

# PLANNING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 12 NOVEMBER 2025 - 1.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor C Marks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor R Gerstner, Councillor S Imafidon and Councillor N Meekins,

Officers in attendance: Matthew Leigh (Head of Planning), Alan Davies (Principal Planning Officer), Zoe Blake (Development Officer), Danielle Brooke (Senior Development Officer), Kimberley Crow (Development Officer), Tom Donnelly (Senior Development Officer), David Grant, Hayleigh Parker-Haines, Stephen Turnbull (Legal Officer) and Elaine Cooper (Member Services)

## **P60/25      PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of 15 October 2025 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

## **P61/25      F/YR25/0416/F LAND TO THE WEST OF HORSEWAY FARM, BYALL FEN DROVE, MANEA ERECT AN AGRICULTURAL STORAGE BUILDING, AND THE FORMATION OF AN ATTENUATION POND AND AN ACCESS**

Kimberley Crow presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Jonathan Malings, the agent. Mr Malings stated that Allpress Farms is a fifth generation family run Fenland business, farming in the region since the early 1900s, employing over 100 full-time staff and around 130 seasonal workers during the busy harvest months, with these jobs held primarily by local residents with operations on the farm supporting many local businesses and the business currently grows around 10,000 tonnes of leeks each year supplying major UK retailers. He made the point that the leek season runs for just 44 weeks leaving an 8 week gap where produce must either be imported or stored and, as with all rural businesses, Allpress Farms are seeing a tougher economic climate to provide what consumers and suppliers require, fresh local produce all year, whilst reducing their carbon footprint and providing a sustainable business model.

Mr Malings stated that the new cold store will allow the farm to keep production British, storing their own crops on site, reducing the need for the current imports from Spain to meet demand, with the cold store reducing the circa 40 lorries required currently to undertake the 3,000-mile trip from Spain each year to meet demand. He expressed the opinion that from a policy perspective the proposal aligns fully with both national and local planning policy, with the NPPF encouraging the sustainable growth and diversification of rural businesses, and it complies with the Local Plan policies LP6, 12 and 14, which promote rural enterprises, local employment and renewable energy use.

Mr Malings stated that the building will be powered directly by renewable energy from the farm's anaerobic digestion plant, significantly reducing its carbon footprint, with the digestion plant being powered by leek production from the farm and by products used on the farm. He expressed the view that the proposal has been designed to minimise impact with landscaping and new tree planting is proposed to integrate the building into the landscape, which will deliver a biodiversity net gain of over 15% with lighting limited to when the site is in use.

Mr Malings referred to traffic and access, appreciating the importance of maintaining road safety and currently the leek harvested are transported off site to Chatteris for storage, a round trip that generates approximately 200 vehicle movements per year and once the new store is built these journeys will no longer be necessary meaning a reduction in overall traffic to the current farm along the highway at the busiest period of the site which is to be used for storage expected to need only three deliveries a day. He added to improve safety further they are proposing a new access point, which will meet modern highway design standards and they welcome the acceptance of their proposal for access and traffic management to the site by Highways.

Mr Malings expressed the view that environmentally the scheme is designed to the highest standards, and a sustainable drainage system will manage runoff to the building and yard areas using an attenuation lagoon designed for a 1 in a 100-year storm event plus a 40% climate change allowance. He stated that a Flood Risk Assessment confirms the site lies primarily in Flood Zone 1 and all necessary mitigation is in place and the ecological survey shows that no significant impact on protected species and details the landscaping plan will enhance local habitats and the visual character of the site.

Mr Malings expressed the opinion that by supporting the scheme the Council would be backing local employment, a Fenland business, safeguarding over 200 seasonal and full-time jobs, encouraging low carbon renewable power, food production and reducing import dependency in food miles. He continued that Allpress Farms have worked closely with officers and specialist consultants to create a design that delivers measurable environmental, social and economic benefits and fully aligns with both local and national policies and asked committee to support the application.

Members asked questions of Mr Malings as follows:

- Councillor Imafidon asked for clarification that there are no runoffs to the public drains and it is an attenuation pond? Mr Malings confirmed that it is an attenuation pond that will manage the runoff.
- Councillor Gerstner asked for confirmation that if the committee granted planning permission that they can comply with all the conditions that officers have recommended? Mr Malings responded that conditions that they have seen currently regarding requirements on the construction of access and management of the build will be complied with.
- Councillor Gerstner asked if the facility is built will it be a 24-hour operation? Mr Malings stated that at the busiest period it is a store and it is predicted there will be three deliveries going in and out all day. He added that at the lower period of the season it may be two deliveries and when it is not in use it will just be storing. Councillor Gerstner asked if this will be seven days a week? The applicant stated that 60% of the movements are going to be between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday and occasionally on Saturdays from 7am until 12 Noon.

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

- Councillor Benney stated that he knows the site well, it is halfway between Chatteris and Manea and lies adjacent to his ward. He made the point that Allpress Farms are big employers in the town, they are a big farm and as with all agriculture it takes precedent in this area being an agricultural area and Nightlayer Leek Company is no longer in business and hopefully this proposal will bring stability to the leek market and ensure leeks are grown locally. Councillor Benney expressed the view that it is a policy compliant application, and he is pleased to see the reduction in traffic movements locally, which will add to road safety. He stated that he sees nothing wrong with this application, it is a local business and a big supporter of local employment and feels it should be approved.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she fully supports the application, and it is nice to see farmers investing, bearing in mind what they have gone through over the last 18 months.

**Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the**

**application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.**

*(Councillor Marks declared that one of the directors is known to him via another business and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon)*

**P62/25      TPO 02/2025**  
**62 CHURCH STREET, WHITTLESEY**

Zoe Blake presented the report to members.

Members asked questions of officers as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French referred to the mention of health and safety and looking at the photos some of the trees do not look stable asking if there is a safety issue? Zoe Blake responded that the Tree Officer has provided their comments in the report.
- Councillor Meekins asked why the applicant wanted to fell these trees as he could not see this within the report. Matthew Leigh responded that the applicant suggested it was because there was ongoing maintenance and some concern in relation to the fact that there had been some branches fall over a historic period without any detail, however, the Council's Arboricultural Officer has visited the site, assessed the trees and has not considered that the trees are at any particular risk more than any other tree to public safety or their health.
- Councillor Meekins made the point that there seems to be a suggested TPO on 15 trees so presumably there is some threat to these 15 trees. Officers indicated this to be the case.

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

- Councillor Gerstner stated that he lives within 200 metres of this site and passes it several times a day, with the building being a unique one-off building in Whittlesey and the original owner was a Mr Limes, who owned the brick works in Whittlesey, and he sold it on to a Mr Brown who lived there for 50 plus years. He continued that Mr Brown maintained all those trees and, on the demise and death of Mr Brown, he believes the property has been sold twice, with there being some development in the back and the two subsequent owners have come along and wanted to do things with the trees. Councillor Gerstner expressed the opinion that it is a very important building, part of the Conservation Area and there is a lane adjacent to it which school children use to go up and down to Park Lane School. He believes that TPOs on all those trees that are adjacent to that pathway should be applied but he has reservations about the four cedar trees on the front as they are getting very large but feels that TPOs would be a good idea for the amenity of the area because it would put the owner under some conditions that if they needed work doing on them that they would have to apply to the Council to get planning permission to do so. Councillor Gerstner referred back to the Conservation Area and the safety of that walkway where school children use it daily during school times.
- Councillor Connor made the point that if the TPO is granted it will save the trees and give comfort that they will not be cut down, however, they can be pollarded at any time with the Council's permission.
- Councillor Mrs French expressed concern about health and safety and suggested that the Tree Officer monitors the condition of these trees regularly. Matthew Leigh responded that this cannot be conditioned and there are a lot of trees in the District that are adjacent to footpaths and certain trees cannot be monitored as they should all be treated consistently. He added that the trees have been looked at and there is no evidence currently of them showing any signs of disease or distress. Councillor Mrs French acknowledged that these are private trees in a private garden but understands that FDC trees are checked on a regular basis so is a bit concerned on the safety of those trees but if the Tree Officer is content then she is happy.
- Councillor Benney stated that private trees should be the responsibility of the owner for the upkeep, maintenance and safety and from personal knowledge he knows that people who undertake works would give advice and feels that if the Tree Officer has been out the advice

given should be adhered to and it falls to the owner of the trees to comply.

- Councillor Gerstner asked if one of the trees need to come down is there a condition to replace it? Matthew Leigh responded that there is a requirement for a tree replacement.

**Proposed by Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that TPO be CONFIRMED in respect of 1 x Lime, 1 x Beech, 1 x Copper Beech, 1 x Yew, 1 x Sycamore, 4 x Silver Birch, 1 x Norway Maple, 1 x Holly and 4 x Corsican Pine.**

*(Councillor Gerstner registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Whittlesey Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

**P63/25**

**F/YR25/0591/A**

**28 BROAD STREET, MARCH**

**DISPLAY OF 1 X INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED FASCIA SIGN AND 1 X EXTERNALLY ILLUMINATED ROTATING PROJECTING BARBER POLE (RETROSPECTIVE)**

Zoe Blake presented the report to members.

Members asked questions of officers as follows:

- Councillor Marks referred to USA Chicken and other signage in the area and asked why has this shop been brought before committee when there is other signage that does not have permission? Alan Davies responded that the applicant's went ahead and made an application following an enforcement investigation whereas the property next door also has unauthorised signage and the owners of that property have not come forward with a planning application. He continued that applications can only be determined that are received and those unauthorised signs within the area are being investigated by the Enforcement Team and those applications would be brought to committee in due course should those applications come forward. Councillor Marks requested clarification that enforcement have investigated this one because the applicant has submitted an application? Matthew Leigh responded that there are a number of open cases for adverts within the District and other forms of breaches and when officers engage with an applicant/owner they can decide to submit an application and other times they can be less than forthcoming. He continued that whilst there is an open case it shows the Council has not considered that it is acceptable and that it is worthy of closing. Matthew Leigh stated that this application has been submitted because the applicant has brought it forward, it has not been because officers have proactively taken action against one over another, but this applicant has attempted to regularise the situation. He made the point that officers have considered the merits of the scheme and come up with a recommendation of refusal, with the fact that there is an advert next to it that is potentially unauthorised as well is an ongoing, open case and should not have any material consideration on determination of this application.

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

- Councillor Marks questioned whether this was just progress as 20-30 years ago it would have just been a dull bulb and now as there are LED lights they are a lot brighter. He expressed the view that 50 years ago the sign for the barbers would have just been a red and white pole and whilst he understands the approach of planning he questioned whether this is not just what is happening in a LED world that people live in. Councillor Marks stated that he cannot see the harm that is being mentioned, he can understand that it is near the fountain and is probably not as in keeping as previous lights and frontages, however, in his view, this is a modern society and he cannot see anything wrong with the application.
- Councillor Benney referred to the signage at the Turkish restaurant being considered a couple of months ago but the committee received a slating on Facebook questioning whether members were sane for refusing this signage. He agreed with Councillor Marks that

LED lights have progressed and this is modern signage, with March Broad Street having been updated at a cost of millions of pounds and Barclays Banks is being demolished on the corner and this is changing the whole of Broad Street. Councillor Benney stated that he visited March in the evening and in the Conservation Area of March there are 8 other business premises that have got internally illuminated signage and, in his view, this is a modern way of living questioning what people would rather see a shop that is lit up or one that is boarded up and empty not paying any rates or offering a service to the people of March. He stated that he will be supporting this proposal.

- Councillor Imafidon referred to refusing in September the Turkish restaurant and whilst it is a Conservation Area, he thinks he will be supporting this proposal even though he did not support the Turkish restaurant one. He expressed the view that, compared to the previous picture shown of what the shop looked like, the sign is not significantly bigger and whilst it is illuminated so is next door. Councillor Imafidon made the point that this is a trading street so it has to somehow make itself known to passing trade and customers and the rotating pole is a recognised international sign to show that it is a barber's shop. He stated that he will be supporting the application as he does not think it is as detrimental because it is a commercial street.
- Councillor Marks made the point that a barbers instead of a dry cleaners relies on footfall, it is an internationally recognised sign and it works, and in relation to LED lighting, Cambridgeshire County Council replaced half of the lights in Fenland with dull lighting, so this stands out.
- Councillor Connor stated that he called this application into committee as he thought it had some merit and he is unable to add to the comments of the other councillors but he will be supporting the application.
- Alan Davies clarified that in terms of the officer recommendation that is based on the duty placed on the Council when assessing proposals in Conservation Areas, with the test being to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. He continued that this is an advert consent application and the signage would not necessarily be recommended for refusal if it was elsewhere in a modern shop front or modern precinct but the consideration here is the impact it has on the historic Conservation Area, with it being a modern design and not necessarily appropriate for a Conservation Area.

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

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that the proposal is not detrimental to the street scene, Conservation Area or Listed Building, it enhances the regeneration of the Town Centre and character of the area and does not detract from it, and the fabric of the building is not being altered.

*(Councillor Mrs French declared that she is involved with Shop Front Grants and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon. She further registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that she is a member of March Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

**P64/25**

**F/YR25/0405/VOC**

**LAND NORTH OF 96A TO 100 WESTFIELD ROAD, MANEA**

**VARIATION OF CONDITION 22 (LIST OF APPROVED DRAWINGS) OF PLANNING PERMISSION F/YR22/1156/O (ERECT UP TO 26 X DWELLINGS, INVOLVING THE FORMATION OF A NEW ACCESS (OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH MATTERS COMMITTED IN RESPECT OF ACCESS)) TO ALTER ACCESS ROAD**

Danielle Brooke presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall stated that the officer has summed up the application very well and the proposal is merely to move the access into the position it is built in now, with no objections from Environmental Health, Highways or the Tree Officer. He made the point that the proposal moves the access even further away from the TPO and there is no other change to the application, with the conditions currently being worked upon and an archaeological dig has been carried and the drainage design has been submitted to Anglian Water.

Mr Hall stated that when he had a meeting with the applicant a few weeks ago they are keen to push on and have reviewed the Section 106 Agreement when the trigger points are for payments and none of that is being changed, with the applicant being well aware when the payments need to be made.

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

- Councillor Mrs French expressed the opinion that it is a good application, and she will fully support it.
- Councillor Marks stated that the proposal is within his ward and by slightly moving the access over it gives it a better vision splay. He added that he has not heard anybody complain about this development within the village and is happy to support it.
- Councillor Imafidon stated that he is happy to support and changing the access would probably protect the tree further, which is a plus. He made the point that it was nice to see that the surface of the road is good and almost in a finished state.

**Proposed by Councillor Marks, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.**

*(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally and the applicant is also known to him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Imafidon declared that the agent is undertaking work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Marks registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Manea Parish Council but takes no part in planning)*

**P65/25      F/YR25/0609/F  
222 LYNN ROAD, WISBECH  
ERECT 8 X DWELLINGS INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING  
BUILDINGS**

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members and drew attention to the update report that had been circulated.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Chris Walford, the agent. Mr Walford stated that this application seeks approval for eight 2 to 3 bedroom dwellings creating much needed housing provision within the built-up area of Wisbech and the proposal has the full support of Wisbech Town Council, Highways, Ecology and the Tree Officer. He added that the proposal involves the demolition of the former Superseal showroom and its associated factory to the rear where the windows and doors were manufactured on site, with Superseal now having moved the whole operation and their staff to a new location out of town and the site has been vacant for about 12 months.

Mr Walford made the point that the site is vacant, was operated by Superseal for many years and it

is a quite historic use and there are no current restrictions on the activities or working hours so in theory any future business could, with similar working operations in retail or light industrial use, potentially move in and continue operating from the site. He expressed the view that this is a non-conforming use within a built-up residential area that is flanked on three sides by existing residential dwellings.

Mr Walford expressed the opinion that, based on its location and the proximity to existing dwellings, they feel that the site should ultimately be residential, with the site having an extant permission for 3 dwellings, however, this permission is not financially viable when factoring in demolition costs, tree protection and BNG offset so the number has been increased to make it a viable and workable scheme. He feels that the site is in a sustainable location, it is located a short walk from the town centre, close to local amenities and the St Peters Primary School.

Mr Walford referred to the officer's report for the extant permission describing the site as well situated, sustainable and in accordance with planning policy. He expressed the view that, with regard to overlooking to neighbours, the site is enclosed by dense trees and hedges, all of which will be retained as part of the scheme and the site has been designed to ensure there is no impact on existing trees, one of which is a TPO tree, hence the more unusual layout that is purely to avoid the root protection areas.

Mr Walford made the point that officers have stated that they have concern with some of the gardens being shaded by existing trees, however, in his view, this is personal preference and consideration by a buyer in the future, not a reason to refuse the development and it is nice to see new build plots that do have trees, referring to the Chapter Gardens site in Leverington which had many trees and the conclusion was that it was not a reason to refuse. He stated that, in terms of flood risk, the proposal adopts the same finished floor levels agreed as part of the extant permission, which was deemed to pass the sequential and exception tests as it was a redevelopment of a site within a built-up urban area previously used for Classes A-D and, in his view, this provides significant weight and at the time outweighed any concerns before which is a material consideration that should be made and considered with this application.

Members asked questions of Mr Walford as follows:

- Councillor Marks referred to the concern regarding overlooking and shaded areas and asked has this design been formulated to protect the trees or if there were less properties would that make a difference? Mr Walford responded that the Tree Officer and third party tree specialist came to the site and there has been a real focus on trying to retain those trees as he feels they are key to the site and are in good condition, with there not being a way to remove under policy unless they are an age dying or decaying trees. He stated that the ones on the perimeter were essential to be kept for the reasons that are being discussed today. Mr Walford acknowledged that it is not an average and an usually shaped site and the indicative outline for the three showed them very close to the boundaries, which were approved under delegated powers so any number, in his view, between 3 and 8 due to the nature of the trees and the shape of the site would result in the same. He expressed concern that the site is now vacant, what is going to happen with it, it is in the middle of the town, it is in a residential area but recognised it is not going to tick all the boxes, however, all consultees are supportive.

Members asked questions of officers as follows:

- Councillor Gerstner asked for confirmation that the pathway for pedestrians is fully compliant, and officers are supportive of this now? Tom Donnelly responded that the reference in the update report was on amended plans that provided clarification about the extension of the footpath along the site frontage and this has been considered by the Highway Authority and they are satisfied that subject to conditions the scheme would be acceptable in terms of the highway safety impact and safety of pedestrians using that footpath.

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

- Councillor Marks expressed the view that the agents are working with a lot of restrictions on this site due to the trees but it is nice to see the trees are being retained and whilst there will be overlooking most properties overlook something. He stated that he does not agree with the one car parking space outside the window of No.6 but the design has been made to fit onto this land and smaller gardens and shading probably adds to the character. Councillor Marks stated that he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that it is a site that does need redevelopment otherwise it will sit there as a brownfield piece of land for decades and the agent, in her view, has done a great job to fit the development into this awkward piece of land. She stated that she will also support it.
- Councillor Benney made the point that these trees will come down at some time as trees do die and it is about the quality of the living space versus the trees and whilst he understands the issue of viability from the previous application it seems to be cramming dwellings onto the site due to the trees and putting car parking in front of one of the dwellings, with the proposal not being ideal. He questions the thinking about putting trees before people's quality of living.
- Councillor Mrs French made the point that every street in Fenland has cars parked outside the front of a house so does not agree this is an issue.
- Councillor Marks referred to a previous item on TPO where trees could be replaced so these trees may be replaced and he hopes in 20 years time that 75% of the trees would be left but there would also be vegetation.
- Councillor Gerstner referred to the officer's report which states there is insufficient information to demonstrate that refuse vehicles can adequately transverse the site and he tends to agree.
- Councillor Marks stated that there are various sized dustcarts and if the applicant liaises with Fenland there would be some mechanism to empty the bins. He made the point that the site is in Flood Zone 2, committee keep discussing flood zones and he would be more concerned about this than dustcarts and layout.
- Councillor Connor stated that he cannot remember this site flooding, even in the great flood which occurred he believes in 1981.
- Councillor Meekins stated that the great flood was in 1978, but he does feel it is putting 'a quart into a pint pot' and 8 dwellings are being squeezed in. He feels that the car parking is a red herring as most properties have car parked outside their windows.
- Councillor Marks expressed the opinion that planning is about land usage and this proposal makes good use of land.
- Councillor Benney expressed the view that a better scheme could be produced with the trees taken down and there is too much emphasis put on these trees but recognised that this is not the application before members. He feels that whilst the proposal does work the trees are standing in the way of where people are going to live, they are going to be cramped when they could have bigger gardens and if the trees were removed the agent would have come up with a totally different and better scheme.
- Councillor Mrs French made the point that if someone does not want a small garden, they will not purchase these properties.

**Proposed by Councillor Marks, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.**

Members do not support the officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that it is a good use of land with no trees being damaged or removed, it is a brownfield site, the site lies within Flood Zone 2 and homes are required in Wisbech.

*(Councillor Imafidon declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on*



*Planning Committee, that he is a member of Wisbech Town Council and was a member of the Town Council's Planning Committee when this application was considered and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon)*

*(Councillor Meekins declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Committee, that he is a member of Wisbech Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

**P66/25**

**F/YR25/0547/F**

**LAND NORTH OF 1 GULL ROAD, GUYHIRN**

**ERECT 6NO DWELLINGS AND THE FORMATION OF 2NO ACCESSES**

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Rory Canham, the agent. Mr Canham stated that this is an infill site and all the dwelling are 100% affordable, ensuring homes for local people and future generations. He expressed the view that the principle of development, on balance, is considered to be acceptable, noting the positive support from various consultees such as Highways, Ecology, Archaeology, Environment Agency and Environmental Health.

Mr Canham referred to the 100% affordable housing provision and made the point that the Council's Housing Team have previously confirmed that there are 31 names of people currently seeking affordable homes in Guyhirn. He stated that a recent outline application 70 metres to the south east of the application site along Gull Road received approval during September's committee meeting and involved the erection of 24 affordable homes and in light of that approval this application site is the last remaining gap in development on this side of Gull Road and would represent a completion of the linear pattern of development along Gull Road, therefore, showing compliance with Policy LP3 relating to infill development whilst simultaneously not extending the village boundary.

Mr Canham expressed the opinion that the proposed 6 affordable units within this application look to successfully assist in meeting the remaining provision of the 31 affordable units assigned to Guyhirn, taking the new total to 30. He feels the design proposals put forward with this application are also in keeping with the form, scale, character and materiality of the immediate area, mirroring the similarly sized scheme which has been built to the north of the site.

Mr Canham stated that they naturally approached the parish in August 2024 prior to any formal application being submitted where the parish noted their interest in this site being a rural exception site supporting affordable housing for a registered social housing provider and subsequently they have submitted this application following this positive pre-application consultation with the parish where they had a separate objection based on the highway, traffic and parking concerns. He added that the separate highways consultation concluded and highlighted no objections on these same concerns, with there being ample off-road parking being provided including two new access driveways which achieve suitable turning circles and visibility splays all in accordance with the Fenland Local Plan.

Mr Canham advised that the applicant has been in dialogue with Anglian Water direct where they have a pre-development drainage strategy agreement in place should planning be sought, which involves foul drainage connecting to the existing infrastructure along Gull Road whilst surface water is discharged to the existing drains to the rear of the site subject to separate agreement with the IDB. He continued that in terms of flooding the application is located on the border of Flood Zones 1 and 3 and the sequential test submitted clearly justifies the search area as being the parish boundary and, therefore, not District wide, which was a similar approach taken for the recent approval of the 24 to the south east of the site with that specific application site being located further into Flood Zone 3.

Mr Canham expressed the opinion that the site is technically safe from flooding with the indicative street scene showing that the proposed heights are comparable with the neighbouring dwellings and the land levels will not be raised above road level, which mirrors the approach of the built dwellings directly opposite and to the north of the site where no issues have been identified. He feels that this application is a perfect example and sole reason why rural exception sites exist in order to allow affordable housing to sufficiently meet the obvious local need and the proposal is, therefore, considered acceptable in respect of character, amenity, biodiversity and highway safety impact.

Members asked questions of Mr Canham and Mr Walford as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French asked if they have been in discussion with North Level Drainage Board? Mr Walford responded that they commented during the application and they undertook the 8 to the north for private market sale so they had a lot of information needed from this development that has been adopted into this proposal, essentially 9 metre easement to the back, no pathways, ramps or anything within that area and they accepted discharge to that on the previous application so have assumed this proposal will be the same. He added that the applicant has made direct contact as well.
- Councillor Mrs French asked, if approved, what will the plans be with the riparian dyke as the owner is responsible? Mr Walford responded that there will be a housing provider for the site and they will be made aware of the 9 metre easement and it is their duty to pass onto their tenants.
- Councillor Benney referred to the proposal being affordable and asked what is the split in terms of shared ownership or rental and will preference be given to local people as from the statistics there is a need within Guyhirn? Mr Walford responded that it is a struggle to find a housing provider on smaller sites so no one has been definitely lined up but there are 3 companies in the running so he is unable to guarantee the exact nature of affordable. He added that he is not sure about local provision but there would be a preference for those registered in the Guyhirn area or whether this could be conditioned or put in the legal agreement. Councillor Benney stated that he understands the position but wanted to know the breakdown and preference to local people.

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

- Councillor Marks referred to the fact that committee discussed a scheme adjacent previously hearing today what the agent said previously, and these are 4 properties along the road which are houses and not bungalows.
- Councillor Benney stated that he visited the site and there are a lot of houses along that road that have been approved, with all these houses looking nice and all these gaps will be filled in making Guyhirn a destination place. He feels it is a good solid application, with the same arguments for and against as with the adjacent application and he will support it.

**Proposed by Councillor Marks, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions and for the applicant to enter into a Section 106 Agreement regarding affordable homes and the offering to local people.**

Members did not support the officer's recommendation of refusal as they feel that a precedent has been set, the application is an infill development and there is significant benefit to the people of Fenland by providing much needed affordable homes which outweighs the requirement for a sequential test.

*(Councillor Connor declared that his reason for call-in related to the weight to be given to the community benefit, but is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

**LAND SOUTH OF WENNY HOUSE, IRETONS WAY, CHATTERIS**  
**CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING PADDOCK LAND TO DOG EXERCISE AREAS**  
**INCLUDING THE ERECTION OF 2 X SHELTERS, A DETACHED DOG GROOMING**  
**HUT AND A 1.8M HIGH BOUNDARY FENCE, AND THE FORMATION OF**  
**ASSOCIATED HARDSTANDING**

David Grant presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall stated that on site at present there is a café, a shop selling various country goods, animal feeds, gifts and homeware and that business has been on site for approximately 8 years, with there already being parking on site and an existing access. He advised that the applicants have identified a need for this proposal in Chatteris and have already had a number of enquiries with regard to the dog grooming proposal following the application appearing in the Cambs Times in July and also from people visiting the site.

Mr Hall made the point that there are other dog exercise areas in March, Manea and Doddington which are popular. He stated there are no technical objections to this application, it is all in Flood Zone 1.

Mr Hall advised that queries were raised by the Highways Officer and they were given time to address these, which was gratefully received, and Highways have now come back and there is no objection, with the proposal being to upgrade the existing access slightly. He stated that the proposal will allow further expansion of an existing business, looking to employ further persons for maintenance and the dog grooming business, which, in his opinion, will complement the existing business.

Mr Hall expressed the view that the officer's report sums up the application well, with a recommendation to approve. He referred to a comment by Chatteris Town Council about having 2 metre high industrial fencing set around, which has not been proposed as, in his opinion, it would stick out being next to a very prominent road and they have worked with the officer, receiving suggestions on fencing, which they have took on board.

Members asked questions of Mr Hall as follows:

- Councillor Meekins referred to Chatteris Town Council wanting a 2 metre high fence but 1.8 metre is considered high enough and asked about their proposal for the double gate system of access to each of the areas? Mr Hall responded that the gated system is set back so people can pull off the road, he believes users will book online and they will then receive a code for the gate to open it. Councillor Meekins sought clarification that this was the access to the two fields for dog exercising? Mr Hall indicated it was, making the point that the main access from the main road will always be open.

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

- Councillor Benney stated that whilst this is in Manea parish now it is nearer to Chatteris, he knows the site well and these dog exercise facilities seem to be cropping up everywhere. He welcomes this application, it is a further development of the business and another service being offered and he is sure it will do well when it is up and running. Councillor Benney stated that it is nice to see something coming to Chatteris and feels this application just needs approving.

**Proposed by Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.**

*(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and*

*himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind. He further declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

*(Councillor Imafidon declared that the agent is undertaking work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Marks declared that he believes he has had dealings via business with the applicant and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon. He further declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he a member of Manea Parish Council and attends Chatteris Town Council meetings but takes no part in planning)*

**P68/25**

**F/YR25/0698/F**

**LAND WEST OF BURNLEA HOUSE, WIMBLINGTON ROAD, MANEA  
ERECT 1 X SELF-BUILD/CUSTOM BUILD DWELLING AND GARAGE, CHANGE  
OF USE OF LAND, ERECTION OF AN INDUSTRIAL SHED AND FORMATION OF  
AN ACCESS, IN ASSOCIATION WITH EXISTING BUSINESS**

David Grant presented the report to members and drew attention to the update report that had been circulated.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from David Nicholas, a supporter of the proposal. Mr Nicholas informed members that he lived close to this location, probably 200-300 metres, and has lived here for 10 years, but farmed the land for about 30 years and his father farmed the land prior to this so he has experience of the land for the past 70 years. He made the point that in that time there has been no flooding whatsoever and he is a member of the local drainage board, so he is well aware of drainage matters, although he does not represent the drainage board.

Mr Nicholas expressed the view that there has been people trying to imply that there is not good road visibility but that is not true as they have farmed here for 70 years and they have never had a problem, with the visibility in both directions being very good. He stated that the one problem he has had with farming is theft but since he has moved on the farm that has virtually reduced and he can understand why Mr Harrison wants to live with his buildings with his equipment in to keep them secure because, in his view, in the Fens this is a problem.

Members asked questions of Mr Nicholas as follows:

- Councillor Marks stated that he lives in Manea and travels Wimblington Road every day, he referred to access and vision along that road and asked if he would agree that, from Lion's Drove, Boots Bridge and up to Poly Sports can be seen, probably a distance of 1.5 miles in total? Mr Nicholas agreed and stated it is approximately 1 mile to Boots Bridge.
- Councillor Marks referred to Mr Nicholas' property being the one that has been built further down Lion's Drove, which is quite a large property with three garages, and asked if it was in keeping with the dwelling being proposed today, being of the same size and scale. Mr Nicholas responded that he could not comment on this.
- Councillor Marks asked in relation to drainage boards if this comes under Wimblington? Mr Nicholas responded that it is the Curf and Wimblington Combined Internal Drainage Board. Councillor Marks continued that he has stated that he is unaware of any flooding within that area, which is in Flood Zone 3 and asked if the land is drained? Mr Nicholas responded that he did not know, it could well be, but he has not seen it flood.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Sam Harrison, the applicant, and Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Harrison stated he wishes to build an occupational dwelling for himself, his wife and three children, two of which are in Manea school. He added that he has lived in Manea for just over 25 years and is proud to call it his home.

Mr Harrison stated that part of this application is for a storage shed and yarded area to be a secure base to run his equipment from and he is currently running out of his parents shed, which he has outgrown. He feels the need to have his own premises in a secure independent location for the future building of the business, and he was recently successful in being awarded a small business grant from FDC, which has already helped him in being able to purchase machinery that has secured him some additional contracts.

Mr Harrison informed members that he currently has himself and three full-time members of staff, with his father working part-time as well as part-time admin staff. He stated that he is not looking to build this to sell, it will be for himself and his family to live in and to be able to build and safeguard his business for the future.

Mr Hall made the point that the applicant has outlined his personal circumstances and his business which is expanding with contracts in Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire and been awarded a small grant by Fenland District Council. He referred to the report where Cambridgeshire Constabulary confirmed that this area is in a medium crime risk area, not low.

Mr Hall stated that there are numerous objections to this application, as seen in the report, however, when you view these they are all very similar and a lot of them are from empty properties in Doddington and March, with this being raised with officers and Carol Pilson. He made the point that there are no technical objections to this application and the applicant is happy to sign a legal agreement and pay a fee as this is clearly a self-build property where the applicant has been heavily involved with the design, is going to build it and live in it and knows the conditions regarding self-build.

Mr Hall stated that they are not applying for a residential dwelling and using this site is logical, the applicant lives in Manea and this site is next to the shed he uses, with this shed also lying within Flood Zone 3 as are the adjacent buildings as is Mr Nicholas' dwelling, with the Environment Agency having no objection to this application. He made the point that the proposal is for an established business that wishes to expand with further on-site storage for equipment and there are three full-time staff employed plus the applicant, with some part-time staff.

Mr Hall expressed the opinion that the design in relation to National Planning Policy Paragraph 84 would enhance the setting, it does not create any adverse impact on neighbouring properties, no-one has objected from the adjacent sites and also it is a very similar size to Mr Nicholas' property. He reiterated that it is an established business that was started by the applicant 17 years ago who has outlined his personal circumstances.

Members asked questions as follows:

- Councillor Marks referred to the mention of it being an established business and that over the years he has probably expanded with more contracts and equipment and have outgrown their current facilities and asked what benefit this extra area will give him? Mr Harrison responded that they are hoping to further expand in time, he does not want to be one of those that grows the biggest and falls the quickest, with steady expansion being his intention. He stated that he is currently based out of his parents shed, he has almost evicted everything of his father's out of the shed, so he is housing him and his father wants his shed back hence the application. Mr Harrison stated that the one proposed shed is slightly bigger, and he is hoping to further fill it with more equipment, more employment for themselves and more work.
- Councillor Marks asked if the land is drained and, as a garden business, does he have a flail where he can keep the dyke tidy? Mr Harrison responded that they have undertaken projects on the existing land and have come across land drains across the site. He added that he does have equipment to flail the dyke out but only to a certain reach, all of their equipment is compact and classed as light goods, and they already maintain the front

roadside dyke as it does get overgrown if they do not.

- Councillor Marks referred to Ghant Farm being ½ mile up the road and security issues here have been that CCC have now agreed to a hard gate being installed because of break ins and issues. He asked if this was similar to Mr Harrison? Mr Harrison responded that his father's property has been secure but previously there have been two guard dogs there, which have now passed away, and his father is away a lot more as well as his family which is leaving all the equipment exposed. He does not live on site, so it is becoming a factor of concern that it is now starting to get vulnerable and with the equipment not being able to all fit in the barn there are mini diggers and vans sitting outside which are vulnerable. Councillor Marks agreed with this as he travels the road most days and can see the equipment sitting there.
- Councillor Benney referred to it only being an opinion on drainage and whether it drains or not and asked for assurance that there is a drainage scheme here, whether it is building the land up so that it safeguards it from flooding, and there is a technical solution, irrespective of whether the land drains or not, to flooding of the property that is proposed. Mr Hall responded in the affirmative, it is a large site, a lot of it is permeable area, with a large amount of area for soakaways which would be in accordance with Building Regulations, there is also a drainage ditch at the front riparian ditch but he would suggest that it will be on-site drainage and it is likely that there will also be some rainwater harvesting from the shed which can be used in the business. He added there are no mains drains here, and it would be a treatment plant, which is one of the reasons the site has been made so large is for the drainage.

Members asked officers questions as follows:

- Councillor Marks referred to 1.2 of the officer's report where it is considered there is insufficient evidence for information submitted to demonstrate the proposal is essential for a rural worker as required in an elsewhere location such as this, therefore, the proposal is considered unacceptable in principle contrary to policies LP3 and LP12, however, members have heard from the applicant regarding security on site and the business is actually running from next door so how would it be established that it is not needed if he erected a shed? Alan Davies responded that the application was not accompanied with the information that the applicant has discussed so the justification on the basis of security was not with the application, but it also is not a material planning consideration. He made the point that it is a self-build, custom dwelling in an elsewhere location so the principle of this is based on whether it is appropriate within that location.

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

- Councillor Marks stated that he knows the area as he travels it twice a day at least and this is a proposal for a business that is expanding and has been supported by FDC in the past, which will provide a home for a young family and provides the comfort factor of security and extra assistance regarding parking. He made the point that, in relation to flood zones, there have been previous applications regarding workplace homes where they were built out of the ground so high you needed a ladder to walk into the front room, and members have heard from the agent that there is mitigation that can be implemented and from a supporter that the area does not flood. Councillor Marks expressed the view that the proposal should be supported as committee has done with many others.
- Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that it is good that this is a young farmer prepared to invest, especially with what they have had to go through over the last 18 months.
- Councillor Benney made the point that this is a business that wants to grow, with it being hard enough being a businessman currently and this provides employment for local people. He expressed the opinion that there are no technical reasons that cannot be worked around, and it is known the plant is very nickable and a theft could finish the business so the best security there is, is living on the premises. Councillor Benney stated that this is the applicant's site although there might be other locations, but this is helping a business, it is

not in an elsewhere location and will be the applicant's home. He stated that he will be supporting the proposal.

- Councillor Marks expressed the view that the visibility splays are very good unlike the application that committee considered further along at Poppyfields, it ticks all the boxes and the ground is also land drained, with the applicant going to keep the drain clear. He expressed concern over the various dubious letters that were submitted and hopes they do not get the outcome they wanted.
- Councillor Connor commended the application being for a young family wanting to invest in business, with Fenland being Open for Business and it would be a travesty if this was refused. He stated that he would be supporting the proposal.

**Proposed by Councillor Marks, seconded by Councillor Benney and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions in consultation with the Vice-Chairman and for the applicant to enter into a Unilateral Undertaking.**

Members do not support the officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they do not feel this is an elsewhere type location, it is a good use of land, it provides security for the business which is a growing business and mitigation can be undertaken for the site lying in Flood Zone 3.

*(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Imafidon declared that the agent is undertaking work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Marks declared that the applicant's parents are known to him, but he does not know or socialise with the applicant and is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind. He further declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Manea Parish Council but takes no part in planning.)*

**P69/25**

**F/YR25/0526/F**

**49 WHITTLESEY ROAD, MARCH**

**ERECT 12 X LIGHT INDUSTRIAL UNITS AND A LINK EXTENSION TO EXISTING UNITS INVOLVING THE DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING**

David Grant presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall stated that the site was used by Fenn's Buses for just over 40 years, there are permanent structures on site which the photos show, some of which are being utilised as part of this proposal. He continued that the applicant purchased the site approximately a year ago and at present the units on site are rented out to existing businesses.

Mr Hall made the point, as the officer has stated, this is a brownfield site and under 10.3 it states this is a material consideration that weighs positively on the proposal. He continued that directly opposite this site, to the north in 2024 planning permission was obtained under delegated powers for industrial units, with that site progressing, and this is all in Flood Zone 3 just as this site is.

Mr Hall expressed the view that there are no technical objections to this application from Lead Local Flood Authority, Highways and March Town Council and he is pleased to note that Fenland's own Business and Economy Team support the application and state there is a significant demand for these units. He reiterated that this site is directly opposite a site under delegated powers

received approval in 2024 for industrial units and within the officer report it stated on that application that the proposal was on an established site with some replacement buildings, the scope of the sequential test is agreed to be confined to this site as all of the site is in Flood Zone 3 there are no preferred areas within the site where the buildings would be set and, in his view, this site is directly opposite to the south, is also in Flood Zone 3, confirmed as brownfield, has been used by Fenn's buses for over 40 years and is already partly developed.

Mr Hall referred to Policy LP6 and, in his opinion, the proposal would allow for employment opportunities and one key point in the officer's report under 10.7 is that between 2012-2025 the town of March should achieve 105,000 metre squared employment area but at present it has only achieved about 51,500 metre squared of employment area, which is not even half the requirement so there is still a significant need and this application will go towards that. He referred to the site layout plan on the presentation screen, making the point that over half of the site is parking to help with the drainage and to comply with the Local Plan in terms of parking and they have used existing buildings on site that are already rented out.

Mr Hall stated that the proposal does not affect the Board's drain, that is all to the north on the opposite side of the road and Middle Level have not objected. He showed a plan of the site highlighting that directly to the west is the Force One site where works have commenced, which was approved by members in 2021 in Flood Zone 3, beyond that is the Middle Level offices to the west which is also in Flood Zone 3, directly to the north is the site he has already referred to in Flood Zone 3 and to the east there are industrial units with businesses, Fox's boatyard and to the north there is also further industrial businesses.

Mr Hall stated the report states it is a brownfield site, it has been used by Fenn's Buses for over 40 years who retired and then the applicant, Mr Rutterford, brought it, it is set between industrial sites, over half the site is for parking, there are no objections to the application, there is a need for these units, which members have previously said and Fenland's own Business Team state there is a need and on the previous application it was stated that Fenland is Open for Business.

Members asked questions of Mr Hall as follows:

- Councillor Benney acknowledged that the site is in Flood Risk 3 but asked if there is a technical solution to stop flooding? Mr Hall responded that they submitted a Flood Risk Assessment as well as a drainage strategy and the ditch to the south is in the applicant's ownership, he has cleaned it out and maintained it and from that ditch there is a pipe under the site within his ownership which then discharges into the Board's drain to the north and underground attenuation tanks will be installed also so it should go in at greenfield run off rate.
- Councillor Marks referred to the mention of footpaths and asked if there is not a walkway that comes across the A141 down Marina Drive, which is about 50 yards? Mr Hall responded that was correct, with Marina Drive being approximately 20 metres from the site.
- Councillor Marks made the point that the site is currently in use and asked is everything being used that is able to be used? The Chairman allowed Mr Rutterford to respond. Mr Rutterford responded that they are and there is a waiting list for units.

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

- Councillor Benney expressed the opinion that the map tells a story as the site is surrounded by industrial units, a carpentry shop, motor mechanics, Fox's Marina, the approved Force One site and the Middle Level Commissioner's offices, with the industrial units approved opposite in Flood Zone 3 under officer delegation. He feels to say it is unsustainable as there is not a footpath is being out of touch with local reality as you cannot work in a rural area without a car and having a footpath is not an issue, with there being plenty of parking on site for people. Councillor Benney questioned where else industrial units can be placed, however, the application is for this site, with when he was Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth a policy being brought in to help build these type of units and the Council should be



supporting businesses, with this being what is needed in Fenland, it wants to retain business as it is not just about bringing new business into the area but the fact that if there is a business that relocates outside the area people lose their jobs. He expressed the opinion that this is the right place for this proposal, it is crying out to be approved and he will be supporting the proposal.

- Councillor Marks agreed with Councillor Benney, he deals with a number of businesses in Fenland and a lot of them want to expand into bigger units and they cannot find them, with this area becoming more and more industrial, with only a minority wanting to walk to the site. He made the point that someone is prepared to build something in Fenland and it will bring revenue in. Councillor Marks stated that he is surprised to see the application in front of committee, the Force One application took a long time to resolve, which is next door but this is a brownfield site and has all the issues that Force One had so questioned why it is at committee. He stated that he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Connor expressed the view that this application should not have come before committee, it is clear the site is crying out for industrial units, the Council's Business Team support it and Fenland is Open for Business.

**Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.**

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that it is not a rural area but industrialised, the fact that it brings employment and prosperity outweigh any perceived detrimental harm to the character of the area, it is not an unsustainable location, there is a technical solution to overcome the fact that the site lies in Flood Zone 3 and there is a need for this type of development in Fenland.

*(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Mrs French declared that the applicant supports March Events which she is involved with and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon. She further declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that she is a member of March Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

*(Councillor Imafidon declared that the agent is undertaking work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Marks declared that he supplies forklifts to and obtains parts from one of the tenants on the site, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Gerstner left the meeting following this item and was absent for the remaining agenda items)*

**P70/25**

**F/YR25/0520/RM**

**NENE PARADE, BEDFORD STREET, CHASE STREET, WISBECH  
RESERVED MATTERS APPLICATION RELATING TO DETAILED MATTERS OF  
ACCESS, APPEARANCE, LANDSCAPING, LAYOUT AND SCALE (PLOT 5 ONLY)  
PURSUANT TO OUTLINE PERMISSION F/YR24/0485/VOC TO ERECT A C2 USE  
CARE HOME FACILITY TO ACCOMMODATE 70 X APARTMENTS WITH  
COMMUNAL AND AMENITY SPACE**

Hayleigh Parker-Haines presented the report to members and informed members that Anglian Water has responded today confirming that they are satisfied the surface water hierarchy has been

complied with and, therefore, this application is now recommended for approval subject to the conditions contained within report.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Alastair Close, the agent. Mr Close stated that he is delighted that, after many months of working closely with officers, the application is recommended for approval. He commended the officers for the comprehensive report as well as their diligence throughout this process which has led to the recommendation.

Mr Close made the point that Nene Waterfront is a major regeneration opportunity, with outline planning permission being approved in 2023 for five plots and these comprise of a mix of residential, commercial and a care home, with this application relating to Plot 5 and will deliver an extra care home with 70 apartments in line with the outline permission. He stated that Fenland Extra Care Consortium, the applicants, is a partnership between Bemore, Seafeld Construction and Pinnacle Care Group, industry leaders in both delivery and operation of state of the art care facilities, with the consortium working closely with Fenland Future Ltd, Cambridgeshire County Council and Homes England and all of these stakeholders are fully supportive of the much needed care accommodation being created.

Mr Close stated that the apartments will be for over 55's who require an element of care, they will be able to live independently but with the added security of access to professional care on site and the homes will also be fully adaptable so they can respond to evolving care needs and residents will have access to shared communal amenities. He made the point that 100% of the units will be affordable and are subject to nomination rights and the building will also be partially funded by a Homes England grant to support the affordability for residents.

Mr Close expressed the opinion that local needs data confirms considerable demand for this type of accommodation and it will be similar to the successful facilities in Whittlesey and Doddington, being the first of this quality in Wisbech. He expressed the view that 25 new jobs will be created on site with many more opportunities during the construction phase.

Mr Close stated that the building has been designed to embrace its waterfront setting, two wings extend towards the River Nene which both maximises views for residents as well as helping to create light and airy living space. He feels the share central amenity area links directly to the waterfront promenade to generate interest and activity and the façade of the building will be predominantly finished in brick work to respect the local character, and this will be patterned across the various facades to add interest and where practical there are also areas of green roof.

Mr Close continued that the building is set within structured landscaping, which includes native planting and there will be 24 dedicated parking spaces as well as internal space for mobility scooters. He added that the building has been designed so that all sensitive accommodation, ie living space, is outside of the flood zone and his team has worked closely with Anglian Water and the Environment Agency to ensure that all flooding and drainage arrangements are fully compliant and as officers have confirmed this is now agreed.

Mr Close stated that all other matters are confirmed as being acceptable and he hopes it is clear that the proposal has been carefully designed to meet both residents needs and respect the local setting, and he looks forward to working in continued partnership to deliver this exciting scheme and breathe new life into this site. He asked members to support the officer's recommendation.

Members asked questions of Mr Close as follows:

- Councillor Marks referred to the mention of 25 jobs on site and asked if they were live in jobs? Mr Close responded that some may be, but staff tend to work on a rotation basis and Pinnacle find that 50% of their staff live within 5 miles of the site and 70% within 10 miles so mostly they will be local positions. Councillor Marks asked that they are to look after the

residents? Mr Close responded it will be a mix, care home staff to look after the residents, on-site management and maintenance staff for the operational side.

Members asked officers questions as follows:

- Councillor Marks asked how many ground floor flats there are? Hayleigh Parker-Haines responded that there is no residential accommodation at ground floor, it is at podium level elevated from the ground floor like a mezzanine, which is to overcome the flood risk being 0.5 metres from the ground floor.

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

- Councillor Mrs French expressed the opinion that it is an excellent application, and she thinks Wisbech people and the Town Council will be pleased to see it, with the site being derelict for many years.
- Councillor Meekins expressed the view that it is a welcome application, it is in his ward and the whole site has been an eyesore for too long. He stated that his experience of care homes is that the grounds are well maintained and staff are on site to look after residents so there are no problems with anti-social behaviour, with it also being right next to the Police Station.
- Councillor Marks stated he fully supports the proposal, it is nice to hear there are going to be at least 20 workers on site, but his only concern is with the flood risk that exists but sensibly no ground floor accommodation is proposed.
- Councillor Meekins stated, in relation to the flood risk, there is a flood wall right in front of this site and gates and it is supposed to be a one in a thousand-year event so does not feel it is a risk.
- Councillor Marks agreed it can be mitigated by flood walls/gates but flood risk is brought up regularly as an issue.
- Matthew Leigh made the point that this is a Reserved Matters application, so the Council has already accepted the principle of development of the site in a flood zone.

**Proposed by Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.**

*(Councillor Benney declared that he was on the Investment Board when this proposal initially came forward, and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon)*

*(Councillor Imafidon declared that he is part of Fenland Future Ltd and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon. He further declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Wisbech Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

*(Councillor Meekins declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Wisbech Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

**P71/25**

**F/YR25/0274/F**

**LAND WEST OF PLAYING FIELD, BARTON ROAD, WISBECH**

**ERECT X 42 AFFORDABLE DWELLINGS, 1 X OFFICE/COMMUNAL SPACE INCLUDING CYCLE STORES, LANDSCAPING, HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENTS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AND DEMOLITION OF ALL EXISTING BUILDINGS**

Alan Davies presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Beverley Moss, the agent. Ms Moss stated that the officer has provided a succinct report on the recently updated position of the flood risk and drainage consultees as a direct response to the reason for deferring the decision at the committee last month. She made the point that the

conclusion from those key parties is clear that there is not a technical flood risk or drainage reason to object to the proposals, with the consultees being wholly satisfied with the technical information submitted and that the use of planning conditions will provide the necessary controls for development and she trusts this gives members the comfort they require.

Ms Moss stated that she presented the key headlines last month and reiterated that this is a scheme for 42 affordable homes, with all the homes being available for social rent and provides a secure housing option for people on the lowest of incomes. She added that the Council's own Housing Needs report confirms there is a clear and demonstrable need for affordable housing of all tenure types in the District.

Ms Moss made the point that all of the homes are bungalows and 6 of those will be fully adapted for wheelchair users, with the new homes in an area identified in the Local Plan for housing growth and that area of growth was subject to a Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) when the area was first identified for inclusion in the Local Plan. She continued that the SFRA confirmed that Wisbech is well defended from fluvial and tidal flood risk issues through a number of things and the Local Plan was adopted on that basis.

Ms Moss expressed the view that the site is sustainably located close to the centre of Wisbech and the site has never flooded in 67 years the current owner has lived there. She stated that the development involves the reuse of previously developed land, which forms a key part of both national and local planning policies.

Ms Moss made the point that there are no objections from the Local Highways Authority both in terms of impact on the local highway network or detailed design in the layout, with the proposal including 8 visitor parking spaces. She feels that officers are satisfied that the new homes will not result in any amenity issues for neighbouring residents and the new homes will be accompanied by new landscaping in the form of private gardens spaces, new trees and other shrub and grass planting, with over 400 metres of new hedgerow and an area of informal amenity open space.

Ms Moss stated that the resolved position of the Council is that contributions for social infrastructure will not be sought on 100% affordable schemes in recognition of the viability issues in this area. She summarised that this is a much-needed affordable housing scheme that seeks to deliver a high-quality development, and which has addressed all relevant technical issues, with no objections from any consultees and she asked committee to resolve to grant planning permission.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Marks expressed surprise that members had asked for four different agencies to attend, all of which are not present today and asked if they were invited in writing or verbally, especially in the case of Anglian Water that they definitely said they could not attend. Alan Davies responded that was correct, he e-mailed each of the four consultees directly and asked for them to attend, along with Highways, with all five responding to the e-mail confirming they were unable to attend and in lieu of this they would provide written responses, which has confirmed they have no concerns.
- Councillor Connor stated that after the Chairman's Briefing yesterday he was concerned because a lot of the deferment was around Anglian Water so he contacted a senior officer at Anglian Water and he confirmed to him that no planning officer at Anglian Water had been contacted about attending today but they were asked for extra information which they duly submitted. He suggested that there may have been crossed wires either by Anglian Water or by officers, if it is Anglian Water he will be contacting them again to clarify the situation, but he did think it was imperative that Anglian Water attended today. Alan Davies responded that he was in contact with a planning advisor from Anglian Water, showing the Chairman his computer screen showing the response that they were unable to attend. Councillor Connor stated that he does not like having misinformation from anyone so will be following this up.

- Councillor Marks stated he believes the senior officer from Anglian Water that Councillor Connor spoke to who members deal with on a regular basis regarding the reservoir did offer to the Chairman to field an officer at the meeting but by the time it came through it was suggested it be via Teams so it was felt that it was not acceptable. Councillor Connor confirmed this to be correct but had to decline his offer through Teams as there would not have been time before the meeting to arrange.
- Councillor Mrs French made the point that there are so many different departments at Anglian Water so can understand why there was some confusion and at her quarterly meeting with them she did bring up the chaos at Barton Road and they did say they were looking into it. She thanked Ms Moss for her update and feels that members have got the information back that they wanted.

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

- Councillor Marks stated that he is probably going to be in a minority of one, but he is still not keen on this application, with there being something wrong with putting people who are disabled in Flood Zone 3, with it being known in Wisbech that it does flood. He feels that committee is opening itself up to a lot of problems on site should there have to be a major evacuation, he knows that Councillor Benney will come back and say that there is mitigation, but, in his view, sense should prevail in putting people at 55 plus in wheelchairs in an area that is already known to have flooding issues and he does not want to be remembered as a councillor who gave planning permission on a site where people have had to be evacuated and it has caused a lot of problems to the emergency services.
- Councillor Benney made the point that this is a policy compliant application, there is no reason to refuse it but plenty of reasons for it to be approved, mainly monetary ones as if it is not approved this will go to an appeal, the Council will lose and have costs given against it. He referred to mitigation, with officers having differing views in differing areas and this area is nearer to the sea and is being built 300 mm out of the ground and is not deemed an issue. Councillor Benney referred to the roadworks and feels they are a 'red herring' and have no bearing on this application, this is about land usage and, in his view, it is a policy compliant application and committee is only guided by the technical people who inform us it will be safe and whilst he appreciates the concerns of Councillor Marks but this just makes a mockery of Flood Zone 3 to him as you cannot build in Flood Zone 3 in Manea, which is miles from the sea and far less likely to flood than Wisbech is, but building can take place in Wisbech. He stated that national policy does not take into account that Fenland is probably the best drained part of the country and all flooding is based on if all the pumps were turned off at once and not turned back on again, which is very unlikely to happen. He expressed the view that everyone lives with risk and this application needs approving as if it is not it will go to appeal and it will cost the Council money, Council Tax will go up and the development could still be allowed to proceed.
- Councillor Connor stated that he has certain sympathies with the views of Councillor Marks but there is nowhere else to go, it is a policy compliant application and there are no objections from the technical consultees, with if it went to appeal, in his view, the Council would lose. He added that his heart is saying it should not be supported but his head is saying it should so he will be supporting the proposal.
- Councillor Marks acknowledged the views of the other councillors, but he is struggling with putting money in front of safety and is not convinced about the area.
- Councillor Imafidon agreed with the views of Councillor Marks and will not be supporting it.
- Matthew Leigh clarified that saying the scheme is policy compliant is not correct and what officers are saying the benefits of the scheme outweigh the harm. He stated that officers have laid out what the benefits are, which are subjective, and if this was a normal market scheme officers would possibly not have reached the same recommendation.
- Councillor Benney asked, in officer's professional opinion, if this application was refused and went to appeal, what would the outcome be? Matthew Leigh responded that this is a subjective matter, he does not think the Council would get costs, it would be a balancing exercise, planners have made an informed judgement, and it would be in the gift of the

inspector.

- Councillor Mrs French made the point that this is a difficult decision, but the benefits outweigh the harm, it is in Flood Zone 3 and local councillors are not in support of it but there is benefit for the surrounding Wisbech area, over 55 homes are required and there is a waiting list for these homes. She stated that she will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Marks stated that whilst he accepts what Councillor Mrs French says, there will be disabled people living in a flood zone area and elderly people are also impacted with the other issues in the area, which have not been resolved. He questioned that if this was not a retirement type complex would this obtain planning? Matthew Leigh responded that there are a few benefits from the scheme, the quantum of affordable housing and the fact that it is older people's housing as there is a need. He feels that if officers had a scheme of a less quantum it would probably be less likely because the number of the public benefits go hand in hand with the fact that it is age restricted and the benefits that go with that beyond just the provision of those houses for those residents. Councillor Marks asked for clarification that if this was a standard development the likelihood is that it would not get approval because it does not tick all the boxes regarding the benefits of putting older people into a Flood Zone 3 site. Matthew Leigh responded that if it were a normal market scheme there would be no or minimal public benefits and it cannot be said that the public benefits would outweigh the harm, which is consistent with every application considered. Councillor Marks asked if this is something the Inspector would take into consideration? He added that it has been said that the Council would probably not get costs but if the inspector saw this proposal as a standalone without the age restriction, bearing in mind that the last application considered by committee was approval for 70 apartments on the Nene Waterfront with no downstairs living at all for safety so there is already this application, does this then put the same emphasis on needing this proposal? Matthew Leigh responded that there is an acknowledged need for older people's housing in the District and he does not consider that a Reserved Matters to go with an outline application would significantly alter the need as this has already received an in principle approval so it is not materially altering the balancing exercise. Councillor Marks summarised that physically able younger people on that site would more than likely be refused as a standard development, but older people is deemed to be acceptable in Flood Zone 3. Alan Davies responded that the test officers have to apply is a sequential test and then the exceptions test and in order to pass the exceptions test it is looking at what the public benefits are being gained from this proposal and those public benefits are the quantum of affordable housing, housing for over 55s and wheelchair adapted housing which outweigh that the site lies partially within Flood Zone 3. He continued that the site is not being considered as an open market site versus an affordable site, it is being considered based on what has been submitted and are those public benefits enough to outweigh the harm that will result in developing a site in Flood Zone 3 and this is undertaken at every committee when sites are looking at that need a sequential test and an exceptions test. Alan Davies made the point that if this site was a purely open market site, it is difficult to say without undertaking the balancing exercise, but there is unlikely to be other public benefits unless a theoretical application had other benefits.
- Councillor Benney expressed the opinion that the proposal is not being built in Flood Zone 3 as by the time it is raised out of the ground it is above the flood line so people are not being put at risk of flooding because their property is built up, which is the mathematics of building it up 300mm. He added that if every pump was turned off it would only raise the water level by 300mm and the floor levels are being raised out of the ground, the dwellings are being built out of Flood Zone 3 so that they are in Flood Zone 1 by the time the floor level is finished so the risk is taken away. Councillor Benney expressed the view that the calculation between harm and benefit is a paperwork exercise in terms of the sequential test to approve and run it through policy whereas the reality is that people are not being put in Flood Zone 3, they are in Flood Zone 1 plus the properties are out of the ground.
- Alan Davies made the point that the northern part of the site, which is where the site will be accessed from Barton Road, is in Flood Zone 1 so this is what the Environment Agency would consider to be safe access and there is also the fact that the dwellings are being

raised.

- Councillor Marks stated that whilst he accepts part of Councillor Benney's argument, he does not accept all of it and it still does not dilute the fact that it is known that there have been flooding issues within that area. He continued that Anglian Water are not in attendance and it has been heard that there is a difference in opinion between officers and Anglian Water whether they could or should have been in attendance, he has read the press and visited the site and he is still of the view that he cannot support it.
- Councillor Connor made the point that the agent did say the site has not flooded for 67 years which needs to be taken into consideration. Councillor Benney added that is without mitigation.
- Councillor Imafidon referred to officers mentioning the benefits outweigh the harm but asked in this case to whose detriment, is it not to the detriment of the people who live there already because one of the biggest arguments that he heard is that the people who already live around this site complaining about how it affects their own lives, including the availability of spaces with local doctors. He understands that it is not a planning reason, but should committee not take that into consideration because it harms and not benefits those existing residents. Matthew Leigh responded that the officer's report deals with this matter, it is an acknowledged point that Fenland struggles to deliver the Section 106 contributions that are required and this scheme will not be providing contributions towards NHS the same as any 100% affordable scheme so while that weighs against the scheme members appear to not give that very much weight as a decision making process because in this instance as well it would only be NHS, there would not be any education shortfall because there is no requirement. He continued that it does weigh against the development, but he would be concerned for the consistency if this was going to be given a lot more weight than it normally does, which would be the most risky part of an appeal if the Council was inconsistent in its decision making.
- Councillor Imafidon stated that there are highway issues as well, with Barton Road being closed and, whilst it is being said it is not linked, Anglian Water are not present even though they were invited and they have said Barton Road should be open in March 2026 but they have given dates before, and these deadlines have passed. He added that roads such as Magazine Lane and the road by the Secret Garden as it has been raining the verges are so soft and cars were sliding into the ditches and, whilst he knows this is not going to continue forever, there are serious problems around the roads in that area and another possible 60-84 vehicles are going to be added and it needs to be taken into account how it impacts people who already live there and the infrastructure in that area. Councillor Imafidon stated that he will not be supporting this application.
- Councillor Connor acknowledged the comments of Councillor Imafidon but made the point that this is not a material planning consideration as issues are being spoken about which are nothing to do with this application and carry no weight.
- Councillor Marks stated in the main he agrees with Councillor Imafidon, previously on this site, although it has not flooded for 67 years, there was a nursery and it has not been a built up area with roadways, etc. He feels the water has to go somewhere and further along the road there is an issue which could be compounded so he cannot support it.
- Councillor Benney made the point that the road might not be fixed until April next year, but this proposal is not going to be built by then so committee cannot go on what might happen. He referred to the NHS and GPs will be found for a practice for an increase in population within an area, with over 55s already receiving health care treatment and it is up to the health service to move that provision from where they are to where they are going to be but none of this is a planning consideration.
- Councillor Marks stated his concern is not NHS but that there has been an issue and there could be one going forward, Anglian Water are not present, and people will have mobility issues, like himself, that are going to be placed in a problem area, which has a knock on effect on the emergency services. He added that he has seen flooding first hand at Manea, seen not only the disruption but the distress when people are having to evacuate their houses.

- Councillor Connor questioned what would be gained by having Anglian Water here? Councillor Benney made the point that Anglian Water and the Lead Local Flood Authority have been present on previous applications saying everything is fine and if they turned up today they would only reiterate what they have stated within their reports.

**Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.**

*(All members present declared, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they had been lobbied on this application)*

*(Councillor Meekins declared that he was not at the previous meeting when this application was considered so took no part in the discussion and voting thereon. He further declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Wisbech Town Council but takes no part in planning)*

5.19 pm

Chairman