
F/YR21/0032/F

Applicant: Conservative Club

**Agent: Mr David Broker
David Broker Design Services**

Land North Of 34, Whitmore Street, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire

Erect 4 x 3-bed 2-storey dwellings

Officer recommendation: Refuse

Reason for Committee: Number of representations contrary to Officer recommendation

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The application site is part of the existing car park serving the Conservative Club in the centre of the town of Whittlesey.
- 1.2. The application site is located on land designated as Flood Zone 1.
- 1.3. The proposal is made on the basis that the reduced membership of the club means that the whole car park is no longer required, and the revenue from the development will support the club going forward.
- 1.4. The proposed dwellings are a terrace of 2-storey, 3 bedroom properties, each with a limited rear garden and provision of 8 parking spaces at the front of the site to serve the development.
- 1.5. The number of dwellings proposed, combined with the limited scale of the application site results in a cramped form of development that will not provide a high quality living environment for the proposed residents, and will also impact adversely on the amenities of existing neighbours.
- 1.6. The scheme is therefore recommended for refusal.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site is located to the rear of the Conservative Club off Whitmore Street in Whittlesey, on land that is currently in use as a car park serving the Club premises.
- 2.2. The land is adjoined to the north by St Mary's Court, a development of 28 flats acting as a retirement housing scheme with a part-time, non-resident manager.
- 2.3. To the east the site adjoins the gardens of residential property on Gracious Street and the parking associated with new dwellings on Orchard Street, and to the south are the Conservative Club and several dwellings on

Whitmore Street. The land to the west of the site is the existing car park serving the Conservative Club, with residential development beyond.

- 2.4. The Conservation Area of Whittlesey encompasses the town centre area, and its boundary extends to Whitmore street to the south, including the Conservative Club itself and part of its car park to the rear. The only overlap of the Conservation Area boundary with the application site boundary occurs at the vehicular access to the site.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The proposal is for the construction of a terrace of four dwellings within the existing car park at the rear of the Conservative Club on Whitmore Street. The dwellings would each be of two storeys with nominally 3 bedrooms at first floor level.
- 3.2. The design of the proposed dwellings includes a projecting single-storey element to their front elevations, creating a small fenced-off yard area to the front of each property serving the main entrance, and providing each property with a bin storage area.
- 3.3. Each dwelling would also be provided with a private rear garden, with access paths to the north and south sides of the terrace giving direct access to each of the rear gardens when required.
- 3.4. The central two dwelling's gardens are shown on the plan as being approximately 4.6m wide and 5m deep, while the end terrace's gardens are shown as 4m deep due to the presence of the access path.
- 3.5. Vehicular access to the dwellings would be shared with the Conservative Club via the existing access to the west of that building, and 8 parking spaces (each 2.4m by 4.8m) are shown across the front of the site.
- 3.6. The result of the sharing of the vehicular access is that the proposed properties would be accessed through the existing car park area of the Conservative Club, which is intended to remain in active use
- 3.7. Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:

[F/YR21/0032/F | Erect 4 x 3-bed 2-storey dwellings | Land North Of 34 Whitmore Street Whittlesey Cambridgeshire \(fenland.gov.uk\)](#)

4. SITE PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1. There is no relevant site planning history.

5. CONSULTATIONS

5.1. Whittlesey Town Council

The Town Council recommend refusal on the grounds of access, the properties are being encased within the curtilage of the carpark and is contrary to LP3.

5.2. FDC Conservation Officer

There is no objection to this application. However, the following comments are made:

The proposed site location represents an infill site and introduces a new (although limited) grain of residential building in this location. The proposed design, with the w/c in a forward projecting element and screening fences creates a sense of small enclosed boxes and it is felt that given the proximity to the conservation area and to the Conservative Club, the design ought to be improved with a more open facing elevation, and quality detail. There is no objection to development in principle in locations where there is no harmful impact, but it does not follow that developments should not take the opportunity to be of high quality and design detail. The relocation of a WC under the stairs would enable the façade of these houses to become more open and pleasing in their design, with perhaps a traditional bay window detail. Alternatively, a modern design would also be welcome. The success of any development hinges on the quality of materials used and these should be conditioned.

5.3. FDC Environmental Health

There are no concerns that the local air quality climate will be adversely affected by this proposal.

There are no noise implications for nearby residential properties associated with this proposal and there are no known noise sources close by which would have an adverse impact on the occupiers of the dwellings.

Consequently, there are no objections to the granting of consent to this proposal subject to the attachment of the following condition: -

UNSUSPECTED CONTAMINATION

CONDITION: If during development, contamination not previously identified, is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the LPA) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted, and obtained written approval from the LPA, a Method Statement detailing how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with.

REASON: To ensure that the development complies with approved details in the interests of the protection of human health and the environment.

5.4. The Whittlesey Society

This development will detract from the Victorian building, being 34 Whitmore Street.

Car parking and use of the car park by the Conservative Club users will affect the residents of these houses.

Noise from car doors and activity from the club at night will be an issue.

The shared drive out on to Whitmore street will devalue 34 Whitmore Street

5.5. Local Residents/Interested Parties

7 letters of support have been received in relation to the proposal. The responses were received from properties on Coates Road (Coates), Mountbatten Way (Whittlesey), Munday Gardens (Whittlesey), Drybread Road (Whittlesey), and Thorney Road (Eye).

The reasons given for the support of the application are as follows:

- Four affordable homes will be an asset (Officer note – the dwellings are not proposed as affordable dwellings)
- The scheme will help to sustain the Conservative Club for years to come
- Proposals are similar scale to new dwellings in Orchard Street
- The site access is of a good width and with good visibility
- More houses are needed for young people to get them on the property ladder
- The dwellings will be close to the amenities within the town

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).
- 6.2. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires Local Planning Authorities when considering development to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

7. POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 7.1. **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**
Para 2: NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.
Para 7: Purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
Para 117: Promote effective use of land
Para 118: Opportunities and benefits of the reuse of land
Para 184: Heritage assets should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance.
Para 189: Applicants should describe the significance of any heritage assets affected.
Para 196: Less than substantial harm should be weighed against public benefits.
- 7.2. **National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)**
Determining a Planning Application
- 7.3. **National Design Guide 2019**
Context
Identity
Built Form
Movement
Uses
Homes and Buildings
Resources
Lifespan

7.4. 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
- LP11 – Whittlesey
- LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland
- LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District
- LP17 – Community Safety
- LP18 – The Historic Environment

8. KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Visual Impact & Character**
- **Residential Amenity**
- **Heritage Impact**

9. BACKGROUND

- 9.1. There is no relevant background to the application.

10. ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

- 10.1. The application is located within the built-up part of the Market Town of Whittlesey, not far from the town centre and all the key facilities that provides to residents.
- 10.2. Whittlesey is identified as one of four market towns within the development plan where development is encouraged to take place across the life of the development plan.
- 10.3. The application site is a backland location, forming part of the car park of an existing commercial building (the Conservative Club) and there are no policies of the development plan that specifically preclude such a form of development.
- 10.4. The principle of the development is therefore considered to be acceptable, and the recommendation made in relation to the scheme will be determined by the specific impacts of the development, namely its visual impact and its relationship with the existing character of the area, its impact on neighbouring residential amenity and the proposed levels of amenity within the development itself for future occupiers, and its impact on the heritage assets of the town present in the vicinity of the application site.

Visual Impact & Character

- 10.5. The proposed dwellings are of a relatively simple design, comprising a single two-storey block, 9m deep along the side gables, and 18.5m wide along the front elevation. The ridge height of the dwellings is 7.75m and the eaves height is 5m.

- 10.6. Each of the individual properties benefits from a modest ground floor projecting gable on its front elevation to accommodate a downstairs wc, with the space enclosed between this projection and that on the neighbouring property with a 1.4m high fence behind which are located bin storage areas for the dwellings alongside the main entrances to the dwellings and immediately outside the ground floor kitchen window.
- 10.7. The application site is located just beyond the boundary of the conservation area to the rear of the Conservative Club, and although the site is surrounded by two-storey properties, there will be views possible of the proposed development through gaps between existing buildings in the street scene.
- 10.8. The views of the development from the public realm would be limited however and gained in the context of other residential development that would be more prominent within those views and therefore the visibility of the scheme would not be harmful in that respect.
- 10.9. With regard to the impact of the proposal on the character of the area, and also whether or not the scheme reinforces the local distinctiveness of the area, the context of the site must be considered.
- 10.10. The site is located in close proximity to the centre of the town and is largely surrounded by other residential development. The character of this development is generally one of two-storey properties, the majority of which are semi-detached. The court of retirement flats and the conservative club itself depart from this character, as do two detached dwellings to the west of the Conservative Club entrance. There are examples of backland development in the area, although these are not commonplace.
- 10.11. Notwithstanding that however, the development would also be viewed from several other locations, including parking courts and neighbouring dwellings, as well as the remaining car park of the Conservative Club itself.
- 10.12. In this respect, the visual impact of the proposal is still required to comply with the relevant policies of the Fenland Local Plan. The appearance of the scheme in that regard would not be of high quality, and would be likely to be of detriment to the area. The frontage of the site would be dominated by the domestic parking arrangements for the dwellings, and with parking spaces shown on the plan as being 2.4m wide by 4.8m deep with no allowance for door opening etc, the parking provision would be intensive.
- 10.13. Beyond that parking provision would be the main elevation of the buildings, partially hidden behind the proposed fencing to their fronts and the proposed building would fill almost the entire width of the available space, with only limited paths to the sides in order to grant access to the rear gardens.
- 10.14. The proposed dwellings would therefore appear cramped within the site, representing overdevelopment of the land available and having a detrimental impact on its surroundings.

Residential Amenity

- 10.15. The Fenland Local Plan requires that development provides high quality environments, in terms of levels of residential amenity as well as impacts of

development on surrounding properties. Policy LP16 indicates that a minimum of one third of the available plot will be expected to be dedicated as private amenity space serving a dwelling.

- 10.16. With regard to the proposed development, the scheme appears to be deficient in several respects in relation to the provision of high levels of residential amenity, and also impacts on the amenities of the neighbouring properties.
- 10.17. The proposed development is located in close proximity to the side boundaries of the application site, and its design is such that it presents a deep gable to each of those boundaries. To the north is a complex of retirement flats that benefits from windows looking out over the application site, and to the south are the residential gardens of properties on Whitmore Street.
- 10.18. In the case of the former, the proposed building would block a significant outlook from the windows and would overshadow the central courtyard at the premises, impacting adversely on the amenities of the neighbouring properties. In the case of the latter, the presence of the proposed gable so close to the rear boundary of their gardens would have an overbearing impact on those areas to the detriment of their amenity.
- 10.19. In addition to this, there are several elements of the scheme that fail to provide adequate amenity standards for the future occupiers of the proposed development. None of the proposed units meet the indicated standard of one third of the plot as private amenity space, with the two central units benefiting from a garden forming 31% of the plot area and the two end units only 25% (figures do not include car parking spaces within the calculation of the total plot area). In this regard therefore the scheme would be contrary to policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014).
- 10.20. In addition, the proposed layout of the site is not conducive to high levels of residential amenity within the dwellings themselves. The two most southerly plots are adversely impacted by the presence of a 5m high rear wall of a building on the adjacent site to the east, whilst a similar, albeit lower structure is also present on the boundary of the northernmost unit. External access to the rear gardens of the two central units is provided by means of narrow paths to either side of the block, which then run adjacent to the boundaries of the end units, whilst the bin storage provision is located within a small courtyard at the front of the dwellings immediately adjacent to the front entrance and outside the solitary kitchen windows.
- 10.21. The application site is also notably located on part of an existing car park site serving the Conservative Club to the south, and justification for the proposal is given as being that the development would enable the continued operation of that facility. If the Conservative Club remains in operation following the construction of the proposals, then its continued use would be likely to have a detrimental impact on the residential amenities of the proposed dwelling, specifically through the proximity of the dwellings to the car park and the likely noise generated by its use, potentially late into the evenings.
- 10.22. The additional use of the Conservative Club as a functions venue exacerbates this impact, as functions of this nature result in more intensive

arrivals and departures than its normal operation, and this would also result in periods of disturbance to the amenity of the future occupiers of the properties proposed.

- 10.23. The proposed amenity levels of the proposed dwellings do not therefore meet the high standard required of development by the Fenland Local Plan, and the proposals are therefore contrary to policies LP2 and LP16.
- 10.24. Parking provision at the premises is made on the basis of 8 spaces provided at the front of the development, each space measuring 2.4m by 4.8m, with 6m to the rear as turning space. No allowance is made for wider spaces to facilitate easier access and this is an additional element of the proposal that limits the quality of the proposed amenities serving the dwellings.

Heritage Impact

- 10.25. The proposal in such a way that the access to the site lies within the Conservation Area, although the proposed dwellings themselves are outside it. Views of the proposal would be possible from the Conservation Area, however given their limited scope it is not considered that these would justify the refusal of the application.
- 10.26. The comments of the Conservation Officer do not identify any harm to heritage assets, but do note that the quality of design of the proposed dwellings is not as high as would be expected, and that control of proposed materials would be expected by condition.

11. CONCLUSIONS

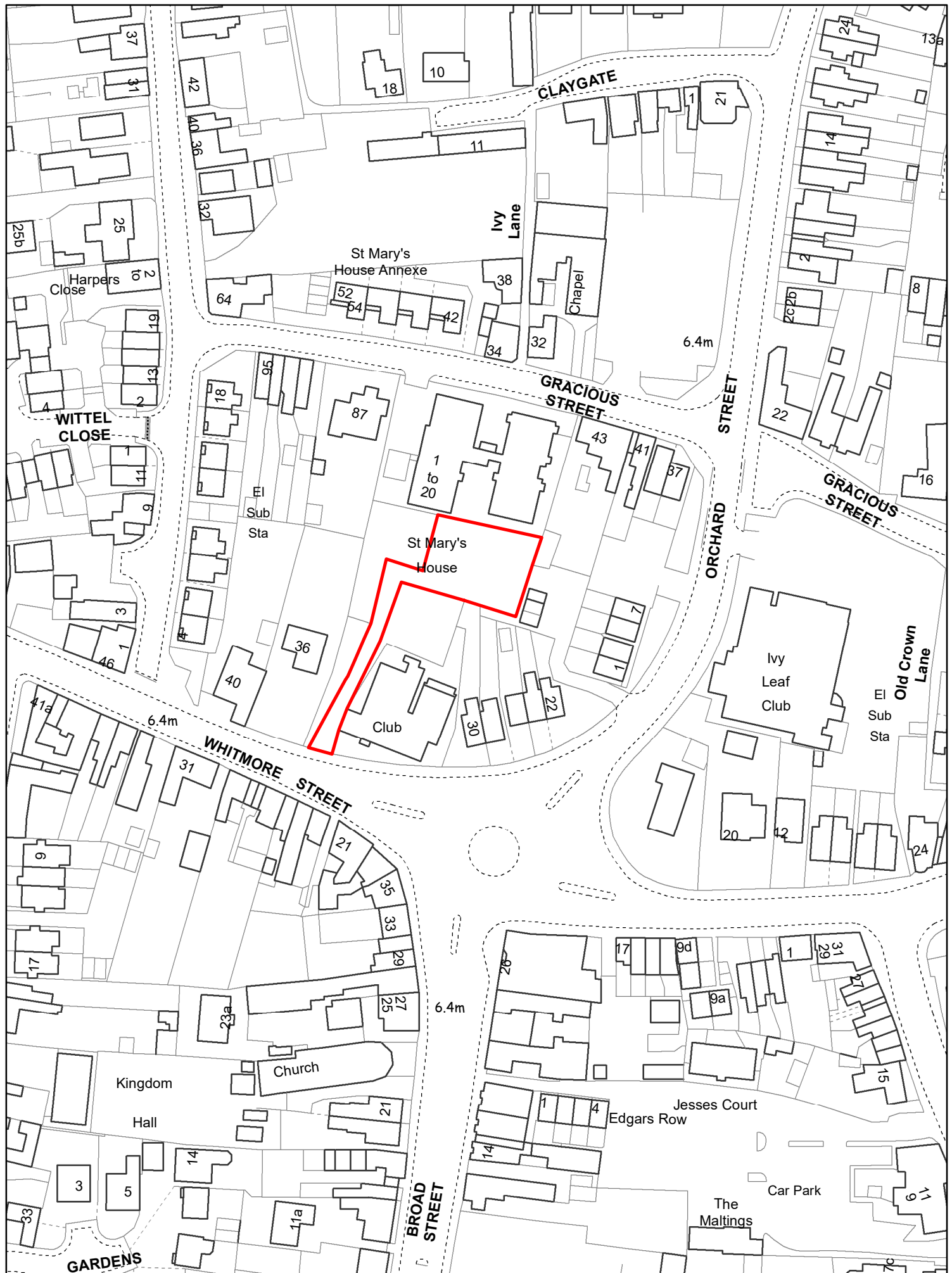
- 11.1. The principle of residential development within the settlement is acceptable, however the specific proposals result in a cramped form of development that impacts adversely on its surroundings and fails to provide adequate amenity to satisfy the requirements of the relevant policies of the Fenland Local Plan.

12. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse, for the following reasons:

1. Policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan requires that development delivers high quality environments throughout the district, making a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness and character of an area. The proposal is for the construction of a terrace of four dwellings in a backland location, and the proposed dwellings would fill the entire width of the existing space, which combined with the proposed parking serving the properties located immediately in front of the dwelling and the lack of provision of a pedestrian access past the parking area, would result in a form of development that by its cramped appearance, would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area contrary to the requirements of policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014).
2. Policies LP2 and LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) require developments to provide high levels of residential amenity, with private amenity space provided suitable to the type and amount of development proposed. The gardens provided with the development are below the indicated minimum one third of the plot, and the level of

amenity provided is limited due to the overbearing impact of the buildings surrounding the plot and its location in close proximity to the commercial use of the land to the west of the proposed dwelling, through which the access to these domestic properties would be gained. The proposal is therefore contrary to the provisions of policies LP2 and LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014).



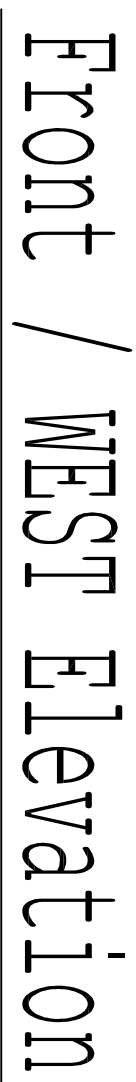
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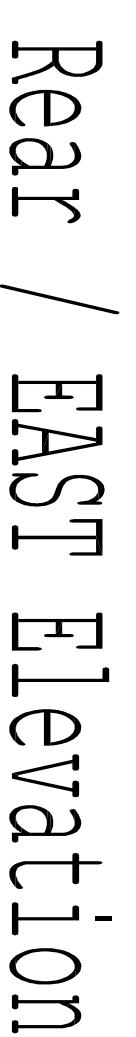
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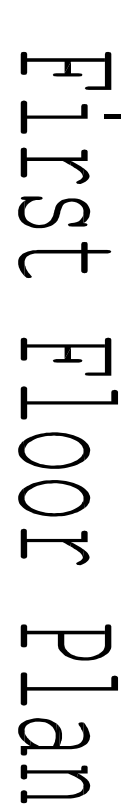




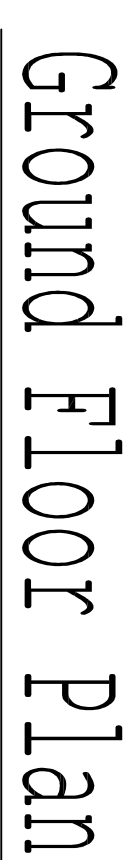
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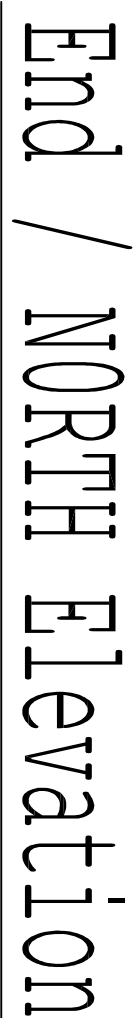
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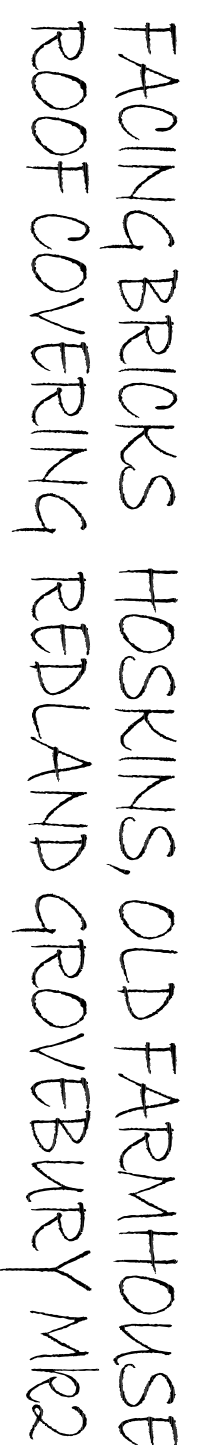
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EXISTING BLOCK PLAN 1:200

EXISTING 47 Club parking spaces



Scale 1:100