



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee
Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 2:00pm
on Wednesday 3 April 2024**

Present:

Cllr Chika Akinwale
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Bill Hunt
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Christine Whelan
Cllr Gareth Wilson
Cllr Julia Huffer

Officers:

Rachael Forbes – Planning Officer
Olivia Roberts – Planning Officer
Holly Chapman – Senior Planning Officer
David Morren – Interim Planning Manager
Catherine Looper- Planning Team Leader
Andrew Philips – Planning Team Leader
Angela Tyrrell – Senior Legal Assistant
Jane Webb – Senior Democratic Services Officer

In attendance:

Lucy Flintham – Development Services Office Team Leader
Laura Goldsmith – Development Services Support Officer
Melanie Wright – Communications Officer

Others in attendance:

5 Members of the Public

76. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Ambrose Smith, Cllr Holtzmann, and Cllr Akinwale.

Cllr Huffer was in attendance as a substitute.

77. Declarations of interest

Cllr Huffer stated she was predetermined with regard to Item 4 (23/00847/FUL) and therefore she would speak as a Ward Member and leave the Chamber for the debate and voting of the item.

78. Chair's announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

79. 23/00847/FUL – Land North West of 3 Arthurs Way, Fordham

Rachael Forbes, Planning Officer, presented a report (Y185, previously circulated) recommending approval for the change of use to garden land and relocation of access.

Members were shown slides of the location, site plan, photos and of the proposed access.

The main considerations of the application were deemed to be:

- **Principle of Development** – Policy GROWTH 2 states that outside defined development envelopes, development will be strictly controlled, having regard to the need to protect the countryside and the settings of towns and villages. Development will be restricted to the main categories listed in the policy and may be permitted as an exception, providing there is no significant adverse impact on the character of the countryside and that other Local Plan policies are satisfied. The change of use to garden land is not an exception listed in Policy GROWTH 2 and the proposal is therefore contrary. However, paragraph 47 of the National Planning Policy Framework states 'Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise'. While the proposed is contrary to Policy GROWTH2, there has been development in the immediate area which has resulted in a change to the character and appearance of the area. The land is surrounded by development on three sides. The land is not large enough to be reasonably used for agricultural and garden use is likely to be the most compatible use when considering the surroundings.
- **Visual Impact** – the land is not in an isolated location and there is residential development and gardens surrounding the site. It is considered that although the site would be visible from Moor Road, as the boundary proposed is a post and fence rail, the use of the land as garden land would not be incompatible with the immediate surrounding area. Further to this, the character of the surrounding area has changed since the adoption of the Local Plan and the development envelope boundaries; both the dwelling to the west and the dwellings to the south have been approved, built, and occupied. There is no built form proposed as part of the application, originally a garage was proposed, however this has been removed from the application following officer concerns around the impact of the building on the character and appearance of the area. Efforts have been made as part of previous applications to protect the character and

appearance of the countryside. The dwellings at Arthurs Way have had permitted development rights removed for Classes A (enlargement, improvement, or alteration to a dwelling), B (additions to the roof), C (other alterations to the roof) and E (buildings in the curtilage) under application reference 21/00703/VAR. An application (20/01576/FUL) was submitted for a 1.8-metre-high closed board fence along the front of this piece of land, as well as a temporary 1.8 metre (5.9ft) high fence along what is now the frontage to Arthurs Way, which was refused on the basis of visual harm. In light of this, it is considered that it would be reasonable and necessary to remove Schedule 2, Part 1, Class E (outbuildings) permitted development rights to protect the character and appearance of the area. Further to this, it is considered reasonable and necessary to remove Schedule 2, Part 2, Class A permitted development rights (gates, walls, and fences) to prevent inappropriate enclosure of the land, resulting in harm to the character and appearance of the area. It is also considered that it would be reasonable and necessary to condition that the garden land shall be used as garden land as part of The Orchards, 2c Moor Road and for no other purpose. It is considered that with the imposition of appropriate conditions, the proposal would not result in a significant adverse impact to the character and appearance of the area nor result in significant harm to the countryside and is therefore considered to comply with Policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015.

- **Highway Safety** – The land proposed to change use includes an access which is separate to that which is used to access the dwelling. It has been established that this is an existing access but would need to be upgraded for the proposed use. The LHA commented that to make the development acceptable in highways terms, the access would need to be constructed with a metalled surface for a length of 5 metres and a means of surface water interception will be needed across the access prior to the highway boundary. In providing the measures that the LHA requested, the proposal would have resulted in conflict with the Oak tree to the front of the site. To avoid any potential conflict with the tree, it has been proposed to relocate the access slightly to the west. There has been concern raised that the relocation of the proposed access would make exiting very dangerous, however, the Local Highway Authority have reviewed the current proposal and have raised no objections and therefore it would not be reasonable to refuse an access in this location on that basis. Although the proposal seeks to relocate the access, which does result in the access being closer to the bend, the relocation of the access is not so significantly removed from the existing location that it would be reasonable to insist on its removal. In addition to this, given that it is not the main access to the dwelling, it is unlikely to be used intensively and as it only serves a single dwelling is unlikely to be a significantly more intensive use than a field access.
- **Other Matters** - It is considered that the proposal would not result in any adverse impacts to residential amenity and with a suitable condition would provide biodiversity net gain.

Whilst the proposed development does not accord with Policy GROWTH 2 as it does not fall within one of the exemptions for development in the countryside, it would not cause any harm to the character of the countryside which is a key aim of Policy GROWTH 2.

The proposal is considered to be acceptable in all other aspects and complies with all relevant Local Plan policies regarding those considerations. It is therefore considered that no demonstrable harm would arise from the proposed development. The surroundings of the site have changed since the adoption of the Local Plan and the development envelope boundaries which have resulted in the application site being surrounded by built form. However, the built form and impact on the character of the area have been carefully considered. The change of use of the land is considered to be acceptable as no built form is proposed and it is considered that with the appropriate conditions, that the character and appearance of the countryside would be protected.

The lack of any demonstrable harm to the character of the countryside is considered to form a material consideration of sufficient weight to warrant a departure from the Local Plan in respect of the strict application of policy GROWTH 2. The application is therefore recommended for approval.

The Chair thanked the Planning Officer for the presentation, and invited Jane Webb, Senior Democratic Services Officer, to read out a statement on behalf of Fordham Parish Council.

“The Parish Council have no objections to the change of use of the agricultural land to garden land. However, the proposed access onto Moor Road is directly next to a blind bend giving restricted visibility and in addition dependant on regular maintenance of the hedgerow which cannot be guaranteed. This is a single-track road with no street lights which is heavily used by farm traffic, dog walkers, runners, and members of the public wishing to access the river walk and will create a dangerous situation. The Committee must understand that Moor Road is a narrow road and is a 60-mph speed limit. The Parish Council refer the Committee to Condition 8 of the original outline planning approval ref: 17/00871/OUT which states “The existing accesses to the site shall be permanently and effectively closed and the footway/ highway verge shall be reinstated in accordance with a scheme to be agreed with the Local planning Authority within 28 days of bringing into use of the new access” Reason: In the interests of Highway safety in accordance with policies COM7 and COM8 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015. As stated by Highways this important condition is “In the interests of Highway safety” and the Parish Council would ask how such an important condition can be ignored or overridden. It is clear that the Highways Surveyor, Mr Geoffrey Ellwood, understood the seriousness of the situation to recommend this condition in accordance with HW7A. This access may well be an existing access to the field/paddock, but this was only used

very seldom for agricultural use and for cattle and horses with little vehicular use. The Parish Council asks the Committee to carefully consider this issue. It would not want to say, "We told you so" This application is a change of use to garden land adjoining and part of the Applicants property 2C Moor Road with access already in place. This would be the proper way to proceed and seems illogical to have a separate access to the garden of 2C Moor Road. The Parish Council is made up of members of the Community of Fordham who are totally aware of the circumstances on Moor Road and ask the Committee to accept the knowledge of the Parish Council members and refuse the application in respect of the element "revised access."

The Chair invited Cllr Huffer, Ward Councillor for Fordham, to address the committee.

"This site has been a thorn in the side of the Parish Council and both the Ward Councillors for the last two years with numerous complaints from residents and neighbours about the breaches of planning conditions too numerous to mention. Now we have the situation of the 2m solid fence finally being replaced with the more suitable post and rail fence but with a gate for access on a blind corner for no apparent reason. The applicant has tried on several occasions to obtain planning permission for this piece of land, in fact an application for a 10m x 6m garage was recently withdrawn. Whilst I appreciate that this Committee can only comment on what is before it today, the fact that the applicant is still insisting on this access would suggest it will not be long before that application will be in front of you. There is no justification for a potentially dangerous exit onto this road used by a steady stream of walkers, riders, farm vehicles and residents' cars and delivery vehicles. I would ask the Committee to approve the fence but remove the access gate which serves no purpose and to ensure that all future development rights are removed from this site."

The Chair invited Members to ask questions of Cllr Huffer.

In response to a question from Cllr Trapp, Cllr Huffer explained it was necessary to remove the access as it was located on a blind bend and therefore hazardous to drivers. Cllr Huffer was also of the opinion that the access was unnecessary as vehicle access was already located to the front of the property.

Cllr Lay asked what the Parish Council wanted to happen to the existing access. Cllr Huffer explained that when the original permission had been granted, all access had to be removed and this had since been overlooked, yet the applicant now requested another access, which was currently only a field gate.

Cllr Huffer left the Council Chamber for the remainder of the item.

The Planning Officer commented that there was currently a separate application for the fencing and therefore it did not form part of this application. The Planning Officer also confirmed there was a separate

access to the dwelling, but that in respect of the existing access to the land subject of the application, it was not felt it was reasonable to ask for it to be removed. It was being relocated due to impact to the trees

The Chair invited questions from Members to the Planning Officer.

Cllr Brown stated for clarity that the tarmacking was to satisfy Highway's concerns and had not been proposed by the applicant.

Cllr Trapp enquired as to the width of the existing entrance. The Planning Officer confirmed that Highways considered the access to be an existing one and the size was as seen at the site visit earlier that day.

The Planning Manager, David Morren explained that a historic access was in place that the applicant used for construction rights and the Council had no enforcement mechanism to remove the access; the current proposal was an upgrade suggested by Highways.

Cllr Lay asked why had the original planning terms been overlooked as use of the land as garden land was appropriate but not appropriate for future development. The Planning Officer explained that Highways had not objected, and the terms had not been overlooked as the correct consultees had been consulted and not raised any objections.

Cllr Lay stated there was no reason to refuse the application but suggested a clause be added to remove the access to prevent any future development. The Chair added that the application before Committee had to be considered and future thoughts around development were not relevant.

Cllr Trapp was of the opinion that the land was suitable as garden land and that the present access was acceptable and therefore why move the access. Cllr Goodearl explained that the reason why the access was to be moved was because of the 5m of tarmac that was to be laid and the need to protect the roots of a nearby tree.

Cllr Wilson felt that the tarmac was not necessary and agreed with Cllr Huffer that there was no need for a main access into the garden.

Cllr Brown commented that the applicant had complied with a request from Highways to protect the oak tree and therefore there was no reason to go against officer recommendation, therefore he proposed the officer's recommendation for approval. Cllr Goodearl seconded Cllr Brown's proposal.

It was resolved (with 5 votes in favour, 3 votes against and 0 abstention):

- i) That the planning application ref 23/00847/FUL be APPROVED subject to the conditions as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Officer's report as amended by the Planning Committee Update Sheet.

80. 23/00877/FUL – Clovelly, 116 Ashley Road, Newmarket

Olivia Roberts, Planning Officer, presented a report (Y186, previously circulated) recommending refusal of the demolition of 1no. semi-detached bungalow and erection of replacement 1 ½ storey dwelling.

Members were shown slides of the location, proposal, and photos.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **Principle of Development** – The application site is located within the Newmarket Fringe development envelope. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the aims of Policy GROWTH 2 which seeks to focus development within existing settlement boundaries. This is subject to all other material considerations being satisfied.
- **Visual Amenity** – The dwelling would have a greater height than the adjoining property at 118 Ashley Road and the ridge line would also be set back from the ridge of the adjoining property. It is considered that this would result in an uncoordinated and disjointed appearance between the two properties, with the proposed dwelling visually dominating the semi-detached pair. The design of the dwelling includes a number of competing features and roof forms which would not be sympathetic to the character and design of the properties within the street scene. The dwelling would have a gable roof form with only a partial hip, which is in contrast to the traditional hipped roof form on the adjoining and neighbouring dwellings. The combination of the roof height and alignment, together with the design of the dwelling, would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the site, adjoining property, and wider street scene. This is contrary to Policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan.
- **Residential Amenity** – The proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact on the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties. It is considered that the position of the dwelling within the site would prevent any harm by way of overbearing and overshadowing. The relationship with the neighbouring properties and the placement of openings is considered to prevent harmful overlooking between the properties.
- **Other Matters** – The impacts of the proposal on highway safety and parking is considered to be acceptable. The proposal would utilise the existing access into the site which would be widened as part of the proposal. The driveway would be able to accommodate parking for at least two vehicles with space retained for on-site turning to allow vehicles to exit onto Ashley Road in a forward gear. The proposal is considered to have an acceptable impact in terms of trees and ecology. It is also considered that an acceptable drainage scheme could be achieved on the site.

Officers acknowledge that there would be some benefits to the scheme through the creation of short-term employment during construction. This

benefit however carries limited weight and is restricted by the scale of the development which is for a single dwelling. It is considered that the scheme does not accord with the development plan as a whole and that, having considered the benefits of the scheme, there are no material considerations that indicate a departure from the development plan is warranted in this instance.

In summary, the proposal, due to the height of the dwelling, its roof alignment and overall form and design, would visually dominate the existing semi-detached dwelling that it would be joined to. This would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the semi-detached pair. Furthermore, the dwelling, by virtue of its significant footprint, height, and overall design, is considered to be out of keeping with the character and appearance of the existing development within the wider street scene and would appear incongruous within its setting. The proposal is contrary to policy ENV 2 of the Local Plan and the aims of the NPPF.

The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

The Chair thanked the Planning Officer for the presentation, and invited James Melville, Agent, to address the committee.

“My client is seeking to create their forever home in Newmarket having lived there for 15 years and being locally employed in the horse racing industry. 116 Ashley Road is a dwelling that is of its time in terms of design, materials, and construction. The last occupant lived in the property until she passed away and it is in extremely poor condition, requiring extensive works to make it habitable. Demolition and rebuilding of property allows us to create a sustainable home which would accord with East Cambridgeshire District Council declaring a climate emergency and help the local authority deliver modern housing stock in its District, which mitigates climate change. From their time renting the neighbouring property, 118 Ashley Road, the applicant would like to replicate its characteristics and design in their proposals for 116. We can deliver a large proportion of the proposal using permitted development rights afforded to the existing dwelling but in terms of viability and sustainability this approach would not be effective or efficient. As part of the planning application process, an assessment was made of the Ashley Road street scene and it was noticeable that there is a significant level of variation in terms of design in each dwelling, this includes a range of storey heights, from single storeys through to 1½ and 2 storey dwellings. In addition, variations in the orientation of ridge lines and the overall roof forms are apparent as well. There are no set materials apparent along Ashley Road, with each plot displaying its own variation in materials used; meaning it is reasonable to suggest that there is no one characteristic that dominates the street scene. The conclusion was also made within the Officer’s report for the approved application of 106 Ashley Road which is for a loft conversion which increased the ridge heights of the existing dwelling; that report detailed that Ashley Road is considered to have a mixed street scene with a mixture of bungalows and 2 storey dwellings at different heights and designs. That proposal increased the roof heights from 2.5m to 3.4m which is an increase

of approximately 90cm, for comparison, the proposed increase of 116 would be 48cm. As part of the design process for the proposal before us, all of those aspects have been taken into consideration, as can be seen through the proposed footprint, heights, materials, and the articulation achieved withing the designs to create a proposal that is sympathetic to existing street scene. Whilst taking into consideration the dog leg within the plots where the bungalow sits which limits possible variations in design. The proposal before us is the most efficient design, in balancing the use of the plots against protecting the amenity of neighbouring properties and achieving the standards required by current building control regulations. The proposed footprint is also in keeping with other dwellings along Ashley Road, this is seen through the extent of the proposed footprint being in line with the existing build lines for 118, for example, the proposal extends no further into the back garden than the extents of the attached neighbour. We have matched the eve sites and we have replicated the layout of the attached neighbours' property within our designs as well. The proposed ridge height is lower than that of the adjacent dwellings, such as 120 Ashley Road, it is lower than the ridge height proposed in the previous detached version, which was at a height considered acceptable by the planning department and is at the minimum height required by the current building control regulations. Furthermore, the existing chimney provides the vertical elements on the roof line that forms a break in the transition between the two properties, which would soften any noticeable difference between them. Notwithstanding that, a similar pallet of materials has been proposed, render over brick elevations and slate roof tiles, which would further reduce any perceived differences between the two properties. By Councillor approving these proposals, a dwelling that meets modern dwellings standards can be achieved which is of a size and scale that accords with the existing dwellings in this location. Furthermore, it would support the applicants' need to continue to live and work in Newmarket."

The Chair invited Members to ask questions of James Melville.

In response to several questions from Cllr Lay, James Melville confirmed that 118 Ashley Road did not include an extension and was a 1½ storey dwelling by way of an added room located in the roof, with a footprint of 168sqm (1808sqft). The footprint of the proposed dwelling would be 189sqm (2000sqm) but currently stood at 80sqm. Properties along Ashley Road consisted of single storey, 1½ storey and 2 storey properties with a variation of footprints:

- Proposed dwelling 189sqm
- 124 Ashley Road 187sqm
- 122 Ashley Road 178sqm
- 120 Ashley Road 170sqm
- 114 Ashley Road 105sqm
- 112 Ashley Road 190sqm

Cllr Trapp commented that 118 Ashley Road and 116 Ashley Road currently had the same roof line, due to the fact that 116 had installed a Velux window in the roof therefore why was the proposed roof of 118 Ashley Road

considerably higher. James Melville explained that the increase in height was due to current building regulations which pushed the ridgeline higher. Permitted development rights could have been used but the property was in such a poor state of repair that this would not have been effective, due to mould and asbestos being present.

James Melville confirmed that the applicants currently rented 118 Ashley Road.

The Chair invited Cllr Lay, Ward Councillor, to address the Committee.

“When you look at the whole length of Ashley Road, one of the lovely things about the road, is the difference between all the dwellings coming out of Suffolk and into East Cambs. It is one of the loveliest roads we have in Newmarket and its characteristics are that of houses that have been built by individual owners and have been developed in one way or another to change the aspect of those properties. I cannot see any just reason for turning down this application because what we have at the moment is a building, under normal circumstances, should be taken down because it is not fit for habitation. So, my view is that basically this is not so out of kilter with the rest of the properties on Ashley Road, that we as a committee should turn it down, I think we should agree to this application going forward and I would propose that we accept the application because it will replace a property that nobody could live in at the moment.”

Cllr Goodearl raised a point of order and stated that Cllr Lay was pre-determined and therefore should not continue and he made a proposal which was not appropriate.

The Chair agreed with Cllr Goodearl’s point of order and informed Cllr Lay that it appeared he was pre-determined on the item, therefore he should have raised this earlier under Declaration of Interest and stated he would speak on the item and leave the room for the rest of the item. Cllr Lay agreed to act in accordance with the Chair.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions of Cllr Lay.

In answer to a question from Cllr Trapp, Cllr Lay agreed that the properties in this particular part of Ashley Road were quite uniform.

Cllr Lay left the Council Chamber for the remainder of the item.

The Planning Officer reiterated that Officers were not opposed to the demolition and replacement of the existing dwelling, nor to the improvements to its visual amenity or the introduction of a 1½ storey dwelling but the concern was regarding the additional height and overall design of the proposed new dwelling in relation to the adjoining dwelling and the impact this would have on the character and appearance of the street scene. The original application submitted had been for a detached dwelling which was of a greater height than the current application, Officers were satisfied that the

increase in height of the detached dwelling would have been acceptable given that there was some variation in the heights within the street scene, however, under the current application for a semi-detached property it was necessary to look at the adjoining property and it was considered that the additional height would be harmful to the character and appearance of the street scene.

In response to a question from Cllr Huffer, the Planning Officer explained that Officers had no concerns regarding the height of the previously submitted detached property, but it was the overall scale and design that officers had concerns with.

Cllr Goodearl proposed the Officer's recommendation for refusal explaining that although the existing dwelling was not fit in live in and required an upgrade, it still needed to suit and support the surrounding dwellings. Cllr Wilson seconded Cllr Goodearl's proposal.

Cllr Huffer agreed with Cllrs Goodearl and Wilson and stated that she also supported the Officer's recommendation for refusal.

The Chair added that the street scene did have various types of dwellings but with regard to semi-detached properties, there was an obligation to keep the two dwellings at an identical height.

It was resolved unanimously:

- i) That the planning application ref 23/00877/FUL be REFUSED for the following reason:
The proposed replacement dwelling, due to its height, roof alignment and overall form, would visually dominate the existing semi-detached dwelling that it would be joined to, to the detriment of the visual amenity of the semi-detached pair. The dwelling, by virtue of its significant footprint, height, and overall design, is considered to be out of keeping with the existing character and appearance of the development within the wider street scene, appearing incongruous within its setting. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan as well as the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework.

81. 23/01338/OUM – Land at Cambridge Road, Stretham

Holly Chapman, Senior Planning Officer presented a report (Y187, previously circulated) recommending approval for outline planning permission for the erection of up to 83 Affordable Homes with associated access, parking and landscaping with all matters reserved except for means of access and updated Members to the following minor changes within the report, of which neither change affected the recommendation:

- 7.4 of the report should read 'allowed' and not 'dismissed'
- 7.13 of the report should read 'households' and not 'individuals'

Members were shown slides of the location, proposal, highway works, planning history and site photos.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **Principle of Development** – The application site is located outside the development envelope and was a 100% affordable housing rural exception site for up to 83 units. There had been a need identified for affordable housing in Stretham and Little Ely. The application complied with the objectives of Policy HOU4 and therefore GROWTH2. Contributions would be provided regarding education and libraries in accordance with GROWTH3.
- **Access and Highway Safety** – The on and off-site highway works was to mitigate the impact of the development. An identical highways scheme has been approved under LPA Ref. 22/00180/OUM and 23/00712/OUM. The County Council's Highways Authority and Transport Assessment Team raised no objections in terms of highway safety or sustainability. The site provided capacity for on-site parking in accordance with Policy COM8.
- **Indicative Layout and Visual Amenity** – This was supported by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment. There would be adverse landscape impact during construction and completion, with the impacts diminishing with the establishment of the site and mitigative planting. The site was capable of accommodating change and the detailed design scheme could compliment the local distinctive character. Long term impacts of the development were not significant at local, national, or county scales.
- **Residential Amenity** – A number of dwellings (plots 1-54) would require Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery (MVHR) systems to mitigate noise impacts from the A10 highway. All dwellings proposed to be constructed in accordance with Passivhaus (passivehouse) principles. The use of MVHR/Passivhaus principles to mitigate noise was established at appeal (22/00180/OUM) and the MVHR would address any noise concerns from nearby kennels and ensure the operation of business was not unnecessarily restricted due to noise complaints.

In summary, the scheme would achieve significant benefits in bringing forward a wholly affordable housing scheme to meet robustly evidenced locally identified need, contribute to district-wide need for affordable housing with a variety of tenures indicated. The dwellings themselves would be built to sustainable Passivhaus principles, which would likely result in a development with low energy usage. These factors together would carry substantial positive weight, primarily in social benefits. Furthermore, there would be economic benefits, through local spend by future occupiers, thereby helping to sustain the village. Mechanical ventilation is an accepted mitigative measure to address residential amenity concerns. The scheme would be expected to secure net gains in biodiversity, in-line with current national and local policy, and would introduce highway upgrades which would likely also provide some very modest benefit to existing nearby

residents on the western side of the A10 highway. It is likely a detailed scheme could come forward which would positively respond to the built environment of Stretham and would not result in significant harm in the long term to the character of the countryside. Whilst the development could have potential significant harm to the immediate locality in the short term, in the long term with the establishment of mitigative planting, any resulting adverse impacts upon the landscape character and settlement at a local, county and national scale (which are likely to be at a low level) are also considered to be outweighed by the benefits of delivering a 100% affordable housing scheme to meet an evidenced local need, which itself is afforded significant weight in the decision-making process.

The Chair invited Laura O'Brien, Agent, to address the committee.

“The application before you seeks approval for 83 affordable homes and follows a previous approval for 38 similar homes on broadly the same site. The scheme is brought forward in association with Stonewater Housing Group, a registered affordable housing provider who will be developing the site. The scheme has been developed in consultation with the Council's Planning and Housing Officers and in order to achieve the best mix of affordable housing tenures to meet local housing needs informed by both the Council's Housing Register and the Local Housing Needs Survey specifically undertaken for the villages of Stretham and Little Thetford. The development will be entirely affordable but will incorporate a mix of tenures to meet demand; this will comprise of 42 rented homes, 16 shared ownership homes and 25 rent to buy homes. The demand for rent to buy tenure was specifically identified by the Local Housing Needs Survey providing a pathway to home ownership by giving a 20% discounted rent to allow residents to save for a deposit, with an option to buy their home outright or a shared ownership within five years. The proposed mix of tenures, including shared and full homeownership will ensure that the development promotes social cohesion and provides housing options for a wide range of local people. The Officer's report sets out in detail the clear and significant need for affordable housing in the borough and more generally in the Parish of Stretham specifically. As part of Stonewater's commitment to building sustainable homes for the future within the development will be constructed following Passivhaus principles, as previously mentioned, to provide highly energy efficient home that will in turn provide low energy and water costs for future residents. We note that there are no objections to the proposal from statutory consultees, including the Highways Authority and the Lead Local Flood Authority. Furthermore, the application has received significant support from local residents including 70 comments from people who wish to support affordable housing in the area. In addition, CIL contributions to the application are already agreed to make substantial 106 contributions towards education, libraries, and open space enhancements. To conclude, we believe that this is an excellent scheme, and we trust that you will follow your officer's recommendations and approve.”

The Chair invited Members to ask questions of Laura O'Brien.

Cllr Huffer asked how residents would be able to cross the busy A10 highway in order to access the schools, doctors and shops and stated that she could not support the application when residents would need to ‘take their life in the hands’ to cross the A10.

In answer to a question from Cllr Wilson, the Agent confirmed that Stonewater Housing Association would manage the affordable housing and the Planning Manager confirmed that the Section 106 ensured the properties were retained as affordable housing properties in perpetuity.

Cllr Trapp approved of the housing be built to Passivhaus standards but had concerns regarding the continuous flow of traffic along the A10.

The Chair asked if the development would receive certification in regard to the Passivhaus principles as this would enable the Council to check that standards had been adhered to. The Senior Planning Officer explained that the conditions only imposed the Passivhaus principles and not the standards and therefore did not require certification. It was also confirmed that there would be a play area on the development. The Senior Planning Officer clarified that there had been no technical objections to this scheme with regard to transport and highways and there was no proposal for traffic lights on the A10. It was also confirmed that all statutory consultees had been consulted.

In response to a question from Cllr Lay, the Senior Planning Officer confirmed that housing would be offered to local residents initially before being offered to the wider parishes and then further out.

Cllr Goodearl asked why a Highways representative had not attended the meeting as he had significant concerns with the crossing of the A10 and that during the site visit earlier in the day, Members were unable to cross the road, and this was not at peak travel time. The Planning Manager reiterated that no objections had been received from Highways and as Planning Officers were not experts in highways, the Planning Officer had consulted both the Highways Teams on more than one occasion. The Planning Manager pointed out to Members that there were no technical highways objections and permission had been granted on the two previous occasions, therefore a refusal would need to explain the difference that 83 dwellings made to the agreed 30+ on site.

Cllr Goodearl stated that the two previous applications had not come before the committee and Members were of the opinion that the road was unsafe, he therefore proposed a postponement until discussions could take place with highways regarding their decision. The Planning Manager advised that Highways could not be forced to attend Planning Committee meetings, but an alternative option would be to request a third party to carry out an independent traffic assessment.

Cllr Huffer seconded the proposal made by Cllr Goodearl to defer the item until further information was received. Cllr Huffer added that she fully supported affordable housing but could not support the current application.

Cllr Whelan added that it was her experience that the traffic was fast and busy along that section of the A10, with cars travelling 50-60mph instead of the enforced 40mph. Cllr Whelan was concerned with the potential amount of people attempting to cross the road, it would result in a major traffic collision. The queue to the nearby roundabout was heavy and therefore she supported refusing the application on the grounds of safety, noise, and speed of vehicles.

The Chair explained he could not support an application that would expose over 200 people to the danger of crossing the A10, he agreed with Cllr Whelan and stated that his opinion was that the scheme was also damaging to the character of the area and hurtful to the views of the open countryside.

Cllr Trapp commented that the affordable housing would be built to a high standard and the application was a good scheme but he was concerned with the proposed access.

It was resolved unanimously:

- i) That the planning application ref 23/01338/OUM be DEFERRED for further information via a traffic report/assessment.
- ii) That the Planning Manager be delegated to arrange an independent traffic report/assessment on the safety of the proposed highways scheme and if it mitigates the additional number of houses from the 38 already approved. The application will then come back to committee once the traffic report/assessment information has been received.
- iii) That this request is made without prejudice to the final decision to be made by the Planning Committee.

82. Planning performance report – February 2024

David Morren, Interim Planning Manager, presented reports (Y188 previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in February 2024.

It was resolved unanimously: That the Planning Performance Reports for February 2024 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 4:32pm

Chair.....

Date.....