

Application Number: F/YR12/0590/F
Minor
Parish/Ward: March Town Council
Date Received: 2 August 2012
Expiry Date: 27 September 2012
Applicant: Mr & Mrs French
Agent: Mr G H Taylor

Proposal: Change of use of industrial unit to 4 x 2-bed flats
Location: Industrial Unit 2, Woodville Drive, Westry, March

Site Area/Density: 0.17 ha

Reason before Committee: The applicant is a Planning Committee member

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

This application seeks a change of use from a commercial building into 4 x 2-bed flats. The land in question is allocated in the 1993 Local Plan for Industry and lies outside the current settlement limits of March.

The application has to be assessed against the loss of an employment unit and in line with Policy CS4 of the emerging Core Strategy, it has to be demonstrated through a marketing exercise that there is no longer a need to retain the building.

Key issues relate to:

- Loss of employment unit
- Sustainability
- Residential amenity
- Waste collection.

Proof of marketing has been provided with the application and the site is considered to be in a sustainable location with a footpath link to the town centre and other amenities and is, therefore, acceptable.

2. HISTORY

Of relevance to this proposal is:

2.1	F/YR06/1209/RM	Erection of a 4-bed workplace home	Granted December 2006	8
	F/YR06/0485/F	Erection of a 4-bed detached house	Granted 23 June 2006	23 June 2006
	F/YR06/0188/RM	Erection of a 3-bed detached workplace home	Granted 31 March 2006	31 March 2006
	F/YR05/0730/O	Erection of 2 workplace homes	Granted September 2005	27 September 2005
	F/YR02/1379/O	Erection of a dwelling	Granted February 2003	28 February 2003

F/YR00/1193/F	Erection of a workshop	Granted	15 February 2001
F/93/0809/F	Erection of a workshop	Granted	23 March 1994
F/91/0297/F	Erection of an industrial unit/workshop	Granted	14 August 1991

3. PLANNING POLICIES

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraph 2: Planning law requires that application for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan.

Paragraph 14: Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

3.2 East of England Plan 2008:

ENV7: Quality in the Built Environment

3.2 Draft Fenland Core Strategy:

CS4: Employment, Tourism, Community Facilities and Retail

3.3 Fenland District Wide Local Plan:

E8: Landscape and amenity protection

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Parish/Town Council:

Recommend approval.

4.2 County Highways (CCC):

FDC will need to consider the implications of having further residential units within a private drive in terms of future maintenance of the road, surface water drainage and lighting issues.

Recommends a minimum of 2 vehicle parking spaces be provided for each flat and an appropriate common turning area be retained.

4.3 Scientific Officer (FDC):

Requests contaminated land condition is attached to any approval.

4.4 Environmental (FDC):

Protection

No objection as it is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on the local air quality or the noise climate.

Under Building Regulations there are sound insulation requirements for separating walls, floors and stairs which apply to new build and conversions.

- 4.4 **Cambridgeshire Fire & Rescue:** Adequate provision for fire hydrants should be made and agreed. Informative will be imposed accordingly.
- 4.5 **Local Residents:**
- 1 letter of concern received regarding the following:
 - service runs in rear gardens and future longevity of the pipes etc;
 - possible disturbance to secure rear gardens;
 - visibility on the access road is poor.

 - 1 letter of objection received regarding the following:
 - problems relating to vehicles reversing in and out of the driveway;
 - no separate road/footpath with no separation between vehicles and pedestrians;
 - the current Government Decent Homes Standard does not encourage creation of homes under asbestos sheet roofing.

5. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 5.1 The application site currently consists of an industrial unit with a flat roof linked building to a similar industrial unit adjacent. To the south west of the site are two workplace homes and one unrestricted dwelling and two further residential dwellings on the opposite side of the access road. To the north east of the site are further factory units, which are approximately 30 metres away and other commercial units to the south east of the site.

A hedge exists along the eastern boundary of the site and continues along the southern boundary. Open fields bound the rear elevation of the site where an open water course is located immediately adjacent to the building.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The proposal is to convert one of the two industrial units into 4 x 2-bed flats with associated parking, communal amenity space and managed waste collection.

Loss of employment units

The proposal will in effect lead to the loss of an existing vacant industrial unit. Policy CS4 of the emerging Core Strategy states that *“the Council will seek to retain for continued use high quality land and premises currently or last in use for B1/B2/B8 employment purposes, unless it can be demonstrated through a marketing exercise that there is no longer a need to retain sites in these uses”*.

The applicant has supplied evidence that proves that the unit was vacated on 31 October 2007 and that the units have been marketed since 2008. In 2008 permission was granted to turn the building into a day centre for FACET, but due to the lack of funding, this use was never commenced.

In 2010 a tenant was found for Unit 1, but again it was vacated within five months and the unit has remained vacant ever since.

Sustainability

The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievements of sustainable development. Whilst the building will need adapting to enable residential occupancy, the conversion will result in the retention of an existing building, which is located close to local services such as shops, pub/restaurant etc. There is an existing footpath link to the town centre and the public transport route is located nearby.

Residential amenity

The proposal relates to the conversion to flats and involves elevational alterations to the building with the introduction of new window and door openings. A central entrance door will lead to 2 ground floor flats and a staircase will lead to first-floor flats. A fire escape door will be located at the rear of the building and will exit onto the piped and filled dyke area for emergency access into the adjoining field.

The asbestos roof will remain in-situ and a new false sealed ceiling will be required to fulfil Building Regulation requirements. Similarly details of sound proofing will be dealt with under Building Regulations.

Each flat will benefit from 2 parking spaces and turning is available within the site to ensure that cars can exit the site in forward gear. A communal drying area will be provided to the east of the building and a gravelled forecourt area with some landscaping of new trees will provide some soft landscaping to the building.

Waste collection

As part of the management plan for the flats, it is intended to incorporate a private refuse collection arrangement to ensure that refuse is collected from the site. The access road is private and, therefore, the Council's refuse vehicles will only pick refuse up from the edge of the public highway. The access road is 120 metres long from the public footpath and, therefore, given that the recommendation contained within the Recap Waste Management Design Guide that householders should not have to move their refuse more than 30 metres, the only refuse collection solution for this site is to provide a private refuse collection strategy.

To ensure that refuse collection can be satisfactory carried out, it is proposed to impose an appropriate condition to agree the refuse collection strategy for this site prior to the commencement of the development. This will entail the applicant providing the LPA with the proposed management plan for the flats, which shows the inclusion of the refuse collection arrangements.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Careful consideration has been given to the loss of an employment unit and an issue relating to the length of time the unit has been empty is one determining factor. Other factors include the presence of other residential properties in the area, which are a mix of workplace homes and also unrestricted dwellings. The site is considered to be in a sustainable location close to local services and public transport routes.

The unit has been actively marketed over a substantial length of time which has not yielded any genuine users and the unit has, since 2007, remained largely vacant. This illustrates to officers that the loss of the unit would not unduly impact on the economy of the area.

The area of land to the north and west of the site is vacant and is still allocated for industrial use and could come forward for development in the future. Therefore, the loss of this unit would not result in a significant loss of employment land, and would bring an under utilized building back into active usage.

8. RECOMMENDATION

Grant

- 1. The development permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.**

Reason - To ensure compliance with Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved a scheme and timetable to deal with contamination of land and/or groundwater shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall then be implemented on site in accordance with the approved timetable.**

The scheme shall include all of the following measures unless the Local Planning Authority dispenses with any such requirement specifically and in writing:

- a) A desk-top study carried out by a competent person to identify and evaluate all potential sources and impacts of land and/or groundwater contamination relevant to the site. This should include a conceptual model, and pollutant linkage assessment for the site. Two full copies of the desk-top study and a non-technical summary shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

IF during development any previously unsuspected contamination is discovered then the LPA must be informed immediately. A contingency plan for this situation must be in place and submitted with the desk study. If a desk study indicates that further information will be required to grant permission then the applicant must provide, to the LPA:

- b) A site investigation and recognised risk assessment carried out by a competent person, to fully and effectively characterise the nature and extent of any land and/or groundwater contamination, and its implications. The site investigation shall not be commenced until:**
 - (i) A desk-top study has been completed, satisfying the requirements of paragraph (a) above.**
 - (ii) The requirements of the Local Planning Authority for site**

- investigations have been fully established, and
- (iii) The extent and methodology have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Two full copies of a report on the completed site investigation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Following written LPA approval of the Site Investigation the LPA will require:

- c) A written method statement for the remediation of land and/or groundwater contamination affecting the site. This shall be based upon the findings of the site investigation and results of the risk assessment. No deviation shall be made from this scheme without the express written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

The provision of two full copies of a full completion report confirming the objectives, methods, results and conclusions of all remediation works, together with any requirements for longer-term monitoring and pollutant linkages, maintenance and arrangements for contingency action shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason- To control pollution of land or water in the interests of the environment and public safety.

3. Prior to commencement of development a refuse collection strategy shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The refuse collection shall accord with the agreed details and thereafter be retained in perpetuity unless otherwise agreed in writing.

Reason - To ensure a satisfactory form of refuse collection.

4. Prior to the commencement of development, a scheme for the provision of external lighting shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such approved details shall be installed prior to commencement of use/occupation of any dwellings and retained thereafter in perpetuity.

Reason - In order to ensure that the site meets the crime prevention guidelines.

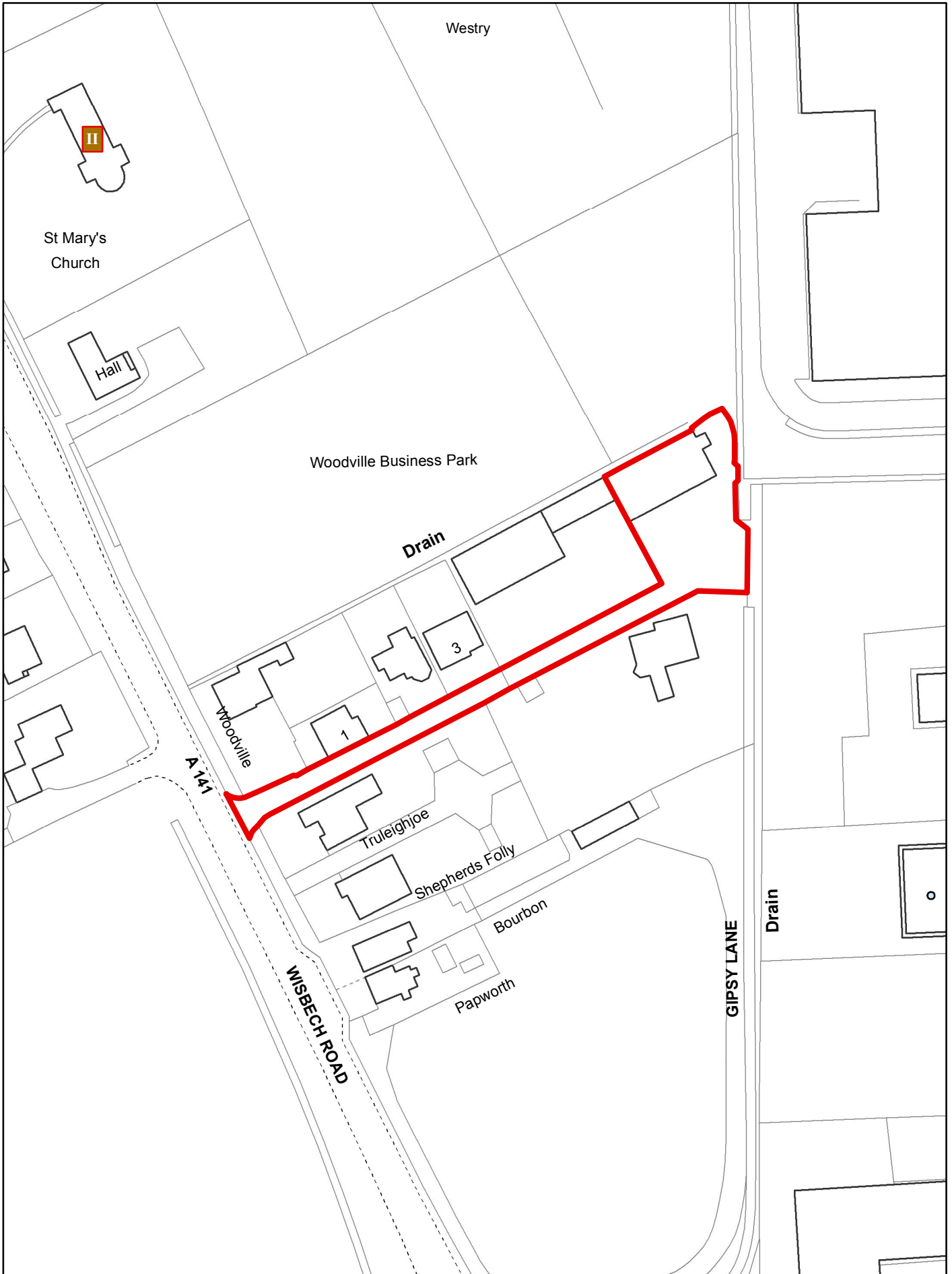
5. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved the permanent spaces shown on the plans hereby approved are to be reserved on the site to enable vehicles to enter, park, turn and leave the site in forward gear shall be levelled, surfaced and drained and thereafter retained for no other purpose in perpetuity.

Reason - In the interests of satisfactory development and highway safety.

6. Approved plans

Informatives:
Fire Hydrants

Building Regulations



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