

PLANNING COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY, 20 JANUARY 2021 - 1.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor M Cornwell, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor A Lynn (Vice-Chairman), Councillor C Marks, Councillor Mrs K Mayor, Councillor N Meekins, Councillor P Murphy, Councillor R Skoulding and Councillor W Sutton, Councillor A Miscandlon (Substitute)

APOLOGIES: Councillor Mrs M Davis,

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

P57/20 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the 16 December 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

P58/20 F/YR20/0884/F LAND TO THE NORTH OF, 15 BURNTHOUSE ROAD, TURVES, ERECT A DWELLING (2-STOREY, 4-BED)

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mr Matthew Hall, the Agent.

Mr Hall stated that the application site is surrounded on three sides by well established, 2-storey residential properties. He made the point that the Environment Agency Flood Map indicates that the whole of Turves is in Flood Zone 3 and at a previous Planning Committee a development had been approved in Wisbech, which is covered by Flood Zones 2 and 3 and next to a major river, however, applications in the villages of Turves and Benwick, which are also in Flood Zone 3 have been recommended for refusal. He stated that on review of the Environment Agency Flood Map, Turves although in Flood Zone 3, also benefits from flood defences at the Nene Washes Barrier Bank.

Mr Hall stated that when the application was submitted, the Planning Officer had initial concerns with regards to the size of the dwelling and the location of it, but the officer has been proactive and worked with him and as a result the design and position have now been revised, which can be seen in the officer's report. He stated that an independent Flood Risk Assessment has been submitted as part of the application, which has been approved by the Environment Agency.

Mr Hall stated that the site did have previous planning approval in 2005 for a residential dwelling and expressed the view that whilst the officer's report states that Whittlesey Town Council have concerns over the application, they were consulted on the first design which was for a larger dwelling, however, he does not think they have been reconsulted since the proposal has been scaled back. He drew members attention to the map on the presentation screen, and highlighted the red hatched area, which indicates the location for the proposed 2-storey detached dwelling, and then he drew members attention to the extreme right of the map, hatched in dark blue, which

was the site that David Rowen had referred to in the officer's report, which was approved for a pair of semi-detached dwellings in 2020, but this site is not on the market and no works have commenced. He stated that the site also had a Flood Risk Assessment, a sequential and exemption test, and that was approved.

Mr Hall referred to the green hatched area on the map, which is less than 100 metres from the proposed dwelling, where in 2019 planning permission was approved for a pair of semi-detached dwellings, which has now been built out and one of the properties has been sold and the other is for sale. He stated that a Flood Risk Assessment was carried out for that site and approved by the Environment Agency and added that those properties are in close proximity to the application being determined.

Mr Hall expressed the view that when driving through the Turves, there does not appear to be any plots available for sale. He concluded by stating that there have been no objections from neighbours, highways or the Environment Agency and expressed the opinion that the application is an infill development in accordance with the Local Plan and officers are happy with the design and the layout.

Members asked Mr Hall the following questions:

- Councillor Sutton asked Mr Hall to clarify, that should the application be approved, what mitigation measures he is proposing in the exception test? Mr Hall stated that his understanding is that in the Flood Risk Assessment it refers to raising the floor levels by 0.3 metres above the ground and the normal level is 0.15 so in this case the floor level is being raised by an additional 2 courses of brickwork and there has also been a request for other flood mitigation measures, which include waterproof plasterboard and sockets, and covers over vents. Councillor Sutton asked for further clarity with regard to the exception test and Mr Hall stated that various renewable energies have been included to make the building highly insulated above the requirement of Building Regulations.

Members asked officer's the following questions:

- Councillor Lynn asked how the application could fail the sequential test if there are no other plots of land available? David Rowen stated that the adopted Supplementary Planning Document in respect of flood water and flooding sets out what is deemed to be acceptable and the policy is clear in its statement that it is purely sites with planning permissions which are considered to be sequentially preferable.

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

- Councillor Benney stated that whatever building takes place in Turves is going to be located in Flood Zone 3. He added that he did have concerns with regards to water run off, but is pleased to hear Mr Hall has confirmed that he is going to build 2 bricks high. Councillor Benney stated that the reason for refusal appears to focus on the sequential test and, in his opinion, the application site would suit a dwelling and he can see no reason to refuse the application. He added that the sequential test aspect of the refusal is irrelevant when two applications for dwellings in the vicinity have been approved over the last couple of years, with site mitigation measures being in place which the agent has outlined. Councillor Benney stated that it is a good application, it is another house and the villages need people moving into them to support them. He expressed the view that he understands the flood risk that has been highlighted, however, there are already houses all around the application site and he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Connor stated that he concurs with the comments made by Councillor Benney and added that there is no land for sale there and 99.9% of land in Turves is in Flood Zone 3, but the application site is worthy of a dwelling. He added that there are numerous dwellings all along Burnt House Road and he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she agrees with the comments made by Councillors Benney and Connor, however, she does have concerns with regard to flooding in the area.

She added that if the application is approved, she would hope that proper drainage is put in place as much of the recent flooding episodes in March have been caused by surface water issues. Councillor Mrs French stated that she was on the Planning Committee when the Red Barn development was built and there were issues at the time, it has now been built for several years. She expressed the view that she cannot see anything wrong with the proposal before Members today and she will support the application.

- Councillor Sutton stated that he agrees with the point raised by Councillor Mrs French that consideration must be given with regard to flooding as to where development is approved, but there are already 60 dwellings in the vicinity and other sites have been approved. He referred to the sequential test and the policy that David Rowen had referred to, where it states available sites, either the same or similar, and added that the site next to the public house is not the same or similar. Councillor Sutton expressed the view that he will be supporting the application in this case.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and decided that the application be APPROVED against the officer's recommendation with delegated authority being given to the Chairman, Councillor Benney and Councillor Mrs French to apply suitable conditions in consultation with officers who will supply a draft list of conditions for consideration.

Members did not support the officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that the officers have not demonstrated that there are alternative sites in Turves, the proposed site is surrounded by development and there are other applications in the vicinity that have been approved which has set a precedent.

(Councillor Benney declared an interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that he knows the Agent, Matthew Hall, in a professional capacity only, but this would not affect his decision making when determining the item)

(Councillor Cornwell took no part in the discussion or voting on this item due to a loss of IT connection)

(Councillors Mrs Mayor and Miscandlon declared an interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that they are both members of Whittlesey Town Council Planning Committee who has commented on the application, and took no part in the discussion or voting on this item)

P59/20

F/YR20/0902/F

LAND SOUTH EAST OF 106, WYPE ROAD, EASTREA; ERECT 3 X DWELLINGS (2-STOREY 5-BED) INVOLVING THE FORMATION OF 3 X NEW ACCESSSES

Gavin Taylor presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mr Gareth Edwards, the Agent.

Mr Edwards made the point that this application for 3 dwellings comes with the support of officers and follows 3 recently completed houses, which were all part of an original outline approval for six dwellings and the site is infilling development which is consistent with the village's capability in LP3. He stated that he was disappointed with the late response from the Environmental Protection Team who only raised issues a couple of days before the deadline date. He explained that there were no issues raised at the outline stage and as the business adjacent to the site is currently building a new workshop, there was no mitigation required for that which was approved in 2020, and he questioned why is there now a need for the application site to have acoustic fencing installed.

Mr Edwards highlighted that the new workshop backs on to the application site as the previous buildings did that it is replacing, with the proposed workshop having no openings towards the site and being hidden by the existing laurel hedging that runs the full length of the boundary and beyond. He explained that, in the report, it points out that 2 bungalows were approved by the Planning Committee the other side of the business and again no acoustic mitigation was required for these and it should be noted that the workshop entrance doors face these bungalows.

Mr Edwards added that the applicant is ready to start work on site on these 3 dwellings as he had expected to start towards the end of last year and is happy to accept the conditions, but would prefer to install a standard 2.1M high close boarded fence instead and retain the laurel hedging.

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

- Councillor Meekins stated that the objections that have been received, appear to be surrounding the potential noise from the business at the back of the site and that if anybody is looking to buy a property with an agricultural engineering works in the vicinity then there must be the acceptance that there will be some noise expected. He added that he will be supporting the officer's recommendation on this application.
- Councillor Lynn expressed the opinion that the officers have done an exceptional job with the mitigation issues on this application. He added that there is bound to be an element of noise resulting from the agricultural works and it is vital for the residents in the dwelling to have a quality of life, even though they are living next door to a business. Councillor Lynn stated that he will be supporting the officer's recommendation for this application with the conditions in place.
- Councillor Cornwell expressed the view that the officers have made the correct recommendation. He added that it appears works have already commenced to clear the site and it will look better to see the frontage of the site replaced with proper hedging and he agreed that agricultural businesses can make noise and he expressed the view that any mitigation put in place strengthens the awareness of whoever is buying it that there is going to be some noise, so it acts as a prewarning. He added that he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she concurs with Members comments and will be fully supporting this application.
- Councillor Sutton stated he agrees with the comments made by Members and added that the agent had highlighted that the Environmental Team had only responded just before determination date which is not ideal but given the Covid situation is understandable. He added that the acoustic fence will benefit the future occupants of the house and for the business too as it will avoid complaints and could affect the businesses' working hours or the way that it operates. He added that he does not consider that the difference in cost of an acoustic fence versus a normal fence on such a scheme would be a problem and he will also support the officer's recommendation.

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

(Councillors Mrs Mayor and Miscandlon declared an interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that they are both members of Whittlesey Town Council Planning Committee who has commented on the application, and took no part in the discussion or voting on this item)

P60/20

F/YR20/0943/F

86 CHARLEMONT DRIVE, MANEA.CHANGE OF USE OF SINGLE-STOREY WORKPLACE BUILDING FROM BUSINESS USE TO 2-STOREY ANNEXE BUILDING (2 X 1-BED ANNEXES) ANCILLARY TO EXISTING DWELLING INVOLVING RAISING THE HEIGHT AND INSERTION OF DORMER WINDOWS, REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING WORKPLACE DOOR WITH DOOR/WINDOW, ERECTION OF CONSERVATORY TO REAR AND INSTALLATION OF EXTERNAL

STAIRCASE (PART RETROSPECTIVE)

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

P61/20

F/YR20/0968/F

LAND NORTH EAST OF, 34 ELDERNELL LANE, COATES; ERECT A DWELLING (2-STOREY 5-BED) WITH FARM OFFICE, 1.2 METRE HIGH (APPROX) WITH 1.6 METRE HIGH (MAX APPROX) METAL SLIDING GATES, DETACHED WORKSHOP AND CATTLE SHED (AS PART OF AN AGRICULTURAL HOLDING)

Gavin Taylor presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mrs Dale who presented to the committee on behalf of her husband, the applicant.

Mrs Dale explained that Mr Dale was born in Coates into a farming family and he applied for a Cambridgeshire County Council holding to get a start in farming, so that he was not reliant upon his family. Mrs Dale added that they married in 1991, she is a Registered Nurse and works as a Deputy Sister at Peterborough Hospital part time, does the bookwork for the farm, is Chair of Governors at Doddington Primary School and alongside him and his daughters, she takes an active role in the care of the animals on the farm.

Mrs Dale explained that they moved to the starter holding at Doddington in 1992, which gave the family a base and an income, enabling them to be able to expand by buying and renting further land. She expressed the view they are now planning for the future, for when their tenancy finishes, and they have sufficient resources to help establish their daughter's farming career, which will release this holding for another young person to start farming. She made the point that when they relinquish their tenancy, they will farm more land at Coates than at Doddington as there are no opportunities to buy further land at Doddington as the land is all farmed by large estates, however, they feel there is more potential to expand their business at Coates.

Mrs Dale explained that Mr Dale classes himself as a mixed farmer and added that although a large part of the farm is arable, he has been involved with cattle all his life, helping with his father and grandfathers' cattle when he was younger and he also had a small herd of Charolais cattle, after getting established at Doddington. She stated that they started a new herd of Dexter cattle in 2011, with their daughter now involved who has a special interest in animals and the Dexter breed was chosen as they are smaller and are safer to handle due to their size. The family have taken them to educational events, e.g. Open Farm Sunday, as children are generally not frightened of them due to their calm manner and their smaller size.

Mrs Dale explained that although their herd is small at present with 8 breeding cows, it is not in its "infancy" and their herd was much larger, however, the decision was taken to reduce numbers, due to their daughter's commitments at school with A levels and health issues following a personal accident. She stated that the intention is to increase their numbers, in preparation for when their daughter has completed her University Degree in Animal Science, Health and Welfare.

Mrs Dale stated that the Dexter cattle work well with the rest of the farm, some of which is in Higher Level Stewardship and this environmental scheme allows the farm to support wildlife, by having grass margins, which provide a suitable habitat for voles, mice, birds and insects, and low grade hay to feed the cattle. She added that as well as being checked at least daily, the cattle need increased supervision at key times, e.g. for breeding, it is important for timing for artificial insemination; also for calving to ensure their safe delivery and for the care of the cow and calf and although the agricultural consultant states that the numbers of cattle do not warrant a full time person living on site, it is these key activities, observing and listening to the sounds the cattle make, that cannot be done effectively by visiting, once or twice a day, being on site allows them to

manage the cattle and the other farm work.

Mrs Dale stated that the dwelling at the farmyard is also the farm office and the place where they hold meetings with different people for the running of the farm. She made the point that farming needs to be carried out with regard to the weather and the temperature, which means that last minute decisions are frequently made.

Mrs Dale stated that the workshop will contain high value tools, having this on the site where they live, means that they can stop to eat their evening meal and then continue to prepare for the next day's work, as well as better security overnight. She made the point that the thefts that are listed by Cambridgeshire Police are mostly from areas away from residences.

Mrs Dale explained that Mr Dale takes an active role in the drainage of the Fens, being District Officer for 2 drainage boards, Ransonmoor at Doddington and Feldale IDB, Coates / Eastrea and is a member of the Middle Level Conservation Committee. She concluded by stating that she hopes further consideration will be given to their application and understand that farming is the family's life, which Mr Dale wishes to continue in the village that he was born.

Members asked Mrs Dale the following questions:

- Councillor Meekins asked for clarification with regard to the number of acres that they are farming in the area where they are proposing to build the dwelling? Mr Dale stated there is a further 50 acres further down the lane and then on the other side of the village there is approximately another 150 acres. Councillor Meekins asked where the cattle are kept at the current time and Mr Dale stated that they are kept in paddocks either side of the current bungalow.
- Councillor Marks asked whether this will become the main farmyard and Mr Dale stated that he has another farmyard in Coates where all the large machinery will be kept, which is in Flood Zone 3 and is down two gravel tracks, situated beside the main East Coast railway line. Councillor Marks asked what the anticipated HGV vehicular movements were in the area and Mr Dale are stated that there will be very few. Councillor Marks questioned where any HGV would be able to turn around as the lane appears to be very narrow on the site layout and Mr Dale stated that on the rare occasion an HGV would need to access the site it would be able to turn around in his yard.
- Councillor Lynn stated that if planning permission was granted is the intention to move into the dwelling as soon as possible or not for another seven years? Mr Dale stated that he is looking to come out of the holding in 5 years' time and he has not applied for the additional two years. He added that in farming, nothing happens quickly, and he has to build sheds for the livestock and set up the infrastructure for the cattle and following that a paddock further down the lane needs to be created. Mr Dale stated that it will take between 4 and 5 years for him to get everything in place and built. Councillor Lynn asked Mr Dale to confirm whether there is the intention to have the property built and for it then to remain empty for 4 or 5 years. Mr Dale stated that he intends to do a lot of the work himself and the buildings need to be constructed for the cattle in the first instance and the pastures and fencing needs to be in place which will take two years. He added that the construction of the bungalow will be the last detail of the application to be sorted and then when the family moves in, the cattle will also be moved at the same time.

Members asked officer's the following questions:

- Councillor Benney asked whether the survey that took place was carried out by undertaking a site visit or was it undertaken by a desk top survey? David Rowen stated that it is usually the case that such surveys are carried out as a desk top exercise and it is very rare that an enterprise, which is mainly arable, would see a consultant actually visit the site and the information that is usually submitted to the consultant includes the acreage that is farmed and the nature of the enterprise in terms of the split of arable to animal which is the only information that the consultant needs and also for the business case it is very rare for a

consultant to need to visit the holding to make a judgement as to whether there is a functional financial case for a dwelling in such a location. Gavin Taylor stated that most agricultural assessments are carried out via desk top exercise and he clarified that the enterprise as a whole is viable and the viability is not in question with this application, the arable business on its own is a viable enterprise and the assessment is on the basis of functional need to ascertain whether a full time worker needs to reside on the site in order to perform the function of the farm and the agricultural side very rarely necessitates the need for an onsite permanent worker. Gavin Taylor explained that it is a functional assessment which has been undertaken on the basis of the livestock enterprise which is likely to yield a functional need, but it is the scale of the enterprise that is in question and the assessment that has to be carried out under LP12 of the Local Plan needs evidence to demonstrate as to whether the existing business demonstrates a functional need.

- Councillor Lynn stated that he notes in the report that 'it is not important at this time' and asked whether that is due to the length of time the applicant has on the County Council farming land, which is 5 years and then possibly two more, which gives seven years. He questioned that if the application had been submitted in four years' time would it be considered that there was more of a need for a dwelling to be on this property? Gavin Taylor stated that the application is to be considered in its current form with the information presented at this time and in four years' time the applicants' circumstances may have changed. Councillor Lynn expressed the view that he considers it to be relevant because the applicant may need to vacate the land that they are occupying.
- Councillor Skoulding asked officers to confirm whether they have ever had experience of dealing with livestock themselves and expressed the view that keepers of livestock need to be on hand 24 hours a day. Gavin Taylor stated that he has not worked with livestock, but he has dealt with other applications that have done. He is aware where temporary workers have utilised permitted development rights to temporarily stay on site during labour or on insemination of livestock.
- Councillor Marks asked whether the desk top study that has been carried out now takes into consideration the three years of setting up the land at this point as opposed to thinking about the future setting up of operation on this site. Gavin Taylor stated that the assessment that was carried out is based on a business plan and predications of that plan as to whether, it currently or could in the future, generate an essential functional need for a full-time worker. He added that with regard to set up times the assessment looks at what the existing need is now and whether in the future, with the scaling up of the business, there would be the need for a full time worker on the site. In both scenarios the consultant has advised a need has not been demonstrated.
- Councillor Cornwell expressed the view that the applicants have substantial land around the area and at some point they will need to move from one property to another and continue the farming operations. He added that at one time Eldernell was the senior of the two settlements of Eldernell and Coates and has always been an agricultural hamlet and over the years things have changed and it has become more of an upmarket residential area in parts of it, but it is still an agricultural based hamlet. He expressed the opinion that there appears to be a focus on the one element of the policy rather than the consideration of a farming operation which is trying to reorganise itself into a more centralised approach and unit.
- Councillor Meekins stated that it is his understanding that the legislation states that the applicant has to prove that there is an essential need to have someone on the site and 8 cows would not justify it to be an essential requirement. He asked officers to clarify what would be the number of cattle that would be required to justify the essential need for somebody to be on site? Gavin Taylor stated that the consultant has used the John Nix pocketbook, which is a standardised document which sets out the standard labour requirements for all types of livestock. He added that the standard labour requirement for one cow is 1.35 standard man days per year and in the submitted business plan, the 20 proposed cows would equate to 0.3 of a full-time worker. Councillor Meekins added that for it to become an essential requirement to have a dwelling on site the applicant would have to

have in the region of 60 cows and asked whether that figure would include calves? Gavin Taylor stated that the cow element refers to the heifers and the followers are the next generation and the projected scale is 20 cows and 50 followers, which is what the John Nix pocketbook sets out as equating to 0.3 of a full time worker.

- Councillor Marks questioned the figures that had been stated and asked whether the figure is only for hands on work for the time spent with the cows or does it also include all the other associated works such as hay making? Gavin Taylor stated that the way the consultant has used the John Nix pocketbook is a standard labour requirement and does not set out what particular elements of labour may or may not be required, but one cow requires 1.35 standard man days per annum for a range of functions required for that cow.

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

- Councillor Lynn stated that, in his opinion, it comes down to whether the family needs a house in the area and whilst he knows that there is an option to pass the County Council land down, the applicants have stated that they want to focus all of their efforts onto the Coates area. He stated that there will come a point in time that the family will need a home in Coates regardless of when that time comes and he would hope that if the house is built he would not want to see it left empty for years. Councillor Lynn added that if the application was approved, he would want to see conditions added to include waste storage, insect control and to ensure adequate light pollution measures are in place.
- Councillor Benney stated that he does not trust or welcome desk top studies, but he can see that the applicants are heavily involved in farming, which is not a job, it is a way of life and farming is currently having a very tough time. He stated that the best form of security for a farmer is to be living on site and added that a herd of cows are very expensive and can be in excess of £100,000 and he commends the applicant for his future plans and wishes him well.
- Councillor Murphy stated that it is refreshing to hear the applicant's plans and commends them for looking into the future and for planning ahead.
- Councillor Marks stated that he welcomes the application and will be supporting it. He added that if the application gets completed in a timely manner it will free up another County Council smallholding to enable a future generation to continue farming.
- Councillor Meekins stated he also welcomes the application and would like to see the pedigree herd of Dexter cattle expand.
- Councillor Connor stated that he commends the applicant on their proposed venture.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she also agrees with the other Members comments, commends the applicant for their foresight, and she will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Sutton stated that he is not sure whether the application is all it seems to be, and he is concerned that the first application that was put in was withdrawn and made no mention of any livestock whatsoever. He added that he has mixed feelings on the application and if the application is approved, he hopes that the livestock issue is as genuine as it has been portrayed.

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Lynn and decided that the application be APPROVED, against the officer's recommendation, with the conditions imposed on the planning permission to be agreed in conjunction with the Chairman, Councillor Benney and Councillor Lynn.

Members approved the application against officer's recommendation as they feels that the application site is the appropriate location to house cattle and for a workshop, the applicant has demonstrated that there is an essential and functional need for the property in order to expand their business which will lead to employment opportunities going forward.

(Councillors Mrs Mayor and Miscandlon declared an interest in this item, by virtue of the fact that

they are both members of Whittlesey Town Council Planning Committee who has commented on the application, and took no part in the discussion or voting on this item)

P62/20

F/YR20/1103/O

LAND SOUTH EAST OF, 43 WHITTLESEY ROAD, MARCH. ERECT UP TO 1 NO DWELLING (OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH ALL MATTERS RESERVED)

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mr Ted Brand, the Agent.

Mr Brand explained that the proposal is for a house, within the curtilage of a bespoke joinery business, for the applicant and his family, which is a much needed for the business and will ensure its future, employment, and prosperity. He referred to the reasons for refusal summarised in the agenda report as there is no 'demonstration' that the house would be 'essential' for the business and failure of flood risk sequential test, diminishment of the open and underdeveloped character of the area, and is too prominent when viewed from the A141 by-pass and, in his opinion, these reasons do not justify refusal as there have been requests from officers for additional information and no communication until last week when he was informed of the officer recommendation and of the committee date.

Mr Brand stated that in light of the agenda report, his client has provided some additional information, which was forwarded to the officer on Monday, and this information included the fact that the applicant is spending increasing time at the business, way over normal working hours, for meeting customers, manufacturing joinery, deliveries, loading/unloading work vehicle, checking security, which is having an adverse effect on his wellbeing, family and the business. He added that there are no other available suitable workplace homes in the area and this family business has been established for 45 years, has always been profitable and has a full order book for the year ahead.

Mr Brand stated that there is no chance of the business closing as the applicant's wife is employed in the business and his oldest child is to join the business, as an apprentice, on leaving school within 18 months. He added that employment is being created with three of the occupants of the house employed on the site and a condition could restrict the occupation of the dwelling to people employed in the business and their families.

Mr Brand stated that with regards to flood risk, the expert consultant's site Flood Risk Assessment concludes low risk and the Environment Agency has no objection to this application. He explained when consulted the Middle Level Commissioners had no objection to this scheme, but have yet to comment to the Council, however, the Middle Level Commissioners and his clients have no knowledge of any flooding on this site or nearby, with a drain on the site boundary taking water from the site to the internal drainage board system.

Mr Brand stated that, with regard to the character of the area, the assessment that the character of the area is "open and underdeveloped" and that the views from the A141 by-pass would be "too prominent" have no evidence to support them and are not justified. He presented photographs to the committee and explained Marina Drive forms a very significant group of dwellings and businesses, many of them visible from the by-pass, with the site having a thick hedge on the east (by-pass) side and hedges and trees on the west boundary and the only significant view will be from a small part of Marina Drive.

Mr Brand stated that the scheme, which is supported by March Town Council, will cause no harm, help address climate change and provide much needed, good quality, housing, with there being, in his opinion, no actual, or real, risk of flooding and added that there is no adverse effect on the

character or appearance of the area. He explained that the scheme will enhance the local economy, and much needed employment, by allowing a long-established, local business to prosper. In this case, he feels the benefits far outweigh the concerns raised and he urged the committee to approve the application.

Members asked Mr Brand the following questions:

- Councillor Meekins asked Mr Brand to clarify where the applicant currently lives? Mr Brand stated that the applicant currently lives in Estover Road and his father lives on the site.
- Councillor Lynn asked Mr Brand to clarify that there was no sequential test submitted? Mr Brand stated that there was no test carried out because there is no real risk of flooding and the Middle Level Commissioners agreed with that fact. He added that although it is Council policy, the scheme was deemed to be in the open countryside, not in March and had a test been carried out it would have failed. Councillor Lynn stated that it may have been helpful to have seen the results of a test and asked whether there was a reason that the access was not included directly onto Marina Drive. Mr Brand stated that the application is to enhance the business and does not include that element.
- Councillor Marks asked for clarity that the applicant's father lives on the site already and the applicant will be living in the proposed dwelling? Mr Brand confirmed this to be the case. Councillor Marks stated that Mr Brand has said that there has been no flooding close by and highlighted that the grass field adjacent to Foxs Marina quite often appears to suffer from flooding and asked Mr Brand to clarify the point he made with regard to not flooding locally? Mr Brand stated he meant on the site or on any land adjacent to the site, with all the land to the north being owned by the applicant's family and as far as he is aware neither has the area to the other side of Marina Drive, including the field with a caravan on by the allotments.
- Councillor Cornwell stated that the frontage of the main site down to the bypass on Whittlesey Road contains very large main drains and the water does drain off into there. He asked for clarity as to whether there is no intention of having an access off Marina Drive onto the plot as he feels that one of the problems of building alongside that part of the bypass is that there is no way of accessing the town unless you use a vehicle, although there is a so called footpath at the bottom of Marina Drive immediately adjacent to the plot, which is so unsuitable for pedestrians to use, he cannot understand why the County Council have never blocked it off as it is dangerous and asked whether there is anyway to exit the site without using a vehicle. Mr Brand stated it is about half a mile to walk to the local supermarket and added that if that is a concern then a condition requiring any access would be acceptable. Councillor Cornwell highlighted that there have been many applications refused for the old public house site, which is close by, because it is almost impossible to cross the bypass due to traffic issues and if applications are refused for that site then why should this application not be turned down based purely on the constant need for vehicles to access and egress the property. Mr Brand stated that the applicant has to drive three miles to and from the application site to his current home and, therefore, the amount of traffic would be reduced. Councillor Cornwell reiterated that his concern is there is no provision for safe pedestrian egress or access to the property.
- Councillor Skoulding stated that before the bypass was constructed it was Peas Hill all the way to Whittlesey Road, which historically never flooded and when the bypass was built, it cut Peas Hill in half and that is why it became Marina Drive. He added that the footpath that Councillor Cornwell had referred to was introduced by the County Council when they built the bypass.

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

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she knows the Whittlesey Road very well, adding that with regard to the flooding issues that have caused concern in recent weeks, this particular area being discussed today has not actually flooded which she finds surprising. She referred to

the extremely large drain that Councillor Cornwell had referred to which helps to alleviate the risk of flooding. Councillor Mrs French referred to officer's report at 5.3 and 5.4, where it states that there have been no environmental objections concerning flooding and to the presentation screen where a picture had been taken from Whittlesey Road where houses and businesses are sited, including a couple of new dwellings and there is also a garage and MOT testing centre and she is surprised that it states in the report that it will be detrimental to the A141, as there are many houses on the A141, which, in her opinion, are not detrimental to that road. She expressed the opinion that the applicant's family business has been operating for 30 or 40 years and the family wish to continue the business and, in her view, the proposal is for a nice house and people are entitled to nice houses if they can afford it and this will go towards supporting local businesses. Councillor Mrs French expressed the opinion that the country is currently starting economic recovery following the Covid 19 pandemic and this proposal is ideal for doing that. She stated that the residents who live in Foxs Boatyard walk to the local supermarket and there is a public footpath there and, in her opinion, this application should be supported and local businesses should be supported. She expressed the view that the state of Marina Drive is appalling and it would not be right to insist that access should be by that road as it is in a dreadful state.

- Councillor Cornwell referred to the presentation screen and stated that the photograph shows the width of the plot at Marina Drive and, in his view, he would not like to see an access included from Marina Drive. He added that it is a good viable business and if the application is approved, he is concerned that one of the main reasons cited to turn down development on the old public house site will disappear.
- Councillor Miscandlon stated that he is concerned with regard to the refuse collection arrangements, due to the excessive length of the driveway, and stated that would need to be looked into further and also, in his opinion, there should be no access permitted for vehicles at any time onto Marina Drive as it is an area which should be stopped off for pedestrians only.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that Marina Drive is a public highway and there are residents from Foxs Boatyard who already reside there and for that reason it cannot be stopped up. She stated that it is her understanding that Cambridgeshire County Council do intend to resurface it. Councillor Miscandlon stated that he meant that access from the proposed site to Marina Drive should not be allowed and Councillor Mrs French agreed that ideal access would be from the exiting site and not Marina Drive.
- David Rowen stated that with regard to access from Marina Drive, if members were minded to grant planning permission then a condition could be imposed to prevent any access being taken through Marina Drive in the future. He added that in terms of the principle of the application, and whilst everybody wants to support local business, members need to qualify how the dwelling is essential for the business to operate in the future. He added that, in his experience, most joinery workshops do not have residential elements to them and there are a lot of industrial sites around the district which do not have residential elements to them.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Skoulding and agreed that the application be APPROVED against the officer's recommendation, with the conditions imposed on the planning permission being agreed in conjunction with the Chairman, Councillor Mrs French and Councillor Skoulding.

Members did not support the officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that the proposal supports a needed local business, provides security for the business by the applicant living on site, is in a sustainable location, would not have a detrimental impact upon the character and visual amenity of the area and has never suffered from flooding due the large drainage ditch in the vicinity.

3.41 pm

Chairman