

Applicant: Mr Richard Hirson

Agent : Mr James Burrows
Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd

Land West Of 78-88, Station Road, Manea, Cambridgeshire

Erect up to 8 x dwellings (outline application with matters committed in respect of access)

Officer recommendation: Refuse

Reason for Committee: Number of representations contrary to Officer recommendation

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application seeks outline planning permission for up to 8 x dwellings with matters committed in respect of access. The proposal site is located at the junction of Station and Wimblington Roads in Manea.
- 1.2 The application site is located within Flood Zone 3, an area at the highest risk of flooding but the applicant has not demonstrated conclusively that there are no other reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas at the same or a lower risk of flooding and therefore the development fails the Sequential. There are more than 8 plots within Manea with extant planning permission for a dwelling where construction has not commenced.
- 1.3 Two outline applications for up to 4 dwellings have previously been refused on site. The current applications indicative plans show 8 semi-detached dwellings. The reason for refusal previously given was also sequential test.
- 1.4 The recommendation is therefore for refusal of planning permission.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The proposal site consists of a 0.46ha parcel of land located at the corner of Station and Wimblington Roads in Manea. The site is currently agricultural land but has residential development to the North, East and to the South, with scattered agricultural buildings. The site is generally flat and has no trees. There are surface water drains located around the site.
- 2.2 The site is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3 as defined by the Environment Agency maps.

3 PROPOSAL

3.1 The application proposes the erection of up to 8 x dwellings with matters committed in respect of access. A single point of access is applied for towards the northern end of the site which is then shown crossing the ditch around the edge of the site before turning in a north-south direction. The dwellings are indicatively shown to the west of this in four pairs, with tandem parking to the side and rear gardens abutting the western boundary of the site.

3.2 Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:
<https://www.publicaccess.fenland.gov.uk/publicaccess/>

4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

Application	Description	Decision	Date
F/YR23/0881/O	Erect up to 4no dwellings (outline application with all matters reserved)	Refused (Planning Committee)	07 Mar 2024
F/YR21/1439/O	Erect up to 4no dwellings (outline application with all matters reserved)	Refused (Planning committee)	23 Nov 2022

5 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Manea Parish Council

Object: Inadequate drainage, Flood zone 3

5.2 Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Authority

After a review of the submitted information with this Outline Application with all matters reserved, accept access, I have no objection to the principal of the development.

As far as can be determined the proposed location of the access can achieve the correct visibility splays for this speed of road (30mph) within the highway. However, the drawings do not show this detail. It is usually the case that a drawing with the Title "Visibility Splays" show this information so that it can be verified and accepted by the LHA and LPA. On this occasion only I will not need this information as I have consulted our records and there is sufficient width to accommodate these splays within the highway.

There are footways leading to the development site in either direction and as far as can be determined the splays are achievable.

5.3 Environment & Health Services (FDC)

The Environmental Health Team note and accept the submitted information and have 'No Objections' to the proposal, as it is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on local air quality, be affected by ground contamination or adversely impact the local amenity due to excessive artificial lighting.

Request – CEMP condition

5.4 Environment Agency 24/11/25

We have reviewed this Flood Risk Assessment and we are now able to remove our objection to this planning application. Please see further information on flood risk below.

Please note our previous comments related to wastewater disposal and water resources from our previous letter remain relevant.

Flood Risk

We have no objection to the proposed development but strongly recommend that the mitigation measures proposed in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), referenced ECL0561b and dated July 2025, are adhered to. In particular, the FRA recommends that:

- o Finished floor levels will be set 0.8m above surrounding ground levels.*
- o Flood resilient / resistant measures will be incorporated into the development up to 0.6 m above finished floor levels.*

Sequential Test

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 174, development in flood risk areas should not be permitted if there are reasonably available alternative sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower risk of flooding. It is for you to determine whether or not there are other sites available at lower flood risk and whether the sequential test has been passed.

5.5 Head of Environmental Services (15/12/25)

We have 'no objections' as our comments have been addressed

5.6 FDC Ecology

The application site primarily comprises an arable field largely bound by a small section of neutral grassland and tall ruderal herbs. Two ditches occur at site boundaries, immediately to the north-west, east and south-east of the site.

Habitats to be directly lost to the scheme are of limited ecological value, and the site is considered to have only low potential to support any protected or priority species, but the ditches do have local ecological value.

Although the site is within 2.5 km of the Ouse Washes designated nature conservation sites (SAC, SPA and Ramsar), because of the relatively small scale of the planned development, its distance from the designated sites and the separation between the designated sites and the application site, I would not consider that the development will affect the special nature conservation interest of the Ouse Washes. While the application site may occasionally be used by notable bird species associated with the designated sites it has low potential to act as functionally linked land because of its proximity to roads and to other built development.

I would advise that should permission be granted to the application a Construction Environmental Management Plan is required to be prepared. The CEMP should include full details of measures to be taken to avoid disturbance of and pollution of adjacent ditches / watercourses during the course of any development.

Biodiversity Net Gain

I would accept that the development could likely achieve an overall net gain in biodiversity of at least 10% on-site through new landscaping and by the enhancement of existing boundary habitats. The on-site gains could be regarded as significant and therefore they will need to be secured by the preparation and

implementation of a 30-year Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP). The HMMP, together with a more comprehensive Biodiversity Gain Plan, should be required to be provided pre-commencement by means of Condition. The statutory Biodiversity Gain Condition will apply to any permission which may be granted to the scheme.

Other Biodiversity Enhancements

I would support the inclusion of new bird and bat boxes as part of any detailed plans which may be prepared for the scheme.

5.7 Middle Level Commissioners

The application appears to involve development within the Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners 9m byelaw strip. During the decision-making process both the applicant and your Council must acknowledge the close proximity of important watercourses and/or associated maintenance access strips to the application site. These watercourses are protected by Byelaws made in accordance with the Land Drainage Act.

Development within, over, or under a Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners maintained watercourse, or within the Manea & Welney District Drainage Commissioners maintenance strip, requires the Manea & Welney District Commissioners prior written consent.

It must not be assumed that consent will be given for any development within, over or under these watercourses and/or any associated maintenance access strips or that the issuing of planning permission by your authority means that the relevant works will be consented.

5.8 Local Residents/Interested Parties

A total of 10no. letters of support were received from The Old Dairy Yards Manea, Cathedral View Manea, Lode Road Manea, Cox Way Manea and High Street March.

Supporting Comments	Officer Response
• Provide much needed housing in sustainable location	• Principle of housing in Manea discussed in assessment section
• In keeping with character of area	• Visual impact discussed in Assessment section
• Link to Fenland Reservoir	• Not a material planning consideration
• Benefits to local business owing to increase in population	• The proposal is for up to 8 dwellings which may have some benefit to local economy

6 STATUTORY DUTY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires a planning application to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this application comprises the adopted Fenland Local Plan (2014) the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021).

7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development

Chapter 4 – Decision-making

Chapter 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport

Chapter 10 - Supporting high quality communications

Chapter 11 – Making effective use of land

Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places

Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Determining a Planning Application

National Design Guide 2021

Context

Identity

Homes and Buildings

Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD 2014

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

Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2016

8 KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Flood Risk**
- **Visual Impact**
- **Highway Safety**
- **Residential Amenity**
- **Ecology**
- **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**

9 BACKGROUND

9.1 As indicated in the planning history section above 2x outline application for up to 4 dwellings have previously been refused on the site by the Council, with these decisions being taken at the Planning Committee meetings on 06/03/24 and 16/11/22. The reasons for refusal previously given on both applications were with regard to inadequate application of the sequential test. The current application is for 8 dwellings.

10 ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

10.1 Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan sets out the spatial Strategy for development and the settlement Hierarchy. Policy LP3 defines Manea as a Growth Village where development and new service provision either within the existing urban area or as a small village extension will be appropriate. Policy

LP12 Part A sets out where development may be acceptable in or adjacent to the developed footprint of the settlement as long as it does not adversely impact the character of the countryside and is in keeping with the core shape of the settlement.

- 10.2 The application site forms part of an agricultural field at the entrance to the settlement, bounded to the north by the workplace home development of Charlemont Drive. To the south on the opposite side of Wimblington Road is a group of commercial buildings with further linear residential development to the south. On the opposite side of Station Road is loose knit linear residential development. Consequently, it is considered that while the site forms an attractive entrance to the village it would be difficult to argue that the principle of residential development was unacceptable, given these surroundings.
- 10.3 As such the principle of this development is considered to be supported by Policies LP3 and LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014).

Flood Risk

- 10.4 Paragraph 165 of the NPPF (2023) states that inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. In the same vein, Local Plan Policy LP14 recommends the adoption of sequential approach to flood risk from all forms of flooding and this is reinforced by the Cambridgeshire Flood and water SPD.
- 10.5 The Cambridgeshire Flood and Water Supplementary Planning Document states that the sequential test was developed to steer development to areas with the lowest probability of flooding. The SPD states that developers need to identify and list reasonably available sites identifying reasonably available sites as:

“Reasonably available sites will include a site or a combination of sites capable of accommodating the proposed development. These may be larger, similarly sized or a combination of smaller sites that fall within the agreed area of search.”

- 10.6 The submitted Flood Risk Assessment undertaken by Morton & Hall is accompanied by a separate sequential test. This sets out the sites with planning permission within Manea, it states whether the agents consider the sites are reasonably available and whether they are considered to be at a lower risk of flooding. The sequential test incorrectly asserts that sites for 1 dwelling or 7 or more are not comparable to the proposal and are therefore rejected. The sequential test also incorrectly asserts that a site with permission for a bungalow is not comparable to the proposal and is therefore rejected. This is clearly an incorrect approach to take and not consistent with policy and therefore, the sequential test is not considered to be passed.

10.7 Exception Test

Notwithstanding the failure of the sequential test, had this been deemed as passed it would then be necessary for the application to pass the Exception Test, which comprises of demonstration of the following:

- a) Development to demonstrate that it achieves wider community sustainability benefits having regard to the district's sustainability objectives, and

b) That it can be made safe for its lifetime and will not increase flood risk elsewhere ('flood risk management').

a) Wider Community Benefits

Section 4.5.8 of the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD sets out the sustainability themes and issues which development could help to address in order to achieve wider benefits, which are:

- Land and water resources;
- Biodiversity and green infrastructure;
- Landscape, townscape and historic environment;
- Climate change mitigation and renewable energy;
- Flood risk and climate change adaptation;
- Pollution;
- Healthy and inclusive and accessible communities
- Economic activity; or
- Transport.

The proposal is for up to 8 dwellings and the submitted Sequential Test and Exception Test Report discusses the Exception test. The Report states that the exception test is passed because:

- *The development would provide wide sustainability benefits to the local village of Manea that would outweigh flood risk.*
- *The site would allow for smaller more affordable 2 bed and 3 bed semi-detached dwellings which there are a lack of smaller two bedroom semi-detached dwellings in Manea.*
- *The development would be safe for its lifetime with regards to vulnerability of the person inhabiting the dwelling and would not increase flood risk elsewhere.*
- *This site does have drainage ditches about the perimeter which are all to be maintained and the Middle Level Commissioners Board Strip is to be left clear.*
- *The site is well drained.*
- *There are no residential dwellings located immediately adjacent the site as the proposal would not increase flood risk on adjacent sites.*
- *The site also has a substantial area left to soft landscaping, which helps with BNG at the site.*
- *The site would be safe from flooding for the lifetime of the development*

It is not considered that these points demonstrate any wider sustainability benefits to the community, albeit there could be scope for a detailed scheme to provide some renewable energy. The Council can currently show a 6.6 years supply of housing land over the five-year period and therefore the provision of 8 dwellings, in flood zone 3, does not weigh in favour when considering the planning balance. The exception test submitted is not considered passed.

b) Flood risk management

The submitted Flood Risk Assessment did recommend the following mitigation measures:

- Finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 0.8 metres above ground level; and
- Flood resistant and resilient construction to height of 0.6 metres above the finished floor level;

The Environment Agency has no objection to the proposal. It is therefore considered that these measures address the need for safety in times of flooding at the site, and as such would satisfy the Exception Test in this regard.

- 10.8 The flood risk assessment undertaken by Morton & Hall Consulting Ltd referenced ECL0561b in support of the development which was considered by the Environment Agency (EA). The EA strongly recommends that the mitigation measures proposed in the submitted Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), referenced ECL0561b and dated July 2025, are adhered to. The EA also set out that it is for the Local Planning Authority to be satisfied by the Sequential and Exception Tests.
- 10.9 There are drainage ditches along the north, south and east of the site. The Drain to the east and part of the south is a Middle Level controlled drain. The indicative drawings show no built form within 9m of the controlled drain, however this would be considered at reserved matters stage. Development requiring consent from the IDB, such as the crossing of the drain, is a separate regime to planning.
- 10.10 Based on the above assessment, the applicant has been unable to show that there are no other reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas at the same or a lower risk of flooding and has not demonstrated any wider community benefits of the development and therefore the development fails the Sequential Test and allowing the development would be contrary to Local Plan Policy LP14, the adopted SPD and paragraphs 159 and 162 of the NPPF(2021).

Visual Impact

- 10.11 Paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021 states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. This is further reflected in Local Plan Policy LP16 (d) which seeks to deliver and protect a high-quality environment for those living and working within the district.
- 10.12 It is considered that the development of the site would visually read as part of the existing village and not appear incongruous or as an encroachment into the countryside. As described above the site is considered to form an attractive entrance to the village and as such a well-designed scheme incorporating sympathetic landscaping would be required to ensure the quality of this gateway is maintained.
- 10.13 Therefore, subject to appropriate design, layout, and landscaping which would be addressed at the Reserved Matters stage, the visual impact could be acceptable in accordance with Policy LP16 and the NPPF (2021).

Highway Safety

- 10.14 Fenland Local Plan Policy LP15 states that new development will only be permitted if it can be demonstrated that safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicle access to and from the public highway as well as adequate space for vehicle parking, turning and servicing would be achieved.
- 10.15 The Highway Authority have no objection to the proposed scheme. The Highway Authority have pointed out that no drawing has been submitted showing visibility splays which is usually required. However, on this occasion they are content that

this detail is not needed because the records show that there is sufficient width to accommodate these splays within the highway. The Highway Authority confirm that splays can be achieved on footways leading to the development site in either direction. The site is located a short walk from Manea railway station.

10.16 The indicative plans show that parking on site may be achievable in form of in tandem parking. The Council's Environmental Services team have raised no issues in terms of refuse vehicles being able to service the site.

10.17 The application is an outline application with matters committed in respect to access. The scheme is considered acceptable and complies with Policy LP15 in this regard.

Residential Amenity

10.18 Local Plan Policy LP16 (e) seeks to provide and protect comforts that the general environment provides and to this end ensures that development does not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring users owing to noise, light pollution, loss of privacy and loss of light.

10.19 The proposed development is in outline form, with matters only committed in respect of access. From the submitted indicative plan, it would appear that the development which details design and layout, would relate appropriately with the dwellings around it. The scale and external appearance of the scheme is subject to subsequent approval, but it is considered that there is sufficient distance from the neighbouring gardens to be able to accommodate this level of development in this location without compromising residential amenity.

10.20 The proposal indicatively allows for the provision of adequately sized garden areas to serve each dwelling unit in line with policy LP16 (h) together with some communal greenspaces at the front of the development to provide soft landscaping.

10.21 Therefore, subject to appropriate detailed design and layout, the scheme would provide adequate residential amenities for future occupiers and protect those enjoyed by existing neighbouring occupiers in accordance with Policy LP16.

Ecology

10.22 Policy LP16 (b) requires proposals for new development to protect and enhance biodiversity on and surrounding the proposal site, taking into account locally designated sites and the special protection given to internationally and nationally designated sites in accordance with policy LP19. Criteria (c) requires the retention and incorporation of natural and historic features of the site such as trees, hedgerows, field patterns, drains and water bodies.

10.23 The application site comprises an agricultural field bounded by a hedgerow to the north and ditches to three sides and the access to the development is indicated as being across one of these ditches.

10.24 An ecological survey and if necessary, a species survey, are required to be carried out pre-determination. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a public sector duty upon local planning authorities to conserve biodiversity. Section 193 of the NPPF states that when determining planning applications local planning authorities should refuse planning permission if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from development cannot be avoided

(through locating on an alternative site with less impact), adequately mitigated or as a last resort, compensated for. Such consideration requires sufficient ecological investigation to assess if there are any particular protected species present so that they can be taken into account in the consideration of the proposals.

10.25 A Preliminary Ecological Report has been submitted with the application. The surveys were originally undertaken on the 3rd of August 2022, updates were made on the 19th of September 2023 and updates were made on the 5th of June 2025. The report incorrectly shows that 4 large, detached homes are proposed with associated parking and gardens. The report concludes that protected species may be present on site, Licences may need to be obtained and mitigation measures such as what season to conduct works, 5m stand off from the ditch, 9m buffer zone from IDB drain, bat boxes, limited external lighting, species specific planting would need to be implemented. FDC Ecology was consulted on the proposals and have responded with no objection. A Construction Ecological Management Plan would need to be submitted at Reserved Matters stage.

10.26 The submitted Preliminary Ecological Report states any potential harm can be mitigated. Therefore, at Outline stage the detail submitted is considered sufficient to say the proposal is considered acceptable under policy LP16(b) and LP19 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 subject to a Construction Ecological Management Plan being submitted at Reserved Matters stage.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

10.27 The Environment Act 2021 requires development proposals to deliver a net gain in biodiversity following a mitigation hierarchy which is focused on avoiding ecological harm over minimising, rectifying, reducing and then off-setting. This approach accords with Local Plan policies LP16 and LP19 which outlines a primary objective for biodiversity to be conserved or enhanced and provides for the protection of Protected Species, Priority Species and Priority Habitat.

10.28 In this instance a Biodiversity Gain Condition is required to be approved before development is begun.

11 CONCLUSIONS

11.1 The application seeks Outline planning permission for the erection of up to 8no with matters committed in respect of access.

11.2 The proposed development would be of a scale that is in keeping with the area and, subject to layout, design and finishes, would not detract from the character of the site and the area.

11.3 The application site is located entirely within Flood Zone 3 and fails to meet the sequential test by virtue of alternative sites being available elsewhere in Manea to accommodate the development that are at the same or a lower risk of flooding. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policy LP14 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) and Chapter 14 of the NPPF.

11.4 The Council can currently show a 6.6 years supply of housing land over the five-year period and therefore the provision of 8 dwellings, in flood zone 3, does not weigh in favour when considering the planning balance. The exception test submitted is not considered passed.

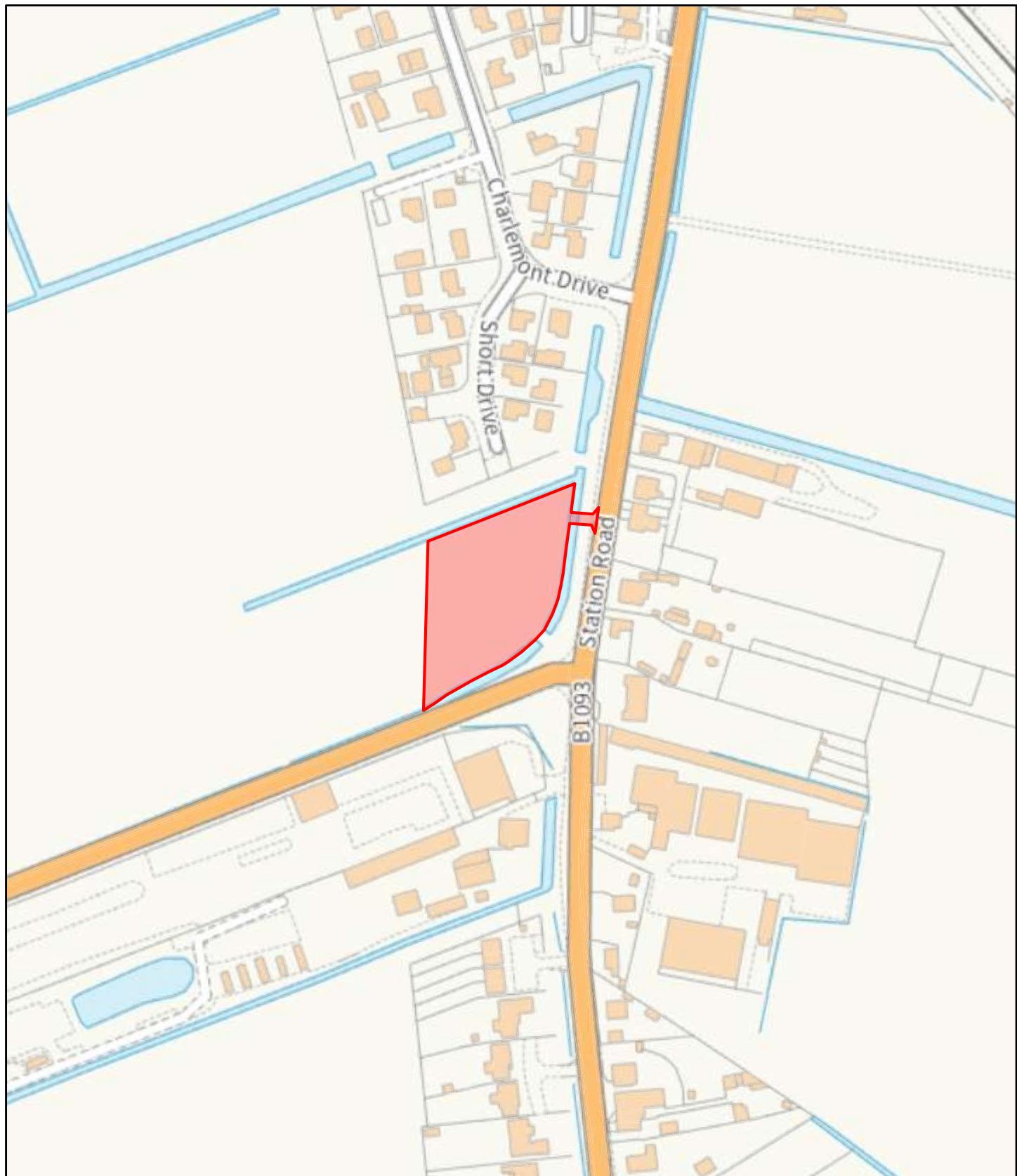
11.5 It is recognised that Manea is an otherwise sustainable location, and it is also recognised that the delivery of eight dwellings would have some limited benefits to the local economy from the provision of jobs during the construction period and in the longer term to businesses in the area as well as some limited social benefits in the delivery of housing. However, these benefits are not considered to outweigh the disbenefits of delivering housing in an area at risk of flooding and the consequent risk to future residents.

11.6 As such the application is considered to conflict with the NPPF, policies of the Local Plan and the Flood and Water SPD.

12 RECOMMENDATION

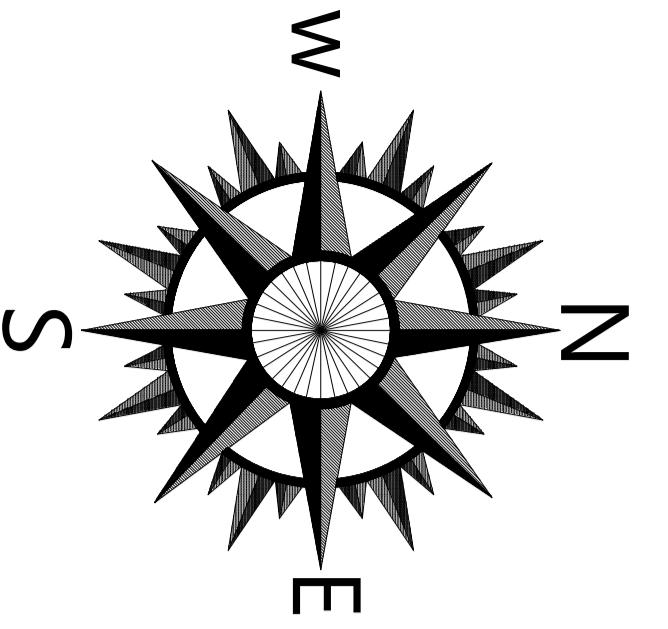
Refuse; for the following reason:

1.	The site is located within Flood Zone 3 where there is a high probability of flooding. The Sequential Test for flood risk has not been adequately applied or met and consequently, the application fails to demonstrate that there are no other reasonably available sites with a lower probability of flooding that could accommodate the development. In addition, the Exception Test has also not been passed. Allowing the proposed development could therefore place people and property at an increased risk, with no justification, of flooding contrary to Policy LP14 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014), NPPF (2024) and Section 4 of the Cambridgeshire Flood & Water Supplementary Planning Document (2016).
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C B A	DRAWING UPDATED PLANNERS COMMENTS UPDATED FOLLOWING INTERNAL COMMENT	DEC 25 OCT 25 AUG 25
	REVISIONS	DATE
MORTON & HALL CONSULTING LIMITED CONSULTING STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS 1 Gordon Avenue, March, Cambridgeshire, PE15 8AJ Tel: 01354 655454 Fax: 01354 660467 E-mail: info@mortonandhall.co.uk Website: www.mortonconsultingengineers.co.uk		
	LABC Building Excellence Awards Winner	Fenland District Council Building Design Awards Building Excellence in Fenland
CLIENT	Mr Richard Hirson Jnr & Mr A Hirson	
PROJECT	Land West of 78-88 Station Road Manea, March PE15 0HG	
TITLE	Existing Site Plan & Proposed Site Plan (INDICATIVE LAYOUT)	
DRAIN	J. Burrows	DATE OF ISSUE
CHECKED		
DATE	July 2025	DRAWING NUMBER
SCALE	As Shown	H10296/02c

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Where materials, products and workmanship are not fully specified they must be of the standard appropriate to the works and suitable for the purpose stated in or reasonably to be inferred from the drawings and specification. All work to be in accordance with good building practice and BS 8000 to the extent that the recommendations define the quality of the finished work. Materials, products and workmanship to comply with all British Standards and EN/BSA standards with, where appropriate, BS or EC marks.

All products and materials to be handled, stored, prepared and used or fixed in accordance with the manufacturers current recommendations.

The contractor is to arrange inspections of the works by the BCO (or NHBC) as required by the Building Regulations and is to obtain completion certificate and forward to the Engineer.

All finishes, insulation and damp-proofing to architect's details



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