

**Applicant: Mr Andy Brand
Abbey Properties Cambridgeshire
Limited**

Agent :

Land West Of 43-69, Wimblington Road, March, Cambridgeshire

Erect 48 x dwellings (2 x single-storey 2-bed, 16 x 2-storey 2-bed, 24 x 2-storey 3-bed and 6 x 2-storey 4-bed) with associated parking, landscaping, and the formation of an attenuation basin and a new access

Officer recommendation: Refuse

Reason for Committee: Officer recommendation contrary to Town Council comments.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application seeks full planning permission for 48 dwellings, with associated parking, landscaping, and the formation of an attenuation basin and a new access. The site is located on the southern fringe of March and covers an area of 1.88ha of open fields located on the western side of Wimblington Road.
- 1.2 Policy LP3 identifies March as a Market Town and the focus for housing growth. The site lies within the South-west March broad location for growth under Policy LP9 which seeks to promote urban extensions to market towns. Policy LP7 identifies the importance of planning and implementing strategic allocations and broad locations for growth in a coordinated way, through an overarching Broad Concept Plan (BCP) that is linked to the timely delivery of key infrastructure.
- 1.3 The site is located in a sustainable location and demonstrates clear social benefits in terms of its contributions to affordable housing stock. Furthermore, development comes forward with no technical issues.
- 1.4 The application however comes forward without an approved BCP and does not demonstrate that its delivery, without conforming to an approved BCP would be inconsequential. The proposal would prevent a coordinated approach being enabled particularly with regards to connection and access to the wider BCP and March and therefore conflicts with Policies LP7 and LP9 of the Fenland Local Plan, and Policy H1 of the March Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.5 On balance, the identified benefits of the scheme are considered to be outweighed by significant harm and resultant policy conflict. The recommendation is therefore to refuse the application.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 This application site relates to an open agricultural field covering some 1.88ha located to the west of Wimblington Road about 1km to the south of March Town Centre. The site connects onto Wimblington Road via a gap of 30m between two bungalows, Nos 47 and 67 Wimblington Road. The greater part of the site lies behind a line of 6 dwellings fronting onto Wimblington Road
- 2.2 The site frontage with Wimblington Road is open and marked by a post and rail fence with prominent mature trees on either side which form part of an attractive line of similar trees on both sides of the road forming a feature of high landscape value. Mature hedging demarks the remaining boundaries.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the residential development of the site for 48 dwellings, comprising a range of 2 to 4 bed dwellings with open space and children's play area. The site will be accessed from a new junction off Wimblington Road.
- 3.2 A attenuation basin would be located along the southern boundary of the site, an area of open space is provided near its middle with further open areas along the eastern boundary forming an easement over a public sewer. A surface water pumping station is located to the south-west, whilst a foul water pumping station is sited to the rear of No 47 Wimblington Road.
- 3.3 The proposal will deliver 100% affordable housing to a mix (29% affordable rent and 71% shared ownership) devised by Accent Housing. However, it should be noted that the 100% affordable nature of the scheme would be 'on trust' and not secured by a Sec106 agreement. This is because if there was a S106 agreement for 100% affordable housing then the scheme would not be able to access grant funding.
- 3.4 The application is supported by the following supporting reports.
 - Health Impact Assessment
 - Foul Sewage and Utilities Assessment
 - Ecological Assessment
 - Transport Statement and Addendum
 - Affordable Housing Statement
 - Statement of Community Involvement (Updated)
 - Planning, Design and Access Statement (Updated)
 - Landscape Proposals
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (Rev C)
 - Arboricultural Survey and Impact Assessment (Rev A)
 - Flood Risk Assessment and Addendum
 - Pumping Station Noise Assessment Report
 - Minerals assessment

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

[F/YR23/0201/F | Erect 48 x dwellings \(2 x single-storey 2-bed, 16 x 2-storey 2-bed, 24 x 2-storey 3-bed and 6 x 2-storey 4-bed\) with associated parking.](#)

4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

APPLICATION SITE

Reference	Proposal	Address	Decision
F/0539/82/O	Residential development - 2 building plots	Land Between Nos 47 And 67 Wimblington Road March	Granted
F/1406/88/O	Residential development - 0.65ha	Land Off Wimblington Road March	Refused
F/YR04/0025/F	Erection of stables	Land West And South Of 43 - 47 Wimblington Road March	Granted

LAND TO THE SOUTH

F/YR15/0961/F	Erection of a 2-storey building for use as offices (supported by a preliminary broad concept plan for the South West March broad location for growth)	Land North Of Mill Hill Garage Wimblington Road March	Granted (Committee Decision). BCP submitted as part of the application not approved.
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5 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Anglian Water (17.10.2023)

Requests a condition requiring a phasing plan and/or on-site drainage strategy together with informatives.

States that the applicant is in discussions with Anglian Water with regards to adoption of SuDs elements.

Refers to a requirement for a 15m easement if the Pumping Station is to be adopted, it is not clear that this can be achieved in the case of Plots 43 to 48 and 6 to 10.

Requests a condition relating to onsite foul drainage works.

5.2 Archaeology (04.10.2023)

Due to the archaeological potential of the site a further programme of

investigation and recording is required which is recommended to be secured by condition.

5.3 Cambridgeshire Constabulary (12.10.2023)

Recommends that security and crime prevention are considered and discussed at the earliest opportunity.

5.4 Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue (04.10.2023)

Requests that adequate provision is made for fire hydrants.

5.5 Cambridgeshire S106 Requirement (16.05.2023)

The following contributions are sought:

1. Early Years: £124,278.
2. Primary: £289,982.
3. Secondary: £120,070.
4. Libraries: £10,920.
5. Monitoring: £150.

Total: £545,400

5.6 Environmental Health Officer (27.04.2023 & 30.06.2023)

The conclusions of the noise assessment that there would be no adverse noise impact from the operation of the pumping stations are accepted.

Recommends a condition requiring a Construction Environmental Management Plan.

5.7 Highways Authority (10.10.2023)

No objections subject to conditions and informatives.

5.8 Lead Local Flood Authority (17.10.2023)

Objections withdrawn on reviewing:

- Flood Risk Assessment (Addendum B), Amazi Consulting Ltd, Ref: AMA868, Rev: A, Dated 22.09.2023.

Requests conditions and informatives.

5.9 March Town Council (17.10.2023)

Recommends approval, has commented that “sign appears to be positioned in the middle of the cycle path.”

5.10 Minerals & Waste Planning Authority (MWPA) (18.09.2023)

The applicant’s Mineral Assessment addresses the requirements of Policy 5 of

the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021) and the MWPA withdraws its objection. It recommends the inclusion of an informative encouraging the applicant to make best use of any sand and gravel that may be incidentally extracted as part of the development.

5.11 **NHS (20 March 2023)**

The proposed development is likely to impact on the practices of 3 GP practices, Cornerstone Medical Practice, Mercheford House Surgery and Fenland Group Wimblington Surgery. None of these practices have any capacity to take on additional patients, and this development would see an increase patient pressure of circa 110 new residents (based on 2.3 persons per household).

A developer contribution of £39,547.68 to mitigate the impacts of the proposal is therefore required.

5.12 **Tree Officer (09.10.2023)**

Recommends refusal on the grounds that the loss of two Grade A (high quality Trees) growing in the highway in a line of similar trees on both sides of the road forming a linear feature of high landscape value. The loss of these trees to enable site access would significantly decrease this landscape feature.

Developments should seek to retain both Category A & B trees in this case considers that the trees should be protected by a TPO to prevent their removal.

5.13 **Local Residents/Interested Parties**

19 representations have been received from 10 sources: 1 letter of support (reasons unspecified) and 18 letters against, the grounds of objections are summarised below:

- Not in keeping, out of character.
- No further need for housing.
- Loss of wildlife and fauna.
- Light, air and noise pollution.
- Highway Safety.
- Inadequate capacity of foul drains.
- Flood risk.
- Local facilities do not have capacity.
- Land should be adopted as nature reserve.
- Visually detract from an attractive approach into town.
- Contributes to climate change.
- Overdevelopment.
- All properties on Wimblington Road have not been notified of the proposal.
- Visually dominant.
- Overlooking, loss of privacy.
- New trees will reduce light and outlook, should be replaced by hedging.
- Odours, and intrusion by reason of size from the foul water pumping station.
- Increased contamination.
- Loss of trees, two trees in the roadway.
- The LPA needs to be mindful of the proximity of the site and access to the local plan allocation at south-east March where a Broad Concept Plan for

the delivery of up to 650 dwellings on the allocated site and two site accesses of Wimblington Road has been agreed and is subject to an application for 425 dwellings (F/YR23/0696/O). Application F/YR23/0201/O needs to be determined in this context noting that it does not relate to an allocated site.

- Urbanisation of a rural area.

6 STATUTORY DUTY

- 6.1 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).

7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

National Design Guide 2021

Context

Identity

Built Form

Movement

Nature

Public Spaces

Uses

Homes and Buildings

Resources

Lifespan

Fenland Local Plan 2014 (FLP)

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.

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

LP17 – Community Safety

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 (Sep 2023), that the policies of this should carry extremely limited weight in decision making. Of importance to this proposal is that it does not carry forward the notion of Broad Concept Plans nor does the application site form part of the allocated sites for development in the area.

Relevant to this application are policies:

LP1 – Settlement Hierarchy
LP2 – Spatial Strategy for the Location of Residential Development
LP7 – Design
LP8 – Amenity Provision
LP18 – Development in the Countryside
LP20 – Accessibility and Transport
LP22 – Parking Provision
LP24 – Natural Environment
LP32 – Flood and Water Management

Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance:

March Neighbourhood Plan – Policy H1 and H3

Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD 2014

DM3 – Making a Positive Contribution to Local Distinctiveness and Character of the Area

DM4 – Waste and Recycling Facilities

Developer Contributions SPD 2015

Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2016

8 KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Drainage**
- **Ecology**
- **Trees**
- **Amenity**
- **Highways**
- **Developer Contribution**
- **Design/Layout**
- **Minerals and Waste**
- **Agricultural Land**

- **EIA Screening**
- **Other Considerations**

9 BACKGROUND

- 9.1 This site has been the subject of previous pre-application enquiries for residential development which has been resisted on grounds that any development in the absence of an approved BCP could not be supported as piece-meal development, which would prevent coordinated delivery of the urban extension.
- 9.2 Land to the south of Barkers Lane and east of Wimblington Road is the subject of two pending outline applications: F/YR23/0370/O for up to 130 dwellings on land to the south of Barkers Lane and F/YR23/0696/O for up to 425 dwellings on land to the south of Barkers Lane and east of Wimblington Road. Objectors refer to both these proposals in the context of undue pressures on infrastructure and adverse impact on highway safety through additional traffic.

10 ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 10.1 March is identified within the Settlement Hierarchy as a Primary Market Town. Market Towns are identified within Policy LP3 as the focus of housing growth, Accordingly, there is a presumption in favour of development within this location, subject to compliance with other relevant policies.
- 10.2 More specifically, the site falls within the South-West March Broad Location for Growth (SWMBLG), an urban extension promoted by Policy LP9. Policy LP7 relates to urban extensions and requires them to be planned and implemented in a co-ordinated way, through an agreed overarching broad concept plan (BCP) except for inconsequential very minor development. Policy LP7 recommends refusal where proposals come forward in the absence of an agreed broad concept plan such as in this instance.
- 10.3 Whilst the policies of the emerging local plan carry very limited weight in decision making Policy LP1, Part A identifies March as a market Town: Part B advises that land outside of the settlement boundaries is defined as countryside where development is restricted (as set out in LP18), this site is outside of the defined settlement. LP39 defines residential site allocations in March and this site does not have such an allocation. As such the proposal would also be considered to be contrary to the policies of the emerging local plan.
- 10.4 The issue of whether a development could be considered to be inconsequential was discussed at an appeal against a refusal of 22 dwellings at the former Kingswood Park Residential Home site (Ref F/YR13/0724/F - APP/D0515/A14/2219030) where the Inspector concluded that 22 dwellings could not be considered to be considered “inconsequential minor development”. For this reason it is unlikely that a larger development of 48 dwellings such as that subject of this application would fall to be considered as “inconsequential”.
- 10.5 The main issue that then remains to be considered in determining this application is whether the proposed scheme would prejudice the comprehensive development of the urban extension. In circumstances where there are limited opportunities of providing access to SWMBLG from Knights End Road, and where

there are potential issues of unacceptable levels of displaced traffic onto its junction with Wimblington Road it would be imprudent to accept that access of Wimblington Road as proposed could not better serve a wider area and be preferable to alternative access arrangements for the wider area. Development of this area in a piecemeal fashion also precludes the provision of proper pedestrian and cycling links to March.

- 10.6 The absence of demonstrating proper connectivity to and within the SWMBLG mitigates against the proposal and would also set an unwelcome precedent for releasing smaller sites.
- 10.7 The proposal comprises a 100% affordable housing scheme and would therefore provide a substantial contribution towards the Council's affordable housing needs. As of October 2023, the Fenland housing list had in excess of 1800 applications including over 800 with a preference to be in the March. However, as described above the proposal conflicts with the terms of Policy LP7 and compromises the objectives of Policy LP9 of delivering growth through urban extensions. The demonstrable harm caused by piecemeal development is therefore considered to outweigh any social benefits arising from the scheme and the objectives of the NPPF (Paragraph 60-September 2023) to significantly boost the supply of housing. It must be borne in mind that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 10.8 On balance, in this particular case it is considered that the demonstrable harm caused by the proposed development outweighs any arising social benefits and the principle is therefore unacceptable.

Drainage

- 10.9 Policy LP14 of the Fenland Local Plan seeks to minimise flood risk and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) into schemes.

Flood Risk

- 10.10 The site is located within Flood Zone 1 and is at low risk of river or tidal flooding. The submitted Flood Risk Assessment acknowledges that part of the site is at high risk of flooding from surface water. However, anticipated flood risks are stated not to be high as most flows will be conveyed downstream of the site to local water courses.
- 10.11 The proposed development will result in the increase in hard surfacing and the generation of additional surface water run-off if mitigation measures are not implemented. The proposed surface water drainage strategy incorporates sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) to control runoff rates and mitigate against the impact of increased run-off volume.
- 10.12 The proposed surface water drainage strategy relies upon an outfall into a watercourse as it not possible to use infiltration drainage as the soil conditions do not allow this, and the groundwater levels are high.
- 10.13 An attenuation basin is proposed in the southwestern corner of the site. As the invert of the basin is below the adjacent watercourse the outfall therefore needs to be pumped into the watercourse, the requisite surface water pumping station is

proposed to be located to the west of the basin.

- 10.14 It is proposed that the main site access roads will be adopted by the County Council, and the main foul and surface water drainage systems by Anglian Water.
- 10.15 Anglian Water, Lead Local Flood Authority and the Highway Authority have been consulted and have no objections. Comments from Middle Level Commissioners have not been received.
- 10.16 The surface water drainage strategy is considered to accord with the requirements of Policy LP14.

Foul Water

- 10.17 It is proposed to connect to the Anglian Water foul water system sewer that passes through the site. As there is limited gradient to enable a fully gravity system, as with the surface water system, a foul water pumping station is proposed to the front of proposed Plots 47/48, and to the rear of No 47 Wimblington Road. The site layout allows for a suitable easement for the existing foul water sewer that passes through the east of the site.

Ecology

- 10.18 Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan seeks to deliver and protect high quality environments, its principles are reiterated by the SPD on Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments (2014).
- 10.19 The application is accompanied by an ecological appraisal which finds:
- The site comprises poor- semi-improved grassland of low quality and species diversity, with patches of bramble scrub bordering the north and west of the site. There are some individual mature trees on the site boundaries.
 - There are no waterbodies, including Great Crested Newts (GCN) present on the site.
 - No reptiles were found during a survey.
 - The site is not of sufficient size to support a bird assemblage conservation significance, or to support ground nesting birds.
 - Bat surveys indicate that the site is used by a relatively small assemblage of bat species. As the field boundaries will be maintained with buffers of open spaces on the western and southern boundaries the development of the site is not considered to affect the ability of the bats to forage or disperse around the site.
 - The development is not considered to affect badgers, no further surveys are required.
 - A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment of the development has been undertaken which indicates a net gain of 46.63% through the provision of public open space, meadow grassland and provision of street trees. Additional enhancements can be provided through the installation of bat and bird boxes.
- 10.20 The proposed scheme intends to mitigate the landscape effects of the proposal

through the retention and augmentation of boundary landscaping, which in turn seeks to enhance the local distinctiveness of the area through additional screening. The existing landscaping of the site is situated mainly along the southern and western boundaries of the site, these areas are where the planting is to be retained, replaced and supplemented. The landscape proposals include habitats that are beneficial for wildlife. The developer states that the proposal will deliver a 46.63% net biological gain.

- 10.21 The Council's Ecologist has been consulted, the proposals are considered to be largely acceptable subject to BNG metric calculations being acceptable and imposition of conditions. No further comment has been received in relation to the submitted BNG metric calculations, which have been assumed to be acceptable and therefore, compliant with LP16.

Trees

- 10.22 The Tree Officer has objected to the application on the grounds that the proposal will lead to the loss of two high quality trees on either side of the proposed access into the site. Residents have raised similar concerns. Both sides of Wimblington Road are lined by similar, mature and prominent trees which form a uniform and linear feature of high landscape value, and the loss of these trees is considered to significantly degrade this landscape feature.
- 10.23 Discussions have taken place with the Highways Authority to explore the retention of the trees. The tree to the north of the proposed access will have to be removed to achieve the necessary visibility splay. The tree to the south is sited in the middle of the proposed cycle infrastructure and therefore has to be removed to facilitate accessibility. There is therefore no scope for replacement trees on the site frontage.
- 10.24 The loss of the two trees will undoubtedly affect the visual amenity of the immediate area. It must be borne in mind that though Wimblington Road is lined by trees on either side, their spacing is uneven and there are areas with significant gaps between trees. In these circumstances, the gap arising from the loss of the two trees is not much different to some other existing large gaps and it is not considered reasonable to justify resisting the scheme on the basis of tree retention.
- 10.25 It is acknowledged that the loss of the trees will have detriment to the visual amenity of the area and local distinctiveness which will be contrary to the objectives of Policy LP16 which is not considered to be outweighed by the benefits of the limited scale of development and the 100% affordable characteristic of the scheme.

Amenity

- 10.26 Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan seeks to make a positive contribution towards local distinctiveness and character of the area and protect visual and residential amenity.

Visual Amenity

- 10.27 As discussed above, the loss of trees will impact on the visual amenity of the area

but not sufficiently so as to warrant refusal. The proposal will result in the loss of the open area between No 67 and 47 Wimblington Road. The area of open space will be replaced by a pair of bungalows adjacent to No 67 and facing the road with the access road into the site running to the north. The street scene will therefore appear as a continuation of a row of bungalows. The depth of the development will only become apparent from the front of the access road where views will be tempered by a backdrop of dwellings at the front of the quadrangle. Impact on visual amenity should not therefore be unacceptable in the context of the site surroundings.

Residential Amenity

10.28 Separation distances to existing dwellings are generous, residential amenity is therefore protected.

Pumping Stations Noise Appraisal

10.29 Due to the proximity of the surface water and foul water pumping stations to residential uses the application is supported by a pumping station noise assessment. The assessment concludes that there would be no adverse noise impact from the operations of the proposed pumping stations. These findings have been accepted by the Council's Environmental Health Officer.

10.30 The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the requirements of Policy LP16.

Highways

10.31 Policy LP2 and LP15 of the Fenland Local Plan and paragraph 110 of the NPPF (Sept 2023) require sites to be served by safe and sustainable accesses.

10.32 The application is accompanied by a Transport Statement which concludes:

- The site is in an accessible location by sustainable modes of transport.
- An assessment of Personal Injury Collisions (PICs) on the local highway network demonstrates low levels of incidents.
- Parking provision accords with local standards.
- Additional vehicular trips in the context of existing traffic flows will not have a severe residual cumulative impact on the local highway network.

10.33 The Highway Authority has been consulted and has no objection and has recommended conditions and informatives. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the requirements of policies LP2 and LP15 of the local plan and the NPPF.

Developer Contributions

10.34 Policy LP5 of the FLP seeks to secure appropriate housing to meet the needs of the district including affordable housing as well as meeting the particular needs of all sectors of the community. Policy LP13 sets out the Council's approach to securing appropriate infrastructure to mitigate the impact of development and a growing district. LP15 seeks to ensure that all development contributes to the delivery of transport related infrastructure. LP16(g) seeks to ensure that development provides publicly accessible open space and access to nature.

- 10.35 The applicant has proposed to enter into a S106 to deliver a 100% wholly affordable scheme.
- 10.36 The scheme comprises 100% affordable housing with a range of dwelling types and sizes (2-, 3- & 4-bedroom houses). The proposed tenure split consists of 29 % affordable rent and 71 % shared ownership tenure. In this regard the scheme would provide a substantial contribution towards the Council's affordable housing needs. The Council's Housing team has indicated support for the scheme and the delivery of affordable housing could be reasonably secured via a S106 planning obligation.
- 10.37 In respect of other infrastructure contributions, the Council's adopted Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document states that planning obligations will not normally be sought from affordable housing schemes (other than the provision of the homes themselves). In this regard therefore, whilst the CCC Education and NHS have requested financial sums, this is not sought in this case due to the nature of the application.
- 10.38 As such, the proposal complies with policy LP5 which requires a S106 agreement to secure the housing.

Design/Layout

- 10.39 Policies LP2 and LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan require well designed layouts and mix of homes to facilitate health and wellbeing and protect and enhance amenity.
- 10.40 The design of existing dwellings along Wimblington Road is diverse with a mixture of single and two storey properties of varying design and materials. In the main Wimblington Road is characterised by large, detached dwellings set in generous plots and facing the carriageway although there is some in-depth development.
- 10.41 The application site is rectangular shaped and lies behind linear development fronting Wimblington Road. The site is accessed through a patch of open land some 30m wide between two detached bungalows, No 47 and 67 Wimblington Road.
- 10.42 The proposed layout has an access road running from Wimblington Road along the northern boundary of the gap between Nos 47 & 67 into the site where the road forms a courtyard with dwellings laid out within and outside it. An attenuation basin and surface water pumping station are set along the southern boundary, with another pumping station (foul water) to the rear of No 47 and near the entrance of the site. An area of open space is provided near the centre of the site.
- 10.43 The contemporary dwelling design is notably stark, utilitarian and uniform. The narrow palette of materials comprises grey concrete roof tiles, with a mix of red and buff brick with splashes of render. The materials however are grouped to relate between plots. Taken as a whole, the design is nondescript but acceptable.
- 10.44 The council does not have an adopted residential design guide setting out the parameters of acceptable design, separation distances, room sizes etc.

The proposed layout is generally compliant with nationally accepted separation distances back-to-back of 22m and 12m gable to back/front. The separation distances between proposed and existing houses are generous.

- 10.45 The Highway Authority had expressed concerns about widening the footway along the site frontage, closure of the existing field access to Wimblington road, layout to be designed to be adoptable standards, provision of visibility splays and vehicle tracking. These concerns have been addressed by the applicant to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority, its objection has been replaced with requests for conditions. It should also be noted that car parking spaces have been increased in size on some plots in the interests of useability.
- 10.46 The proposal is considered to accord with the policies LP2 and LP16.

Minerals and Waste

- 10.47 CCC as the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority (MWPA) had objected to the application (letter dated 13 April 2023). The site lies within a Sand and Gravel Mineral Safeguarding Area which is safeguarded to prevent mineral resources of local and/or national importance being needlessly sterilised. Therefore, the MWPA required policy 5 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan to be addressed.
- 10.48 The applicant submitted a Minerals Assessment which contended that: there was an overriding need for the development; it was not practical to extract minerals from the site due to the relationship with existing residential uses; and due to the constraints of the site and access extraction would not be viable although there're might be some incidental use of minerals arising from the site.
- 10.49 The MWPA is content that the requirements of its Policy 5 have been addressed, its objection is withdrawn (**18 September 2023**) and an informative is recommended drawing attention to make the best use of any sand and gravel that may be incidentally extracted as part of the development.

Agricultural Land

- 10.50 The Agricultural Land Classification Map for the Eastern Region shows that the land as Grade 2/3 (Very Good/Good to moderate quality). The best and most versatile (BMV) land is defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a. The agricultural land classification map is at a very large scale and not sufficiently accurate for use in assessment of individual fields or sites. Furthermore, Grade 3 is not subdivided, and a site would have to be individually assessed for detailed grading.
- 10.51 The majority of land in the district falls within the BMV definition and it would not be possible to meet housing targets without developing areas of BMV. Having said this, the site area in this instance is relatively modest and not 'significant' having regard to the NPPF and the extent of BMV land which would remain were the site developed. In this respect there is no conflict with the requirements of paragraphs 174 and 175 of the NPPF (September 2023).

EIA Screening

- 10.52 The proposal does not fall under Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 or under Schedule 2, Column 10 (Infrastructure projects) (b) Urban development projects (ii) for more

than 150 dwellings and (iii) where the site area exceeds 5 hectares (it is for 48 dwellings on a site covering 1.88hectares (4.646 acres)). The proposal does not therefore need to be screened.

Other Considerations

Pumping Stations

10.53 Objections have referred to adverse noise, odour and visual impacts arising from the proximity of the pumping stations to dwellings. The Council's Environmental Health Officer has no concerns regards noise and odour impacts; any future complaints would be dealt with under statutory nuisance. A typical pumping station layout indicates that that the only above ground structure will be a small kiosk designed to Anglian Water requirements but around 1.5m in heights. Visual impact should therefore be minimal.

11 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The site is sustainably located, the development demonstrates social and economic benefits in terms of the contribution towards the affordable housing stock of the district and there are no technical issues weighing against the proposal.

11.2 The site lies within the South-west March broad location for growth as laid out under Policy LP9 of the Fenland Local Plan. Policy LP7 identifies the importance of planning and implementing urban extensions in a coordinated way, through an overarching BCP that is linked to the timely delivery of key infrastructure. The application comes forward without an approved BCP and fails to demonstrate that its delivery, without conforming to an approved BCP would be inconsequential to the wider allocation. Furthermore, the proposal does not demonstrate how it could connect to the wider BCP. As such, although the proposal in its own right may be acceptable and would derive significant benefits in terms of housing benefits the benefits of the scheme are considered to be outweighed by the resultant harm and policy conflict.

12 RECOMMENDATION

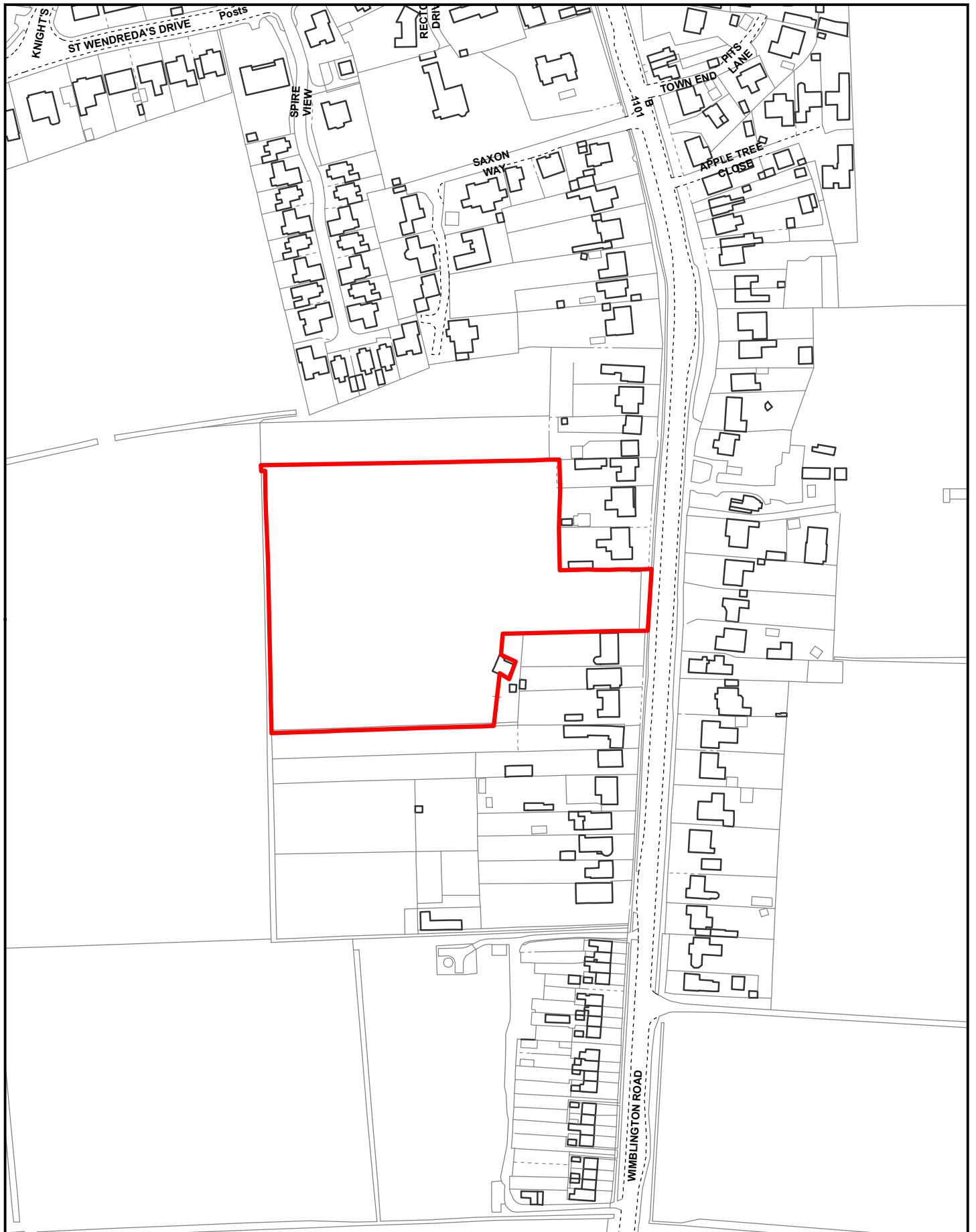
Refuse for the following reason.

1. Policy LP7 of the Fenland Local Plan and Policy H1 of the March Neighbourhood Plan identifies the importance of planning and implementing Fenland's locations for growth in a coordinated way, through an overarching Broad Concept Plan (BCP) that is linked to the timely delivery of key infrastructure and states that with the exception of inconsequential very minor development, proposals for development within the growth locations which come forward prior to an agreed BCP will be refused.

The proposal comes forward without an agreed BCP and is not considered to be very minor or inconsequential to the wider site allocation. Granting of planning permission for development risks compromising the effective planning and design of the wider site and would set an unwelcome precedent for the release of smaller sites. As such the proposal conflicts with Policy LP7 and LP9 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) and H1 of the March Neighbourhood Plan (2017) in respect of failing to provide an agreed

BCP and failing to demonstrate that the development would not compromise the objectives of the South-west March (road location for growth).

2. The proposal would result in the loss of two trees in the highway verge which significantly contribute to the amenity of Wimblington Road. The loss is not outweighed given the limited scale of development and the benefit brought by the delivery of affordable housing. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policy LP16 (c) of the Fenland Local Plan (2014).



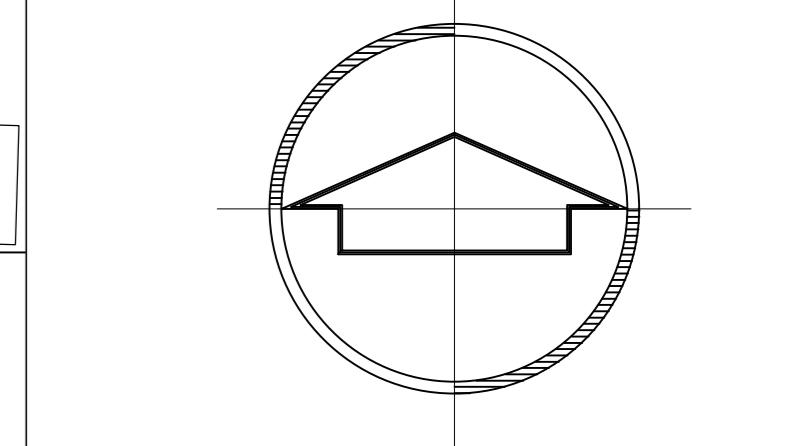
Created on: 15/03/2023

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Scale = 1:2,500





abbeygroup

REV	DATE	REVISION NOTES
A	23/02/23	Updated 02 & 07 design
B	14/02/23	Updated layout as per highway and public comments
C	07/02/23	Updated layout as per council comments
D	23/08/23	Updated layout as per council comments
E	03/02/23	Updated layout as per highway comments

PROPOSAL
Proposed Residential Development at Land to the West Side of Wimblington Road, March, PE15 9QW

DRAWING TITLE
Site Layout Plan

DRAWN: **CWM** SCALE: 1:250 @ A0
 DATE: 17/01/23 DWG No: 21/01/201/03 REV: E