



EAST
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held at 2:00pm on Wednesday 4th May 2022 in the Council Chamber at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE.

PRESENT

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Sue Austen
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Matthew Downey
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr Bill Hunt (Chairman)
Cllr Julia Huffer (Substitute for Cllr Lis Every)
Cllr Alec Jones
Cllr Lisa Stubbs (Vice-Chairman)
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Gareth Wilson

OFFICERS

Rebecca Saunt – Planning Manager
Maggie Camp – Legal Services Manager
Angela Briggs – Planning Team Leader
Gemma Driver – Planning Officer
Caroline Evans – Democratic Services Officer
Lucy Flintham – Office Team Leader, Development Services
Molly Hood – Planning Officer
Angela Tyrrell – Senior Legal Assistant
Karen Wright – ICT Manager
Melanie Wright – Communications Officer

IN ATTENDANCE

Cllr Lorna Dupré
James Bailey (Applicant's Agent, Agenda Item 5 / Minute 92)
Richard Pitt (Applicant, Agenda Item 6 / Minute 93)
David Stazicker (Supporter, Agenda Item 5 / Minute 92)

3 members of the public.

88. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Lis Every.

Cllr Julia Huffer was attending as a substitute.

89. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

90. MINUTES

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2022.

2:01pm – Cllr Downey joined the meeting.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 6th April 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

91. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman made the following announcements:

- Thanks and best wishes were offered to Molly Hood, Planning Officer, who would be leaving the Council after 4 years of service.
- At the previous meeting, some Members had expressed concern about the safety of the exit point, particularly for a right-turn, from a proposed Traveller site along the A10 between Stretham and Little Thetford. The Local Highways Authority had raised no objections and the application was approved by the Committee. Within a couple of days there had been a serious accident involving a vehicle turning right onto the A10 a little further south from the application site, which the Chairman considered suggested that Members concerned for the safety had been correct.

92. **21/01536/FUL – LOW BANK FARM, LOW BANK, MEPAL**

Molly Hood, Planning Officer, presented a report (W180, previously circulated) recommending refusal of an application seeking permission for the construction of an agricultural worker's dwelling to the north-west of the existing agricultural buildings forming part of Low Bank Farm. Cllr Dupré had requested that the application be considered by the Planning Committee on the grounds that re-establishing a dwelling on the site would have multiple benefits including providing security for the on-site agricultural operations and for the neighbours.

Members' attention was drawn to the update sheet, sent to all Members the previous Friday, which summarised a statement received from the applicant's agent. The statement had confirmed the staffing levels for the existing business and that the farm was operated as a single unit; the previously-provided accounts had been for the entire business and not sub-divided by farm. In addition, the agent had conducted a search on Rightmove which yielded only one property in the area and it had not been considered suitable for the applicant's needs.

Members were shown a map, an aerial image, a site plan, and several photographs taken from a public right of way, all of which illustrated the site's rural location outside the development envelope of Mepal and close to a public footpath. There was an existing farmyard with various storage buildings and the proposed dwelling would be set well back from the access road, behind the farmyard. Elevations of the proposed 4-bedroom dwelling with integral garage and raised floor levels of 0.9m were also shown.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **Principle of development** – due to the site's location outside the development envelope, and the proposal for a rural worker's dwelling, the application would need to meet the requirements of policy HOU5 which formed one of the exceptions under policy GROWTH2 seeking to protect

the countryside. It would also need to have no adverse impact on the character of the countryside. Low Bank Farm was already operating as an established farm unit without an on-site residential dwelling and the arable farming, security, fishing lake, or the owner's future loss of tenancy at his current home at Trinity Farm, March, were not considered to justify an essential need for an additional dwelling. Other elements of policy HOU5 had also not been met, such as an assessment of nearby accommodation (notwithstanding the small search detailed in the update sheet) and details of proposed landscaping. The proposed development was therefore not considered to meet the requirements of policy HOU5 and consequently of GROWTH2.

- **Residential amenity** – the dwelling would be situated to the rear of the existing farmstead, with land to the rear of the dwelling being in the applicant's ownership, and would not closely relate to any neighbouring properties, the nearest of which was 254m from the edge of the site. There were no significant concerns and the proposal was therefore considered to comply with the relevant aspects of policy ENV2 and with paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF.
- **Visual impact** – the design and layout of the dwelling would result in built form being extended further into the countryside due to its set back location 46m from the existing agricultural buildings. The dwelling would be very exposed in the countryside to the north and west and would be prominent in the landscape from Mepal Long Highway and from the public footpath. Insufficient landscaping information had been provided since only a low boundary hedge had been included. The proposed development was therefore not considered to comply with chapter 12 of the NPPF or with policies ENV1, ENV2 and HOU5 of the Local Plan 2015.
- **Highway safety** – no objections had been raised by the Local Highways Authority as the site benefitted from an existing access to the A142 and sufficient parking and turning for vehicles.
- **Flood risk** – due to the application site being located within Flood Zone 3, the sequential test needed to be passed. The essential need for an agricultural worker's dwelling on the site had not been demonstrated and other sites were available in the parishes of Mepal or Sutton that had a lower probability of flooding and were within a reasonable distance of the farm. The Environment Agency had raised no objections but had advised that the sequential and exception tests should be applied. The proposal was considered to fail the sequential test by unnecessarily placing a dwelling in an area of significant risk of flooding. The proposed development was therefore considered to be contrary to policy ENV8 of the Local Plan 2015, the provisions of the PPG on Flooding and Coastal Change, the Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD, and the NPPF.
- **Other matters** – the access road was sited within the SSSI of the Ouse Washes although the dwelling itself would not be. A Habitats Regulation Assessment had been undertaken to assess any likely significant effect on the SSSI, as set out in policies NE1 and NE2 of the Natural Environment SPD. It was considered that there would be no significant effect since the dwelling would be outside the SSSI and the road within it was already in use. Biodiversity enhancements would be made including the installation of bird and bat boxes in the existing buildings, and an owl box in the corner of the rear curtilage. The proposed development was therefore considered to

comply with the Natural Environment SPD and policy ENV7 of the Local Plan 2015.

In summary, the proposal failed to meet the requirements of policies GROWTH2, HOU5, ENV1, ENV2 and ENV8 of the Local Plan 2015. It had failed to demonstrate an essential need in accordance with policy HOU5, it had not passed the sequential test, and it would cause significant or demonstrable harm to the character of the area. It was therefore recommended for refusal.

The Chairman then invited two supporters of the application to address the Committee. David Stazicker, resident of the nearest neighbouring property, stated that his family's full opinion was detailed in the Officer's report and, whilst strongly supporting the Local Planning Authority's control of residential development in the open countryside, he considered that there was a genuine need for an agricultural dwelling in the case of this application. He considered that the Officer's report had confused the Low Bank Farm site with the overall farming business of which it was a small part. Paragraph 7.5.13 of the report had incorrectly stated that the site provided storage for the whole business but this was not the case; the vital storage and machinery for the whole business was currently at the March site. The report also confined the definition of "essential need" to the examples in paragraph 4.6.1 of the Development Plan whereas he considered that the list was not intended to be exhaustive and that security of produce and equipment could also be an essential need. If the development was not allowed to proceed then from October 2025 there would be a family farm of almost 1000 acres with no farmhouse.

James Bailey, Land Agent responsible for the applicant's agricultural appraisal, explained that the basis for the application was the relocation of the farm operations from March to the established farmyard at Low Bank Farm when the applicant's tenancy at Trinity Farm, March, expired on reaching retirement age. Low Bank Farm did not currently operate as an independent business but was part of a wider operation run by the applicant from the farmhouse and farm buildings at March; once the tenancy ended then the applicant's holding would reduce from approximately 1100 acres to approximately 950 acres, but would have no farmhouse from which to operate. Low Bank Farm was considered the most appropriate location for a dwelling within the applicant's holding and the proposed farmhouse had been positioned within sight and sound of the existing farmyard. It had also taken into account the new agricultural quality store that had recently received planning permission. The business currently employed more than three full time workers and the intention was for two of those workers - the applicant and his son - to live in the new dwelling at Low Bank Farm with their respective partners. The building design was functional and appropriate for the housing needs and farm operations, it reflected the design and style of other properties in the area, and it would provide security for the machinery and produce that would be stored on-site once the March tenancy ended. Based on the size of the operation and the activities undertaken, the agent was of the opinion that the essential need for the applicant to live on-site had been demonstrated and genuinely existed. He also highlighted the lack of any objections to the proposal.

Cllr Trapp asked about the current management of the fishing lake, whether Low Bank Farm had experienced thefts, and whether the rundown equipment on-site was used. The land agent stated that there had been some thefts of fish and some small thefts or attempted thefts of equipment. The applicant regularly visited the

site during the daytime and out of hours but the business's main equipment was all currently stored elsewhere.

Cllr Downey acknowledged that the supporters had rebutted the Officer's first two reasons for recommending refusal, and asked whether they had any response to the third reason regarding the design and layout. The neighbour stated that they had no objections and the land agent added that the dwelling had been designed to accommodate the farm office in addition to the residential aspects.

Cllr Huffer asked for more details about the applicant's current tenancy in March, and the state of the equipment seen at the application site. The land agent explained that the applicant was currently a tenant at a County Council farm in March and that was the location of his current dwelling. Although the applicant had no intention of retiring from farming, the County Council's policy was that a tenancy must be relinquished upon reaching retirement age. All of the business's valuable equipment was stored at the March farm and would therefore move to Low Bank once the March tenancy expired.

Cllrs Jones, Wilson and Huffer asked about the size of the farm and its lack of a farmhouse. The land agent explained that the tenancy at the County Council farm in March had enabled the applicant to grow his business from approximately 4 acres of land 30 years ago to nearly 1000 acres now. He had bought parcels of land at various stages, the bulk of which was between March and Sutton. None of his land included a farmhouse, therefore when the tenancy ended the business would be without a farmhouse. Of all of the applicant's land, Low Bank Farm was considered the most appropriate location with the least impact for the construction of a farmhouse. The March tenancy accounted for approximately 140 acres of the overall business and therefore a substantial and viable business would continue once the tenancy ended, but there would be no farmhouse or storage buildings from which to run the business.

In response to a question from Cllr Ambrose Smith, the land agent confirmed that the applicant would be happy to agree to a landscaping condition to ensure appropriate screening of the new building.

Cllrs Trapp and Hunt asked further questions about the tenancy, in particular whether it could be passed down the generations of the applicant's family. Cllr Downey also asked whether the applicant's son would be given preferential treatment in the application process if the tenancy was advertised. The land agent explained that although farm tenancies offered under the Agricultural Holdings Act could remain in a family for three generations, the applicant's tenancy was instead a Farm Business Tenancy which had no rights of succession. In addition, it was the County Council's policy that tenancies be relinquished on reaching retirement age, at which point they would be offered on the open market. The tenancy would not be advertised until notice had been served and, although the applicant's son would be eligible to apply if he wished to, the land agent had never seen preferential treatment be offered to a relative of an existing Farm Business Tenant.

Cllr Stubbs asked for an explanation of the perceived essential need for an on-site dwelling since there had been livestock on the site, and the farm in operation, for 20 years. The land agent explained that although the applicant's farming business had been in operation for more than 20 years it had not been managed from Low

Bank Farm; all farm operations including management, crop growing, irrigation, storage, and the securing of machinery and produce, were currently overseen from the March site.

The Chairman then invited Cllr Lorna Dupré to address the Committee in her role as District Councillor for Sutton. Cllr Dupré drew Members' attention to the reasons for call-in detailed in section 5.1 of the Officer's report. She considered that the Officer's multiple reasons for refusal could be condensed to two key issues: the essential need for a dwelling, and the size and scale of the proposed building. The applicant farmed a total of 1062 acres including the land at Low Bank Farm and the tenanted Trinity Farm at March which included the only residential building on the estate, from which the business was run and where the valuable equipment was securely stored. Trinity Farm would need to be vacated in October 2025 when the applicant reached retirement age set by the County Council. Although the Officer's report stated that a continuation of the tenancy would be possible after October 2025, the Ward Member's discussions with the relevant senior officer at the County Council had indicated that this would not be the case. In addition, as a Farm Business Tenancy, there were no succession rights and it would not be reasonable for the family to wait to see if the applicant's son was successful in a bid for the new tenancy once advertised, should he even choose to apply. The Planning Officer had suggested that a home could be found off-site and other security solutions be found for Low Bank Farm once the business's equipment had been relocated to the site. However, in her opinion, the necessary security measures such as high fencing and security lighting would have a greater negative impact and be less sympathetic to the surroundings than the presence of a farmhouse. Residing on the holding would fulfil the essential need as defined in policy HOU5 since there was no other suitable accommodation available on the holding. A flood risk assessment had been submitted and was acceptable and the finished floor levels of the house would be raised but she considered that the Officer's interpretation of the lack of essential need, and subsequent failure of the sequential test, was flawed. Many years previously there had been housing at the site and the proposed design would not be out of keeping with the neighbour's property. In addition, the only neighbour on Low Bank was in support of the application. The Ward Member did not consider that a convincing argument had been presented regarding lack of compliance with policies ENV1 and ENV2, and considered that there were fundamental flaws regarding the application of policies HOU5, GROWTH2 and ENV8, and therefore urged the Committee to approve the application.

In response to questions from Cllr Brown about the previous dwelling on-site, and from Cllr Trapp about neighbouring properties, Cllr Dupré explained that two dwellings, one of which was set further back from the footpath, were shown on maps from approximately 50 years ago but she had no further knowledge of them. The neighbour who had already spoken in support of the application was the site's only neighbour, and neither Mepal Parish Council nor any other statutory consultees had placed any objections.

The Chairman then invited further comments from the Planning Officer, and questions from the Members for the Planning Officer. The Planning Officer responded to several points raised by the public speakers as follows:

- The current uses of the Low Bank Farm site, as reported in paragraph 7.5.4 of her report, were taken from the submitted Planning Statement; it was clearly not a disused site.
- Security considerations were not sufficient to prove an essential need since they could be addressed by other means.
- 70 sheep were not considered to be sufficient livestock to require an on-site dwelling.
- The legal team had reviewed the applicant's County Council tenancy agreement and considered that although the agreement was due to end in October 2025, the tenancy could be continued on a periodic basis if both parties were in agreement. To date there had been no notice to quit and no confirmation that the tenancy would end.

Regarding the essential need, Cllr Ambrose Smith questioned why, given that the applicant would need to vacate their current property within three years, it was not considered an essential need to live locally in order to operate their large family business. She also asked what type of building design might have been considered to be suitable, and stated that in her view the application was a functional design. The Planning Officer explained that the current need was what had been assessed, and the applicant currently had a tenancy which included appropriate housing therefore the security and livestock issues were not sufficient to demonstrate an essential need. In terms of the design, the scale and bulk of the building were a concern, as was its separation from the existing agricultural buildings since it would create a residential use in a rural agricultural location. Cllr Jones then questioned whether the voluntary surrender of the applicant's tenancy would create an essential need. The Planning Officer stated that the situation would be reviewed if it arose, but maintained that a need to be on-site had not been demonstrated because the arguments regarding crops, livestock and security were insufficient to be considered as an essential need.

Cllr Trapp considered that the timing of the application was reasonable since it would give time for the planning process and construction before the existing tenancy ended. However, he asked the Officers whether conditions could be imposed to ensure suitable landscaping and a requirement for agricultural occupancy. The Planning Manager explained that a legal agreement would be more appropriate for the agricultural occupancy but the landscaping could be secured by condition.

In answer to a question from Cllr Wilson as to whether the residential conversion of one of the agricultural buildings would be acceptable, the Planning Manager explained that there was a separate policy for conversions and therefore the current application had not been assessed against those requirements.

The Chairman then opened the debate. Cllr Jones stated that he considered there to be an essential need and, based on the site visit, he considered that the building would be set sufficiently far back that it would not have a significant impact. He therefore proposed that the application be approved, against the Officer's recommendation, and his proposal was seconded by Cllr Trapp.

Cllr Huffer agreed, and added that the security of an on-site dwelling would be needed once the March tenancy ended and all of the modern equipment moved to Low Bank Farm. Cllrs Ambrose Smith and Trapp also agreed, and Cllr Trapp

emphasised the need for appropriate landscaping and a restriction for agricultural use only. Cllr Downey also spoke in favour of approval, stating that a strong argument had not been presented against the essential need.

Cllr Brown spoke in support of the Officer's recommendation, stating that he did not consider an essential need to have been demonstrated and there were too many unknowns to warrant overturning the Officer's recommendation. Cllr Stubbs agreed and explained that she did not consider the essential need to have been demonstrated, would have preferred a smaller building, and that the landscaping details should have been supplied as part of the application. Although she had intended to propose the Officer's recommendation, it appeared from the debate that there would be a majority in favour of approving the application and she therefore stressed the importance of ensuring appropriate conditions were applied. The Planning Manager reiterated that a S106 legal agreement would be more appropriate for ensuring agricultural occupancy since a planning condition offered less control.

The Chairman asked the proposer whether he would be willing to add to his motion the requirement for a legal agreement. Cllr Jones agreed, and also requested a landscaping condition and other relevant conditions with the details delegated to the Planning Manager.

It was resolved with 9 votes in favour, 0 votes against, and 2 abstentions:

That planning application ref 21/01536/FUL be APPROVED, subject to the signing of a S106 legal agreement regarding agricultural occupancy, on the grounds that an essential need had been demonstrated to meet the requirements of policy HOU5, the scale and design was appropriate for the area, and the sequential test had been passed.

It was further resolved:

That the Planning Manager be given delegated authority to impose suitable conditions, including a landscaping condition.

93. 21/01721/FUL – 127 HIGH STREET, SUTTON

Gemma Driver, Planning Officer, presented a report (W181, previously circulated) recommending refusal of an application seeking permission to construct a two-storey extension to the rear of the existing detached dwelling, together with increasing the height of the existing flat roof element to the rear of the property. Cllr Dupré had requested that the application be considered by the Planning Committee on several grounds including compliance with existing policy, and inconsistent application of policy, as detailed in the Officer's report. Members' attention was drawn to the update sheet, sent to all Members the previous Friday, which included a statement and photographs provided by the applicant.

Members were shown a map, aerial images and site photographs demonstrating the site's location within the development envelope of Sutton, and the dwelling's position slightly set back from the highway. with a grassed area to the front together with off-street parking provision. The application site sloped down from the High Street at the front towards The Row at the rear. Proposed elevations were

provided, together with the proposed and existing dimensions of the building. The proposed extension was shown to protrude from the rear wall by 4.7m and span the width of the existing dwelling. The proposal would have a dual pitched roof matching the height of the existing dwelling and increasing the height of the existing flat-roofed extension.

A very similar 2006 application to extend the dwelling had been refused on the grounds that it failed to respect the character and proportions of the original dwelling and would consequently subsume the original dwelling and have a detrimental effect on the streetscene. Although both national and local planning policy had evolved in the intervening years, a drive for good quality and beautiful design remained and paragraph 126 of the NPPF stated that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places was fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Officers therefore considered their position to be strengthened since the previous refusal due to more robust guidance being in place.

The main considerations for the application were deemed to be:

- **Residential amenity** – although the proposal would increase the level of built form to the rear of the dwelling, there would be a limited impact on the neighbouring amenity. The two windows facing the application site from the neighbouring dwelling to the west (129 High Street) were obscure glazed, suggesting that they served bathrooms. The host dwelling was also considered to be set comfortably in the plot such that the proposed development would be far enough from the neighbours to not appear overbearing. The proposed development was therefore considered to comply with paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF and with policy ENV2 of the Local Plan 2015 in terms of residential amenity.
- **Visual amenity** – the proposed extension would span the width of the existing dwelling and protrude 4.7m from the rear resulting in a dwelling with a depth in excess of 10m. The addition of such a bulky extension was considered to create a significant level of built form that failed to have regard for the existing site and its surroundings since it would result in a dominant form of development visible from the High Street, and a volume that would overwhelm the modest nature of the host dwelling. It was considered that when a dwelling had been extended, the original building should be legible and predominate but the application did not encompass those design merits and would have a harmful impact that would not enhance the character and appearance of the dwelling or the surrounding area. Paragraphs 126, 130 and 134 of the NPPF referenced visually attractive development and the Design Guide SPD required that the form and proportions of the original dwelling should determine the degree to which it could be extended. It was considered that the volume of additional built form in the application would result in the modest nature of the host dwelling being overwhelmed by massing that would be dominant and unbalance the appearance of the dwelling. The proposal was therefore considered to be contrary to the Design Guide SPD, Chapter 12 of the NPPF, policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the Local Plan 2015, and policy NP3 of the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan.
- **Other matters** – Officers recognised that there was scope for extension of the dwelling on the large site and had therefore sought amendments to the proposal in terms of its scale. A proposal that would have been considered to have an acceptable relationship with the host dwelling was agreed with

the agent but the applicants had not accepted the revisions. The matters raised by Cllr Dupré in support of the call-in had all been addressed in full on pages 13-16 of the Officer's report.

In summary, although the proposal would not have a significant impact on the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties, it was considered that this was outweighed by the significant and demonstrable harm to the visual amenity of the host dwelling and the surrounding area and the proposal was therefore recommended for refusal.

On the invitation of the Chairman, the applicant, Richard Pitt, addressed the Committee. He thanked Cllr Dupré for the call-in to Committee and for speaking on behalf of the application. Addressing various points of the Officer's report, he stated that he had no knowledge of the extension of time request mentioned in paragraph 2.11, highlighted the lack of objections from consultees, and questioned the relevance of 3 pages regarding a 16-year old planning application of which he had previously been unaware. The similarities between the current proposal and the application refused in 2006 were coincidental, although he emphasised that he had chosen not to extend over the side extension out of consideration for the neighbours. Beautiful design was subjective and, in his opinion, the proposal would enhance the appearance of the building. The Planning Officer had agreed that the principle of development was acceptable and in paragraph 7.4.3 of the report had stated that the proposal would have limited impact on the neighbouring amenity and was set comfortably within the plot so as not to appear overbearing; this seemed inconsistent with the argument for refusal. The rear garden was 200ft in length and as the oldest property in the immediate area it was set further forward than the larger houses either side of it. The revisions mentioned in the Planning Officer's report had only been discussed between the agent and the Planning Officer and were not acceptable to him. (Having exceeded the 5 minute speaking limit, the applicant was unable to finish his presentation.)

Cllr Jones questioned the substantial size of the extension compared to the original building, and asked whether it would extend further to the rear than the existing footprint. The applicant confirmed that the overall depth would be increased but the two-storey design would add symmetry and improved the overall appearance.

In response to questions from Cllrs Huffer and Downey, the applicant explained that the proposal sought to improve the internal living space to better suit the needs of his family. The historic parts of the original building would be retained but the layout and floorspace would be improved. Lifestyles had changed in recent years, in particular full-time working from home, which was a consideration in modern living. He confirmed to Cllr Trapp that he had not explored the feasibility of extending to the front of the property since he wanted to preserve that aspect.

The Chairman then invited Cllr Dupré to address the Committee. She emphasised that the Officer's reasons for refusal were detailed in paragraph 1.2 of the report; neither the details regarding the 2006 refusal, nor the suggested revision that was not supported by the applicant, were relevant to the decision before the Committee. Regarding the issue of the scale and bulk of the proposal, Cllr Dupré detailed several nearby properties with extensions, or permission for extensions, of a similar or larger scale. She also drew Members' attention to several imposing properties near the application site and stated that the proposed 4.7m extension would reach

the furthest point of the current building line. The Design Guide encouraged symmetry, which the proposal would provide. The applicant valued the history of the property and consequently the front of the building would be unchanged. She dismissed the assertion that the size of extensions should not be driven by the desire for extra space, but added that the applicant had proposed a design that would accommodate the needs of his family, rather than a desire for a specific amount of additional floorspace. The revision detailed in paragraph 7.7.8 of the Officer's report had not met the needs of the family, and had therefore not been pursued. She reiterated that there had been no objections from the Parish Council or any neighbours, and she urged the Committee to approve the application.

Cllr Wilson stated that he had the impression from the site visit that the houses along the High Street were all different, and asked for the Ward Member's views. Cllr Dupré responded that there was a very varied streetscene, including detached, semi-detached and terraced dwellings, with a mixture of ages and sizes amongst the properties.

The Chairman invited further comments from the Planning Officer, and questions from Members for the Officer. The Planning Officer responded to several points raised by the public speakers as follows:

- An extension of time request had been sent to the applicant's agent who had advised that they were unwilling to sign it.
- Officers had agreed that the existing building could, in principle, be extended.
- The mention of the siting within the plot was in reference to the building's distance from the site boundary, making it acceptable in terms of residential amenity.
- Regarding permitted development rights, it would be necessary to assess what works had already taken place.
- Officers had actively engaged with the agent regarding amendments.

Cllr Wilson questioned why a design complementary to a modest dwelling was considered necessary since the original property had already been extended several times and therefore was no longer modest. The Planning Officer explained that it was important to conserve the integrity and legibility of the host dwelling whereas the proposed extension was not subservient to the host. Although replacement of the existing flat-roofed extension would be acceptable, the overall bulk should be minimised in order to reduce the visual prominence. In response to questions from Cllr Trapp concerning the appearance of the proposed roofline, the Planning Officer stated that it would be higher and would extend further back than the current roof. The Planning Manager added that the ridge would be visible and the eaves would be at the current height of the flat roof.

The Chairman then opened the debate. Cllr Huffer stated her support for the application as an improvement to the existing additions to the original property. The site visit had demonstrated that the garden was large and the neighbours would not be affected. She did not consider that it would cause harm and she therefore proposed that the application be approved, against the Officer's recommendation. Cllr Wilson seconded the proposal.

Cllr Brown agreed, but added that he understood the reasoning for the Officer's recommendation. Although the view from the east would be affected he did not

consider that it was sufficient to cause harm. He also considered that the integrity of the host dwelling had already been damaged by the previous additions to the property. Cllr Ambrose Smith stated that the existing extensions were unattractive from the rear and, she assumed, were impractical inside. She considered that the proposed design was coherent and would improve the house. Cllr Downey agreed with the comments made by other Members. Cllr Hunt also considered that the design would result in an overall improvement to the streetscene. Cllr Stubbs thanked the Planning Officer for a good report with detailed reasoning, but stated that the site visit had changed her opinion in favour of the proposal.

It was resolved unanimously:

That planning application ref 21/01721/FUL be APPROVED on the grounds that it was not contrary to policies ENV1 and ENV2 and would not result in the concerns detailed in the Officer's report such as mass and bulk giving prominence to the streetscene and a poor relationship with the host dwelling.

It was further resolved unanimously:

That the Planning Manager be given delegated authority to impose suitable conditions.

94. PLANNING PERFORMANCE REPORT – MARCH 2022

Rebecca Saunt, Planning Manager, presented a report (W182, previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in March 2022.

There had been an increase in the number of planning applications received in March 2022 compared to the previous two months. Ten valid appeals had been received in March, five of which related to five separate enforcement notices served to units at 17 Oak Lane, Littleport. The appeal against a sixth notice had been received in April. The level of enforcement complaints received was in line with the levels in 2021.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Planning Performance Report for March 2022 be noted.

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers, and reiterated the importance of Members attending the formal site visits in order to reach an informed decision on each application.

The meeting concluded at 3:55pm.