

PLANNING COMMITTEE



WEDNESDAY, 4 MARCH 2026 - 1.00 PM

PRESENT: Councillor D Connor (Chairman), Councillor C Marks (Vice-Chairman), Councillor I Benney, Councillor Mrs J French, Councillor S Imafidon and Councillor M Purser

APOLOGIES: Councillor R Gerstner.

Officers in attendance: Matthew Leigh (Head of Planning), David Rowen (Development Manager), Tom Donnelly (Senior Development Officer), Kimberley Crow (Development Officer), Stephen Turnbull (Legal Officer), Andrew Connolly (Cambridgeshire County Council Transport Assessment Team for P111/25) and Elaine Cooper (Member Services).

P110/25 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings of 21 January and 4 February 2026 were approved and signed as an accurate record.

P111/25 F/YR23/0942/F LAND SOUTH OF MARCH TRADING ESTATE, WESTRY AVENUE, MARCH ERECT 5 X INDUSTRIAL UNITS (B2/B8 USE), THE FORMATION A CAR PARK AND CYCLE PARK, AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members.

Members asked questions of officers, including Andrew Connolly from Cambridgeshire County Council's Transport Assessment Team, as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French stated that she was Chairman of MATs at the County Council from 2017 to 2025 where it was discussed for many years about a roundabout at Hostmoor and she also understands that around £350,000 was received from the Aldi site. She made the point that this site is in the middle of an industrial estate and if industrial units cannot be built here where can they be built. Andrew Connolly responded that he is not involved with the MATs scheme, but he does know they have moved away from the roundabout and are now looking for an all-movement signal junction as this requires less land and deals with the issue a bit easier and it is easier for the authority to deliver on the ground.
- Councillor Mrs French asked what is the position with the traffic lights as this has been discussed for 8 years and she understands there is an issue with somebody who owns a strip of land and she does not know if this has been resolved? Andrew Connolly responded that to deliver an improvement here there is third party land that is needed and there would have to be a CPO at some point. He believes the issue currently is regarding funding, there was an initial pot of funding received and that has been spent elsewhere because these two junctions, Hostmoor and Peas Hill, are going to cost £8 million to deliver.
- Councillor Marks asked with regard to the highways is it felt that the issue is traffic coming out of the end of the junction turning left or right or is it more of a bigger problem further along past the Aldi to the A141? Andrew Connolly responded that the issue is vehicles coming out of Hostmoor Avenue onto the A141, at the minute vehicles have to go south, it is not an all-movement junction and this puts a lot of U-turners at the Peas Hill roundabout and U-turners create a lot of capacity issues because they cut off all other arms.
- Councillor Marks questioned that the capacity is there on the Hostmoor/Peas Hill roundabout? Andrew Connolly responded that the capacity is not there, otherwise they would not be objecting and there is a lot of committed development coming forward that

puts a lot of pressure there, Aldi are looking to deliver a set of signals there and it is a very constrained part of the network. He stated that whilst there is a solution, the MATs scheme, that is underfunded currently and it is not known timescale wise when that will be funded.

- Councillor Connor referred to the strip of land mentioned by Councillor Mrs French, which is probably a ransom strip and this issue has been in existence a long time now so asked why a CPO has not been submitted on this piece of land, being proactive rather than reactive? Andrew Connolly responded that he was unable to answer this as it is not a scheme he is involved with as he deals with planning applications rather than projects but would assume it comes down to funding and they would not look to secure third party land until there is adequate funding to deliver the scheme.
- Councillor Connor expressed the view that Andrew Connolly's comments curtail any more development in Hostmoor until such time as improvements can be made? Andrew Connolly confirmed this to be correct. He added in the past there was a roundabout solution, a planning application for Westry which was approved which would have resolved a lot of issues because it allowed all movement on the junction but that is over 10 years old now and has not come forward so the County has had to look at developing its own solution.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that the person who owns the strip of land got the permission for a retail park across the road and he had permission to put a roundabout in. She continued that the argument between the County Council Highways and the owner of this strip of land is the size of the roundabout, he wants to put a bigger one in and County Council do not. Councillor Mrs French stated that what is being talked about is a left hand turn only, it is still no turn right out of this junction and that left hand turn only was put in around 2003. She made the point that Highways have known about the problems on this junction for years, so she feels it is unfair to refuse an application on industrial land because Highways have not undertaken what they are supposed to.
- Councillor Marks requested clarity in whether it is a safety issue or due to capacity? Andrew Connolly responded that it is mainly a capacity issue but if there are lots of vehicles queuing and people getting frustrated it can sometimes lead to safety issues so they would not want to allow something that would potentially cause a safety issue at a later date.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Marks made the point that this is an industrial area, and Fenland is Open for Business and it now seems to him that it is not open for business because Highways have not got their act together. He continued that it is not the developer that has got the issue, it is Highways that have not got the budget or have not undertaken the work so questioned is development just going to be stopped here and where else would this development be placed? Councillor Marks stated that it is known that industrial units are sought after, with 4-5 recent applications, so this is needed and it is within an industrial area. He referred to it being a capacity issue more than a safety issue and, in his view, this proposal should be approved and then hopefully Highways will get their act together, find some money from somewhere and either put traffic lights or a roundabout at the junction.
- Councillor Benney agreed with the comments of Councillor Marks, if this is turned down County will not do anything about the issues and this will push it up the list, it may be a short-term loss for a long-term gain. He made the point that it is industrial land, and he fully supports the application.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that the capacity issue is not just the junction of Hostmoor but it is Peas Hill roundabout. She continued that when she was Chairman of MATs they decided to pull Peas Hill because it wanted major investment, with the problem here being that most people turn left when they are supposed to and then they go around the roundabout, with this roundabout costing Highways a fortune to repair every couple of months because of the way the lorries are going around to go the opposite way. Councillor Mrs French stated that she agrees with the comments of the other councillors, this is industrial land and the Council needs to be supporting local businesses.
- Councillor Benney stated that he understands that the turn left was a temporary measure. Councillor Mrs French indicated that this was correct. Councillor Benny continued that if this

was the case this should have been resolved and it shows the longer the County Council can put off doing the work the more they will and when it gets to the point when there is a real crunch then the work will be undertaken. He feels it will be better for March if this is approved rather than not.

- Councillor Marks made the point that an Aldi has just been built in this location which they paid towards having the road improved and questioned why at that point did they not pay enough to have traffic lights installed. He expressed the view that it was known this was going to be an issue and thinks it should be approved for Highways to then sort out the road.
- Councillor Mrs French made the point that Aldi did pay £325,000 towards road improvements and there was funding available from the Combined Authority, but it is up to the County Council and the MATs team to reapply for funding, and, in her view, it is not down to local businesses to suffer because of it.
- Councillor Purser stated that approving this shows that Fenland is Open for Business and he is in support of it.
- Councillor Marks made the point that officers have been correct with the recommendation they have put forward but it comes down to County who have tried to be the problem in this application, and, in his view, it looks to be a good proposal.
- Councillor Mrs French asked that, if this is approved, can it be made sure that the developers are aware of the 9 metre strip for access to the dykes around the site. Councillor Connor agreed that it is in the report and the applicant will have to deal with Middle Level Commissioners to make sure that happens.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with conditions delegated to the Head of Planning to apply in consultation with the Chairman, including entering into a legal agreement for highway works.

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that the location is industrial land in an industrial area and the Council should be supporting local business.

(Councillors Mrs French and Purser registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they are members of March Town Council but take no part in planning)

**P112/25 F/YR25/0893/F
LAND WEST OF 5 CHURCH GARDENS, WESTRY, MARCH
ERECT 1 X SELF-BUILD/CUSTOM DWELLING**

This item was withdrawn.

**P113/25 F/YR25/0089/F
LAND EAST OF MARCH AIRFIELD, CROSS ROAD, MARCH
ERECT X 1 SELF-BUILD/CUSTOM BUILD DWELLING IN ASSOCIATION WITH A
NEW BUILDERS YARD (SUI GENERIS), INCLUDING THE ERECTION OF A SHED,
AND 2.4M HIGH PALISADE FENCE AND GATES, THE SITING OF 6 X
CONTAINERS, AND THE FORMATION OF AN ACCESS**

Tom Donnelly presented the report to members and drew attention to the update report that had been circulated.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Nigel Davies, an objector. Mr Davies stated he is the owner of March Airfield and Chief Flying Instructor and whilst he has no objections to the application in principle it is just the location where

the application is being proposed. He referred to a diagram on the presentation screen which shows to the northern end of the application site there is adequate room to put the same proposal without any disturbance, interference or safety risks to the airfield giving them a clear 500-foot safeguarding area which was put in place by the LPA and themselves in 2021.

Mr Davies referred to another diagram on the presentation screen which demonstrates, unlike the previous meeting where someone showed an approach to his airfield in a straight line which is incorrect information and more used by a normal airfield with heavier aircraft, with paragliding they have to come into a circuit off the circuit pattern around the airfield then they have to lose height prior to landing. He continued that as can be seen by the figure of eight diagrams this illustrates where currently they would undertake the figure of eights to lose height prior to landing in the field, making the point that they are a school, not just an airfield, so this happens regularly.

Mr Davies stated there is a predominant wind direction of a westerly direction for the UK so the majority of its flights would come in on this approach and if you take into consideration where the proposal is this is directly overhead of the proposed building, which is why if it is put to the north of the site it would be in a safe area unobstructed to themselves. He referred to the CAA letter that was received prior to the last meeting that will stop any heat or wind turbulence from the proposal being in the exact position it is put currently.

Mr Davies referred to the diagram on the presentation screen showing the circuit pattern around the school so when students take off they then increase height to do a circuit above 500-foot around the airfield prior to yet again coming back on the circuits doing figure of eights to lose height prior to landing, which is why they require the 500-foot safeguarding area. He stated that official Government legislation documents cap 738 of the CAA outlines the regulations and safety guidance that they have to apply to which is the 500-foot rule and this in the aviation industry is known as the 500-foot bubble, it is an area around an airfield, it is safeguarded and they cannot fly below 500-foot unless they take off or land and within that people, obstacles, vehicles or vessels cannot be flown over.

Mr Davies showed on the presentation screen the 500-foot legislation rule, which can also be found in the new SERA document .0005, Section F, which highlights all the new European 500-foot regulations as well. He emphasised that 500-foot is so important to them for safety, they cannot fly within structures, people, vehicles or vessels and by allowing this application in its current location, physically it would make them break the law.

Mr Davies expressed the view that there is plenty of room to the north within the plot to put the proposal and he does not have an issue with the applicant building there but the issue is he has sought planning permission 3 times to build his business over 16 years, which has been granted, but if this is successful in the current location he feels his business will be shut down.

Members asked questions of Mr Davies as follows:

- Councillor Marks stated that he visited the site yesterday and asked if he classed himself as an airfield? Mr Davies responded that they are officially March Airfield and are on all the CAA air charts and maps.
- Councillor Marks stated that some of the reports refer to the CAA referring back to the governing body and asked does Mr Davies' governing body give them the legislation or is it via the CAA? Mr Davies responded that the CAA is their governing body and they fly by the air law.
- Councillor Marks made the point that they have no airfield signs up. Mr Davies responded that aircraft do not drive to his airport, they fly in. Councillor Marks expressed the view that there should be warning for traffic as the last time this was considered Mr Davies said he had to be in control of all and give warnings but there are no signs up on the roadside to say this is an airfield. Mr Davies responded that if you visited Holbeach Fenland Airfield there are not signs there but there are windsocks which are clearly marked. Councillor Marks

stated that this is not directly by the side of the road. Mr Davies responded that the windsocks can be seen from the bypass. Councillor Marks expressed the opinion that if there is an airfield beside the road and it could be a hazard and there are vehicles and lorries going along this road, when last time he said he needed full control, he has not got that control. Mr Davies responded that if it is required, he would put signs up. Councillor Marks made the point that he does require it, but it does say this on the net.

- Councillor Imafidon referred to the figure of eight base leg take-off and landing and understands that they have to come in from a particular direction when they come into land. Mr Davies responded that the diagram shows an example of a westerly take-off and landing. He stated that they can take off in any direction on the compass, but he has shown the predominant wind direction in the UK, which is westerly, but they always have to land into wind and take off in the wind.
- Councillor Imafidon asked if the figure of eight loop has to be in that particular location and can it be moved further backwards or in either direction? Mr Davies responded that the lines of a circuit are take-off, cross wind, downwind, base leg approach and the reason they do a figure of eight close to the airfield is because if they mess it up, remembering these are students, they can still glide safely into the airfield. He added that if they did this in the fields to the east for example and they messed it up they would land in the field next to them and not the airfield. Mr Davies stated that it is always undertaken on a base leg side so the turns and manoeuvres are at a safe height and at any point he could get them to peel off and land because they have made a mistake or are too low. He continued that if it was in a field to the east side it would mean they would land out of the airfield.
- Councillor Benney questioned that if all this space is needed why did he not buy all the land around it? He further questioned how it sits with the CAA in terms of flying over other people's land if that much space is needed and surely the airfield is not big enough? Mr Davies responded that this could be said with any airfield and the problem they have is because they are ultra light aircraft they do not move fast, with the maximum speed being 25mph so they float about a lot longer and they have never had a problem in the 16 years they have been operating so he does not see why they should have a problem now. He made the point that they are one of the biggest schools in the country and draw customers in from all over the country, being recognised by the CAA as a qualified quality safe training school and all they are asking is to stay safe and keep their operation active. Mr Davies made the point that Chatteris Airfield will be lost soon and airfields are really rare currently, with his airfield being a big community gatherer for getting pilots in the air as a training school.
- Councillor Marks stated, from visiting the site, he has a tall green building and a house within the airfield zone and asked how is this safe and why the novice pilots will not hit those buildings instead of a building that is 500 feet away? Mr Davies responded that they do not do circuits over the house or the airfield, but around the airfield and he controls his pilots, they are all on radio and there is no conflict with his property and his buildings with what his pilots do. He feels that members are missing the point that the CAA wrote about the turbulence caused by buildings and having buildings directly on the figure of eight coming into land where they are losing height and can legally fly below 500 feet being affected by heat and turbulence, questioning whether members want the responsibility of somebody's wing collapsing and being impaled on palisade fencing or harmed or killed because it should not be there and his business should be safeguarded, with them being an airfield and there being laws no different to not building a house on a roundabout on a highway. Mr Davies expressed the opinion that you cannot do silly things and interfere with aircraft, with aircraft having more rules in this country than the highways have. Councillor Marks made the point that it has been said that the circuits could be moved and he is control of his pilots and asked why cannot he be in control of the pilots further afield? Mr Davies responded that the pilots need to land in an airfield and to do that they have to circuit and undertake base legs turns as he has illustrated. He stated that the direction can be moved as in around the circumference but not out.

- Councillor Imafidon asked at what height do the pilots come in and do they look before they land? Mr Davies responded that they can come in from any height they want onto a circuit but they would lose height on the circuit to 500-600 foot and then they would start losing height from that point to line up for landing. He made the point that the lower the aircraft is, the more susceptible it is to turbulence and these size buildings and the angles and positions they are placed would be a major hazard to his aircraft, particularly as they are not fixed wings and they are made of fabric, being susceptible to turbulence and heat rotor, which is why they do not fly in the day in the Summer and they fly in the mornings and evenings as it is too thermic and how sensitive the aircraft are. Mr Davies stated he is not being awkward, and he does not want Mr Venni not to develop, it is up to him, but he did say from day one that he needs to be outside his 500-foot area.
- Councillor Connor referred to it being said that the airfield is very busy and people attend from all over the country and asked how many clients he has got in a general working week? Mr Davies responded that this time of year they are quiet because they have had bad weather and currently they have 47 students on the book and if you look at the objections you will see where these come from as far as near Scotland, Wales, London, the East Coast but very few people locally. He expressed the opinion that they get a lot of people because of their reputation for safety with people travelling past 2-3 schools to come to them and they just want to maintain what they do and keep the business strong. Mr Davies stated that the safeguarding was put in place in 2021 and he does not understand why he is faced with this and he does not need this stress in his life.
- Councillor Connor stated that in the past few weeks he has been down this awful road and he has not seen anyone having lessons or flying. Mr Davies responded that this year to date they have had 6 days on the floor training and 4 days flying due to how bad the weather has been.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Mark Venni, the applicant, and Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Venni stated that he was asked to go away and find out further information about safety and he contacted the CAA, who never responded to him, and then he contacted the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association which are part of the governing body for the CAA and received a letter and report from the Senior Technical Officer. He continued that this officer says on safety the air navigation law is that no aircraft shall fly closer than 500-foot to any vessel, vehicle or structure unless they are landing and taking off and from a legal perspective this specifically allows and appears straightforward to operate a circuit pattern which maintains a safe separation distance from the structures, confirming this is doable.

Mr Venni continued that, in this officer's opinion, the airfield operation should be possible to manage in a way that mitigates any risk to safety and complies with the letter of the law. He added that this officer feels that when taking off to the east circuits towards his land they should be able to bank right, ie turn south after a climb out, which would be doable.

Mr Venni made the point that before he came to committee he spoke to Mr Davies and asked him what would be safe and doable and this proposal is as a result of those discussions, with the agent also speaking to him, with Mr Davies being happy then and now deciding he is not. He stated that the majority of his buildings are over 500-foot away and they are smaller than Mr Davies buildings, with the trees behind his proposed house being much higher than anything around here.

Mr Venni expressed the view that Mr Davies has planning permission for shepherd huts and hardstanding along the side and the back of his airfield, so he is prepared to land over these. He stated that he could change the fence if required and in relation to noise, he has been down to the site quite a lot and seen flying two or three times in the last 8-9 months and you cannot really hear them, and it is nice to see them flying around.

Mr Venni stated he will do what he needs to do but the plans have been produced so they are safe as he does not want anyone to get hurt either.

Mr Hall stated that the applicant is happy to sign the legal agreement for a self-build dwelling, Mr Venni owns the land and will be building the dwelling himself and will live in this occupational dwelling if approved. He referred to October's meeting when the application was deferred for additional information from the CAA, which were contacted and nothing has been received back from them, his understanding was that there were no concerns from members on the other four reasons for refusal, purely the one that the applicant has spoken about.

Mr Hall stated that a flood risk assessment has been submitted and the applicant needs a yard and a shed with this occupational dwelling, with this sort of development not being available in town and space is required. He added that the owner wants Mr Venni's existing yard in Elm Road back, so he has to vacate this yard.

Mr Hall stated that the proposal would be set back 100 metres from Cross Road so it would not be detrimental to the street scene. He referred to the objector's diagram showing the figure of eights but to be clear to members within that 500-feet there are already buildings that Mr Davies owns and he has planning permission for various pods at the end of the runway so there are building well within that 500-foot, which whilst he understands that Mr Davies controls them, they are buildings and structures and they do not move.

Members asked questions of Mr Venni and Mr Hall as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French referred to the mention of pods and asked how many pods are going to be situated there? Mr Hall responded that at the western end there will be 3 and along the northern face there are pitches for touring caravans with an access along that side and bin storage.
- Councillor Mrs French asked what kind of notice has Mr Venni been given for his Elm Road site? Mr Venni responded that he should have already vacated but because of what has happened, the owner is helping him, but he does want his yard back as he wants to develop it so as soon as possible otherwise he will have to find somewhere else to go.
- Councillor Marks referred to the leylandii trees at the back of the site and asked if they will be taller than the properties being suggested? Mr Venni responded in the affirmative.
- Councillor Imafidon referred to containers being stored on the site and asked if they were going to be stacked on top of one another? Mr Venni responded that they would not be.
- Councillor Benney referred to the mention of Mr Venni speaking to Mr Davies before submitting the application and asked if this was a favourable outcome as it seems that an awful lot of trouble has been made for someone to change their mind halfway through. Mr Venni responded that he did speak with Mr Davies, he wanted his building in the corner opposite Mr Davies' property but he said it could interfere with landing so it was moved over and then Mr Hall spoke to Mr Davies and he was happy with that but now Mr Davies does not want to hear someone else's noise.

Members asked questions of officers as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French referred to Mr Davies having planning permission for pods and touring caravans and asked if this was taken into consideration with the CAA when the permission was granted? David Rowen responded that any relevant consultations would have been undertaken at the time of that application, but he cannot personally remember that application.
- Councillor Marks referred to the application the objector put in originally which was for security reasons that was granted not for pods or anything else.
- The Legal Officer drew members attention to the scenario in front of them, whilst there is a general rule that planning authorities cannot be liable for, if they properly grant planning permission, any subsequent events that might occur on that site, his concern having looked at the documents is that the CAA have not objected but they have raised a couple of safety concerns in particular heat coming off buildings and other concerns and the CAA also advised officers to listen to the licence holders views, which members have done today. He

stated that if permission is granted and there is some sort of future incident or personal injury, he could not rule out that the Council might be liable should there be any kind of claim on the basis that the Council has instigated the development of a “hazard” on this site. The Legal Officer made the point that case law is very limited and there is no clear-cut answer it is a small risk that should there be some sort of future incident the Council might well be claimed against for damages.

- Councillor Benney referred to there being a risk, making the point that flying is hazardous activity anyway and there are buildings around the site, which have been approved by the Council, so if anyone crashed into them would the Council be liable for that? He stated that he has also discussed with the Legal Officer about significance and questioned whether it was a significant risk and it is how that significant risk is interpreted. Councillor Benney made the point that the Council could be open to all sorts of claims for all sorts of things and the Council deals with these as they come along and whilst members have been informed of worst case, reiterated is this a significant risk? The Legal Officer responded that in terms of quantifying the risk he would say it is not significant but if it succeeds then it will be. He provided an illustration that there was a case about 20 years ago in the New Forest where the district planning authority approved a footpath which the Highway Authority said would be dangerous and entered into a 106 agreement for it to be built and subsequently he believes a motorcyclist was killed because of the danger of that footpath and the lack of sight lines and the council were held liable because they had been aware of the risk and they still granted planning permission for that development, which he acknowledged is an extreme example of what might occur. He stated that if pushed he would say it is a 10% risk that the Council might be held liable if there was some future incident.
- Councillor Benney made the point that a footpath has been passed in Eastwood End that joins to the A141, which has an element of risk so if somebody got run over on that footpath would the Council be liable there and if looking at it in black and white where does the significance of the level of risk fall? The Legal Officer responded that the Council would not be liable here unless the County were saying this is a severe danger and might result in accidents.
- Councillor Connor made the point that the CAA are not saying it is dangerous or a severe risk, they are just making comments and not giving a judgement one way or the other. The Legal Officer responded that they are raising concerns, but they are not using the language of severe risk. He made the point that they are the proper consultation body, and the Council should take their views seriously.
- Councillor Marks expressed confusion about whether the risk is due to the building causing thermals to make the pilot crash or the pilot is going to crash into the building. He asked, in relation to thermals and buildings, the owner of the airfield has already put up on his property a green shed which he assumes will give thermals and asked if there is any way the committee can say that the proposal is built with materials that should limit the thermals? The Legal Officer advised this is beyond his technical expertise but that is one of the risks the CAA has pointed out. David Rowen added that the comments from the CAA dated March 2025 talk about thermal energy and such energy is known to radiate upwards from surface-based infrastructure such as buildings, roofs, paved surfaces, metallic surfaces, glass surfaces and others so short of building the house out of plastic there really is not much scope to limit the materials.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Benney stated that when this was considered previously he thought there are two different opposing views and he wanted to get to the bottom of whether this is right and pushed for the deferment because he wanted something from either party to make the right decision and would have liked to have seen something from the CAA that came back and said no this is dangerous and committee has not got this. He made the point that it has been stated that both parties were quite happy and then they are not all of a sudden and looking at the plan all of the aircraft movements are suddenly over this piece of land. Councillor Benney expressed the view that he does not know which side on this is right or

wrong, he pushed for deferment last time when he would have been happy to approve it as it is a builder's yard so why would committee not support it and these applications at committee are supported quite regularly because the Council is Open for Business and he does want to promote business in Fenland, and this is a Fenland business already in existence and it should be supported but equally the airfield is also a business which members supported but when he pushed for the deferment he wanted somebody to come back with some firm documents that said either way and he does not believe that members are any further forward as the deferment did not deliver what he hoped it would.

- Councillor Marks stated listening to both parties and agreeing with Councillor Benney it has not brought back a yes or no and it is still a gray area, with the Legal Officer saying there may be a 10% risk but is not saying definitively there is an issue. He referred to the plan that has been drawn with the figure of eights and feels that if the two parties had previously got together and decided that this was place the house was positioned, why suddenly has this changed and he cannot see the applicant wasting time, money and effort, with him having notice to be out of his current yard, so is confused as to why those plans have been drawn in the way they have been drawn now unless initially there was no problem. Councillor Marks acknowledged that these pilots are in training, but he feels they can move across slightly, with the owner of the airfield applying for permission initially because of security and he has erected a very big green building which must also emit thermals and there are other properties in the vicinity emitting thermals. He expressed concern that committee may be stopping a builder's yard but believes there may be some mitigation and whilst he does not want to affect the airfield's business, Fenland is Open for Business for other businesses as well, questioning that airfields are located all over the place and are there no buildings near them.
- Councillor Connor stated that he visited the site yesterday and he is certain with the information that has been provided by the Legal Officer that a solution could be achieved and believes the figure of eight could be move slightly out so it would have nothing at all to do with the running of the business. He expressed the opinion that both parties could live in harmony and does not know why it has got to this point where the applicant and the objector are at loggerheads when something was previously agreed. Councillor Connor stated that he is leaning towards supporting the application.
- Councillor Imafidon expressed the view that the figure of eight and the flight pattern of the aircraft as they come in is not a perfect line so he feels something could be altered because the buildings on the airfield itself must release thermals and create turbulence, if those do and there is a way for them to circle and land safely he does not see why they cannot do the same with this application.
- Councillor Marks questioned what height the pilots drop to before they actually go onto the airfield as they still need to get onto the airfield so they must still be at some sort of height to get across the road and into the airfield. He referred to the previous application where Highways said 80% was attributed to congestion but 10% was attributed to safety but members still took the view to approve and, in his view, with regard to litigation this is in the 10% category, and he feels he is going to support the proposal.
- Councillor Connor allowed the objector to respond to query of from the figure of eight what height the pilots are when they cross the road to land on the airfield. Mr Davies stated that when they break off the figure of eight they would be approximately 100-75 foot coming in depending upon the wind speed because if there is less wind they sink quicker.
- Councillor Marks made the point that 75 feet is 22.86 metres so the building, against the conifers at the far end, would have a height of no more than 9 metres to the eaves so there would still be a 13 metre gap at worst. Matthew Leigh stated that the concern is not that the aircraft is going to fly into the building but the thermals coming off the building causing health and safety issues. He made the point that he is not an expert on thermals and he does not believe councillors are either so he would not be suggesting undertaking a calculation such as this and it be relied upon.
- Councillor Marks stated that all he was trying to do was work out the height on average when coming into land, how far away these buildings are and the height of the building does

come into this. Matthew Leigh responded that this is not the concern they have raised, it is not about the building being flown into but the thermals that comes from the building.

- Matthew Leigh highlighted that there are five reasons for refusal and the debate has not dealt with any of those other issues.

Proposed by Councillor Marks, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions and the entering into a unilateral agreement.

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as whilst they recognise the site is in an elsewhere location there is a justified and a need for the development to support an existing business that needs to relocate, it would be a struggle to find industrial land that does not lie in Flood Zone 3 and this can be mitigated against, and information has not been submitted to demonstrate that the existing airfield could not continue to operate in a safe and unconstrained manner.

(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillor Mrs French registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Local Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that she is a member of March Town Council but takes no part in planning)

(Councillor Imafidon declared that he knows the agent, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillor Marks declared that he has been in contact with the agent over a Manea village issue, but is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillor Purser declared that he was not present at the previous meeting when this application was considered and took no part in the discussion and voting thereon)

(All members present registered, in accordance with Paragraph 2 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that they had been lobbied on this application by the receipt of additional information from the agent)

**P114/25 F/YR25/0840/O
THE PIGGERIES, FLAGGRASS HILL ROAD, MARCH
ERECT UP TO 4 X DWELLINGS AND THE FORMATION OF AN ACCESS
(OUTLINE APPLICATION WITH
MATTERS COMMITTED IN RESPECT OF ACCESS)**

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Matthew Hall, the agent. Mr Hall stated that members will remember this application which was supported by the committee in 2023 for exactly the same proposal, a small scale development of four bungalows on a site set between existing properties, with it being seen on the Google image that there is a lot of development around it. He stated that he has submitted an ecology report and contamination report and there are no objections, with the site all being within Flood Zone 1.

Mr Hall made the point that the previous application expired mid to late 2025 and there has been a lot of interest in the site. He feels the officer's report sums up the situation well and it is recommended for approval.

Members asked questions of Mr Hall as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French asked if Mr Hall had been to the site recently as she visited the site and thought someone had thrown a bomb in the road. She asked if there are any plans to do something with Flaggrass Hill Road? Mr Hall responded that he was at the site three weeks ago, but this application does not include any improvements to Flaggrass Hill Road.
- Councillor Benney expressed the view that from being down Flaggrass Hill Road in relation to an application at last month's committee to visiting this site for this application the road has deteriorated significantly in the past month and asked if he could find something in the budget to fill the holes in. Councillor Connor interjected that Mr Hall did not have to answer this as it is a highway issue.
- Councillor Purser asked if there is a reason why the site has not been developed within the timeframe? Mr Hall responded that there was a lot of interest in the site and there was, to his knowledge, at least 2 parties, not from this area, who progressed quite a long way and then one dropped away due to not being able to secure the funding and the other just dropped away. He added that one of them wanted the applicant to sign an agreement to stage payments based on profit, which they would not do, with this taking ages and it just expired.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French made the point that it has already received planning permission which has unfortunately run out, and she does not see anything different on this application, and it should be approved.
- Councillor Purser agreed.

Proposed by Councillor Purser, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.

(Councillor Benney declared that the agent has undertaken work for Chatteris Town Council and himself personally, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillors Mrs French registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that she is a member of March Town Council but takes no part in planning)

(Councillor Imafidon declared that he knows the agent, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillor Marks declared that he has been in contact with the agent over a Manea village issue, but is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

(Councillor Purser registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of March Town Council but takes no part in planning. He further declared that the agent has undertaken work for him, but he is not pre-determined and will consider the application with an open mind)

**P115/25 F/YR25/0847/LB AND F/YR25/0846/F
27 MARKET PLACE, WISBECH**

F/YR25/0847/LB - EXTERNAL WORKS TO A LISTED BUILDING INCLUDING REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING SHOP FRONT (WITH REPOSITIONED ENTRANCE DOORS) AND INSTALLATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY SHUTTERS, AND DISPLAY OF 1 X NON-ILLUMINATED FASCIA SIGN, 1 X NON-ILLUMINATED PROJECTING SIGN, AND A VINYL (PROPERTY NUMBER ABOVE DOOR) F/YR25/0846/F - REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING SHOP FRONT (WITH REPOSITIONED ENTRANCE DOORS) AND INSTALLATION OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SECURITY SHUTTERS

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Benney stated that he can see why the business wants to change the frontage, he tried to do this with his shop but it was not favourably looked on by the Council, as if you have the door in the centre from a shop perspective it is a waste of space either side of the door and Savers is also a shop that always put their counters to one side so by moving the door over it will increase the sales area of the shop and it will improve the customer flow around the shop. He added that he knows that people use doorways to sleep in or as a toilet if it is set back and if the door is flat to the front it helps. Councillor Benney expressed the view that this proposal makes perfect sense for the shop, he visited Wisbech and wandered around the Market Place and it is full of empty shops and it looks derelict, the buildings are in a poor state of repair, it is a rundown area and if anyone is going to spend any money to improve it he would be fully supportive. He feels that if more shops or businesses could spend money on their shops it would improve the area, the Market Place has been refurbished but it has a lot of empty shops and a bad feel about it. Councillor Benney stated that although it is a Listed Building he does not feel the proposal will bring any significant harm to the building and businesses need to protect and safeguard their premises so roller shutters are required, when the shop is open the shutters will be up and he thinks it is a good application from a retail point of view, it is in a retail area and the committee should be supporting it.
- Councillor Mrs French stated that she visited the site and had not been to Wisbech for some time being amazed at the number of empty shops. She feels the owners of this shop deserve a medal wanting to invest into the shop rather than shut down and she will be supporting the proposal.
- Councillor Imafidon agreed with the comments of Councillors Benney and Mrs French, he will be supporting the application as he lives in Wisbech and goes into town on a daily basis and he knows the impact that vandalism has on shop fronts, with a number of shops having their windows smashed. He stated that he is Portfolio Holder for Heritage but at the same time the high street needs to be protected by allowing businesses to stay open, with there being too many empty shops in Wisbech and another one should not be encouraged.
- Councillor Purser echoed the comments of the other councillors, businesses should be encouraged, with the proposal cleaning and tidying the shop front up and it encourages people to go in and use the shop so it can only be good for all concerned.
- David Rowen clarified the nature of the application in that the doorway will still be a recessed doorway and will not be flush with the frontage. He stressed that the property is a Listed Building and there is a duty in law to give great weight to protecting that Listed Building.

F/YR25/0847/LB

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED against the officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.

F/YR25/0846/F

Proposed by Councillor Benney, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED against the officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions.

Members do not support officer's recommendation of refusal of planning permission as they feel that there would be no adverse harm to the Listed Building, they are supporting a business which is looking to invest in Wisbech, with there being many empty or boarded up shops in Wisbech that

is detrimental to the area and the shutters are required for security.

(Councillor Imafidon registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Wisbech Town Council but takes no part in planning)

P116/25 **F/YR25/0833/F**
2 SCRIMSHIRES PASSAGE, WISBECH
CHANGE OF USE OF EXISTING RETAIL TO 1NO DWELLING

Kimberley Crow presented the report to members.

Members received a written presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Alexandra Patrick, the agent, read by Member Services. Ms Patrick stated that she believes the recommendation for refusal on this site is based on a subjective “feeling” rather than a consistent application of policy. She expressed the opinion that the officer’s verdict is that the space is “oppressive”, but quality of life is not defined by a tape measure alone, it is defined by light, layout and functionality.

Ms Patrick expressed the view that the proposal has designed a purposeful, high-quality home intended for a single occupant or a young professional, a demographic that is currently underserved in Wisbech. She disagrees with the “oppressive” label due to the Council’s recent decision at the former wool shop in Wisbech with the Council approving a flat with a nearly identical floor area with the space deemed to provide a high level of amenity.

Ms Patrick referred also to the Hare and Hounds, with the committee recognising that site specific context and clever design often outweigh strict square footage requirements. She added that a shop to residential conversion has also been approved next door, so it is already established that this row is suitable for homes.

Ms Patrick expressed the view that this proposal completes the transition of this building and is consistent with the character of the street and consistent with precedents that have already been set.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Benney stated that he visited the site, retail is disappearing from people’s way of life and questioned what retail could go into the building as a shop, with there being empty shops all throughout Wisbech and turning the ones on the periphery into accommodation, in his view, makes perfect sense. He added that it pushes the retail there is more into the centre of Wisbech, which he feels would help Wisbech. Councillor Benney acknowledged that it is a small property but made the point that there was a gentleman sleeping in a shop doorway when he visited the area and he is sure he would be grateful for this rather than sleeping in the open air. He made the point that there is a housing problem in Fenland and if this produces a home for somebody, it may not be a perfect home, but it is a stepping stone. Councillor Benney stated that whilst this proposal is not ideal, it is ideal for what is there and he will be supporting the application.
- Councillor Connor stated that he called this into committee as he thought it would be of interest to committee and on Agenda Item No.12 he received some information from Dan Horn, a director at Fenland, saying there are 491 households on the waiting list at Fenland. He acknowledged the proposal is not ideal but feels it would be suitable for a single person and he will be supporting this application as it is an opportunity to convert an empty shop into accommodation.
- Councillor Mrs French agreed with the comments of Councillors Benney and Connor, it is an interesting passageway, there are people sleeping rough in Wisbech and Hill Street is full of empty shops which should be brought back into use. She knows that Wisbech has received £20 million in funding and she would suggest that some of these shops are brought and

refurbished, especially in Hill Street. Councillor Mrs French stated that she will be supporting this application.

- Councillor Imafidon echoed the comments of the other councillors, he will be supporting this application, he knows the street very well and walking down the street and turning left or right into Hill Street there are empty shops everywhere and even the shops that appear to be open he never sees anyone in them. He feels if this application is not approved it is just going to be another empty building in town when it could easily have people living in it.

Proposed by Councillor Imafidon, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the application be GRANTED against officer's recommendation, with authority delegated to officers to apply conditions in consultation with the Chairman.

Members do not support the officer's recommendation to refuse planning permission as they feel that residential accommodation in any form is needed in Wisbech.

(Councillor Imafidon registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Wisbech Town Council but takes no part in planning)

**P117/25 TPO01/2026
STATION STREET, CHATTERIS**

Kimberley Crow presented the report to members and stated that Chatteris Town Council have notified the Council that they support the TPO.

Members received a presentation, in accordance with the public participation procedure, from Donna Barwell, an objector to the TPO. Ms Barwell stated that her objection is straightforward, the Eucalyptus tree at 23 Station Street is unsafe, unsuitable for its location and the temporary TPO was issued, in her view, without the necessary evidence or assessment. She expressed the view that the provisional TPO was imposed without an arboricultural inspection, there was no assessment of the tree's structural condition, its risk level, its life expectancy or its suitability for long-term retention.

Ms Barwell expressed the opinion that a TPO should only be confirmed when a tree provides significant public amenity and when it is expedient to protect it and neither requirement has been met. She feels the tree has multiple well-documented structural defects, it has had previous branch failures, it has visible decay and extensive bark loss, it has a pronounced lean of around 45 degrees and its species typically has shallow rooting and brittle wood.

Ms Barwell stated that one of the most important points is the species behaviour of sudden limb drop, with Eucalyptus trees being known for shedding large branches without warning, even in calm weather. She added that following an incident of this nature, which was reported to the Council in June 2025, they were advised to make the tree safe and her concern is, therefore, not theoretical as several branches have already fallen from this tree and it has been fortunate that these have been inside the boundary of her property, as if those should have fallen in the opposite direction it would have landed where children walk to the local primary school and where vehicles regularly pass, which demonstrates a real risk.

Ms Barwell made the point that Eucalyptus trees are not native, they grow very fast and have shallow spreading roots that can affect drains and structures and they are prone to structural failure. She expressed the view that in a confined high traffic urban setting she does not believe this tree is suitable for long-term retention and it also offers limited ecological value compared with native alternatives.

Ms Barwell expressed the opinion that given the tree's condition, its species characteristics and its location, she does not believe it can be reasonably considered suitable for long-term protection.

She feels the TPO was issued reactively following a felling application and not based on evidence, with the statutory test of amenity value or expediency not being observed.

Ms Barwell expressed the view that protecting a hazardous tree in a high-risk location is not in the public interest. She made the point that removing the tree is not in her aesthetic interest as at present this tree screens the properties across the road and its removal would open up that view and she also has other trees on her property that include a Cherry and Laburnum that are currently stunted because of the Eucalyptus' size and dominance and if this tree were removed those trees would finally be able to grow and flourish, improving the long-term character and greenery of the area.

Ms Barwell stated that her position is not about convenience or preference, it is about safety, suitability and responsible management and if deemed appropriate, she would be willing to replace the Eucalyptus with a more appropriate species, subject to guidance, that would provide genuine amenity without posing a risk. She asked members for the reasons she has outlined to withdraw or decline to confirm the TPO.

Members asked questions of officers as follows:

- Councillor Marks asked if the tree officer visited the site to look at the tree? David Rowen responded in the affirmative and that as part of the assessment of the application for works to various trees within the site, which included the felling of the Eucalyptus tree, the Council's Arboricultural Officer has undertaken what is known as a tree valuation method for preservation orders which is an industry standard series of assessments of the tree including its health and general condition, coming to the conclusion that it is worthy of a TPO.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Marks stated that committee has heard from the objector who obviously owns the tree and one thing she did say was about upkeep and safety but questioned why the tree not been maintained, with safety being of paramount importance through the years. He queried why all of a sudden the tree has become an issue if it has been maintained. Councillor Marks made the point that the Tree Officer has been out to site and members need to support the report of the Tree Officer, who is the professional and, on this occasion, he will be supporting the TPO.
- Councillor Benney made the point that the house has been sold several times, but Eucalyptus trees do grow, the branches do fall off them, and they are not a native species. He feels from listening to the objector she is more than happy to replace this tree with another tree and personally he would prefer to see it replaced with a native UK species. Councillor Benney stated that it is a big tree, trees need management and they do not last forever, it is a lovely garden, and it is very dominant and he can understand why the other trees are not thriving. He expressed the opinion that the Tree Officer by the nature of his job is always going to support trees, but he will not be supporting this TPO.
- Councillor Mrs French questioned how old the tree is? The Chairman allowed Ms Barwell to respond to say she believes it was planted in the 1960s.
- Councillor Purser questioned, with all due respect to the Tree Officer who is obviously the professional, if the tree is getting into a bit of a dangerous state why has it not been pollarded previously. He feels if a TPO is placed on the tree now and it did get into an even more dangerous state and injured or killed someone, would members forgive themselves for allowing it to go forward.
- Matthew Leigh stated that the responsibility of the tree management sits with the owner of the tree, it does not sit with the Council, and the applicant has come into remove the tree, they have not come in with works to reduce it or for any maintenance. He added that the Tree Officer has been on site and undertaken an assessment, with part of the Tempo scoring system being about the long-term health and it takes into account quite a number of different criteria, including the condition and suitability of the tree, remaining longevity, how

visible it is in the public domain and arboricultural features, ie whether it is unusual. Matthew Leigh stated that the Planning Officer's report says in paragraph 4.2 definite merit is level 15 and this scored 16 so the Tree Officer considers it has merit. He referred to a point being made about health and risk in the future, but officers are not saying they would not allow any works as a substantial part of a LPAs caseload is applications for work to trees with TPOs and generally they are allowed if it can be demonstrated there are health issues with the tree, with sometimes management resolving the issue but sometimes they will need to be removed. Matthew Leigh made the point that the only way to require a tree to be replaced is to impose a TPO, which is standard practice if a tree is relatively unhealthy and it is a borderline case to impose a TPO to allow them to remove it so that the harm can be mitigated against for the loss of the tree so even if members say that it adds to the character of the area and has value but are concerned about the principle of this tree his advice would be to still confirm the TPO and then a subsequent application could come in to remove it and to replace it with a different tree, which if members consider to be more appropriate, safer, etc, is the correct way to do this as it is about installing officers with the legal powers to affect it. He added that the tree not being native or ecology issues are not considerations.

- Councillor Benney stated that he had a Horse Chestnut tree at his former home and the Tree Officer came and looked at it as he was looking to get some work undertaken to it as it was getting too tall and dangerous and he agreed with the work saying that it was a healthy specimen of a tree but when the tree surgeon came to undertake the works he said the tree was unsafe, with the Tree Officer advising to take whatever action the tree surgeon recommended but the Tree Officer did not see that the tree was dangerous in parts. Matthew Leigh stated that he would not want to bring any question into the capabilities of the Tree Officer, particularly as it probably is not the same Tree Officer as now and the Council's current Tree Officer is a commercial entity with a lot of experience and this should not be given any weight in the consideration of this proposal. Councillor Benney stated he was not questioning his ability but making the point that until the tree is climbed up it is not always visible what condition it is in.
- Councillor Imafidon expressed the opinion that what is important from his perspective is public safety and whilst the Tree Officer has been out to look at it, the objector lives there and has seen the tree branches fall off. He added that it can be seen from the photos that there is a great lean on it and the root system is shallow so no one knows when that is going to come down and like Councillor Benney said without someone undertaking some work on the tree it would not be known what state of health it is in. Councillor Imafidon expressed the view that he does not think the objector is after just removing the tree as she offered to plant another tree there and he feels personally he is looking at it from a public safety point of view and if the species of this tree is known to shed branches without warning he thinks members should consider the objector's point of view.
- David Rowen stated that there was an application to fell the tree which is why the TPO come around so clearly there is an intention to fell it and branches do fall off trees, even healthy trees. He added that as Matthew Leigh indicated there is a responsibility on the owner of any tree to make sure it is in as safe a condition as possible and just imposing a TPO does not preclude any further work being undertaken to that tree, it just gives a degree of control to the works that are taking place. David Rowen made the point that if members do accept the TPO there is nothing stopping the owner of the tree making an application tomorrow to undertake significant works to the tree and that will be considered on its merits. He continued that while the speaker has indicated that they would be willing to plant a replacement tree the only way to legally ensure that is to place a TPO on the tree as if the Council just accepts the felling of the tree there is no legal requirement to ensure that this tree is replaced, with the only mechanism to do that being the imposition of the TPO.
- Matthew Leigh added that an initial consideration of a tree can be undertaken and it could look healthy or unhealthy and if someone started works it could be worse, but the Council does not have an initial report saying it is unhealthy, it is just anecdotal that occasionally branches fall and it is not known if there is or is not any health risks or issues with the tree. He continued that it is not known if a slight reduction of the tree would mitigate some of the

issues as none of this information is with the Council and all that is known is that sometimes the tree loses branches and they want to remove it, with there being no arboricultural report in front of the Council backing up that this tree needs to be removed for health and safety reasons.

- Councillor Marks acknowledged what Councillor Benney has said as well as officers, he feels that if the route of TPO is followed the tree is safeguarded instead of just removing it, however, if by reducing the size of the tree it is found to be in a poor state and needs to be removed then with advice from the Tree Officer it could be taken down and a replacement tree safeguarded. He added that if it is not in bad condition and it can be pollarded to a safe condition then there is a 60 year old tree still standing there, which, in his view, does add to the street scene. Councillor Marks expressed the view that the objector has made a good presentation and agreed that health and safety has to be of paramount importance but just cutting it down because of health and safety he is uncomfortable about, however, should it be found to be rotten inside then at least the future of a replacement has been safeguarded. He added that the objector may move next week and if that tree is felled there is no guarantee that it will be replaced but at least with a TPO there will be that guarantee.
- Councillor Mrs French thanked to David Rowen for explaining the situation and she feels it makes sense to place a TPO on the tree and then the owner can apply to undertake works, if it is dangerous or in a bad condition a replacement tree can be conditioned.
- Councillor Connor expressed the opinion that the TPO should be placed on the tree, the owner can submit an application for works to the tree and if it found to be unsafe appropriate action can be taken.

Proposed by Councillor Marks, seconded by Councillor Mrs French and agreed that the TPO be confirmed in respect of 1 x Eucalyptus tree.

(Councillor Benney registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning)

(Councillor Marks registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he attends meetings of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning)

**P118/25 F/YR25/0088/PLANOB
LAND SOUTH OF 8-59 FAIRBAIRN WAY, CHATTERIS
MODIFICATION OF PLANNING OBLIGATION ATTACHED TO PLANNING
PERMISSION F/YR19/0152/O (ENTERED INTO 03.08.2020) RELATING TO
PROVISION OF 100% AFFORDABLE HOUSING (WITH ASSOCIATED
NOMINATION RIGHTS) AND A REDUCTION IN EDUCATION CONTRIBUTIONS
TO £100,000 (£2000 PER PLOT)**

David Rowen presented the report to members.

Members asked questions of officers as follows:

- Councillor Mrs French asked if there is public open space or play equipment on the site as she is thinking about Pride of Place funding which is coming on board. She referred to Councillor Connor mentioning on a previous application about 491 people being on the waiting list across Fenland, but she believes this to be Chatteris only as there used to be 3,000 for the whole of Fenland and it does say at 1.2 there are 491 registered within the Council in Chatteris. Councillor Connor stated the information provided to him by Dan Horn stated that the numbers fluctuate daily as it is a live database, at the time of writing the report there are 491 households registered with the Council looking for affordable rent with Chatteris as their preference.
- Councillor Imafidon referred to the affordable housing and questioned affordable to whom? Matthew Leigh responded that this is defined in the NPPF. Councillor Imafidon asked if

these homes could be allocated to Fenland residents only. Matthew Leigh responded that they will be let through the allocations policy, so it is normally through a connection. Councillor Connor added that the allocations will be made to the properties through the Council's approved Housing Lettings Policy.

Members made comments, asked questions and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Benney expressed his disappointment that the site is not going to be for market housing but recognised there is a need for affordable housing. He stated that his only concern is that priority should be given to local people. David Rowen stated that the nomination rights are set out in paragraph 3.3 of the report so the Council would be receiving nominations rights to all but five of the dwellings.
- Councillor Mrs French stated her main question was on play equipment and there will be a Pride in Place report going to Cabinet in March, with each town being given a set amount of money for play areas and she will speak to Phil Hughes on this as these houses keep being built, with only contributions given. Matthew Leigh stated that paragraph 8.11 states that the open space contribution was secured for off-site improvement or provision of facilities in the area of Chatteris as the site is too small to require anything on site and there is very limited open space in the development, with the reserved matters plan showing there is no play equipment being provided on site, which is why the £38,000 is still seen as necessary to off set the harm from the development.
- Councillor Connor stated that he would have liked to have seen some play equipment on the site itself, there are 50 affordable homes on the site so there is going to be children, and he would press to get equipment on site.
- Councillor Mrs French expressed the view that Pride in Place funding has probably been missed but there is the Inspire! project as well so it does need to be looked at as she does not know Chatteris well so is not aware where the nearest play area is. Councillor Benney responded that the nearest main play area is probably Huntingdon Road.

Proposed by Councillor Mrs French, seconded by Councillor Imafidon and agreed that the application be GRANTED as per the officer's recommendation.

(The Chairman agreed to this item being considered as a matter of urgency to avoid undue delay)

(Councillor Benney registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he is a member of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning)

(Councillor Marks registered, in accordance with Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct on Planning Matters, that he attends meetings of Chatteris Town Council but takes no part in planning)

3.55 pm

Chairman