
F/YR22/1135/F

Applicant: Mr John Loveridge

**Agent : Mr Matthew Taylor
Taylor Planning And Building
Consultants**

**Land North East Of The Paddocks, Horsemoor Road, Wimblington,
Cambridgeshire**

**Change of use of land to site 1 x residential mobile home and 1 x touring caravan,
and the formation of hardstanding and a new access (part retrospective)**

Officer recommendation: Grant

**Reason for Committee: Referred by Head of Planning due to relationship with
preceding applications**

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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| 1.1 | Fenland District Council is currently unable to demonstrate that it has a five-year supply of sites to meet the need for traveller sites in Fenland. The GTNA undertaken in 2013 is now out of date. Neither national policy in the PPTS nor policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan rule out traveller sites being located in the countryside therefore in principle, the proposal is acceptable. |
| 1.2 | The application is being assessed on the basis that the proposal for 5 pitches on the adjacent land to the west and south of the site (F/YR21/0356/F) is approved. This is the subject of a preceding Committee item. If the adjacent 5 pitches are approved, this current application for one pitch would not in itself have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the area if conditions are imposed to ensure that external boundary treatment comprises post and rail fencing with native hedgerow planting. As such, whilst potentially only partially complying with policy LP5 (a) and (e) and LP16 (d), adequate fencing and landscaping, could ensure that this isn't significant harm to the landscape. |
| 1.3 | If the adjacent proposal for 5 pitches is approved, the addition of this one pitch (and the pitch under application F/YR21/0768/F, the subject of the preceding item on the agenda) will not make a material impact to the overall numbers of pitches at this general location and it would not be possible to successfully sustain an argument that 19 pitches as opposed to 17 makes such a difference in terms of over dominance of the nearest settled community. As such it is considered the application meets paragraph 14 Policy C and paragraph 25 Policy H which seek to ensure that sites do not dominate the nearest settled community. |
| 1.4 | In other respects and subject to conditions, the application is acceptable. |

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The site comprises a roughly rectangular parcel of land measuring approximately 39 metres deep by on average 15 metres wide. The submitted site plan states that the site area is 593 square metres. The site is located in the countryside beyond what is the settlement of Wimblington and is close to the bend in the road which is the point at which Horsemoor Road and Hook Road join. To the immediate north of the site is a drainage ditch maintained by Middle Level Commissioners and beyond this and to the east is open agricultural land. To the south and to the west of the site are further unauthorised traveller sites where planning applications F/YR21/0356/F and F/YR21/0768/f are pending determination. There are other authorised traveller sites in close proximity to the site which will be discussed below.
- 2.2 At present the site is screened from the road by a close boarded fence including gates across the vehicular access, which is off Hook Road, which does not reflect the proposals shown on the submitted site plan.
- 2.3 The site lies within flood zone 3.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The application is for change of use of the land, described as paddock for the siting of one mobile home with one touring caravan and formation of access. The submitted site plan shows the front part of the site being used for parking and turning and the rear of the site for the siting of one mobile home and one tourer. The proposed vehicular access is situated approximately 30 metres north of the bend in the road. The plans also show a close boarded fence is to be located across the frontage and then set in to provide a vehicular access secured with a double five bar gate which would open inwards. The current fencing and gates would need to be altered to provide the proposed fencing and gates. The submitted plan also states that the mobile homes would be raised 450mm above ground level.
- 3.2 The application is part retrospective because the site is already occupied by caravans which are occupied as residential accommodation. There are more caravans/structures on the site at present than shown on the submitted site plan.
- 3.3 The submitted FRA states that the applicant hopes to use a package treatment plant for drainage and wishes to discharge to the drainage ditch to the rear. To this end, a plan has been sent to Middle Level Commissioners who are responsible for the drainage ditch.
- 3.4 Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at: [F/YR22/1135/F | Change of use of land to site 1 x residential mobile home and 1 x touring caravan, and the formation of hardstanding and a new access \(part retrospective\) | Land North East Of The Paddocks Horsemoor Road Wimblington Cambridgeshire \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://www.fenland.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-applications/2022-2023/F/YR22/1135/F)

4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 No site history

5 CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 **Wimblington Parish Council** - Concerns raised about the adequacy of Hook Road which is very narrow and already suffering with surface damage and loss of grass verges/passing places for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists. Additional vehicles using this land will have a severe impact on everyone using the lane. The speed limit is 60mph and this in itself causes a threat to those who have no safe haven due to loss of verges and passing places. There is poor road user visibility due to the high fencing of other sites. Touring caravans constantly using this narrow lane is inappropriate.

This is a high flood risk area and last year Wimblington had an unprecedented number of homes flood and this will only exacerbate the matter.

There is no infrastructure within Hook Lane i.e. street lighting, water drainage, sewerage, utilities.

The Parish Council references policies LP1, LP3, LP5 part D, LP12, LP14 part B and LP16

- 5.2 **Environment Agency** – The site is within flood zone 3 and Table 2 of the Planning Practice Guidance makes it clear that this type of development should not normally be permitted. The LPA should therefore consider if there any other appropriate locations in flood zone 1.

Notwithstanding the above, the EA has no objections given the site is defended from flooding from the River Nene and River Great Ouse. The EA has considered the risks associated with the failure of Middle Level Barrier Banks of the Ouse Washes and River Nene Flood defences; these studies indicate that this site would not be flooded in the event of a failure of these defences. Middle Level Commissioners should be consulted (*officer note: they have been*)

- 5.3 **Middle Level Commissioners** – No response received

- 5.4 **CCC Highway Authority** – No objections

- 5.5 **Local Residents/Interested Parties**

No comments received.

- 5.6 **Other Correspondence**

Several letters from local Councillors expressing concerns regarding the neighbouring development were sent to Stephen Barclay MP and which were subsequently forwarded to the Council for comment. While not relating directly to this application they do express concerns regarding the number of gypsy and traveller pitches in this area.

6 **STATUTORY DUTY**

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014).

The Council has a duty Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

Planning Policy for Traveller Sites August 2015

Policy B – Planning for traveller sites

Policy C – Sites in rural area and the countryside

Policy H – Determine planning application for traveller sites

Policy I – Implementation

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Para 2: NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Para 7: Purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development

Para 11: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Para 12: Conflict with an up-to-date plan should not usually be granted

Para 80: Avoid the development of isolated homes in the countryside unless specified exceptions apply

Para 119: Promote effective use of land

Para 123: Take a positive approach to alternative land uses

Para 124: Making efficient use of land (density - need & character)

Para 159: Development should be directed away from areas at highest risk of flooding.

Para 161: Need to apply the sequential and exceptions tests.

Fenland Local Plan 2014

LP1 – A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

LP2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents

LP3 – Spatial Strategy, the Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside

LP5 – Meeting Housing Need

LP12 – Rural Areas Development Policy

LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland

LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland

LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District

Emerging Local Plan

The Draft Fenland Local Plan (2022) was published for consultation between 25th August 2022 and 19 October 2022, all comments received will be reviewed and any changes arising from the consultation will be made to the draft Local Plan. Given the very early stage which the Plan is therefore at, it is considered, in accordance with Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, that the policies of this should carry extremely limited weight in decision making. Of relevance to this application are policies:

LP1 – Settlement Hierarchy
LP4 – Securing Fenland's Future
LP7 – Design
LP14 – Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
LP20 – Accessibility and Transport
LP22 – Parking provision
LP24 – Natural Environment
LP25 – Biodiversity Net Gain
LP27 – Trees and Planting
LP28 – Landscape
LP32 – Flood and Water Management

8 KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Character and Appearance**
- **Impact on Settled Community**
- **Sustainability re transport, highway safety and utilities**
- **Flood Risk**
- **Other Issues**
- **Personal Circumstances**

9 BACKGROUND

- 9.1 This site is adjacent to other traveller sites. The Spinney site (not abutting but nearby to the west along Hook Road) has planning permission for 8 pitches. The Cedar Rose Stables site, also to the west, has recently been granted planning permission for 3 pitches (F/YR21/0713/F). There is also an authorised travelling show person's pitch to the south (other side of Hook Road) which has 1 pitch. There are 12 authorised pitches in the near vicinity. The two adjacent unauthorised pitches (subject to pending applications) have 5 pitches and 1 pitch respectively.
- 9.2 An application for the 5 pitches on the adjacent site (F/YR21/0356/F) is being recommended for approval on the grounds that the personal circumstances of the occupiers outweigh the policy objections to the proposal, and is the subject of a preceding item on the agenda. This application is therefore being considered on the basis of the adjacent site for the 5 pitches being granted planning permission prior to determination of this application.

10 ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development/Need for Pitches

- 10.1 The site is outside the built-up area of a settlement and therefore, in planning policy terms it is in an area which is considered to be in the countryside whereby local plan policies for 'Elsewhere' locations apply. Except on statutorily designated Green Belt land (not applicable anywhere in Fenland) the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS) published in August 2015 is not opposed in principle to Traveller sites in the countryside. It does however state in Policy H

(paragraph 25) that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should "very strictly limit" new Traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas allocated in the development plan.

- 10.2 Furthermore, paragraph 25 states that LPAs should ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate, the nearest settled community, and avoid placing undue pressure on the local infrastructure. In its recent decisions the Council has accepted that planning permission can be granted on sites in the countryside, acknowledging that the identified need will not be met by land within existing towns and villages.
- 10.3 Policy A within the PPTS sets out at c) that local planning authorities should use a robust evidence base to establish accommodation needs to inform the preparation of local plans and make planning decisions. Policy B states that in producing their Local Plan, local planning authorities should identify and update annually, a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide 5 years' worth of sites against their locally set targets. They should identify a supply of specific, deliverable sites, or broad locations for growth, for years 6 – 10 and, where possible, for years 11 – 15. To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development, and be achievable with realistic prospect that development will be delivered on the site within 5 years. To be developable, sites should be in a suitable location for traveller site development and there should be reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged. The last Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment (GTANA) was carried out in 2013 and this identified a need for 18 pitches up to the year 2026. Since then, in excess of 40 pitches have been granted. However, the GTANA is not up to date and there is presently no evidence of what the need is in Fenland for gypsy and traveller pitches. A new GTANA was commenced in 2019 but this is not yet completed and there is no available up to date empirical evidence, at the time of writing this report that could assist with this issue.
- 10.4 Policy LP5 Part D of the local plan states that there is no need for new pitches as per the findings of the Fenland GTANA update in 2013. However, an appeal decision received in April 2020 (APP/D0515/C/19/3226096) identified that there was an unmet need within Fenland which was a matter of common ground between the LPA and the appellant.
- 10.5 Policy H of the PPTS re-affirms the provision of Section 38(1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 i.e. that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Fenland Local Plan identified no need for pitches (policy LP5) in Fenland based on the evidence contained in the GTANA of 2013 and no pitches were allocated. The GTANA of 2013 and the subsequent policy position in LP5 of there being no need for pitches, is now out of date. Policy LP5 goes on to state that the Council will be prepared to grant permission for sites in the countryside, provided that there is evidence of a need as identified in the local assessment, that the occupiers meet the definition of Gypsy and Travellers or Travelling Showpeople and that the criteria set out in policy LP 5 (a) to (f) are met. The lack of an up to date needs assessment based on up-to-date evidence and the PPTS which was published in 2015 are material considerations to weigh alongside the development plan policy. It is clear that at present, the Council would not be able to sustain an argument that there is no need for pitches within Fenland and nor can it be confirmed with evidence that there is an

identified need. Therefore, it is not reasonable, at present, to refuse traveller site applications on the premise that there is no need.

- 10.6 Policy LP5 states that permission for sites in the countryside would depend on evidence of a need for such provision. However, this policy conflicts with the PPTS (post Local Plan adoption) Paragraphs 11 and 24, which endorse criteria-based policies where there is no such need, and Paragraph 25 which expects sites to be located in the countryside, albeit with restrictions, but without any precondition of evidence of need. *(Officer comment: The emerging policy LP14 is criteria based irrespective of whether there is a need, but this policy can at this time only be afforded limited weight).*
- 10.7 Annex 1, Glossary to the PPTS defines Gypsies and Travellers for the purpose of applying this policy as;
 - a) whether they previously led a nomadic habit of life
 - b) the reasons for ceasing their nomadic habit of life
 - c) whether there is an intention of living a nomadic habit of life in the future, and if so, how soon and in what circumstances
- 10.8 However, the recent Court of Appeal case [2022] EWCA Civ 1391 (Lisa Smith and Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and NW Leics District Council) has found that at least in part the PPTS is discriminatory and therefore, the weight to be afforded to the parts of the PPTS which set out definitions of travellers will be diminished if not completely, as the Government has stated it does not intend to seek leave to appeal from the Supreme Court. This means that the PPTS will need to be amended. Although, not the central plank of the appellant's case, the Court of Appeal Decision appears to set out that ethnicity is a defining factor as to whether a gypsy/traveller is such.
- 10.9 The Council's Traveller and Diversity Manager has confirmed that the applicant is an ethnic gypsy/traveller.
- 10.10 Policy LP5 of the Local Plan states that irrespective of whether an up-to-date need is identified or not, the Council will determine applications on a case-by-case basis and set out six criteria by which to assess new suitable gypsy/traveller and travelling showpeople sites. The policy goes on to say that the Council will grant permission for sites in the countryside provided there is evidence of need. Paragraph 11 of the PPTS states that criteria should be set to guide land supply allocations where there is an identified need and where there is no identified need, criteria based policies should provide a basis for decisions in case applications nevertheless come forward. Policy 25 of the PPTS states that LPAs should very strictly limit new traveller site development in the open countryside that is away from existing settlements but differs from policy LP5 in that it does not state development will only be permitted in the countryside where there is an identified need. However, despite this degree of tension between the Local Plan and the PPTS, both advocate the use of criteria to assess the suitability of sites; the criteria set out in Part D of policy LP5 generally reflect other policies of the local plan and concern issues of acknowledged importance such as visual appearance, flood risk, impact on the environment and amenity. They also generally reflect issues referred to in the PPTS.
- 10.11 Given the lack of up-to-date evidence as to the need for pitches and that the applicant/occupiers meet the definition of Gypsies and Travellers, the principle of the development in this countryside location is acceptable, subject to compliance with the criteria in policy LP5 and other detailed considerations.

Character and Appearance

10.12 Part D of policy LP 5 of the local plan, sets out the following criteria against which applications for Gypsy and Traveller (and Travelling Showpeople) caravan sites and associated facilities will be assessed;

- (a) the site and its proposed use should not conflict with other development plan policies or national planning policy relating to issues such as flood risk, contamination, landscape character, protection of the natural and built environment, heritage assets or agricultural land quality; and
- (b) the site should provide a settled base and be located within reasonable travelling distance of a settlement which offers local services and community facilities, including a primary school; and
- (c) the location, size, extent and access and boundary treatment of the site should allow for peaceful and integrated coexistence with the occupiers of the site and the local settled community; and
- (d) the site should enable safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicle access to and from the public highway, and adequate space for vehicle parking, turning and servicing; and
- (e) the site should enable development which would not have any unacceptable adverse impact on the amenities of occupiers of nearby properties, the health or wellbeing of any occupiers of the site, or the appearance or character of the area in which it would be situated; and
- (f) the site should be served by, or be capable of being served by, appropriate water, waste water and refuse facilities whilst not resulting in undue pressure on local infrastructure and services

10.13 Policy LP 16 requires all new development to;

- (c) retain and incorporate natural and historic features of the site such as trees, hedgerows, field patterns, drains and water bodies
- (d) Make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and character of the area, enhance its local setting, respond to and improve the character of the local built environment, provides resilience to climate change, reinforce local identity and does not adversely impact , either in design or scale terms, on the street scene, settlement pattern or landscape character of the surrounding area.

10.14 Policy H, Paragraph 24 (d) of the PPTS states that local planning authorities should consider this issue (amongst others) when considering planning applications for traveller sites;

“that the locally specific criteria used to guide the allocation of sites in plans or which forms the policy where there is no identified need for pitches/plots should be used to assess applications that may come forward on unallocated sites.” (it is noted that this wording assumes that where there is a need for sites that these will be allocated)

10.15 Paragraph 26 of the PPTS states that when considering applications, local planning authorities should attach weight to the following matters;

- (a) effective use of previously developed (brownfield), untidy or derelict land
- (b) sites being well planned or soft landscaped in such a way as to positively enhance the environment and increase its openness
- (c) promoting opportunities for healthy lifestyles, such as ensuring adequate landscaping and play areas for children

(d) not enclosing a site with so much hard landscaping, high walls or fences, that the impression may be given that the site and its occupants are deliberately isolated from the rest of the community

- 10.16 The fen area in which the site is located can be characterised as follows;
- Large scale, flat and open landscape with extensive views and large skies
 - Largely unsettled, arable landscape with isolated villages and scattered individual properties
 - Individual properties often surrounded by windbreaks including numerous conifers
 - Rectilinear field structure divided by pattern of artificial drainage ditches
 - Very few hedgerows in landscape
 - Productive and functional landscape with few recreational uses
 - Long straight roads, elevated above surrounding fields but locally uneven
- 10.17 As one moves west along Hook Road, the landscape character changes and field patterns become smaller, older roads are more winding, there are some unsympathetic industrial structures at the edge of settlements but there are open panoramic views across Fens.
- 10.18 There are notable large agri/industrial buildings to the west near the bend in Hook Road but although these are large, they are separated from the site and the case officer considers they are not seen as being in the same viewpoint context as the site when travelling in the vicinity.
- 10.19 Given that caravans are nearly always white or cream in colour, it is quite difficult to ensure that they do not have an unacceptable impact on the appearance or character of an area, especially an area that is so flat and open to long distance views as characterised above. The location of the site within the landscape, the placement of the caravans within the site and the boundary treatment will be important to ensure that the caravans do not appear as stark incongruous features within the landscape setting. There is also a balance to be struck with criteria (c) of policy LP5 of the local plan and with paragraph 26 (d) of the PPTS which advise against having too much hard landscaping or high walls or fences around a site.
- 10.20 In this instance, the site appears as part of the area of land located at the corner of Horsemoor Road and Hook Road which comprises the three pending planning applications for retrospective use as traveller sites. The three sites are located on the corner in a prominent location and due to the very open nature of the surroundings and the number of caravans and paraphernalia that can be seen, the cumulation of the three sites appears cluttered and incongruous within the landscape setting. They cannot only be seen close up but also from quite a distance when approaching from the north along Horsemoor Road. This is not the case with regard to the recently approved site at Cedar Rose Stables, nor The Spinney site as they are not so prominently located or visible from a distance. There are also public rights of way which approach the site from the east. Due to the nature of the flat landscape, both would give open views to the site from a distance away.
- 10.21 Retaining the existing close boarded fencing to help screen the caravans is not an acceptable solution because this fencing in itself is incongruous. More open fencing would enable greater views of the caravans and solid fencing at this location will in itself appear incongruous which suggests that the site is not a good location in which to site caravans/mobile homes. The individual and

cumulative impact of each of the three unauthorised sites has an adverse impact on the character of the area. This impact could be reduced if the solid fencing and gates at the site frontage were removed and replaced with post and rail fencing a gates with native hedgerow, as proposed for the other external boundaries. This will need to be set back to enable visibility when exiting the drive onto Horsemoor Road.

- 10.22 The impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the locality would be reduced if application F/YR21/0356/F for 5 pitches on the adjacent land to the south and west of the site is approved. This application is being recommended for approval (as the personal circumstances of the occupiers outweighs the policy objections). As such, sustaining an argument that this proposed pitch will have such an adverse impact in itself, would be extremely difficult to substantiate. Assuming that application F/YR21/0356/F is approved, the current application would be acceptable subject to conditions concerning fencing and landscaping and would at least partially comply with policy LP5 (a) and (e), policy LP16(d) and paragraph 26 (b) of the PPTS due to the character of the area being maintained if not enhanced.

Impact on Settled Community

- 10.23 Policy L5, Part D criteria (e) states that the site should enable development which does not have any unacceptable adverse impact on the amenities of occupiers of other nearby properties. Policy C of the PPTS states that when assessing the suitability of sites in rural or semi-rural settings, local planning authorities should ensure that the scale of such sites does not dominate the nearest settled community. Policy H states that LPAs should ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate, the nearest settled community, and avoid placing undue pressure on the local infrastructure.
- 10.24 This matter was recently addressed in a decision on application F/YR21/0487/F regarding provision of 10 plots at Land South of Greenbanks, Garden Lane, Wisbech St Mary. Reference was made to appeal decision APP/L2630/C/20/3250478 in South Norfolk where the Inspector determined that the nearest settled community was a different concept to nearest settlement. In that case the nearest settled community consisted of a scatter of houses and farms that lay within 1km of the site. In that instance, the pattern of development within 1km of the site consisted of a scatter of houses and farms. In the case of the Greenbanks site it was considered that a 0.5km radius was appropriate for gauging impact on the nearest settled community. A 1km radius would have included the outlying parts of Wisbech St Mary which had a very different settlement pattern, density and character to the development in the countryside in which the application site was situated. It is considered that this is also the case with regard to this application. A 1km radius would include properties in Eastwood End which is the edge of the built-up area of Wimblington and has a very different settlement pattern, density and character to the site and the scattered dwellings within its vicinity. However, it also needs to be kept in mind that (a) taking a radius approach to establishing what comprises the nearest settled community is not set out in the development plan policy and the size of the radius is subjective; and (b) in rural areas within Fenland, the settled community is likely to contain few scattered houses. In such instances, many traveller sites might be considered to dominate the nearest settled community because the numbers of dwellings will be low.

- 10.25 There are approximately 12 properties within a 0.5km radius of the site, excluding traveller plots and these properties are all located to the west along Hook Road. To the north, east and south of the site there are only isolated farm houses at the edge of a 1km radius of the site.
- 10.26 There are 12 authorised traveller pitches within the near vicinity of this site. This application would take that number to 13. If application F/YR21/0356/F is approved, this number would rise to 18 pitches (and with application F/YR21/0768/F that number would be 19). Looking at the cumulative impact of all the unauthorised pitches at this corner location, the number of pitches could rise to 19. Whether looking at this proposal on its own merits or considering the cumulative impact with the other unauthorised pitches, the proposal extends the land in use for traveller sites further east from the Cedar Rose Stables site and infills the land up to Horsemoor Road. The scale and spread of the land in use for traveller sites coupled with the high visibility of this site and the other unauthorised sites at this corner location, give an impression of a cluster of sites that over dominate the settled community which in this vicinity comprises scattered dwellings. These sites have not been well planned and have expanded due to land being available to purchase rather than what is suitable for the countryside location and setting. However, if 17 pitches in total become approved with the granting of the 5 pitches on the neighbouring site, then another one (or two) pitches which infill the remainder of the land within this bend in the road, will have limited additional impact in terms of dominance.
- 10.27 It is considered that the proposal does lead to a domineering impact upon the settled community which is contrary to paragraph 14 in Policy C and paragraph 25 of Policy H of the PPTS which seek to ensure that sites are well planned and in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate the nearest settled community. However, as the adjacent plot for 5 pitches is being recommended for approval because the personal circumstances in that instance outweigh the policy objections, such approval puts a different complexion on the assessment of this application. It is considered that the addition of this one plot (and the plot under F/YR22/1135/F) will not make a material difference to the domination of the nearest settled community should the adjacent 5 plots be approved.

Sustainability re transport, highway safety and utilities

- 10.28 The site is proposed to be served by a vehicular access off Horsemoor Road. This access is approximately 30 metres north of the sharp bend in the road where Horsemoor Road becomes Hook Road. The surfaced access is shown on the submitted site plan to be 6.5 metres wide and served by a set of double five bar gates which are set in from the carriage way edge by 6 metres. The gate opening is 4 metres wide. Beyond this within the site is an area for parking and turning.

The speed limit in this location is 60mph although due to the bend in the road, vehicles will be likely to be travelling significantly slower than this.

- 10.29 The Highway Authority has raised no objections to the proposal.
- 10.30 In terms of sustainability, the appeal Inspector in his decision to allow the The Spinney traveller site adjacent to this proposal commented as follows;

“Nothing in the NPPF or PPTS that says traveller sites have to be accessible by means other than a private car. In fact, both recognise that the lifestyle of travellers must be factored into the planning balance.”

- 10.31 Although the site is in the countryside, Wimblington, Doddington and March are only a short drive away from the site and each provides access to primary schools, medical facilities and other services. The Spinney site was found to be acceptable with regards to it being a sustainable location and it must follow that this site is also sustainable in this regard and in compliance with policy LP5, Part D (b). Taking into consideration that sites will be acceptable in the countryside, it would be unusual for such sites to be served by pavements.
- 10.32 The application form states that surface water will be dealt with via a sustainable drainage system and foul drainage by a non mains wastewater treatment package plant. The submitted FRA states that further information will be provided once comments are received from the IDB. No further information has been received. The MLC were consulted and no response has been received. The applicant would need separate consent to discharge into a watercourse maintained by them. It is noted that in the appeal decision relating to The Spinney site, no details were known about utilities and the Inspector was content to deal with these matters by condition. The proposed foul drainage is by package treatment plant and it is prudent to condition the details of this together with its future maintenance in the interests of public health and prevention of contamination.
- 10.33 It is considered that the site has adequate pedestrian and vehicular access, is within a short drive to the nearest settlements where schools and services are located and is or is capable of being served by mains water and adequate foul and surface water drainage. The application is therefore in compliance with policy LP5, Part D (b), (d) and (f).

Flood Risk

- 10.34 The site lies within flood zone 3 (defended) and is highly vulnerable development. The site is accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA). The EA has not objected to the application on the grounds of flood risk but has assumed that the local planning authority has applied the sequential test. The EA states that the main source of flood risk associated with this site is associated with watercourses under the jurisdiction of the Internal Drainage Board (IDB), who should be consulted with regard to flood risk and residual flood risk associated with watercourses under their jurisdiction and surface water drainage proposals. The IDB has been consulted and no response has been received.
- 10.35 In determining the appeal for the adjacent Spinney site, the Inspector stated the following in relation to flood risk;

“The site is located within an area designated as lying within Flood Zone 3. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) carried out for the appellant concluded that the site has the benefit of defences designed to withstand a 1 in 100 year event, including climate change, and that with these defences in place the flood risk to the site is identical to a site in Flood Zone 2.

The FRA concluded that as the nearby drainage ditches were substantially below the level of the site, surface water would either be collected in the ditches

or, if they were overwhelmed, it would flood lower land to the north. These conclusions are consistent with the findings of a FRA carried out for a Travelling Showperson's site to the opposite side of the road, and neither the Environment Agency nor the Internal Drainage Board raised objection to the appeal proposal and, in the case of the Travelling Showperson's site the Council were satisfied that the wider sustainability benefits and the lack of evidence of more suitable sites outweighed flood risk considerations

With regard to the sequential test, the Development Plan does not identify any deliverable land for gypsy sites and there are no "reasonably available" appropriate sites with a lower risk of flooding. The site specific FRA demonstrates that the proposal would be safe from flooding for the lifetime of the development. However, to provide additional assurance and safeguards, the production of a Flood Plan for evacuation of the site can be required by condition."

- 10.36 The Fenland Local Plan does not identify any deliverable land for gypsy sites. This, couple with the fact that the majority of the land outside of towns and villages will lie within flood zones 2 or 3, lead to a conclusion that there are no reasonably available sites with a lower risk of flooding. It is therefore considered that the sequential test will be passed.
- 10.37 Following successful completion of the sequential test, the exception test must be met which requires (a) development to demonstrate that it achieves wider community sustainability benefits having regard to the District's sustainability objectives, and (b) that it can be made safe for its lifetime and will not increase flood risk elsewhere ('flood risk management').
- 10.38 Wider community sustainability benefits - The District's sustainability objectives are outlined under 2.4 of the FLP and, relevant to this application includes the aim to thrive in safe environments and decent affordable homes (6.1) and redress inequalities related to age, gender, disability, race, faith, location and income. In respect of the proposal, it would assist in addressing a shortfall of accommodation needs for the Traveller community where an inadequate supply of housing currently exists.
- 10.39 The FRA sets out that even in the event of a breach of flood defences, the site is unlikely to flood, and the EA acknowledge this. The proposed mobile home would be raised off the ground by 450mm above existing ground level. This could be secured by condition.
- 10.40 Taking the above into account, it is considered that with regards to flood risk, the proposal is acceptable, subject to condition and complies with policy LP5, Part D (a) of the local plan. It is recognised that the PPTS, paragraph 13 (g) advises local planning authorities not to locate sites in areas of high risk of flooding, but the local circumstances of Fenland district must be taken into account, given the amount of land in the district that is at a higher risk of flooding. As already stated, the Inspector for the Spinney site took a pragmatic view on this matter.

Other Issues

- 10.41 Residential Amenity

The development is sufficiently separated from the adjacent Spinney site and other dwellings, of which there are few in the vicinity, so as not to impact on residential amenity in terms of loss of privacy, loss of light etc. Over dominance has already been assessed above.

10.42 Heritage Assets

There are no heritage assets in the vicinity of the site.

10.43 Natural Environment

The submitted biodiversity checklist states that the proposal does not affect any natural features where species might be present. The site is adjacent to a drainage ditch adjacent to the northern boundary but does not directly impact it and from site visits it is not evident that this ditch is permanently wet. From historical aerial photographs the site was used as grazing land and covered in grass. It is not clear whether hedgerows have been removed. As the development has largely taken place it is not possible to say with any certainty that no protected species were affected by the development, however, impacts can be limited in the future and biodiversity could be improved with native planting which could be conditioned. Similarly, external lighting details would be conditioned.

Contaminated Land

There is no evidence to suggest that the site is contaminated.

10.44 Agricultural Land Quality

The Natural England land classification map shows the site to be grade 2, very good quality agricultural land. The majority of land within the district outside of the built-up areas will be either grade 1 or grade 2 land. Given that there are no available alternative sites available, the proposal is acceptable in this regard.

Personal Circumstances

10.45 There is no evidence of any particular health or education needs relating to the applicant.

11 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 Fenland District Council is currently unable to demonstrate that it has a five-year supply of sites to meet the need for traveller sites in Fenland. The GTNA undertaken in 2013 is now out of date. Neither national policy in the PPTS nor policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan rule out traveller sites being located in the countryside therefore in principle, the proposal is acceptable.

11.2 The application is being assessed on the basis that the proposal for 5 pitches on the adjacent land to the west and south of the site (F/YR21/0356/F) is approved. At the time of writing this application is pending determination. If the adjacent 5 pitches are approved, this current application for one pitch would not in itself have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the area if conditions are imposed to ensure that external boundary treatment comprises post and rail fencing with native hedgerow planting. As such, whilst potentially only partially

complying with policy LP5 (a) and (e) and LP16 (d), adequate fencing and landscaping, could ensure that this isn't significant harm to the landscape.

11.3 If the adjacent proposal for 5 pitches is approved, the addition of this one pitch (and the pitch under application F/YR21/0768/F) will not make a material impact to the overall numbers of pitches at this general location and it would not be possible to successfully sustain an argument that 19 pitches as opposed to 17 makes such a difference in terms of over dominance of the nearest settled community. As such it is considered the application meets paragraph 14 Policy C and paragraph 25 Policy H which seek to ensure that sites do not dominate the nearest settled community.

11.4 In other respects and subject to conditions, the application is acceptable.

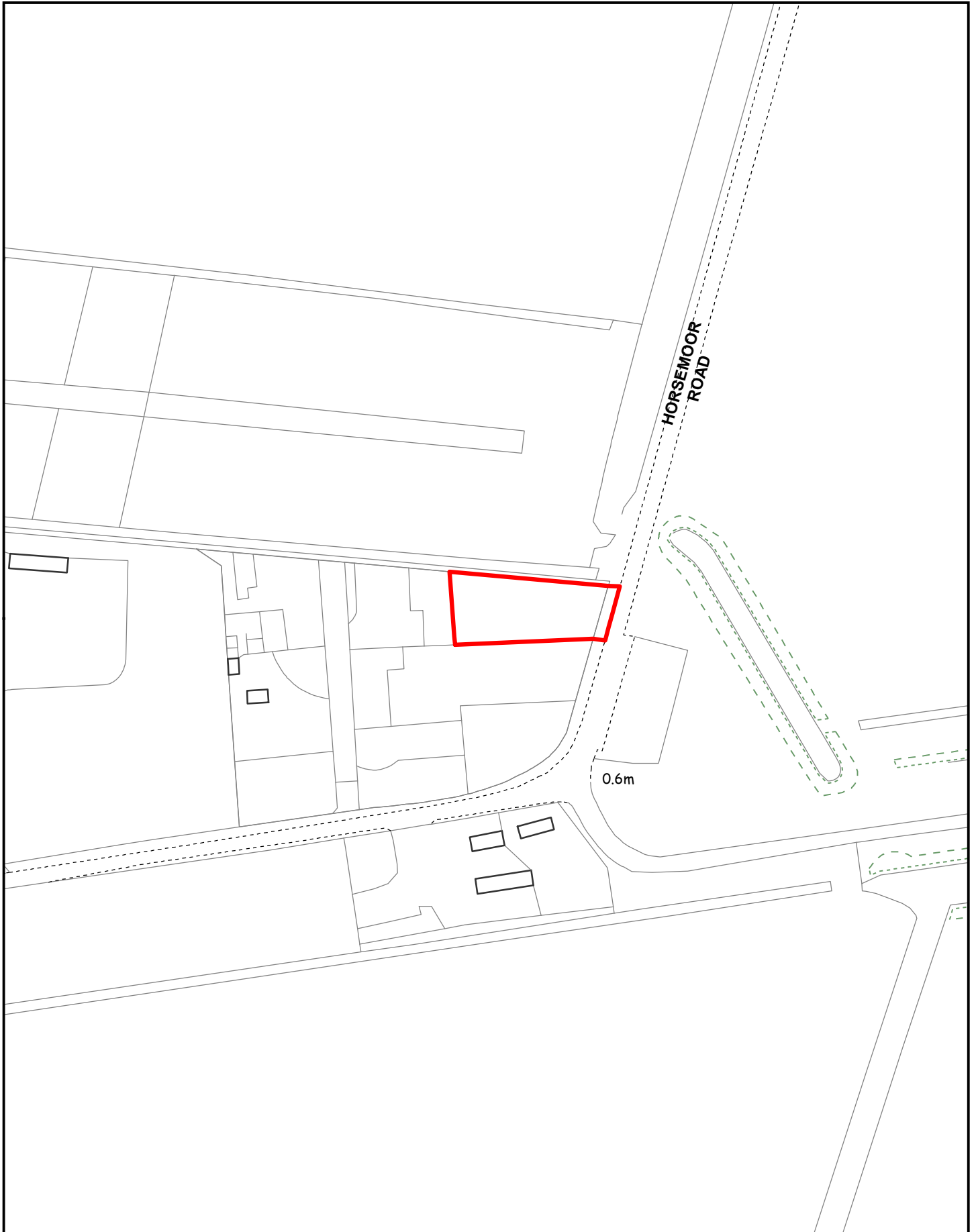
12 RECOMMENDATION

Grant; subject to the following conditions:

1	<p>The site shall not be occupied by any persons other than gypsies and travellers as defined in Annex 1 of the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (DCLG 2015)</p> <p>Reason: The application is only approved due to the applicants meeting this definition and to clarify what is hereby approved.</p>
2	<p>No more than 2 caravans comprising 1 static and 1 tourer, as defined in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and the Caravan Sites Act 1968, shall be stationed at the site at any time.</p> <p>Reason: To clarify what is hereby approved and to ensure that the stationing of the caravans does not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the area in accordance with policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan.</p>
3	<p>No more than one commercial vehicle shall be kept for use by the occupier of the plot and shall not exceed 3.5 tonnes in weight.</p> <p>Reason: In order to control commercial activity at the site and the visual appearance of the land in accordance with policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan</p>
4	<p>No commercial activities shall take place on the land, including the storage of materials.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the land and area in accordance with policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan.</p>
5	<p>Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved site plan, within 3 months of the date of this permission, the access to the site shall be constructed and sealed for the first 10 metres from the highway edge and drained away from the highway.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of highway safety in accordance with policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan</p>

6	<p>Within 2 months of the date of this decision, the following information shall have been submitted to the Local Planning Authority for approval;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Details of a scheme to plant a mixed native hedgerow with post and rail fence to all external site boundaries including the site frontage. This shall include a plan, fence details, planting specification, visibility splays and timetable for planting and the removal of any existing solid fencing and gates to the external boundaries. The approved scheme shall be implemented in full in accordance with the approved timetable. The solid fencing shall be permanently removed from the external boundaries. Should any of these plants die, become diseased or are removed within the first 5 years of planting, they shall be replaced by similar native species within the next available planting season. The hedgerow and fencing shall be retained thereafter. - Details of all existing and proposed external lighting including luminance levels and measures to avoid light spillage. Within 4 weeks of the approval or refusal of the lighting scheme from the local planning authority, all external lighting which has not been approved shall be permanently removed from the site. Thereafter, only external lighting that accords with the approved lighting scheme shall be erected. <p>Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site and biodiversity in accordance with policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan.</p>
7	<p>With the exception of the fencing to be approved under Condition 6, and notwithstanding the provisions of Schedule 2, Part 2, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), no other gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure shall be erected on the site, unless planning permission has first been obtained from the local planning authority.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of the visual appearance of the site in accordance with policy LP5 of the Fenland Local Plan.</p>
8	<p>All floor levels to the static caravans shall be at least 450mm above the ground level and shall be retained as such.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of the safety of the occupants in the event of flooding in accordance with policies LP5 and LP14 of the Fenland Local Plan.</p>
9	<p>Within 2 months of the date of this decision, full details of the foul drainage treatment and its ongoing future maintenance shall be submitted to the local planning authority for approval. The foul drainage shall only be installed in complete accordance with the approved details and shall be maintained thereafter in complete accordance with the approved maintenance schedule.</p> <p>Reason: In the interests of public health and prevention of contamination to the environment in accordance with policies LP5 and</p>

	LP14 of the Fenland Local Plan
10	Approved plans



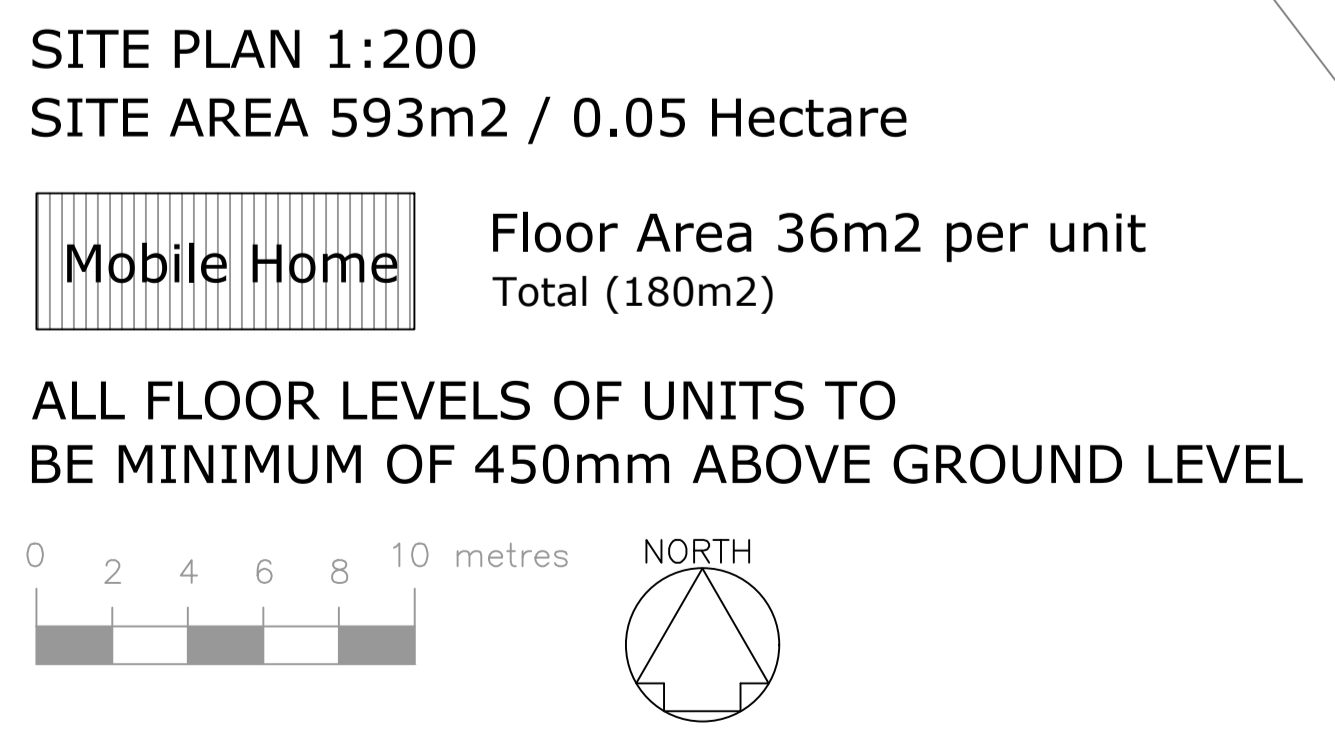
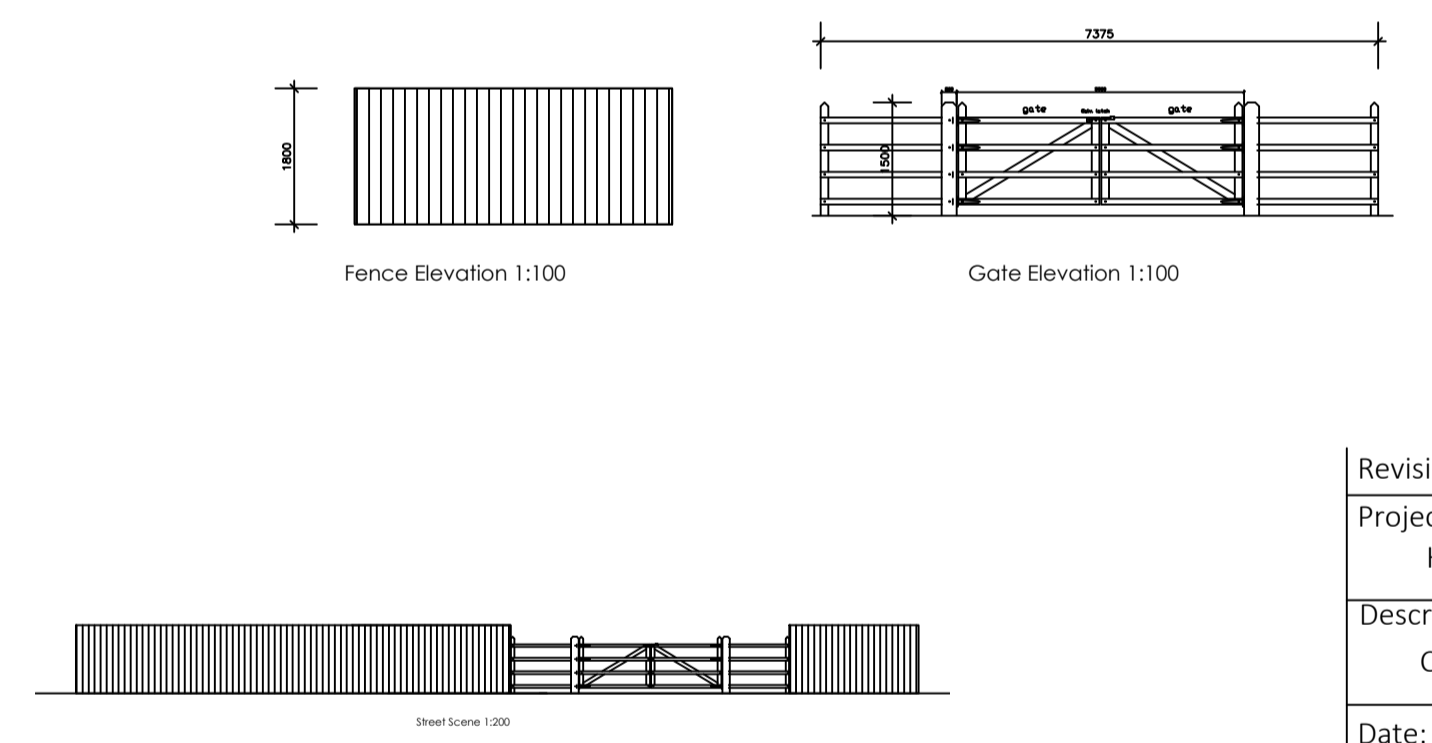
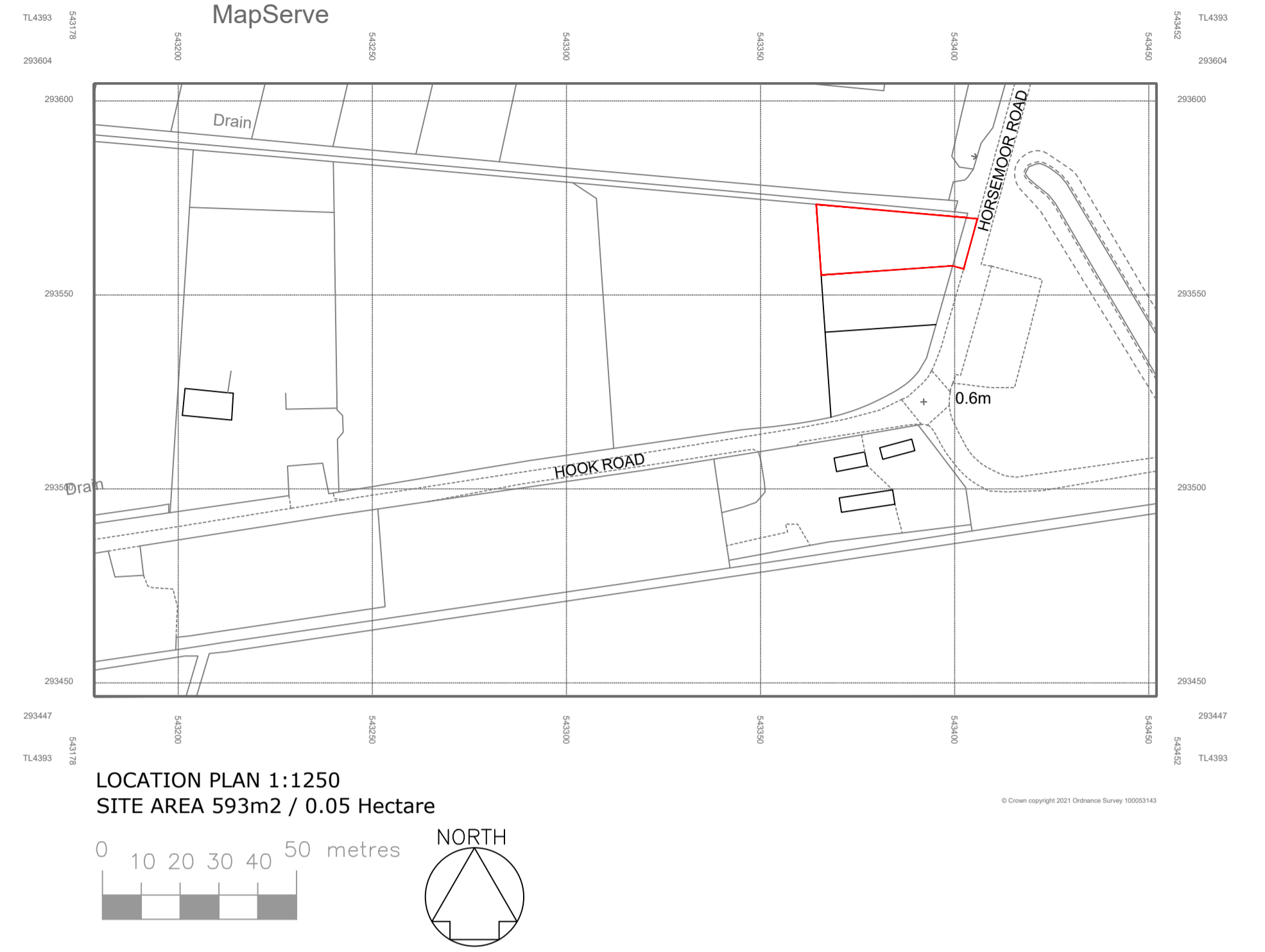
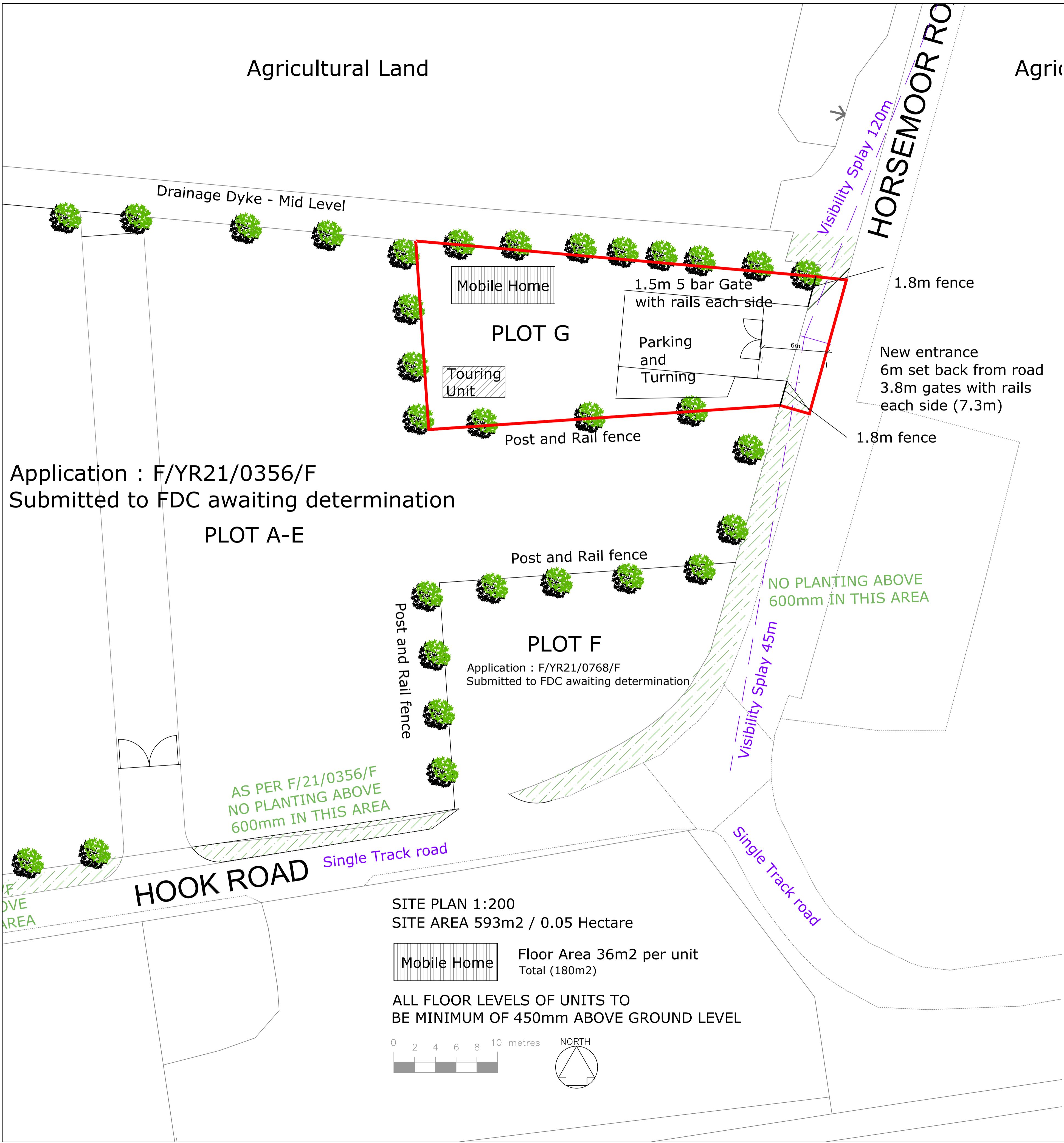
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Revision:
Project:
Hook Road HOOK

Description:
CHANGE OF USE SITE G

Date:
10-3-21

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Taylor Planning & Building Consultants
28-2c Broad Street
Whittlesey
Peterborough
PE7 1HA
01733 530757
www.TaylorPlanningandBuilding.co.uk

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