



EAST  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee facilitated via the Zoom Video Conferencing System at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 at 1:00pm.

### **PRESENT**

Cllr Bill Hunt (Chairman)  
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith  
Cllr David Ambrose Smith (Substitute for Cllr David Brown)  
Cllr Sue Austen  
Cllr Matt Downey  
Cllr Lavinia Edwards  
Cllr Alec Jones  
Cllr Josh Schumann  
Cllr Lisa Stubbs (Vice Chair)  
Cllr John Trapp  
Cllr Gareth Wilson

### **OFFICERS**

Rebecca Saunt – Planning Manager  
Emma Barral – Planning Officer  
Angela Briggs – Planning Team Leader  
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager  
Rachael Forbes – Planning Officer  
Andrew Phillips – Planning Team Leader  
Dan Smith – Planning Consultant  
Janis Murfet – Democratic Services Officer (Committees)

### **IN ATTENDANCE**

Cllr Charlotte Cane (Agenda Item No. 6)

## **12. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor David Brown.

It was noted that Councillor David Ambrose Smith would substitute for Councillor Brown for the duration of the meeting.

## **13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Wilson, Jones, Trapp and Downey each declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 7 and 8 (20/00214/FUL & 20/00215/LBC, Cross Green House, Cross Green, Soham), one of the applicants being a fellow Liberal Democrat Member of the District Council. They each stated that they would participate in the debate and vote on the items.

**14. MINUTES**

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**15. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- There would be a recorded vote for each application, with Members' names being taken in alphabetical order;
- He wished to place on record his thanks to Officers for going the extra mile to facilitate the Planning Committee meetings as he felt they had been very helpful;
- He hoped that this would be a relatively short meeting and therefore did not intend having a comfort break. However, Members should indicate if they required one.

*Councillor Schumann joined the meeting at 1.10pm; he stated that he did not have any declarations of interest to make.*

**16. 19/01323/FUM – 19 ELY ROAD, STRETHAM**

Dan Smith, Planning Consultant, presented a report (reference V25, previously circulated) which sought full permission for the erection of a new B8 storage and distribution building, the laying out of additional hardstanding for vehicle parking, the provision of fencing, associated drainage features and landscaping of the site. The proposal would function as an extension of the premises and operation of the existing storage and distribution business of the site.

It was noted that the application had been called in to Planning Committee as it was a full application which fell within the category of major development (floor space of 1,000 square metres or more). It was therefore required to come to Planning Committee for determination, in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The application site was primarily agricultural land located immediately to the north of the Masters storage and distribution site, just outside the development envelope of Stretham. It was accessed directly from the A10 and that access formed part of the application site. Pairs of semi-detached dwellings were opposite the Masters site and there were other residential dwellings and Hill Farm to the south of the site. Further to the south a public

footpath ran east-west along the brow of the hill and on just over the brow of the hill on the east side of the A10 was a Grade II listed windmill.

A number of illustrations were displayed at the meeting, including a map of the location and aerial photographs indicating the network of footpaths around the village, and the application site outlined in red. There was also a layout of the proposal, main front and a side elevation, a planned view of the building and the proposed parking.

In the absence of a site visit, Members were provided with a series of photographs taken from various viewpoints in, and around the site.

The main considerations in the determination of the application were:

- Principle of development;
- Visual amenity;
- Residential amenity;
- Highway safety and parking;
- Ecology; and
- Drainage.

With regard to the principle of development, Members noted that Planning Policy GROWTH 2 generally focused new development within development envelopes rather than the countryside. However, the policy stated that there were some circumstances in which development may be acceptable in the countryside. One such circumstance was where development was for the extension of existing businesses, which was regulated by Policy EMP 2; paragraph 7.2.2 of the Officer's report set out the supporting text and the relevant wording of the policy. It was considered that the proposed development complied with Policy EMP 2 and was therefore acceptable in principle.

The proposed development would extend the site out into the open countryside and involve the erection of an additional large building and the provision of HGV parking to the north of the building. The applicant had commissioned a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to assess the quality of the existing landscape and the potential impact of the proposed development.

The site and the surrounding areas were assessed to be of a low to medium quality and sensitivity. The Assessment stated that the immediate impact of the proposal would be 'slight adverse' in the short term, and 'neutral or slightly beneficial' in the long term.

Officers considered that more could be done to enhance the overall visual impact of the site. Paragraph 7.3.3 of the Officer's report had stated that amongst other landscaping measures, the creation of a new landscaping belt along the frontage of the existing site was possible. However, since publication of the report, the applicant's agent had informed the Planning Officer that due to a covenant on the existing site, only more limited hedgerow planting and not a wider belt would be possible. It could take the form of trees and the applicant committed to additional width along the frontage of the new site, additional hedge planting and hedgerow trees on the existing frontage, and control of the external lighting. The Update Document, circulated to Members in advance of the meeting, set out the amendments to Conditions 1, 4 and 5 to take account of this.

It was considered that there would be a neutral impact on the Listed Windmill, and with mitigation, the proposed development would have an acceptable visual impact.

In terms of residential amenity, the proposed building and new HGV parking area was at the northern end of the site, further away from residential neighbours. There would not be any impact on neighbouring amenity from the built form. Although the use of the site would be intensified, the location of the building and the new parking area would be further from the neighbours and there would be no significant additional vehicle movements. It was therefore considered that the proposed development was acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity in accordance with Policies ENV2 and ENV9 of the Local Plan 2015.

Turning next to highway safety and parking, it was noted that a Transport Statement had been submitted with the application and this had been considered by the County Council Transport Team. It was considered that the development would not lead to a significant increase in vehicle movements and the existing access was adequate to serve the development. However, gates would be widened to improve the passing of HGVs close to the access. The application had demonstrated adequate parking and turning for cars and HGVs within the site, and additional car parking would be provided in place of the existing HGV parking on the frontage. It was therefore considered that the proposed development was acceptable in terms of highway safety and parking in accordance with Policies ENV2, COM7 and COM8 of the Local Plan 2015.

The Committee noted that an Ecological Appraisal had been carried out and the site was judged to be of very low ecological value. It was considered that the proposal would not result in harm to ecology; additional planting belts and native hedging would enhance biodiversity.

The application site was located in Flood Zone 1 and was therefore considered to be at the lowest risk of flooding. As the development would result in a significant proportion of hard standing on the site, it would have the potential to increase the run-off rates of surface water. Following consultation with the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) the applicant had provided additional information including drainage calculations in respect of the drainage features, redesigned the proposed swale and provided further justification of

the SuDs strategy and the need for a pump in the loading bay. The LLFA, having considered this information, was now satisfied that an adequate level of drainage infrastructure could be achieved; it requested a full drainage strategy be required by condition.

It was therefore considered that the proposed scheme was acceptable and in accordance with Policy ENV8 of the Local Plan 2015.

The Planning Consultant concluded his presentation by saying that the proposed development was acceptable in principle under the provisions of Policy EMP2 and it accorded with other relevant policy requirements. It was therefore recommended for approval.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Ian Smith, agent, addressed the Committee; he was accompanied by Mr Paul Upton, Managing Director, Masters. Mr Smith made the following points:

*‘Good afternoon, my name is Ian Smith, I am a Director of Cheffins and thank you for the opportunity to address Committee today. I am responsible for the submission of this application on behalf of Masters of Stretham and I am joined today (on-line) by Mr Paul Upton who is the Managing Director of Masters and a shareholder, and is able to answer any questions about the business, its current activities and its growth aspirations.*

*Many of you will have seen this site when driving along the A10 but may not know a lot about what goes on. Masters has been in Stretham for about 16 years with the company originally renting and occupying a single former farm building and occupying the whole since 2010 and now owning the whole site. The business employs 30 FT staff and about 20 agency staff at present.*

*However today, this is an important local business providing third party logistics to a number of local business in the area. In recent years the business has grown and now hosts some fairly significant contracts with major PLCs such as British Sugar. Quite simply, the business has outgrown its premises and it needs to expand physically if it's to grow and remain in this area. Satellite sites have been tried but do not work well for logistics operations and it is notable that there is currently an historic low vacancy rate for warehouses in the area.*

*There are three existing warehouse buildings on site and a fourth similar sized building is now proposed together with associated parking, new office accommodation and drainage and landscaping works.*

*It is fully set out in your Officers report and while there are a number of local plan policy considerations (traffic, landscape, drainage, biodiversity and so forth) I think the key policy is EMP2. Under EMP 2 the Council has a key aim of encouraging business growth especially indigenous businesses and the*

*policy accepts that cases will inevitably involve existing sites in countryside locations such as this.*

*EMP 2 also sets out four factors to be considered – character and appearance of the area, being in scale with the location, extension being for an existing business, and protecting residential amenity. All of those aspects are considered in detail in the report and the scheme has been assessed as being in compliance with those criteria. We should acknowledge that, during consideration, various scheme amendments have been introduced to meet specific concerns raised – particularly in relation to landscape and amenity impacts.*

*In conclusion I would say that:*

- This is a long-established local business, which serves other local business in the area. It operates in an economically buoyant sector and has ambitions to grow. It very much wishes to remain at Stretham where many of its staff live;*
- The Councils Jobs Growth Strategy recognises the importance of the distribution industry and this area remains one of high demand for this sector;*
- A scheme has been carefully designed to minimise impacts – it is on the north side of the existing site, further away from existing houses on the east side of the A10 and the existing HGV parking will be located further away;*
- A strong landscape structure has been proposed which will help to soften views of the complex, as it matures. Building heights and materials will match the existing structures;*
- Modest additional traffic will be generated (6 peak hour trips) and the Highway Authority has endorsed this application.*

*It is a suitable proposal for the site and we would therefore ask Members to support the recommendation and grant planning permission.'*

Councillor Jones thought the proposal to be quite a sizeable investment and he asked about the figures relating to the extra traffic movements. He wondered if the warehousing was just for storage rather than for trying to increase capacity. Mr Smith advised that the traffic movements were derived from the floor space rather than being specifically related to operational capacity. Mr Upton added that Masters was not a modern technological company and the figures were generated from the number of pallets coming and going out of the warehouse. There was a need for this extra space in order to meet the demands of their customers. The numbers related to shipping in were estimated and stock was held for as little or as long as was needed, until it was despatched. He did not dream of having many more lorries; he simply wished to expand the warehouse so he could fulfil his customers' needs.

Councillor Stubbs wished to know more about the jobs creation, having noted that Mr Smith had said there was the potential to create a further 8

jobs. Mr Upton said that he wished to grow the number of staff within the warehouse team. The logistics industry was lacking in younger people and he had tried to stimulate interest in the local schools. He would like to see local youngsters come and have a look at the operation in the hope that they might become interested in pursuing a career in logistics. The company could train and educate, and bring them on. Councillor Stubbs then spoke of apprenticeships, saying that in the light of the Covid pandemic there would likely be youngsters who had maybe lost out on the opportunity of an apprenticeship. She could see a definite need and with the Government saying it was going to put money into apprenticeships, this could be a means of bringing young people into the business. Mr Upton said he would love to take up on this.

Councillor Trapp applauded the idea of more local business and said it was great that Masters was expanding. He then asked about the vehicle movements; from the site plan, it appeared to him that they exited to the left onto the A10 and entered the site from the south and he wondered if the vehicles piled up. Mr Upton replied that there was not a massive amount of movement but they tended to be busier in the morning because of the pallet line business. There was no stacking and vehicles came in from both directions; it very much depended on where they were coming from and what was required on a particular day.

The Planning Consultant said he could provide reassurance in respect of Councillor Jones' questions. Rather than relying wholly on the TRICS calculation, the submitted Transport Statement contained a survey which was used to predict the existing traffic movements in and out of the site. This added a level of robustness to the survey over and above what would have usually been done.

The Chairman had a couple of questions. He asked Mr Upton if trees were to be planted along the north edge of the site, to which Mr Upton replied that they were, so that eventually people would see a line of trees rather than a line of HGVs. The Chairman then said that during the course of the application, someone had suggested there should be a sign warning people of vehicles approaching from the northbound carriageway. He asked if Mr Upton would be prepared to discuss this with the Case Officer and the Local Highway Authority. Mr Upton said he would welcome this measure, as would his drivers, and he would pick up the costs of providing the sign.

It was noted that the two objections to the proposal were from people living on the other side of the road, down towards the roundabout looking towards the HGVs.

Councillor Trapp commended the Planning Consultant for the 'photo site visit' during his presentation, saying he had found it very useful.

Councillors C Ambrose Smith, Jones and Wilson each expressed their support for the application.

It was duly proposed by Councillor C Ambrose Smith and seconded by Councillor Jones that the Officer's recommendation for approval be supported. When put to the vote,

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application reference 19/01323/FUM be APPROVED subject to the recommended conditions as set out in the Officer's report, and the amendments to Conditions 1, 4 and 5, as detailed on the update sheet provided to Councillors.

**17. 19/01721/VARM- CAR PARK, HILL SIDE MILL, QUARRY LANE, SWAFFHAM BULBECK**

Emma Barral, Planning Officer, presented a report (reference V26, previously circulated) which sought to vary Condition 1 (approved plans) of the previously approved 17/01231/FUM for the construction of 19 dwellings with associated parking and amenity space and retention of existing offices on site.

It was noted that LPA Reference 17/01231/FUM was approved on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2018. This Section 73 application sought to vary Condition 1 attached to the extant planning permission to amend the approved layout and dwelling types to a scheme of 18 semi-detached residential dwellings.

The amended plans related only to the amended layout, design, dwelling mix and number of houses proposed within the application site. The amended layout was to address previous concerns raised by the Highways Authority during the course of the previous application.

The application was proposing a shortfall of on-site provision for affordable housing against the requirement for 40% affordable housing in the south of the District under Policy HOU3 of the Local Plan 2015. Given this departure from policy, the application was to be determined by Members at the Planning Committee.

The site was partially within the Cambridge Green Belt, with the existing office building fully within the Green Belt and the proposed 18 dwellings all outside of it. The site was located adjacent to the T-junction of Quarry Lane and Swaffham Heath Road, approximately half way between two sections of the village that were within the village framework. A public footpath came to the south west corner of the site.

A number of illustrations were displayed at the meeting, including a map, an aerial view of the site, a locational map indicating the position of the site within the Green Belt, photographs giving views of the site from the public highway, and the layout of the previous approval.

The Planning Officer reminded Members that the latest date the development could be commenced was 18<sup>th</sup> January 2021. Members were then



shown a slide of the elevations for the previous scheme, computer generated images of the proposed scheme and the variation to the layout.

It was noted that the proposed dwellings were to be constructed using off-site manufacturing technology. The application proposed a total of 4 affordable housing units on the site, which equated to 22%, with 2 dwellings as affordable rent and 2 as shared ownership. Because of the way in which the dwellings were manufactured, they would be manufactured as pairs of semi-detached units. It was not possible to produce a single unit and as such, it would be difficult to deliver 5 affordable dwellings on the site. It was therefore proposed to make a financial contribution to provide an additional affordable unit off-site. The advantage of this kind of modern dwelling was that the build rate and delivery was much quicker.

Speaking of the layout changes, the Planning Officer said that Plots 11 – 14 would be pushed forward to emphasise the corner. The new internal road would serve as an access to the commercial building and plots 7 – 14. There would be two new accesses to serve Plots 1 – 6, to allow space for turning and manoeuvring and Plots 15 – 18 would have a single access point off Swaffham Heath Road.

A side façade had been developed on the Plot 1 elevations facing south and the Plots 7 – 10 elevations facing Swaffham Heath Road to break up the brick façade facing the public highway.

The main considerations in the determination of this application were:

- The principle of development;
- Green Belt;
- Visual amenity;
- Residential amenity;
- Highways and parking;
- Affordable housing and housing mix; and
- Other matters.

The principle of development was established under application 17/01231/FUM. There had been no change in circumstances on site or to the relevant policy considerations, and the proposal was therefore considered to be acceptable in principle.

Policy ENV10 of the Local Plan 2015 required that development permitted adjacent to the Green Belt would ensure there would be no adverse impacts on the purposes of Green belt. As all the dwellings were outside the Green Belt, the amended scheme was not considered to constitute

development that would significantly impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and therefore complied with Policy ENV10.

With regard to visual amenity, the scheme proposed dwellings reaching a maximum height of 9.8 metres; this was slightly taller than those previously approved at a maximum height of 8.5 metres. While the difference in height was noted, it was not considered to result in an unacceptable degree of harm to the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area together with the other changes proposed. It was considered that the amendments in relation to layout, design, dwelling mix and number of houses would be of a very high quality. Officers believed that the benefits of the design outweighed the concerns outlined through the previous application relating to density and the creation of an urban built frontage.

It was considered that there would be no detrimental impact from the completed dwellings. The siting of the properties and the proposed fenestration pattern would ensure that there was no unacceptable overlooking or overbearing impact to residential amenity. The existing office building on site was not expected to create any undue disturbance to the potential future residents and any unexpected noise issues could be covered under Environmental Health legislation.

In respect of highways and parking, it was noted that the access to the office and parking remained in the same position as previously approved. The amended layout of the scheme was discussed extensively with County Highways following which, it was considered that the amendments were enough to overcome their objections, as sufficient space would be provided for turning and manoeuvring. The 19 office parking spaces could be used by visitors.

The Planning Officer reminded the Committee that the total amount of housing on the site had been reduced from 19 to 18 dwellings. The previous application had proposed a total of 8 affordable dwellings out of 19, which equated to 42%. Policy HOU3 of the Local Plan 2015 required at least 40% affordable housing.

Following the withdrawal of the emerging Local Plan, a Viability Assessment was published in April 2019 to consider the appropriate level of affordable housing which should be provided in different areas across the District. The report recommended that the appropriate and viable level of affordable housing for the southern part of the District (which included Swaffham Bulbeck) should be set at 30%.

This current application proposed 4 affordable dwellings on site, (equating to 22%) with a financial contribution to provide an affordable dwelling off-site, which would ensure the required level of 30%. This had been discussed and agreed with the Housing Officer.

With regard to other matters, the Planning Officer said that an updated Ecological Impact Assessment had been undertaken to support the amended layout and had been submitted with this application.

The site was located in Flood Zone 1 and the LLFA were satisfied with the ability of the previous proposal to control foul and surface water with relevant conditions added to the decision notice and a Drainage Strategy Plan and Drainage Strategy Report had been submitted as part of this application. It was considered that the proposal would have no detrimental impact upon water flow in the local area.

Conditions would be imposed in respect of hard and soft landscaping.

In connection with educational requirements, the current application and the revised Section 106 would need to ensure that contributions related to the loss of one dwelling on the application site as well as the amended affordable housing provision.

The Planning Officer concluded her presentation by saying that the contemporary design would provide a strong architectural statement to the local area, which would dramatically change the current character. However, the overall design was considered to enhance the local area. The application was therefore recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions and a revised Section 106 Agreement to secure the off-site affordable housing contribution.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr George Ballard addressed the Committee and made the following comments:

*I speak as Chair of the Swaffham Bulbeck Community Land Trust.*

*My objection is to the reduction of the affordable housing units on the site from the required 5 to 4, reducing the proportion of affordable units to 22% not the minimum of 30%, and commuting this loss by way of an off-site contribution in a financial sum "to provide an additional affordable unit". It does not provide this at all for Swaffham Bulbeck, the funds go to ECDC for distribution elsewhere and not necessarily for affordable housing.*

*The justification is that a mix of market and affordable as semi-detached dwellings may be impractical.*

*The impracticality is not I understand for the developer, but for the Housing Association which has been identified as the future owner/manager of the dwellings. The Planning Officer has accepted this supposition of impracticality without testing it.*

*The Developers, both the present and the original applicants for permission granted for this site, as well as ECDC, have been made aware that the village has already formed a CLT, and that that CLT is ready and willing to work with the developers to secure affordable housing units and to take on ownership and management of them, and to incorporate that into the management of the affordable units planned for the development on the adjacent sites on either side of Heath Road and Quarry Lane Swaffham Bulbeck. Our willingness to do this has not been tested.*

*There is no impracticality to the mix of market and affordable as semi-detached dwellings.*

*The CLT has received urgent enquires from 14 young families currently living/working in Swaffham Bulbeck as to what affordable housing is likely to be available and when. Others have expressed interest: there is a real and pressing need for this housing. It is of no help to these people, members of our community, to say that one of the affordable homes that could have been theirs has been lost by way of an off-site contribution in a financial sum to ECDC. They cannot live in that. One affordable home has been lost because it will be off-site.*

*The Committee should not accept the reduction in affordable homes proposed and should consider making it a condition of the Permission sought that the developer works with the CLT to deliver the correct proportion of affordable homes on this site.'*

Councillor Wilson asked if the management of the fifth affordable home being off-site would cause problems for the CLT. Mr Ballard replied that it would not; the CLT was willing and ready to take it on and he had already checked the financial side of things and could access the funds to take on the property.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr Andrew Black, agent, addressed the Committee and made the following remarks:

*My name is Andrew Black, I am agent for the application and speak in support of the proposals.*

*The proposals in front of you for consideration today represent an amendment of an application previously approved by you. My client, Woolensbrook Developments, purchased the site with the benefit of the planning permission already in place and has worked with your officers, residents and other stakeholders to develop a scheme which overcomes the considerable issues with deliverability associated with the previous scheme. The scheme has been reduced from 19 to 18 units in order to resolve some of the deliverability issues and create a scheme which we feel is more suited to the area.*

*Woolensbrook Developments will develop homes on the site using an innovative 'off-site' manufacturing process which is well established in their business in mainland Europe. Not only is the scheme now viable, the homes will be completed considerably quicker than those through traditional building methods. Woolensbrook has already entered into a formal agreement with Longhurst Housing Association who are a local provider with an excellent reputation. They are very interested in how the off-site manufacture process can be used to speed up affordable housing delivery for their product in the region.*

*Other considerable benefits from the new scheme in comparison to the previously approved scheme include:*

- *Provision of separate access for office and residential*
- *Revision of car parking from rear parking courts to on-plot parking – reducing the prospect of residents parking on the main roads to the front of houses.*
- *Larger residential gardens as a result*
- *Resolution of technical issues including drainage.*
- *Longhurst Housing Association*

*Woolensbrook Developments is committed to the immediate delivery of these homes, along with the associated benefits, and approval of this application will enable construction to begin immediately. Woolensbrook is committed to developing more houses across East Cambridgeshire and the wider region using this exciting new technology and are actively pursuing a number of other local opportunities. The team therefore look forward to continuing the relationship with the council on other similar opportunities as the business grows.*

*We are grateful for the support of your planning officers throughout the determination process of this application and your support of this application is welcomed.'*

A number of Members asked questions of Mr Black.

The Chairman wished to know why there had been a delay, given that planning permission had been given in January 2018. Mr Black explained that the consent had been obtained by the previous owners who then disposed of the site on the open market. His client bought the site, but there were legal matters and a period of due diligence looking at the housing. He and his client had worked with Officers; there were issues regarding ownership to be resolved as the red line boundary did not tally with what was owned, and there were some issues regarding drainage to be properly looked at.

Councillor Trapp noted that the Trees Officer had said there would be difficulty of having trees on the site because he considered that Cypresses were the only ones that could live there at the moment. He asked if Mr Black had considered this, to which Mr Black replied that this had been looked at very carefully. An Arboricultural Assessment had been produced as part of the application and it indicated that the proposed landscaping was viable. However, if Members wished to add an additional condition, he would be happy to submit additional information to demonstrate that there would be no impact on the existing trees.

Councillor Trapp next asked why the access for Plots 15 – 18 was on Heath Road and not Quarry Lane, as the former had a hill on the other side of it and was a dangerous T-junction. Mr Black said he had worked with Highways and Officers to ensure the access was acceptable and it had been approved by them.

Councillor Stubbs recalled that the Chairman of the CLT had said the CLT had requested to manage the affordable homes. As the CLT would have been happy to take them on, she asked Mr Black why this had not been considered. He advised that deliverability was the main priority and a relationship had been built over a significant period of time with Longhurst Group, including discussions over the design and details of the affordable units and it was a contractual commitment. They were happy to move forward and he had not been approached by the CLT.

Councillor Stubbs continued, saying she did not see why these properties were so special; they were just homes. Mr Black replied that they were not traditional houses, the difference being that they were manufactured off-site. There had been much work carried out alongside Longhurst to ensure they were happy, he was keen that it should continue and there was a limited time span in which to achieve it.

Councillor Wilson suggested that the fifth affordable dwelling could be managed by the local CLT so that a local person could live in the house. Mr Black responded, saying that this was not currently in their plans or what had been looked at. He reiterated that the houses were manufactured as semi-detached units and could not be manufactured as individual units. Also the internal fit out was different between the market and affordable units. Councillor Wilson went on to say he felt the financial contribution should be used on the local housing development, so that Swaffham Bulbeck had the benefit of it. Mr Black said he appreciated the point, and if Members had a strong desire, he could take this away and have further discussions to see if it would be a viable prospect to use the money to work with the CLT to deliver a house on the site.

In response to a question from Councillor Jones about how the affordable houses were constructed differently, Mr Black replied that they were minor points such as the layout within the units and room sizes, all things required by the Longhurst Group as the landlord. The quality of the construction was no different to those of the other properties.

Councillor Trapp said that although Mr Black had mentioned there was no contract with the CLT, he recalled the application coming to the Parish Council meeting and somebody had given a presentation. Mr Ballard had exchanged his email address with that person; Mr Black replied that it had not been him.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Charlotte Cane, a Ward Member for Bottisham, addressed the Committee and made the following points:

*'The principle of development on this site has already been established when planning permission was given for 19 dwellings. I am therefore not going to address any concerns relating to that.*

*I have met with the developers and find the idea of building with off-site manufacturing technology genuinely exciting. It would appear to offer a*

*sustainable way of providing high quality housing, and I look forward to watching the scheme develop.*

*I have two major concerns, about affordable housing and the height of some dwellings, a concern about the proposed conditions, about site hours and a concern about the revised S106 agreement.*

*The proposal to have just 4 affordable dwellings – 22% - on site, rather than the 5 which would be required under the 30% rule, should not be accepted. I understand that the developer would pay a commuted sum, but this would not provide for the established needs in the village. The CLT and the Parish Council are aware of 14 households who live or work in Swaffham Bulbeck who need affordable housing. As it is a village, opportunities to build are limited and the District Council cannot afford to reduce the affordable housing on any developments within the village. We really need to get the best out of the scheme. As the paper says, the proposed manager of the affordable dwellings does not want to manage split tenure on a semi-detached property. However, there is a CLT in Swaffham Bulbeck which has stated that it would like to manage the affordable houses, and would be happy for this to include a split tenure semi-detached. A further option could be for the District Council to consider a contribution, from its commuted sums reserves or from CPCA funds for affordable housing, to allow 6 affordable dwellings on the site and therefore no split tenure semi-detached. It is worth noting that the original Planning Permission for 19 dwellings included 8 affordable dwellings. In addition to the quantity of affordable homes, I am disappointed at the suggestion of a 50:50 split between rented and intermediate. Our Council's policy is for 77:23 rented: intermediate, which would better reflect the needs in Swaffham Bulbeck. There should therefore be just 1 intermediate affordable dwelling and the rest should be for rent.*

*We heard from Mr Black that he was willing to discuss the fifth dwelling with the CLT. As an aside, it does raise questions about our processes at East Cambs and it was slightly disappointing to hear that the developer was unaware of the CLT until fairly recently. However, we do have a bit of time and I would like to see the developer consulting with the CLT regarding the dwelling that Longhurst doesn't wish to manage.*

*Since the original application came forward, a CLT has been formed in Swaffham Bulbeck. This CLT is looking into potential sites in the village which would be suitable for the development of affordable homes. This revised application should be used as an opportunity to consider working with the local CLT to manage the affordable homes on the site.*

*The proposal is for some properties to be 9.8m high. This is high compared to existing properties in Swaffham Bulbeck. The height will be added to because this development is towards the highest point in the village. The development will therefore be visible from many areas of the village, including the conservation areas of The Denny and Commercial End. This visibility could be harmful to the setting of the many historic buildings in Commercial End, whose significance has been recognised by Planning Inspectors. I recognise that the construction method means that the height can't be adjusted and*

*would therefore ask for additional mitigation in terms of landscaping and finishing details, eg different coloured bricks, false windows.*

*It is proposed that site works be restricted to 7.30-18.00 Mon-Fri and 7.30-13.00 on Saturday, with no works on Sunday and Bank Holidays. In the original permission, site works could not start before 8.00am. This is a residential area and starting as early as 7.30 could cause disturbance to neighbours. I should therefore like this restriction to be adjusted so that works cannot start before 8.00am.*

*The initial S106 Agreement required that no more than 6 of the market value homes could be occupied before all the affordable dwellings had been built, made ready for occupation and ownership passed to the Affordable Housing Provider. I should like the Committee to request that this clause remains in the revised S106 Agreement.'*

The Planning Officer responded to a number of the comments from Members. She advised that the fifth dwelling could be delivered in the village and a contribution would be sought, as set out in her report. She acknowledged Councillor Cane's concerns regarding the height of the dwellings, but said this had been carefully considered in respect of the listed building. The access to Plots 15 – 18 had been discussed with County Highways, after which they had removed their objections.

Councillor D Ambrose Smith said he was excited by the scheme and asked if it met the national design standards. The Planning Officer confirmed that Plots 15 – 18 were now a bit bigger and they did comply with the standards.

Councillor Trapp wished to know about the proximity of the car parking to the houses and if they could have charging points. It seemed to him that Plots 15 – 18 were adjacent, but 8 – 14 were much further away. The Planning Officer advised that some parking was provided to the rear of the properties, other spaces were further away and the remainder were close to the properties in tandem.

Councillor Trapp repeated his concern regarding the dangerous junction and the Planning Officer reiterated that the access was one of the changes to the scheme, and Highways had no objection to it.

Councillor C Ambrose Smith, referring to the mention of a warning sign in the last agenda item, asked if the Parish Council could ask for something similar in this application and Mr Black confirmed that he would be happy to enter into discussions if required. She then said that she had been part of the Committee for the previous application and she considered this one to be better. She was excited by the concept. Although the loss of an affordable house was a shame, much work had gone into the application and she thought it too late in the day to alter too much; she would support approval of the proposal.



Councillor Jones declared himself to be of a similar mind. He liked Councillor Cane's idea of using the funds to get 6 units on the site, and he too would support the recommendation.

Councillor Wilson said they could not just accept the loss of affordable housing, especially when there were supposed to be 8 dwellings. He believed the money available should be put towards a house in Swaffham Bulbeck and the CLT permitted to manage it.

The Planning Manager reminded Members that they could not dictate what the £142k was to be used for in terms of which provider would manage the affordable housing as this would be unreasonable; they had to consider the application as it was before them today, with the majority on site and an off-site contribution. The developer was happy to discuss the matter and Members would be kept updated, but she could not guarantee that the property would go to the CLT.

Councillor Wilson said a S106 was needed and as this had not been signed or completed, discussions could be had between the agent and CLT in relation to the fifth affordable house.

Councillor Downey said he was dispirited by the loss of affordable housing, as the reduction in numbers from 8 down to 4 was bad and should not be encouraged. He was also unhappy that the Authority could not dictate that the fifth house should be on the site. Whilst he was happy that there would be further discussion, there was no guarantee and he was therefore minded not to support the recommendation.

Councillor Trapp believed modular building to be a great idea and he was sure the developer wanted it to be a success, but nonetheless he felt that something was missing. The loss of affordable housing was terrible and he did not see why 6 affordable houses could not be built on-site.

Councillor C Ambrose Smith responded by saying that the developer had given a clear explanation and it was acceptable to her. She was disappointed at losing some affordable housing, but if the application was refused, all of it would be lost.

Councillor D Ambrose Smith asked the Planning Manager if it would be possible for ECDC and the developer, or the developer alone, to approach the Combined Authority to assist in meeting the 30% affordable housing. She replied that the Combined Authority money was outside our remit, but she would flag it up and was happy to have discussions.

Councillor Trapp stated that the loss of affordable housing was a concern and the developer could build the other scheme they had permission for.

Councillor Jones asked if it would be possible to extend the time limit. The Planning Manager advised that the variation could not be used for this; it was not within the Authority's gift.

Councillor Downey suggested that as the current permission expired in January 2021, the applicant could always wait and then submit another application.

The Planning Manager reminded Members that the proposal was outside the development envelope and the Council had a 5 year supply of land for housing. In the light of this, should another application be submitted when there was no extant permission on site, it would likely be recommended for refusal. The Committee had to look at the application as it was before them today. The agent was happy to have further discussions, but if Members were so minded, they could defer determination and have the case brought back after those discussions.

Councillor Wilson expressed his confidence in the Officers, adding that the Section 106 Agreement had not yet been signed and was therefore still up for negotiation.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilson and seconded by the Chairman that the Officer's recommendation for approval be supported and a report be brought back to the Committee on the outcome of the discussions regarding the S106 Agreement in respect of affordable housing.

When put to the vote, the motion was declared carried, there being 8 votes for, 2 votes against and 1 abstention. Whereupon,

It was resolved:

That planning application 19/01721/VARM be APPROVED subject to the signing of the S106 Agreement and the recommended conditions as set out in the Officer's report, with authority being delegated to the Planning Manager and Legal Services Manager to complete the S106 and to issue the planning permission.

It was further resolved:

That a report be brought back to the Committee on the outcome of the discussions regarding the S106 Agreement in respect of affordable housing.

*There was a short comfort break between 3.05pm and 3.15pm.*

*At this point, and at the request of the Chairman, the Legal Services Manager addressed the Committee. Agenda items 7 and 8 were Councillor Victoria Charlesworth's applications and there was a procedure under the Council's Constitution in respect of Members making planning applications. Councillor Charlesworth had engaged an agent to act for her and she had not taken part in any discussions. The Legal Services Manager was satisfied that Councillor Charlesworth had complied with everything required of her.*

**18. 20/00214/FUL – CROSS GREEN HOUSE, CROSS GREEN, SOHAM**

Rachael Forbes, Planning Officer, presented a report (reference V27, previously circulated) which sought permission for the conversion of a Grade II listed stable and coach house within the curtilage of Cross Green House, a former vicarage prominently located within the Soham Conservation Area.

The site was situated within the development envelope of Soham with the surrounding area comprising a mixture of residential and commercial properties.

As previously stated by the Legal Services Manager, this application had been made by a District Councillor and had therefore come to Planning Committee in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

A number of illustrations were displayed at the meeting including a map of the location, aerial views of the application site and its wider setting, the elevations of both the existing buildings and the proposed conversion. There were also floor plans, photographs of the street scene and photographs taken from within the site.

It was noted that the main dwelling, stables, and coach house were all individually listed buildings, with the stables and coach house listed for group value.

The main considerations in the determination of this application were:

- Principle of development;
- Historic environment and visual amenity;
- Residential amenity; and
- Other matters.

With regard to the principle of development, the Planning Officer said there was no specific policy relating to residential annexes; applications of this type were assessed on their functional link to the main dwelling. The building proposed for conversion was a Grade II Listed stables and coach house currently used for storage. The proposal would largely use existing openings, with one new roof light proposed. The level of accommodation would allow the occupant to be somewhat independent of the main dwelling, with the parking and garden being shared.

A condition was recommended to ensure that the annexe was linked to the host dwelling as ancillary accommodation to the existing residential use of the property. This would prevent the annexe being subdivided into a new dwelling or separate unit, which would likely be considered unacceptable. As the proposal was not tantamount to a new dwelling, it was supported in principle.

At this point, Councillor Schumann interjected to say that on one of the earlier slides, the map showed where he lived in White Hart Lane. Whilst not declaring a personal interest, he wished to make the Committee and public aware of this.

Members noted that the proposal originally contained six roof lights on the south roof pitch and a balcony to the east gable. However, the application was amended following comments from the Conservation Officer, removing all but one of the proposed roof lights and the balcony. The latter was replaced with a glass door and glass balustrade. Following these amendments, the Conservation Officer had no further objections, subject to conditions for roof light details and joinery details.

Turning next to residential amenity, the Planning Officer said that all windows and doors, with the exception of two, would face into the site towards Cross Green House. The window on the Paddock Street elevation was a glazed screen and served a non-habitable room and the glazed doors on the eastern elevation would not directly face the dwellings on Paddock Street.

The building was not being enlarged and would not result in any overbearing or overshadowing; the proposal was therefore considered to comply with Policy ENV2.

In connection with other matters, it was noted that the LHA had no objections to the proposal but had commented that the Local Planning Authority should ensure that there was sufficient parking and turning for both properties. There was ample space for parking and turning on site, but as the proposal was for an annexe the applicant would not be expected to provide two parking spaces for the annexe.

The Planning Officer concluded her presentation by saying that the proposal complied with the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, and was therefore recommended for approval.

Councillor Jones said he was aware of the property; the stable was underused and he thought it would be good to have it brought back into use. Although he represented the same Ward as Councillor Charlesworth, he had no issues with the application and was happy to recommend it for approval.

The Chairman said he felt that as Councillor Jones had declared a personal interest in this item, this could be something of a sensitive matter and it might therefore be more diplomatic for him to propose approval.

Councillor C Ambrose Smith believed the scheme to be a sensible use of the buildings and said she could see no problems with it.

Councillor Trapp was of the same opinion; the proposal would not be extending the current building and he believed it would be a good way to get it back into use.

The Chairman agreed with Councillor Trapp, adding that there had been no objections from neighbours, the group value had been recorded and protected, and there had been no comment from Soham Town Council. He

was aware that considerable work had gone into the application by ECDC and the applicant, and commendable results had been achieved.

It was duly proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor C Ambrose Smith that the Officer's recommendation for approval be supported.

When put to the vote,

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application reference 20/00214/FUL be APPROVED subject to the recommended conditions as set out in the Officer's report.

**19. 20/00215/LBC – CROSS GREEN HOUSE, CROSS GREEN, SOHAM**

Rachael Forbes, Planning Officer, presented a report (reference V28, previously circulated) which sought Listed Building Consent for the conversion of a Grade II listed stable and coach house to an annexe. The application was being assessed alongside the previous agenda item (reference 20/00214/FUL).

The Chairman asked the Planning Officer if there was anything she wished to add or make reference to and she replied that the main considerations were the same as before. However, for this application she would read out the impact to the Listed Building:

*'Paragraph 193 of the NPPF 2019 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.*

*Policy ENV12 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan states that proposals to extend, alter or change the use of a Listed Building will only be permitted where they would:*

- *Preserve or enhance the significance of the building and not involve substantial or total loss of historic fabric;*
- *Be compatible with the character, architectural integrity and setting of the Listed Building*
- *Facilitate the long term preservation of the building.*

The Committee noted that the Conservation Officer had been consulted as part of the application, and following initial objections regarding roof lights and balcony, these elements had been removed from the proposal and his objections had now been overcome. He had, however, recommended conditions for details of the roof light to be used and details of the new windows and doors.

The Planning Officer concluded her presentation by saying that the proposal was not considered to result in harm to the listed building and it was considered to comply with Chapter 16 of the NPPF and Policy ENV12 of the Local Plan 2015. It was therefore recommended for approval.

The Chairman said he presumed a heritage roof light would be used; the Planning Officer replied that further details had been requested and this would come under the discharge of conditions.

There were no comments or questions from the Committee.

The Chairman said he would propose approval of the Officer's recommendation so that there could be no question of favouritism by any Members of the same political group as the applicant. He hoped that Councillor C Ambrose Smith would second the motion and she confirmed that she was content to do so.

When put to the vote,

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application reference 20/00215/LBC be APPROVED subject to the recommended conditions as set out in the Officer's report.

## **20. PLANNING PERFORMANCE REPORT – MAY 2020**

Rebecca Saunt, Planning Manager, presented a report (reference V29, previously circulated) which outlined the performance of the Planning Department for May 2020.

She commenced by saying that May had not been the Department's best month in terms of determination of applications on time. 100% of the major applications were normally determined within the timeframe, but for a number of applications where the officer was recommending refusal, agents were not prepared to accept and sign an extension of time. The targets for all other categories had, on the whole, been met.

The Planning Department had received a total of 134 applications during May, which represented a 27% decrease on May 2019 (183) and a 6% increase from April 2020 (127). There had not been so many ad hoc applications since 21<sup>st</sup> April 2020, when the Authority announced that it had a 5 year supply of land for housing. However, Officers had always been busy, and caseloads were now increasing

It was noted that the number of enforcement cases was starting to increase. Officers were once again going out on site and were receiving a number of reports about neighbours carrying out 'projects' during lockdown and they were now seeing new complaints being reported to the team.

The Chairman remarked that the Council had gone through a fairly difficult patch with Coronavirus. His experience was that Officers had been

exceptional and gone out of their way to make the procedure for Zoom meetings as simple as possible and he wished his thanks to be recorded.

Councillor Trapp expressed his appreciation for the additional site photographs and the Planning Manager said that they would continue going forward.

It was resolved:

That the Planning Performance Report for May 2020 be noted.

The meeting closed at 3:37pm.