

PLANNING COMMITTEE DATE: 14 February 2023

APPLICATION NO: F/YR22/0226/F

SITE LOCATION: 33 And Land North Of 17-31 Gosmoor Lane Elm

UPDATE

Local Residents/Interested Parties

A further 4 letters have been received. These essentially raise the same issues as set out within the main report, as well as suggesting potential alternate 'community' uses for the land.

Anglian Water reaffirmed previous comments regarding sufficient capacity and possible need for the developer to divert sewers. No objection or additional request for conditions is included.

Hundred of Wisbech Level IDB

Residential Development involving the demolition of existing buildings at 33 and land north of 17-31 Gosmoor Lane, Elm

Many thanks for your recent e-mails in respect of the above. Apologies for not responding sooner.

The request for the provision of a 2.0m wide footpath on the southern side of Gosmoor Lane is not unexpected. The plans provided are not clear or easy to read but presumably simply show the repositioned watercourse two metres to the south.

The repositioning of the existing watercourse to accommodate the footpath is considered appropriate and the Boards preferred means of mitigation provided that its requirements are met.

As discussed previously, this section of watercourse would be an easier point of discharge for the surface water system serving the site and with some simple enhancement could provide some mitigation for both the loss of water storage volume and habitats on the main development site and potentially provide a suitable location for Biodiversity Net Gain. Suitable planting or other means of improving the water quality discharging from the site into the adjacent Boards District Drain will also be required.

Suitable space should be provided to ensure that works to the repositioned watercourse can easily be undertaken without damaging the footpath.

As detailed in previous correspondence it is expected that the content of the documents submitted in respect of the consent applications will need to be similar to those that were provided for the Willow Green site in March.

In addition, if works are to be undertaken in the forthcoming year, then consideration needs to be given now to undertake surveys and works to alleviate any adverse impacts on the local environment.

Officer's comments – The IDB has no objection to the possible realignment of the ditch to the south of Gosmoor Lane. Other matters relate to applications under the Drainage Acts.

Letter from Applicant's agent to Councillors of the Planning Committee:

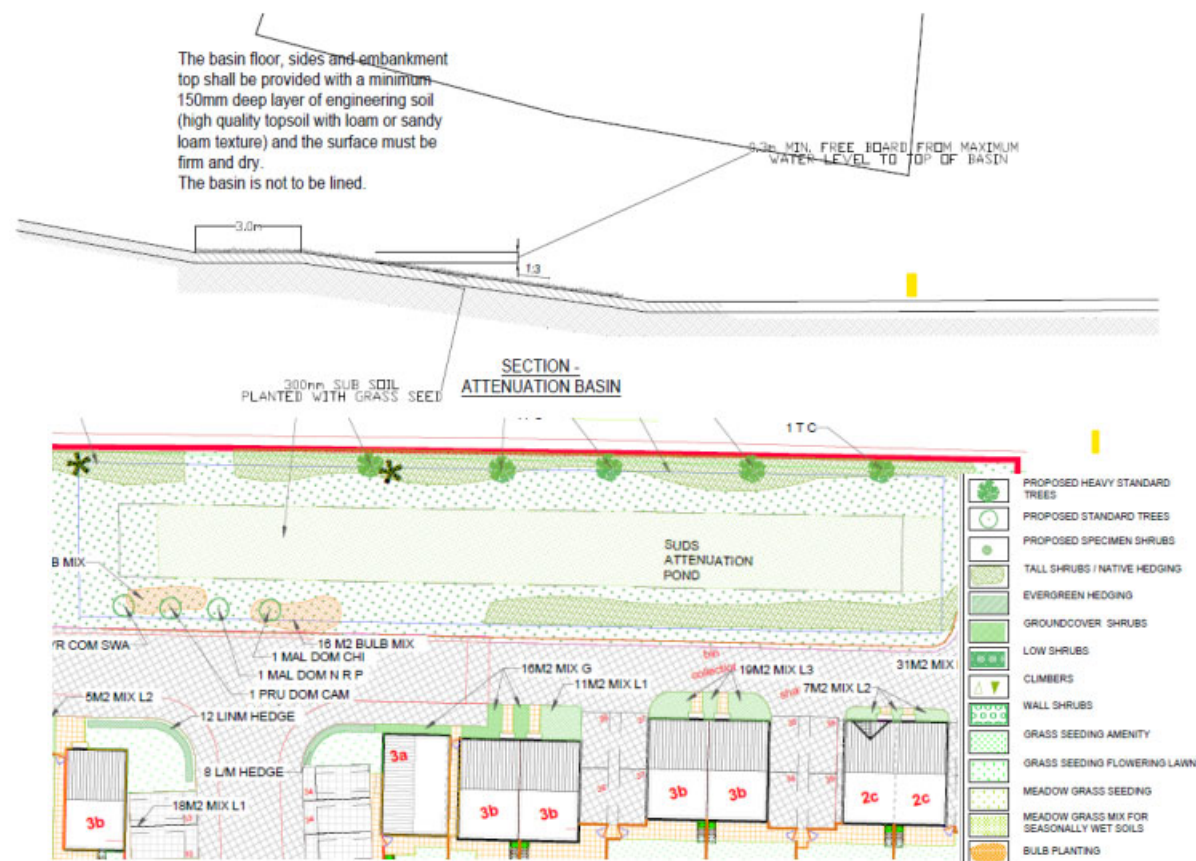
At the outset I wanted to highlight that all of the dwellings proposed are to be affordable dwellings (35 affordable rent and 28 shared ownership) and this will be secured by way of a Section 106 Agreement. You will have no doubt by now had sight of your Officer's report to the Planning Committee. As the Agent for the planning application, I wanted to take this opportunity, in advance of the Planning Committee meeting to set out in brief some key elements of the proposals to ensure that you have a full picture of what the Applicant is hoping to deliver. My colleague Marc Hourigan will be at the Planning Committee having registered to speak in support of the proposals, but I hope that this letter might assist as a form of Aide Memoir.

Firstly, I wanted to record that since starting pre-application discussions on this site in February 2021 your Officers have worked hard with the Applicants to address issues raised by local residents and statutory consultees. Needless to say, the Applicants were pleased to have received a recommendation of approval from your Officers. Notwithstanding the recommendation of approval, I did want to touch upon the matters which your Officer raises as a concern, with a view to hopefully alleviating any concerns you may have, whilst also summarising the significant benefits that the proposals would deliver:

- 63 no. affordable homes to be managed by Longhurst Group, a well-established Registered Provider and joint Applicant for the planning application.*
- A mix of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroomed affordable homes, including 4 bungalows and another 4 houses which have been designed as specialist homes ready made for people with disabilities. Longhurst Group know that people are waiting for all these types of properties.*
- The redevelopment of greenfield and previously developed land and the removal of large and unsightly buildings.*
- There is no single house style or character within the village of Elm, but instead there is a mixed variety of designs which each bring with them their own style. The Applicant has proposed a design which it believes would be complementary to the existing built form already found in Elm, whilst also delivering homes which Longhurst Group believes will be attractive to people who genuinely require assistance accessing housing.*
- Whilst the Council does not have a Development Plan policy requiring homes to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) (due to viability issues in the area) I am pleased to report that overall the scheme achieves 94.4% compliance with NDSS, with all units exceeding 85% as required by Homes England. The specialist homes referred to above exceed the NDSS. This should be seen as a substantial benefit of the scheme given the absence of a policy requirement.*
- Every home would be very energy efficient, being built to the new 2022 Building Regulations which will affect this site from the summer. These increased standards have resulted in an additional cost of £5,332 per plot. • The new homes would be within 300 m walking distance of Elm Park Children's play area on the corner of Main Road and Abington Grove. The proposals will deliver a new footpath along Gosmoor Lane so that all residents have safe access (via a continuous footpath) to that play area, the convenience store, school and the wider village.*
- It is the Applicant's intention that the drainage and roads would be adopted by the statutory authorities.*
- The scheme would also deliver a new highways gateway feature to the east of the site where the speed limit changes from 30 mph to 60 mph. The gateway feature includes new signage, road markings and surfacing and will encourage road users to slow down on approach to the village*

from the east by making the entrance to the village clearer for all. The Local Highways Authority is supportive of these proposals.

- The proposals include an area of public open space which has been positioned along the northern boundary to act as a transition to the open countryside beyond. Your Officer has expressed some concern about the potential inaccessibility of that area of open space, noting that there may be water sat in it at some points of the year as it would double up as a storage facility in extreme weather events. Our engineers consider that it is only likely in the most extreme of circumstances bearing in mind that the site is in Flood Zone 1 (low probability of flooding i.e. less than 0.1% per annum) and for the vast majority of time this area will be a perfectly usable area of open space. Notably the Lead Local Flood Authority and Internal Drainage Board have no objections to the planning application, and as the extracts below taken from the Drainage Strategy and Landscape drawings¹ show, this space would be gently sloping and sensitively landscaped so that it is useable as open space: (Letter includes 1 Drawing References 20518 DR-C-0100 P17 and ART214.09.C)



- I would also like to note that the surface water regime on the site features a pumped solution. This is necessary because ground conditions do not allow for soakaways, and it would not be feasible given the underlying ground to raise levels on the site. The pump is the subject of an alarm system and there is provision of emergency back-up pump. The pump is to be adopted by Anglian Water. This technical solution is backed up by extensive modelling which the LLFA has considered and deemed acceptable. We are therefore confident that the homes on this site will be safeguarded from surface water. Overall, we believe this is a rare opportunity to secure a truly affordable scheme in Fenland District and I very much hope that when the application is presented to you that you will be able to support it. In the interests of transparency, I have copied this letter to

your Officers Nick Harding and David Rowen.

Officers Comment. The applicants confirmed 94.4% compliance with the Nationally prescribed space standards. It is noted that this exceeds the level required by Homes England.

As regards the reference to the area of open space, officers highlight the applicant's section attached to the flood modelling and reference to the attenuation area as a pond, with 1 in 3 slopes. In officers view there remains some doubt as to the value of this land as publicly accessible open space.

Resolution: No change to the recommendation which is to Approve the application subject to S106 agreement as per Section 12 of Agenda item 7 on page 76.