

**Application Number: FYR14/0702/F**  
**Minor Dwellings**  
**Parish/Ward: Wimblington Parish Council/Wimblington**  
**Date Received: 29 August 2014**  
**Expiry Date: 24 October 2014**  
**Applicant: Mr & Mrs R Broad**

**Proposal: Erection of a 2-storey 3-bed dwelling with detached double garage and the formation of a new access involving the demolition of existing outbuildings and wall within a conservation area**

**Location: Land south-west of 12 Benwick Road, Doddington**

**Reason before Committee: Called in by Cllr Connor as the applicant and agent does not believe the principle of development is not acceptable. The southern side of Benwick Road has buildings and dwellings behind the street frontage and the application is considered satisfactory.**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATION**

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 3-bed dwelling and garage on land to the west of 12 Benwick Road, Doddington. The site is part of the garden land of No.12 Benwick Road, sits immediately adjacent open farm land and is located within the Doddington Conservation Area boundary.

The area is characterised by mainly frontage development and this part of Benwick Road retains its established historic form and morphology and remains relatively little changed since map extracts from the 18<sup>th</sup> century has evidenced. The areas to the south and north of Benwick Road has been included within the Doddington Conservation Area Appraisal 2011 (DCAA) following a detailed appraisal of Doddington.

Private gardens were identified as important aspects within Conservation Areas (CA) and although not designated as Important Open Spaces it is noted that the Appraisal considers that such areas make an essential contribution to the character and appearance of the CA and the setting of individual houses. Within the context of this site, the garden space constitutes an important transitional space separating the linear road fronting built forms from the open fenland farmland beyond.

The development of the land to the west of No.12 Benwick Road and to the rear of Nos. 18 – 26 Benwick Road will result in backland development out of character with the prevailing form of frontage development. The development will accordingly fail to preserve the established special character of the CA and could set a precedent for further garden development to the detriment of this recognized historic part of Doddington.

The proposed amendments to the existing vehicular access, required to comply with Local Highway Authority standards, would necessitate the removal of the existing historic brick boundary wall attached to No.32 Benwick Road. The DCAA asserts that boundary walls play an important part in defining areas between the public realm and private spaces.

It is therefore considered that the loss of this section of wall would accordingly have a detrimental affect on the character of the CA.

The removal of the boundary wall will inappropriately widen the visual field at this point and as a consequence the resultant views of an expansive 5m wide hard landscaped driveway would be at odds with the character and appearance of the street scene. Similarly the introduction of a bin collection point at the top of the drive would compound the negative visual impact of the enlarged access. The formation of an enlarged access would impose a discordant urban character that is at odds with existing vehicular accesses along the southern side of Benwick Road which characteristically comprise narrow graveled driveways, running between buildings.

The proposal does not accord with guidance contained within the adopted RECAP document in that householders will have to move their waste bins more than the recommended distance of 30 metres to a collection point at the back edge of the public footpath.

The application is therefore recommended for refusal.

## 2. HISTORY

F/YR14/0279/F	Erection of 2-storey 3-bed dwelling with detached double garage	Withdrawn 27 June 2014
F/0846/84/F	Use of agricultural land as part of domestic curtilage to dwelling	Granted 13 December 1984

## 3. PLANNING POLICIES

### 3.1 National Planning Policy Framework:

Section 6: Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes

Section 10: Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change

Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

### 3.2 Fenland Local Plan 2014:

LP1: A presumption in favour of sustainable development

LP2: Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents

LP3: Spatial strategy, the Settlement Hierarchy and the Countryside

LP12: Rural Areas Development Policy

LP14: Responding to Climate Change and Managing the Risk of Flooding in Fenland

LP16: Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments across the District

LP18: The Historic Environment

## 4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 **Wimblington Parish Council:** Whilst the Parish Council is not making a specific objection to the application we make the point that an additional vehicular access is proposed onto Benwick Road at a dangerous stretch of the highway.

4.2 **Conservation Officer/Team :** The revised proposal for the dwelling incorporates a sizeable reduction in scale, which is more in keeping with that of the neighbouring properties. The current design would not have such an imposing presence when viewed from Benwick Road. The use of natural clay pantiles typical of the local vernacular would help assimilate the new structure into its surroundings.

As stated in the original comments, there is concern about the loss of the brick boundary wall to create a wider vehicular access. If the scheme were to be permitted this element of the scheme could be revisited to lessen its impact. This could be achieved by a reduction in the width of the carriageway, the use of small unit paving, together with some rebuilding of the wall (perhaps including piers and gates) and good quality landscaping.

Whilst no further comments are made upon the design of the dwelling it is accepted that by definition, a backland development could be held to be contrary to current planning policy. It is also noted that backland at this point would be contrary to the established pattern and grain in the area. It is important that weight is given to the Doddington Conservation Area designation.

The plot is already compartmentalised by the existing boundaries due to the existing pattern of development (including fences, hedges and outbuildings) and so no views are possible through the application site from the public realm in to the open countryside beyond. Assessment of the level of harm is an issue as this part of the Conservation Area constitutes private garden i.e. it is not developed. Therefore it is considered that the revised design characteristics of the dwelling will still have a degree of impact upon the immediate CA. Assessment of the level of harm is an issue as this part of the Conservation Area which constitutes private garden i.e. it is not developed. Therefore the 'in principle' development of this site needs to be quantified.

**Recommendations:** If the principle of development on this site is accepted in planning terms and there would no harm to the character of the Conservation Area, no objection to the proposed design of the dwelling in conservation terms.

4.3 **Local Highway Authority:** No objection subject to conditions relating to satisfactory construction of the vehicular crossover; parking and turning to be provided prior to occupation of the dwelling; gates to be set back a minimum of 5 metres and the provision of visibility splays.

4.4 **Environmental Protection:** Note and accept the submitted information and have no objection to the proposed development and is it unlikely to have a detrimental effect on local air quality or the noise climate. However given that the development involves the demolition of some outbuildings the unsuspected contamination condition should be imposed.

4.5 **Middle Level Commissioners:** No comments received at time of writing report.

4.6 **Local Residents:** No comments received.

## 5. **SITE DESCRIPTION**

5.1 The application site consists of an area of garden land measuring approximately 0.02 ha and is presently laid to grass. The land is located to the rear of Nos. 12 – 26 Benwick Road, Doddington, and was former agricultural land until approximately 1984 when a change of use of agricultural land to residential land was approved. The site is currently garden land associated with No.12 Benwick Road. There are a number of trees on the southern, western and northern boundary of the site. The site is located within the Doddington CA. The site is located within flood zone 1 and access will be formed of a B class road.

## 6. **PLANNING ASSESSMENT**

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a 3-bed dwelling on land associated with No.12 Benwick Road, Doddington.

The key issues for consideration to this application include:

- Principle of development and policy considerations
- History of the site
- Pre application discussions
- Conservation considerations
- Design considerations
- Access and parking
- Flood Risk
- Health and Wellbeing
- Economic Growth
- Other matters

### Principle of development and policy considerations

The site is located within the built settlement of Doddington and is also located within the Doddington Conservation Area Appraisal 2011. Policies LP1, LP2, LP3, LP4, LP12, LP16 and LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014 together with the National Planning Policy Framework are considerations in this respect.

The Local Plan seeks to deliver housing in sustainable locations and the proposal therefore complies with policy LP1, LP3 and LP4.

Policy LP12 requires development to fulfil several criteria including the need for development to be of a scale and in a location that is in keeping with the core shape and form of the settlement and would not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding countryside and farmland. The development should not result in the loss of important spaces within the village.

Policy LP16 seeks to deliver and protect high quality environments across the district and proposals should demonstrate that the development meets the relevant criteria. In particular development should make a positive contribution

to the local distinctiveness and character of the area, enhance its setting, responds to and improves the character of the local built environment and will not adversely impact, either in design or scale terms, on the street scene, settlement pattern or the landscape character of the surrounding area. Development should not adversely impact on the amenity of neighbouring users through, for example, loss of privacy or loss of light.

Policy LP18 seeks to protect, conserve and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment throughout Fenland.

### History of the Site

In 1984 planning permission was granted for the change of use of agricultural land to garden land resulting in the present boundaries of the garden. Earlier this year an application for a 3-bed dwelling was submitted and subsequently withdrawn by the agent/applicant following discussions with the LPA regarding principle of developing the site.

### Pre-application discussions

The site has been the subject of pre-application discussions, both written and verbal. In May 2013 a letter was sent to the applicant setting out key planning policy considerations and material planning considerations including principle of development, conservation area issues, highways and biodiversity.

The conclusion of the pre-application enquiry was as follows:

*“The site is a form of backland development that will not respect the form and character of the locality. The access into the site could impact on the wellbeing of the existing trees and the distance that the occupier would have to move their refuse bins exceeds the guidance in the Recap Guide.*

*It is unlikely that the Local Planning Authority could support a dwelling in this location”.*

Following a meeting with the applicants on site the same conclusion was reached and the applicants verbally informed that there could be no guarantee that Officers would support an application in this location and that any proposal must meet the constraints of the site and comply with Local Plan policy.

Subsequently the Conservation Team met with the applicants to discuss detailed design and explore possible amendments that could reduce the visual dominance of the proposal. Whilst design amendments have been secured and the scale of the dwelling has been reduced, such amendments do not adequately mitigate the negative impact the positioning of a dwelling in this backland context would have upon the Conservation Officer. The Conservation Officer did not address the principle of development with the agent/applicant.

### Conservation Considerations

The Doddington Conservation Area Appraisal 2011 (DCAA) states that the area around High Street, Ingles Lane, Church Lane, Benwick Road and New Street remain relatively little changed from when an estate survey map was commissioned by Thomas Waddington Esq. in 1770.

The Appraisal also states that the only areas where this historic settlement pattern survives unchanged are west of New Street and north and south of Benwick Road.

Officers acknowledge that there is permission for a new development behind No. 50 Benwick Road 'The Hermitage', Doddington. This was approved under an Interim Planning Policy Leaders Statement during the transition from the old Local Plan 1993 to the new Local Plan 2014. This development approval therefore does not set a precedent for further development on the southern side of Benwick Road.

For reference, Nos. 40 and 40A Benwick Road, which also sit in a backland context on Benwick Road, were approved in 1993 and 1998 respectively in line with the Fenland District Wide Local Plan 1993 which identified this particular site for housing. This development does therefore similarly not set a precedent for further development on the southern side of Benwick Road.

The introduction of a dwelling in this garden area is considered to be an erosion of an area identified as important to the historic form of Doddington. Point 6.8 of the DCAA sets out the importance of private residential gardens. Although rarely designated as Important Open Spaces, private gardens within the CA generally make an essential contribution to the character and appearance of the CA. There will be a general presumption in favour of the retention of private garden spaces which positively contribute to the appearance and grain of the CA.

#### Design considerations

The proposal is for a 3-bed dwelling 2-storey in nature with an overall ridge height of 6.89 metres. The design has been changed following discussions between the agent and the Conservation Officer. The current design would not have such an imposing presence when viewed from Benwick Road. The use of natural clay pantiles typical of the local vernacular would help assimilate the new structure into its surroundings. Slate would be another suitable option.

The dwelling will be sited centrally on the plot with ample amenity space. One ash tree and a willow tree are to be removed but all other trees will remain on site. The loss of the trees are acceptable and will not have an adverse impact of the visual amenities of the area.

#### Access and parking

The proposal involves the formation of a new vehicular access off Benwick Road located between 26 and 32 Benwick Road which is presently enclosed with a brick wall and gate close to the back edge of footpath. The access will require the removal of the brick wall and the formation of an access 5 metres wide with visibility splays. The access road is approximately 56 metres long and will consist of a permeable surface to be agreed with the LPA.

The access road will lead to a double garage where parking and turning will be available. The parking provision is in accordance with the requirement of the local plan.

The loss of the brick wall to accommodate access into the site will further impact on the character of the conservation area. Enclosures form an important element within Conservation Areas and Benwick Road in particular has fine examples of such walls/enclosures. Whilst the wall to be removed is not significant in either length or importance its demolition will open up a gap in the street scene to the detriment of the streetscape vista together with the introduction of a 5 m wide access road in close proximity to the flank wall of No.32 Benwick Road.

### Flood Risk

The site is located within Flood Zone 1. The site is 0.02 ha and therefore a flood risk assessment is not required in accordance with guidance contained within the Technical Guide to the NPPF.

### Health and Wellbeing

Policy LP2 seeks to achieve development that positively contributes to creating a healthy, safe and equitable living environment and to promote high levels of residential amenity. The dwelling is generous in size with adequate amenity space to provide a high quality development.

### Economic Growth

The development of this land will add to the existing housing stock however Fenland has no overriding need for additional housing as it has met its 5 year land supply targets. Given the impact the dwelling will have on the CA it is considered that there is no overarching need to approve a dwelling in this location.

### Other matters

The development is to be served off a private drive therefore issues relating to the collection of refuse have to be addressed. It is proposed to site a bin collection point for the plots close to the back edge of the footpath along Benwick Road. RECAP guidance indicates that residents should not have to move their refuse more than 30 m to a collection point. It is noted that the dwelling is located in excess of 50 metres from the collection point and the proposal is therefore contrary to RECAP guidance.

## **CONCLUSION**

This application seeks full planning consent for the erection of a 3-bed dwelling with parking served off a private drive. The development is located within the Doddington Conservation Area on garden land associated with No.12 Benwick Road.

As mentioned above, the southern side of Benwick Road was identified as important historic form in the 2011 Doddington Conservation Area Appraisal and was subsequently included in the adopted Appraisal. Issues relating to the importance of private gardens and spaces within the CA are identified in the DCAA and the loss of this particular space will erode the historic form of this section of Benwick Road, as defined within the DCAA.

The development will also introduce a 'backland' form of development in an area where frontage development is prominent and therefore the development will not respect the form and character of the area. The introduction of a further vehicular access point next to No.32 Benwick Road requiring the loss of an existing brick wall will also have an effect on the street scene to the detriment of the CA. The vehicular access and its route also contributes towards the urbanisation of the site.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Refuse**

- 1. The development will result in development that fails to respect the established special form and historic character of the area and thus fails to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Doddington Conservation Area. The development will also have a detrimental effect on the settlement pattern by virtue of its backland nature and introduction of an enlarged vehicular access off Benwick Road. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies LP12, LP16 and LP18 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.**





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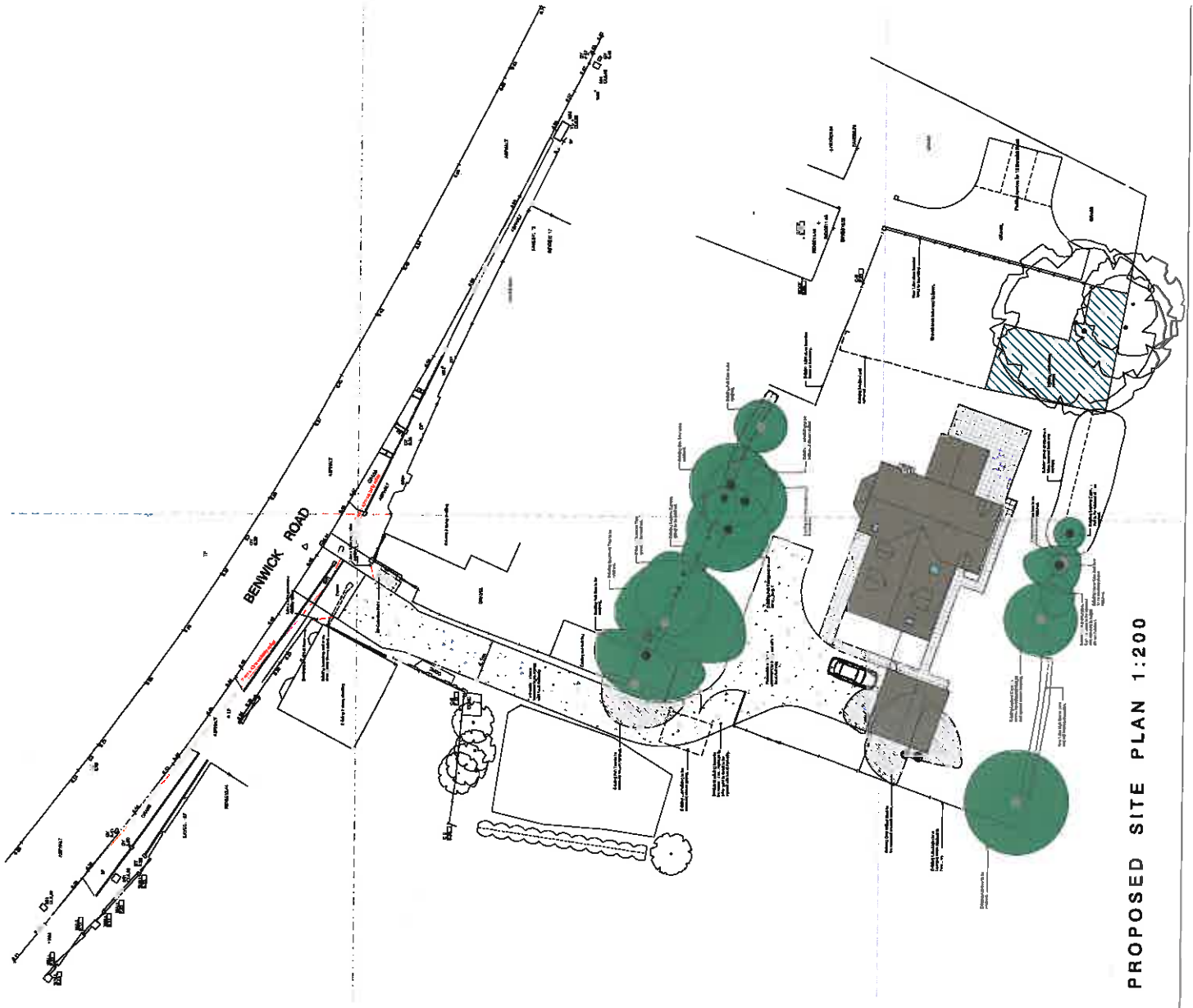
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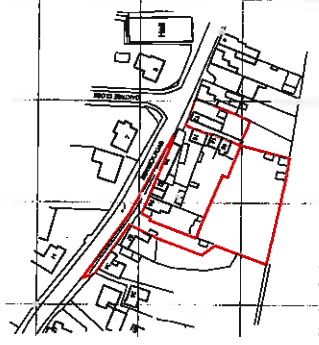
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PROPOSED SITE PLAN 1:200



LOCATION PLAN 1:1250

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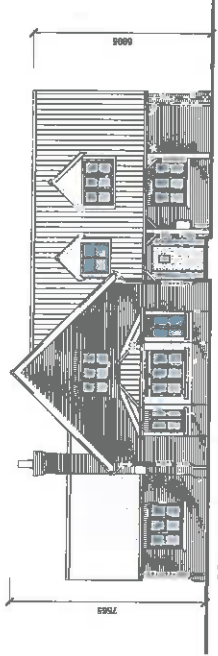
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PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION



PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION



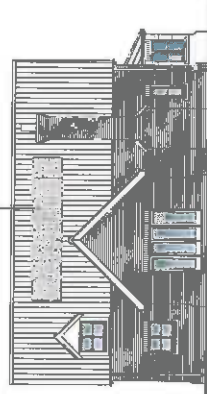
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PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION



PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION



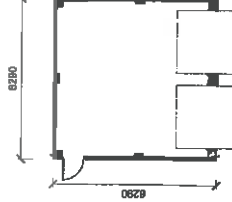
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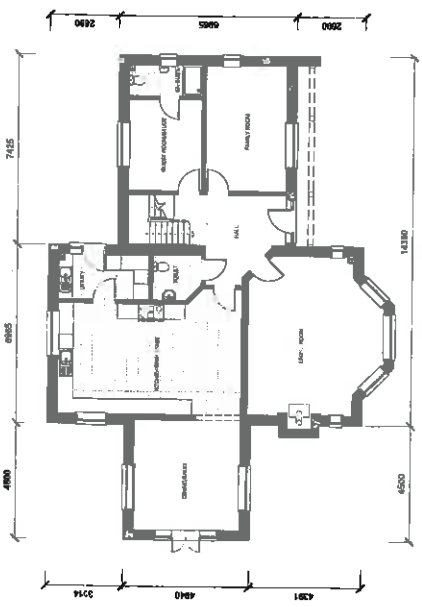
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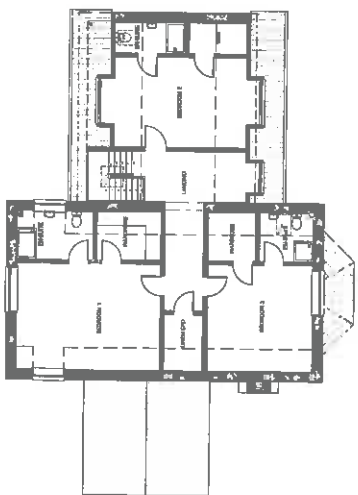
PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION



PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN



PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN

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