

F/YR15/0287/F

**Applicant: Rose Plant Hire (Whittlesey)
Ltd**

**Agent : Mr Graham Walker
Graham Walker: Architect**

50 - 52 Inhams Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire,

Erection of 4 x 2-storey 2-bed dwellings

This application is before committee as the comments received from the Town Council are at variance to the Officer recommendation.

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of 4 dwellings at 50 – 52 Inhams Road, Whittlesey. The key issues to consider are:

- Principle of Development
- Design and layout
- Access and parking
- Residential amenities
- Flood risk
- Health and wellbeing
- Economic Growth
- Other matters

The site is within the established settlement of the town where the principle of the development would usually be supported however there are fundamental issues with regards to the layout, design and impact on neighbouring residential amenities arising from the proposal. It is considered that the proposal is in conflict with planning policies and it is therefore recommended that planning permission is refused.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located within the established settlement of Whittlesey, on the western side of Inhams Road. The area is residential in character with all properties having a road frontage. The site is currently occupied by a detached garage and a pair of semi-detached dwellings, set back from the highway due to the electricity substation which is on the road frontage. The dwellings are orientated so that the side elevation faces the highway. The northern boundary of the site is secured by 1.8m close boarded fencing and there is an existing wall with fencing above on the south and west elevations. The eastern boundary is formed by the access and substation which is enclosed by 1.8m high close boarded fencing.

3 PROPOSAL

The proposal is for terrace of four dwellings. They are two-storey properties with two bedrooms. They will have a footprint of 21.5 x 7.5m and will have a maximum height of 7.5m.

The site is L-shaped and the dwellings will be positioned in the rear section of the site, with the access and parking area on the Inhams Road frontage. Units three and four are located behind the existing substation, with only their first floors being visible above the substation enclosure.

Eight parking spaces are provided, three of which are positioned between units three and four and the substation. A bin collection area is located on the road frontage as well as a small pocket of landscaping. The front elevation of the terrace is approximately 16m from the road frontage, which is a contrast to the siting of the neighbouring dwellings to the north which are 6m from the road frontage.

The existing boundaries will remain in place, with the exception of the northern boundary which will include new 1.8m and 0.9m wooden fencing towards the front of the site.

4 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

F/YR15/0209/DE1 – Demolition of existing dwelling and outbuildings – Further details not required 26.03.2015

5 CONSULTATIONS

Town Council

Consider that the application is in keeping with the area, the amenity space is acceptable and there is sufficient parking. The site should be visually improved or at least reinstall the wooden gates which were removed.

FDC Scientific Officer

No objections, the proposal is unlikely to have a detrimental effect on local air quality or the noise climate. Since the development involves the demolition of an existing building the unsuspected land contamination condition is required.

County Development Minerals and Waste

No comments received.

CCC Archaeology

Do not object to the development but consider that the site should be subject to a programme of archaeological investigation secured via a planning condition.

CCC Highways

No highways objection subject to conditions relating to the provision of visibility splays, adequate drainage measures, and provision of parking spaces.

National Grid

Comments awaited.

EDF Energy

Comments awaited.

Local Residents/Interested Parties

1 letter of objection received, raising the following concerns:

- The house is being erected 2m from the neighbour's house and garden;
- It will block neighbours sunlight;
- Overbearing impact;

- No desire to live next to a car park;
- Noise and disturbance from car park;
- Visual impact of bin store;
- Not clear as to whether overlooking is an issue however would object on this basis if this was the case;
- The fence on the northern elevation is frail and not robust enough to serve a passage;
- A new fence should be positioned all the way around the site;
- Safety posts should be erected to stop vehicles crashing into the common fence boundary.

6 POLICY FRAMEWORK

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

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 50: Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Paragraph 58: Development should respond to local character and be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and landscaping.

Paragraph 100: Directing development into areas of lower flood risk.

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

Fenland Local Plan 2014

LP1: A Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

LP2: Facilitating Health and Wellbeing of Fenland Residents

LP3: Settlement Hierarchy

LP14: Responding to climate change and managing the risk of flooding in Fenland

LP15: Facilitating the Creation of a More Sustainable Transport Network in Fenland

LP16: Delivering and Protecting High Quality Environments

7 KEY ISSUES

- **Principle of Development**
- **Design and layout**
- **Access and parking**
- **Residential amenities**
- **Flood risk**
- **Health and wellbeing**
- **Economic Growth**
- **Other matters**

8 BACKGROUND

Prior approval has already been given for the demolition of the existing dwelling and outbuildings on site however they have yet to be demolished.

9 ASSESSMENT

Principle of Development

The application site lies within the established settlement of Whittlesey which is characterised as an 'Other Market Town' in policy LP3 where the majority of the district's new housing should take place. The principle of the development is therefore acceptable subject to compliance with other policies of the Local Plan.

Design and layout

The shape of the site and the presence of the substation have led to the terrace being positioned towards the rear of the site, partially tucked behind the substation terrace. The position of the building, away from the road frontage, will result in a significant departure from the character of the area. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the whole of the building would not be readily visible from the street scene and that the focal point of the development will be a car park on the road frontage. The resulting appearance is that the development will appear cluttered and visually incongruous which will be to the detriment of the visual amenities and character of the area.

Concerns are also raised with regard to the design of the building. It is one single building with repetitive fenestration alignment however there are no visual breaks within the building. The expanse of the roof, with no variation, appears bulky, excessive and overbearing. Whilst an opportunity to improve the site could be had by demolishing the existing building and redeveloping the land, this poor design has failed to take the opportunity to contribute to or reinforce the character and visual amenities of the local built environment. The application is therefore contrary to policy LP16 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

Access and parking

CCC Highways has raised no objection to the proposal however has requested a series of conditions should permission be granted. The development includes two parking spaces per dwelling – which is consistent with the parking standards set out in the Local Plan. Each space measures 2.4 x 5m and there is 6m between the two rows to allow for manoeuvring. Although tight, the parking arrangement does technically work and as such an objection cannot be raised on parking grounds. The prominence of the car park does however remain a concern as discussed in the Design and layout section of this report.

Residential amenities

Each dwelling is afforded a rear private garden space of at least a third of the plot, thereby complying with policy LP16 (h). The garden depths are approximately 7m. Although close to the rear boundaries of 17 to 31 Station Road, it would not result in loss of privacy to these properties as the proposal would overlook their rear parking area. However concerns are raised with regards to plot 4: The proximity of the first floor rear bedroom window serving plot 4 is approximately 2m from the rear boundary of the existing dwelling at 37 Station Road and is positioned perpendicular to the rear boundary treatment.

As such this window would be able to look directly into the rear private garden area of 37 Station Road, resulting in a significant reduction of the occupiers residential amenities.

The flank wall of the new dwellings will extend approximately 5.5m beyond the rear elevation of 48 Inhams Road and consists of a blank gable wall measuring 7.5m high to the ridge. Since the proposal is positioned only 1m away from the common boundary of number 48, it will result in their immediate private outdoor amenity space being completely dominated by the proposal. This would result in significantly reduced residential amenities for the neighbour in question by reason of visual dominance and overbearing impact.

By reasons of overlooking and loss of privacy for 37 Station Road and an overbearing and visual impact on 48 Inhams Road the proposal would fail to comply with policies LP16 and LP2.

Flood risk

The site is located in flood zone 1 and is therefore in a sequentially preferable area for development in terms of flood risk. However the layout, design and impact on neighbouring residential amenities are such that the proposal is unacceptable.

Health and wellbeing

As per the 'Residential amenities' section of this report, the proposal would have a harmful impact on the neighbouring private garden area. The proposal therefore fails health and wellbeing principles, contrary to policy LP2 of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

Economic Growth

The proposal constitutes additional housing thereby contributing to economic growth.

Other Matters

The proposal was not the subject of a pre-application enquiry and as such there was insufficient opportunity to advise the agent that the proposal was unacceptable and that the amount of alterations required to render the proposal acceptable could not be dealt with under the same application.

The site is capable of being redeveloped however not in the manner which is proposed under this application which is in conflict with Development Plan policies.

The comments raised by the neighbouring resident which have not already been discussed in this report are addressed as follows:

- *It will block neighbours sunlight;*
It is acknowledged that some shadowing of the northern neighbours garden will occur however this is likely to be a strip of approximately 2m, when measured from the common boundary fence. This not considered sufficient enough to substantiate a reason for refusal.
- *No desire to live next to a car park;*
This is not a material planning consideration.

- *Noise and disturbance from car park;*
These comments are noted, however since the surfacing treatment can be conditioned to ensure that there is no noise generated by the cars, this would not substantiate a reason for refusal.
- *Visual impact of bin store;*
The bin store is in place for bin collection days only. The plans show that there is space on site round the back of the building for private bin storage.
- *The fence on the northern elevation is frail and not robust enough to serve a passage;*
Comments are noted. It would be for the owner of the fence to replace should it fall down.
- *A new fence should be positioned all the way around the site;*
This is not something the Local Planning Authority would insist on given that the existing and proposed boundary treatments are considered acceptable.
- *Safety posts should be erected to stop vehicles crashing into the common fence boundary.*
This is not a material planning consideration.

10 CONCLUSIONS

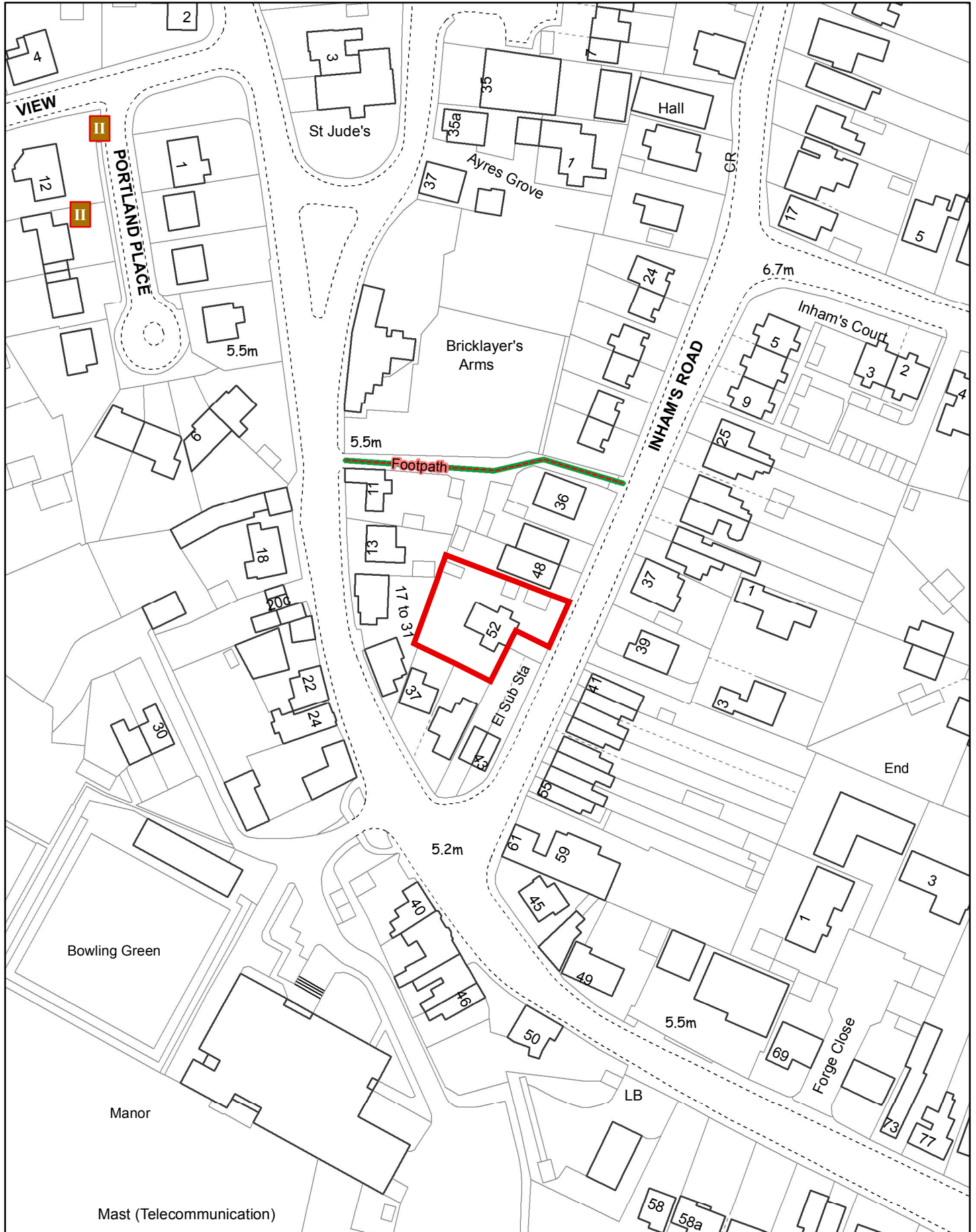
The layout of the proposal is such that the development would result in a harmful impact on the character and visual amenities of the street scene. The design of the proposal would fail to respect or enhance the local distinctiveness or character of the area. The height of the building and its proximity to the neighbouring property would result in an overbearing impact to the detriment of the residential amenities of 48 Inhams Road to the north and the bedroom window serving the first floor rear elevation of plot 4 would result in the loss of privacy to the garden area to 37 Station Road. For the above reasons the proposal is contrary to policies of the Development Plan and refusal is recommended accordingly.

11 RECOMMENDATION

1. Policy LP16 (d) of the Fenland Local Plan requires new development to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness and character of the area, improve the character of the local built environment and not adversely impact on the street scene. By reasons of the position of the building to the rear of the site and the car park to the front, the proposal would fail to respond to the local characteristics of the area. The design of the proposal appears bulky and overbearing by reasons of the lack of variation in the design and the lack of visual breaks. The development would therefore appear as an incongruous feature within the street scene, which would be to the detriment of the character and visual amenities of the area. The application is therefore contrary to policy LP16 (d) of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.

2. Policies LP2 and LP16 (e) of the Fenland Local Plan require new development to promote high levels of residential amenity. The scale of the development and its proximity to the neighbouring property at 48 Inhams Road is such that the northern elevation of the proposal would dominate their outdoor private amenity area by reason of overbearing and visual

impact. The location of the first floor rear bedroom window serving plot 4 and the proximity of the proposal to 37 Station Road is such that there would be opportunity to overlook directly into the private garden area of 37 Station Road. As a result, the occupiers of 48 Inhams Road and 37 Station Road would suffer from an overbearing impact and loss of privacy from the proposal which would be to the detriment of their residential amenities. The application is therefore contrary to policies LP2 and LP16 (e) of the Fenland Local Plan 2014.



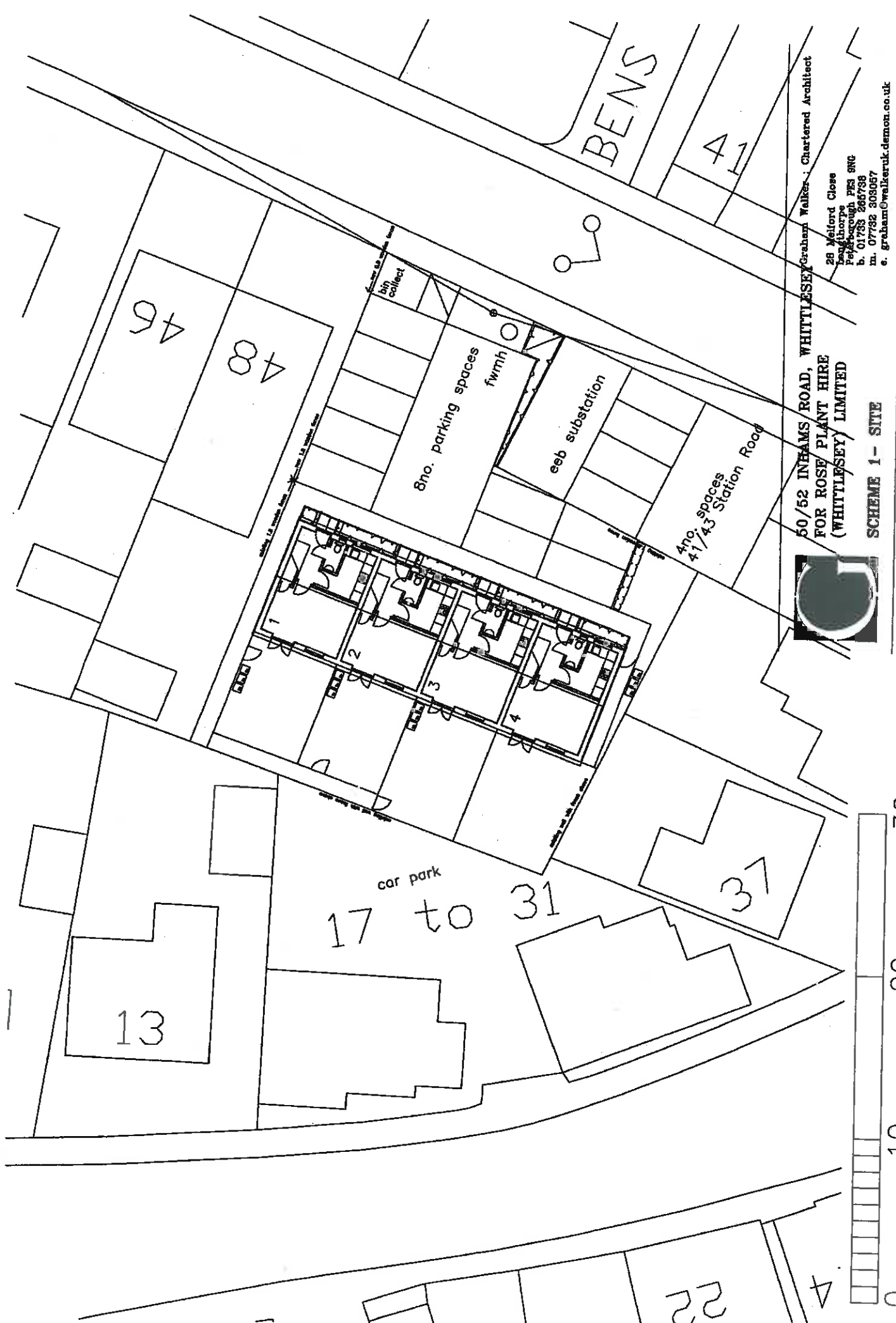
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Created on: 22/05/2015

F/YR15/0287/F





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SCHEME 1 - SITE