floor, he would have supported the application. He suggested that if the application could be deferred and bedroom 7 could be altered into a wet room officers could be given delegated authority to grant the application. Councillor Sutton stated that public comments cannot be taken into consideration unless they are for material planning reasons.

- Councillor Benney stated that he agrees with Councillor Sutton regarding his comments concerning letters of objection. He added that consideration needs to be given to the quality of life for the residents who live in this type of accommodation, with many of the people who come to Wisbech to work, being from other countries and he is concerned about the cramped conditions that 9 people would be living in and they should be entitled to live in good high-quality accommodation, which, in his opinion the proposal does not equate to. Councillor Benney referred to the comment made regarding the footfall when the premises was a Probation Office, and expressed the view that although at that time there was a high level of footfall, during office hours, with nine residents plus guests visiting the property at different times of day and night, there will be a significant increase in footfall. He feels that the real concern is not so much about the building, it is how people are treated, referring to the Fenland Local Plan Policy LP2, Facilitating Health and Wellbeing for Fenland residents and he questioned how nine people can flourish, living together, who may not know each other with residing in this type of environment not promoting a healthy lifestyle. Councillor Benney added that with reference to crime, Wisbech does have a slightly higher rate of crime than some other Fenland areas and this should be taken into consideration when determining the application. He referred to LP16 of the Local Plan and questioned how the proposal protects a heritage asset with it will also having an impact on the neighbouring properties with noise. He stated that there is no statement to support how the waste will be stored and added that if the waste is stored in bags this will lead to an accumulation of refuse which has not been taken into consideration. Councillor Benney stated that he has looked into other HMO properties in Wisbech and referred to F/YR16/1185/F which was also for a nine bedroomed HMO at 17 Leverington Road, which was refused, and it went to appeal, and it was dismissed. He concluded by stating that the application should be refused and converted into an HMO for 6.
- David Rowen stated that regarding the living standards within the property, that would fall under the licensing regulations for properties of this type which set out the amenity standards required with comments having been received from the Licensing Team who have stated that the amenity provision is acceptable.
- Councillor Sutton referred to the Leverington Road site which was refused on the grounds of lack of amenity space on all floors and the application was brought back before the committee with amended plans and the application was granted. He expressed the opinion that if room 7 was changed into a wet room and toilet so that each floor of the property has its own facilities it would resolve the issue.
- Councillor Cornwell referred to the comments made by the Licensing Team and stated that when reviewing information, they are working on a minimum standard to reach the conclusion that the proposal is acceptable. Members have intimated that they would prefer to see an additional toilet and wet room and this will then enhance the quality of life and meet the requirements of the Local Plan.
- Nick Harding stated that he has reviewed the appeal decision notice for Leverington Road proposal, which was for two bathrooms shared between 16 people, whereas this proposal has 2 bathrooms for 9 people and is therefore better designed.

F/YR20/0710/F – Change of Use.

It was proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Skoulding and AGREED that the application be deferred to encourage the applicant to submit amended plans to change bedroom 7 into a wet room for the health and wellbeing of the residents under LP2 of the Local Plan.

F/YR20/0711/LB – Internal and external Alterations to a listed Building

It was proposed by Councillor Connor, seconded by Councillor Sutton and AGREED that the application be deferred, in association with the previous application F/YR20/0710/F.

P45/20

F/YR20/0790/F

CURF FEN COTTAGE, CURF FEN DROVE, CHATTERIS; ERECT A 3 AND 4-STOREY (INCLUDING BASEMENT) REAR EXTENSION, AND SINGLE-STOREY SIDE EXTENSION TO EXISTING DWELLING INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING CONSERVATORY AND SINGLE-STOREY EXTENSION, AND THE ERECTION OF A 6.5M HIGH (APPROX) STORAGE BUILDING INVOLVING THE CHANGE OF USE OF LAND FOR DOMESTIC PURPOSES

David Rowen presented the report to members:

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Councillor Alan Gowler of Chatteris Town Council.

Councillor Gowler stated that he is one of the Town Councillors for Slade Lode Ward, in which the proposal site is situated with the location site being very rural and on the edge of the parish boundary between Chatteris and Doddington. He added that he sits on the Chatteris Town Council Planning Committee and when it was discussed at the committee all the members unanimously agreed that it was a good proposal and concluded that it would improve the current dwelling with the applicant being a well-known and respected member of the community. Councillor Gowler referred to LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan which he feels this proposal complies with. He added that the Town Council welcomed the application and would like to see it approved.

Members received a presentation in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Ian Benney who advised the committee that he would be addressing them as an individual and not as a Councillor.

Mr Benney stated that he knows the applicant personally and has done so for many years, but he still has an opinion on the proposal and considers the application to be worthy as he feels that the extension to the property will make a positive contribution to the area. He expressed the opinion that from Doddington Road, the current dwelling looks to be out of place by its lack of scale and mass and added that he does not feel it will be detrimental to the street scene when it is a detached property with no near neighbours and will be set back from an unclassified road between Chatteris and Doddington which once built will blend in and enhance Curf Fen. Mr Benney referred to a newly built block of flats in Chatteris which was deemed to be out of character with other buildings in the area, had nothing in common with anything else in the vicinity and when it was being constructed, he thought it would be overpowering, however, now it has been completed, it sits nicely in the street scene. He stated that the only reason to refuse to application would be under LP16d of the Local Plan but in his view this reason is subjective and he would like to see the application supported and given approval.

Members received a presentation in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Mr Robert Feast, the Applicant.

Mr Feast thanked the committee for giving him the opportunity to address them today and asked them to support his planning application. He explained that for most of my working life he has worked in the construction industry and worked his way up to site manager for large construction companies including Skanska and Langs but in recent years as a self-employed builder, and as well as being in the construction industry for the last 10 years, for 8 months of the year he has owned a pest control business. Mr Feast explained that he has Danish hunters who pay to come to England to shoot wood pigeons on farms protecting crops with the dead birds then sold to a game dealer where they end up in the food chain and he needs a barn to store not only his construction equipment, but all the equipment including the walk-in chiller for his hunting business. He stated that he has a JCB digger, a mini digger and numerous other pieces of plant and equipment some of which he currently has stored at a secure rented yard with the 4 acres plot his house stands on needing agricultural machinery to maintain the garden, orchard and grounds and he requires somewhere to store his tractor, grass cutter, trailer, industrial size sprayer and rotovators and he cannot store this equipment in a garden shed. Mr Feast explained that he has a large close knit family with 4 children and 8 grandchildren, who across the generations work with each other for help and support and along with his wife has looked after his parents, and when his father in law passed away in 2006 his mother in law who was suffering from dementia moved in with them rather than put her in a home and it was from my mother in laws inheritance that he has been able to buy their dream home at Curf Fen Cottage.

He explained that the proposed design will be like an old manor house style, he is a firm believer in re-cycling and he would not want to pull down the house as he has invested time and money renovating it to bring it up to a liveable standard, with the intention of including a sensory room within the property for his grandson. Mr Feast stated that he has two static caravans on the site which are currently being used by his two sons and the proposal includes two bedrooms for them to be able to move into.

Members received a presentation in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Mr Matthew Hall, the Agent.

Mr Hall explained that all statutory consultees support the application and there are no objections. He made the point that it is a large site where the applicant wishes to have a large property and there is no overlooking or over shadowing and the nearest house is 100 metres away and nearest road is three quarters of a mile away. Mr Hall referred to the officer's report to 9.10 which shows an ancillary building with Mr Feast providing an explanation to officers as to why this would be required within the residential curtilage. He referred members to the presentation screen where slides were displayed to highlight images of the current site and the proposed site and views.

Members asked Mr Feast and Mr Hall the following questions:

- Councillor Marks asked Mr Feast to clarify who is currently residing in the static caravans? Mr Feast confirmed that his two sons currently reside in the caravans as the existing dwelling is only a one bedroomed property.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs Davis expressed the view that she cannot support the officer's recommendation as she feels that the application proposal is balanced and meets many aspects of the Local Plan Policy LP16. She added that she would prefer to see a larger standalone house rather than a house and caravans and stated that she applauds Mr Feast for wanting to keep his family together. Councillor Mrs Davis expressed the opinion that

there are instances where there appears to be a lack of consistency in the determination of applications and referred to a recent application where there was a large dwelling built under reference F/YR20/0338, which was a 6 bedroomed dwelling with a triple garage and swimming pool block, which at first was refused and the applicant continued to build the dwelling to second floor level and then submitted a retrospective application which was granted, but has had a large impact on neighbours in the vicinity, whereas the proposal before members will not impinge on anybody due to its rural location.

- Councillor Sutton stated that he agrees with some of the points raised by Councillor Mrs Davis, but he does have concerns over Flood Zone 3, as whilst officers with delegated authority have passed applications within Flood Zone 3 previously, but there have always been mitigation measures in place. He stated that he has noted that the proposal has a basement added to it and questioned as to how there can be any mitigation with a basement included and if the basement had not been included, he may have supported the application. Councillor Sutton expressed the opinion, that he has no issue with the applicant wanting a bigger home for his family or with the inclusion of the shed, but the design is not a quality proposal and could be a better designed property in terms of look and usability for the applicant.
- Councillor Skoulding expressed the opinion that he will be supporting the application as he feels that the proposal is a nice design and whilst he respects the views of Councillor Sutton in his opinion, he can understand why the applicant wants to have his tools and equipment for his business in one place and for his family to live under one roof.
- Councillor Marks stated that he will be supporting the application as he thinks the site is of a good size and design and the proposal will tidy up one of the sites along the road and he would hope that the neighbour along the same stretch of road will also do the same thing.
- Councillor Murphy expressed the opinion that the officers' recommendation is correct as they have taken into consideration the Fenland Local Plan, which should still be adhered to, until the new plan is put in place. He added that the officers have correctly identified the site as being in an elsewhere location, which is out of character with the area and the design, scale prominence and layout are all detrimental with the design being three and a half times of the original dwelling and is against policy LP16(d) and chapters 7, 12 and 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework. Councillor Murphy stated that a planning application on the site was refused in 2017, which was smaller in scale than the proposal before members today and questioned why a larger sized dwelling has been applied for. He made the point that there are several representations of support for the application which have been submitted from individuals who are not local to the proposed site who will not be impacted by the proposal. Councillor Murphy stated that detail in the officer's report highlights the enormity of the dwelling which could be likened to a small hotel and he feels the application still has many outstanding aspects which need to be considered and the applicant needs to reconsider his application and discuss with officers the detail in the application to reach a satisfactory resolution.
- Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that although she does not know the area, but by looking at the plans, the site would be enhanced if the application was approved. She added that the design looks good and if approval is given the neighbours in the locality will be pleased to see the area tidied up. Councillor Mrs French referred to a comment made by Councillor Sutton regarding the proposed basement and stated that there is technique in place called Modern Method Construction which includes building homes including basements in Flood Zone 3. She added that in her opinion, if somebody can afford a large property, which is not causing any issues or harm, then the proposal should be approved, and she will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Lynn referred to a comment made by Councillor Murphy, who stated that the proposal is in an elsewhere location and added that there is already a dwelling in place and, therefore, that cannot be cited as a reason for refusal. He expressed the view that the design of the house is down to the applicant to decide to ensure that it meets the needs and requirements of his family and business and should not be a reason for the proposal to be refused. Councillor Lynn agreed with the comments made by Councillor Sutton

regarding his concerns regarding the basement being in Flood Zone 3, if it was going to be a liveable area, however, the area is only going to be used for storage and modern dwellings are now constructed to be able to take this into consideration. He stated that he will be supporting the applicant on this occasion and voting against the officer's recommendation.

- Councillor Meekins expressed the opinion, that he does not normally like large houses built in the open countryside, but on this occasion a large dwelling will be a vast improvement to the dwelling already on the site. He added that along with the letters of support for the proposal it has also been fully supported by Chatteris Town Council. Councillor Meekins expressed the view that the design is nice and will improve the area and he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that regarding the proposal being in an elsewhere location, if there is already a dwelling on site, there can be an application for an extension and a rebuild. She added that she would rather see the family living in a dwelling in Flood Zone 3 rather than a static caravan.
- Councillor Marks added that although the proposal on the plans looks stark currently, in a few years it will blend into the countryside and will fit in nicely.
- Councillor Skoulding questioned as to whether the nearest neighbours are in support of the application.
- Councillor Connor stated that, it is commendable that the applicant wishes to bring his family together under one roof and added that the applicant has designed the property to meet his own needs. He stated that there are no other dwellings in the near vicinity, and it will not impact on any neighbours and he added that he will be supporting the application.
- Nick Harding stated that having listened to the applicant, who has mentioned the addition of the shed for the purposes of business use, it may be that the site does not currently have mixed use consent, which officers will need to look into and if required the applicant may need to apply for this separately.
- Councillor Sutton stated that he is not against the application in its entirety and added that although mitigation measures can be put in place to stop flooding the only way to stop it totally is to put a pump in. He added that the site could be so much better and in his view is out of proportion.

Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Murphy to refuse the application as per the officer's recommendation. This proposal was not supported on a vote by the majority of members.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Davis, seconded by Councillor Lynn and decided that the application be APPROVED against the officer's recommendation subject to reasonable conditions being applied to include adequate screening and for the basement to be constructed in such a way as to mitigate the risk of flooding.

Members did not support the officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that the application does meet some of the criteria of LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan.

(Councillor Benney declared an interest in this item as the applicant is known to him and he took no part in the discussion on this application and voting thereon).

(Councillor Murphy declared an interest by virtue of the fact that he is a member of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning matters)

P46/20 PLANNING APPEALS.

David Rowen presented the appeals report to members.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses in relation to appeal on F/YR19/0499/F as follows:

- Councillor Cornwell asked for clarity of the construction method used, David Rowen explained that the walls of the dwelling were constructed from tyres substantially with a skimmed rendered external finish, with the Inspector concluding that it was an innovative approach used and if it had been proven that it was a safe means of construction then he may have allowed it.
- Councillor Mrs French asked where the site was and David Rowen confirmed that it was in Bar Drove, near Friday Bridge.

The appeals report was noted

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4.11 pm

Chairman