

# PLANNING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2025 - 1.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor R Gerstner, Councillor S Imafidon and Councillor N Meekins, Councillor M Purser (Substitute)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor C Marks (Vice-Chairman) and Councillor I Benney,

Officers in attendance: Matthew Leigh (Head of Planning), Stephen Turnbull (Legal Officer), Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer) and Gavin Taylor (Principal Development Officer)

**P72/25**

**F/YR24/0903/0**

**LAND ADJACENT NEW SAXON WORKS, PETERBOROUGH ROAD, WHITTLESEY**

**ERECT UP TO 65,000 SQ M FLOOR SPACE CONSISTING OF E (B)(D)(F) (AMENITY BUILDINGS) AND E (G)(I)(II)(III) (OFFICE, LABORATORY AND MANUFACTURING) INCLUDING RENEWABLE ENERGY INFRASTRUCTURE, PARKING, COUNTRY PARK AND OTHER ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE (OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH MATTERS COMMITTED IN RESPECT OF ACCESS)**

Gavin Taylor presented the report and drew members attention to the update report which had been circulated.

Gavin Taylor advised members that he was in receipt of a letter which was received earlier that day from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which in exercise of their powers under Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure Order, has directed that the Council is not to grant permission on this application without specific authorisation. He added that the direction is issued to enable MHCLG to consider whether they should direct under Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act, that the application should be referred to them for determination, however, this direction does not prevent the Council from considering the application or from forming a view to the merits or if so minded to refuse the planning permission.

Gavin Taylor made the point that the direction from MHCLG should not influence the decision making of the Council and should the Council resolve to grant permission, the Secretary of State requires time to consider whether to call the application in for their own consideration before the Council issues any planning permission. He explained that further information has also been received from the Ecological Officer with regards to comments received from the Saxon Gate Residents Group in particular with regard to their concerns over the habitats regulation assessment that is undertaken and the Ecologist has confirmed the recommendations of the habitats regulation assessment which sets out the requirements for review the assessment following the receipt of the reserved matters application including the water resources strategy which is also required under one of the proposed conditions.

Gavin Taylor explained that further comments have been received from the Council's Environmental Health Team who have considered the additional comments submitted by the Saxon Gate Residents Group which covers a number of matters such as pollution control,

exposure to pollution, ongoing Saxon Pit investigations, monitoring enforcement concerns and all comments have been reviewed along with the circulated committee update and the proposed conditions set out in the officer report and have advised that they are satisfied that the necessary controls are secured and raise no objection. He explained that he has also received an update from the Middle Level Commissioners (MLC) earlier today and further to their previous consultation on 24 November 2024, they have noted the proposal to discharge surface water via the adjacent Saxon Pits discharge into the Kings Dyke and the Environment Agency is considering a foul effluent discharge permit application for this particular outfall and, therefore, it should not be assumed that MLC would grant consent to discharge surface water via this outfall.

Gavin Taylor explained that MLC have also stated that an alternative discharge directly from the site may be required and any surface water discharge will require the prior consent of MLC under their byelaws as well as an agreement and approval of final planning decisions. He added that there are a number of conditions securing the water supply strategy, foul and surface water drainage strategies and these conditions will be consulted with via the Lead Local Flood Authority, Environment Agency, Anglian Water and MLC when such conditions come to be discharged or when a reserved matters application is submitted which is the standard approach.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Councillor Chris Boden, who addressed the committee in his position as a Cambridgeshire County Councillor. Councillor Boden stated that he is addressing the committee as the County Councillor for the application site, and he explained that he fully endorses the officer's report and the recommendation of approval. He added that he recognises that it is an outline application which is important to note because there are some matters of detail which do need to be addressed but that can be achieved under the reserved matters stage of the application.

Councillor Boden explained that the application has been subject to a successful pre-application submission and has the approval of Whittlesey Town Council. He expressed the view that the proposal brings huge positive economic effects with it and not merely for Whittlesey but for Fenland as a whole.

Councillor Boden made the point that the location of the proposal is very important as there are no material effects on residential amenity which sets it aside from any other economic growth area that there is a potential for in Whittlesey. He expressed the view that all planning applications involve the requirement of taking a balanced view of the pros and the cons and, in his opinion, officers have reached the correct recommendation and most of the objections raised have been with regards to the issue of transport issues.

Councillor Boden explained that he has been in contact with the Highways Team at Cambridgeshire County Council with regards to the application, adding that he has frustrations with regards to their approach, which he does not feel has been the correct one. He made the point that there was a fundamental change to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024 with regards to transport planning and the change meant that the modelling changed from a predict and provide model to a vision and validate model, with, in his view, the County Council appear to still be using the predict and provide model and are not utilising the current NPPF for transport planning.

Councillor Boden stated that it is the cumulative impact that is important when considering the traffic situation not with this application but when considering every planning application within Fenland. He added that he wished to emphasize the comments made by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council which mirror the point he has been making for some considerable time concerning the fact that the current transport network within and outside of Whittlesey cannot cope with significant major additional development.

Councillor Boden expressed the view that the advantages of the scheme outweigh the disbenefits

that there are, with there having been a significant number of new applications which have come through in the last few years for additional housing all of which add to the negative effects of transport in the area. He explained that there is a further planning application which will be brought forward within the next few months which will be coming through on the site adjacent to Saxon Pit which lends itself to a significant increase in heavy good vehicles coming into Whittlesey and the cumulative effects cannot continue to be added on top of each other.

Councillor Boden expressed the opinion that the limit is yet to be reached but the limit is not too far away, and this does need to be taken into context as additional employment is required within the Whittlesey and Fenland area. He added that this sort of employment is also required and this sort of economic development is exactly the sort of thing which is needed and he does not want to see all of the advanced engineering and research roles being located in the Peterborough area, leaving Fenland with nothing so far as economic development is concerned.

Councillor Boden expressed the view that Fenland needs this sort of development, and it is inherently good and he explained that he has reviewed the points made by Peterborough City Council Highways and, in his opinion, most of it appears to resonate with peak hour access to the site than there reasonably will be. He added that when in operation it is likely that it will be a 24-hour operation as well a large amount of remote working due to the nature of the employment roles and, therefore, he does have doubts with regards to the calculations of the Peterborough City Council Highways team.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked Councillor Boden whether he has made any progress with his discussions concerning a potential bypass as the A605 is nearing capacity? Councillor Boden explained that Fenland District Council received a report earlier this year with regards to the potential of the A605 Relief Road and he hopes to bring a further report to the next meeting of Cabinet and Full Council to progress the matter. He added that the likelihood is that the road maybe implemented in the next decade and explained that the biggest and most immediate problems will actually be in Whittlesey Town Centre itself at the two roundabouts, the Kelly Vision Roundabout and the Cemetery Road roundabout, as that is where the most significant impact is and that will also be least impacted by the proposed development.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that the A605 is surcharged and the Kelly Vision roundabout is already suffering from very heavy traffic congestion, with Whittlesey suffering from considerable HGV traffic and the condition of the A605 being very poor. He expressed the view that there are severe limitations with regards to what can be done on the A605 which will also mean there can be no widening achieved and by implementing an additional 1300 – 1600 jobs at the Science Park in the future then there will be a cumulative effect on the A605. Councillor Boden stated that he agrees with the points made by Councillor Gerstner as there are times when the A605 suffers from very heavy traffic which is only going to get worse as there has been further residential development which has already been approved but is yet to be built out and both roundabouts will suffer further from an increase in traffic. He stated that the objections concerning the transport side which are being highlighted with the application have nothing to do with the Kelly Vision roundabout or the Cemetery Road roundabout as they are primarily to do with the Kings Dyke Bridge and with junctions within the Peterborough City Council area. Councillor Boden expressed the view that it is a very important distinction to make and added that if there must be an increase in traffic then it should be against the flow of peak hour traffic which currently exists. He stated that this is what the proposed application will cause, and it will obviously increase the amount of traffic and the greatest increase in traffic will be against the current peak hour flow and minimizes the effect that it would have. Councillor Boden added that if it were in addition to the current direction of peak hour flows in both directions during the morning and evening then it would be a different matter. He referred to the state of the A605 and added that he wholeheartedly agrees that the condition of the road is unacceptable.

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she is horrified at the state of the A605 and added that the Highway Authority at the County Council need to take appropriate action as the state of the A605 is disgraceful. Councillor Boden agreed.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Councillor Mrs Dee Laws, who addressed the committee in her position as a Whittlesey Town Councillor. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she completely endorses the officer's report, and she fully supports the application. She expressed the view that the Planning Officer should be applauded for his detailed and comprehensive report which demonstrates the amount of work involved with the statutory consultees to bring the application forward for a decision to be made.

Councillor Mrs Laws stated that the proposal in front of the committee is forecast to deliver 1660 full time equivalent jobs equating to £59 million per annum additional wages and £126 million per annum gross value-added uplift for the UK economy. She added that the proposal also brings with it significant economic benefits not only to the economy of Fenland but also the regional and UK economy, with it also fitting with the Council's economic growth objectives contained within its Economic Refresh Strategy 2025 to 2028 and the shared ambition from Cambridgeshire and Peterborough 2050 and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Local Growth Plan.

Councillor Mrs Laws added that it also fits with the Council's political strategy occupying a broad location for growth in Whittlesey which is identified for employment use, making the point that the application achieves net gains in biodiversity, and will provide public accessibility and open space through a country park. She stated that was a facility which was lost some years ago with the failure of the Sainsbury's out of town store, with an attached retail park and adjacent public country park.

Councillor Mrs Laws added that it is the west to east main gateway into the town of Whittlesey and there are opportunities for a high-level design and a visual enhancement to the area. She explained that the agent and applicant provided a presentation to the members of Whittlesey Town Council, and the members were supportive and welcomed the application, with their also being a public consultation and as a result a lot of positive comments and support were received.

Councillor Mrs Laws explained that the proposal means a lot to Whittlesey Town Council and as Councillor Mrs French has referred to the southern relief road, the proposal is the type of opportunity that will open the gateway for transport and will improve the road network. She expressed the view that Fenland is an aging and maturing population, and the proposal will encourage younger people to come back and settle in Fenland and as a result it would mean that the houses would be developed which are needed for families, with the proposal delivering so much for the town and enhancing the future with the improvement to the age group coming through.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Gerstner stated that Councillor Mrs Laws has referred to people coming to Whittlesey to live and he asked whether she would agree that Whittlesey has almost reached capacity in land terms to build out any further major developments in Whittlesey as it stands at the present time? Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she does not disagree with that fact, and she expressed the view that Whittlesey has taken a hit for the Fenland area with regards to the amount of development which has taken place. She added that there are larger applications coming forward for both March and Wisbech and she stated that in the Local Plan there is a figure but that is not a ceiling figure. Councillor Mrs Laws added that there are several applications in the pipeline which are yet to be built out, and she explained that she undertook a survey a few months ago which resulted in her consulting with the local estate agents in the area, with the concerning thing being that people are trying to buy retirement bungalows more than family houses at the present time, but it is her understanding that in the community now residents are looking to give their children their

houses and then they move into a retirement bungalow themselves. Councillor Mrs Laws added that there appears to be an element of concern and there needs to be a more levelling off the age group in the area.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that the proposed 1660 jobs which may or may not come forward for local people in the Science and Technology park will require pretty high levels of education and qualifications. He added that in Whittlesey there is an element of the area being constrained on future land to build on which he is concerned about, with there being no large open spaces anymore to build thousands of houses. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she understands the point being made by Councillor Gerstner and there is still land available and there are still several applications which are to be brought forward which are in Whittlesey and border Whittlesey. She made the point that the employment within the Science and Technology Park would offer a variety of different job types and will not only include degree operating technicians as there will be positions available for landscape gardeners and posts available to maintain other aspects of the buildings. Councillor Mrs Laws added there will be the requirement for staff to operate the café and restaurant too and, therefore, there will not be the requirement just for the focus to be on high academic level posts and there will be opportunities for a wide range of diverse skills.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that having read the officer's report, the biggest concern is Anglian Water and Middle Level Commissioners, and she asked Councillor Mrs Laws for her views. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that she has many views on that point, but the application is only at outline stage and further details will come forward as the application progresses, with it appearing suddenly that the Middle Level Commissioners are taking an interest which is not something that they have done previously. She made the point that she welcomes the fact that they are showing an interest but that could be that they have more staff support to be able to do that and whilst she appreciates that they have concerns, Anglian Water have issues with regards to the right to connect and whilst there is an awareness of this, it is not going to change and whatever utilities are on the site, Anglian Water will have the right to connect into. Councillor Mrs Laws stated that from a Middle Level perspective, in her view, it will come down to the next stage of the application process.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Sarah Hann, Ross Percy-Jones and Robyn Green from Peterborough City Council Highways Team. Sarah Hann explained that she is the Principal Engineer within the Highway Development Control Team at Peterborough City Council (PCC) and they were consulted on the application as a neighbouring authority. She explained that the application has been reviewed to assess the impact of the proposed development on the Peterborough City Council highway network and due to the lack of information provided as part of the application, as well as their understanding of the existing highway network within Peterborough, they have had to recommend that the application be refused because it has not been demonstrated that it would not result in a severe residual cumulative impact on the highway within Peterborough.

Sarah Hann made the point that she is aware of several roads and junctions and roads in the vicinity of the site which are already near to, at or over capacity during network peak hours, which are on main routes anticipated to be used to access the development which include the A605, Whittlesey Road, Toll Road and A605 Stanground bypass as well as the bypass junction with Fletton Parkway. She made the point that the trip rates used within the transport assessment rely on there being a modal share of 50% or 60% of car driver trips and the census data from 2011 shows that for existing employment sites in this area, 88% of people who travel from the Peterborough area travel by car and 74% of the total trips made as a car driver.

Sarah Hann made the point that whilst the data is now 13 years old, it is the most recent census data available which is not affected by the impacts of Covid and public transport, walking and cycling links to the location have not significantly changed in the intervening period and she still considers the data to be representative. She added that the Department of Transport connectivity

tool also demonstrates that the location is poorly located by bus and active travel modes.

Sarah Hann explained that no assessment of the impact of the development for the 88% existing mode share on the Peterborough network has been carried out and little information has been provided by the applicant to indicate how it is intending to improve accessibility of the site from Peterborough by non-car modes to achieve a vision of a reduction from 88% to 50% or 60% car trips. She stated that it has been acknowledged that a shuttle bus is to be provided from Peterborough Station to the site but this is unlikely to be widely used as the majority of people travelling from the Peterborough area would then have to travel by bus to then have to travel out of town again and for most people it would be quicker and more easier to just drive.

Sarah Hann added that the 63% of the trips generated are expected to travel to, from or through the Peterborough area and she explained that even at a 50% mode share it would see an increase of 180 trips in the peak morning travel period and 160 trips through the evening peak travel period. She added that by using the trip data from the traffic assessment and the current modal share of 88% car trips for the application site, there would be an increase in 317 trips in the morning peak travel time and 281 trips in the evening peak travel time because of the development.

Sarah Hann stated that the transport consultants have indicated that as the development does not exceed an 8% increase in vehicle trips through Peterborough junctions, the impact of the development is not significant, however, the trigger for junction capacity assessments is any junction which receives thirty or more additional two-way trips in a single network peak hour because of the proposal and this trigger applies across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough transport assessment guidelines. She made the point that the application does not fully consider the impact of the proposed development of the Peterborough highway network and there has been no junction capacity modelling for many of the affected junctions.

Sarah Hann acknowledged that Cambridgeshire Highways have recommended refusal of the application but have also provided a condition restricting trips from the site to the 50% mode share but if the 50% threshold was applied and restricted by a condition it would still have that significant increase in trips through the Peterborough network and as the impact of this on all of the affected junctions has not been fully modelled it has not been possible for her team to determine appropriate mitigation measures for the impact within the area or what the appropriate level of contribution associated with such a trip cap for the area would be. She asked the committee to consider refusing the application due to the severe residual cumulative impact on highway safety and capacity within Peterborough or defer the decision to allow the appropriate assessment of the impacts of the development on Peterborough's network to be carried out, and any mitigation or trip cap contributions to be determined.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Meekins asked for clarification with regards to the point made concerning the fact that the data held is 15 years old. Sarah Hann explained that the most recent census data that is not affected by the Covid pandemic is 13 years old, which is what would be used to assess the modal share across trips to and from a development.
- Councillor Meekins stated that there appears to be an assumption that all those persons who are going to be employed at the Science Park will be travelling from Peterborough and apart from Whittlesey there are three other market towns and there is a great deal of unemployment in Wisbech and the Science Park could offer employment for some of those looking for work. Sarah Hann explained that the transport assessment submitted by the applicant indicates that 63% of the trips to and from the site will come from the Peterborough direction and the remaining trips will come to and from the Whittlesey direction.
- Councillor Gerstner questioned whether at the time when the Cardea roundabout was built and the junction for the Milk and Water Road was improved was there not any transport assessments undertaken including statistical information gathered? Ross Percy-Jones,

Principal Transport Planner, explained that there have been a number of planning applications over the last 5 to 10 years where the junctions have been looked at and subsequently had improvements made to them, specifically the Milk and Water junction. He stated that those developments have each assessed their own impacts and there has been significant changes around different development growth assumptions over time meaning it is difficult to draw a like for like comparison between the applications and their assessments. Ross Percy-Jones added that each one of the applications have been able to justify any impacts in relation to those junctions and when considering the current proposal, there is a neighbouring application site which has carried out the assessment on Peterborough's network and has taken into consideration the current proposal which demonstrates that cumulatively when you add in all of the growth sites together it is when you see the impact at the junctions. He made the point that it is acknowledged that the A605 is currently capacity constrained but not to the extent which is being demonstrated under the assessments.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that there has been a number of planning applications for the Saxon works for an operator bringing in IBA and that is heavy goods traffic. He added that he is surprised that PCC have not raised this as an issue as most of the traffic is coming from the Peterborough direction and leaves in the Peterborough direction. Councillor Gerstner added that there is an impending planning application going through the County Council to double the amount of material that the applicant is going to deal with and he has concerns with regards to the cumulative impact this application will also have. He asked for clarification as to the type of modelling used if there is a reliance on statistical information which is 13 years old. Ross Percy-Jones explained that the modelling that has been undertaken by the applicant and the transport consultant have used up to date survey data following a traffic survey exercise undertaken in 2023 using traffic flows and the census data which was referred to, to give an indication of the percentage of car driver trips. He added that he agrees it is indicative and it does not give a complete view of what happens now but it is the closest that is available and does appear to be a national issue that most authorities have to grapple with in terms of the age of the available data. Ross Percy-Jones explained that the junction modelling that has been undertaken is based on current data and added that with regards to the Saxon brick work site, PCC has provided a response on that application and he has requested the same type of assessments and the applicant for that proposal has carried out those assessments and has taken into consideration the effect of the current application. He added that the Saxon brick work application has demonstrated that by 2030 without their proposed development, with the doubling of HGV traffic, there was an indication that the Milk and Water Drove junction on the A605 and the immediate roundabout junctions to the west would operate at capacity. Ross Percy-Jones expressed the opinion that when you start to see at capacity conditions on the network, then any further increases in traffic delay starts to have a material impact on highway safety, with there being a great deal of academic research which demonstrates that there will be an increase in accidents on the network as congestion increases.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that the border between PCC and Fenland is located near the Horsey Way turning and there have been some good road improvements undertaken by PCC including improvements near Cardea and the Milk and Water junction, however, the report states that the capacity is not sustainable and he asked for further clarity with regards to what is considered to be sustainable. Ross Percy-Jones stated that regarding sustainable network operations if the traffic volumes exceed 85% of the available capacity on the network then that is what would be at capacity conditions. He added that a vision validated approach needs to be followed with applications and there is the need to work with applicants to identify a preferred vision to see whether that is something that can be achieved and delivered. Ross Percy-Jones stated that from a PCC perspective when considering the application, it has not been possible to determine whether that vision can be sustainably delivered and it needs to be demonstrated whether there is going to be an impact on the highway network and if there is a realistic chance that enough active travel provision or increases in bus services is going to come forward which would help to offset

the number of cars on the network, with to date it has not been demonstrated that there are going to be sufficient proposals in place to achieve those aspects. He explained that as well as the junction modelling which is looked at the modelling within the transport assessment is also considered and if it is not demonstrated that the application site could be reasonably accommodated with a vision that aligns with local and national policy then that is when he would put forward a refusal recommendation.

- Councillor Gerstner referred to the condition of the A605 and its severe limitations in engineering terms of what could and could not be achieved and he asked whether from a PCC perspective there are any suggestions as to what works could be taken to help the situation. Sarah Hann stated that she agrees it is a very constrained network in terms of the physical space to allow improvements of any type and the Stanground bypass is currently being looked at as one of the current phases is only a single carriageway and it is likely that when considering all of the proposed developments in the locality it is likely that this section of the bypass will need dualling and an entire additional carriageway will be needed. She added that, with regards to the existing junctions, by dualling the bypass it would have a knock-on impact on those junctions which would then need to be looked at as well.
- Councillor Purser referred to the A605 which suffers from heavy traffic, and he made the point that if people use buses and cycles surely that will alleviate some of the problems faced by the A605 and its heavy usage by HGV and cars. Sarah Hann stated that car trips take less space on the road network as opposed to lorries and there is always a congestion benefit by moving lorry trips from the highway. She explained that the information submitted as part of the application does not have any comparison of the trips and as a result it is not clear whether the proposed development would result in a reduction in trips and, therefore, be a benefit because the comparison has not been undertaken.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Stephen Rice, the agent and James McPherson, Transport Consultant. Mr Rice outlined what a Science Park is, explaining that it is a type of business park with a specific focus on research, development and innovation. He added that the buildings on it are usually specifically designed and purpose built with bespoke facilities for laboratories, workrooms, offices, meeting areas and high-grade manufacturing as well as recreational facilities such as gyms and cafes.

Mr Rice explained that there is normally a link to a university or an educational body and the main aim is to facilitate growth for business, entrepreneurs, start ups and collaborative communities. He expressed the opinion that they all deliver heightened levels of prosperity for the businesses on them and in turn this prosperity and wealth get distributed throughout the region in which it is located.

Mr Rice explained why he is proposing a Science Park on a former brickwork, adding that in 2021 he was tasked with designing a scheme for the regeneration of the brickworks and when this commenced it had only been announced that construction was starting on the new University in Peterborough and this was a key factor in his initial evaluation process. He made the point that he used to work for a company who managed all the science parks in Cambridge and Oxford, and he is of the view that a Science Park can offer far more than a standard Business Park.

Mr Rice stated that he formed a team of consultants and the first company he employed specialises in advising Science Parks who were recommended by the UK Science Park Association, with them evaluating the site and concluding that it had excellent prospects. He explained that it has always been the vision to design a development which was genuinely Net Zero and this required an input from energy specialists and Vital Energy who are the onboard development partner have designed an energy infrastructure which will mean that the development will be self-sufficient in heat and power whilst also being able to export heat and in particular generated from the on site ground and water source heat pumps.

Mr Rice explained that the energy and innovation centre on site could also be used to redistribute



waste heat from McCains to Whittlesey through a local heat network which would potentially be funded by national Government. He made the point that from an early stage in the process he engaged with educational bodies including the new ARU, Peterborough College and Cranfield University with ongoing discussions taking place, with Cranfield University being particularly keen to commence research projects on water neutrality and circularity as well as energy infrastructure focussing on heat networks and distribution, which is very much in line with Government policy for which there is significant grant funding available and Cranfield are very keen to apply for grant funding if outline permission is granted and he added that he is keen to involve the ARU with the projects.

Mr Rice stated that Councillor Mrs Laws has outlined some of the benefits that the Science Park will provide but it will also provide two hectares of public park immediately next to Whittlesey, an onsite gym and café open to the public and a shuttle bus, with the shuttle bus key to the Science park as it could run from the site to Peterborough Station and possibly Whittlesey Station. He added that the proposal will include circular cycle footpaths which will run around the site as well as a new pedestrian and cycle path from the site to Snoots Road, Whittlesey and explained that there will also be new control crossings on the A605 for pedestrians and cyclists.

Mr Rice made the point that he is very conscious that despite extensive discussions and the provision of evidence-based modelling which demonstrates how the development can deliver the sustainable transport modes which are confirmed in the transport assessment, the information has not been able to satisfy the Highway Team at the County Council and acknowledges the fact that there is further work to do and he has confidence that the transport plan will work. He stated that he has agreed to the principle of a Section 106 legal agreement that requires the delivery of new sustainable transport infrastructure, off site parking control and substantial financial payments to the Council if the sustainable transport targets are not met.

Mr Rice expressed the opinion that he feels that the town of Whittlesey and the region deserve a development like this, he has heard views expressed that the proposal will not provide jobs for Whittlesey or Fenland and he made the point that he does not agree with that view. He added that of the predicated 1650 new jobs, about 30% are likely to be for high qualified scientists and the rest will be for support staff across a whole range of disciplines including administration, media, property, grounds maintenance and hospitality.

Mr Rice stated it is an aspirational project which would not only offer employment opportunities for existing Fenland residents, but he is looking towards the future for the next generation who can aspire to work in science and technology, attend university and build a successful prosperous future for themselves and their families and region.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Gerstner stated that it is important to clarify that contrary to the point made by some Whittlesey Town Councillors that there was no public consultation, he can confirm that there has been a consultation exercise undertaken not only with the public but also with the Town Council. He added that the public consultation took place in December 2023 and the Town Council following that.
- Councillor Gerstner expressed the view that the proposal is a wonderful opportunity to change Whittlesey and the surrounding area for generations to come.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that should the committee be minded to granting outline planning permission would Mr Rice be prepared to confirm that the thirty-seven proposed draft planning conditions in the officer's report can? Mr Rice stated that he has reviewed all the conditions with the Planning Officer and he is happy to agree to them all.
- Councillor Gerstner stated whether there is any plan in place should the Ralph Butcher Causeway be restricted in traffic flow as has been the case for the last 12 months. Mr Rice stated that it is a phased development which is not all going to happen overnight and if built out as envisaged it would be the third largest science park in the UK. He added that

everyone appears to be assessing what the transport issue is likely to be and by the time it is fully built out it may be 15 years, with in 15 years' time sustainable transport modes are going to be far more prevalent and the use of the car will not be as prevalent as it is in the current day. Mr Rice expressed the view that it cannot be contemplated that the issue with the causeway will not be solved as they would have to consider reopening the railway crossing again and consideration may be given to opening the southern relief road to take some of the freight off the causeway or considering a weight limit on the causeway.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that Mr Rice had referred to a proposed bus service running from site to Peterborough and in his presentation, he alluded to the possibility of the bus servicing Whittlesey, and he asked for further clarity on that statement. Mr Rice explained that at the current time the focus is on Peterborough as it is going to be more difficult to persuade people to get off a train in Peterborough and use a bicycle to get to the site and he sees that as a challenge. He explained that he has used a model of a very successful Science Park in Didcot in Oxfordshire and that site operates an amazing sustainable transport network including the use of the first autonomous buses in the UK. Mr Rice explained that he is far keener to decipher on how to get people from Whittlesey Train Station to the site using walking and cycling as a mode and he prefers to spend money working out how a cycle route could be implemented rather than spending money on a shuttle bus service but he has costed proposals for the bus service and that has been provided to the County Council who have advised that it does look to be realistic in terms of the costings. He stated that the parking on the site will be subject to a nominal parking charge to dissuade people from using a car and the shuttle bus to Whittlesey has been discussed and it could be factored in, but the preference would be to improve the sustainable transport routes in the first instance.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that the application is in outline only but questioned whether Mr Rice has any idea of who the end users may be? Mr Rice explained that he has worked with Richard Collins from EIBC who are specialists in Science Parks and he has worked with him for three years since the infancy of the application process, with Mr Collins compiling a list of companies both from a local and slightly wider area from the district and it has been surprising how many high-tech businesses already exist in the region and all of them are potential targets but realistically the businesses that have been spoken to will not engage fully until a planning permission is secured. He added that he has already spoken to a number of regional politicians along with the CPCA, ARU and Cranfield and the only way a site such as this is going to be successful is if all the interested parties have a vested interest in seeing something like this work and come together. Mr Rice explained that when the genetics of a science park are considered along with how they evolve it requires a commitment from everybody, including politicians, regional leaders to attract businesses and the search for employees which is a very important factor. He added that it needs to be demonstrated to businesses that want to come here that there are employees and certain services and facilities in place to attract international companies, with them also having engaged with the CPCA from the outset as they would be one of the outside bodies that consider the database of possible businesses.
- Councillor Mrs French asked for an explanation with regards to what a mobility hub is as it is mentioned in the application. James McPherson stated that a mobility hub is a focal point where the shuttle bus operates from as well as a place for parking and hiring bicycles and a hub where the café could be. He explained that it is a centralised hub which looks to primarily have opportunities for sustainable travel but will be a standalone building which has other uses as well. Mr Rice added that there will also be a cycle shop, cycle repair stations and showers which are all included to encourage people to use a bike rather than a car.
- Councillor Connor stated that it has been mentioned that the CPCA and Cranfield have been contacted and have shown an interest, however, should there be a problem and businesses do not wish to operate from Whittlesey, how can he be certain that this will come to fruition. He expressed the view that it appears that there is a reliance on others to come forward with joined up thinking and it may not be as easy as that. Mr Rice stated that

it is incredibly difficult to bring a project such as this to reality, with obtaining planning permission just being the start and it has taken four years so far to get to the current stage, and he made the point that this type of development does not happen overnight and if it did then its longevity and successfulness would not be there. He explained that a great deal of work and discussion has taken place over the four-year period and Cranfield University are exceptionally enthusiastic and are looking to submit grant funding packages for research projects based on energy and in particular water. Mr Rice stated that he been receiving advice from Professor Stevenson who has been involved with the application from an energy perspective, and he is of the opinion that the science park should be water based due to the uniqueness of the park and none of the surface water can leave the site until a pump is switched on. He added that this is completely unique and the only way that the water will get into the Kings Dyke will be if a pump is switched on and the water will not go anywhere unless the pump is turned on, with this being the concept of water neutrality where all the on-site surface water comes in and it has been designed with a surface water drainage system, and the water will all be directed back to the lake which has got a freeboard and a vast attenuation capacity. Mr Rice explained that ultimately the site will be treating its own water, circulating and reusing all of its water which its water neutrality before moving to the next stage known as water circularity which means all the water including foul water gets reused and recycled on the site. He added that Cranfield are very keen to commence and obtain Government funding to commence research as the site could become a blueprint for commercial developments in the east.

- Councillor Connor stated that, if the application were approved, when does Mr Rice anticipate that works on the site would commence? Mr Rice stated that a realistic date would be 2027 by the time the reserved matters application is dealt with, and the highways issues are considered. He added that Anglian Water have agreed to supply fresh water to the site and with regards to foul drainage on any site this needs to be dealt with. Mr Rice explained that the first piece of work will be to implement the new access off the roundabout and a Section 278 process will take 18 months to 2 years.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that with regards to land contamination and the current state of the land, there has been historic issues with land contamination, and he questioned whether any survey work has been undertaken on the land? Mr Rice stated that there has been a survey carried out, and it was the first report he commissioned on the site, and a full stage three contamination assessment was undertaken with twenty metre deep bore holes and the survey was clear.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that he presumes that, in consultation with Cambridgeshire Highways, the concerns and issues regarding the A605 and including traffic volumes and the availability of cycle and pedestrian facilities will be properly addressed as in his view the site is not suitable for either walking or cycling from Whittlesey or Peterborough. He asked whether consideration has been given to joining and accessing cycle route 63 which can be reached via Funthams Lane, with the pathway on the northern side of the A605 not being fit for use and is challenging for pedestrians and he questioned whether Mr Rice can make a commitment and agree to look at improving the pathway in order to open up a route to the cycle route 63. Mr Rice explained that he has engaged with McCains very heavily during the application as have his energy consultants with regards to potentially using heat from McCains but unfortunately the strip of land in Funthams Lane which would be required to implement a cycle lane is owned by Forterra and they have totally failed to engage with him. James McPherson stated that with regards to footway improvements the transport planning policy now compels them to be visionary, and it is in the revised NPPF, and from the very outset of the application they have wanted to focus on the movement of people and not cars and if bigger roads are built then ultimately they will be filled with cars and car dominated behaviour. He made the point that he does not want to look at the future demand based on historic traffic trends and with regards to the cycle and pedestrian connections he has considered a route through the site to come out onto the A605 and looked at a toucan controlled crossing to allow people to cross to the northern side of the A605 and to then join those into Crossway Hands which will then go up towards the off

carriageway cycle connection. James McPherson added that with regards to going back into Whittlesey there are constraints with regards to what is achievable in terms of improvements for cyclists, but it has been carried along as far as Snoots Road and that is where the cyclists would rejoin the carriageway. He made the point that it is part of the strategy being looked at and considering how people can be moved by sustainable modes and the mode share target of car drivers at 50% has been included in all the transport work and a lot of work has been undertaken to show how that can be achieved through not only active travel but also to include shared and public transport including the shuttle bus.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that there is a cycle route 63 which goes from Stonald Road in Whittlesey and all the way to Peterborough, and he has concerns that the Crossway Hand junction is already suffering from a high level of traffic with limited capacity. He expressed the view that the road is dangerous for cyclists due to the volume of traffic and the fact that it is a single carriageway and with lorries attempting to pass each other, there is no room for cyclists. James McPherson stated that he is not saying that everyone is going to cycle to the site or that nobody will drive to and from the site, however, they are trying to provide an evidence based sustainable strategy by considering various different options on how people can travel to the site, with a lot of that travel is based on public transport including the shuttle bus. He added that with regards to the Crossway Hand junction there have been different options considered with regards to the design and in line with local transport note 120 which looks at cycle infrastructure design and how cyclists can be integrated with vehicles whilst acknowledging the HGV company in the vicinity that a swept path analysis has been undertaken in order to consider the largest vehicle types that would have to access Crossway Hand and to check that all of the different users could be accommodated and that has also been subject to an independent stage one road safety audit as well. Mr Rice explained that the site can be accessed by coming out of Whittlesey at Crossway Hand where you come into the site where there is then a perfectly good cycle way that takes cyclists through the site, through the science park and then back out the other end. He added that if people wanted to cycle from one end of the A605 to the McCain end then that is achievable rather than used the A605. James McPherson added that he is not suggesting that an inordinate amount of people would cycle to the site and whilst they would love to see that happen in the overall mode share he is suggesting just under 10% of the overall employees at the site could potentially have the opportunity to cycle. He made the point that the figure is not a dissimilar level to what is shown in the census data of 2011.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that 10% of 1600 is 160 and he does feel that the figure is being slightly ambitious.
- Councillor Gerstner questioned whether consideration is going to be given to a further public consultation should outline planning permission be approved? He further asked whether consideration is being given to the inclusion of a data centre within the science park? Mr Rice stated that with regards to a further public consultation he would be keen to know what Councillor Gerstner had in mind and if there was a valid reason for it and it would achieve something then he would consider it. He added that with regards to a data centre, the whole concept of the application is to provide employment, and the applicant has already been approached by people who are looking to include many different types of things on the site including a data centre. Mr Rice stated that a data centre would only employ about ten people and that is not something that he wants to see in Whittlesey and, in his view, it would seem a waste of a fantastic site. He explained that there will be data on the site and the vital energy infrastructure which has been designed for the site could be a blueprint as it shares heat and cooling and there is no requirement for air conditioning on the site and all of the computer banks in the site will be cooled from the lake. He added that he is totally against data centres and distribution centres on the site.
- Councillor Meekins stated that Mr Rice has mentioned that he has previous experience with Science Parks, and he explained that he was a partner at Bidwells for 13 years and a fundamental part of the business. He referred to the 1600 jobs going to be located on the Science Park and asked whether the office jobs that were alluded to are 9-5 roles or could they be attributed to flexible working hours? Mr Rice stated that he would describe a

Science Park as one of the most enlightened places that you can get in terms of employment, and they are flexible in terms of working hours. He added that it will be dependent on the type of research that is being undertaken, and some employees will treat it as a 9–5 job whilst others will hybrid work.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Gerstner stated that there has been a consultation exercise undertaken but one consultee was omitted, and he asked whether that has any bearing on what can and cannot be achieved today given the fact that the consultee have been given further time to respond. Gavin Taylor stated that there was one resident who was missed off of the original consultation and as a result they have been issued with a 21 day consultation letter which is the statutory obligation and that consultation period expires around the 26 November but to date no comments have been received from them. He added that the recommendation is as set out in the report and is to have regard to any material matters that may arise after the determination of the application today, but irrespective on whether the residents' comments on the application, the Council has a legal duty before a planning permission or refusal notice is issued to take into account all material considerations. Gavin Taylor explained that should that resident raise a matter to be considered which has not already been identified in the officer's report then the recommendation would be to discuss the matter with the Chairman of the Planning Committee as to whether the application would need to be brought back before the committee. He added that if there are comments raised which are not materially different to what has been considered in the officer's report then it would permit to proceed on that basis.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that given the objections both within the application from PCC Highways and CCC Highways and considering the point made by Councillor Boden within the presentation that they may be using the wrong model to factor an opinion on the proposal he would like that to be answered. He added that Travel England have stated that the A605 is not conducive to cycling or walking and the condition of the A605 is very poor as well as the adjacent road not being suitable for active travel at 40 mph. Councillor Gerstner made the point that to his knowledge there are five different speed limits along the A605 which alternate between 30 and 40mph along various parts of the road. He stated that given the possibility of wastewater there are several factors to consider, and he asked officers to explain how they have decided the contributing factors to recommend the application for approval. Gavin Taylor stated that, in terms of the process, there is always a planning balance to apply to most applications when making a determination and on this occasion the planning balance is set out in the report. He referred to some of the outstanding matters which include drainage and water supply and stated that the NPPF sets out that where it is considered that the development can be made acceptable in planning terms through conditions or obligations and in this case it is deemed appropriate to apply planning conditions to ensure that there are satisfactory schemes coming forward to support the development and he added that there is no reason why that cannot be secured through a planning condition. Gavin Taylor explained that he has contacted the EA as well as the MLC and asked whether they consider the conditions which have been set out are satisfactory and they have responded positively and with regards to some of the outstanding matters with regards to drainage there are reasonable conditions which can be imposed which are attributed to larger applications asking for site wide strategies. He added that, with regards to the balance of the transport impacts, it is set out in Section 11 of the report, with officers being mindful that the site is constrained and limited in terms of its scope and what can be reasonably and viably achieved through the scheme and whilst ideally there would be a continuous cycle footway connecting Whittlesey to Ramsey to Peterborough to March, unfortunately there is not due to how the settlements have evolved. Gavin Taylor stated that the applicant has chosen to look at what reasonable opportunities can be achieved through sustainable transport modes and active travel modes and a package has been put forward which, in the view of officers, is not going to alleviate the transport impacts and as is set out in the report there are going to be cumulative impacts of transport on the highway, but it

does aim to limit that through its vision. He added that by working through the proposal with the transport team there are obligations going to be sought through the Section 106 system where there will essentially be a financial penalty if the active travel movements and the modal share is not achieved, for the applicant to pay towards highway improvements which may either alleviate some of the transport impacts or improve and encourage non car modes of travel. Gavin Taylor stated that those issues are balanced against the benefits of the scheme which are set out in Section 11 of the report and include economic growth, employment opportunities, bio diversity net gain which is above the statutory 10% requirement as well as the public community areas which can be utilised by everybody and all of those aspects are seen as benefits which outweigh those disbenefits.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that the proposal is a wonderful opportunity for the district and should not be missed, however, he does not feel that enough weight has been given to the A605. He added that PCC have highlighted their constraints and restrictions and their ability to address the A605 and Active Transport England have highlighted that they require a firm commitment around the provision of an enhanced service in the area, making the point that currently the application does not include part of this enhanced transport system. Councillor Gerstner expressed the view that out of 1600 jobs, they are expecting 10% of that number to be cyclists on a road which is not conducive to cyclists or pedestrians. He reiterated that point that Active England are not supporting the proposal in its current form, and he finds the serious cumulative effects of the A605 to be unnerving.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to condition 2 and added that it states that application for approval of the reserved matters shall be made to the local planning authority before the expiration of five years and she questioned whether that statement contains an error as the Council will not exist in five years. Gavin Taylor stated that the conditions are in place for members to consider and if they wish to amend any of them then that is within their gift to do so. He added that five years was set as a requirement to deliver the reserved matters stage of the application as it is a long-term project and if after 5 years the reserved matters aspect is not in place then the element of that permission is removed. Matthew Leigh stated that the condition relates to the local planning authority and irrespective of whether it is Fenland or another council, it will still be the local planning authority.
- Councillor Gerstner asked officers from CCC Highways how they came to their decision on the application and why they are not using the latest data and information? Andrew Connolly explained that the modelling that has been assessed by the Highway Authority is the modelling that has been submitted by the applicant and the assumption within that model uses up to date traffic counts using industry standard software to assess the impact, with the model not being out of date and it is very much up to date. He referred to the census data and added that census is undertaken once every ten years and is, therefore, a little bit limited, making the point that it is unfortunate that the last census was in the middle of the Covid pandemic, and nobody uses that data as it does not give an accurate representation, and as a result the 2011 data is used to demonstrate how people travel around in Whittlesey. Jez Tuttle from CCC Highways stated that he has heard it mentioned during the committee that the Highway Authority at CCC do not use the vision and validate model but that is not the case and that modelling system is used and especially where networks are constrained. He made the point that the challenge that the highways authority faces is that someone has a vision, but consideration must be given as to whether the challenge is reasonable and he is aware that people who live in Peterborough will walk and cycle but as soon as you get out of the parkway system then that is less likely to be the case. Jez Tuttle stated that in terms of the vision the Highway Authority are not convinced that they will see a lot of walking and cycling because of the A605 and even the path alongside the river is not of a good condition during the winter months especially when it is dark. He made the point that when considering passenger transport, at the current time, there is only one bus which is being proposed to run from the train station in Peterborough and whilst it may pick up some passengers from the station who have travelled from Huntingdon, in his view, the proposed bus will not help those people who are travelling from the March direction and there is a larger suite of measures that is required to accompany

the application, and he does not believe that the work has been undertaken to ascertain what those additional measures might be. Jez Tuttle explained that because of the issue, the Highway Authority have requested a trip cap as they are convinced that the mode share will go down to 50% as that lends itself more to Cambridge where there are park and ride facilities and cycle ways. He expressed the view that passenger transport is the way forward, one bus operating from the station in his opinion is not sufficient and there may be other opportunities to look at works buses from other areas and he explained that the Highway Authority are not against the vision and validate, but in their opinion and with the information that they have seen to date, it is not achievable at this point in time.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that in the presentation it was stated that the current proposals for the Crossway Hand junction remains unacceptable and the revised design incorporates several positive amendments to partially address the concerns. He added that it also states that the variation in design could be deliverable but would likely resolve its principal concerns and on balance the Highway Authority feel that it is now in a position where it can seek a planning condition to secure delivery of appropriate and cycle mitigations at the Crossway Hand junction. Councillor Gerstner asked whether a desktop modelling exercise has been undertaken for the junction and whether an officer has been to site to see it first hand to ascertain what can and cannot be achieved at the junction? James Stringer from the Highway Authority stated that with regards to that junction he agrees that it is quite constrained and there are HGV movements related to the business located nearby. He explained that the design which has been undertaken by the applicant has been through a road safety independent audit to assess whether the junction would flag up any safety issues which would need to be resolved and as a result the design has been amended. James Stringer explained that the current status is that the design is not perfect and the application is at outline stage but there is a design in place which could be delivered that would be satisfactory to the Highway Authority after going through the 278 process to refine the design in order to assist HGV traffic from getting through the junction whilst also providing something that is safe and attractive for non-motorised users which he agrees is a challenge.
- Councillor Gerstner stated that there does not appear to be any recent data, making the point that he fails to understand why when dealing with a road layout where there is one road in and one road out, where there is no other alternative and traffic survey has not been undertaken. Jez Tuttle explained that the traffic survey data is up to date or as up to date as it can be given the time scale between the submission of the application and now and the traffic conditions in terms of vehicles are up to date and the key thing is the vision validate process requires consideration as to how the amount of car trips can be reduced. He added that the base data for the mode share is quite old which causes an issue as when trying to undertake a vision and validate analysis on data which is old and officers do know the number of cars and an assumption can be made with regards to the number of cars that would go to the site given the trip rates which are standardised. Jez Tuttle explained that the figure which is not known is how many people that could refrain from using their cars and because the data for the existing amount of people such as the mode share is old and it is very difficult to undertake a vision and validate assessment with data which is quite old. He added that it is very difficult for Highways Officers as they used to rely quite significantly on Government census data and as the last census data was 2021 this does lead to questions with regards as to whether the data is still valid. Jez Tuttle explained that one of the PCC Highways Officers had made the point that the status quo has not altered that much when considering the corridor which is being looked at and there have not been any large-scale bus, walking or cycle interventions and when considering people's travel habits there is not a lot which is going to change. He explained that the train services have not particularly increased and as there have not been any significant changes since 2011, it is going to be broadly the same in terms of the mode, with it going to be predominantly car modes with very few cyclists as well as people using the bus and potentially train users. Jez Tuttle stated that the opinion of Highways is that the data is old but given the fact that there will not be much which will change things, in their view, the data set for the route is going to be

about right.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that modelling alludes to the fact that there are going to be queues on the roundabout and Highways have predicated that the queue could be up to 110 metres, with 2034 still being a considerable number of years away but that could be when the science park comes to fruition. He made the point that the Highway Authority have stated that this is not acceptable and demonstrates that the proposed development will have severe impact on the roundabout and he asked officers to provide an explanation. Andrew Connolly explained that it is the applicants modelling which the Highway Authority have reviewed to determine the impacts and what they are required to assess is the base year which is when the application is submitted, the year when the application is fully built out and then five years following post full build out in order that it can be determined how the network is going to operate in the future. He explained that the information which has been provided by the applicant has been reviewed and the modelling they have used is up to date and is, therefore, acceptable, which demonstrates that the queues in the transport assessment are shown as being 109 metres on the A605 at the roundabout by the Ralph Butcher Causeway. Jez Tuttle added that the queue length is 109 metres which is approximately twenty cars and the delay in journey would equate to 48 seconds per vehicle but that information was on the very minimal mode shares as officers have already stated that they are not entirely convinced by that. He made the point that if the mode share increases significantly to 80%, if there is a junction that reaches capacity it becomes an exponential increase and if the mode shares are not achieved then the delay to each vehicle could then increase to up to 2 minutes which is why the trip cap has been suggested as a secondary intervention if the mode share is not realised.

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

- Councillor Mrs French asked for her thanks to officers to be recorded and added that, having listened to the views of the Highways Officers from both PCC and CCC, she believes that the issues are something which can be overcome in the future. She stated that it is a brownfield site, an outline application and there appears to be very few objections. Councillor Mrs French referred to 5.21 of the officer's report where the Council's Business and Economy Team have stated that there is a shortage of commercial space employment land in the district. She made the point that the agent has undertaken a great deal of work on the proposal, agreeing that the condition of the A605 is appalling and she will support the application.
- Councillor Imafidon stated that Fenland is crying out for something such as a Science Park, and it is an opportunity which should not be missed. He added that he has considered the issues and challenges concerning the A605, however, the road infrastructure across the whole country is struggling but that does not mean that development should not be encouraged. Councillor Imafidon stated that both the officers and agent for the application have carried out very good work and the benefits outweigh the harm in this case, and he will fully support the application.
- Councillor Meekins stated that the application has good points and bad and the issue concerning traffic congestion, in his opinion, is just a way of life. He added that this is a wonderful opportunity with potentially 1600 jobs and Fenland is open for business and the agent has alluded to the fact that whilst there is still uncertainty with regards to businesses coming forward with a proposed 1600 jobs there must be some interest. Councillor Meekins added that if the proposal does not come to Whittlesey then those employment opportunities are going to go elsewhere, and the brownfield site will be left. He made the point that if outline permission is granted then the agent and applicant can move forward and advise interested parties that outline permission has now been granted. Councillor Meekins added that there are a significant number of conditions which have been attributed to the application and, in his view, it should be supported.
- Councillor Connor stated that he will support the application, adding that this type of application does not come forward very often and it is a wonderful opportunity for Fenland to put itself on the map. He added that it is only an outline application which only has access



agreed and a significant amount of detail can come forwards at the next stage of the application should it be approved today.

- Councillor Gerstner stated that he would have preferred to see the application deferred as there are sustainability and mode share concerns as well as cycling and walking infrastructure deficiencies, with there also being bus and public transport uncertainties and a number of technical outstanding issues. He added that there is a great deal of mitigation measures included in the conditions and he does not feel that the application has been rushed because he appreciates that the applicant has put in a great deal of work. Councillor Gerstner stated that the officers have also dealt very well with the application but, in his view, he believes that the application should be deferred in order to give the applicant time to revert back to highways in order to try and find some mitigation that can be engineered. He expressed the view that people do not walk and cycle down that road and there are a number of aspects that can still be rectified including the Crossway Hand junction. Councillor Gerstner stated that it is a fantastic opportunity which he is very supportive of but in its current form he cannot support the application, and he would rather see it deferred.
- Councillor Purser stated that the application is in outline form and he will fully support the proposal.
- Councillor Connor stated that on balance the employment opportunities the proposal will bring with it and the aspirations of Fenland to move forward all outweigh the concerns with the road apart for repairing the A605.

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

*(Councillor Connor stated that he had previously attended a presentation given by the agent with officers and members during the infancy of the application but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(All members present declared that they know Councillors Boden and Mrs Laws as they are elected members of the District Council)*

*(Councillor Mrs French and Imafidon stated that they are members of Cabinet and work closely with both Councillor Boden and Councillor Mrs Laws, but they have not entered into any discussions regarding the application)*

*(Councillor Gerstner stated that he has met the agent on two previous occasions, but they did not discuss the application and attended the open public meeting concerning the application, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)*

3.40 pm

Chairman

# PLANNING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 10 DECEMBER 2025 - 1.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor C Marks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney and Councillor S Imafidon, Councillor P Murphy (Substitute)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor R Gerstner and Councillor M Purser,

Officers in attendance: David Grant (Senior Development Officer), Tom Donnelly (Senior Development Officer), Matthew Leigh (Head of Planning), Hayleigh Parker-Haines (Senior Development Officer), Stephen Turnbull (Legal Officer) and Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer)

## **P73/25      PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of 12 November 2025 were confirmed and signed as an accurate record.

## **P74/25      F/YR25/0726/PIP LAND SOUTH OF 29 PRIMROSE HILL, DODDINGTON PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE FOR 2 X DWELLINGS**

The Legal Officer stated that the application is for residential and workplace use and the issue facing the Council is that there is no power which allows it to impose planning conditions or Section 106 obligations on a Planning in Principle (PIP) application. He explained that the advice that he has given the committee is that it would be better for the application to be deferred in order to allow time for discussions to take place with the applicant to consider amending the application to make it more efficient for the application to be approved or refused and then if it were to be approved it would be framed in the correct way so that members could achieve what they want in that event.

Councillor Connor stated that he is sorry that this issue has not been highlighted prior to today's meeting and apologised to the applicant and agent for the issue which has arisen and also to members who have spent time reading the reports and have undertaken site visits.

Councillor Connor asked members whether they were content with the legal advice which had been provided to them and members unanimously agreed that they were.

Councillor Benney stated that it is disappointing that issue this has not been identified prior to today as the application has been in the planning system for a long time. He asked the Head of Planning to confirm whether the application is going to be brought back before the committee for determination? Matthew Leigh explained that as members are aware a new scheme of delegation is being introduced by Central Government and it is not likely to be heard by the House of Lords for at least another two months and he does not see any reason why this application will not be brought back to committee in January.

**Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Marks and agreed that the application be DEFERRED.**

*(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 has undertaken work for him personally, but he is not pre-determined, and will consider the application with an open mind)*

*(Councillor Marks declared, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he had been lobbied on this application)*

**P75/25**      **F/YR25/0729/PIP**  
**LAND NORTH OF 10 PRIMROSE HILL, DODDINGTON**  
**PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE TO ERECT 4 WORKPLACE DWELLINGS**

The Legal Officer stated that he has advised the committee that this application should be deferred due to the fact that the Council cannot currently impose conditions to regulate the development and a deferral will enable discussions to take place with the applicant.

Members confirmed that they agree with the legal advice provided to them.

**Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Marks and agreed that the application be DEFERRED.**

*(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 has undertaken work for him personally, but he is not pre-determined, and will consider the application with an open mind)*

**P76/25**      **F/YR25/0730/PIP**  
**LAND NORTH OF THE QUADRANT, PRIMROSE HILL, DODDINGTON**  
**PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE FOR 2 X DWELLINGS**

The Legal Officer stated that he has advised the committee that this application should be deferred due to the fact that the Council cannot currently impose conditions to regulate the development and a deferral will enable discussions to take place with the applicant.

Members confirmed that they agree with the legal advice provided to them.

**Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Marks and agreed that the application be DEFERRED.**

*(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 has undertaken work for him personally, but he is not pre-determined, and will consider the application with an open mind)*

**P77/25**      **F/YR25/0258/VOC**  
**LAND EAST OF THE ELMS, CHATTERIS**  
**VARIATION OF CONDITION 7 (SOUTHERN ACCESS) AND REMOVAL OF**  
**CONDITION 16 (LEAP) OF PLANNING PERMISSION F/YR22/0967/FDL (ERECT**  
**UP TO 80 X DWELLINGS (OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH MATTERS COMMITTED**  
**IN RESPECT OF ACCESS)) - RE WORDING OF CONDITION.**

Hayleigh Parker–Haines presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Councillor Benney, a District Councillor. Councillor Benney stated that the application site used to be in the ward but is now in his adjacent Council ward. He explained that this was a scheme that he looked at when he sat on the Investment Board and came under his portfolio holder responsibilities which is why he is not taking part in the discussion or voting for the item.

Councillor Benney stated he has always supported the application because when he first became a councillor for Birch Ward, he had several residents contact him with regards to a flooding issue in The Elms, explaining that when the Farriers Gate development was built at a higher level the water runs off from that development and into The Elms causing flooding to gardens which are often underwater as well as being halfway up the wheels of parked cars. He stated that at that time he went to see David Rowen, the Development Manager, and asked him what steps could be taken to overcome the drainage issue, and his professional advice was the best thing to resolve the issue will be to build near it and, in his view, this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to fix the flooding issues in The Elms.

Councillor Benney added that councillors can be unpopular for approving the granting planning permission amongst other things but fixing a situation so that residents houses do not flood is a vital part of a councillors role, which is why he has always supported this application because when he was the Portfolio Holder, he was involved in meetings with Lovells who are the construction company responsible for the build of the development. He added that during the course of one meeting he asked whether the development would fix the problem in The Elms, and he was advised that it would and he asked for a written guarantee that the proposal would fix the problems for the residents of The Elms, and it was confirmed by the Lovells representative that it would, with the response he was provided being as good as you are ever going to get as a councillor to reach a satisfactory resolution.

Councillor Benney explained that there are two attenuation ponds on the site which are located in order to take the water away from the application site as well as to take the water away that is flooding through from Farriers Gate, which is the only chance which will come forwards to fix the issue and it will be a lost opportunity if it does not go ahead. He explained that at the outline stage of the application it was going to be for 80 houses, however, that has now been reduced to just over 50 dwellings due to the amount of land which is required for the attenuation ponds to drain the water away which is why the variation of condition application is needed due to the costs of undertaking the work, which are prohibitive and could stop the development from going ahead.

Councillor Benney added that he appreciates that there is a loss of social housing from the proposal but there have been several houses approved in West Street and as a councillor there is the requirement to have social housing for local need as opposed to people being sent from outside the area because they need somewhere to live. He made the point that Chatteris is a nice place and he fully supports the application for the social housing that was passed which he appreciates is required but if the reduction in social housing means that the issue in The Elms is resolved then, in his view, it is a sacrifice which is worth it and he asked members to support the proposal.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Marks asked Councillor Benney whether he was able to confirm how much social housing has been approved in Chatteris recently? Councillor Benney stated that he does not know a definitive number, but he explained that there is the whole estate located down West Street and the Hallam Land development will include an element of social housing. He added that there needs to be enough social housing in the first place for local need and it should not be the situation where people are just sent to Chatteris because it is cheap to live. Councillor Benney expressed the view that several years ago the Council were moving

people out of London, where the Housing Benefit equated to £1,500 a month and in Chatteris it was £600 per month. He expressed the opinion that he wants to keep Chatteris a nice place to live and the houses should be for local people. Councillor Benney stated that he does fully support the developments which are being undertaken but his focus with the current application is overcoming the drainage issues for the residents of The Elms.

- Councillor Marks asked Councillor Benney whether he can recall when the last episode of flooding occurred? Councillor Benney stated that he did not know as he is no longer the ward councillor where the site is located but does recall an instance where he was called to a meeting in a resident's home and the gardens were all under water and their cars had water above tyre level with the road at the bottom of The Elms being flooded. He made the point that this is a one-time opportunity to fix the problem and he would rather be unpopular for building something that people do not want than be unpopular for having a house that has 2ft of water running through it as it is a situation that people should not find themselves in.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that it is disappointing that there is a loss of affordable housing, but she does understand why. She asked Councillor Benney whether he is aware if the Lead Local Flood Authority has been consulted on the proposal? Councillor Benney stated that he did not know as he is no longer the Portfolio Holder he is no longer involved in briefings.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from John Mason, the agent. Mr Mason stated that the application seeks to amend several key aspects of an outline planning permission granted by the Council in September 2024. He added that the outline application for land east of The Elms, approved the principle of up to 80 dwellings on the site and the principle of access from The Elms and all other matters were reserved.

Mr Mason stated that the site has been purchased by Fenland Future Limited (FFL) for delivery and he explained that FFL is the wholly owned subsidiary of the Council and the purpose of FFL is to deliver much needed housing and to provide a financial return to the Council which can be used to support Council services and local projects. He made the point that the site in Chatteris provides FFL with the opportunity to build a range of homes for local people and to provide a revenue stream for the Council, with the FFL employing highly experienced construction company Lovell Partnerships (LP) to design and deliver a housing scheme which provides much needed local housing and additional revenue back to the Council and maximising the financial return from the site.

Mr Mason explained that following the outline approval FFL and LP have been working with the architects and engineers to fully understand the constraints of the site and this has led to three key changes being proposed which require an amendment to the outline application. He made the point that the site is at risk of surface water flooding and the outline application including limited detail on how surface water could be safely managed without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Mr Mason added that updates to the Environment Agency's flood map to account for climate change now suggest that the site is more at risk than previously thought and that as a result a cut and fill exercise will be proposed in order to raise some parts of the site and lower others to ensure that the new homes are protected from flooding and any flood waters can be directed out of the site to the east. He stated that as a result this has reduced the developable area and increased the engineering costs meaning that only 54 homes can now be delivered instead of 80 and there cannot be any affordable housing included.

Mr Mason explained that this change has been subject to robust scrutiny with officers and third-party consultants, and he added that whilst there has been some disagreement concerning the exact construction costs, all parties agree that the scheme will not be viable if it provides affordable housing and consequently would not be able to proceed. He added that the second key change is with regards to the vehicular link to the south, however, the outline application only proposed a link

from The Elms, which was on the basis of highways modelling done at the time and this is what was shown on the approved outline plans.

Mr Mason explained that a pedestrian and cycle link to the south will have several advantages and, in his opinion, it will promote walking and cycling through the developments to the east of Chatteris and will link the public footpaths to the town centre and out to the countryside. He added that it will also limit the traffic going through The Elms which will now only have a vehicular link to the homes on the application site rather than a vehicular link to homes across the entire eastern allocation.

Mr Mason made the point that the change has been reviewed with the Highways Authority and Planning Officers who have confirmed that by removing the link it will comply with both the allocation and the outline application. He explained that he is also proposing to remove the public play area from the site and make a commuted sum payment of £67,000 to replace and improve existing play equipment nearby.

Mr Mason stated that the proposed homes are already within walking distance of several play areas and officers agree that it will be better for the local community if the existing play areas are upgraded, making the point that a play area on the application site would duplicate existing provision and would also be located in areas at risk of flooding which may limit its usability. He stated that if the application is approved then FFL will move forward with the reserved matters submission for 54 dwellings which will set out the precise layout and designs of the homes and open space.

Mr Mason made the point that FFL in partnership with Lovells are confident that the scheme is deliverable and they will be able to get on site in good time to ensure that the new homes can be delivered. He added that it is regrettable that the site cannot deliver affordable homes and the site will continue to play an important part in delivering housing, open space and pedestrian and cycle connections for the district whilst fulfilling the aims of the allocation.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French asked whether the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) have been contacted with regards to the existing flood issues which are being experienced? Mr Mason explained that he has already submitted the reserved matters application which contains a detailed surface water drainage scheme and his engineer has been engaging with the LLFA on a pre application basis to agree the plans and the reserved matters application has also been subject to consultation as well from the LLFA and Anglian Water. He explained that their written responses already appears online which approves the drainage strategy and officers will be making their assessment of that shortly. Mr Mason added that it is his understanding that with regards to the surface water flooding issues is that the water comes into the site from a variety of directions and the cut and fill exercise will create contour lines which will channel the water out of the site and out to the countryside to the east taking flood water from the surrounding areas and direct the water in a controlled manner.
- Councillor Mrs French referred to the public open space and the proposed financial contribution that has been stated, and she expressed the opinion that as the Portfolio Holder for Parks and Open Spaces it is far preferable to have better quality play areas as opposed to too many smaller ones.
- Councillor Marks stated that he understands that the £67,000 will be for the park provision, however, he asked for clarification as to what the actual original figure was for the initial proposed park? Mr Mason stated that in the original viability review there was a figure for public open space and it is his understanding that the £67,000 figure was provided by the Public Open Spaces Team.
- Councillor Marks stated that there is going to be a loss of social housing which he is concerned about and he added that there is a very large attenuation pond proposed on site

which will affect land use and he questioned whether that is one of the reasons why there is a loss of social housing. Mr Mason explained that it formed part of the flood engineering works that are creating the areas of raised and lowered land, they can only raise enough land to lower the equivalent amount of land which means that you are not going to flood back into The Elms and as a result it means that there is a tightly defined developable area. He explained that by increasing the developable area to include a play area would mean that there would be the requirement to deepen those channels for surface water which was reaching the point where it would not work anymore. Mr Mason stated that the balance has been struck where the land will be raised and that can only fit 54 homes plus the engineering works means it is no longer viable to provide the 20% affordable homes.

- Councillor Connor stated that whilst he was initially disappointed with regards to the loss of social housing, he is now content that the works being undertaken will alleviate the flooding from the nearby properties which is a very positive step.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Marks asked what the initial figure was which was submitted for the play area? Matthew Leigh explained that officers do not have the information submitted by the applicant in their original assessment for what they were looking to spend. He added that the figure officers have, which has been negotiated in the Section 106 contributions, relates to what the Parks and Open Spaces Team were looking for in 2021 in relation to improvements and enhancements to the existing play facilities and officers have index linked it up to the figure as stated within the officer's report.
- Councillor Marks requested clarity that it was considered in 2021? Matthew Leigh confirmed that the figure has been index linked and is now, therefore, higher as originally the figure was £60,000.
- Councillor Connor expressed the view that £67,000 does not provide much play area equipment and is very frugal amount. Matthew Leigh explained that the issue of the application is viability and the reason that the request for this amount of money is still valid is to make the scheme acceptable because of the shortfall on site.
- Councillor Murphy stated that the land needs to be built on and was earmarked for housing 30 years ago.

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

- Councillor Mrs French stated that the figure of £67,000 is irrelevant because by the time the reserved matters is submitted and works starts it is likely to be another four or five years. She stated that the Council are working on Inspire and Place and Pride projects and as a result of funding from Central Government, every play area across the district is being assessed and reviewed, which could mean that the play areas in Chatteris will be enhanced. Councillor Mrs French expressed the opinion that she is delighted that the flooding issue has been considered by the agent and applicants as it has been a known problem for some time. She stated that she will support the application and referred to the fact that Chatteris Town Council are of the opinion that the application should have been determined by another authority but made the point that the Planning Committee members are very experienced, and she does not agree with the comments that they have made which she finds to be offensive.
- Councillor Connor stated that he agrees with Councillor Mrs French adding that members of the committee are experienced and he was also the Chairman of the County Council's Planning Committee.
- Councillor Marks stated that £67,000 is only a small amount and he is concerned with regards to the loss of the social housing, but there is community benefit by dealing with the drainage further along the road, making the point that the land was earmarked for housing 30 years ago when the bypass was built. He stated that if there was just social housing on the site then it would be unaffordable anyway, meaning the land would never be built on and the flooding issue would still exist and, in his view, this is the best way forward for the land and for the surrounding community and he will support the application.

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

*(Councillor Benney declared that as he was a previous member of Cabinet and sat on the Investment Board who are involved with Fenland Future Limited, he would take no part in the discussion and voting thereon, and following his presentation to the committee he left the meeting for the duration of the item)*

*(Councillor Imafidon declared that as he is a member of Fenland Future Limited, he would not take any part in the item and left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and voting thereon)*

*(Councillor Murphy registered, 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)*

**P78/25      F/YR25/0347/F  
20 NENE PARADE, MARCH, PE15 8TD  
ERECT 2X SELF-BUILD/CUSTOM BUILD DWELLINGS INVOLVING DEMOLITION  
OF EXISTING DWELLING AND GARAGE WITHIN A CONSERVATION AREA**

Hayleigh Parker-Haines 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 application was deferred by the committee in June, with the committee agreeing to demolish the existing 1970's bungalow which is heavily damaged with subsidence and replacing it with two dwellings being acceptable. He explained that he has worked with officers to bring forward a recommendation of approval for 2 three bedroomed chalet bungalows in the middle of March, and he added that the applicant is happy to sign the self-build declaration and pay the fee.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French thanked Mr Hall for taking into consideration the views of the Planning Committee and for working proactively with officers.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that if the application is approved, she would like to see a very strong condition added that during demolition and rebuild there is to be no parking allowed on Nene Parade. Hayleigh Parker-Haines stated that a condition for a construction management plan can be included to secure those details.

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

- Councillor Mrs French stated that the application was heavily debated in June and the agent, applicant and officers have worked successfully together.
- Councillor Benney stated that he welcomes the fact that the agent has worked with officers on the application and the application should now be approved.

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

*(Councillor Marks assumed the position of Chairman due to Councillor Connor's declaration and being unable to Chair the item)*

*(Councillor Mrs French 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)*



*(Councillors Connor and Imafidon declared that as they were not present when the item was debated previously, they would not take part in the item for its entirety)*

*(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 Murphy registered, 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. He added that he also knows the agent but has had no business dealings with him)*

**P79/25**      **F/YR25/0776/PIP**  
**LAND NORTH OF 386 WISBECH ROAD, WESTRY**  
**PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE FOR UP TO 9 X DWELLINGS**

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mrs Simmons, an objector to the proposal. Mrs Simmons stated that the A141 is a major road which is very busy and Westry is an elsewhere location. She made the point that the report makes reference to the site being in Flood Zone 1 but according to the Government's flood maps it does state that the area is located in Flood Zones 2 and 3.

Mrs Simmons explained that there has been planning permission granted at The Paddocks and also across the road but the flood zone appears to be closer than a Flood Zone 1 and it also states that it is very close to Flood Zone 2 and she has severe concerns that her property will be flooded as a result. She explained that her property has suffered from frequent power cuts, along with total loss of water and in some instances very low water pressure, with the infrastructure and pressure on the utilities being unreliable at times and Westry is an isolated area with no nearby shops or facilities and poor public transport links with a very infrequent bus service.

Mrs Simmons added that the properties located across the road took over six months to rent out and, in her opinion, the proposed properties will also find it difficult to attract new residents and occupants will also find it difficult to cross the busy A141. She expressed the view that the surface water run off to existing properties needs to be considered as local residents are very concerned if the flooding situation worsens.

Mrs Simmons explained that the road suffers from severe congestion which causes hazards for emergency vehicles when they are trying to navigate the heavy traffic and, in her opinion, any additional development is only going to add to the existing chaos. She expressed the view that the proposal conflicts with LP3 of the Local Plan and is located in an isolated and unsustainable area, with the flood risk having been misinterpreted, the highway safety is of a concern as the application is on a major road and the demand for housing in Westry is low and the site is agricultural.

Mrs Simmons added that she has lived in other parts of March and moved to Westry in 2011 for a quieter environment and, in her view, the land should be left as agricultural as it has been up to October 2025 and there should be no development on that land when there are other suitable places to develop. She added that the objections which were submitted for the development at 433 Wisbech Road are also relevant to this application due to its proximity to the current application site.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she also lives in Westry and has not experienced any loss of power or water. Mrs Simmons stated that throughout the year she experiences low water pressure, no water and issues with power cuts including twice in the last two weeks, with

the additional dwellings only going to add to the existing problems. She added that she also has concerns with regards to the increase in vehicles which may accompany the new dwellings. Mrs Simmons expressed the view that as the properties will be using cess pits the new residents will not be familiar with how cess pit systems operate and this could also add to environmental issues.

- Councillor Marks asked for clarity that the land was in agricultural use up until October and has the land just now been left as fallow or have they drilled it and left the site? Mrs Simmons explained that until October it was being farmed and there were bales of hay on the site and then following that the land was blocked off and the land was only being farmed at the other end. She stated that neighbouring properties have also noticed that the land has ceased agricultural use in that particular section from October of this year.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall explained that the application is for linear development set between residential properties which, in his opinion, follows the form and character of the area even though at the back there are barn conversions. He stated that on the latest Environment Agency maps the application site is located in Flood Zone 1 and whilst he agrees that the land at the back is in Flood Zones 2 and 3 the application site is in Flood Zone 1.

Mr Hall explained that to the south of the site there are two barn conversions that were approved in Flood Zone 3 and they are single storey and referred to the presentation screen and pointed out the application site which, in his opinion, is infill development, making the point that when you review officers' reports for developments in Westry further to the south it does state that they consider that this part of Westry as part of March. He referred to the officer's presentation and stated that the officer pointed out that an appeal was submitted previously for a site 50 metres to the north of the application site and was refused planning permission and the appeal was dismissed about 7 years ago and that site that was dismissed is located between a large construction company and a large farming business.

Mr Hall explained that the current application site is set between residential properties and it faces all residential properties to the east and the north and a continuous built-up form to the south, with the site to the north being included in the emerging Local Plan and whilst it holds limited weight, in his view, somebody must have held the view that the site would be suitable for development even though it is located further north. He made the point that March Town Council support the application and none of the consultees have objected to a small-scale development for infill development for individual dwellings.

Members asked the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that in front of the proposed development there is a riparian dyke and whilst she appreciates that the application is only for planning in principle, it does need to be taken into serious consideration as does the inclusion of cess pits as there are no main sewers in Westry.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that if she wants to turn right out of her property she must turn left and use the roundabout to turn around. She added that she must rely on the traffic lights at Goosetree for her to turn and she asked Mr Hall to take that all those points into consideration.

Members asked officers the following questions:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she does not feel that there is enough information from any of the authorities especially highways. Matthew Leigh explained that when dealing with planning in principle applications there is no ability to really make any consideration outside the principle.
- Councillor Murphy stated that in the officer's presentation they referred to the site being in an elsewhere location but, in his opinion, it should be classed as an infill application. Tom

Donnelly explained that this is something that was considered for the appeal site on the opposite side of the road and at the time the Council in their refusal did contend that this was an elsewhere location. He explained that the appellant suggested that it did form part of the built-up form of March and that due to the distance from services, facilities and lack of public transport links, the Inspector concluded that this part of Westry would be classed as an elsewhere location.

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

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she has lived in Westry for 41 years and over the years she has seen it grow, with there being one footpath which is not particularly good and that is located on the opposite side of the road. She expressed the view that she has concerns with regards to the dyke and cess pits and she explained that the contractor has been chosen for the traffic lights which are going to be installed at the Hobbs Lot junction with work commencing in the new year. Councillor Mrs French expressed the opinion that Westry cannot take anymore development and if the proposal was for 1 or 2 dwellings then it could be acceptable but in her view 9 is too many. She added that the issue at Lime Tree Close has been ongoing for 5 years and there is still no resolution and ,in her opinion, this application is going to be a nightmare waiting to happen and she cannot support it.
- Councillor Marks stated he has listened to the views of Councillor Mrs French who is the Ward Councillor and knows the area very well, with planning being about land use and the objector to the proposal highlighted her concerns with regards to the additional vehicles and he also has concerns with regard to the highways and the entry and exit from the site. He added that traffic can tail back for some distance which could include lorries turning into the factory if it reopens and, in his opinion, his major concern is regarding the highway, and he also feels that there is not enough detail which has been provided. Councillor Marks stated that he recognises the comments concerning problems with cess pits and low water pressure, but he believes that the proposal is for too many houses on too small a plot with too many vehicle movements and he cannot support it.
- Councillor Connor expressed the view that nine houses are far too many and he cannot support the application.

**Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Marks and agreed that the application be REFUSED 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)*

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

**P80/25      TPO042025  
TAVISTOCK ROAD, WISBECH**

Hayleigh Parker-Haines presented the report to members.

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

- Councillor Benney stated that it does not impede any works which need to be undertaken by having a Tree Preservation Order applied and if works needs to be undertaken to it which deem it to be unsafe then that can be done. He added that it does look to be a nice mature tree, and he feels that the order should be granted.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she concurs with view of Councillor Benney.

**Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the Tree Preservation Order in respect of 1 x Sycamore tree be CONFIRMED.**

**P81/25**

**F/YR25/0787/PIP**

**LAND EAST OF 50 STATION ROAD, MANEA**

**PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE TO ERECT UP TO 7 X DWELLINGS**

David Grant presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Lee Bevens, the agent. Mr Bevens stated that his clients moved into their property in December 1995 and have never suffered from any type of flooding episode or been waterlogged with surface water, with the only occasion where they have had an excess of water was outside their driveway on the road which was as a result of the road drain being blocked. He explained that on investigation the land distributor was blocked solid with mud and dirt which was cleared by highways and there have been no further occurrences.

Mr Bevens explained that report of the annual overflow of sewage detailed in some of the letters of objection has not happened at the address but is a recurring problem at Poppyfields where there is an ongoing issue that Councillor Marks is involved with. He stated that with regards to land drainage, the applicant has been paying drainage rates to Welney Internal Drainage Board on a yearly basis since 1995, and they also pay a farmer to clear the ditches twice a year around their land to cut and to dredge the ditches as and when required, with the applicant being aware that other landowners do not make payments and do not even pay for the pumps.

Mr Bevens added that the applicants' stables, barns, tack room, shed, poly tunnel and paddocks have also been in place for 29 to 30 years and 52 Station Road which is located north of their field also has brick buildings and stables located on the east side of the property which all protrude into the area of the countryside and go beyond the linear frontage of Station Road. He referred to the presentation screen and highlighted the recent planning applications which have been submitted along Station Road, and he pointed out the site to the north at 76 Station Road, which, whilst it had pig sheds located on the site, it still proposed the back land development.

Mr Bevens explained that the Planning Officer has stated that the application does not respect the rural character or linear settlement pattern of Station Road, making the point that the site to the north is also located in Flood Zone 3 and had to raise floor levels of the proposed dwellings. He explained that the next slide demonstrates that it is a triangular shaped area of land where the development is proposed and it is a self-contained parcel of land which is bound by Station Road and existing ditches to the north, south and east, with there being numerous outbuildings established behind the linear frontage of Station Road which were shown on the slide by red squares.

Mr Beven referred to the presentation screen and explained that the slide shows the site layout that formed the permission in principle for the rear of 76 Station Road and highlights the fact that there is a precedent already for back land development along Station Road. He added that whilst the proposed development is behind the frontage of Station Road it is following an example already established by the development already in place and also follows a general concept of development in Manea that has been behind the linear frontage.

Mr Bevens made reference to the developments in Westfield Road in Manea which also has a strong linear frontage and in recent years there have been numerous approved applications including 24 dwellings at Smart Close, 3 approved dwellings approved at land north of 100 Westfield Road, 9 self-build dwellings at 36 Westfield Road, 7 dwellings northwest of 34 Westfield Road and 8 dwellings at 18 Westfield Road, which are all behind a linear frontage. He expressed the view that at some point a scheme sets a precedent for back land development which can be

demonstrated along Westfield Road.

Mr Bevens expressed the view that the site has had the precedent set by the development to the north and is in a more sustainable location being within 10 minutes' walk of the village centre including the school and a 10-minute walk to the station and development is needed to support the station. He added that the applicant wishes to develop the site for a retirement property for themselves and a dwelling for their daughter, with the additional dwellings together with their current property paying for the dwellings to be built as well as supporting the required infrastructure.

Mr Bevens explained that further specific details on drainage, flooding and highways works would be submitted in a future technical details consent and he is confident that all those matters could be addressed without causing flooding to neighbouring properties ensuring highways safety and he asked the committee to look at the benefits of the scheme and support the application.

Members asked Mr Bevens the following questions:

- Councillor Marks referred to the comment made by Mr Bevens in which he was referred to, and explained that Poppyfields is a development which is located by Wisbech Road. He explained that he has been involved with flooding throughout the whole village and he organised a meeting with Anglian Water which Councillor Mrs French also attended to raise the various flooding issues that Manea suffers from.
- Councillor Imafidon asked whether there has been any consultation undertaken with the local Internal Drainage Boards? Mr Bevens stated that he has not consulted with them but there have been comments between the Drainage Board and the Lead Local Flood Authority with regards to the sequential test and it is his understanding that they were satisfied with regards to what has been undertaken and they are looking for further information which would come in as a result of the technical details consent.
- Councillor Marks expressed the opinion that the number of proposed dwellings is too many for such a small area, with Mr Bevens explaining that two of the dwellings will be for the applicant and the applicant's daughter which is only two dwellings out of a possible seven plus the existing house which is there. He added that the other major concern that he has is the actual entrance and exit on Station Road as the existing property stands forward and he has concerns with regards to the visibility as there are vehicles driving more than 40mph along that road and there is also a pavement used by children going to school. Councillor Marks asked whether the proposed properties are going to be joined to the main sewer network or will be using cess pits? Mr Bevens expressed the view with regards to the layout he does not feel that it is a dense layout at all, and the paddock will be retained opposite and the site could take a lot higher density. He stated that the highways have been considered and it is likely that the road would not be offered for adoption and it will be a private road and the visibility splays can all be achieved as that has been reviewed almost as if it was an outline application just committing the access due to the fact that access is the key driver when considering this type of scheme. Mr Bevens made the point that he does not believe that there is an issue with highway safety and visibility at that point even though there are cars which park along that section of road but that cannot be controlled as it is a public highway. He explained that with regards to the drainage for the individual properties that would be committed in the technical details consent and advice would be sought from a drainage expert as to what would be the best solution, but it would not be onto the main system.
- Councillor Connor stated that he has concerns with regards to the site being in the catchment of Manea Town Lots Water Recycling Centre which currently lacks capacity to accommodate any additional flows generated by the proposed development. He added that it is included in Anglian Water's Business Plan and a planned growth scheme investment between 2025 and 2030 but there is no certainty whether this will be undertaken in that time. Councillor Connor made the point that it does state that Anglian Water would object to any connection into the foul network from the proposed development due to the capacity

constraints and the pollution risk. Mr Bevens stated that if the application were to be approved, the technical details consent would be worked out with a drainage consultant to ensure the best solution is achieved and then further discussions would take place with the drainage boards and Anglian Water. He explained that there is an attenuation pond on the planning in principle scheme and with regards to controlling the flow, the flow would be controlled and would go into the ditches. Mr Bevens added that it would form part of the technical details consent and it cannot be committed to in a planning in principle application, but he is aware of the foul water issues and that would be addressed.

- Councillor Connor stated that he does have significant concerns with regards to the foul water.

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

- Councillor Marks stated that he is a member of Manea Parish Council and was not present when this was debated, however, he has read their comments which he agrees with and are all poignant. He expressed the view that it is back land development and whilst the application where the pig sheds used to be located is now taking place, he recalls that it was a requirement to remove pig farms out of villages which was why that was passed. Councillor Marks stated that the application site goes further back compared to the piece of land where the pig farm used to be and the biggest concern he has is still flooding. He stated that across the road from the application site there was an episode of flooding which took place in December 2024 and there was an Anglian Water pump located in the vicinity which then failed and it was discovered that it had backed up all the way from Wisbech Road which is a quarter of a mile away near Poppyfields and the blockage also continued towards Pump Corner. Councillor Marks added that the whole line is struggling to keep up with foul water and whilst the application site could have cess pits installed it is his understanding that the drain at the top of the site is a private drain that must feed in at least a third of a mile into a main drain. He added that the properties will need to be raised to come out of Flood Zone 3 and he made the point that he cannot support the application it is over intensification for the application site and is far too much for the village of Manea.
- Councillor Connor expressed the view that he is not content with the application, and he added that Anglian Water are up to the limit with the flows and, in his opinion, the access is poor and it is back land development, and he cannot support the application in its current state.
- Councillor Marks stated that the agent had referred to Westfield Road regarding various development located there and he added that the committee recently refused an application and the Planning Inspector found against that but there was not a cost implication. He added that the Inspector's report stated that an application further down the road for four bungalows with almost exactly the same entrance of the property being located close to the road was refused by the Inspector and he agreed with the Council. Councillor Marks made the point that he sees this as a very similar application as it is back land with the access and the vision issues.

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

*(Councillor Marks declared, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Manea Parish Council but was not present when this item was discussed. He further declared that he is a member of the Manea and Welney Internal Drainage Board)*

**P82/25**

**F/YR25/0796/PIP**

**LAND NORTH OF 120 LONDON ROAD, CHATTERIS**

**PERMISSION IN PRINCIPLE TO ERECT UP TO 1 X DWELLING**

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 application is for an infill plot for a single dwelling to match in with a continuous linear development along London Road and the dwellings along that part of London Road are all individually designed dwellings which have been there for several years. He referred to the officer's report with regards to the bowling green which was a private bowling green and its use ceased in 2014 when the owner passed away, with it never being a public facility and was only for the owner's private use and was never a commercial bowling green as Chatteris already has one located in Wood Street.

Mr Hall explained that in the officer's report it refers to various refusals and appeals on the site in 2006 and 2008 which he agrees with and added that they were considered under a different Local Plan. He stated that all along the front of the site on the opposite side of the road there is a footpath which stretches for almost the whole length of London Road and the site is in Flood Zone 1.

Mr Hall referred to the presentation screen and highlighted the red star which indicates the application site, and he explained that to the northeast of the site the construction for Hallam Land has commenced and to the south of the application site down London Road and Stocking Drove there have been various planning permissions given since 2019 and some of those are built out, and some are partway through construction. He expressed the opinion that the committee have already accepted that this area is part of the built-up form of Chatteris under LP3 of the Local Plan and there are no objections to the application from any consultee or members of the public and Chatteris Town Council support the application.

Mr Hall expressed the view that it is an ideal site for an individual dwelling to match in with the adjacent development in Flood Zone 1 and it has not been used for agricultural land for at least 20 to 30 years. He added that it has a footpath link and matches in with the adjacent built-up form of linear development.

Members asked Mr Hall the following questions:

- Councillor Imafidon stated that he has noted that the bowling green is not a public asset and was last used in 2014 but as it appears to be well maintained he would like to know what it has been used for since that time? Mr Hall explained that it is his understanding that the family just maintain the site as a green piece of land as the family still reside there.

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

- Councillor Murphy stated that, within the presentation, officers have stated that the site floods, but he has lived in Chatteris for 80 years and he has never known the site to flood. He added that the application is for the family and the land is a private piece of land and he added that officers are of the opinion that the site cannot be built on adjacent to the bungalow which the family already own. Councillor Murphy stated that further down the road, there are more properties being built and they are located much further outside of the area and should never have been allowed to be built there. He added that the application is for one dwelling located next to another bungalow which will allow a family to live near each other and, in his view, it should be approved.
- Councillor Benney stated that he agrees with the points made by Councillor Murphy and added that the bungalow which is already there is a replacement bungalow as the previous property on the site suffered from subsidence and had to be demolished and rebuilt. He added that it was a private bowling green and the proposed dwelling will be for a family member to be able to reside next door to their mother which he applauds. Councillor Benney stated that the officer report states that the site is located outside of Chatteris and he disagrees with that as, in his opinion, there is at least a mile in distance from the bottom of Ferry Hill where the sign says Chatteris as you come from Somersham. He explained that this has been very well debated by the committee and there must be at least 10 further

houses which are built further along going out towards the road sign which have already approved. Councillor Benney expressed the view that the principle of development has already been well established in the area and he is confident that the bungalow will be built to a high standard and he will support the application.

**Proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Benney and agreed that the application be GRANTED against the officer's recommendation.**

Members do not support the officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that the proposal is located inside the Chatteris area, and they feel that the precedent of development has already been set and members need to be consistent

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

*(Councillor Murphy 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. He added that he also knows Matthew Hall but has no business dealings with him)*

3.19 pm

Chairman