
F/YR25/0937/PIP

Applicant: Mr Ian Gowler

**Agent : Swann Edwards Architecture
Limited**

Land South Of Woodlands, 20D Primrose Hill, Doddington, Cambridgeshire

Permission in principle for 2 x self-build/custom build dwellings

Officer recommendation: Refuse

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

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This application seeks Permission in Principle (PiP) for the development of up to two dwellings on land to the south of Woodlands, 20D Primrose Hill, outside the development footprint of Doddington.
- 1.2 Under Policies LP3 and LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan, the site is considered to be in an 'Elsewhere' location, where new housing is only supported if it is demonstrably essential to a rural-based enterprise. No such justification has been provided. The development would therefore be in direct conflict with the settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy of the Local Plan.
- 1.3 The site is visually and physically detached from the main settlement and would result in the urbanisation of open countryside, with associated harm to rural character.
- 1.4 Although the density of development proposed is low and could be accommodated physically on the site, this does not overcome the fundamental policy objections regarding location and use. Other technical details, including highway safety, would be addressed at the second stage (Technical Details Consent). The County Highways Officer objects to this application, expressing concerns regarding inter-vehicle visibility splays.
- 1.5 Therefore, the proposal fails to comply with the Local Plan's spatial strategy. Accordingly, the application is recommended for refusal.
- 1.6 Additionally, the application is submitted for self/custom build dwellings. As there is no mechanism with a PiP application to secure the type of residential accommodation it is not considered that approving the application would be procedurally correct.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1 The application site is located outside of the settlement footprint of Doddington. The site is situated to the east of Primrose Hill and is in cultivated woodland use. Adjacent development consists of dwellings at 22a and 22b Primrose Hill to the south of site, a replacement dwelling named Wildwood to the west, as well as a commercial development named The Quadrant. Arable fields lie to the east, and beyond arable fields to the north lies a dwelling of 'exceptional' design approved under reference F/YR21/0015/F. An 'exceptional' design dwelling is an exemption from normal rural residential policy and is supported by Paragraph 84 (previously Paragraph 80) of the NPPF.
- 2.2 The site is bordered by a 1 metre high timber post and rail fence to the south, beyond which is the driveway which serves 22b Primrose Hill. A 1 metre high timber post and rail fence borders the rear of the site to the east, with an established area of trees to the western site frontage. The site is bordered by an established area of trees and lines of infant trees to the north. A drain is located with the established areas of trees along the western site frontage.
- 2.3 The site lies in Flood Zone 1 but is located immediately adjacent to Flood Zones 2 and 3 to the south and east. The site is not subject to a low, medium or high annual likelihood of surface water flooding on the Environmental Agency mapping.

3 PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The 'Permission in Principle' (PiP) application is for residential development of up to two dwellings. The current proposal is the first part of the permission in principle application, which only assesses the principle issues namely:
- (1) location,
 - (2) use; and
 - (3) amount of development proposed,
- 3.2 This seeks to establish whether the site is suitable in principle. Should this application be successful, the applicant would have to submit a Technical Details application covering all other detailed material planning considerations. The approval of PiP alone does not constitute the grant of planning permission.
- 3.3 A location plan, existing site plan and indicative site layout (although not a requirement of a PiP application) accompany this submission. These indicate the removal of some existing trees on the site and the provision of two detached dwellings with associated parking and garaging together with the provision of an access road utilising the existing site access serving 22b Primrose Hill.
- 3.4 Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:
<https://www.publicaccess.fenland.gov.uk/publicaccess/>

4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

No relevant site history.

5 CONSULTATIONS

5.1 Doddington Parish Council – 04 January 2026

Further to your email dated 18th December 2025, Doddington Parish Council is objecting to this application on the following grounds.

- a) This part of Primrose Hill, being a significant distance from the developed boundary of Doddington, is cultivated woodland where any proposed development needs to be fully justified by special circumstances. None have been provided to support this PIP application and the application therefore conflicts with FDC's Policy LP3.*
- b) There is a conflict with Policy LP12 as the development would have an adverse impact on the character of the woodland.*
- c) This section of Primrose Hill has a speed limit of 60mph whether traffic has left Doddington travelling towards Chatteris or heading towards Doddington from Chatteris. Any traffic needing access to or from the development must join Primrose Hill. This area of Primrose Hill has no street lighting or a footpath along the roadway to cater for pedestrians. These two dwellings will create additional traffic movements thereby increasing the risk of accidents on this busy, fast road.*

I trust that FDC will refuse planning permission for this PIP application.

5.2 Fenland District Council – Environmental Services – 12 January 2026

Guidance is given as to private driveway construction standards, shared collections points, a swept path plans as well as notification for new residents of collection and storage details.

5.3 Cambridgeshire County Council – Highways Officer – 08 January 2026

After a review of the submitted information the highways authority objects to this application for the following reasons:

1 - The submitted achievable inter-vehicle visibility splays shown do not meet the minimum requirements. These should be 2.4m x 215m in either direction. These must be within the existing highways extent or under the control of the applicant. These are the current standards used to determine any application in the interests of the safety of the highway and the users of the highway including the residents of the future property.

Based on the information submitted for review, at this time I have no other option but to advise that this application be refused in its current form.

5.4 Fenland District Council – Environmental Health – 23 December 2025

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

In the event that Permission in Principle is granted and a further application for the site is submitted in the future, this service may recommend a condition on working time restrictions during the construction phase due to the close proximity to

existing noise sensitive receptors.

5.5 Local Residents/Interested Parties

Six letters have been received in support of the application from Primrose Hill x 2, Thistledown and Walden Close in Doddington, Fenland Close in Wimblington, and Angoods Lane in Chatteris.

Supporting Comments	Officer Response
Provision of self build housing	This will be assessed in the use section.
Provision of family housing	This will be assessed in the use section.
The projected plans will blend in with the surrounds	This will be assessed in the location section.

6 STATUTORY DUTY

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

7 POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

Chapter 2 - Achieving sustainable development
Chapter 4 – Decision-making
Chapter 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
Chapter 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
Chapter 11 – Making effective use of land
Chapter 12 – Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
Chapter 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Chapter 17 – Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

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

National Design Guide 2021

Context

Identity
Built Form
Nature
Uses
Homes and Buildings

Fenland Local Plan 2014

LP1 – A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
LP2 – Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents
LP3 – Spatial Strategy, the Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside
LP4 – Housing
LP5 – Meeting Housing Need
LP12 – Rural Areas Development Policy
LP13 – Supporting and Managing the Impact of a Growing District
LP14 – Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland
LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland
LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District
LP19 – The Natural Environment

Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments in Fenland SPD 2014

DM3 – Making a Positive Contribution to Local Distinctiveness and character of the Area
DM4 – Waste and Recycling Facilities
DM6 – Mitigating Against Harmful Effects

8 KEY ISSUES

- 8.1 This application is made pursuant to the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) (PiP regulations) that provides opportunity for an applicant to apply as to whether 'Permission in Principle' is acceptable for a site, having regard to specific legislative requirements and, in accordance with the NPPG (58-012-20180615) as to whether the location, land use and amount of development proposed is acceptable. The permission in principle (PiP) consent route is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle for proposed development from the technical detail of the development. The approval of PiP alone does not constitute the grant of planning permission.
- 8.2 The PiP consent route has 2 stages: the first stage (or Permission in Principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed.
- 8.3 Evaluation of a PIP must be restricted to the issues highlighted above; even if technical issues are apparent from the outset they can form no part of the determination of Stage 1 of the process, Accordingly, matters raised by consultees may not be addressed at this time.

9 ASSESSMENT

Location

- 9.1 Policy LP3 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) identifies Doddington as being a 'Growth Village'. For these settlements, development and new service provision either within the existing urban area or as a small village extension will be appropriate albeit of a considerably more limited scale than that appropriate to the Market Towns.
- 9.2 Policy LP12 identifies that to receive support, the site must be in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village, defined as the continuous built form of the village and excludes individual buildings and groups of dispersed, or intermittent buildings, that are clearly detached from the continuous built-up area of the settlement. The Local Plan does not rely on defined settlement boundaries but rather requires a physical assessment to be made to determine whether or not a site is within a village for the purposes of Policy LP12. This results in a situation where a site could be considered in general terms to be part of the village but not be in the village for the purposes of the spatial strategy. It is considered that the site is visibly separated from the edge of the built-up settlement of Doddington by approximately 1 km when travelled by road.
- 9.3 Policy LP5 sets out the housing targets for the District and the Council has undertaken a full assessment of the Five Year Housing Land Supply in the District and has concluded that the Council is able to demonstrate a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide for more than Five Years' worth of housing against the Council's identified requirements. This is a material consideration and means that any application for new development must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 9.4 It is apparent, that in the case of the application site, it is clearly detached from the remainder of Doddington by agricultural fields and thus outside the continuous built form of the settlement. The majority of the surrounding area is agricultural in use and rural in nature. As such the proposal would constitute development in an 'Elsewhere' location as defined under LP3 which seeks to restrict that to essential rural based development. The proposal is therefore in conflict with Policies LP3 and LP12.
- 9.5 The site comprises of approximately 0.38ha of Grade 3 Agricultural land as defined by DEFRA (Defra Spatial Data Download) and classified as being of good quality.
- 9.6 Policy LP12 ((i) states that development should not result in the loss of high grade agricultural land or if so comprehensive evidence is provided to justify the loss. Para 187 of the NPPF recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land (defined as Grades 1, 2 and 3a) and para 188 (footnote 65) advises that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality.
- 9.7 Having regard to the wider DEFRA mapping site, it is acknowledged that a significant majority of the Fenland District falls within the BMV land with only the urban areas of the main Market Towns, the Kings Delph and Morton's Leam areas and the north of March including the prison area falling within the lower grades. As such, it is recognised that there are very few areas of poorer quality agricultural

land, and it would not be possible therefore for Fenland to meet its housing demands without developing areas of BMV land.

- 9.8 This does not however confer that all agricultural land should be developed, especially where it relates more to open countryside than to the settlement and Officers consider that this is the intention of LP12, Part A (c), supported by the preamble at paragraph 4.7.1 of the Fenland Local Plan. An assessment however should be made as to the relationship of the land to the open countryside, in comparison to the built envelope of the settlement. As stated in the section above, the application site is considered to relate more to the open countryside than the built form, though it is acknowledged that 0.38ha is not significant in the context of BMV land within Fenland. Additionally, it should be noted that the proposal would introduce residential use into a location where are large number of hybrid coppice willow trees are sited. Some of these trees would require removal to facilitate development. While, it should be noted that biodiversity loss does not form part of the assessment criteria at the PiP application stage, the loss of the trees would tie into the character impacts considered elsewhere within this report.
- 9.9 There is a bus stop located 300 metres to the south which can provide a public transport link to good and services in Doddington, Chatteris and beyond. However, the surrounding area is unlit and is not served by a footpath. As such it is not considered to be reasonably or sustainably linked to Doddington.
- 9.10 As per Policy LP3, development not falling into one of the categories set out in the settlement hierarchy will fall into the “elsewhere” category and will be restricted to that which is demonstrably essential to the effective operation of local agriculture, horticulture, forestry, outdoor recreation, transport or utility services or to minerals and waste development. Whilst the supporting information states that “these self-build plots could also be used to be workplace homes, such as homes offices or small businesses”, the dwellings do not appear to be specifically required for the industries set out in Policy LP3. The proposed site area and number of dwellings could lead to tandem development given the existing agricultural land in the vicinity of the site. Allowing development in this location would result in an unacceptable urbanisation and set a precedent for future development, further eroding the open character of the area.

Use

- 9.11 The development as applied for is described on the application form as “2 No. self-build dwellings”. As there is no legal mechanism to secure Permission in Principle for a specific type of residential accommodation (either through a legal agreement or by way of planning condition) it is not considered that any weight could be given to this and indeed to approve the application as submitted would be questionable procedurally.

Amount of Development Proposed

- 9.12 The application seeks Permission in Principle for two dwellings on a site of 0.38ha which will equate to a density of approximately 5 dwellings per hectare. The proposal site is in a remote location with only sporadic dwellings in the vicinity which are located in larger plots. More intensive development in this rural location is not considered to be appropriate. The detailed layout and design will be for consideration at the Technical details stage. In terms of consideration of amount, the proposal is acceptable.

Matters Raised During Consultation

9.13 Doddington Parish Council have raised concerns in terms of the highways impact of the proposal. Other concerns are raised by the Parish Council with regard to loss of woodland and proposed location which are addressed elsewhere in the report. Cambridgeshire County Highways have also raised concerns at this stage, with regard to vehicular visibility splays. Additional details regarding visibility splays would need to be considered at the Technical Details stage or subject of a subsequent application. The concerns of both Doddington Parish Council and the County Highways Officer, whilst not a reason to refuse Permission in Principle, are considered to further highlight the unsuitable location of this development.

10 CONCLUSIONS

10.1 As indicated above it is only location, use and amount of development that may be considered at the first 'permission in principle stage' and it is considered that the location and use of the site for residential development is unacceptable due to the conflict with the settlement hierarchy of the Local Plan.

10.2 The principle of development is not supported as the site does not adjoin the built form and whilst the proposal is for self-build dwellings there is no planning justification for such a dwelling in this location.

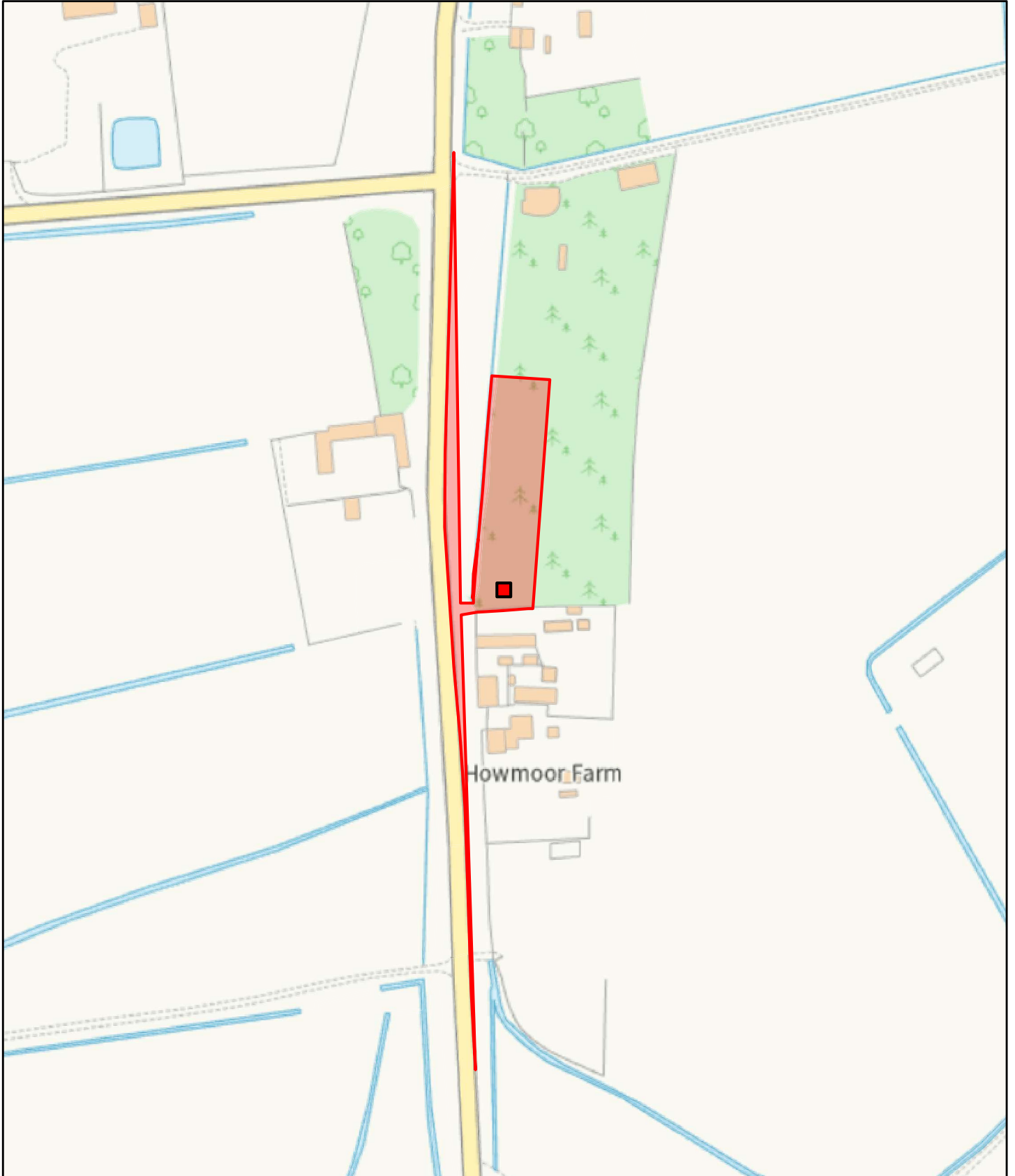
10.3 As the development is applied for as self/custom-build and there is no mechanism to secure this through a PiP application it is not considered to be procedurally appropriate to approve the application.

10.4 As such the recommendation is one of refusal.

11 RECOMMENDATION

Refuse; Permission in Principle for the following reasons:

1.	The application site constitutes an area of land located outside the developed footprint of Doddington. Development of this site would result in an unacceptable urbanisation, extending development into the countryside. It would likely set a precedent for future development, further eroding the character of the area and the open countryside. The development proposal will be in an 'elsewhere' location contrary to Policies LP3 and LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014). As such any residential development on this site will be contrary to the above policy considerations and thus, in terms of location and use, the Planning in Principle application fails.
2.	The development as applied for is "2 No. Self build dwellings". There is no mechanism to secure a particular form of residential development when granting a Permission in Principle application and consequently to therefore approve the application as submitted is considered to be procedurally incorrect.



12/18/2025, 12:58:00 PM

 Fenland District Boundary

