
F/YR21/0159/PIP

Applicant: Messrs S, P & R Shippey

**Agent: Mrs Lydia Pravin
Brown & Co Barfords**

Land North of East View, Ringers Lane, Leverington, Cambridgeshire

Residential development of up to 4 dwellings (application for Permission in Principle)

Officer recommendation: Refuse

Reason for Committee: Referred by the Head of Planning on the advice of the Planning Committee Chairman

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The proposal is an application for Permission in Principle to develop the site for up to 4 dwellings. The Permission in Principle route has 2 stages: the first stage (or Permission in Principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and assesses the principle issues namely: (1) location, (2) use and (3) amount of development proposed and the second ('technical details consent') stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. Technical details consent regarding the proposed properties would need to be applied for should this application be granted.
- 1.2. The application site is located beyond but adjoining the built-up part of the settlement of Leverington within an area designated as flood zone 1.
- 1.3. The existing open character of the site is a key part of the setting of this part of the settlement and the public house and the connection between the settlement and the agricultural land surrounding it.
- 1.4. The granting of consent on this land would result in severance of a substantial connection between the settlement and the countryside to the detriment of its character.
- 1.5. For this reason, the application would be contrary to Policy LP16 of the Local Plan and is recommended for refusal.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The application site is an open field located beyond the existing built up part of the settlement of Leverington and to the west side of Ringers Lane. There is some limited recent development to the west of Ringers Lane to the south, however this is significantly detached (approximately 270m) from the application site. A single dwelling (early 20th century) is located on a plot immediately to the south of the application site.

- 2.2. The land is located within flood zone 1. The site is currently open to view from Ringers Lane with no boundary hedgerows to limit any views across the agricultural land in this location. It is consequently of an extremely open, agricultural character.
- 2.3. The site adjoins the existing settlement through its shared boundary with an existing dwelling to the north, which forms part of the continuous developed footprint of the settlement.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The 'Planning in Principle' (PiP) application is for residential development of up to 4 dwellings at the site. 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,and establishes whether a 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.
- 3.2. Full plans and associated documents for this application can be found at:
<https://www.publicaccess.fenland.gov.uk/publicaccess/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=QOBIQPHE01U00>

4. SITE PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1. No site planning history.

5. CONSULTATIONS

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Authority

- 5.1. *The principle of a 4-dwelling development is acceptable in this location subject suitable access junction spacing from the Ringers Lane/Gorefield Road junction.*
- 5.2. *A suitable footway connection may be required, linking the development with the existing Highway footway network.*
- 5.3. *I will happily comment further on the above two points when further details are committed in the way of site access arrangements.*

Local Residents/Interested Parties

- 5.4. None received

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

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 78: Housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities.

Para 117: Promote effective use of land

7.2. National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Determining a planning application

7.3. National Design Guide 2019

Context

Uses

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

LP12 – Rural Areas Development Policy

LP15 – Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland

LP16 – Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District

8. KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Character Impact**
- **Agricultural Land Grade**
- **Residential Amenity**
- **Highways & Access**

9. BACKGROUND

- 9.1. There is no relevant background to the proposal. No pre-application contact has been made with the authority.

10. ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development in this location

- 10.1. The application site is located near the settlement of Leverington, which is identified within the settlement hierarchy policy (LP3) of the Fenland Local Plan as a Limited Growth Village, where policy allows for a “*small amount of development and new service provision*”. The principle of residential development as part of the settlement of Leverington is therefore not opposed by the settlement hierarchy, and the detailed aspects of the development must be considered, including whether or not the site constitutes a part of the settlement.
- 10.2. Policies LP12 and LP16 consider the detail of development proposals in rural areas, and note that development needs to satisfy a list of criteria in order for

it to receive support, as well as making a contribution to the sustainability of the settlement without harming the wide open character of the countryside.

- 10.3. Policy LP12 identifies initially that to receive support, the site must be in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of the village. This is defined as the continuous built form of the settlement, subject to certain exclusions. In this case, the site is considered to be adjacent to the existing developed footprint and therefore the principle of residential development is not opposed. Consideration must therefore be given to the specific impacts of the proposals under policy LP16 as follows.

Character Impact

- 10.4. The application proposes the development of an existing section of an agricultural field that currently provides a distinct open character and affords significant views over a substantial piece of the countryside to the west of the settlement. This agricultural field is an important part of the setting of the settlement of Leverington and is also prominent in westward views from Gorefield Road, as well as defining the character of Ringers Lane. The current nature of the site contributes to the distinctiveness and character of the area and the development of this would result in the loss of this character, regardless of the scale of properties proposed. It would therefore fail to accord with the requirements of policy LP12 part A and LP16(d).

Agricultural Land Grade

- 10.5. The application site is currently in agricultural use, and forms part of a much larger agricultural field. The applicant has stated that the land does not have an agricultural grading and states therefore that the proposed development must be deemed acceptable. The Agricultural Land Classification data available from Natural England indicates that the site lies within an area generally classified as grade 1 or 2, the highest grades available.
- 10.6. It is accepted that a large proportion of land within the District is classified within the grades qualifying as the 'Best and Most Versatile' agricultural land and that development on such land within the district may be necessary in order to meet its housing targets. Consequently, it is not considered that the application could be reasonably refused on such grounds

Residential Amenity

- 10.7. The application is made for Permission in Principle, and as such the detailed design of the proposed dwelling is not available for consideration at this time. Consideration of such details would include the impact of detailed proposals on the amenity of the occupiers of the neighbouring dwellings. On that basis the impact of the proposal on residential amenity is not for consideration at this time.

Highways and Access

- 10.8. The format of the current application does not allow for detailed consideration of access proposals, however the Highways Authority have confirmed that there are no objections to the principle of the proposal from a Highway Safety perspective, subject to an appropriate design being submitted at the Technical Details stage.

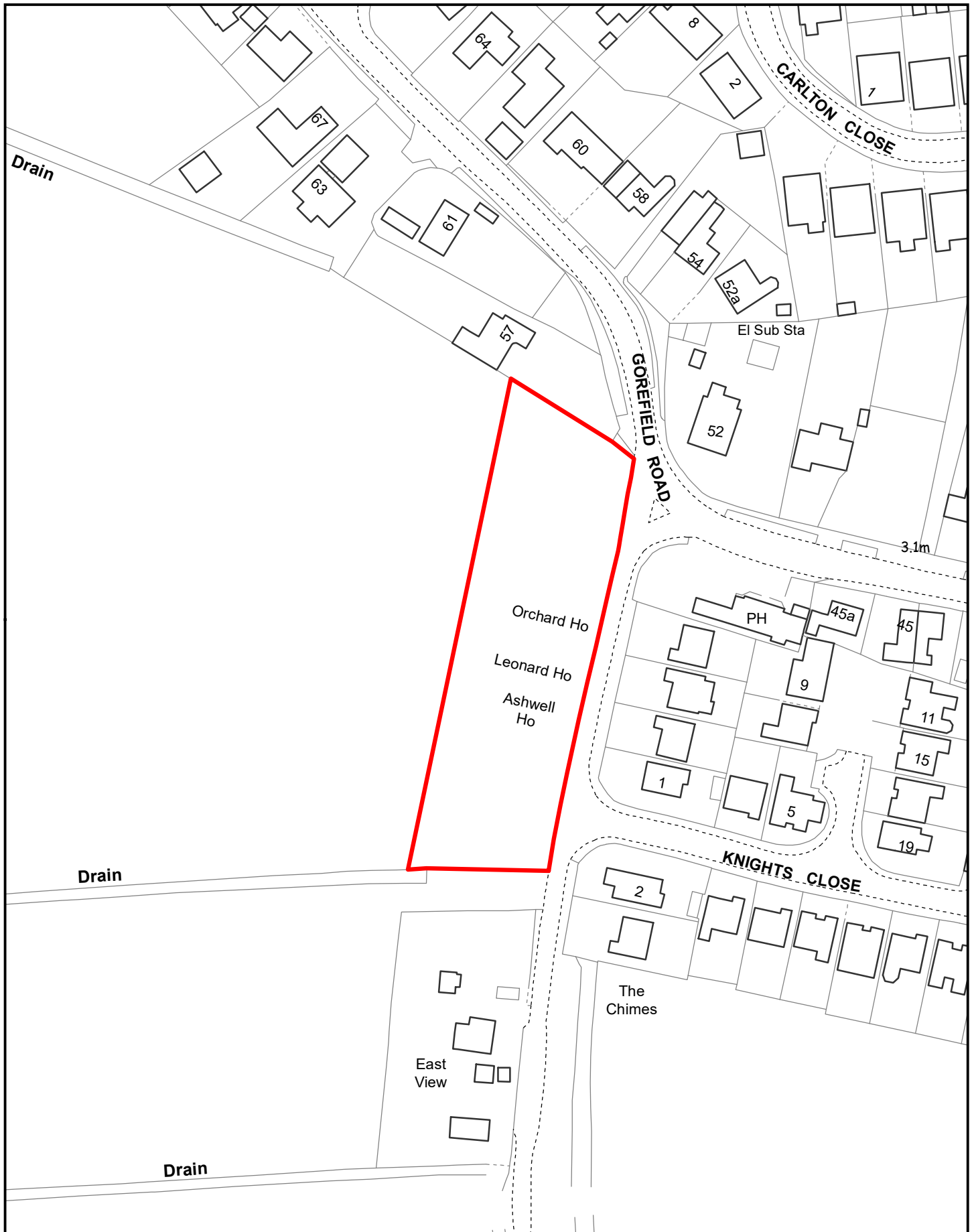
11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1. The development of this site would not be in accordance with the adopted policies of the Fenland Local Plan (2014). The site is in a location where its development would result in harm to the character of its immediate surroundings through the loss of significant open views across the open countryside. Such harm would be contrary to the provisions of policy LP12 of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) and may, subject to the availability of detailed proposals, also be contrary to policy LP16. It is therefore considered that in terms of location and land use considerations the PIP application fails.
- 11.2. The loss of agricultural land with the best and most versatile categories is not justified within the information supporting the application. Given the extremely limited land within the district that does not fall within such classification however, this does not in and of itself justify refusal of the application.
- 11.3. The amount of development proposed on the land is proportionate to similar existing development within the area, although it would be of a lower density than the more directly related site on the east side of Ringers Lane. The amount of development proposed does not justify refusal of the application, if the principle of the development of the site were to be accepted. It is considered that the development would make a modest contribution to the housing supply in the District, but that this would not outweigh the harm identified.

12. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse

- 1 Policies LP12 Part A and LP16 (d) of the Fenland Local Plan (2014) requires development to not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the countryside and to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and character. The proposal for development of up to four dwellings on part of an existing agricultural field would result in the loss of significant views across the open countryside to the west of the application site, and the loss of the close relationship between the settlement and the countryside in this location. The development would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area. The scheme would therefore be contrary to policy LP12 part A and LP16(d) of the Fenland Local Plan (2014).



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