

**Application Number: F/YR13/0910/F**  
**Minor**  
**Parish/Ward: Parson Drove/Wisbech St Mary**  
**Date Received: 6 December 2013**  
**Expiry Date: 31 January 2014**  
**Applicant: Mr and Mrs A White**  
**Agent: Mr D Broker, David Broker Design Services**

**Proposal: Erection of 3 x 2-storey 4-bed dwellings with detached car port (Plot 1), and attached car ports (Plots 2 and 3)**

**Location: Land East of Two Ways, High Road, Bunkers Hill**

**Site Area/Density: 0.25ha / 12 dph**

**Reason before Committee: This application is before committee given that an elected Member is acting agent for the scheme. In addition the comments received from the Parish Council are at variance to the Officer recommendation.**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION

The site lies beyond any established settlement in an area of the District which is not identified for growth unless development is required for the essential running of a rural enterprise. The development of the site is considered to result in unsustainable growth by virtue of the intrusion into the countryside and the nature of the proposal, being ribbon development. Furthermore the regular appearance of the dwellings would appear out of keeping with the sporadic nature of other buildings on this side of the highway.

The dwellings will be positioned within Flood Zones 2 and 3. Both the emerging Core Strategy and the NPPF require new developments to be located within areas of lower flood risk before land at high risk of flooding is released. It is widely accepted that there is land available within the District which is at lower risk of flooding.

The proposal therefore fails in terms of flood risk, sustainability and design and accordingly the application is recommended for refusal.

## 2. HISTORY

F/YR13/0048/F – Erection of 3 x 2-storey 4-bed dwellings with detached car port (Plot 1) and attached car ports (Plots 2 and 3) – Withdrawn 11/03/2013

## 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 32: Decisions should take into account whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people.

Paragraph 100: Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided.

### 3.2 **Draft Fenland Core Strategy:**

CS3: Spatial Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy

CS12: Rural Areas Development Policy

CS14: Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland

CS15: Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland.

CS16: Delivering High Quality Environments

### 3.3 **Fenland District Wide Local Plan:**

E8: Landscape and amenity protection

H3: Development Area Boundary/Protection of Character and Amenity/Highway Safety

## 4. **CONSULTATIONS**

- |     |  |   |
|-----|--|---|
| 4.1 | <b><i>Parish Council:</i></b>                      | Support this development and recommend approval.  |
| 4.2 | <b><i>Environment Agency:</i></b>                  | No objection, request a condition relating to mitigation measures detailed within the Flood Risk Assessment.  |
| 4.3 | <b><i>North Level Internal Drainage Board:</i></b> | No comments to make   |
| 4.4 | <b><i>CCC Highways:</i></b>                        | The submission confirms that adequate visibility can be achieved. If the LPA are satisfied that the use of 'blue land' can be controlled via a condition then CCC Highways has no objections. Request conditions relating to the provision of gates, the access gradient, on-site parking and turning, construction of the access, provision of temporary facilities, visibility splays, and drainage measures. |
| 4.5 | <b><i>FDC Scientific Officer:</i></b>              | No objections   |
| 4.6 | <b><i>Neighbours:</i></b>                          | 4 letters of objection received, comments as follows:   |

- the road is too dangerous for more houses,
- highway safety from restricted visibility,
- there have already been many accidents in this location,
- there is no footpath outside of the development which would be to the detriment of pedestrian safety,
- there is no main drainage,
- trees have already been taken down which could have been used by owls,
- the traffic survey was taken at a time when the roads were not busy,
- the timing of the application is opportunistic as it was submitted over the Christmas period when residents are less likely to be able to respond,
- the proposal will result in more traffic which will exacerbate the existing highway safety situation,
- Bunkers Hill is defined as an 'Other village' which should be restricted to infill development only. This application is not infill, it creates ribbon development that does not currently exist on this side of the road and would set a precedent for similar applications in the future,
- the loose fragmented nature of the settlement means that it is particularly vulnerable to infill development, the cumulative effect of which would be a consolidation of sporadic development resulting in a material change of the areas character,
- mid-morning on a week day is not the most appropriate time to carry out a survey to obtain the true extent of speed variations on the highway.

## 5. **SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 5.1 The site is located on the eastern side of High Road, on the opposite side of the highway to the existing dwellings within the hamlet. The current use of the site is as paddock land and the trees which previously formed the front boundary of the site have been recently felled exposing the open character of the site. There is fencing and landscaping on the side boundaries. The rear boundary is currently open and there is a belt of landscaping beyond the rear site boundary which defines the extent of the existing paddock. The area is rural in character.

## 6. **PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 The key considerations for this application are:
- Policy implications

- Design, layout and highways
- Flood Risk
- Other Matters

(a) Policy implications

The site is located at Bunkers Hill, albeit on the opposite side of the highway from the existing dwellings which form the hamlet. The highway marks a clear distinction between the hamlet and the open countryside and as such the proposal does not read as part of the existing settlement.

Bunkers Hill does not fall within the settlement hierarchy as set out in Policy CS3 of the emerging Core Strategy. CS3 stipulates that development not falling into the defined settlement categories shall be restricted to that which is demonstrably essential to the effective operation of a business which depends on the rural locality. No such justification has been provided as part of this application and as such the proposal fails to comply in principle with policy CS3.

Policy H3 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan stipulates that unless accompanied by a justification (as above) new development located outside of established settlement boundaries should be resisted. As before, since no appropriate justification has been provided, the proposal fails to comply with policy H3.

Despite being advised at pre-application stage that the proposal would not be supported in principle due to the location of the site, the application was still submitted without appropriate policy justification.

The submission includes a statement which indicates that the application was submitted following a recent approval for new housing development at Tholomas Drove. The comments raised in the statement are noted however as Tholomas Drove is defined as an 'other village' within the Settlement Hierarchy which is suitable for some growth, the Tholomas Drove approval is distinctly different to this proposal and therefore no comparison can be drawn.

The proposed three dwellings, with their associated areas of hard standing and residential paraphernalia would appear as a cluster of suburban-type development within a countryside location. This would be to the detriment of the character and visual amenities of the surrounding area. The proposal would create linear, ribbon development along the highway frontage which would be distinctly out of keeping with the sporadic and irregular type development which characterises the eastern part of the highway. The proposal would therefore appear incongruous within its location and would set a dangerous precedent for further ribbon development along High Road which the Local Planning Authority would find difficult to resist. With this in mind the proposal fails to meet the criteria set out in policies CS12, CS16 and E8 which seek to ensure that new development is appropriate to its setting and that no harm is caused to the character of the countryside.

(b) Design, layout and highways

The dwellings have been designed to have a rural appearance however the uniform appearance in the front elevation of the buildings and their regular positioning provide a suburban appearance, rather than a rural one.

The principle of the regularity of the development is wholly inconsistent with the sporadic nature of buildings which feature on the eastern side of High Road and it results in domestic encroachment into the open countryside, to the detriment of the character of the area, contrary to policies E8 and CS16.

Several comments have been made by neighbouring residents relating to the highway being unsafe for further development. These comments have been noted however since no concerns have been raised by the Local Highway Authority a refusal reason on highways safety would not be reasonable.

(c) Flood Risk

The site is located on land which falls within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3, with the dwellings being principally located in Zones 2 and 3. Both the emerging Core Strategy and the NPPF require new developments to be located within areas of lower flood risk before land within Flood Zones 2 and 3 are released. It is widely accepted that there is land available within the District which is at lower risk of flooding. The proposal therefore fails to satisfy the planned sustainable growth of the District, contrary to CS14 of the emerging Core Strategy.

(d) Other Matters

The comments received from the Parish Council and neighbouring residents have been noted and those which are material planning considerations have already been addressed within the body of this report.

## 7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposal constitutes unjustified residential development beyond any established settlement. Developing this site will result in unsustainable growth by creating ribbon development which would set a dangerous precedent for further linear development along High Road which the Local Planning Authority would find difficult to resist. The regular appearance of the dwellings would appear out of keeping with the sporadic nature of other buildings on this side of the highway.

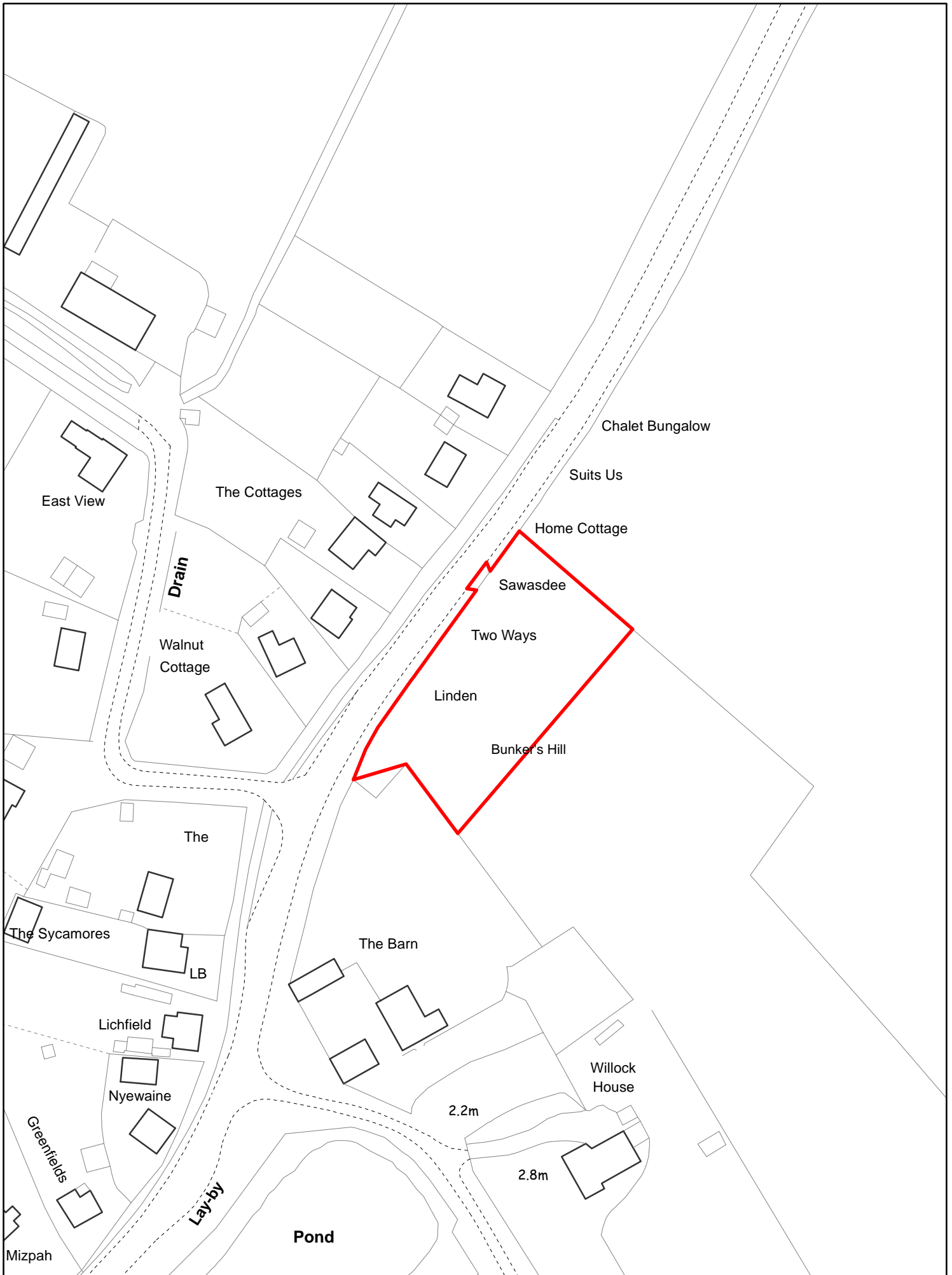
The site is located within an area at high risk of flooding and no special justification has been provided for the proposal. It is therefore considered that there is no need to release land for housing in this area which is at high risk of flooding when there is land available at lower risk of flooding elsewhere within the District.

For the reasons above it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the provisions of the Development Plan and national guidance and it is therefore recommended that planning permission is refused.

## 8. RECOMMENDATION

**Refuse**

- 1. The proposal represents unjustified residential development beyond any established settlement and would result in the creation of ribbon development. The application is therefore contrary to H3 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan, CS3 and CS12 of the Fenland Local Plan Core Strategy (proposed submission 2013) and Section 6 of the National Planning Policy Framework.**
  
- 2. The development is located within Flood Zones 2 and 3 despite there being land available elsewhere in the District within areas of lower flood risk. The application is therefore contrary to CS14 of the Fenland Local Plan Core Strategy (proposed submission 2013) and Section 10 of the National Planning Policy Framework.**
  
- 3. The regular appearance of the development is wholly inconsistent with the sporadic nature of buildings which feature on the eastern side of High Road and it results in domestic encroachment into the open countryside, to the detriment of the character of the area, contrary to policies E8 of the Fenland District Wide Local Plan, CS16 of the Fenland Local Plan Core Strategy (proposed submission 2013) and Section 07 of the National Planning Policy Framework.**



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