

# PLANNING COMMITTEE



**WEDNESDAY, 17 JULY 2019 - 1.00 PM**

**PRESENT:** Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor A Hay (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs S Bligh, Councillor A Bristow, Councillor S Clark, Councillor A Lynn, Councillor C Marks, Councillor N Meekins, Councillor D Patrick and Councillor W Sutton,

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor P Murphy,

Officers in attendance: Jo Goodrum (Member Services & Governance Officer), Nick Harding (Head of Shared Planning), David Rowen (Development Manager) and Gavin Taylor (Senior Development Officer)

The following Councillors were present in the public gallery, but took no part in the planning meeting. Councillor Mrs Laws, Councillor Skoulding, Councillor White from March Town Council and Councillor Wilkes.

## **P14/19      PREVIOUS MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of 19 June 2019 were confirmed and signed.

## **P15/19      PLANNING APPEALS**

David Rowen presented a report to members with regards to appeal decisions received on applications over the last month and explained this will be a standing agenda item going forward.

## **P16/19      F/YR18/1136/F LAND SOUTH WEST OF 1 TO 23 SPRINGFIELD AVENUE, MARCH. ERECTION OF 40 DWELLINGS COMPRISING OF 4X1 BED AND 4X2 BED 2 STOREY STOREY FLATS;20X2 STOREY 2 BED AND 12 X2STOREY 3 BED DWELLINGS,FORMATION OF A SURFACE WATER LAGOON ,PUMPING STATION AND NEW ACCESS TO CRICKET CLUB**

The committee had regard to its inspection of the site (as agreed in accordance with the Site Inspection Policy and Procedure (minute P19/04 refers)) during its deliberations.

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

Members received a presentation in objection to the application, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Mr Peel.

Mr Peel explained that he has lived in his property since 1995 and referred to the overhead projector where he highlighted to members a map which he had asked to be displayed. He pointed out the fields which had been maintained at that time, however shortly after the year 2000 the area was left to deteriorate by the landowners. There has been no maintenance carried out and the area has been left to remain in a natural state.

Mr Peel identified a gentleman who has been maintaining the lane and as far as he is aware there have been no issues raised with regard to trespass.

Mr Peel added that with regard to hazards, there is not the need to have any additional hazard and there is already pedestrian and cycle traffic twice a day. He explained that trying to cross Springfield Avenue can be dangerous when traffic turns into the road from The Avenue.

He added that the officer has already outlined the plans which contravene the set out plans however the Executive Officer states that the plans are agreeable.

He stated that a Wildlife Trust Officer has stated that March has a deficit of natural green space and had highlighted this when he had reviewed the phase 1 habitat map of the town had been reviewed.

Mr Peel stated that in 2018 the Government had published a summary of targets for a 25 year environment plan to integrate wildlife and humans together. He drew member's attention to the conclusion on page 151 of the plan and added everyone feels better after a walk in the park or the woods. He added that the people of Fenland need their open spaces and listed some of the other aspects listed within the plan.

Mr Peel referred to the Fenland Local Plan and referred to some land which was gifted to the Town by a family in the 1950's. He mentioned that the old nursery grounds should be restored and made into a community wildflower and orchard facility. He added that the only green area which he believes has been created in March in the last ten years is the Crematorium.

He concluded by questioning who would want to build over the high pressure gas main.

Members received a presentation in support of the application, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Mr Kratz, the Agent.

Mr Kratz stated that the proposal is on land, half of which is part of the allocation, but all of it is within the built framework of March, for a 100% affordable housing scheme, with guaranteed funding for it.

The officer's assessment has stated that in principle the scheme is agreeable and in the summary there are no technical issues standing in the way of the development. All of the County Council statutory consultees have no objection to the scheme technically and there are only 2 proposed reasons for refusal, 1 of which is that there is no Broad Concept Plan and the other is that should there be an appeal, there is no agreement in place to provide affordable housing.

Mr Kratz added that the committee need to weigh up the benefits of the proposal against the harm of it. In his opinion the benefits are largely self-explanatory and the government have stated that the provision of housing should be given significant weight, with the provision of affordable housing should be given an even greater priority.

He added that the other benefits of the scheme include the mitigation of the wildlife impact.

Mr Kratz referred to the allocation maps and stated that the bulk of the Broad Concept Plan site is not accessed through Springfield Avenue junction. The junction is perfectly capable and will save the larger site becoming an even larger cu de sac in its own right. He stated as to whether there is the need for the site to connect with the other site and added that pedestrian and cycle wise would be an advantage but for vehicular movements it would be a dis benefit.

Mr Kratz added that it is highly likely that the other site will be subject to a viability assessment, which in his opinion will result in the scheme not being able to provide affordable housing.

Mr Kratz concluded by saying there is no harm in terms of affecting the viability of the other site

and no issues concerning the access point of the other site. He added by saying that there is no harm in stating that the other site is going to be denied an opportunity from the proposal before members today.

March Town council have offered support to the application and with regard to the local objectors, there are some local to the proposed site but also some who live a considerable distance from the area.

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

- Councillor Sutton commented that he has some concerns about the Broad Concept Plan and also with the proposed site. The dog leg area which can be seen on the map will be more of a hindrance to a developer of the BCP land than an advantage. He added that he does not see the proposal as detrimental to the Broad Concept Area and work is commencing on the production of the new Local Plan, and in his opinion there will still be issues with the land owners.
- Cllr Sutton stated that the proposal is for social housing and there are in the region of 1500 people on the housing list and the proposal is 100% affordable, on balance in his opinion he believes the committee should go against the officer's recommendation and approve the application.
- Councillor Benney commented that in his opinion, the land is open for development. He added that if there are 2000 houses to be built, this would not be the entrance for them to be built and there would be multiple entrances into the development. He stated it brings the benefits of much needed housing, both affordable and social and will also be of benefit for the people of March. He added that with regard to the Broad Concept Plan for development, there will be multiple entrances when the plan comes forward, however if we continue to wait for the Broad Concept plans to be brought forward, there could be little housing being built. He stated whilst we have to consider other factors such as wildlife, people do have to come first.
- Councillor Hay stated that on many occasions we have stated we need affordable housing and on many occasions due to viability, proposals have been refused. She added that with regard to the proposal before members there is a guarantee of 100% affordable housing which is backed by the Combined Authority. She questioned that if this application is not approved will the Combined Authority continue to support affordable housing in this area in the future. She stated that on balance this application should be approved.
- Councillor Mrs Bligh agrees with all the comments made and added that the need for affordable housing outweighs the issues of the broad concept plan and she will be approving the application.
- Councillor Sutton commented that the earlier comments from Councillor Hay concerning the Combined Authority with regard to the financial aspects should not be a deciding factor when determining this application. The committee are here to decide whether the use of the land is the correct use and at the correct time. He added that not to approve this application would mean an injustice to March, Fenland and the residents a dis service.
- Councillor Meekins commented that he has reviewed the reasons listed by the officers for refusal for this application and questioned whether the BCP and the items listed with regard to offsetting the bio diversity harm cannot be addressed before the application is approved. Cllr Meekins confirmed he was querying LP7, LP5 and LP19. Gavin Taylor clarified that the scheme has been found to mitigate the impact of the development through a compensation scheme, which is a requirement of a financial contribution which is dealt with through a section 106 contribution. Entering into such an agreement prior to the application going before committee could potentially be costly and therefore if applications are approved it is generally subject to a section 106 agreement being approved before the decision is issued. Councillor Meekins asked for clarification and asked that if the application is approved will the two issues stated in the officer's report be addressed. Gavin Taylor confirmed that the reasons stated the last refusal reason states that there is no section 106 agreement in place to secure affordable housing and also the bio diversity offsetting. He stated that because

officers are recommending the application for refusal, it has to go down to refusal reasons, in case the application went to appeal.

- Councillor Connor commented that he has noted March Town Council approve the application subject to an adequate section 106 agreement and noted that the March Town Councillors have stated that they have moved away from their neighbourhood plan and made the decision to support the development for 100% affordable housing. Councillor Connor added that the site lies in flood zone 1 and is supported by a flood risk assessment and drainage strategy report. The County Council have raised no objections to a condition securing a surface water scheme and there are no highway objections. Councillor Connor stated that Fenland Housing have supported the application and expect the dwellings to come forward as affordable housing and the current tenure is expected as 70% affordable rented and 30% immediate tenure which would equate to 7 affordable rented homes and 3 immediate tenure. Councillor Connor mentioned that going forward the 2000 homes will need businesses and schools and some provision for access and reiterated the point Councillor Sutton and Benney had alluded to with regard to the stalling of other Broad Concept Plans. He concluded that this application cannot be turned down.
- Nick Harding commented that having listened to the debate a number of members have highlighted the benefits of the scheme and principally that the delivery of 100% affordable housing scheme outweighs the disadvantage of the scheme in the context of our planning policy in relation to the BCP for the site and if that is the proposal that members are going to make then he asked that delegated authority be given to officers to apply development conditions and provision for the section 106 contributions in respect of the 100% affordable homes and the biodiversity contribution.
- Councillor Lynn asked whether the archaeological investigations can also be included. Nick Harding added that this will be included as part of the conditions.

The substantive reasons given by members to against the officer's recommendation were the committee on balance feels that the benefits outweigh the disadvantages according to the policies that are referenced in the officers' report.

**Proposed by Councillor Connor, seconded by Councillor Lynn and decided that the application be APPROVED, against the officers recommendation, subject to Section 106 and conditions being approved.**

**P17/19**

**F/YR19/0257/F**

**SITE OF FORMER 24 HIGH STREET, WISBECH, DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING IN WISBECH CONSERVATION AREA AND ERECTION OF 3NO TEMPORARY STORAGE/TOILET BUILDINGS.**

The Committee had regard to its inspection of the site (as agreed in accordance with the Site Inspection Policy and Procedure (minute P19/04 refers)) during its deliberations.

David Rowen presented the report to members and drew their attention to the update report which had been circulated.

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

- Councillor Sutton questioned why this proposal was not submitted in the original application.
- Councillor Patrick commented that there has been the loss of so many buildings in Wisbech and the building in question is central to the town of Wisbech and the demolition needs to take place and move on.
- Councillor Meekins has recently visited Constantine House which backs onto the proposed site before the committee today and has been advised by the developer that pigeons nesting in the site are causing considerable damage. He added that although he is not over enamoured with the proposal, anything is better than the current eyesore.

**Proposed by Councillor Sutton, seconded by Councillor Patrick and decided that the application be APPROVED as per the officer's recommendation.**

**P18/19      F/YR19/0352/F  
LAND WEST OF 126-128 ELLIOTT ROAD, MARCH.ERECTION OF 3XSINGLE STOREY 3 BED DWELLINGS WITH DETACHED GARAGES**

The Committee had regard to its inspection of the site (as agreed in accordance with the Site Inspection Policy and Procedure (minute P19/04 refers)) during its deliberations.

David Rowen presented the report to members.

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

- Councillor Sutton commented that this site has been presented to members on 4 previous occasions and the proposal before members today is the best option seen to date.
- Councillor Hay stated that she felt that it was a good scheme because it tidies up the area. She added that in 2017, March Town Council recommended approval for a proposal of 4 dwellings, however in 2019, they are recommending refusal for over development where it is fewer dwellings. She commented that she will be agreeing with the officer recommendation for approval.
- Councillor Patrick stated that he was impressed with the layout of the plans and he concurs with Councillor Hay with regard to the reasons for refusal from March Town Council. He added that the proposal does tidy up the area and will make it far more pleasant.
- Councillor Mrs Bligh added that this is not over development and will complete the area.
- Councillor Lynn added that in his opinion the road needs to be completed before residency and also there is an archaeological investigation required.

**Proposed by Councillor Patrick, seconded by Councillor Mrs Bligh and decided that the application be APPROVED as per the officer's recommendation.**

**P19/19      F/YR19/0362/F  
LAND NORTH WEST OF SEAFIELD FARM, GOREFIELD ROAD, LEVERINGTON, ERECTION OF 3 X 2 STOREY, 3 BED DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED DOUBLE GARAGES**

The Committee had regard to its Inspection of the site (as agreed in accordance with the Site Inspection Policy and Procedure (minute P19/04 refers)) during its deliberations.

David Rowen presented the report to members and drew their attention to the update report which had been circulated.

Members received a presentation in support of the application, in accordance with the Public Participation Procedure, from Mr Gareth Edwards, the Agent.

Mr Edwards explained that the proposal is before the committee after working closely with the planning officer and he asked for his thanks to be recorded. He stated that the application is purely a change in design for what has been previously approved and is in the same location. He confirmed that the application has the support of all the statutory consultees with the exception of the Parish Council who have commented that it is over development, however in Mr Edwards opinion he feels that it is not over development as there has already been approval for 3 dwellings on the site and it is purely a change of design.

He stated that in his opinion, the proposed dwellings are more in keeping with the area and this view is further supported as there have been no local objections.

Members asked Mr Edwards the following questions:

- Councillor Sutton asked for confirmation of which drain is the responsibility of the Internal Drainage Board. Mr Edwards confirmed it is the drain that is the drain to the left hand side and there will be the normal agreement in place.

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

- Councillor Sutton commented that he cannot see how any Planning Inspector can state that the proposal is adjacent to the village. He added that he will support this scheme.
- Councillor Hay stated that members need to be mindful that we are here to determine the application before them today. She added that permission has already been granted for 3 houses irrespective of the Inspectors decision, and irrespective of whether we agree with it. It would prove very difficult to refuse this application, as it is just a change of design and she will be supporting it.

**Proposed by Councillor Meekins, seconded by Councillor Sutton and decided that the application be APPROVED, as per the officer's recommendation.**

*(Councillor Patrick left the meeting following this agenda item)*

**P20/19      F/YR19/0447/F  
19 RICHARDS CLOSE, MARCH. ERECTION OF A 1.05 METRE HIGH BRICK  
WALL TO FRONT BOUNDARY**

The Committee had regard to its Inspection of the site (as agreed in accordance with the Site Inspection Policy and Procedure (minute P19/04 refers)) during its deliberations.

David Rowen presented the report to members and drew their attention to the update report which had been circulated to members.

*(Councillor Mrs French had registered to speak in support of this application, however withdrew her request.)*

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

- Councillor Sutton asked whether the bricks are 4 inches or 9 inches. David Rowen stated the officers do not have that level of detail, however they are satisfied that as long as the wall does not exceed the height specified, the fact as to whether it is single or double skin will not have any impact on the character of the area.

**Proposed by Councillor Mrs Hay, seconded by Councillor Clark and decided that the application be APPROVED as per the officer's recommendation.**

2.36 pm

Chairman