

PLANNING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2022 -
1.00 PM**

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

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Cornwell and Councillor M Purser,

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

P48/22 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting of the 24 August 2022 were agreed and signed as an accurate record.

P49/22 F/YR22/0464/LB MARCH TOWN HALL, MARKET PLACE, MARCH WORKS TO A LISTED BUILDING COMPRISING THE REPLACEMENT OF FRONT ACCESS DOOR

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, from Councillor Mrs French, who had been given permission to address the committee by Councillor Mrs Davis who had assumed the position of Chairman for this agenda item.

Councillor Mrs French explained that in 1985 the building was listed, and it is her understanding that the building had once been owned by Cambridgeshire County Council and had been used as a Magistrates Court for many years. She added that when the building ceased to be used as a court it was purchased in its dilapidated state by a local person and it was handed to March Civic Society, so that the building was protected.

Councillor Mrs French stated that the March Civic Society were then awarded a National Lottery Grant of £1,000,000 and the building was renovated to include the double-glazed units in the café element of the building which has gone on to be very successful. She added that it appears that whenever the Civic Society apply for further works to be undertaken to the building they encounter problems.

Councillor Mrs French made the point that there were problems with their application for double glazed windows which needed to be replaced due to the condition of the existing windows which were falling out and the approval was conditioned to state that the wood used had to be soft wood instead of hard wood. She explained that the existing door to the building is original and is 120 years old and has been repaired between 15 and 20 times and it is very difficult to open.

Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that she does want this type of building preserved and the Civic Trust have tried their utmost to do that and have been prepared to spend money on the upkeep of the building. She made the point that the new door is not a cheap door and will cost in

the region of £10,000 to £12,000.

Councillor Mrs French stated that she found it interesting to hear the view of the County Council and added that under the March Area Transport Study there will be major changes undertaken in the Market Place and she questioned whether the County Council Highway Department will need a Listed Building because it is in the setting of a Listed Building.

Members received a presentation in accordance with the public participation procedure from Matthew Hall, the Agent. Mr Hall explained that the committee will recall that the building was given Listed Building consent for the replacement of existing timber framed windows to double glazed units in 2018 and a further application in 2020. He stated that the proposal is to replace the existing double doors with new double doors with double glazed fan lights which will all match the existing style with no change in the actual opening size.

Mr Hall explained that the joiner D R Betts who made the windows and installed them, has visited the site and inspected the door and he made reference to an email which the joiner has provided following that visit. Mr Hall read the email to members which stated that ' I have been and inspected the doors and feel that it is better to replace them as there are several layers of thick paint on the doors which has hidden the features of the mouldings, particularly the staff bead moulds on the meeting rails and in my experience the best way to remove this is to have them dipped, however this could cause problems once it dries out as it may cause the panels to crack, having said that I noticed that there are a couple of panels already cracked with a crack running down them and there are mouldings which have been cut through for the letter box and pieces of timber inserted where the lock has been removed. The hinge style on the left-hand side appears to have split where it meets the curved top rail, the door looks like it has dropped due to its weight and may require clamping and re gluing'.

Mr Hall stated that the door has been repaired on numerous occasions with new wood being spliced in along with adjustments to the ironmongery and locking mechanism and replacements to the locking mechanism on several occasions. He explained that it is his opinion along with that of the March Civic Trust that when reviewing the comments of the Conservation Officer on 30 August, it would appear that the Conservation Officer has not visited the site to review the doors.

Mr Hall explained that the applicant is happy to provide joinery details of the proposed doors and the locking mechanism referred to by Cambridgeshire Constabulary as part of a condition. He stated that the existing doors can be removed and donated to March Museum to keep them within the Town of March as a relic of the town's history.

Mr Hall added that the approved replacement of the windows previously in the Listed Building, together with the earlier setting of the aluminium framed windows and doors in the café, shows approval for the replacement of the fabric in the building.

Members asked Mr Hall the following questions:

- Councillor Miscandlon asked Mr Hall whether he was aware of the comments made by the Conservation Officer before the report came before the Planning Committee? Mr Hall confirmed he had received an email on the 30 August and was aware of the comments. Councillor Miscandlon questioned why the additional information had not been provided in order for a more pragmatic decision to be made? Mr Hall stated that when the application was submitted the Planning Officer requested some further information and this was submitted along with a covering email to explain why he felt the door should be replaced but nothing further has been submitted.

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

- Councillor Murphy stated that the applicant wishes to install a reasonable door on the building. He added that he welcomes the fact that it is not for in perpetuity otherwise in 200

years it will require a replacement again. Councillor Murphy expressed the view that it is of a nice design and will add to the building. He stated that it is a building that has been brought to life and it will be enhanced with the replacement doors.

- Councillor Miscandlon stated that he agrees with the points made by Councillor Murphy. He expressed the view that the building has been subject to various modifications to bring it up to date and the current door is in a very poor state of disrepair and it needs to be replaced rather than keep making interim repairs. Councillor Miscandlon added that the applicant is not replacing it with a plastic door and it is being replaced with something far more substantial and he will support the application.
- Councillor Marks stated that he fails to understand why something is repaired on numerous occasions until nothing of the original fabric of the door is left and it should just be replaced.
- Councillor Mrs Mayor highlighted the fact that the elements need to be considered and the fact that there is a draught. She added that the cost of heating a building now needs to be taken into consideration and she will be voting against the officer's recommendation.
- Councillor Benney stated that that he agrees with the comments made by the other members. He added that he can recall when the application for the replacement windows was submitted, and he made the point that at that time that the best way to keep a building in good repair is to keep it used and maintained to a good standard. Councillor Benney stated that a new door is maintenance and although it is expensive that is because it is being done properly and he will support the application.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that when you stand in front of the existing doors the old repairs are visible, including the thickness of the paint and some of the beading that is lifting. She added that she is aware that the door has recently caused visitors to the building having problems when leaving as they were unable to physically push the door open, resulting in having to call somebody to open the door from the outside. Councillor Mrs Davis made the point that from the drawings that members have seen it is a very fair replacement of the door which is costing a significant amount of money. She added that she agrees with the point raised by Councillor Mrs Mayor who made reference to the cost of heating and the door will go some way to mitigate that.

Proposed by Councillor Miscandlon, seconded by Councillor Murphy and agreed that the application be APPROVED against the officer's recommendation with authority delegated to officers to formulate suitable conditions.

Nick Harding stated that the likely conditions would relate to the material to be used to construct the door and with regards to the design details, the Agent has already stated that they would be willing to provide detailed drawings of the design of the door.

Members did not support officers' recommendation for refusal as they do not feel that the replacement door will be detrimental to the historic nature of the building in any way whatsoever.

(Councillors Connor, Skoulding and Councillor Mrs French declared that they are all members of March Town Council and following advice sought from the Legal Officer decided that they would take no part in the discussion and voting thereon on this item)

(Councillor Mrs Davis took the Chair for this item)

P50/22

F/YR22/0495/O

36 WESTFIELD ROAD, MANEA

ERECT UP TO 9 X DWELLINGS INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING SHED (OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH MATTERS COMMITTED IN RESPECT OF ACCESS)

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Lee Bevens, the agent. Mr Bevens stated that he is disappointed to see that the wording on the description of the development is incorrect and that he had specifically worded the application originally and completed the application form, based upon nice self-build and custom-built dwellings. He made the point that the Council has been legally required from the 1 April 2016 to keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who are seeking to require surplus plots of land in their area in order to build their own homes and he has asked the Council on several occasions for a copy of the register, and it is only recently that he has been provided with the figures from 2016 onwards.

Mr Bevens expressed the view that it is unclear whether the figures provided are for specific self-build custom builds as described within the qualifying terms of the Self-Build Custom House Building Act. He stated that if the Council is bound by this Act to keep and publicise the register then he cannot understand why it is not a public document.

Mr Bevens stated that in considering whether a home is a self-build or custom build the Council need to be satisfied that the initial owner of the house will have primary input into its final design and layout. He expressed the opinion that he is unsure whether the criteria has been met and added that if the application is approved it will meet all the required criteria to comply with Self-Build Custom House Building Regulations 2016.

Mr Bevens stated that the officer's report refers to the site lying predominantly in the countryside, and referred to the presentation screen which shows the open countryside is delineated by Darcy Lode to the north and the public footpath to the northern side of the site. He pointed out that beyond Darcy Lode it is typical Fenland farmland which he agrees is open countryside and he referred members to the second slide which has been taken from the Ordnance Survey footpath maps which highlights the footpath that runs along the northern boundary alongside Darcy Lode and that the land south of Darcy Lode which is coloured grey infers it to be in the built-up area of Manea.

Mr Bevens stated that, in his view, the development is not out of keeping with the area and he added that on the first slide it shows Glebe Close to the south west of the site which is not a linear frontage site and therefore it breaks the linear frontage pattern along Westfield Road together with development along Dunvegan Close and the recent approval for planning at 18 Westfield Road. He stated that the proposal does recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside by including a green frontage to Westfield Road and the retention of all of the trees and fauna at the northern end of the site which is adjacent to Darcy Lode.

Mr Bevens explained that the layout suggests that the area would also have the inclusion of additional tree planting to screen the development even further and the hedgerows will be retained and increased along the west and eastern boundaries. He pointed out that a surface water attenuation facility will create a significant ecology enhancement on the site.

Mr Bevens stated that members may recall an application for 26 dwellings in Westfield Road earlier in the year, which was refused by the committee. He added that the officer has referred to the site within their report outlining its similarities but, in his opinion, the proposal before the committee has more cohesiveness to nearby housing and is less dense than the other application and offers better mitigation to the countryside beyond its boundary.

Mr Bevens pointed out that the proposal has a clear ecology strategy that could be further reinforced in a future reserved matters application. He added that the site does not require affordable housing provision and there are numerous letters of support for the proposal which outweigh the letters of objection received and the Environment Agency, Natural England, Highways, Wildlife Officer, Fire and Rescue and Environmental Health all have no objection to the proposal.

Mr Bevens stated that in the report at paragraph 10.9 the officer makes reference as to whether the application can be deemed as brownfield and Mr Bevens expressed the view that the land lies within the curtilage of an existing structure currently, which was purchased and mortgaged under one title with no agricultural restrictions and in accordance with the description of brownfield as described in the National Planning Policy Framework which was also recognised in the Court of Appeal and accepted as case law in a case with Dartford Borough Council v the Secretary of State. He stated that the site should have been entered onto the brownfield register by the Council by 31 December 2017 and recognised as a brownfield site.

Mr Bevens added that the Parish Council's reasons for refusal, in his opinion, are not strictly accurate as it is a brownfield site and whilst the entrance is opposite the fire station, access will be made easier by virtue of the fact that cars will no longer be able to park opposite the entrance. He stated that there is infrastructure to support the proposed dwellings with shops, schools, bus services and a train station and he added that the officer has noted that affordable housing is not a reason for refusal.

Mr Bevens concluded by stating that he would ask the committee to consider his counter argument to support the application to give nine applicants the opportunity to design their own dwellings.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked whether the application site is within walking distance of the train station at Manea. Mr Bevens stated that it would be about a 30-minute walk to get there.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Marks stated that officers had advised the committee that there is a quantity of self-build plots available, and he asked whether that was within the Manea area or within the district? Nick Harding explained that the register that the Council maintains, is not a public document in its own right, because the register comprises of personal names and addresses which cannot be shared under General Data Protection Regulations. He added that the key point about the register is the numbers of the persons that are on the register and those that have an interest in constructing custom self-build accommodation. Nick Harding stated that the information that has been provided to the agent is available on the Council's website and can be found in the Annual Monitoring Report which has been compiled in accordance with the requirements of the legislation in relation to monitoring of custom and self-build properties. He pointed out that the register relates to the district as a whole and is not location specific, however, when somebody registers, they can indicate if they have a particular interest in custom and self-build properties in a particular part of the district. Nick Harding pointed out that the statistics that are published on the website and also provided to Government each year and have been shared with the Agent, demonstrate that the number of planning permissions that the Council grants is significantly higher than the required figure. He pointed out that since October 2016 and annually the requirements have been 18, 23, 7, 2, 5 and the number granted has been in excess of 100 every year except for the period ending 23 and by looking at HMRC information about reclaims the average number of reclaims in our area is 36 per annum and therefore in terms of actual deliverable custom self-build homes, the Council is exceeding its requirement. Nick Harding explained that the Council has to monitor the number of planning permissions granted that may go on to be used by custom and self-build homes.
- Councillor Marks asked for clarity that the dwellings could be anywhere in the district and Nick Harding stated that there is no requirement for that to be monitored or factored into the decision making.

- Councillor Marks stated that a self-build dwelling is more affordable than a property already on site and he asked whether that is considered when taking affordable homes into account? Nick Harding explained that custom build and self-build homes do not come under the consideration of affordable homes and, therefore, it would not be lawful to consider it on that basis.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked officers to confirm whether the site is a brownfield site? David Rowen provided a definition of previously developed land from the National Planning Policy Framework which states that land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or was last occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill, where provision for restoration has been made through development management procedures; land in built-up areas such as residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape.' David Rowen expressed the opinion that his interpretation of the site in the context of that definition is that even though there is a dilapidated building on the front part of the site, in his view, it would be very difficult to say that the four fifths of the site that stretches back into the grassland paddock area could be defined as brownfield.

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

- Councillor Benney stated that he does not necessarily class the land as brownfield, but the site is Flood Zone 1, and it is the land that should be built on first and the proposal will provide 9 homes in what is classed as a growth village. He added that whilst the site is at the other end of the village to the train station, there is a very large car park at the train station, and he would like to see it used to its full potential and, in his opinion, anything that can be done to encourage the use of the railway at Manea is good. Councillor Benney stated that every business is struggling, and Manea has a few shops and a good Indian restaurant, and they all need customers to spend money and if more homes are not built then the businesses are going to suffer, and the businesses and the village of Manea will go backwards, with the village currently thriving with a very good community spirit. He expressed the view that the application is for a good development, and within the officer's report it states that Glebe Close is in the open countryside which he does not agree with as the lane at the back is garden land as opposed to fields of wheat and barley and, in his view, it is a piece of land which needs development. Councillor Benney stated that it will make access into the fire station easier and, in his opinion, the site is not on the outskirts of Manea. He expressed the view that there have been other approvals of developments on the entrance into the village of Manea and the proposal will provide 9 good homes. Councillor Benney stated that regardless of the fact whether the Council has a land bank that meets Government targets, which are a success story in their own right and the number of HMRC returns for VAT reclaims demonstrates to him that this is what people want. He stated that 2,800 homes have received planning permission already in Fenland which are still to be built and just because they are approved does not mean that it has got to be built making the point that if there is land with self-build dwellings approval on it, some of those will not be developed. Councillor Benney expressed the view that he feels it will be a good development and it will be built out and provide homes, with the Council and the Combined Authority having spent a considerable amount of money in the area around the railway station and if development is not supported then, in his opinion, the Council is remiss because they are not supporting the very thing that public money has been spent on and the application is something that the village of Manea is suited to. He will support the application.

- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that reference was made earlier concerning the application which was refused for the 26 dwellings at 96 to 100 Westfield Road but, in her opinion, it cannot be compared as it is on the edge of the village of Manea.
- Councillor Mrs French clarified that the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority financed the car park at the train station which is for 116 car parking spaces and prior to its development she is aware that they had looked at the local infrastructure and possibility of growth and, in her opinion, they would not have funded such a project if they had not agreed that Manea was a growth village. She added that there is a shortage of houses in Manea, which is a nice village with an underused car park which she hopes will be utilized more when people move in as the local roads are not good. Councillor Mrs French stated that she will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Marks stated that he is the local Ward Councillor and explained that over the last 18 years he has seen the village grow. He explained that there have been some recent self-build dwellings constructed in Station Road and they have good space around them. Councillor Marks added that due to a lack of footfall a local shop has just closed and whilst the train station has just been improved there is still the need for people to live in Manea. He stated that he will support the proposal and believes in the new Local Plan the boundary of Manea is being extended down to the Darcy Lode and there will be development along that piece of land as well.
- Councillor Connor stated that he agrees and will also be supporting the application.
- Nick Harding stated that the consultation of the emerging draft Local Plan shows the proposal site sitting outside of the village boundary. Councillor Marks asked for clarity as to whether that is the suggestion of the Council or what the Parish Council had suggested previously as he is of the opinion that there are two differences in the boundary position. Nick Harding stated that it is the proposal of Fenland District Council in the Local Plan as opposed to the opinions of the Parish Council.
- David Rowen stated that with regards to the point made by Councillor Mrs Davis in terms of the developments not protruding out into the open countryside beyond Glebe Close, the indicative layout shows the dwellings extending out approximately 50 metres beyond the line of Glebe Close.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Marks and agreed that the application be APPROVED against the officer's recommendation with authority delegated to officers to formulate suitable conditions.

Members did not support the officer's recommendation for refusal as they feel that the development does not harm the open countryside, does not adversely impact the character of the area and will provide much needed homes.

Nick Harding stated that during the debate a number of members made reference to the sort of benefits that this development would bring in terms of delivery of custom self-build dwellings and he asked for confirmation as to whether the committee would want a legal agreement to secure that the development is delivered in the form of customer and self-build dwellings. Members agreed that they would want a legal agreement to form part of the conditions applied to the planning permission.

P51/22

F/YR22/0529/F

15 BRIDGE STREET, CHATTERIS

REPLACE EXISTING SHOP FRONT AND SEPARATE ACCESS DOOR WITH FOLDING DOORS, AND INSTALLATION OF ROLLER SHUTTERS TO RESTAURANT FRONTAGE (RETROSPECTIVE)

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Miscandlon stated that officers have advised that the applicant was given the opportunity to amend their application from a solid to a see-through screen and he asked officers if they are aware why the applicant failed to consider the advice given? David Rowen stated that he is unaware why the applicant chose to rebut the option presented to them. Councillor Miscandlon stated that, in his opinion, the applicant was probably misled by the salesperson into purchasing a solid shutter even though the advice from officers was to have a see-through shutter which would have been more acceptable.
- Councillor Marks stated that there a number of premises in Chatteris which have the solid roller shutters including the old Budgens site at the roundabout. He added that there are four or five properties that he can recall, and he questioned as to whether they would have obtained planning permission? David Rowen stated that they probably should have done, and he explained that he has researched planning permissions for the inclusion of shutters, and he is not aware of many permissions which have been granted recently. Councillor Marks stated that if the property is in a Conservation Area a precedent has been set by allowing other solid roller shutters being allowed. David Rowen reiterated that he is not aware of too many examples of roller shutters having been granted in the Chatteris Conservation Area and if permissions had been granted historically then that does not automatically mean that permission should be granted in this case particularly given how explicit Policy LP17 is in terms of its resistance to solid roller shutters being installed on premises.
- Councillor Mrs Davis asked whether the applicant submitted an application for the roller shutters at the same time as they submitted the application for the bi-fold doors? David Rowen explained that the previous two applications at the premises were purely for the shop fronts and contained no details of the shutters at all.

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

- Councillor Sutton expressed the opinion the officer's recommendation is correct.
- Councillor Benney stated that the building has been there for many years and was derelict and over time it has been brought back to life and has become a thriving business. He added that he is aware that the owner of the business has suffered from vandalism before the bi-fold doors were installed and, in his opinion, the roller shutters are to stop vandalism as if the whole glass frontage was vandalised it would cost a significant amount to replace, and businesses cannot afford to do that. Councillor Benney expressed the view that application such as these should be approved as they allow for individuals to protect their properties and to safeguard their investment. He referred to a business four doors from the application site which has a stone clad frontage with a tree growing from it, which has been like it for some considerable time and there has been no enforcement undertaken. Councillor Benney notes that within the emerging Local Plan it states that roller shutters can be installed where there is a history of violence and damage and, in his opinion, this property fulfils the criteria as set out, with the business smartening up that particular area of the town which has had some very derelict buildings in area. He added that the shutters will allow the business owner to protect his business and continue and he cannot see anything wrong with the proposal as a boarded-up premises is not beneficial to the business, customers or the residents that live there and he will support the application.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that she appreciates the points raised by Councillor Benney, however, if the applicant had chosen alternative mesh roller shutters the application would not have had to come before the committee. She added that the committee need to be very careful about setting a precedent when considering solid roller shutters when premises can install mesh shutters instead. Councillor Mrs Davis added that she sympathises with the owner, and she agrees with Councillor Miscandlon that the owner was probably given advice from the roller shutter installation company that the solid shutters were better, however, in her opinion, the owner of the business should have taken the advice from the Planning Officers. She added that as much as she would like to support the business and she does have sympathy for them due to the ongoing vandalism, she is not content about setting a precedent for the solid shutters being installed.

- Councillor Benney explained that the business is open from early morning and late at night and the shutters are only down when the premises is closed. He added that the owners work very long hours, and the vandalism happens at night and whilst he agrees with the comments concerning perforated shutters, he made the point that the BP garage has solid roller shutters and that is also in a Conservation Area. Councillor Benney expressed the view that every application is judged on its own merit and although the application is a retrospective application, he questioned whether the business is going to be further penalised from the Covid recovery period and high energy bills. He expressed the view a number of businesses are going to be lost from the High Street if they are not supported and to make the applicant remove the roller shutters and replace them would mean an unnecessary cost.
- Councillor Mrs Davis addressed Councillor Benney and asked him to clarify that a precedent has already been set as there are other businesses in Chatteris which already have the same type of roller shutter. Councillor Benney stated that he is fairly certain that the BP garage has roller shutters.
- Councillor Marks stated that old Budgens store has solid shutters and added that is also very close to the road, which in the past has caused stones to fly up and that is another reason why most people go for solid shutters as opposed to see through.
- Councillor Miscandlon referred to 5.3 of the officer's report which makes reference to designing out crime, with the crime statistics which have been provided not reflecting much evidence of crime having been reported over the past three years and he made the point that by using crime as a justification for the installation of something which is not in keeping with the area is totally misleading.
- Councillor Murphy stated that that the application site is not within the desirable part of the town and that area has many different styles and types of buildings and the premises itself is very smart and, in his view, it is a very good business which appears to be successful. He added that the business is in the part of the town where it is needed and there are a lot of housing estates in the vicinity. Councillor Murphy expressed the view that the business is in the part of Chatteris which unfortunately does suffer from vandalism, and he cannot see why there is concern about the shutters standing out from the building, adding that historically he had a business which suffered from vandalism and as a business owner he can empathise with the applicant. He stated that the report states that the shutters are not in keeping with the area and he questioned what could be classed as in keeping with the area as everything is different in that part of town and nothing is uniform in design. Councillor Murphy expressed the view that the applicant has invested well into their business which is very well supported and he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Sutton expressed the view that it appears that all the applicant has had to do is spend money, go against planning regulations, bring the application to committee and it will be approved. He stated that the elected members for Chatteris appear to be keen to see the application approved and he questioned whether they would like to see the whole of the High Street with black shutters installed as he has seen that in other parts of the country, with a town having numerous shutters installed and the area unfortunately deteriorating.
- Councillor Murphy expressed the view that unfortunately you have to think of the future as vandalism is an everyday occurrence nowadays and, in his opinion, it will only get worse. He stated that Chatteris Town Council are in support of the proposal.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that she had made a comment earlier about being careful of setting a precedent, but it would appear that from the comments made by the Chatteris Councillors that a precedent has already been set and, therefore, she has changed her mind on the proposal, and she will be supporting the application.
- Nick Harding pointed out to members that the BP petrol station which formed part of the members debate is actually outside of the Conservation Area and the application site being determined is inside the Conservation Area. Nick Harding clarified that the BP station he is referring to is located on the corner of Park Street and Huntingdon Road which Councillor Murphy stated is right within the centre of Chatteris.
- Councillor Benney made the point that Budgens has solid shutters which is within the

Conservation Area.

Proposed by Councillor Sutton that the application should be REFUSED as per the officer's recommendation however this was proposal was not supported due to no member seconding the proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Skoulding and agreed that the application be APPROVED against the officer's recommendation.

Members did not support officer's recommendation for refusal as they feel that the principle of the application is needed which outweighs policy LP17(e) in the Local Plan and they feel that the proposal is not detrimental to the area and will be of benefit the town of Chatteris.

(Councillors Murphy and Benney declared, under Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they are members of Chatteris Town Council but take no part in planning matters)

P52/22

F/YR22/0701/O

LAND NORTH OF 59 AND 61 MARCH ROAD, COATES

ERECT UP TO 4 X SELF/CUSTOM BUILD DWELLINGS (OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH MATTERS COMMITTED IN RESPECT OF ACCESS)

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the Agent. Mr Hall stated that members will have noted from the officer's report that there are no technical objections to the proposal, with the applicant trying to achieve executive self-build style properties which are similar in style to those at the front of the site and although the site plan which was shown as part of the presentation is indicative, the proposal is likely to be for bungalows or chalet bungalows and not full two storey properties. He stated that in the Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan it states that development proposals which make a provision for self-build and custom build housing will be supported and schemes which provide executive homes as part of a wider housing mix will also be supported which is what the applicant is trying to achieve, and any design of the properties would be agreed with officers.

Mr Hall stated that the officer's report refers to the proposal as being in the open countryside, but directly to the east of the site there is a proposal for in excess of 200 houses on land that abuts this site all to the east and is set far back from March Road as the proposal before the committee. He stated that the proposal would not result in a loss of agricultural land as it is currently used as grassland and is maintained by each property and the application still retains large gardens to the rear of the existing dwellings which are located at the front of the site.

Mr Hall pointed out that the land is all located in Flood Zone 1 and there has only been one objection received to the proposal which he has reviewed, with the proposed site being in excess of 85 metres from the objector. He expressed the opinion that the officer's report appears to be a positive report and it confirms that there are no technical objections to the proposal, and he pointed out that he has received a number of enquiries from persons wishing to purchase the site or individual plots which confirms that there is interest in the development to be built out.

Mr Hall stated that under 1.3 of the officer's report it confirms that a policy compliant scheme could be achieved at the site in relation to highways, refuse collection, flood risk, ecology, residential amenity, and drainage.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Nick Harding pointed out that there was also an objection submitted from Whittlesey Town

Council.

- Councillor Benney asked officers to clarify that the application is adjacent to the big site that is earmarked for development further out as stated in the SHELA report in the draft Local Plan? Nick Harding confirmed that is correct. Councillor Benney asked officers to confirm that as that is the case then if the proposed piece of land does come forward as a development it would be between the built-up form and the new development and Nick Harding confirmed that is correct.

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

- Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she knows the area very well and, in her opinion, officers have made the correct recommendation. She added that the access is dreadful and the four properties that have already been built are superb executive properties, but to place an access between two of those properties to build behind them, in her opinion, is not suitable. Councillor Mrs Mayor stated that she will support the officer's recommendation and added that she can understand why people wish to build beautiful properties but to include an access which will go through the driveways of two of the existing properties is not right and she cannot agree to the proposal.
- Councillor Miscandlon pointed out for clarification purposes only that the access to the proposed site is actually up the back end of the last property and it is actually not over two properties.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that she agrees with the officer's recommendation and added that notwithstanding that the field next door stands to be built out under the new Local Plan which cannot be taken into consideration as that is still out for consultation.
- Nick Harding explained that because the first draft version of the Local Plan is out for consultation virtually no weight can be given to the emerging Local Plan. He added that as the plan works through the process then more weight can be given to it when making decisions where there are no objections to a particular policy or allocation that is in play that is pertinent to the application at the time.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she agrees that officers have made the correct recommendation and she expressed the view that she thinks that the application is slightly premature, and the applicant should maybe have waited until the new Local Plan is in place.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs Mayor, seconded by Councillor Sutton and agreed that the application be REFUSED as per the officer's recommendation.

(Councillor Miscandlon declared that he is the Chairman of Whittlesey Town Council Planning Committee and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon on this item)

P53/22

F/YR22/0863/F

18 EAST PARK STREET, CHATTERIS

ERECT A FIRST-FLOOR REAR EXTENSION TO EXISTING BUILDING

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mr Mark Williams, the applicant. Mr Williams explained that he is the CEO of the Police Firearms Office Association which is a registered charity and has 11,000 members across the United Kingdom. He explained that the members and their families are all looked after by the association and the members are all officers involved in armed policing in the UK, with the charity providing counselling, physiotherapy, financial support, respite breaks and anything that can help the officers be at work or back to work if they are absent.

Mr Williams explained that the charity moved into Chatteris Police Station in 2015 and a fifteen-year lease was signed with the Police and Crime Commissioner and shortly afterwards the Constabulary chose to close the Police Station. He stated that six staff are employed on a full-time

basis, three are employed in a part time capacity and in 2019 a museum of armed policing was opened which was housed in the dilapidated garage area which was converted into a museum attracting over 2,000 visitors a year educating and informing the public about armed policing including schools where the younger generation can learn about the dangers of knife and gun crime.

Mr Williams explained that in 2019, Her Royal Highness Princess Anne, visited the museum, and she expressed her delight in what had been achieved including the work of the staff who support Police Officers nationally. He pointed out that the planning application has been submitted to future proof the future of the association and to ensure that it can remain in Chatteris, with the detail of the application being as sympathetic as possible which includes the wooden cladding that blends in with the buildings immediately around the existing building and consultation has been undertaken with the neighbouring properties and particularly the older neighbours that live to the right-hand side of the Police Station and there have been no objections to the proposal.

Mr Williams expressed the view that the application will provide an increase in office space, a bigger and better museum and a state-of-the-art virtual reality firearms range which does not make noise, but it is a new form of technology, and the association will be one of the first in the UK to have it. He pointed out that it is hoped that the footfall to the museum will also increase, and Insight Days will also be introduced for Police Officers who are interested in armed policing and for those looking to join the Police.

Mr Williams explained that the Police Station in Chatteris will also be re-introduced for at least two days a week, which Cambridgeshire Police have agreed to, and it will reopen at the expense of the Association and not the public. He added that the increased footfall to the museum will create money for the local economy and also increase employment.

Mr Williams stated that the 30-metre-high radio mast will be removed, with the Police already making arrangements for its removal and the Police Station will remain a focal part of the town of Chatteris and will provide a much-needed facility for the community.

Members asked Mr Williams the following questions:

- Councillor Benney stated that he is always very interested to know what is happening in Chatteris as he is a local Councillor for the town. He explained that he had recently had a conversation with a member of staff who works at the Police Firearms Office Association and initially he had thought that the building was just a museum, and he did not realise that there was the charity element of supporting firearms officers which he thinks should be publicised more. Councillor Benney stated that he is very pleased to hear that the building is also going to be used as a base for officers to come and take their rest breaks which in turn will mean that there are more Police in Chatteris. He expressed the view that the residents of Chatteris will very much welcome the news that the Police Station is going to reopen in the town, and asked Mr Williams to clarify how long the Police Station will be open for during the day. Mr Williams stated that he can confirm that the Police Station will re-open for two days per week and will open from 9am-5pm to enable the community to report crime and speak to somebody for enquiries.
- Councillor Mrs French asked Mr Williams to confirm how the Police Firearms Office Association is funded and he advised that the funding is through donations and sponsorship.
- Councillor Marks asked Mr Williams if he could give the committee an indication on the number of visitors he would expect if the application is approved? Mr Williams explained that prior to Covid the number of visitors was 2,000 and he added that the figure will increase due to the steps proposed to modernize the building and make it bigger to include more features, which will attract more visitors. He added that he is aware of the issues concerning parking, however, parking in Chatteris is adequate and many visitors do visit in groups. Mr Williams explained that the tours of the museum are undertaken with 8 to 10

people at a time and three tours a day can be accommodated quite comfortably.

- Councillor Murphy thanked Mr Williams for all of the information he has provided, and he added that the Police Station is needed, and he will whole heartedly support the application.
- Councillor Mrs Davis stated that she is full of admiration for the plans and the proposal before the committee, but asked for clarification with regards to the neighbouring properties. She added one of the properties is going to be quite overshadowed and asked Mr Williams to confirm whether they have been contacted? Mr Williams stated that the occupiers have been spoken to and have also been met with to discuss the proposed plans and given advice and guidance should they wish to object to the proposal. He added that the residents are very happy that crime has reduced, due to the installation of the CCTV cameras outside of the Police Station, and he has provided them with details concerning the design which is almost cantilever in design, so it is not too steep, and they have not objected to the proposal. Mr Williams added that if they had objected to the proposal then he would not have continued with the application.

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

- Councillor Miscandlon expressed the view that it is nice to see an application brought before the committee that has been undertaken properly and is complete. He added that all too often applications are submitted which are short of information or have misleading information provided and he will fully support the application.
- Councillor Mrs French thinks the work that Mr Williams is involved in is excellent and that visitors to the museum will find it extremely interesting. She will fully support the application as it is good for Chatteris and for Fenland.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Murphy and agreed that the application be APPROVED against the officer's recommendation.

Members do not support the officer's recommendation of refusal as they feel that the proposal makes a positive contribution to the area and the proposal does not adversely effect any of the neighbouring dwellings and complies with the criteria of Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan.

(Councillors Murphy and Benney declared, under Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning matters, that they are members of Chatteris Town Council but take no part in planning matters)

2.56 pm

Chairman