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**F/YR22/1243/PIP**

**Applicant: Mr S Munden**

**Agent : Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd**

**Land North Of 8-10 Askham Row Accessed From, Hospital Road, Doddington, Cambridgeshire**

**Residential development of up to 3 x dwellings (application for Permission in Principle)**

**Officer recommendation: Refuse**

**Reason for Committee: Number of representations received contrary to Officer recommendation**

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## **1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This is an application for Permission in Principle (first stage) for up to three dwellings on a parcel of agricultural land in the countryside outside of the existing developed footprint of Doddington. Development (agriculture to garden land) has recently been refused on adjacent land and the proposal is contrary to the policies of the adopted local plan. There are no material considerations which outweigh the determination of this application in accordance with the adopted policies and in line with the NPPF.
- 1.2 Only matters of location, use of land and amount of development can be considered at this stage. All matters of detail would be subject to Technical Details approval if this first stage Permission in Principle (PIP) were approved.
- 1.3 With regard to location, the proposal fails to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, the pattern and character of the natural landscape and built development at this location and would appear incongruous to both the rural character of the immediate area creating an adverse visual impact to occupiers of adjacent land and users of the public footpath network in the area. The development would necessitate removal of some of the continuous hedgerow to the east of the site which would add to the urbanising effect of the proposal.
- 1.4 If the principle of development in this location were acceptable, the development for only up to 3 dwellings does not make efficient use of the land.

## **2 SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The site lies in the countryside and is a roughly rectangular parcel of land currently in use as an agricultural field. It measures approximately 95 metres wide by on average approximately 68 metres deep, therefore has an area of approximately 0.646 hectares. The site is set behind the rear of 8 – 10 Askham

Row which is a relatively modern row of detached dwellings fronting Benwick Road. The site can only be accessed via Hospital Road which is a single-track road with no footways running north off Benwick Road.

- 2.2 Benwick Road extends from the High Street/Doddington village centre in a westerly direction. There is development on both sides of Benwick Road up to Hermitage Gardens and beyond this the development becomes more sporadic, especially to the south of Benwick Road at this point and even more so on both sides of Benwick Road as one travels further west. Doddington Hospital and Doddington Court retirement homes and then Askham House, a rehabilitation centre and nursing home are prominent developed sites to the north of Benwick Road. The character as one travels west is one of sporadic development, mainly fronting the road interspersed with fields and most of the land to the rear of the frontage development comprises open fields. Built development lessens as one travels further along Benwick Road which is typical interface between a village core and the countryside beyond. It is noticeable that this character is being eroded by infill development in a ribbon style which is gradually urbanising this road and Askham Row is an example of this. However, there still remains a general semi-rural/rural feel to the road whereby development is interspersed with open land between development and to the rear.
- 2.3 Hospital Road is not much more than a track but it provides an emergency access to the hospital and car park and also the residential development including the dwelling Norbrown to the north of the hospital and to the east of Hospital Road and the four new dwellings that have recently been permitted between Norbrown and the Hospital (see history below). Hospital Road continues for some distance and serves a few sporadic dwellings and farms and also other sporadic business including the Megaplants Garden Centre and, opposite this, a former poultry farm which now seems to be used for storage purposes.
- 2.4 The site subject of this application is flat and devoid of landscape except for a mixed native hedgerow along its eastern boundary where it adjoins Hospital Road. The site lies within flood zone 1 which is the area at lowest risk of flooding.

### **3 PROPOSAL**

- 3.1 The current proposal is the first part of the Permission in Principle application; this “first stage” establishes whether a site is suitable in principle only and assesses the “principle” issues, namely;
- (1) Location
  - (2) Use, and
  - (3) Amount of development proposed
- 3.2 Should this application be successful the applicant would have to submit a Technical Details application covering all the other detailed material planning considerations. The approval of Permission in Principle does not constitute the grant of planning permission.
- 3.3 The applicant is only required to submit minimum information to accompany the application. However, an Indicative Site Plan has been submitted. This shows a

single point of access to the site off Hospital Road leading to a private drive serving three detached dwellings which face Hospital Road.

3.4 Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:

[F/YR22/1243/PIP | Residential development of up to 3 x dwellings \(application for Permission in Principle\) | Land North Of 8-10 Askham Row Accessed From Hospital Road Doddington Cambridgeshire \(fenland.gov.uk\)](https://fenland.gov.uk/F/YR22/1243/PIP | Residential development of up to 3 x dwellings (application for Permission in Principle) | Land North Of 8-10 Askham Row Accessed From Hospital Road Doddington Cambridgeshire (fenland.gov.uk))

## **4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY**

4.1 This site itself has no planning history. Decisions in the vicinity of the site will be addressed in the Background section later in the report.

## **5 CONSULTATIONS**

### **5.1 Doddington Parish Council**

*Objects for the following reasons;*

*The proposed development is accessed from the west of Hospital Road on a site which provides an important gap between Hospital Road and the public footpath adjacent the Askham House care facility. The site therefore clearly comprises open countryside for the purposes of applying planning policy and there is no overriding need for development to take place given the District Council's housing land supply position.*

*The District Council recently refused planning permission F/YR22/0390/f for domestic use which is close to the application site on grounds of encroachment into the open countryside which would result in significant affect on the character and visual amenity of the area. The authorised use of the site and land to the west is an agricultural field.*

*The application site includes a substantial amount of trees and hedges along Hospital Road. In order to provide vehicular access with associated visibility, the vast majority of trees and hedges would need to be removed which would have a significant adverse impact on the character of the area.*

*The proposed development would lead to unsafe highway access conditions onto Hospital Road due to its narrow single tracked nature with a lack of any formal passing spaces, street lighting or footpaths. Hospital Road also acts as an emergency access to the Hospital.*

*The proposal has failed to demonstrate that the location is appropriate having regard to biodiversity considerations. The removal of a substantial amount of trees together with developing the land itself will create significant negative impact on the biodiversity value of the site.*

*The proposal would result in the loss of grade 3 agricultural land.*

*The proposed development is contrary to a number of sections within policies LP12 and LP16 and we trust FDC will refuse the granting of planning permission.*

## 5.2 CCC Highways –

Originally submitted no objections subject to conditions  
(Officer comment: Conditions are not permitted on permission in principle first stage applications)

Given other comments made by the Highway Authority regarding development in the vicinity clarification was sought on their stance. The following comments were subsequently provided:

- *Hospital Road is a narrow road devoid of opportunity for safe passing between the B1093 Benwick Road and the proposed site access (circa. 120m). Generally, such a road is ill-suited for further development due to increased risk of vehicle or vehicle/pedestrian conflict, but three additional dwellings is unlikely to materially impact the operation of Hospital Road in context of existing uses. So, in planning terms I do not consider the principle objectionable (or at least I think there is a strong probability an objection could be overturned at appeal), although careful consideration should be given to the incremental development precedent a permission would set. The additional impact of three dwellings is minor, but further prospective development could result in a severe cumulative impact over time.*
- *While it would not be reasonable in relation to the proposed scale of development to condition the road be widened to allow two vehicles to pass, nor to install a footway, I do think requiring a passing place at a point roughly mid-way between the access and Benwick Road is necessary and proportional. This will help to minimise the risk of conflict, vehicles traversing the soft verge, or reversing excessive distances. Such a passing place should be designed to allow a large car and refuse freighter to pass (5m – 6m)*
- *While the submission drawings show 2.4m x 90m visibility splays, the road is de-restricted meaning visibility splays should be 2.4m x 215m or otherwise a speed survey procured with visibility based on the 85th percentile speeds. Ideally the speed survey should be provided prior to determination as it's fundamental to achieving a safe access; but if this isn't possible, I am reasonably confident that observed speeds will be low based on-site conditions so could be considered as a condition.*
- *Any access would need to remain ungated.*
- *The LPA should give consideration to the opportunity for active and sustainable travel, given the lack of pedestrian infrastructure along Hospital Road.*

## 5.3 Local Residents/Interested Parties

### Objectors

Letters of objection have been received from 7 households (five at Askham Row and one each from Hospital Road and New Street, all Doddington) and summarised as follows;

- There is no need for the dwellings as the village threshold position statement dated 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022 sets out there are 192 committed dwellings (at that date) compared to the village threshold of 127. Local Plan policy LP12 Part A

- establishes the position in regard to proposals which breach the threshold and in this case there is no clear village support.
- The site is located in the countryside being away from the built-up area of Doddington as defined by policy LP12.
  - The proposal is located to the west of Hospital Road, a narrow unclassified road with no streetlights or footpaths. It is used by walkers as it provides links to the local public footpath network and also by vehicles accessing other houses and mega plants nursery. It has a speed limit of 60mph. It is therefore frequently used by walkers and vehicles.
  - Regarding the character of the area it is noted that 4 dwellings have recently been granted planning permission further to the north on the east side of Hospital Road. This development is however located on the west side, the character of which is undeveloped except for houses fronting Benwick Road and the site therefore provides an important gap between Hospital Road and the footpath adjacent to Askham House care facility. The proposal will create significant adverse impact on the character of the area by introducing dwellings to a countryside location. The harm will arise from a number of viewpoints including other residential property, the public highway and public footpaths. It will be at odds with the character this side of Hospital Road and create a harmful urbanising effect upon this rural area. Approving this development will set a precedent for further unjustified development in this local area. It will change the character from a pleasant rural road to an urban street.
  - The access would result in the loss of trees and hedgerows. It is not clear as to the extent of the loss and it is not clear whether any arboricultural or ecological survey has been undertaken. The loss of this greenery will result wherever the access is taken.
  - The access to the other side of Hospital Road is an emergency access from the Hospital onto Hospital Road which is one carriageway in width. A new access here could cause conflict with the safe use of the emergency access. The NHS should be asked to consider the impacts on their safe use of the Hospital site. There are no formal passing places.
  - The proposal would result in permanent loss of agricultural land classified as grade 3. Grade 3a is best and most versatile for planning purposes whereas 3b is not and the Natural England maps do not identify this differentiation. The applicant has failed to demonstrate whether the proposal results in loss of best and most versatile land and so is contrary to policy LP12 of the Local Plan and paragraph 174 of the NPPF.
  - The proposal is contrary to policy LP12 Part A in respect of –
    - (a) As the development relates more to the countryside than the built up area;
    - (c) The proposal will have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside
    - (d) is of a scale and location not in keeping with the core shape and form of the settlement
    - (e) would result in uncharacteristic ribbon development to the west of Hospital Road
    - (f) Would not retain or respect the natural boundaries including trees
    - (g) Would not respect biodiversity features including trees
    - (h) would result in the loss of an important space within the village which provides views of the countryside between Hospital Road and the public footpath to the east of Askham House care facility
    - (i) Potential loss of high grade agricultural land and no evidence provided to justify the loss
    - (k) The development cannot be served by sustainable infrastructure provision such as the highway

- Given the breach of policy LP12 A, the proposal must satisfy the “elsewhere” criteria in policy LP3 which it fails to do and also conflicts with allowable exceptions under paragraph 80 of the NPPF.
- Policy LP16(b) requires that proposals protect biodiversity. It is like the trees and hedgerows are used by bats which are seen in the area. A bat survey is required in order for the Council to discharge its obligations under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended (the NERC Act)
- With regard to the tree and hedgerow loss the proposal fails to retain and incorporate natural features as required by policy LP16(c) and also DM2 (a) and (c) of the Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments SPD 2014. The proposal cannot also comply with policy LP16 (d)
- The proposal fails to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside as required by paragraph 174 of the NPPF and is also out of character with the countryside contrary to policy DM3 in the SPD
- For all these reasons the location of the development is unacceptable and in addition the site lies outside the settlement boundary of Doddington set out in the emerging local plan which also confirms its location as being in the countryside
- Reference is made to the recently refused use of the adjacent land to the west under application F/YR22/0390/F and that it would be illogical to then approve this application and consider the land as anything other than an agricultural field
- The amount of development amplifies the harm even further not that a single dwelling would be acceptable
  - I walk my dog there and it would not be in keeping with the rural character of the area
  - Hospital road is already increasingly busy road and this will get even more problematic with the development of the garden centre. It is used as the Doddington circular by many walkers in the area.
  - The developers are a resident of Askham Row who intend to move away and who at the time they purchased the land told people it was for horse grazing and to provide protection from future development
  - The access is unsafe with no footpaths, but this does not infer that footpaths should be constructed as this will create an urbanising effect to a pleasant rural route
  - Enough is enough unless you want to make Hospital Road a wider 2-way road with pavements and proper off road parking, yellow lines etc and properly maintained throughout

## **Supporters**

15 letters (four from Hospital Road, three from Wimblington Road and one each from Juniper Close, Primrose Hill, Benwick Road, Newgate Street, Askham Row, Cowslip Close, Cedar Avenue and High Street, all Doddington) of support have been received from 13 households who raise the following points;

- I am in full support as it is in keeping with the recently built properties nearby
- I support the development as it will provide more homes for the village
- I am happy to support the application because I think it will be a good addition to the village and will make good use of unused land
- I live on Hospital Road and fully support the application as more houses are needed and there are already houses built on the same field

- I cannot see any valid reason why this development should not be allowed as the heavy traffic down that road is mainly due to the businesses and 3 additional dwellings won't make any difference
- This application has my full support as more homes so other families can enjoy our lovely village
- We are in full support of this application as it will blend in nicely with the houses on Askham Row
- Recent planning permission granted to 10 Askham Row for access to property from Hospital Road F/YR22/0698/F and planning permission granted for Askham Row (F/YR16/0576/RM) within the same original field.
- It is only a short distance from amenities such as playing field, doctors and school, shops and there seems to be a shortage of houses around this area
- It would give more security to a quiet end of the village where I walk my dogs
- I support the application as I believe the village needs more housing to support the ever-increasing population.
- It will not affect the area visually or environmentally as there is already a hospital and housing within close proximity.
- It is only 0.5 miles from the centre of the village which is spread much further
- The extra passing points that have been completed this summer ensures no issues with traffic/passing vehicles
- I support building more houses in Doddington. It will provide more opportunities for people to move to Doddington and the space is free and not being used.

## **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).

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 as amended (The NERC Act) places a duty to conserve biodiversity on public authorities in England. It requires local authorities to have regard to the purposes of conserving biodiversity in a manner that is consistent with the exercise of their normal functions such as policy and decision making.

## **7 POLICY FRAMEWORK**

### **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**

#### **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**

Paragraph: 012 (Reference ID: 58-012-20180615) The scope of permission in principle is limited to location, land use and amount of development. Issues relevant to these 'in principle' matters should be considered at the permission in principle stage. Other matters should be considered at the technical details consent stage. In addition, local authorities cannot list the information they require for applications for permission in principle in the same way they can for applications for planning permission but can advise applicants on the decision notice, where Permission in Principle is granted, what they would expect to see at Technical Details stage.

#### **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  
LP4 – Housing  
LP5 – Meeting Housing Need  
LP12 – Rural Areas Development Policy  
LP13 – Supporting and Managing the Impact of a Growing District  
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  
LP19 – The Natural Environment

### **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  
LP2: Spatial Strategy for the location of residential development  
LP4: Securing Fenland's Future  
LP5: Health and Wellbeing  
LP7: Design  
LP8: Amenity Provision  
LP12: Meeting Housing Needs  
LP18: Development in the Countryside  
LP19: Strategic Infrastructure  
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  
LP33: Development of Land Affected by Contamination

## **8 KEY ISSUES**

- **Location**
- **Use**
- **Amount of development proposed**
- **Matters raised during consultation**

## **9 BACKGROUND**



- 9.1 There are a number of recent decisions relating to development in the vicinity of the site which Members should be aware of when determining this application.
- 9.2 Firstly, a total of four detached dwellings adjacent to Norbrown (a pre-existing dwelling) have been approved by Planning Committee, contrary to officer recommendation, further north and to the east of Hospital Road from the site subject of this application (refs F/YR20/0182/O and F/YR21/1522/O)
- 9.3 Planning permission has also been granted (ref: F/YR22/0032/F) for café/retail buildings at Megaplants, a garden centre served off Hospital Road with conditions requiring passing bays on Hospital Road. One of these passing bays appears to be within the red line of this current PIP application.
- 9.4 Most recently, planning application F/YR22/0390/F was refused by Committee (in line with the officer recommendation) for change of use of land to the north of 5 – 7 Askham Row (including erection of chicken run and pond) on 26<sup>th</sup> August 2022. This site is to the immediate west of the current application site. The application was refused for the following reason;

*Policy LP12 Part A (c) and Policy LP16 (d) of the Fenland Local Plan 2014, DM3 (d) of the Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD 2014 and Paragraph 130 of the NPPF require that developments do not adversely impact upon the character and appearance of the open countryside. The development creates a significantly sized domestic garden which results in an urbanising encroachment into the open countryside to the significant detriment of the character and visual amenity of the area. As such, the development is contrary to the aforementioned policies.*

## **10 ASSESSMENT**

- 10.1 Noting the guidance in place regarding Permission in Principle submissions, assessment must be restricted to (a) location, (b) use, and (c) amount and these items are considered in turn below:

### **Location**

- 10.2 Policy LP3 of the Local Plan defines Doddington as a growth village. For these settlements, development and new service provision either within the existing urban area or as small village extensions will be appropriate albeit of a considerably more limited scale than appropriate to market towns. Development not falling into one of the defined village hierarchies will fall into the “elsewhere” category and will be restricted to that which is demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport or utility services or to minerals and waste development. The site therefore could be considered as an extension to the village but must also comply with the more detailed policy criteria set out in policy LP12 as well as policy LP3.
- 10.3 Policy LP12 states, at Part A, that “*new development will be supported where it contributes towards the sustainability of that settlement and does not harm the wide-open character of the countryside*” and the following criteria:

- (a) *The site is in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village; and*  
(b) *It would not result in coalescence with any neighbouring village; and*

- (c) *It would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and farmland*
- (d) *The proposal is of a scale and in a location that is in keeping with the core shape and form of the settlement, and will not adversely harm its character and appearance; and*
- (e) *It would not extend linear features of the settlement or result in ribbon development; and*
- (f) *The site retains and respects natural boundaries such as trees, hedgerows, embankments and drainage ditches; and*
- (g) *The site retains and respects ecological, heritage and biodiversity features; and*
- (h) *It would not result in the loss of important open space within the village; and*
- (i) *It would not result in the loss of high-grade agricultural land, or if so, comprehensive evidence is provided to justify the loss. This should include an assessment of all alternative reasonable opportunities in the locality to develop on lower grades of agricultural land; and*
- (j) *It would not put people or property in danger from identified risks; and*
- (k) *It can be served by sustainable infrastructure provision, such as surface water and wastewater drainage and highways.*

- 10.4 The developed footprint referred to in criteria (a) is further defined in a footnote as *“the continuous built form of the settlement and excludes:*
- (a) individual buildings and groups of dispersed or intermittent buildings, that are clearly detached from the continuous built-up area of the settlement*
  - (b) gardens, paddocks, and other undeveloped land within the curtilage of buildings on the edge of the settlement where the land relates more to the surrounding countryside than to the built-up area of the settlement*
  - (c) agricultural buildings and associated land on the edge of the settlement*
  - (d) outdoor sports and recreation facilities and other formal open spaces on the edge of the settlement”*
- 10.5 The site adjoins open agricultural land to the west and north, and the substantial rear gardens of the properties on Askham Row to the south. The site itself is agricultural land. Given criterion b of the footnote it is considered that the site does not therefore adjoin the continuous built form of the settlement and is not therefore *“in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village”*. Consequently, it does not therefore comply with LP12 Part A(a)
- 10.6 LP12 Part A (c and d) require development to, in summary, be in keeping with the character of its surroundings. The application site lies on one of the radial routes extending out from the built-up part of the village where development is more sporadic, is interspersed with open land and is largely frontage ribbon development. This presently remains the character of the area despite development such as Askham Row and the recent back land development close to Norbrowne being permitted. The site is an agricultural field and has the appearance of being part of the countryside more than being part of the built-up area.
- 10.7 The proposal would result in development to the rear of Askham Row and fronting Hospital Road. Supporters of the proposal point to Askham Row and the new development comprising 4 dwellings adjacent to Norbrowne as being reason to permit further development. The more development that is permitted in this form outside of the built-up area, the more difficult it becomes to resist future development. However, the starting point in law for determining applications is the development plan and as set out above, the site is not in a

location where such development would be permitted except where the proposal may comply with parts c and d of Policy LP12 (Part A) which is not the case in this instance. The recent approved development is a material planning consideration, however, this site relates more closely to the land immediately to the west, where change of use to garden land was refused in August 2022 by reason of the location being in the countryside and the impact upon the character of the area. Given this decision, it would be somewhat perverse to approve a site abutting this land for residential development. This site is therefore not in a location that is in keeping with the core shape of the village and is therefore contrary to Policy LP12 Part A (c and d).

- 10.8 The location and shape of the proposed site and the positioning of three dwellings to the rear of the Askham Row dwellings, will create a development that will appear incongruous and out of character with the surroundings. Askham Row, despite it infilling some of the open area which characterises the street scene in this area (thus affecting that character), at least is frontage and infill development. The four dwellings permitted between the rear of the hospital and Norbrown to the east of Hospital Road, which were approved by Committee contrary to recommendation, at least in part infill the gap between the hospital and Norbrown but they do not relate to and should not set a precedent to develop the current site which is part of a much larger field to the west of Hospital Road. This proposal, if permitted would be an inorganic, almost back land site in nature, which is a contrived rectangular shape and would represent planning in a patchwork quilt style ie one square of countryside at a time. It will visually encroach into an area of land which would likely set a precedent for remainder of this larger field to come forward in other small sites until the area is infilled.
- 10.9 The site will be viewed from anyone travelling along Hospital Road and will likely be glimpsed when passing by the entrance to the road along Benwick Road. It will clearly be seen from the upper rear most windows to the properties in Askham Row and will be viewed from the public footpath which extends along the perimeter of the large field. There is an extensive public footpath network in the area and those people objecting to the proposal have mentioned the walks taken by people out of the village and round this footpath network. At present this network provides countryside walks with views of fields. The site is therefore, highly vulnerable to public view and the nature of change in the character of the area will be significant from a public perception but also as a matter of the character of the countryside and its natural features for its own sake. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services, including the economic and other benefits of best and most versatile land and of trees and woodland.
- 10.10 In addition to the reasons set out above, the proposal will inevitably result in a vehicular access needing to be put in to the site where presently a substantial hedgerow and number of trees are situated along the eastern boundary. Aside from the loss of the hedgerow in terms of biodiversity, a vehicular access here will further diminish the character of Hospital Road by creation of further incremental urbanising development. As such the proposal is also contrary to policies (c) and (f) of LP12 A.
- 10.11 As the site does not satisfy the policies set out in LP12 Part A, it must be considered an elsewhere location for the purposes of the settlement hierarchy

set out in policy LP3. In such locations, development is restricted to that demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport, utility services or minerals and waste development. Clearly, the proposal is not in compliance with this policy.

- 10.12 Policy LP16 of the Local Plan requires that high quality environments will be delivered and protected throughout the district and proposal for all new development will only be permitted where the relevant criteria set out in the policy are met. This includes criteria (c) which requires retention of natural features such as trees, hedges, field patterns, drains and water bodies to be retained and incorporated into proposals and criteria (d) which requires proposals to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and the character of the area, enhancing its local setting and responding to and improving the character of the local built environment. It should reinforce local identity and not adversely impact either in design or scale terms on the street scene, settlement pattern or the landscape character of the surrounding area.
- 10.13 As set out above, this proposal is not respecting the pattern of development in the area and comprises an arbitrary rectangular piece of a larger field. It will further erode from the local identity of sporadic development which characterises the interface between the rural and village setting. It will result in the loss of an existing continuous hedgerow and will create a further urbanising form of development in a countryside location. As such the location of the proposal does not comply with Policy LP16 A , (c), (d) and (f).
- 10.14 Paragraph 130 of the NPPF requires, amongst other things that development is
- (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area..
  - (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate effective landscaping
  - (c) are sympathetic to the local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)
  - (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place...
- 10.15 The proposal, as already set out, will not achieve these objectives due to its location in the countryside and its piecemeal, almost backland nature.
- 10.16 There is no need for this housing. The Council can currently demonstrate more than a five year supply of deliverable housing sites. The Fenland Local Plan remains up to date and is not at odds with the relevant policies of the NPPF. The tilted balance does not therefore apply. The application is clearly contrary to the development plan in terms of location as it is contrary to policies LP3, LP12 (a), (c), (d) and (f) and LP16 (c) and (d) as well as paragraphs 130 and 174 of the NPPF and should be refused for this reason.
- 10.17 With regard to detailed matters such as design of the access and dwellings, biodiversity net gain and likely archaeological implications, such matters would be dealt with at the Technical Details Stage (which would be the grant of planning permission) via submission of detailed plans and reports if Permission in Principle were being recommended for approval.

## **Use**

- 10.18 Policy LP12 ((i) states that development should not result in the loss of high grade agricultural land or if so comprehensive evidence is provided to justify the loss. Paragraph 174 of the NPPF states that decisions should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside....including the economic benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Grades 1, 2 and 3a agricultural land fall within this category. A large proportion of agricultural land in Fenland District is best and most versatile land. While there is insufficient information upon which to assess whether the loss the land might mean loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. However, the Council has rarely refused applications for this reason, given the quantity of such land within the District, and it is not considered that this issue could therefore be used as a reason for refusal in this instance.
- 10.19 Considering the land use in relation to surrounding land uses, the use of the land for residential purposes, in principle, would not give rise to unacceptable impacts on surrounding users by reason or noise or disturbance or vice versa. Account has been taken of the motocross site which is situated to the north-west but this is likely of sufficient distance from the site so as not to significantly adversely impact future occupiers.

### **Amount**

- 10.20 The proposal is for permission in principle for up to three dwellings. The site area is 0.646 hectares approximately. This would equate to an approximate density of 5 dwellings per hectare. This is not efficient use of land. However, policies LP12 (c) and (d) and LP16 (d) requires development respond to the local character as does paragraph 130 of the NPPF.
- 10.21 Densities vary within the local area from the care home facilities, through to the older established dwellings along Benwick Road to the low density of Askham Row. Taking aside that this location is unacceptable for residential development in principle (as set out above), if this land were to be developed it would not amount to efficient use of land.
- 10.22 One of the three overarching objectives that the planning system has is achieving sustainable development. Set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF is an environmental objective which includes making efficient use of land. This ties with the economic objective of ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places at the right time to support growth (it has already been set out in the report above that this is not the right land in the right location and is not needed to support growth). Efficient use of land and proper planning including good layouts ensure that the wider environmental objectives set out in paragraph 8 e.g. improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently (best agricultural land is a natural resource), minimising waste and adapting to climate change are maximised. Piecemeal development, inefficient use of land and developments not in accordance with the adopted development plan are individually and cumulatively counter to these aims. The NPPF defines sustainable development as development that accords with an up-to-date development plan. It follows that development not in accordance with adopted policies is most likely to be unsustainable development and this is considered the case here.
- 10.23 In this instance, whilst a lower-than-average density would be more in keeping with the countryside setting, a development of up to only 3 houses on a parcel of land of this size resulting in a density of approximately 5 dwellings per hectare

is not making efficient use of land and therefore the amount of development proposed is unacceptable and contrary to paragraph 8 of the NPPF.

## Highways

10.24 Comments from the Highway Authority do pose questions as to the suitability of Hospital Road to serve further development. However, there is no formal objection to the application on the basis of location, use or amount. Several of the matters raised, such as requiring the provision of a passing place, cannot be considered at this stage of the Permission in Principle process.

### 10.25 Matters raised on consultation (not considered in the report above)

1	No clear village support as per policy LP12	This aspect of policy LP12 was not accepted by a planning Inspector in an appeal decision and since then officers have not been using this aspect of policy LP12 as a reason to refuse development
2	Issues of highway safety generally and interference with the hospital emergency access	The local highway authority has not raised objections and detailed design of access and safety issues would be a detailed matter to be considered at technical details stage. It is not possible to add conditions to a first stage of a Permission in Principle (should approval be recommended)
3	Impact on biodiversity and LPA duty under the NERC Act	The LPA duty under the NERC Act (which has been set out above in Section 6 Statutory Duty, has been considered. In other application types such as outline and full applications, an ecological survey and perhaps species surveys would be needed up front to accompany the application. This application if approved, would not be granting planning permission. Ecological information should be submitted at the Technical Details stage (if this first stage were approved) and taken into account then, consulted upon and the decision, including potential refusal or conditions, should be based upon the findings of said ecological information. If this PIP were approved, it would not prevent proper consideration of ecological issues at the next stage and it would not alter duties of landowners/developers to

		comply with other legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act in the meantime.
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- 10.26 The issues raised by supporters of the proposal have been addressed in the main body of the report i.e. the reasons why the proposal is not appropriate, contrary to the views of the supporters, has been set out.

## 11 CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 This is an application for Permission in Principle (first stage) for up to three dwellings on a parcel of agricultural land in the countryside outside of the existing developed footprint of Doddington. The proposal is contrary to the policies of the adopted local plan and there are no material considerations which outweigh the determination of this application in accordance with the adopted policies and in line with the NPPF. It should also be noted that it would be entirely inconsistent to have refused application F/YR22/0390/F (adjacent land) for its urbanising impact and detrimental effect on the appearance of the countryside location and then to recommend approval of this application.
- 11.2 Only matters of location, use of land and amount of development can be considered at this stage. All matters of detail would be subject to Technical Details approval if this first stage Permission in Principle (PIP) were approved.
- 11.3 With regard to location, the proposal fails to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, the pattern and character of the natural landscape and built development at this location and would appear incongruous both the rural character of the immediate area creating an adverse visual impact to occupiers of adjacent land and users of the public footpath network in the area. The development would necessitate removal of some of the continuous hedgerow to the east of the site which would add to the urbanising effect of the proposal.
- 11.4 Insufficient information has been provided with regards to whether the grade 3 agricultural land is best and most versatile land, therefore proper assessment of this impact regarding use of land cannot be made. In terms of neighbouring land uses and impact on amenity, the use for residential purposes would be acceptable.
- 11.5 If the principle of development in this location were acceptable, the development for only up to 3 dwellings does not make efficient use of the land.

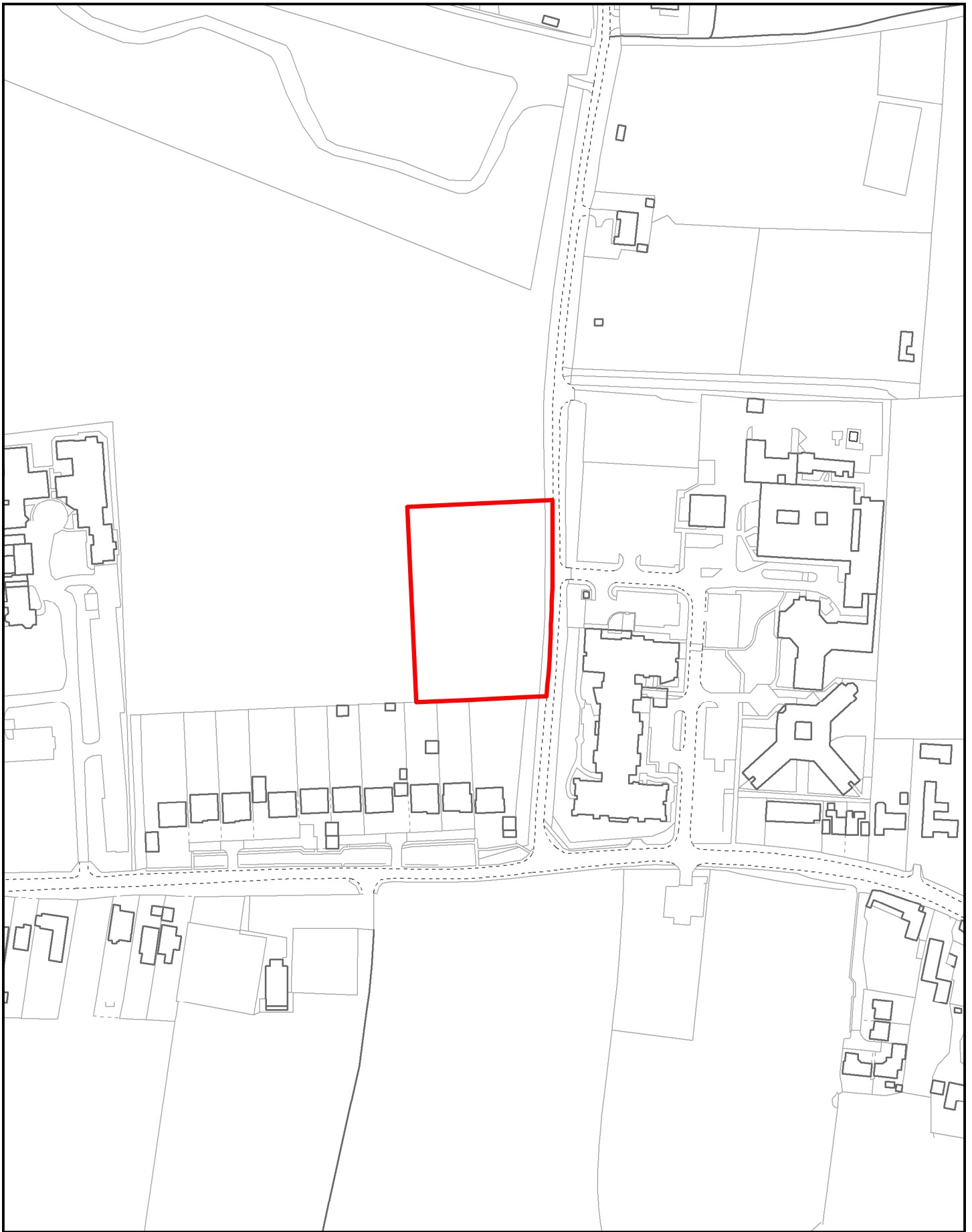
## 12 RECOMMENDATION

**Refuse;** for the following reasons:

1.	<p>The site does not lie adjacent to the continuous built form of the settlement of Doddington and is in a countryside location, defined as “elsewhere” in policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan.</p> <p>The development of this site for up to three dwellings fails to recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the pattern and character of the surrounding natural landscape and built character of the immediate area which his sporadic, interspersed with open land and</p>
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	<p>largely frontage development. It would be inconsistent with the core shape of the village and would appear incongruous both in terms of the landscape character of the area and in terms of visual appearance to adjacent occupiers of land/property and users of the nearby public footpath network. It will inevitably result in the severance of a continuous length of hedgerow to the east boundary of the site with Hospital Road which will result in a further urbanising impact and an adverse impact on the verdant rural character.</p> <p>As such the proposal is contrary to policies LP3, LP12 A (a), (c), (d) and (f), LP16 (c) and (d) and paragraphs 130 and 174 of the NPPF.</p>
2.	<p>If the principle of residential development on this site were acceptable in terms of location and use of land, development of up to 3 dwellings would not make efficient use of the land and as such would not constitute sustainable development in accordance with paragraph 8 of the NPPF.</p>





Created on: 08/11/2022

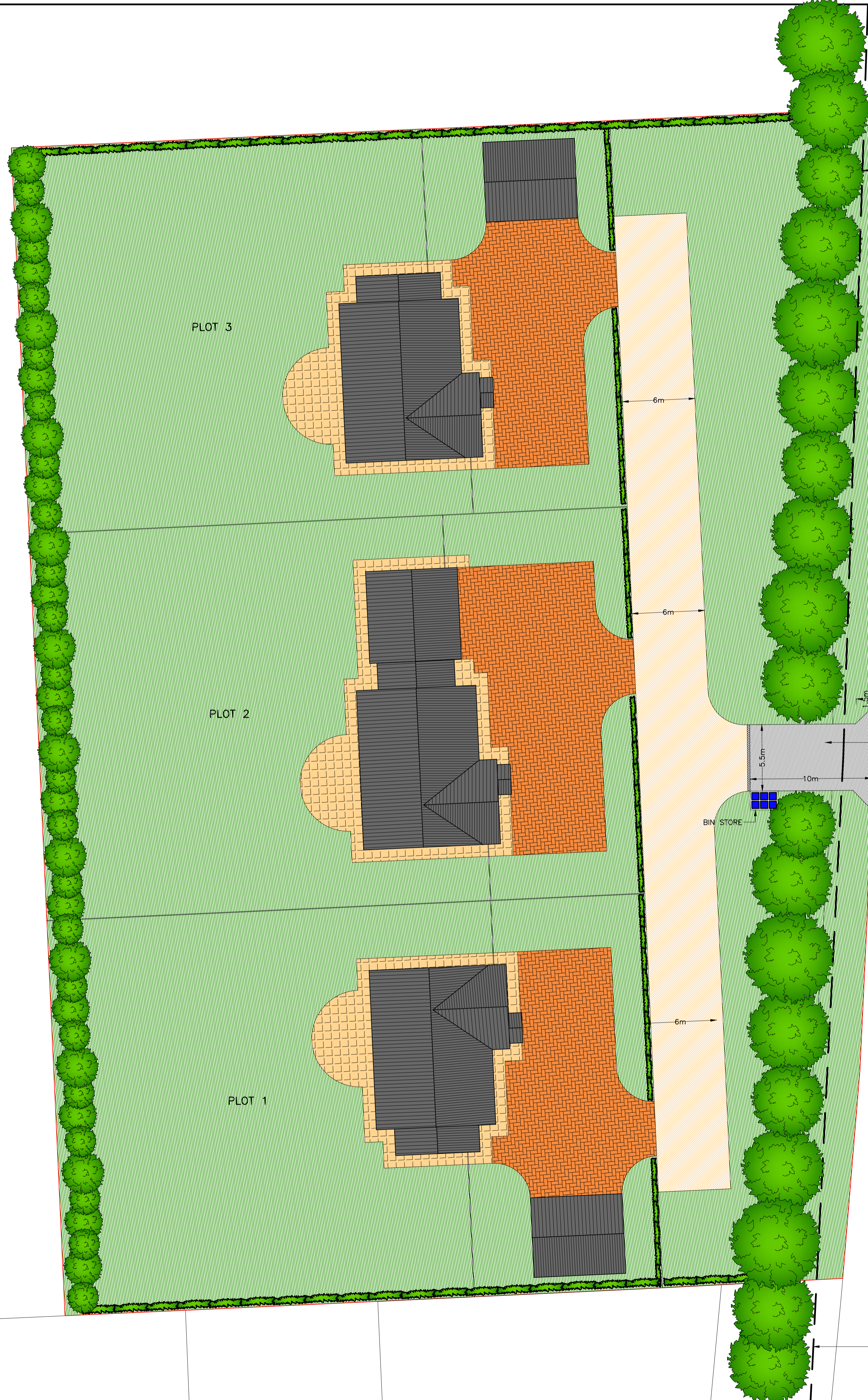
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**F/YR22/1243/PIP**

Scale = 1:2,500



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 Contractor to check all dimensions on site before work starts or materials are ordered. If in doubt ask. All dimensions are in mm unless stated otherwise.  
 Where materials, products and workmanship are not fully specified they are to be of the standard appropriate to the works and suitable for the purpose stated in or reasonably to be inferred from the drawings and specification. All work to be in accordance with good building practice and BS 8000 to the extent that the recommendations define the quality of the finished work. Materials products and workmanship to comply with all British Standards and EOTA standards with, where appropriate, BS or EC marks.  
 All products and materials to be handled, stored, prepared and used or fixed in accordance with the manufacturers current recommendations.  
 The contractor is to arrange inspections of the works by the SICO (or NHBC) as required by the Building Regulations and is to obtain completion certificate and forward to the Engineer



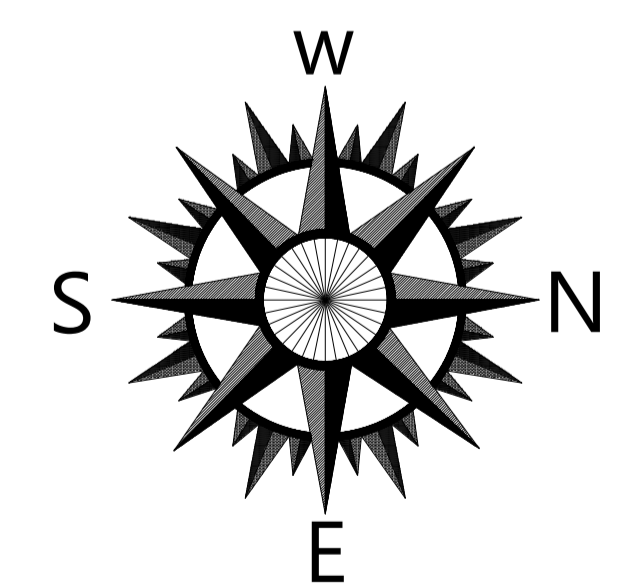
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 VISIBILITY SPLAY  
 WITHIN VERGE/LAND  
 UNDER APPLICANT  
 OWNERSHIP

5.5m x 10m  
 TARMAC SURFACE  
 LAID TO FALL AWAY  
 FROM THE HIGHWAY

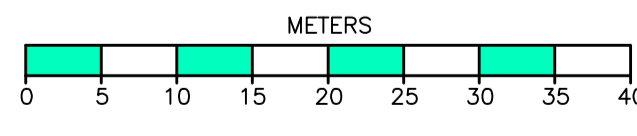
2.4m x 90m  
 VISIBILITY SPLAY  
 WITHIN VERGE/LAND  
 UNDER APPLICANT  
 OWNERSHIP

ESS

HOSPITAL ROAD



PROPOSED SITE PLAN  
 (1:200)



REVISIONS	DATE

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**LABC** Fenland District Council  
 Building Design Awards  
 winner Building Excellence in Fenland

CLIENT: Mr & Mrs Munden

PROJECT: Land East of Askham House Benwick Road Doddington

TITLE: Proposed Indicative Site Plan

DRAWN: R.Papworth  
 CHECKED:   
 DATE: Oct 2022  
 SCALE: As Shown

DATE OF ISSUE:   
 DRAWING NUMBER: H8685/02