Application Number: F/YR13/0541/F Minor Parish/Ward: Elm Parish/Elm and Christchurch Ward Date Received: 11 July 2013 Expiry Date: 5 September 2013 Applicant: Mr F Leach, William Norman and Son Ltd Agent: Mr N Lowe Peter Humphrey Associates Ltd

Proposal: Erection of 4 no of 4-bed 2 storey dwellings with double garages Location: Land West of Appletree House, Begdale Road, Elm.

Site Area: 00.95 hectares

Reason before Committee: Contrary to Development Plan and Level of Interest

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 4 x 4-bed 2 storey dwellings with double garages at Land West of Appletree House, Begdale Road, Elm. The proposed site is located on the edge of the existing developed footprint of the village however in view of the location the proposed site performs poorly, in terms of its overall sustainability and the lack of pedestrian connectivity to the village centre and other local and community facilities and services.

In line with CCC Highways comments it is considered that there is a lack of linkage between the site and the existing footway network, particularly given the restricted width and the lack of verges between enclosures along the intervening length between the site and the existing footpath which serves the village. Therefore, it is questionable whether the site which further extends the built form of the village into the countryside is suitable in terms of the sustainability and connectivity of the site with the village core. In addition, it is considered that the residential amenity of future occupiers and, arguably, their safety is of concern. It is considered that the site is not in a sustainable location and the occupiers of the dwelling would have to rely on the use of a private motor car due to the lack of footpaths and street lighting.

Therefore, acknowledging the CCC Highway comments it is considered that the proposal would be contrary to Policies H3 of the Local Plan in that it would be outside of the established settlement and may give rise to highway safety issues. The proposal would also be contrary to Policies CS12 and CS15 of the emerging Local Plan – Core Strategy (Sept 2013) which outlines that all development schemes should be served by safe and sustainable highway infrastructure and located and designed so that they can maximise accessibility and help to increase the use of non-car modes. Therefore the proposal is recommended for refusal.

2. HISTORY

Of relevance to this proposal is:

2.1 No relevant history

3. PLANNING POLICIES

3.1 National Planning Policy Framework:

Paragraph 2: Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan. Paragraph 14: Presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 17: Seek to ensure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants.

Paragraph 112: Best and most versatile agricultural land.

Section 7: Requiring Good Design

3.2 Emerging Fenland Local Plan - Core Strategy Submission Version (Sept 2013):

CS1: Presumption of Sustainable Development

CS3: Spatial Strategy, The Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside.

- CS12: Rural Areas Development Policy
- CS13: Supporting and Mitigating the Impact of a Growing District
- CS14: Flood Risk
- CS15: Development Schemes and Parking Requirements
- CS16: High Quality Environments

3.3 Fenland District Wide Local Plan:

H3: Development should be within existing settlement

E2: Open Spaces and Gaps which are an important part of the Settlements Character

E3: Retention of Existing Trees and Hedgerows

E8: Landscape and Amenity Protection

4. CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 Parish Council
- 4.2 *Middle Level Commissioners*

Parish Council object on the basis that the site lies outside of the DAB for Elm

Expect the applicant to prove to the Board that a viable scheme for appropriate water level/flood risk management exists or that it could be constructed or maintained for the lifetime of the development with no material prejudice to the Boards operation or the local water level management system, water or built environment should the development proceed.

4.3 CCC Highways

Comments include;

'The site lies within the 60mph speed limit, where the existing 30mph speed limit terminates at the eastern end of the site frontage. Further, the nearest footway adjacent Begdale Road terminates around 85m east at the Limes Avenue. The highway between Limes Avenue comprises a modest carriageway with narrow/ non existent verges along the intervening length to the site. No details of the available access visibility have been submitted, either in terms of visibility for emerging vehicles, or forward visibility (sight stopping distance) for right turning traffic. I estimate that visibility is significantly restricted at all accesses below the required standard of 2.4m x 215m for the direction into the 60mph zone. Whilst it is highly unlikely that 85th%ile wet weather approach speeds would necessitate full visibility splays for the 60mph zone, no data has been provided to demonstrate actual vehicle speeds are, and how such speeds relate to the available access visibility. Further, I am extremely concerned with the lack of safe pedestrian infrastructure between the development accesses and the existing footway to the east, particularly given the lack of verges to provide even a basic safety margin for vulnerable users. It is not apparent how this deficiency can be addressed in the limited highway available. I am mindful that dwellings exist to the west of the site on Begdale Road and that such dwellings may exert a basic pedestrian use of the highway, however, I do not consider that it is appropriate to establish new general needs residential development where appropriate safe infrastructure is so inadequate. Accordingly, have no alternative than to recommend that the application is refused for the following reasons:

- As far as can be determined from the submitted plans the applicant does not appear to control sufficient land to provide adequate visibility at the site access. The proposed development would therefore be detrimental to highway safety.
- The approach road is considered to be inadequate to serve the development proposed, by reason of it's the lack of safe pedestrian infrastructure between the proposed development and the existing footways within Elm village to the east'.

Following, this response a Highways Statement was provided by the applicant, additional highway comments are outlined below.

'Thank you for the additional details supplied by MTC. The speed data demonstrates that adequate access visibility can be achieved at the proposed access points. My consultation of the 31/08 also referred to the need to demonstrate the adequacy of forward visibility/ sight stopping distance for right turning vehicles. However, I have also checked this element in the context of the speed data, and the proposals appear adequate.

The outstanding element is the connectivity of the site to the existing built form and infrastructure within Elm village to the east.

I am not convinced that a discreet footway within the site, which is of questionable public merit, would compensate adequately for the lack of linkage between the site and the existing footway network, particularly given the restricted width and the lack of verges between enclosures along the intervening length.

I would therefore strongly question the suitability of the site, which further extends the built form of the village into the rural environment, in terms of the residential amenity of future occupiers and, arguably, safety'.

4.4 FDC Contaminated Land Officer The Environmental Health Team note and accept the submitted information and have 'No Objections' to the proposed development, as it is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on local air quality or the noise climate. From the information contaminated provided land is not considered an issue. 4.5 EDF Energy No comments received 4.6 National Grid

No objection - National Grid apparatus that has been identified as being in the vicinity of the proposed works is a Low or Medium pressure (below 2 bar) gas pipes and associated equipment. As a result it is highly likely that there are gas services and associated apparatus in the vicinity.

4.7	CCC Archa	aeology Residents/Interested	Our records indicate that the site lies in an area of high archaeological potential. The proposed development sits within an historic landscape, on the western outskirts of Elm. Hints of a larger Roman landscape are visible through finds spots adjacent to the application area (such as HER No's MCB10168 & MCB10166) and slightly further to the west a Roman structure and burial were unearthed (HER No. MCB4872). Medieval finds have also been discovered adjacent to the application area (such as HER No's MCB10167) suggesting medieval and post-medieval use of this part of the landscape.
			We therefore consider that the site should be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation and recommend that this work should be commissioned and undertaken at the expense of the developer. This programme of work can be secured through the inclusion of a negative condition such as the model condition 'number 55' contained in DoE Planning Circular 11/95: 9 x letters of support from residents of Elm and Wisbech with issues raised including; - suitable plot for a growing family with a professional outlook; - quality homes on large plots and ideal site for houses of this type; - within walking distance of the village centre and services; - shortage of high class executive style homes in the area that have potential to attract skilled professionals etc - would give work to local tradesmen in short term.
			 2 x letters of objection from neighbouring residents with concerns including; loss of hedgerows and impact on wildlife impact on local facilities e.g. schools overlooking and impact upon amenity and privacy of neighbouring properties; increase in traffic particularly considering the development which is to take place at the Dale further along the road.

5. SITE DESCRIPTION

5.1 The application site is located along Begdale Road, Elm in an area which holds a particularly rural sense of place which is mainly attributed to the mature hedgerows around the perimeter of the site. The field does not appear to be used for agricultural production at present. To the east of the site is the established settlement, to the west of the site is an agricultural storage building. Opposite the site to the south of Begdale Road, the permanent and established built form stops, although the presence of residential curtilages and temporary structures is noted. Also further to the south west of the site on the southern side of Begdale Road is a storage facility.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 Planning Assessment

The NPPF seeks to promote sustainable development in rural areas where it will maintain the vitality of rural communities. This is further supported by the policies within the Local Plan and Emerging Core Strategy where it is determined that new development in villages will be supported where it contributes to the sustainability of the settlement and does not harm the wide, open character of the countryside.

The proposed development is contrary to policy H3 of the existing Local Plan, however some weight can be attached to Policy CS3 of the emerging Core Strategy which seeks to support sustainable growth within Fenland. The focus for the majority of growth is in and around the four market towns. Policy CS3, together with other policies, steers most new development to those larger places that offer the best access to services and facilities, both for now and for the foreseeable future. This helps to reduce the need to travel as well as making best use of existing infrastructure and previously developed land in built up areas.

Policy CS12 of the emerging Local Plan - Core Strategy (Sept 2013) is also relevant to this application and lists the general good practice criteria for evaluating proposals. The criteria listed in this policy details that the application site should be in or adjacent to the existing developed footprint of a village; would not result in coalescence with neighbouring villages; would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside; should be in keeping with the shape and form of the settlement; respects natural boundaries; would not result in the loss of high grade agricultural land and can be served by sustainable infrastructure provision such as surface and waste water drainage and highways infrastructure.

The site is located along Begdale Road, Elm in an area which holds a rural sense of place. It is considered that the key features which attribute to this particular character are the mature hedgerows surrounding the site and the lack of public footpaths in the area. These presence and absence of such features make a significant contribution to the character of the area.

A key issue is the connectivity of the site to the existing built form and infrastructure within Elm village to the east. In terms of retaining the visual amenities and character of the area the provision of a discreet footpath to the front of the dwellings is welcomed. However, as raised by CCC Highways there is a lack of linkage between the site and the existing footway network, particularly given the restricted width and the lack of verges between enclosures along the intervening length. Therefore, it is questionable whether the site which further extends the built form of the village into the countryside is suitable in terms of the sustainability and connectivity of the site with the village core. In addition, it is considered that the residential amenity of future occupiers and, arguably, their safety is of concern. It is considered that the site is not in a sustainable location and the occupiers of the dwellings would have to rely on the use of a private motor car due to the lack of footpaths and street lighting.

The proposal introduces 4 very large dwellings on individual plots. This agricultural land which forms a field in the local area has been artificially subdivided in an arbitrary manner to introduce a suburban type development in the form 4 individual plots. In terms of design and appearance of the proposed dwellings, whilst it is considered that the scale, massing and appearance of the dwellings along with the layout and cumulative impact of 4 large 'executive style' homes would not be in keeping with character and form of the area, the mixed character of the area which has naturally evolved over different periods is noted.

7. CONCLUSION

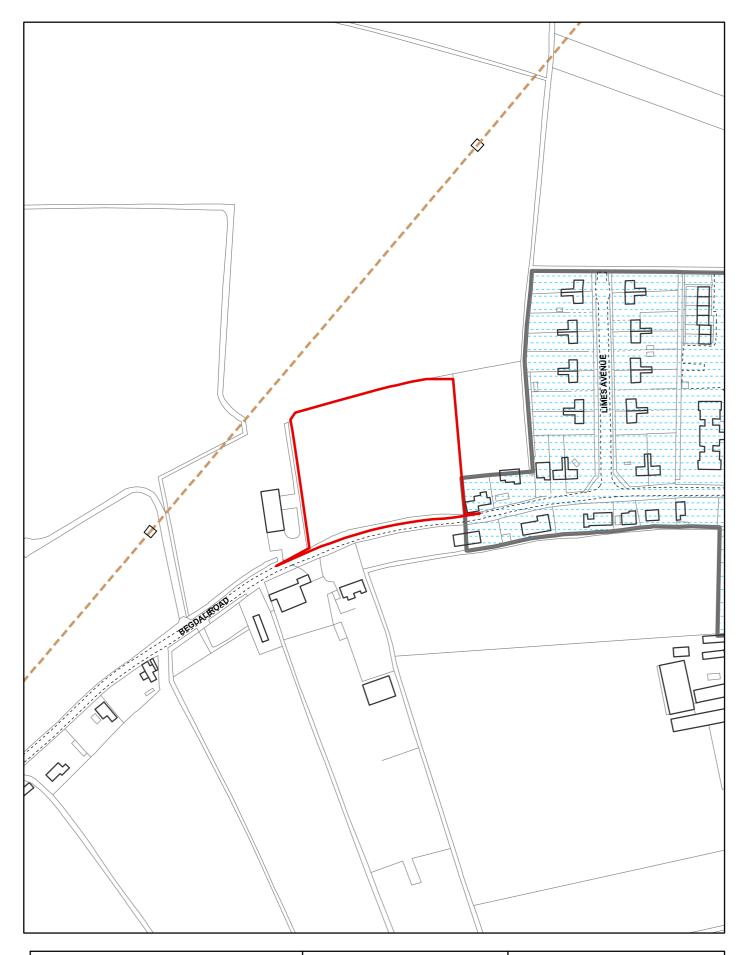
7.1 Therefore, acknowledging the comments of CCC Highways it is considered that the proposal would be contrary to Policy H3 of the Local Plan in that it would be outside of the established settlement and may give rise to highway safety issues.

The proposal would also be contrary to Policies CS12 and CS15 of the emerging Local Plan – Core Strategy (Sept 2013) which outlines that all development schemes should be served by sustainable highway infrastructure and located and designed so they can maximise accessibility and help to increase the use of non-car modes. In addition, it is outlined that schemes should provide well designed, safe and convenient access for all giving priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, people with impaired mobility by providing a network of pedestrian routes that give easy access and permeability to adjacent areas.

8. **RECOMMENDATION**

Refuse

1 In terms of the sustainability of the location the proposed site is poor, particularly in terms of its connectivity with the existing public footpath network and the village centre and other local community facilities and services. By virtue of this it is considered that the proposal would potentially result in highway safety issues for the future occupants of the dwellings and the others who use the highway. Therefore, it is considered that the proposal is contrary to Policy H3 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan, and Policies CS12 and CS15 of the emerging Local Plan – Core Strategy (Sept 2013) which set out the overall requirements for sustainable growth.



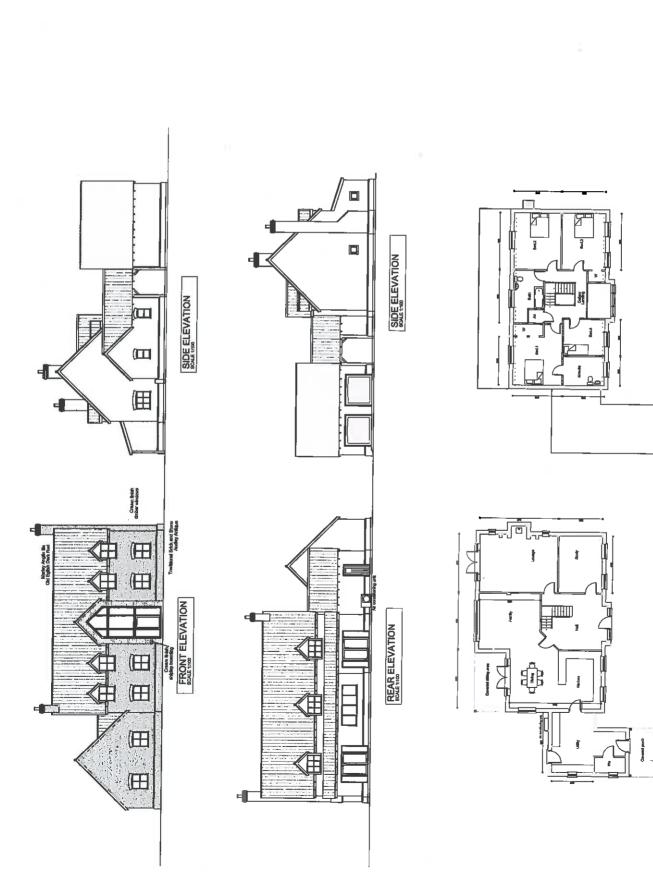
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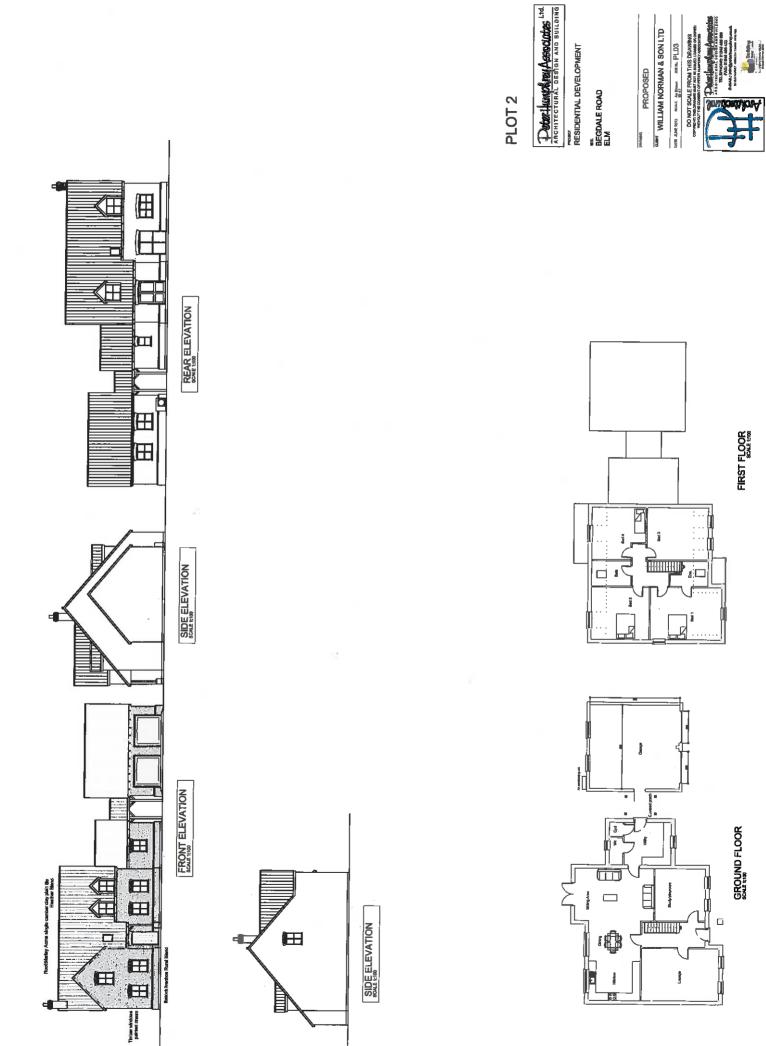




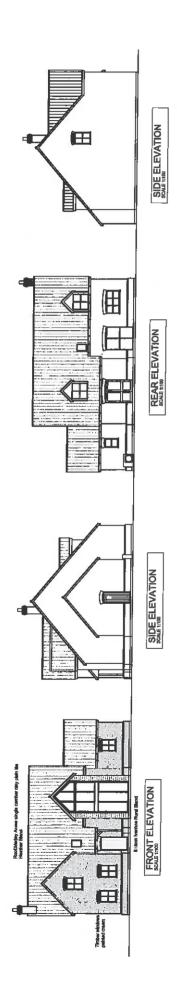


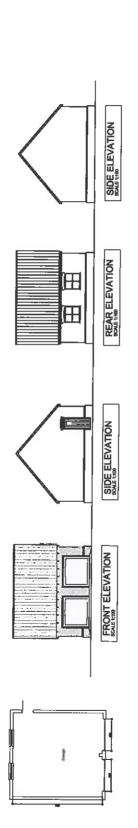
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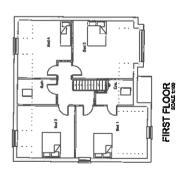




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PLOT 3





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